

THE CAUSE OF THE YOUTH, THE CAUSE OF IRELAND

*Cúis na nÓg,
Cúis na hÉireann*

THE PROGRAMME OF THE CONNOLLY YOUTH MOVEMENT
An Clár Ógra Uí Chonghaile

- ★ ANTI-IMPERIALISM
- ★ CIVIL RIGHTS
- ★ CULTURE
- ★ EDUCATION
- ★ ENVIRONMENT
- ★ GAEILGE
- ★ HEALTHCARE
- ★ HOUSING
- ★ INTERNATIONALISM
- ★ WORKER'S RIGHTS

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1. Introduction

1.1 Who are the CYM?

The Connolly Youth Movement is a 32-county Marxist-Leninist and Socialist-Republican youth organisation. We follow in the footsteps of such socialist revolutionaries as Karl Marx, James Connolly, and Vladimir Lenin.

The working-class youth of Ireland have, for their entire lives, borne the brunt of ruthless austerity policies imposed by a vindictive capitalist class. This manifests in all avenues of their lives, in housing, education, in the culture they consume and engage in. Enforcing and underpinning this is an advanced and all-encompassing security apparatus, which doles out violence and repression to maintain the capitalist and imperialist conditions prevailing on this island.

The CYM believes that the only ideology that adequately represents the interests of the working-class youth and offers the solutions necessary for the overcoming of capitalism is Marxism-Leninism. In the Irish context, this has manifested itself as Socialism-Republicanism. As the only Marxist-Leninist youth organisation on the island of Ireland, we are the only effective and committed representatives of its working-class youth.

In the pages below, we will lay out the guiding principles of our organisation, as well as our stances and strategies on the most pressing issue facing Irish youth today.

1.2 What is Marxism-Leninism?

As an explicitly Marxist-Leninist organisation, the philosophical outlook of the CYM is dialectical materialism: the conception that any change, be it in matter or society, occurs through the interaction of opposing forces. In the case of capitalist society, the interaction is between classes; the working class and the bourgeois class. Through this analysis, we are able to accurately identify both the historical and contemporary conditions facing the Irish working-class and their opponents, and act accordingly in the liberation of Ireland.

Fundamentally, we agree with the conclusions of Karl Marx, that all value is created by the working-class through their labour. However, while the working class are the producers of value within the capitalist system, they do not control either the processes by which this value is produced, or the results. Therefore, we constantly experience what Marx referred to as "alienation". Marx conceives all things produced by human labour as fundamentally consisting of, at their basest level, congealed human labour power (hence the labour of the working classes produces all value within the capitalist system). Within everything produced by workers is their essence, which would, in a world where we were in control of this final product, act as an affirmation of ourselves. Therefore, if the means of production are owned by the capitalist, and the results of production are owned by the same capitalist, the worker is left with nothing. By producing for the capitalist (and by extension the market) rather than for themselves or for their fellow workers, the working class is left adrift, denied the affirmation that would come with recognising themselves in the products of their labour.

1.3 Who are the Ruling Class in Ireland?

Before exploring in more depth who the CYM are as an organisation, it is first important to comprehend who our opponents are. Who are the ruling class in Ireland, and what apparatuses are at their disposal to enforce capitalism?

Central to the enforcement of any class' rule is the state.

Fundamentally, the state is made up of the legislative bodies (Leinster House and Stormont in the Irish case), with other bodies such as the judiciary and police forces serving as enforcers. However, there are a slew of other bodies and institutions that help the state in an indirect capacity in the upholding of class rule. For example, educational institutions, especially those in receipt of state funding, primarily serve the purpose of inculcating the youth with the ideology of the ruling class. The media also serve this role, with television, radio and newspapers (online and print), and social media generally taking a pro-government line. Finally, religious and cultural institutions primarily push a pro-ruling class line, to maintain a status quo that they benefit from, or even simply for the fact that much of their funding comes directly from the state.

