

A new politics

Manifesto for the Assembly Elections



Workers Party



For a new politics

*“ I see the Executive has been criticised as being a “carve-up” by some.
This is one of those cheap phrases that is trotted out but doesn’t actually stand up to scrutiny.”
Peter Robinson 12th March 2011*

Peter Robinson is wrong. The Executive is precisely a carve-up between the main sectarian parties in a mandatory coalition government with no official opposition. The Good Friday Agreement and the significant ceasefires are long behind us. There is no going back to the dark days of the Troubles. The Peace Process has served its purpose and now it’s over. It’s time now for the Democratic Process. But the democratic process needs democratic institutions. As long as the Executive is made up of parties which are allocated executive positions on the basis of a sectarian headcount then instability and sectarian confrontation and antagonism will continue to prevail. The carve-up on Stormont Hill continues to be mirrored in the streets of our towns and cities.

As well as this, the mandatory Coalition is trying to force through a Cuts Agenda with each party blaming the system or the other parties for forcing hardship on our people. They blame anyone but themselves and the Stormont Carve-Up gives them the excuse to do this.

Evidence from the recent *Public Attitude Survey* (March 2010) indicates that 75% of the people here believe that the present system of governing Northern Ireland either “needs a great deal of improvement” or “could be improved quite a lot” This improvement will not be achieved by putting parties of the stitch-up back into power. That’s why we are calling for a New Politics. The Workers’ Party believes that the emergence of a centre left block or alliance of democratic, progressive and anti-sectarian opinion would be a powerful

challenge to the institutionalised sectarian carve-up. There is a need to create a new political space which is neither unionist nor nationalist, Catholic nor Protestant.

- **The Workers’ Party calls for an end to the mandatory designation of MLAs as ‘nationalist’, ‘unionist’ and ‘other’.**
- **We would end the system of mandatory coalition at Stormont and introduce legislation which would enable the formation of opposition parties.**
- **Under the D'Hondt mechanism each Minister is chosen by his or her party and is really accountable only to his or her Party, not to the Executive. This means that Party politics come before good government. The Workers’ Party believes that government Ministers should be chosen by the Executive as a whole.**



Economic strategy for full employment

Northern Ireland needs an economic strategy that will benefit the whole population.

That might be obvious, but recent discussions have been obsessed with tax breaks for existing private companies as the only way to bring new investment and economic growth. That is not a strategy.

The Workers Party wants to see full employment, people in jobs in the public, private and voluntary/ community sectors earning a good living and paying reasonable taxes in return for good quality health and education services and some decent political representation in the Assembly and Councils.

Corporation Tax

The Workers Party knows that reducing corporation tax will not automatically lead to new investment and new jobs here.

Investment and jobs is not the same thing but reducing Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland would certainly lead to more companies paying less tax.

It has the potential to take a further £300 million from the existing Northern Ireland block grant from Westminster. Almost immediately this would mean even greater cuts in public services and jobs than the outgoing Stormont Executive has already approved.

Over 40,000 workers have lost their jobs here since July 2008 because of the recession which has not yet passed. One third of the construction workforce has gone in the last three years as a major part of that.

Another 30,000 workers and associated public services are expected to go in the public sector here because of the Stormont budget cuts already underway for 2011/15 across all Government Departments. No argument here then for another £300 million to go uncollected from the corporations.

Jailing the Bankers – No Chance

Barclays Bank paid £113,000,000 in UK Corporation Tax in 2009 in the same year it made £11,600,000,000 of profits. That is less than ten per cent it paid in tax – nothing like David Cameron's 28% Corporation Tax headline figure which his Chancellor proposes to now cut by 4 per cent across the next four years for all UK businesses. Barclays bank was not breaking the law in 2009; it was pushing the rules and regulations to the limit and employing the chartered accountants they needed to deliver. They were able to pay less tax on income than any individual in the country would pay under Pay As You Earn. The Chief Executive has threatened to relocate the Bank Headquarters if they face greater regulation after the Vickers'



Report into the Banking crisis . He might find America under Obama a less welcoming place for tax evaders than it once was.

There appears no issue of any of the corporate bankers being prosecuted for putting us into all of this debt, unlike in the United States where the sub-prime mortgage scandal unfolded. They have sent bankers to jail. So given what Barclays have been able to do and get away with paying even less than the recently proposed DUP rate of 10%, the questions on Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland should be – why do you need a change here when Barclays already pay less tax than the 12.5% of the Republic of Ireland and can stay headquartered in London?

