

2,222	1.710	1.720
2,217	0.314	0.316
2,100	1.180	1.190
2,179	0.332	0.338
10,000	0.460	0.47
10,000	7.120	7.5

The Cost of Living Crisis—Building the Fight Back

Eddie Conlon

The cost-of-living crisis is having a profound effect on working people, raising key questions about the operation of the free market and its ability to meet the needs of the majority in society.¹ Households are reeling from the huge increases in energy and food costs. In June 2022, the children’s charity Barnardos reported that families are having to make hard choices between eating, lighting, and heating, and that many were cutting back on food purchases: ‘70 percent of parents said that cost of living increases have negatively affected their children over the past six months.’² With energy prices rising, energy poverty is at all-time high, affecting 29 percent of households. If current trends in energy costs continue, this could rise to 43 percent, almost double its previously recorded high of 23 percent in 1994/95.³ Some projections suggest it could be as high as 70 percent.⁴ In general terms, it is estimated that many households will be €4000 worse off by the end of the year due to rising prices.⁵ Some will see their energy bills increase to €6000 per year from under €2000 in 2021.⁶

This cost-of-living crisis has coincided with a deepening housing crisis, which has seen homelessness surpass pre-Covid levels. In July, there were a record number of people homeless, 10,568, of which 3,137 were children.⁷ Rents in Ireland have risen more rapidly than in the rest of Europe. While the average increase across Europe was 15 percent between 2010 and 2019, it was 63 percent here, the third-highest increase.⁸ According to Social Justice Ireland, almost one-fifth (19 percent) of the population, 935,182 people, including nearly 300,000 children, is living below the poverty line when housing costs are factored in.⁹

High costs, low social wage

While the inflation crisis is having a devastating effect on households, it has added to a situation wherein prices in Ireland were already higher than in other European countries. Recent Eurostat data¹⁰ shows that Ireland, along with Denmark, has the highest price levels in the EU, 40 percent above the EU average. We have the third highest energy and food prices. Housing costs are 88 percent higher than the EU average. On average, renters are paying a third of their income on rent, but a quarter are paying over 40 percent.¹¹ These high rents are a direct effect of a failure to invest in social housing and an overreliance on the private rental sector and vulture funds to meet housing needs.

The value of the social wage for workers is lower than in many other EU countries, meaning that households in Ireland pay for health, education, childcare, and other vital services, which are generally free in other countries. Ireland has the lowest level of public spending per person when compared to similar EU countries; on average, we spend €14 billion less per annum. One reason for the gap is that the tax take is also relatively low. Most of the shortfall arises from low taxes on employers.¹²

Low levels of social spending mean that every time you go to a doctor or into hospital, you have to pay. While education is supposed to be free, parents have to pay for books, uniforms, school and transport and make so-called voluntary contributions to keep schools afloat. A recent survey from Barnardos found that ‘the basic cost of sending a child to school in 2022 remains substantial across primary and secondary: the average cost of the basics needed for a fourth class pupil is €424; a first year pupil is €814 and a fifth year pupil is €722.’ Unsurprisingly, over two-thirds of primary and three-quarters of secondary school parents were worried about meeting costs this year.¹³

College fees are the highest in the EU, and scandalously, some households are paying the equivalent of a second mortgage to cover childcare costs. Out-of-pocket childcare costs for the average working couple with two preschool children are 20 percent of their joint disposable income. Meanwhile the state spends 0.3 percent of GDP on childcare, when UNICEF recommends 1 percent.¹⁴

Profit restraint, not pay restraint

The origins of the current crisis were examined in the previous issue of the IMR.¹⁵ But it's worth reiterating the extent to which it's driven by profiteering and the impact of imperialist rivalries being played out in the Ukraine War, and how the elites in society can escape its effects, while those at the bottom are immiserated.