When we say that those indirect bodies propagate the ideology of the ruling class, do we mean that the state is explicitly pressuring them to do so? No, and for the simple reason that that is not necessary. Through a system of cultural hegemony (first theorised by Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci), the moral and value systems of the ruling class become those of society as a whole. Through growing up and being exposed to all the above institutions for an entire lifetime, the nation's population finds itself at the disposal of the state, promoting the interests of the ruling class, even to the population's own detriment.

That is the state and the ruling class in general sense however. Who are they in the Irish context? Before going into any detail, it is important to recognise that there are two different jurisdictions on the island of Ireland. In the North, direct British colonial rule still exists in 6 counties, while in the south, while there is a nominal independence, the situation can be most accurately defined as neo-colonial.

In the occupied 6 counties in the North of Ireland, there are, to a certain extent, two categories of ruling classes operating in parallel. Firstly, there is a colonial bourgeoisie, descended primarily from Protestant settlers who arrived during the Ulster Plantation. For the majority of the period following partition, they were the only ones to wield political power, enforced through institutions such as the Royal Ulster Constabulary, judiciary and Orange Order, on top of an armed and organised paramilitary system. In the same fashion as colonial forces in other parts of the world, any form of resistance, no matter how lukewarm, was met with extreme violence. While they do enrich themselves at the expense of the working classes within the 6 counties, much of the extracted wealth makes its way back to mainland Britain.

However, following the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, the opportunity arose for the emergence of a genuine bourgeoisie among the nationalist community. This group acted as the bourgeois generally do following formal independence from a colonial power: they slipped into the niche left by the colonisers and continued to maintain capitalism, enriching themselves at the expense of the working classes that did the real work in the liberation struggle.

These two forms of ruling class operate in tandem in the 6 counties, with the division enforced by the Good Friday Agreement. Ultimately, this

relationship only serves to benefit the colonial power that keeps it in place, in this case Britain, both to enrich itself with a colonial holding, but also to maintain its strategic pressure on the other jurisdiction on the island, in the 26 counties.

South of the border, a third system prevails, but it does so alone. The ruling class in the south is a neo-colonial one. While they are nominally independent and enforce capitalism to enrich themselves, they also do so to benefit various foreign interests, in this case, Britain, the EU, and the United States. Through initiatives such as an emphasis on Foreign Direct Investment, the wealth produced in the south very rarely actually gets spent in the state, instead being extracted to the City of London, or Wall Street. In the case of the EU, membership has meant a relinquishing of sovereignty over currency, making us beholden to the whims of a market totally outside of our control. As a peripheral state of the union, when the markets inevitably crash, it is ourselves, along with other peripheral states such as Greece and Portugal, that bear the brunt of the austerity and subsequent capital concentration to prepare for the next cycle.

Fundamentally, the organs of state, when controlled by the bourgeoisie, are used to maintain capitalism. We would like to see these apparatuses in the hands of the working class, to build and maintain socialism.

1.4 Principles of the CYM

1.4.1 Revolutionary Principles

The CYM is a revolutionary organisation. This means that we do not believe that simple reforms are enough to address the fundamental exploitation inherent to capitalism. The use of the bourgeois state-apparatus will never bring about this overthrow, and so we look to other avenues.

While we do (and have in the past) advocate for certain reforms to better the lot of the working class (wage increases, evictions bans, repealing the 8th amendment), we understand that they are not an end in themselves. Rather, they serve the purpose of mitigating the worst excesses of capitalism in the short-term, and defending the rights of working-class people insofar as is possible under the present system.

Our members integrate themselves into community-led organisations, such as trade and tenant unions with the goal of directing them in a more radical direction, by raising class-consciousness among the membership. We seek to lead these movements and constructively engage with them, rather than tailing behind them, or opportunistically taking advantage of their successes.