Who actually pays any Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland currently and what do they pay? And finally, which companies in Northern Ireland pay no or less corporation tax on their profits and why is that ?

Tackle Tax Avoidance and Dodgers

The Workers Party propose that more is done now to ensure that many of the existing tax loop holes for big business are closed here and that sufficient staff are allocated this task within the Revenue and Customs Agency to stop the culture and practice of tax avoidance by private companies and corporations. We accept this is a significant task but well worth doing on behalf of the tax payer and efficient government. Tax amnesties for example have worked well in the Republic of Ireland to reduce corporate and individual avoidance of public tax due

.Scale of the Problem

The outgoing Executive at Stormont had growing our economy as the overarching priority of the last Programme for Government. Unemployment doubled in that time. The numbers of individuals and companies declaring bankruptcy continues to rise significantly. Property developers and land speculators are relocating to warmer climates leaving the rest of us to live through the mess and the failure to regulate them. Indeed many of them were held up as outstanding contributors to the public good and given awards by newspapers. So, political and public memories are short.

Vote for Change

The Workers Party believes that growing the economy should be the overarching priority for the next Executive.

The difference this time is that priority must produce real results for all of the people and not a small political class who share the Executive table with their supporters. We need change. People will need to vote for change or expect the same.

The same being same old Unionist/Nationalist, wrap the flag round me politics that sections of the media and Tony O'Reilly think have moved on since the Chuckle Brothers were a number.



Back in the real world many working people are already coping with the economic hardships delivered from Stormont and more recent Westminster budget cuts. Budgeting for cuts in jobs, living standards and for young people in particular, is a recipe for emigration and already underway affecting those with both high levels of qualifications and those with none: something we now share with the Republic of Ireland.

Low Wages and Poverty

The recent Treasury paper on rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy takes a very critical view of its current state. It points out that the lowest wages in the UK and Ireland are found here. This makes Northern Ireland more vulnerable to inflation which is on the rise and not expected to fall below 4% in the rest of this year. Base lending rates could well rise on the very date of the Assembly election or more likely by July and as a consequence the cost of mortgages. The markets and the FTSE will not be shaken so those who own and control the Stock Market already have rises factored in to their investments and risk assessments.

Northern Ireland already has the highest petrol prices in the UK and the highest levels of fuel poverty. The populist tax cut of one penny and one penny deferred, told nothing of the tax pouring in to the UK Treasury since OPEC raised oil prices from \$80 to \$130 in the last six months and we know the UK government grabs 58% of the price paid for every litre dispensed at the pump. It is people on benefit and low wages that need the 20 litre top up at

£1 per litre fill from the local garage to keep the heating running for their children. It is the proud pensioner who will order 500 litres and not let on that it takes a month's pension to pay for it. Where are our Regulators on prices, at the pumps and for home heating fuel? Where is the Consumer Council or the Water Regulator when you need them? The Workers Party know we will need more support for agencies providing debt advice as the real public sector cuts starting this month begin to remove jobs and the 38 benefit changes kick in alongside the National Insurance rise for April pay packets. We will all become less interested in choice or competition between providers in future and will need to seek out the cheapest. GPs will be dispensing more drugs for depression and ill health will rise. No rocket science here that we need to change it or many more people will go under.

The Low Wage Economy – drags us all down

As prices in the shops, petrol forecourts and on public transport rise, household incomes are being squeezed by pay cuts or pay freezes. The minimum wage increased in April by 15 pence an hour to £5.93 if you are aged over 22. There were workers who received a pay rise of 4 pence a week for 2011 and were told this was good news.

The Workers Party knows that the Stormont Parties are saving lots of bad news for after May time so let us get prepared for 'balanced Departmental budgets' and the delivery of cuts in public/taxpayers money by

fresh skins heading up their different

Departments.



Northern Ireland is over-represented in low pay sectors such as agriculture and food processing. The Workers Party would point to these sectors as representing low wages, poor employment protection and widespread use of economic migrant workers. The Treasury Report also confirms that Northern Ireland has suffered the worst impact from the recession with the highest economic inactivity rate at 28.4% against an average of 23.3%.

Cutting Welfare Benefits

There appears not a lot that the Assembly is capable or prepared to do about the tsunami that will hit the benefits system on which we have a higher dependence than others. The Workers Party's advice service has supported people resisting the pressures to force people off Disability Living Allowance and we anticipate the next cost reducing measure as taking away Incapacity Benefit if you are not well advised or represented. All of the Parties know this is underway but little has been heard of resistance. Let us give some commitment to increase funding to the CAB, Advice NI and others in this field to let them recruit additional staff to support and advise people becoming unemployed because of Stormont cuts.

