

The Workers Party



socialist, secular, anti-sectarian

The Workers' Party

submission to

The Review of Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations

as conducted by

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Introduction

The Workers' Party welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Review of Ireland's Foreign Policy and External Relations.

Foreign Policy and External Relations cannot be separated from all the other policy areas and decisions of government. The values and priorities which a government applies to the governance of this state will, inevitably, be reflected in how we treat and interact with other people, other governments, and different organisations.

The Workers' Party, as a socialist party, has a clear internationalist perspective which promotes international solidarity and opposes capitalism, imperialism, exploitation, and national chauvinism.

Issues for Consultation

The Workers' Party takes serious issue with the underlying attitudes and assumptions contained in the section Issues for Consultation (pp. 3-4) of the public consultation document.

We do not accept that "Ireland's foreign and security policy ... [is] providing the means to ensure our stability and security and contribute to our economic prosperity and well-being". This statement, in our view, is too narrow, too negative, too utilitarian and too anti-people to be an acceptable definition. Foreign policy may well achieve, or strive to achieve, all of these things but it cannot be the fundamental premise of our interaction with the rest of the world.

Ireland's foreign policy must be based on a vision of a common humanity, equality, global solidarity, international trade for the common good, peaceful relations between states and peaceful resolution of disputes between or within states, and positive neutrality. If these values do not underpin our objective then our foreign policy and external relations descend to unprincipled and Machiavellian pragmatism.

The Workers' Party supports effective multilateralism based on the United Nations and applauds all attempts to promote human rights; to advance disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament; to ensure that hunger and poverty are eliminated worldwide. However we do not share the consultation document's rose-tinted view of Ireland's commitment to these values and we will return to this in a later section of our submission.

The Workers' Party welcomes the economic growth of many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, the Workers' Party recognises that this growth takes place within the context of an economic system which is inherently unequal, exploitative, wasteful and fundamentally undemocratic and where millions are condemned to a life of poverty, drudgery and despair. The deteriorating circumstances of working people across the globe arise and escalate in the conditions of the on-going capitalist crisis of over production and over accumulation. We believe that Ireland should recognise this global reality.

The Workers' Party believes that the statement within the consultation document that global rules-based bodies like the UN or the World Trade Organisation are being complemented by the development of groups like the G8 and the G20 to be either unbelievably naïve or deliberately misleading. It is quite clear that exclusive grouping of states like the G8, the G20 or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development as well as exclusive invitation-based organisations like the Davos conference, the Trilateral Commission, or the Bilderberg group do



not complement but seriously contest, and even seek to discredit, marginalise, and undermine international rules-based bodies in general and the UN in particular.

The very narrow world view of the consultation is particularly encapsulated in this section:

*“In addition to these changes, a global economy driven by the accelerating pace of technological advances; **security threats posed by non-state actors operating across borders**; and the emergence of individuals and networks of citizens as global actors are also factors driving change.”*

(p.4, emphasis added)

Undoubtedly there are some international terrorist groups operating at this time. However, world history, and specifically history in this millennium, has very clearly shown that the greatest security threat to the world, and the greatest threat to world peace, has been presented by imperialism, by the actions of monopolies, by state actors and networks of states. In particular the USA, either acting alone or in consort with NATO, the EU, the UK, France, Israel or Saudi Arabia has been to the forefront in fomenting and fanning the flames of war and human destruction from Afghanistan to Syria; from Iraq to Libya; from Iran to Mali.

Lastly, under the section Issues for Consultation in the DFAT document, we draw attention to the paragraph:

“While many of today’s challenges, including hunger, population growth, climate change, emerging diseases and migration, have particular negative impacts in impoverished societies, they also impact more developed countries, including Ireland. The international community has a responsibility to respond effectively to these global threats.”

(p.4)

In the space of two sentences challenges have become threats. We accept that climate change, hunger, and emerging diseases may present threats but these threats are hardly new. In particular, as we in Ireland know only too well, hunger is etched in folk memory since the mid-1840s and “new” diseases are a constant feature of medical and societal development. However we fail to see why migration and population growth are assumed to pose “a global threat”. The developed capitalist economies survive because of, not despite, mass migration. The south to north brain drain, as well as the cynical use of migrant workers as a source of cheap and often unregulated labour has greatly added to the profits of the largest corporations and the further impoverishment of poor and developing states. The challenge and the task of Ireland’s foreign policy must be to equalise global economic relations so that enforced migration is ended.