We know, for example, that inflation is hitting poorer households harder. Data from the CSO¹⁶ to June 2022 shows that inflation was 9 percent. But because they spend a higher proportion of their incomes on food, transport, and energy, those in households with the lowest incomes experienced higher annual inflation, up to 10.3 percent, as did those over 65, at 9.8 percent. These households are more likely to experience fuel poverty.¹⁷

It is worth noting, that while there has been much focus on energy costs, food inflation has been accelerating as the crisis and Ukraine War has gone on. So while food inflation was at 3 percent in the year to March, by August the annual increase was 8.8 percent. The annual increase for basics such as bread jumped from 8.3 percent to 14.9 percent, while for milk it went from 8.6 percent to a massive 22.6 percent. A report in August from Kantor, which monitors trends in retail, reported that food inflation was at a fourteen-year high and stated that 'everyday essentials such as butter, milk, flour, eggs and bread are seeing some of the biggest price rises. This rise means that the average annual shop could rise by a staggering €662 if consumers buy the same products as they did last year.'¹⁸ This is driving many households to seek help from charities such as St Vincent de Paul, which reports record levels of calls, with one in three coming from those facing food poverty,¹⁹ a stark illustration of how inflation and war sanctions are hurting those at the bottom.

While those at the bottom are forced to make real choices the capitalist class and their hangers-on face no such dilemma. The wealth and earnings of the wealthiest in society are rising dramatically.

The median pay packages of top CEOs rose by 42 percent to €2m in 2021.²⁰

Oxfam says the wealth of Ireland's nine billionaires has increased by a massive €15.55 billion since the start of the pandemic.²¹

A report on the pay of directors of Irish companies shows many of them recorded maximum bonus payments in

2021. The average non-executive director (basically a part-time 'job')

was paid €107,000 last year. The average for executive directors was close to €1 million.²²

Much of this increased wealth is based on greedy profiteering by corporations, which has contributed directly to rising inflation. Energy companies, in particular, have been increasing prices for households while reporting increased profits. Electric Ireland made an additional €63 million in 2021, with profits reaching €679 million. Bord Gáis operating profits grew 74 percent in the first half of 2022 to €39.4 million. Both companies announced numerous price increases throughout 2022. In September we learned that profits from the Corrib gas field tripled to €560 million for the first half of 2022,²³ while profits at the ESB for the same period also tripled from €390.3 million.²⁴

While this gross profiteering takes place, some want us to believe that wage restraint is necessary to stop a wage-price spiral. There is no evidence of any wage-price spiral here or anywhere else. Data from the CSO²⁵ shows that in the year to the end of June, weekly wages rose by 2.4 percent and hourly wages by 2.7 percent. Inflation was 9.1 percent in June. Therefore real wages are being cut on a massive scale not seen since the financial crash. And this in the context where the wage share in national income is collapsing. In 2019, the labour share for Ireland reached an all-time low of 30 percent, down from 49 percent in 2010, and it has continued to decline since 2019.²⁶ This reflects a longer-term trend of increasing profits. As the People Before Profit Budget 2023²⁷ shows, there has been a spectacular rise in corporate profits over the last decade, which have grown by 158 percent since 2012, with growth only halted in 2020 by the global pandemic. But with the surge in the corporate tax take in 2021 and 2022, it is clear that profits have increased again at an exceptional rate.

Finally, it can be noted that, despite the fact that there is no evidence that inflation is being caused by excess demand, the ECB, in line with monetarist orthodoxy, has proceeded to increase interest rates twice this year by 1.25 percent. For a mortgage of €250,000—which is the average mortgage in Ireland—that means an extra €1,680 a year.²⁸ Ireland's mortgage rates are the second-highest in the Eurozone after Greece. The weighted average interest rate on new Irish mortgages was 2.77 percent, compared to the Eurozone average of 1.59 percent.²⁹ Increasing rates will put further financial pressure on struggling

households without solving the problems that are actually causing inflation in the first place. The effect is ‘more likely to cause stagnation in investment and consumption, thus provoking a slump.’³⁰

The Cost of Living Coalition

The reason for surveying this terrain is to make the simple point that building a campaign around the cost of living is not simple. The crisis raises very immediate issues for people across a number of fronts, but also a more fundamental issue about relying on a profit-driven system based on markets to meet fundamental needs. Further, given the centrality of energy costs to the current crisis, it provides a real opportunity to argue for effective climate action to reduce energy use and reliance on fossil fuels and thus reduce both costs for households and emissions.

