

## Editorial

‘Know your enemy’ has always been a useful adage for socialists. In that spirit this issue of Irish Marxist Review begins with an analysis by Kieran Allen of how the Irish ruling class has waged class war on the majority of people in this country and the effects this assault has had on their living standards and conditions of life.

Hopefully this analysis will assist in the process of generating the much needed other side of that class war namely, working class resistance. Their attacks are organised and coordinated; our fightback has to be the same.

In 1844 Marx argued that the relationship between men and women served a key indicator of humanity’s ‘whole level of development’. By this token the existence of large scale prostitution and the rise of the sex industry is a symptom of a deeply sexist and alienated society. But what should be done to tackle prostitution? Sinéad Kennedy offers a carefully argued critique of the widely supported idea that a useful and radical response to prostitution is to criminalise the buyers.

An important role in the ideological legitimisation of contemporary capitalism, including Irish capitalism, is played by its claim to offer formal ‘legal’ equality and equality of opportunity. Two articles address this claim from different angles. Tina McVeigh counters the myth that Ireland’s ‘meritocratic’ education system in any way leads in the direction of a genuinely equal society, and Dave O’Farrell, in his examination of the politics of evolution, provides a Marxist critique of the sociobiological and genetic determinist interpretations of Darwin.

Another crucial ideological weapon of the system – one that is especially dangerous in times of economic crisis – is racism. Ireland is fortunate in having no equivalent of Greece’s Golden Dawn, France’s Front

National or even Britain’s BNP and EDL but, as Sara O’Rourke shows in her article on ‘Racism in Ireland’, there are no grounds for complacency. Ireland is an institutionally racist society and opposition to racism in all its forms is central to socialism.

In Irish history sectarianism has been of particular significance in dividing the working class and, of course, the country – thus securing, as Connolly predicted a ‘carnival of reaction’ on both sides of the border. Many people hoped that ‘the peace process’ would lead to the overcoming of sectarianism but this was an illusion. In reality the sectarian division of the North was entrenched within the very terms of the peace settlement and the recession with its accompanying austerity, implemented with the cooperation of Sinn Fein, has seen a new rise in sectarian tensions. In this context John Lyons contributes an article on the significance of the Ulster Covenant of 1912.

It is a surprising fact that a generation before Marx, Ireland produced an important socialist theorist who was also a champion of women’s emancipation. Pat O’Sullivan introduces us to the work and ideas of the remarkable William Thompson.

Finally we have two extended book reviews. Fiona Boyd uses an account of three books on psychiatry and mental health to present a strong critique of the dominant bio-medical model of mental illness. John Molyneux gives a warm, if not uncritical, welcome to Donny Gluckstein’s new book about the Second World War while revisiting the issues that war raised for socialists.

Unfortunately printing costs force us to raise the price of IMR to €5. We hope it remains good value.

-John Molyneux