The European Union

Ireland's relationship with the European Union has been buried in myths. These include the myth that it was the EU which brought about equality, that Ireland's economy was miraculously improved by joining the EU and that, accordingly, voicing opposition is selfish. As these myths have been unquestioningly repeated they have obscured the reality of the lack of democracy at the centre of the EU.

The EU is an unequal union. It has championed deregulation, privatisation, and the steady erosion of workers' rights. Faced with rising unemployment, poverty, and housing problems the EU instead bailed out bankers and instigated austerity measures against working people. The number of unemployed in the EU is 30 million, under-employment and poverty are constantly expanding, the future of the youth is being undermined. Its inherent inequality is also apparent in the enlargement programme which has created two tiers of membership. The Workers' Party supports the struggle of the peoples from the member-states of Eastern Europe, who are subject to the painful consequences of their countries' accession to the EU.

The European Union is attempting to overcome the crisis at the expense of the peoples of Europe and beyond. The EU acts in the interests of the monopolies and is strengthening its characteristics as an imperialist economic, political and military bloc opposed to the interests of the working class and peoples' struggles. The European Union is the European imperialist centre, which, in common with the US and NATO, supports aggression, increased militarisation, intervention and war. For example, the EU "Common Security and Defence Policy" is a dangerous instrument for war and intervention in the services of imperialism.

The Workers' Party highlights growing unemployment; the anti-people measures being imposed by the governments and the European Union for the reduction of salaries and pensions; the abolition of labour and social-security rights; the commercialisation of health, education, welfare; the destruction of the environment and the abolition of democratic rights and freedoms.

The regressive and anti-people nature of the EU has also been visible in the role it plays in organisations such as the WTO. The WTO has been involved in expanding neo-liberal policies as the norm across the world. It solidifies a vastly unequal global relationship whereby developing nations are opened up to exploitation and locked out of their own profits.

It is in the EU's trade relationship with Israel that any supposed commitment to human rights can be shown to be a lie. The EU engages in a biased relationship whereby Israel's failures to fulfil its obligations under various agreements are repeatedly ignored. In these agreements (including the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, etc.) there was an undertaking by Israel to behave according to international norms, to act in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to respect territorial integrity. Through the construction of illegal settlements, the continued siege of Gaza, building an Apartheid Wall around the West Bank, the possession of nuclear weapons, and discrimination against Palestinians, Israel has clearly breached its obligations and yet the EU continues its preferential treatment of Israel. By developing ever closer connections with Israel the EU has assisted in the further militarisation of the Israeli state, strengthened Israeli intransigence and has permitted the continued violence and repression against the Palestinian people.

Ireland's EU membership, with its concomitant support for the process of strengthening EU militarisation, also ignores the vast support for neutrality held by the Irish people. Ireland is party to the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy. This flies in the face of any supposed commitment to neutrality as it ties Ireland to both



NATO and the EU Battlegroups, controlled by a central group of ex-colonial powers driving forth their own neo-colonial and imperialist control of the developing world. This makes a mockery of the Triple Lock guarantee. It is also important to stress that NATO and the EU Battlegroups do not take part in humanitarian aid, and indeed are neither suitable nor appropriate for humanitarian missions. The Workers' Party is for peace, for the removal of all the US-NATO military bases, against NATO, against the "Partnership for Peace" and the Euro-army, against participation in wars and intervention.

The Workers' Party is also very concerned about the attitude within the European Union towards global migration. It is unsurprising that the global economic crisis has seen a rise in anti-immigration, fascist and neo-Nazi politics and forces in Europe when the institutions of the EU promote the concept of "Fortress Europe" (propped up on ideas of superiority and isolation); the Dublin system of returning migrants to their country of entry; and detention of migrants in camps. The EU has shown itself unwelcoming. The obvious dichotomy between armed land and naval patrols on the borders of the EU to prevent poor, and often trafficked, people entering the EU and the active luring and incentivising of educated and skilled migrants from the very same countries is obvious to all. The appalling deaths at Lampedusa and Farmakonisi and the increasing discrimination and repression against immigrants and refugees who have been uprooted due to poverty, due to reactionary regimes and imperialist wars, must be highlighted and condemned. The waves of immigrants and refugees who suffer from hunger, destitution and persecution will continue and increase as long as the causes remain.