While there have been many references to the water charges campaign as a point of comparison for what we are trying to do in the Cost-of-Living Coalition (COLC), the comparison fails when we examine the range of issues facing cost-of-living campaigners and those who were opposed to water charges. The question of water charges was a relatively simple question of whether people were for or against water charges. There were significant differences around the tactic of non-payment, but clear agreement that the objective was to stop water charges. The COLC throws up a wider range of issues, especially when the objective is to unite workers, the unemployed, single parents, pensioners, students, and climate campaigners in a single campaign to protect incomes, control prices, and reduce energy use.

The COLC grew out of discussions within People Before Profit and between our TDs and a number of pensioner groups and student organisers. The work that Brid Smith had done on a bill to give pensioners access to the state’s industrial relations machinery provided an important platform to reach out to pensioner groups, such as the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament and retired worker groups such as the ESB Retired Staff Association. Because these groups were on board, Sinn Féin agreed to participate and attend the first meeting in April 2022, as did important campaigning groups such as SPARK (Single Parents Acting for the Rights of Kids), the National Homeless and Housing Coalition, the Union of Students in Ireland, and trade union activists associated with UNITE and the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

This breadth has been the strength of the coalition, which has expanded to over thirty groups ranging from the socialist left through the Communist Party and Right to Change to the Social Democrats and a significant number of groups campaigning on disability, including Enable Ireland, and on issues such as MICA, climate change (Extinction Rebellion), post-graduate students’ rights, and racism and the rights of asylum seekers (MASI). While the left of the trade union movement is supporting the coalition, including the Trade Union Left Forum, no union has yet affiliated, but the ICTU has supported the demonstrations called by COLC. Others, such as the Community Action Tenants Unions (CATU) and Friends of the Earth, have not affiliated but have also supported the demonstration on September 24th, which was the largest demonstration Dublin has seen for some considerable time, with real estimates of between 15,000 and 20,000 attending. By any measure, and following a long period of inactivity due to Covid, this must be considered a success and arguably put pressure on the government to increase spending on one-off measures in the recent budget.

A united front?

It can reasonably be argued that PBP have been at the core of COLC and done much of the heavy lifting to make it work. Through exercising a genuine commitment to building a united front and not insisting that its demands be adopted by all in the coalition, it has created a space to allow many groups to cooperate and to build opportunities for the public to mobilise and convey their anger to the government about the cost-of-living crisis.

The essence of the united front tactic for radical and revolutionary left parties is that it provides a mechanism to reach to layers of people beyond its membership and supporters and to reach an audience imbued with reformist ideas or delusions about capitalism.³¹ The success of the tactic ‘lies in the ability of the organisers to work with people or groups who agree on a single issue or range of issue while maintaining independence on other issues.’³²

It allows the socialist left to engage with and mobilise alongside those supporters of political projects led by reformist parties with the hope of winning them over to a project of radical change, in an atmosphere of mobilisation rather than of isolation. Through working in united fronts with reformists, we can demonstrate the superiority of revolutionary politics over reformism both by our actions and commitments but also our political

ideas. Rather than arguing abstractly with the supporters of reformism, the united front offers the ability to educate workers through joint struggle.

To use the tactic effectively requires, on the one hand, a non-sectarian approach to those who command support in the working class, such as Sinn Féin and trade union leaders, while at the same time maintaining a political independence which allows the left to put forward its own programme and solutions to the issues facing the working class. Additionally, the tactic allows us to demonstrate the importance of people power and of action on the streets; ‘Through extra-parliamentary action, workers would see this...activity as a sign of their own power to make a difference, compared to the passivity of waiting for parliamentary resolutions.’³³ It requires more than just a focus on the demands of the movement: ‘More important is that the demands themselves are implemented through the direct action of the workforce.’³⁴

Finally, the adoption of the united-front tactic is a useful foil to all those who argue that the left is inevitably divided and that the radical left is incapable of uniting with other others to fight for real gains in the here and now.