1.4.2 Counter-Culture

Culture under capitalism is one that is inherently commodified. Cultural hegemony extends into our recreational spaces, ensuring that at no point are we offered legitimate alternatives to the constant drive of the profit motive. Capitalist culture reinforces the values of the system: individualism, consumerism, chauvinism, exploitation, and

objectification. However, young people wishing to unwind in their free-time are left with little alternative but to engage in this system.

There is a chronic lack of sober spaces in working-class neighbourhoods, the primary meeting places being pubs, clubs, or other venues for the abuse of drugs and alcohol. If one is to stay at home and try and find sanctuary online, all that exists to consume is a steady stream of American-influenced social media content, an attention economy that only serves to further enforce the idea that the individual is the zenith of society.

Even communities online are generally commodified, usually coalescing around a particular commercial product, like a television programme, or a video game. They are therefore inherently pay-walled, the ability to become a member and reap the benefits of community being beholden on your ability to pay for any updates to your chosen product. With the inherently imported nature of all these issues, comes a total disregard for an Irish identity.

The Irish language is almost totally absent from these spaces, existing only in designated spaces that are consistently being encroached upon.

Capitalism reinforces itself through its culture. In film, online spaces, and television, the logic of capitalism, the cult of the individual, is enforced, systemised, and propagated among the youth. Therefore, it is vital that any revolutionary organisation commits itself to a cultural revolution, to developing a culture that celebrates and reinforces communist principles. As James Connolly said in his *Revolutionary Songs*: "No revolutionary movement is complete without its poetical expression [...] until the movement is marked by the joyous, defiant, singing of

revolutionary songs, it lacks one of the most distinctive marks of a popular revolutionary movement. It is the dogma of a few, and not the faith of the multitude".

How does the CYM aim to develop such a counter-culture within our organisation and communities? We are a collectivist organisation, in that our motive is to improve the lot of each other, rather than personal enrichment. We promote functional fitness and self-defence, through actions such as hikes, and martial arts classes, and strive to develop sober social activities and spaces. We discourage substance abuse, and advocate for a health-based approach towards addiction, rather than a punitive one. Through education, we look to politicise the youth, who have, through the state school system up to this point, gone through a rigorous programme of depoliticisation. We also promote the learning and use of the Irish language among our members, with the goal of it becoming the organisation's first language.

1.4.3 Internationalism & Anti-Imperialism

As internationalists we understand that capitalism is a global system, and that the struggles against it are similarly global. The CYM therefore commits itself wholeheartedly to a policy of solidarity and relationship-building through fraternal organisations, utilising our membership of and engagement with the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY).

Republicanism has a long and proud history of solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles the world over, such as Palestine and South Africa. These links have served only to strengthen each movement, and the anti-imperialist cause more generally. In many cases, one colonial theatre has been used as a testing ground for another. The Black and

Tans for instance, so infamous in Irish history and culture, found themselves shipped to Palestine directly after their Irish outing, to secure British rule there against Arab intransigence. Similarly, counter-insurgency tactics developed in Malaya in the 1950s, and refined in Kenya in the 1960s, were finally put into place in the 6 counties by British security forces during the conflict there.

Today, the CYM stands in solidarity with anti-imperialist struggles around the world, such as Palestine, Cuba, the Western Sahara, and the ongoing Bolivarian Revolution of Latin America. We support fully a single, united Palestinian state, and reject a two-state solution. We offer critical support to those countries engaged in socialist construction, and oppose all forms of imperialist expansion and militarism, such as the increased involvement of NATO in the affairs of Ireland and the cooperation of the Irish bourgeois government with EU militarisation. We support all peripheral nations in their struggle against imperialism and we reject the indiscriminate utilisation of sanctions, predatory investment, and “colour revolution” by imperialist powers. We oppose any attempts at the balkanisation of the People's Republic of China, the instigation of colour revolutions, or the destabilisation of countries by imperial powers.