The EU, in both its policies and actions as guided by the Nice and Lisbon Treaties as well as the Lisbon strategy, regards the poorer and developing countries not as equals but merely as a source of cheap natural resources, a safe haven for the dirtiest and most dangerous elements of primary manufacture, and out of sight dumping ground for all manner of industrial and electrical detritus, a reservoir of cheap labour and an unequal trading partner. Ireland has never opposed this neo-liberal and neo-colonial view within the EU but we believe that, even now, it is both timely and possible for Ireland to oppose the oppressive relationship of the EU to the developing world.

Recommendations

1. End the austerity and anti-people measures being implemented by the EU.
2. Oppose the use of WTO treaties and agreements as a means of entrenching capitalist domination of the developing and emerging economies.
3. Ban trade with entities in illegal Israeli settlements in Palestine and with companies complicit with activities in these settlements. Refuse tenders for government schemes that come from any company (Israeli or multinational) involved in aiding the occupation and/or violations of Palestinian human rights and international law. Support full enforcement of the EU Guidelines on banning funding to Israeli entities that operate in the occupied Palestinian territories and the application of such guidelines by the Irish state.
4. Support an EU arms embargo on Israel. Support the suspension of Israel from the Euro-Med agreement and oppose any further treaties, cooperation or upgrades in EU relations with Israel.
5. Oppose the ongoing militarisation of the European Union, including increased military spending and Ireland's involvement in NATO or EU Battlegroups.
6. Oppose the racist and discriminatory policies which are leading to the creation and strengthening of a "Fortress Europe" mentality.



The Global Context and the UN

Ireland has been a member of the United Nations since the 1950s. This commitment to the concept of a global organisation of states was not new as we had, even as a fledgling and indeed impoverished state, been a member of the earlier League of Nations. In so far as the UN impinges on public consciousness it is very largely through the participations of Irish troops in UN peacekeeping missions over 50 years ranging from the Congo to the present mission in Lebanon.

The United Nations is one of the most unique organisations in the world. Its membership extends across all continents and ranges from the largest and most powerful states in the world to the smallest, least populated and poorest states. While every state can have a voice at the UN there is a fundamental lack of democracy at the heart of the organisation. The General Assembly, in which each state participates and has an equal voice, is not the supreme governing body of the organisation. Instead the supreme power within the organisation is held by the much smaller Security Council and within that body the ultimate power resides in the veto-holding Permanent Five.

The Irish state must be to the fore in promoting democracy within the UN. Democracy will not arise from tinkering at the edges or from co-opting states like Germany, India or Brazil into an enlarged veto-holding P8 or even a P12. Democracy within the UN can only arise with the abolition of the veto-holding powers of the P5 and the transformation of the General Assembly into the democratic centre of the UN.

One of the more shameful episodes in relation to the UN over many decades has been the concerted attacks on the internal operations of the UN and UN agencies and the sustained attempts, largely by the USA, to unduly influence and pressurise the decision making of the organisation by the deliberate withholding of funds from the UN. This type of blatant international blackmail must never be allowed to happen again in the future and Ireland should make positive proposals to ensure the adequate and sustained funding for the UN.

As part of strengthening and securing the UN into the future Ireland must seek to ensure the ongoing safety and security of UN personnel and buildings. In the first instance, therefore, Ireland should propose a binding international protocol amongst all UN member states guaranteeing that UN positions and UN agency positions are filled on a merit basis free from bias or political pressure; that all UN staff are free from espionage by state or state-contracted agencies; and that all UN buildings are off-limits for the espionage services of states.

The issue of peacekeeping is central to the existence of the UN. As stated earlier Ireland can be proud of the role it has often played in UN peace keeping missions in different parts of the world. However, what is often very little appreciated by the public is that the role played by the UN in conflict zones over the last 20 years or so is much different from the bulk of the missions prior to 1990. In the first 40 years of its existence, 11 of the 12 missions undertaken by the UN were established under Chapter VI "Pacific Settlement of Disputes" procedure. Peacekeeping at the time was defined by the UN Under Secretary for Peace Keeping operations, Murrill Goulding as:

"United Nations field operations in which international personnel, civilian and/ or military, are deployed with the consent of the parties and under UN command to help control or resolve actual or potential international conflicts or internal conflicts which have a clear international dimension."