Demands

So, in pulling the coalition together the emphasis has been on creating a mechanism to allow a wide range of groups to unite behind a call for mobilisation. Considerable flexibility has been demonstrated in pulling the COLC together. While early meetings were dominated by discussions of demands, with the inevitable production of a laundry list, flexibility has been demonstrated by not insisting that all groups sign up for every demand. As the letter inviting affiliations says:

There are a broad range of groups in the Coalition, with different emphasis in terms of specific demands, but broadly we are calling for action to control energy and housing costs; inflation-proof incomes and introduce a Living Wage; remove charges for vital public services such as health, education and childcare; and to share the wealth of this country and stop profiteering. While there is diversity in which demands different groups in the Coalition emphasise, we strongly agree that the public must be provided with an opportunity to send a message to the government that urgent action is needed now.

While this might demonstrate a certain vagueness in the approach of the coalition, it did allow groups to join who did not agree with every demand, such as the Social Democrats, who do not agree with scrapping the carbon tax. There is agreement that the coalition should fight to:

1. *control energy costs*, including price controls on energy and an immediate insulation programme to reduce energy use;
2. *protect incomes* for workers, pensioners, students, and those reliant on social welfare such as single parents and disabled people (the demand for additional payment for those with a disability, given the extra costs of being disabled, has meant that a bloc of groups campaigning on disability has played an important role in the COLC);³⁵
3. *make housing affordable* by controlling rents and banning evictions;
4. *invest in public services* by making childcare, education, health, and public transport free; and
5. *share the wealth* by placing a windfall tax on the profits of energy companies and increasing the taxes on corporation profits and the super wealthy.

What seems significant in the above is the inclusion of demands in relation to housing and climate action, which broadened the scope of the COLC, but also demands on taxing the rich, which, while argued for by the socialist left, were not resisted. They have allowed the COLC to point to resources which could allow the demands of the campaign to be funded.

Challenges

While COLC has been relatively successful so far, it faces two key challenges.

The first is in the unions. In his recent article,³⁶ Kieran Allen points out that, historically, inflation has been fought on the streets and in the workplaces through strike action. Unfortunately, we have seen little of the latter in the South. No Mick Lynch or Sharon Graham has emerged to capture the popular imagination and legitimate the right of workers to strike for wage increases that match inflation. Despite the inflation crisis and tight labour markets, there has been no significant dispute over wages in the South. Up to June 2022, there have been just three strikes.³⁷ There has been no significant increase in recent years, despite the extent of the cost-of-living crisis and weekly wages rising by just 2.4 percent in the year to

June 2022. Hourly earnings in the accommodation and food sector went down by 3.6 percent.³⁸

The union leadership remains addicted to social partnership, and despite the willingness of workers to support unions, there has been no major campaign to recruit workers or expand collective bargaining rights. A recent study³⁹ showed that four out of ten of those not in a union would be willing to vote to join. But it also showed that membership among sixteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds is 14 percent, and that coverage of collective bargaining had fallen to 43 percent in 2021 from 48 percent in 2009. OECD data shows it is as low as 34 percent.⁴⁰ Union membership is now 25 percent, but is much lower in parts of the private sector such as retail (11 percent) and accommodation and food (3 percent), where earnings are far below average earnings and where workers need substantial pay increases.⁴¹

Union leaders negotiated and promoted a public services pay deal that offers 6.5 percent over two years; way less than inflation and not much better than the 5 percent deal offered by the government in June, which the unions rightly rejected. While many shapes were thrown in the intervening period and it was agreed to ballot members for industrial action, the unions balked at the prospect of a fight with the government. In agreeing to put the 6.5 percent to ballot, they said they expected the budget to deliver for union members because, as Kevin Callinan, general secretary of Forasa admitted in a letter to members, ‘In the absence of other measures to improve the social wage in the form of better services and financial supports, the proposed pay increase would constitute a reduction in the value of wages in real terms.’ This did not stop him pushing this awful deal, and many unions asked members to vote before the budget, which was deemed by ICTU to have cut the living standards of many workers and those reliant on social welfare.⁴² There was no significant boost to the social wage.⁴³

Given their attachment to social partnership, it’s not surprising that ICTU has had a somewhat lukewarm approach to the COLC. It is not committed to an active fight against falling living standards and remains suspicious of the radical left. While it did actively promote the march of June 18th, it did not actively promote the march on September 24th, although individual unions did. The COLC now needs to focus on getting individual unions and branches to affiliate in order to build trade union support. The fact that large number of workers voted for the deal is not surprising given the weakness of the left in the unions and that it involved a

back payment to February that would give many workers vital cash in back pay that they need. Also, it was clear to workers that even if they rejected it, the unions were not going to fight. But no sooner had the pay deal been agreed than it became clear that all estimates for inflation next year had risen. The demand for pay increases to match inflation remains, and the argument needs to be taken up in the COLC that strike action to demand inflation-matching pay increases is required.