Resistance is not about defending people who do not want to work. Resistance is about people who do not have enough employment opportunities available to them, are under or over qualified for the few jobs available or have lost their employment due to the recession.

Enforced idleness on less than £70 a week Job Seekers Allowance is destroying hope and families and driving many into the hands of the high interest rate credit cards and then the unlicensed loan sharks who populate working class communities.

The UK government intends to take a further £18 billion out of spending by cutting back on benefits received by the sick, disabled and incapacitated for work. This is not about a public sector delivering public services or making efficiencies or town hall cuts, but about benefit for the most vulnerable. The Workers Party is not opposed to the rigorous pursuit of anyone who abuses the welfare system.

The Workers Party consider massive welfare cuts by MPs who sit as millionaires in a cabinet as a return to the values of Thatcher and an ideological attack on the principle of welfare support for the most vulnerable.

This forthcoming tsunami is recognised by the Stormont Executive and has resulted in the setting aside of £20 million as a Support Fund, acknowledging there will be real cuts to benefits of people here and soon.

The Workers Party calls for a closer examination of how this figure was arrived at and better explanation of the greater sum of £80 million set aside in the additional budget for special projects by the OFM/DFM



Education and Vocation

The Workers Party consider it significant that currently we have the lowest proportion of people with graduate qualifications and the highest proportion of people with no qualifications at all in the UK. This reminds us of the campaigns we initiated in the 1970s to end academic selection at eleven and the segregation of children on religious belief in favour of a fully integrated system.

Both issues need to be on the political and economic agenda in 2011. The financial cost alone of sectarian schooling has already been raised by others and in a report estimating £1 billion as the cost of a continued segregated society.

The new Assembly desperately needs to promote greater vocational provision as part of the standard curriculum, particularly through Key Stage 3, to equip our young people for the new employment opportunities that are required today rather than see the standard degree as the main economic passport to a better life every time.

That no longer holds. This also requires our Further and Higher Education Colleges to stand up and deliver as a more significant driver with the economic community.

Peace, Work and Democracy

The Workers Party point to positive indicators that we must use and promote if we are to develop our economy, keep people in jobs and offer hope to our young people.

The end of terrorism and the creation of a more peaceful and positive political environment was at the heart of Workers Party campaigns in the 1970s and 80's. 'Sectarianism Kills Workers' and the demands for Peace, Work and Democracy struck a chord with many who rallied to demonstrations against murder and bombing campaigns.

Bombs and bullets of home-grown terrorists and paramilitaries prevented foreign investment at a time when the island was an economic target for transnational companies seeking a foothold in the growing European Union. Many economic opportunities were missed during these wasted years.

Among the small number of larger companies who chose Northern Ireland and stayed, some did put down roots here and remain a part of our still small manufacturing and exporting base. They did it because they could make it work and we could make it work for them with grants and initiatives which so many new EU joiners now offer in competition to where and what Northern Ireland is today.

Others have since followed and Northern Ireland has attracted more Foreign Direct Investment than all other UK regions according to the Treasury report.



Tax in Northern Ireland today

The Regional Rate is the principal vehicle for raising local taxes beyond the block grant determined in London under the Barnett formula.

It was frozen in the last four years. Before judgement on further reductions in Corporation Tax as a key economic lever, we should question more those who have been locating their business here when they could have gone to the Republic of Ireland?

Does the private sector alone have the capacity to grow the economy, invest for jobs, and expand the tax base? There is not much evidence since the 1980s that the conservative culture of local business has changed.

The Workers Party say that only a partnership of public and private partnership driven by political will and regulation is likely to change our present course.

We are all Europeans now

Membership of the European Union has supported with both Structural and Peace Funds and historically helped to maintain a level of employment without which we may indeed have become 'the basket case' that one Stormont Minister casually described the Northern Ireland economy during 2010.

EU regulation however also contributed to the demise of the Belfast shipbuilding industry when government supports were forced to reduce and disappear. Today we compete with Poland and Portugal for repair work and the 52,000 employees of the 1950s are the lean and mean 150 of 2011.

The Titanic Quarter is now of greater value because of dockside regeneration and relocation going on throughout the UK over 20 years. The new opportunities are in offices and a patchwork of developments which has seen Belfast Lagside develop and flourish. Titanic Quarter could yet be home to manufacturing the offshore windmills that will harness new energy sources off the coastlines of Europe and Scandinavia.