Note here the key concepts of consent and UN command.

Because of the failure of the UN to implement either Article 43 or 47 of its own charter, the operation of UN peace keeping missions was much different from that envisaged in the Charter and the Secretary General had a key role to play in assembling peace missions. *“The view was taken that there should be no a priori requirements – save that the big powers should not be involved – and that the Secretary General was best placed to decide which nations were best suited to contribute”* and that the designated Commanding Officer was seconded to the secretariat of the UN and thus answerable to the Secretary General and thereby to the whole UN.

We believe that most Irish people believe that this is how the UN still operates and that therefore they have an automatic respect for any UN mission. Sadly this is not how they operate any longer and this change has a profound effect on Ireland’s relationship with the UN.

The major changes actually date back over 20 years and are contained in 12 motions within the block of motions SC Res 660- SC Res 678. In brief, the key set of words is Section II of Sec Res 678 (29 November 1990): *“Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter,*

II. [The Security Council] Authorises member states cooperating with the government of Kuwait, unless Iraq on or before 15 January 1991 fully implements as set forth in para 1 aboveto use all necessary force to uphold and implement Res 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area”.

As one of only two Security Council countries opposing the resolution, Yemen characterised Res 678 as allowing *“persons unknown to use means unspecified to achieve goals unstated”*. Yemen could also have stated that there was a timescale unlimited, a budget outside UN control and that to conclude operations under Res 678 needed great power unanimity.

It is the very clear view of the Workers’ Party that Ireland should neither support nor participate in Chapter VII operations but should maintain our traditional commitment to participation in Chapter VI operations.

In our opening remarks we referred to the attempts to diminish and sideline the UN as an effective world body by such organisations as the G8 and the G20. However, a much earlier attack on the UN via the Breton Woods agreement has, sadly, been largely successful. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank are creatures of Breton Woods. The people of Ireland, along with the peoples of Greece, Portugal and very many African, Asian and Latin American countries are only too well aware of the regressive and brutally anti-people policies of these two organisations. These organisations, along with the WTO, all of whom are controlled on a share basis, were established and promoted by the major Western powers in direct opposition to pre-existing UN agencies, namely UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation). In order to promote fair and democratic economic relations worldwide, Ireland must insist on a limit to the power of the IMF, World Bank, WTO and a revitalisation of UNCTAD, UNDP and UNIDO.

As an independent and sovereign state Ireland must maintain an independent foreign policy based on the views and aspirations of the Irish people rather than on some contrived EU consensus. For example, Ireland is not a member of nuclear-armed military alliance of NATO and as recently as last September, in a poll conducted by the RedC company, the vast majority of the Irish people declared themselves in favour of continued Irish neutrality. The Irish



government can therefore speak with authority within the UN in opposing war, invasion or occupation and in defending peoples and countries threatened by interventions and war or the threat of same. Accordingly, Ireland, at the various UN fora, must, in particular, defend the right of the Palestinian people to an independent state within the territory as defined in the 1948 UN resolution; the right of the Cuban people to decide their own destiny and form of government free from the US economic blockade and free from US state-sponsored terrorism and subversion. The Workers' Party believes that Ireland's relations with Cuba should be based on mutual respect with a commitment to a policy of open engagement without conditions, rather than attempted interference in the internal affairs of Cuba which has characterised the US/EU approach.