The other challenge is building the COLC on the ground. The COLC has been built as an effective united front from above. It’s essentially an alliance of organisations and groups representing a range of groups representing the exploited and oppressed across society. But if it’s going to match the water charges campaign, it has to sink deep roots in the communities and build groups in local areas open to those who are not members of affiliated organisations. To date, that has not proven easy, and local attendance at activities has been uneven. While PBP has a commitment to building a united front on the ground, others need to embrace this commitment and grow the local protests on November 12th so that they can be used to build local activist groups in every area as a basis for developing the COLC as a significant social movement across the country. The potential to do so will increase as the winter progresses and as the effect of the one-off payments provided in the budget wear off. The fantastic walkout in colleges on October 14th must also be built on to develop the campaign amongst students.

A left government?

The rise of the COLC and the centrality of PBP and Sinn Féin in it has posed the question of whether it is some precursor to a left government. The question is being posed by journalists when they see Mary Lou McDonald and Richard Boyd Barrett standing side-by-side and calling on the public to get in the streets. Given the passivity of the unions and the weakness of the left within them, it’s likely that the Irish working class will express their anger with a riot at the ballot box in the next election. Recent opinion polls show Sinn Féin sustaining their high ratings, but they also show that PBP have passed out Labour, the Social Democrats, and the Greens.⁴⁴ PBP have gained from leading the fightback on the cost of living, but also from being associated with the mood for change in the country, which is currently expressed in support for Sinn Féin. The danger, of course, is that in being too closely associated with Sinn Féin, the public may not understand the need to put PBP’s fighting

left-wingers into the next Dáil who can give real expression to the demand for change and keep pressure on Sinn Féin to deliver what people need.

While the commitment to work with others to mobilise the largest numbers is at the heart of the united-front tactic, to make gains from this strategy requires that the socialist left maintain a strong left profile within the united front to distinguish it from other forces. This not always easy. As Bois comments on the use of this tactic by the German Communist Party in the 1920s, ‘The art of being neither too close to the SPD [Social Democratic Party] nor too isolated was the greatest challenge to the application of the politics of the United Front.’⁴⁵

So while we need to promote the fightback by being the best builders of a real united front which has significant social weight, we also need to argue that socialist solutions are needed to the cost-of-living crisis; socialist solutions that Sinn Féin have shied away from as they make themselves ready for government, court the corporate establishment, leave open the option of government with Fianna Fáil.⁴⁶

There are three key things socialists should argue for in the current crisis: First, the end of the reign of the market in energy and in health, education, and childcare. Currently, the demand to take the energy system into public ownership is the only solution that makes any real sense in a context where people are calling for price controls. Some are arguing that imposing price controls in the current energy market requires the state to subsidise highly profitable energy companies who have made vast profits from rising prices. Sinn Féin say in their budget that ‘under our proposal the state would compensate electricity suppliers for the difference between summer 2021 rates and the wholesale price that the suppliers themselves must pay to electricity generators.’ They oppose the nationalisation of the energy system.

Price controls combined with nationalisation of the energy sector are a better option than continually subsidising private companies. This will give us control over energy prices and supply, while the current approach means pouring money into companies who just keep raising prices. In the first instance, the for-profit mandate of the ESB needs to be changed. They should revert to being a not-for-profit state company. This will incur no costs. The reality is that the energy market is not working. Already four suppliers have left the market, with customers reverting to the ESB (Electric Ireland). If price controls were imposed on the providers, they would also

desert the market, leaving the ESB to absorb their activity at no cost. A state controlled and planned energy system would also allow us to better plan for a future based on renewables.⁴⁷

Secondly, we need to demand substantial increases in pensions and benefits and a living wage of €15 an hour to take households out of poverty. The PBP Budget 2023⁴⁸ shows that, for too long, welfare payments in Ireland have been too low and below the minimum-required disposable income to avoid poverty, which in 2021 was €286 per week for a single person. In 2021, the poverty rate was 11.6 percent, compared with 13.2 percent in 2020. But without Covid-19 income supports, it would have been 19.9 percent. This illustrates the important role that the €350 PUP payment played in reducing poverty and providing people with an adequate income.