It is not here yet and the Workers Party accepts that we continue to lag behind in the high productivity and high earning sectors such as finance and business, but that is there to be fought for. Skills can be re-learned and new skills taught with 2,000 business graduates available locally each year to support our new technicians, craftsmen and engineers for the 21st century.



Local Government and regeneration

Inner city regeneration has brought many benefits and local government has played an important role in investing and leading the way for others to change the city in a positive way for citizens and develop business and economic life. St George's Market in Belfast is a tangible example of engaging locally to develop and encourage sustainable enterprise.

A more cosmopolitan Belfast is a resource for the whole island and tourism, arts and culture have the potential as both a driver of employment and a vehicle for attracting more tourists to engage with more than just Peace Walls and murals.

Derry as a UK City of Culture has the potential to do what Belfast was unsuccessful enough to deliver a decade ago and stake out the claims for the north-west to become another driver for jobs and prosperity that the Workers Party wants to see develop across Northern Ireland.

Positive Images that are sustained

The better relations and image that we can now project with the reduction in terrorism and communal strife has also brought a number of positive developments bringing some competitive advantages which we need to develop further.

The Workers Party recognises the benefits of the 100% broadband coverage we already have; the incentive it has provided for back office relocation to here and the opportunities to get into employment provided by call centres.

The IDB/ Invest NI have worked with their hands behind their backs for a long time trying to compete for inward investment with the IDA to the south and the Development Agencies to the west.

An improved north-south road network, upgrading public transport; access to ports and among the lowest operating costs in Europe are now to our advantage.

New Ways of thinking and doing

The Workers Party propose the new Assembly develop a business plan for a Dalriada Bridge to link County Antrim and Ireland to the Scottish mainland just 12 miles away.

The aim to reduce our peripheral status as an island on the edge of Europe and provide a physical land bridge with support canvassed from the Dublin; Edinburgh and London governments and a joint case to the EU to support its creation for 2025.

This provides a technology challenge and opportunity to learn from and access other EU member states. It would benefit the whole island and bring us closer to our Scottish neighbours in every sense.



Housing and Economic Health

Over the past ten years employment here has increased by 8.2% against 1.4% in the rest of the UK.

Aspects of that growth are not sustainable and are now in reverse. The transfer of large retail outlets in food, clothes and furniture are coming to an end and the huge jump in construction across the island has come to an abrupt end with the collapse of the housing boom and the frenzy of greed that accompanied it. Many victims remain, not least those who lost their jobs and their homes.

There is a need for greater provision of public housing as the levels of homelessness are rising. The priority for banks to get back some of what they gambled away is marked by the monthly sales of homes repossessed creating more downward pressure on the value of homes and for those recently unemployed and those whose wages are frozen – meaning cut, as unregulated banks continue rebuilding their money base and stop lending.

Varney may moderate bank behaviour but will not get the urgent release of funds needed to invest in our infrastructure. The new Assembly needs to take that on in a comprehensive economic strategy over the next ten years.

The Workers Party propose that the new Assembly, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, seek to stimulate a new social housing programme to address the known waiting list and to redefine the relationship with specialist Housing Associations regarding planning and funding new house building programmes.

Including the creation of a new Social Housing Fund.

Decent housing planned and delivered locally made the Northern Ireland Housing Executive the largest public sector housing provider in the UK and one of the success stories of our recent past.

Good affordable social housing is a hallmark of a healthy society. People living in socially deprived areas we know face much higher levels of alcohol and drug abuse, smoking, mental health problems and obesity.

The Workers Party wants to see all Government Departments build in plans to address health inequalities in the next Programmes for Action and recognise the economic values of good quality care and planning as poor quality continues to cost society more.

Summary

The Workers Party wants real and not cosmetic change for measures that will improve quality of life for both young and old alike in Northern Ireland. There are significant political challenges but sectarianism has not left the stage and under D'Hondt cannot in the near future.

Long term debt in the UK economy cannot be dealt with in 4 years as Mr Cameron will discover.

Greater imagination will be required at Assembly level as ministers are relegated to contact with the Secretary of State in Hillsborough. The economic challenge in the next ten years is to get people into work and that is top of the Workers Party programme

and manifesto.