As part of our commitment to the UN and the UN Charter it is incumbent on Ireland not to be involved in illegal wars, proxy wars, or illegal activities. The government and the DFAT may well protest innocence at involvement in any of these actions. While it may be correct to state that this state is not directly involved in any such activity it is most certainly complicit. Shannon Airport, once Ireland's major Trans-Atlantic hub, is now largely reduced to being an aircraft carrier and transit hub for the US/NATO military machine. Since the present phase of US international adventurism began in October 2001 with the invasion of Afghanistan and was ramped up by the completely illegal Bush-Blair invasion of Iraq in 2003, Shannon Airport has been integral to US military infrastructure and logistical planning. Thousands of planes, over one millions troops, untold numbers of hand held and heavy duty weapons and other military hardware has transited through Shannon. Despite the fact the Ireland's agreement with the US (disgraceful as its very existence is) prohibits the use of Shannon for through transit of arms or armaments, not one plane has been boarded or searched by the Gardaí. Indeed the opposite is the case and those who seek to highlight this illegal activity at Shannon Airport are harassed, hounded and imprisoned by the Gardaí and the Irish courts. Furthermore, the use of Shannon Airport (verified by the Council of Europe) as a hub for Extraordinary Rendition, namely illegal kidnapping, transportation and torture, brings shame on the Irish people, leaves the Irish state liable to international sanction or private prosecution, and totally negates our commitment to the UN Charter and the myriad UN resolutions against torture and the inhuman and degrading treatment of prisoners.

Recommendations

7. Promote the abolition of the veto-holding powers of the Permanent Five members of the UN Security Council and the transformation of the General Assembly into the democratic centre of the UN.
8. Guarantee UN autonomy by proposing a binding international protocol amongst all UN member states guaranteeing that UN positions and UN agency positions are filled on a merit basis free from bias or political pressure; that all UN staff are free from espionage by state or state-contracted agencies; and that all UN buildings are off-limits for the espionage services of states.
9. Maintain Ireland's commitment to peacekeeping under Chapter VI protocols and neither support nor participate in Chapter VII operations.
10. Insist on the limitation of the powers of the IMF, WTO, and World Bank in favour of the revitalisation of UNCTAD, UNDP and UNIDO
11. Fulfil Ireland's international human rights responsibilities by investigating the past and present use of Shannon airport in illegal activities, including extraordinary rendition.



Economic Diplomacy and Building Bilateral Ties

As mentioned above, the Workers' Party believes that Ireland's international relations should be based on the concepts of solidarity, equality, human rights, and mutual assistance. We object strongly to agreements which increase inequality, erode workers' rights, destroy family life, and allow for the destruction of the environment. It is for these reasons that we highlight the proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership presently being negotiated between the EU and the USA.

The stated purpose of this new agreement is to increase Trans-Atlantic trade by removing regulatory differences between the US and the EU and thus to increase both investment and employment. A figure frequently floated into the public domain by those steering this new treaty into existence is that it will increase GDP by 0.5%. However, the history and experience so far of other US-led bilateral trade deals is that they have led to no increase in GDP but a substantial decrease in jobs.

An issue of particular concern in this agreement is the inclusion of Investor-State Dispute Settlement. This mechanism operates outside the normal civil, legal and commercial court processes within the signatory states. By design, and as shown in practice elsewhere, this process bypasses national and international labour law, environmental law, and contract law. There are no corresponding rights for citizens. It supersedes national constitutions, cannot be appealed, and is even beyond the remit of international bodies like the WTO. Cabals of corporate lawyers, backed by limitless resources of transnational corporations, and with the interests of corporate profits as their sole motive, can legally ride roughshod over the interests of small farmers and suppliers, customers, workers, communities, and even entire states. This device will permit multi-national corporations to evade domestic laws and courts while simultaneously permitting them to sue sovereign states for taking measure to protect the interests of the state or its people.

We would also highlight that such a pan-Northern free trade agreement would further isolate and disadvantage all developing and emerging economies and help to solidify rather than remedy the problems of global inequality and uneven economic development.

The proposed Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is fundamentally undemocratic, a clear threat to state sovereignty and is purely and simply an instrument for the benefit of the monopolies and against the interests of peoples and sovereign states. Despite the far-reaching consequences of such developments the "deal" is being prepared behind closed doors and there is no public debate. An equitable foreign policy must take steps to block this proposal immediately.

The Workers' Party favours the coordination of our resources and skills within such diverse bodies as the IDA, Udarás na Gaeltachta (if it is allowed to retain an economic development function), Fáilte Ireland and the diplomatic corps to promote trade, tourism and economic development. However, we also firmly believe that economic development cannot be bought at any price. After the death of Nelson Mandela last year there were many references to Ireland's opposition to Apartheid, to its promotion of sanctions against the then regime in South Africa, and of the heroic work and status of the many individuals like the Dunnes Strikers and the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement. While thankfully the era of Apartheid has been swept away there are still many regimes which operate on equally barbarous and inhuman foundations.