1.4.4 Anti-Fascism

A core tenet of the CYM's organisational philosophy is anti-fascism. Beside capitalism, fascism represents the greatest threat to the working-class. It acts in an insidious manner, outwardly pretending to offer an alternative, but this is simply not the case. Fundamentally, fascism is capitalism in decay, its pressure-release valve, rolled out to take advantage of and organise working-class anger, in a way that

can be ultimately directed by the ruling classes. Historical fascist movements have always operated hand-in-hand with capitalism, never challenging the core of the capitalist system, always enforcing its worst aspects; racism, patriarchy, and exploitation.

In Ireland, the Irish far-right demonstrate this pattern to a tee. They use a litany of scapegoats as examples for capitalism's decay; migrants, travellers, the LGBTQ+ community, marrying it with a conservative Catholicism and appeals to a mythical Ireland of Oisín and Fionn mac Cumhaill, in an attempt to distract from the true enemy: capitalism. However, it should be understood that fascism in Ireland has always been an import. An indigenous fascist movement has never existed in Ireland: O'Duffy's blueshirts borrowed their regalia from Hitler's brownshirts and Mussolini's blackshirts, while today's are imitators of fascists in the imperial core, in Britain and the United States. In attempting to provide an Irish identity, the majority of their efforts go into attempting to appropriate republicanism, an ideology that, where successful, has always been the antithesis to fascism: working-class, socialist, and internationalist.

A core element of fascism, one that demonstrates its inseparability from capitalism, is its attempts to appropriate and corrupt socialist talking-points. It does this in an attempt to redirect and reorganise working-class anger and discontent into a movement that will not challenge, but rather reinforce capitalism. To take our Irish fascists as examples: regularly will they complain of the evils of "international finance" (often with thinly-veiled anti-semitism), yet at the same time insist on the need for a return to an Ireland dominated by the Catholic Church, the islands most consistent bastion of reaction, patriarchy, and capitalism

The CYM will confront fascism in all its manifestations, and work with other anti-fascist organisations and activists to counter their propaganda, oppose and expose their underhanded strategies and tackle their opportunism in our communities and movements.

1.5 Strategy of the CYM

1.5.1 What kind of organisation is the CYM?

As a communist organisation following the Bolshevik model, the smallest unit upon which the CYM is based is the cadre. A cadre is a comrade that embodies what Lenin described as the "professional revolutionary". They are devoted to the cause of the working-class, engaging constantly in independent study so as to develop their theoretical foundation to the highest level. They are embedded and active within their communities, workplaces, and universities. Being the most theoretically and ideologically advanced in these theatres, they are willing and confident in taking up the mantle of leadership in working class organisations such as trade, tenant, and student unions

Outside of these organisations, cadres are expected to be engaged within their communities, as in formal organisations, as communists. While many in our organisation are involved in charitable activities such as food banks, the CYM does not view charitable work as forming the basis of our activity. While it does serve the purpose of alleviating some of the worst suffering experienced by the working-class, it is ultimately only beneficial in highlighting the failures of capitalism. We look instead to empower working-class communities to overcome their own issues.

1.5.2 Trade Unions

Trade unions are the primary organisational tool of the working class, and as such, they are a priority in terms of engagement for the CYM. However, on both sides of the border, unions have been crippled by neo-liberalism, through legislation such as the 1990 Industrial Relations Act and Trade Union and Labour Relations (Northern Ireland) Order, 1995.

The current trend among unions is towards an overfocus on bureaucratisation and casework, with no effort being put into advocating proactively for their membership. A large part of this issue is caused by the relationship between union and state being one of social partnership: rather than unions fighting to get their members the best deal possible, they instead must come to an agreement that takes into account the interests and desires of both the government and IBEC (the Irish Business and Employers Confederation). While Ireland has an average level of union density in EU terms (around 29%), their effectiveness is abysmal compared to unions elsewhere in Europe, for example France, where unions regularly dictate public policy despite density sitting at only around 8%. This situation is set to deteriorate sharply considering the incredibly low levels of unionisation among young people, especially those employed in the service and gig economies.