Tackling sectarianism and racism

Central to our commitment to the development of a New Politics in Northern Ireland is our long-standing and complete opposition to all forms of religious and racial sectarianism in our society. The Workers Party is a socialist party, committed to the unity of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. Our history in Northern Ireland is one of constant and consistent opposition to sectarianism in all its shapes and forms. The Workers Party approaches this question as a class issue. Workers who should be coming together as a mighty force against the cuts are lethally divided by sectarian differences.

Sectarianism is deeply rooted in Northern Ireland, in politics, socially, culturally and in religion. Unaltered sectarian practices, beliefs and dispositions pose a formidable challenge to the realisation of the kind of a New Politics and a new society which works for the benefit of the working-class majority.

It has been 13 years since the signing of the Belfast Agreement and yet our society remains divided along religious lines and many of our new citizens from other countries face racial discrimination as a matter of course.

We now have at least 47 official peace lines. In 2005 a mapping exercise carried out by Belfast Interface Project and the Institute for Conflict Research identified 83 barriers in Belfast alone and peace lines of various kinds persist in villages and towns throughout the North.

As recently as March this year Derry City council agreed to lodge a planning application for the peace wall at an interface area in the city. It is significant that the SDLP, the DUP and Sinn Féin all agreed that this was necessary. Sinn Féin's Gerry Mac Lochlainn, stated: "It is unfortunate that we have to put up fences but there is a saying that goes 'good fences make good neighbours'".

For the main Nationalist and Unionist parties national self-identification is monolithic and fixed but the Workers Party recognises that the situation is much more fluid.

The *Public Attitude Survey* produced by the Stormont Executive last year bears this out: while 35% of those asked identified themselves as 'Unionist' and 24% as 'Nationalist', the largest group -38%- identified themselves as 'Neither'. For those between the ages of 16 and 34 fully 49% preferred not to identify themselves as either Unionist or Nationalist. Where do these people fit in to the ethos of fences and neighbours?

The kind of 'separate but equal' mentality shown by Sinn Féin's Gerry Mac Lochlainn was also on display when the DUP and Sinn Féin put out their *Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* for consultation last year.



The Workers Party rejected the ideological underpinnings and terms of this document including the notion that locally-based 'community practitioners' might replace the Community Relations Council.

We endorse the findings of the earlier – now shelved - **Shared Future** document which clearly stated that 'separate but equal is not an option' and that "parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically."

Instead of institutionalised sectarian difference the Workers Party calls for the establishment of a fully-funded **Institute of Citizenship and Reconciliation** as a centre of excellence that would research and highlight positive alternatives to sectarianism and racism.

Tackling sectarianism and racism requires political will. But sectarianism is present in almost all facets of life. Political parties exist on the basis that they appeal to and serve the interests of only one section of a religiously divided society. The education system is sectarian because it is organised on religious division.

In research from 2006, when parents whose children do not attend integrated schools were asked why this was so, 41% said that their children attended other schools only because there was no integrated school in their area.

A massive 71% of parents said they would support their local school being transformed into an integrated school. If the Stormont government was responsive to the wishes of the people, plans would already be in place for this.

But because the sectarian parties believe they will get the votes regardless of what they do or don't do, these hugely popular wishes are quietly brushed aside.

Sectarianism and Housing

Our housing is deeply divided and very often what is allowed to pass as tradition and culture is nothing more than naked sectarianism.

However, as with integrated education, a massive majority of our people would prefer something better. In 2008 The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey found that 80% of people would prefer to live in a mixed-religion neighbourhood. Once again the Stormont Executive has failed to reflect the will of the majority.

The Workers Party welcomed the main recommendations of the recently released report of the **Independent Commission on the Future for Housing in Northern Ireland** in 2010. The Report calls on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and other housing bodies to undertake shared housing projects not least on 'neutral' sites, and those vacated by public bodies, including the Ministry of Defence and the PSNI.

We can think of no better use for public land than the development of non sectarian housing developments. Northern Ireland has had quite enough of so-called luxury flats and trophy buildings. What we need now is a building policy that puts 'ordinary people' first."



We also support the Housing Executive and Department for Social Development, which through their Shared Neighbourhood Programme are in the process of building 30 mixed housing areas. When complete this will cover 22,500 households, comprising almost 70,000 people.

This is a great step forward but it's only the start. The kind of change the Workers Party envisages would make integrated housing the norm rather than the exception. This is achievable but only with the kind of political will that is woefully absent in the current Stormont Coalition.

Only a new sort of coalition - a progressive, anti-sectarian coalition - would have the will to make these changes.