In order to immediately move people above the poverty line, PBP propose that all basic social welfare and benefit payments be increased to €300 this year, with the aim of moving them to €350 in budget 2024. Disabled people have faced a cost-of-living crisis for decades. Disabled people’s poverty rates are three to five times the national average. PBP therefore support a fifty-euro cost-of-disability payment for every disabled person. The cost of these measures would be €5.8 billion. But a wealth tax, as proposed by PBP, would raise €5.9 billion. These radical measures, which unfortunately Sinn Féin do not support, would have a huge impact on the cost-of-living crisis facing poorer households.

Finally, the left also needs to clearly link the current crisis to the war and the manner in which it and the sanctions against Russia are hurting working people not just through rising energy costs but also food costs, given the central role of Ukraine and Russia in global food production.⁴⁹ While the UN index of global food prices hit an all-time high in February 2022, rising by 24 percent and reflecting problems across the global food system, this was surpassed in March following the outbreak of the war. Food prices were 34 percent higher than in March 2021. While the Index has fallen in recent months, it remains elevated, with risks associated with the war expected to push it up in coming months. A recent UN Food and agriculture Organisation report points out that ‘in Ukraine between 20 and 30 percent of the areas where winter crops are sown are likely to remain unharvested during the 2022/23 season,’ while in Russia, sanctions ‘could disrupt its imports of agricultural inputs it is highly dependent on, especially pesticides and seeds. This could result in less planting, lower yields and lower qualities of

crops in the future.⁵⁰ This means not only continued high prices for us but also devastation for the additional nineteen million people who face undernourishment as a direct result of the war.⁵¹ The demand for the ending of sanctions, and an end to the war, must be given greater prominence.

Conclusions

The COLC has been a success to date. It has managed to pull together a coalition that has allowed the public to ventilate its anger at a government that has failed to address the cost-of-living crisis, or the housing crisis, or the crisis in health, which will have deadly effects over the winter. With the prospects of a recession hanging over us,⁵² the effects will be devastating for working people.

While the achievements of the COLC should not be overstated, it provides the basis for building a fightback and a significant social movement aimed at forcing the radical measures we need to address the cost-of-living crisis. It also raises the prospect of a movement emerging that could see the end of the rule of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. The radical left, and People Before Profit in particular, while continuing to build the COLC, needs to raise the wider questions about the sources of the current crisis and the socialist solutions needed to address them. It also needs to ensure that the prospect of a left government is kept on the agenda, keep the pressure on Sinn Féin to rule out coalition with the right, and deliver on the radical changes needed to really transform Irish society.

¹ This section builds on my introduction to People Before Profits Budget 2023: Cost of Living and Housing Emergency: A Radical Budget for System Change. <https://www.pbp.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FINAL-BUDGET-23.pdf>

² See <https://www.barnardos.ie/policy/the-issues/cost-of-living-2022>

³ <https://www.esri.ie/news/energy-poverty-at-highest-recorded-rate>

⁴ Irish Times August 24, 2022.

⁵ Irish Times August 26, 2022.

⁶ <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-40952831.html>

⁷ <https://www.thejournal.ie/record-homelessness-emergency-accommodation-5850318-Aug2022/>

⁸ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/ddn-20210708-2>

⁹ <https://www.socialjustice.ie/publication/housing-costs-and-poverty-2022>

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Comparative_price_levels_of_consumer_goods_and_services and <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/wdn-20220623-1>

¹¹ ICTU (2022) *The Social Wage*, Dublin.

¹² ICTU (2022).

¹³ <https://www.barnardos.ie/media/15931/barnardos-back-to-school-survey-2022.pdf>

¹⁴ SIPTU (2021) *New Deal for Early Years*, Dublin.