We are particularly concerned with this state consorting with some of the most brutal theocratic dictatorships to secure private sector investment despite both national and international abuse of



human rights and violations of international law. In this regard we refer specifically to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. For example, Saudi Arabia considers and treats women as third class citizens; treats workers from developing countries as slaves; enshrines in law, and implements bodily mutilations as part of its code of law, and foments and finances religious civil wars and reactionary armed groups throughout the entire Middle East and North African region. The regressive nature of the Bahraini regime is best portrayed by its recent decision that any medical personnel (many of whom were trained in Ireland at the RCSI) who treat civilians injured by the police and army are themselves criminalised and jailed. We firmly believe that Ireland should not invest in, or seek investment from, such regimes either now or in the future.

Recommendations

12. Place the protection and promotion of human rights at the centre of Ireland's foreign policy and external relations. All aspects of bilateral treaties should be compatible with human rights commitments.
13. Oppose the EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the use of Investor-State Dispute Settlement in particular.



International Development

The Workers' Party considers the questions of international development inseparable from its position that the problems of any country cannot be solved within the context of the global capitalist system. The conditions of workers and small farmers throughout the world will remain under threat in a system where the relentless pursuit of markets and profit, the corporatisation of the world order, the subordination of national economies and natural resources to big capital, the continued indebtedness of nations and inequitable trade relations and the ever increasing expansion of US/EU/NATO military bases worldwide prevail.

We believe that sustainable development can only take place under socialism. However, in the short term and where Ireland engages in international development it is vital that development aid strengthens the infrastructure of partner states. Instead of fortifying a shadow infrastructure based on charity and dependence and reliant on constant international control, Ireland's international development should aim to support and expand the education, health and taxation systems of partner countries. It is only in this manner that sustainability will be ensured.

The vision set out in *One World, One Future: Ireland's Policy for International Development* (2013) is of a "sustainable and just world, where people are empowered to overcome poverty and hunger and fully realise their rights and potential". *One World, One Future* maintains the importance of "our solidarity with the poorest nations in the world at a time of economic hardship at home". It establishes an approach based on the values of sustainability, effectiveness and results, equality, human rights, accountability, and partnership, and recognises that "no other organisation has the same global impact or the political, moral and legal authority to act" as the United Nations.

However, the positive vision set forth in *One World, One Future* is significantly undermined by the reality of Ireland's foreign policy and bilateral commitments and its participation in the European Union. This is strikingly visible in the advocacy, as an EU member, of the WTO rules-based system for development, which is strongly biased against developing countries in both its forms and function. Allowing the privatisation of seed supply, the primacy of intellectual property rights over primary production, or land and resource grabs by international companies does not demonstrate solidarity with developing countries.

Ireland's domestic laws also damage development. Action Aid has reported Ireland's central place in siphoning tax revenue from developing countries. *Sweet Nothings: the human cost of a British sugar giant avoiding taxes in southern Africa* (2013) describes how Associated British Foods, through their Zambian subsidiary Zambia Sugar Plc, reroutes profits and loans through Ireland so as to avoid taxation in Zambia. This is completely "legal" though requires an Irish sister company whose own accounts show no employees in Ireland and a 1971 tax treaty which denies Zambia the right to tax any of the outflows of cross-border income normally subject to withholding tax.

Ireland cannot continue to maintain a self-congratulatory attitude towards its international development policy while simultaneously advocating and implementing a foreign policy and taxation system which disempowers developing countries.

Recommendations:

14. Assess the possible negative effects of the tax regime and bilateral tax treaties on developing countries and change them accordingly



15. Actively monitor companies operating through Ireland without a large physical presence and require multinationals headquartered in Ireland to disclose all international related-party transactions producing a significant tax advantage and exchange this information with relevant countries
16. Insert anti-avoidance clauses in bilateral tax treaties so as to protect against artificial transactions.



Northern Ireland

The Workers' Party has long stated that lasting peace and reconciliation cannot be achieved without facing the problems of sectarianism and segregation.