- **The Northern Ireland Executive should, even within current resources, agree timebound, measurable, resourced anti-sectarianism and anti-racist strategies.**
- **Instead of institutionalised sectarian difference the Workers Party calls for the establishment of a fully-funded *Institute of Citizenship and Reconciliation* as a centre of excellence that would research and highlight positive alternatives to sectarianism, racism and homophobia.**
- **As a secular socialist party the Workers Party calls for the immediate rolling out of a programme which will provide comprehensive integrated education at primary and secondary levels for anyone who wants it within the next 5 years .**
- **Separate but equal is not an option. The Workers Party agrees with the *Shared Future* document that "parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically."**
- **The Workers Party calls on the Planning Department, the Housing Executive and all statutory bodies to be obliged to take the promotion of anti-sectarianism into account in all planning decisions.**



Against the Cuts

The cuts programme is a political choice, not an economic necessity.

The Tories, who when last in power decimated the industrial base of the NI economy now tell us that state provision is “top-heavy” here and is “crowding out” the private sector. In the real world, the state is a key provider of income to the private sector and must continue to be if we wish our people to have any kind of decent life.

The Cuts Agenda is a deliberate policy aimed at removing money and influence from workers and it will make Northern Ireland a more socially divided society than it already is.

In Northern Ireland today 15% of employees earn £1,000 or more per week while 30% earn £300 or less per week. The bottom 50% of our people between them own only 9% of the wealth. And, however much they wring their hands and blame Westminster, Stormont politicians are responsible for implementing the Cuts Agenda.

Health

In health, Ulster Unionist Minister Michael McGimpsey has announced £828m cuts, which will lead - as predicted - to 4,000 job losses (including compulsory redundancies), longer waiting lists, the introduction of community care charges and a massive reduction in home-care packages.

The Health Department is to go ahead with building a satellite radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry, but is warning that there will be no cash to run it. Unless things change, the brand new building will stand empty

Education

Education Minister, Sinn Féin’s Caitriona Ruane, will oversee cuts in her department amounting to £300m.

A further £41million will be cut from the department’s school building budget to “minimise the impacts in the classroom”.

As it stands there is already a £400 million backlog in the school maintenance budget. Moreover, £10m has been set aside to pay for redundancies over the next two years, indicating that job losses are planned. Children will be going to schools which are crumbling around them. On top of this there will be cuts to school bus services, support for classroom assistants, and school meals. Across all the Departments similar cuts have been rolled out.



Corporation Tax

All the main parties in Stormont support the proposed cut in corporation tax recently rolled out for consultation by Tory Minister, Owen Patterson. Such a move would do little to bring jobs to Northern Ireland.

Due legal issues related to pricing, businesses located in GB may find it so difficult to do business in Northern Ireland that it is not worth their while operating here. Moreover, EU law dictates that Stormont must bear the full consequences of varying the corporation tax rate with no intervention or financial aid from central government. As a result, the current subvention from Westminster would fall.

This would cost us around £300m off our block grant to reduce the business tax from the current rate to the 12.5% charged in the Republic.

The politicians of the Stormont Coalition talk up this plan by saying that it will bring in thousands of well-paid, stable jobs, but in reality it will turn Northern Ireland into a de facto tax haven, where money from tax dodgers will briefly be located before its transferral to the City of London.

Outside the legal and accounting professions, few real jobs will come from this. The Workers Party is totally opposed to this plan. That all the main parties support it is a measure of the degree to which they cling to the disproven nostrums of neoliberal economic theory. The Workers Party believes in an economic strategy aimed wholly at the development of jobs and services for the people of Northern Ireland - and beyond.

The dream of attracting enough foreign investment to kick-start the private sector here is just that – a dream.

It is a dream Arlene Foster and all other Ministers in Stormont cling to and they have no other alternative for when the dream fails as it always does.

It is time to develop a pro-active job creation strategy in which money is directly spent on state job creation in agreed areas of need. We've seen what reliance on the market does both here and around the world. It's time to move on.

- **Workers Party MLAs will go in to opposition and lead the attack in Stormont against the cuts agenda.**
- **No more mass youth unemployment. The Workers Party says, instead of slashing Northern Ireland's budget, the Worker's Party will fight for emergency funding to protect our young people from becoming another wasted generation.**
- **We call for an end to all forms of privatisation including the break-up of our NHS and state education system, with public services financed from progressive taxation and sustainable long-term borrowing.**
- **We call for real powers of economic and industrial intervention for the Stormont parliament, not to introduce a low-tax welfare regime for the rich but in order to implement a progressive tax system in our deeply unequal society.**
- **We call for the implementation of free, comprehensive childcare for all parents in Northern Ireland.**



A planned environment

"Until very recently, the discussion [on the future of world society] revolved around the kind of society we would have. Today, the discussion centres on whether human society will survive."