¹⁵ Kieran Allen (2022). The Politics of Inflation. *Irish Marxist Review* Vol 11 Issue 33

¹⁶ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/frm/frp-eihc/estimatedinflationbyhouseholdcharacteristicsjune2022/>

¹⁷ <https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/RS144.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.kantar.com/uki/inspiration/fmcg/2022-wp-grocery-inflation-in-ireland-hits-highest-level-in-14-years>

¹⁹ Irish Times August 23 2022.

²⁰ Irish Times July 29 2022.

²¹ See <https://www.rte.ie/news/business/2022/0522/1300533-irish-billionaires-wealth-up-16bn-during-the-pandemic/#:~:text=Irish%20billionaires'%20wealth%20rose%20%E2%82%AC16bn%20during%20the%20pandemic&text=The%20wealth%20of%20Ireland's%20nine%20individuals%20to%20%E2%82%AC51%20billion>

²² Irish Times June 3, 2022.

²³ Irish Times September 16, 2022.

²⁴ Irish Times September 17, 2022.

²⁵ <https://www.cso.ie/en/statistics/earnings/earningsandlabourcosts/>

²⁶ See <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/ppii/productivityinireland2020/chapter4gvaandthelabourshare/> and <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/ppii/productivityinireland2019/chapter4gvaandthelabourshare/>

²⁷ See <https://www.pbp.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FINAL-BUDGET-23.pdf>

²⁸ Irish Times September 9, 2022: <https://www.thejournal.ie/ech-raises-inflation-5822504-Jul2022/>

²⁹ Irish Examiner June 8, 2022.

³⁰ Michael Roberts (2022). Inflation: Wages versus profits. <https://braveneweuropa.com/michael-roberts-inflation-wages-versus-profits>

³¹ See Daryll Horan (2021). The Comintern and the United Front, *Irish Marxist Review* 2021 Vol 10 Issue 31, and Marcel Bois (2017). The KPD and the United Front During the Weimar Republic. Available at <https://www.rs21.org.uk/2017/05/19/revolutionary-reflections-the-kpd-and-the-united-front-during-the-weimar-republic>

³² Horan (2021) p.86.

³³ Bois (2017).

³⁴ This quote is from Ernst Meyer, chair of the German KPD in 1921. Quoted in Bois (2017)

³⁵ In December 2021, the government published a report on the extra costs of having a disability. For people with intellectual disabilities, the extra costs (on top of regular living costs) range between €9000 and €13,000 per year.

³⁶ See Allen (2022)

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<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/id/industrialdisputesquarter22022/>

³⁸ <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-elcq/earningsandlabourcostsq12022finalq22022preliminaryestimates/>

³⁹ John Geary and Maris Belizon (2021). *Union Voice in Ireland*. <https://www.smurfitschool.ie/t4media/7791%20NERI%20UCD%20Union%20Voice.pdf>

⁴⁰ See note 38.

⁴¹ Union membership data was provided to me by the CSO. Thanks to Martina O Callaghan. For earnings data see note 38.

⁴² <https://ictu.ie/news/budget-fails-low-paid-and-low-income-households-face-highest-inflation-1984>

⁴³ For the PBP analysis of the Budget see <https://www.pbp.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Budget-2023-Briefing-People-Before-Profit.pdf>

⁴⁴ see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Next_Irish_general_election for all polls since the last election.

⁴⁵ Bois (2017).

⁴⁶ Pat Leahy, “Sinn Féin still has plenty of work to do in order to take power”, *Irish Times*, 8 October, 2022.

⁴⁷ See Patrick Bresnihan and Sinéad Mercier (2022) “Time to look to our own history for inspiration on national energy security” *Irish Examiner* September 5, 2022:

<https://www.irishexaminer.com/opinion/commentanalysis/arid-40953707.html>

⁴⁸ See note 1.

⁴⁹ See *The Importance Of Ukraine And The Russian Federation For Global Agricultural Markets And The Risks Associated With The War In Ukraine*, UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, 20 June 2022. <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9013en/cb9013en.pdf>

⁵⁰ See note 49, p.2.

⁵¹ See note 49, p.3.

⁵²

<https://notesonthefront.typepad.com/politiceconomy/2022/09/recession-hangs-over-budget-2023.html>