There can be little surprise at the persistence of sectarianism in Northern Ireland when the political institutions are themselves part of the architecture of sectarian division and segregation. Change must begin at that level. The full promise of the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement has not been realised; one of the major failings has been the refusal to move beyond the narrow and dangerous confines of unionism and nationalism. The myth that a society can be developed based on the notion of "separate but equal" can no longer be perpetuated if we are to work seriously towards an integrated society. Sectarianism, segregation, and ghettoisation must be rejected in favour of a genuinely integrated society.

The Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement acknowledged that a Bill of Rights should form part of a lasting settlement. The Workers' Party believes that the purpose of a Bill of Rights is to establish and guarantee the relationship between citizens and the state. We believe that a Bill of Rights must form the cornerstone of democracy as the guarantor of the civil liberties and of the political rights of all political parties, groups and individuals prepared to work through the democratic process.

A reinstated Civic Forum could be used, alongside a Bill of Rights, to address the disconnect between citizens and political institutions. Provision for a Civic Forum as a consultative body is contained in Strand One of the Good Friday (Belfast) Agreement and the Northern Ireland Act 1998. It would provide a voice for an input to public life for civic society. Issues of identity, culture and the past would benefit from being discussed in a forum and in a way which was different to protagonists facing each other across a room.

Recommendations

17. Oppose the continued utilisation sectarianism as a basis for political structures and community relations.
18. Promote a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Such a Bill must enshrine fundamental principles constituting a clear statement about the nature and operation of political institutions in Northern Ireland, providing a positive statement of the rights which each citizen can expect and demand of the state, and provide the means whereby those rights will be protected and enforced if they are infringed.
19. Promote the Civic Forum.



Diaspora Engagement

Ireland's engagement with the diaspora has been detached and opportunistic.

Emigration has been treated as a method of diluting Irish social problems, particularly unemployment and inequality. Faced with unemployment, social welfare cuts and limited prospects for the future, it is unsurprising that so many "choose" to emigrate. Although a choice based on a lack of options is not a choice at all, referring to recent emigrants as having made a "lifestyle choice" is symptomatic of an attitude whereby emigrants are deride or ignored unless something can be gained from them.

Despite the existence of frameworks for "the most senior Irish and Irish-connected individuals overseas" (consultation document, p. 10), there is little recognition of the interest that ordinary people from Ireland have in their country of origin and in its future. They are given few platforms for discussing their reasons for leaving, their opinions on how the country is run, or their hopes (or otherwise) of returning. In truth, there has been scant interest in the realities of emigration or even whether the "Irish abroad" consider themselves members of an "Irish diaspora".

It is important not merely to recognise that "our people abroad have made a remarkable contribution to this country's development" but that those who leave do not automatically lose their connection to the country or their interest in its future the moment that they leave.

Recommendations

20. Investigate granting voting rights to the Irish abroad, paying regard to international practice as well as prior residency, an expectation to return, and setting a time limit.



Promoting a Positive Image of Ireland

The DFAT's public consultation document aims for a foreign policy which project a "strong, coherent and identifiable image of Ireland, based on our values, interests, and culture". Unfortunately, Ireland can all too readily be associated with the use of Shannon in illegal interventions, wars, and occupations; as a country displaying many of the attributes of a tax haven, which permits the siphoning off of vital revenues from developing countries; being conveniently mute of the issues of Fortress Europe and being an active proponent of the anti-people measures of the EU. Although a negative image, it is certainly "strong, coherent and identifiable".

The Workers' Party believes in the right of each people to choose in a sovereign way its path of development, including the right to disengage from the dependencies on the EU and NATO and every other imperialist organisation, and to struggle for a path of socialist development. We believe that this should be the cornerstone of foreign policy.

Projecting a positive image of Ireland will require rejecting the underlying attitudes and assumptions demonstrated in the public consultation document. Instead of an unprincipled and self-serving policy, Ireland's foreign policy should be based on positive neutrality, international solidarity, and human rights. In this way Ireland could take on not only a new image but find a new place for itself in the world based on equality, the prosperity of the peoples, social progress, democratic rights, equal cooperation, mutual assistance, and peace.

The Workers' Party
February 2014

The Workers' Party is agreeable that its submission may be published on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Workers' Party is agreeable that its submission may be published in a hard copy as part of the final report of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Workers' Party is also agreeable that the Review Team/ DFAT may release all of part of this submission under FOI, subject to Data Protection Requirements.