Fidel Castro, December 2009

For those concerned with the fate of the earth, the time has come to face facts: not simply the dire reality of climate change but also the pressing need for social-system change. Knowledge of the nature and limits of capitalism, and the means of transcending it has become a matter of survival.

Contrary to Sammy Wilson, who as Minister for the Environment declared it "a giant con", global warming, brought about by man-made increases in greenhouse gases is real and is destabilising the world's climate with disastrous effects for most species on the planet and humanity itself.

Each decade is warmer than the one before, with January to November 2010 the warmest period yet recorded by NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), whose analysis covers 131 years. If these changes deepen and intensify, as they will without the right responses locally and globally, they will increasingly change the environment.

For Northern Ireland, as Friends of the Earth notes, this could mean more extreme weather events, including hotter and drier summers, flooding and rising sea-levels leading to coastal realignment.

Other severe environmental issues include contamination of the air and surface waters with industrial pollutants.

Many ocean and fresh water fish are contaminated by mercury and numerous industrial organic chemicals.

The oceans contain large "islands" of rubbish, the most infamous being the Pacific Rubbish Patch an island of domestic and industrial waste that doubles in size every decade and is now believed to be roughly five times the size of Northern Ireland. How has this come about?

While individual and household consumption has had its part to play in this destructive process, we must place it in context. In the developed world for every tonne of household waste produced, commercial, industrial and construction businesses produce another six tonnes.

In Northern Ireland we produce over 6 million tonnes of waste from a range of sources each year. Of this domestic waste accounts for just over 1 million tonnes whilst the construction, demolition and excavation sector produces 4 million tonnes with the remaining

1 million tonnes of waste from the commercial and industrial sector.



Moreover, the 'carbon footprint' of wealthy households is proportionally greater than poorer households.

The system of global capitalism, which puts profit and expansion above all other concerns, is fundamentally responsible for our environmental problems.

Environmentally sustainable capitalism is a contradiction in terms and, given the scale and complexity of the issues, technology is unlikely to provide all the answers. Only a society which puts human and environmental needs above those of profit can begin to deal with the serious problems we and our grandchildren will face.

Some will say that the problems are too big to deal with – best to forget about them and get on with our lives. The Worker's Party believe the necessary changes can be brought about.

Along with many millions around the globe the Workers Party aims for a democratic socialist society in which a planned response to crises replaces the chaos of competing profit-seekers.

In the immediate term the Workers Party is calling for a range of measures which will help to mitigate environmental destruction in Northern Ireland.

According to Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland has the least protected environment in the UK and Ireland. For example, in 2003 over 40 per cent of companies failed to comply with their licences to pollute water.

This compares with around 30 per cent in England and Wales - and just 16 per cent in Scotland.

Raw sewage is pumped into the sea at our top costal resorts, important wildlife sites are trashed and illegal landfill sites are found across our countryside

The Workers Party agrees with journalist Anton McCabe, who has written that "in planning and environmental protection ... short-termism and a libertarian faith in the rights of property drive a culture and a politics", in both jurisdictions on this island.

The Workers Party calls for reform of the Planning Service in Northern Ireland. As it stands, if developers are refused permission to build they have an automatic right of appeal to the Planning Appeals Commission.

We call for the extension of this right of appeal to third parties, who may be affected by a decision but under current conditions can do nothing about it. According to Rita Harkin of the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society, "the Planning System has been so heavily weighted in favour of developers (with its established policy presumption in favour of development) that it might be argued that there was no need for corruption".

The Workers Party believes that current Draft Bill on Planning, which would devolve planning decisions to local government – again .



with no third-party right of appeal- opens the door to potential corruption.

This is especially the case because the Planning Service in Northern Ireland has lost 720 employees constituting about 40% of staff. We call on an expansion of the Planning Service and the implementation of strict and impartial oversight in planning matters.

Further to this, we call for the immediate setting up of an Environmental Protection Agency in the North. In the absence of such an agency, sustainable development as an over-arching policy objective will continue to find it extremely difficult to compete with other policy objectives that run counter to sustainable development.

Lough Neagh Incinerator

The Workers Party supports CALNI (Campaign Against the Lough Neagh Incinerator) in its campaign against the granting of planning permission to build a chicken litter Incinerator in an area of high scenic value.

The application has been made by Rose Energy, a company is controlled by local firm Moy Park, who in turn were bought by the multi-national company Marfrig in 2008, with headquarters in Brazil.

A group of experts commissioned by CALNI has drawn up a report which found the incinerator was the least efficient form of energy generation because it would operate at only 30% efficiency, would generate toxic ash and might not be sustainable, as the amount of local poultry litter available is not proven.

A5 Dual carriageway

The A5 is the biggest road project ever proposed for Northern Ireland. The proposal is for a dual carriageway from the Tyrone-Monaghan border at Aughnacloy to Newbuildings, on the southern outskirts of Derry.

The Republic's government may or may not be putting up 50% of the funding - £400million at present, or approximately 50% of the state's budget for road construction.

Three roads built in the last decade at a cost of just over £22 million are to be by-passed. The road will occupy 4,000 acres of farmland. As well as taking farmland, the road will also split farms.

The Workers Party supports the Alternative A5 Alliance in its campaign against the road building scheme and we endorse its Tyrone Rail Road plan as sustainable solution to the transport needs of the North-West region.

Given that road transport CO₂ emissions are responsible for an ever increasing portion of greenhouse gas emissions in the North, the railway will be an alternative transport mode that will tend to constrain the growth of traffic on the A5.



The development of public transport is essential in terms of the needs of our environment and our people.

Data from the Family Resource Survey 2004 show that 44% of people in Belfast do not own a car or a van. (In the Sandy Row this figure stands at 72%.) The figure for Northern Ireland is 26%. Across Northern Ireland, *over half of lone parent families and two-thirds of single pensioners lack a car.*

Just over 20% of households in rural areas do not have car, particularly relevant when in much of rural Northern Ireland many people do not live within easy access of public transport. This has to change.

The Workers Party supports the full development of public transport in Northern Ireland to meet the needs of our people and to mitigate CO₂ emissions.

The Department of Regional Development's *Regional Transport Strategy 2011* outlines a number of strategic challenges which the future holds on different fronts:

- to support our economy by having an efficient, integrated and innovative transport network that facilitates and encourages economic growth and supports business ;
- to maintain the transport infrastructure in a way that better attracts and allows people and goods to move safely and have reliable journey times;
- to make better use of the transportation network to get the best value from it that we can;

- to reduce the environmental impact of transport not only to tackle climate change but also to protect the environment and improve the quality of life;
- to improve accessibility in both rural and urban areas that will allow people better opportunities to access facilities, services and employment;
- to support communities by having transport which connects people and places and fosters better community cohesion; and
- to improve safety that will reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads and encourage the use of more sustainable forms of transport including public transport and cycling and walking.

This is an admirably comprehensive list of challenges.

The Workers Party intends to hold to account any government which fails to measure up to them.

- **According to the Department for Regional Development, the exact details of the operation of the Belfast Rapid Transit system have yet to be finalised and these will form the basis of further public awareness and consultation in the future, including the required statutory impact assessments. The Workers Party calls for this process to be rolled out as a matter of priority and we call for the development of a Rapid Transport system in Belfast within the lifetime of this Executive.**
- **The Workers Party is totally opposed to planned cuts in the number of Local Councils from 26 to 11 so-called "super districts". In democratic terms, there is no good reason to undermine local democracy in this way. As democrats we believe that this would represent a diminution of the power of people to have a say in local affairs.**



- As noted, Northern Ireland has the least protected environment in the UK and Ireland. Presiding over all this is an ineffective and complacent environmental watchdog - the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS), an agency of the Department of the Environment, which is not even allowed to object to planning applications in areas with inadequate sewage treatment. This muzzling would not be tolerated anywhere else in the UK. We are forced to rely on the European Commission to protect our environment. Along with Friends of the Earth and others, we call the implementation of an independent Environmental Protection Agency of the kind that exists everywhere else on these islands.
- We oppose the current A5 road plan and support the Alternative A5 Road and Rail Plan.
- We call for massive programme of house building by the NIHE to meet social need, with no housing stock transfers

Workers Party



The Workers Party is fielding four candidates in the Assembly Elections on May 5th

John Lavery
Belfast North

Paddy Lynn
Belfast South

Kevin McNally
Belfast East

John Lowry
Belfast West

The Party's election website is
www.workerspartyelection.wordpress.com

You can view the Party's election broadcast on
You Tube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7KpdUXGUdU>