Therefore, CYM members are mandated to become members of their union of choice, to stand for elected positions and attempt to drive the organisation in a more radical direction, one that prioritises the recruiting and organising of new members, rather than simply maintaining a dues paying membership list to enrich those in executive positions.

Fundamentally we believe that, unfortunately, the current establishment unions do not possess the revolutionary wherewithal to protect the working-class in the long-term. However, in the short-term, they offer the best immediate method at our disposal of protecting workers' rights.

1.5.3 Tenant's Unions

Outside of the workplace, tenant's unions are where the CYM directs the bulk of its energy. We see these organisations as crucial vehicles to shifting the balance of power between tenants and landlords. Within tenant's unions, our members work to build and strengthen their communities, by both developing community solidarity and challenging landlords whenever necessary, for instance by resisting evictions and infractions, as well as highlighting the role they play in the housing crisis. Similarly to unions, we also look to push them in a radical direction, adopting tactics such as occupations, and more pro-actively challenging landlords. On a broader, strategic level, tenant's unions teach valuable lessons around organising, allowing communities to build and develop their power with which to challenge and beat their oppressors.

1.5.4 Universities & Student's Unions

Today, universities play a greater role in the lives of the youth of Ireland than ever before. With an ever growing desire on the part of employers for their workforce to have a third-level qualification, the proportion of the student body made up of the working-class is at its highest point. However, as with all other profit-making institutions, the university is sustained through exploitation. Exploitation of the labour of staff and

students to maintain its national and international standing, and so to draw funding, and exploitation of the service staff that keep it operating day to day.

Therefore, the CYM believes that the building of solidarity between students and staff is integral to our movement. Our members are engaged in student and staff unions to expose the exploitation inherent in how the university operates, so as to encourage this solidarity and drive both groups to work together to collectively improve their conditions.

On top of this, we also operate the Connolly Youth Societies. These are the way the CYM engages most directly on university campuses, functioning as our mass student organisations, and being the most direct way for students to engage with the CYM.

1.5.5 Electoralism

As a Marxist-Leninist organisation, we do not believe that engagement in bourgeois parliaments can ever hope to achieve a socialist state. Engagement with national elections ends simply with electoralism and the pursuit of seats becoming the primary focus of the organisation. Such parties use young people as essentially nothing more than election machines: they become politically disaffected and mindless canvassers, engaging in campaign after campaign with no end or hope of change in sight.

While the CYM refuses to engage with national elections for the reasons listed above, we accept that engagement with local elections can be beneficial. While they face the same potential issues as national elections, they provide a platform within our community that

does not require large amounts of time to be spent in the capital. They require considerably less time in contrast to national campaigns, and therefore sap much less energy from revolutionary activity. They are, nonetheless, primarily useful to highlight the failings of electioneering and will never be the primary focus of the movement.

1.5.6 The Party

Collectively, the issues touched on above represent the most pressing issues and strategies for the working-class in Ireland today. History demonstrates that the only legitimate representative of the working-class in any revolutionary struggle is a Communist party. Any such party would draw together all the elements of the working-class in a united front against capitalism. In the Irish context, we believe that any such party would be Marxist-Leninist, socialist-republican, internationalist and democratic-centralist.

However, at present we do not believe that any party in Ireland adequately represents these aims and values. As such, one of the most pressing issues facing Irish communists is the foundation of a party following these principles. Until such a party arises, the CYM will continue to work with other socialists, left republicans and communists to further the aims and strategies outlined in this programme.

2. Resolutions of the CYM

2.1 The National Question

Having introduced the organisation, it is now time to discuss where we stand on the specific issues facing young people in Ireland today. From housing to education, capitalism encroaches on nearly every facet of our lives, imposing misery and division where it goes. Of all the issues facing Irish youth, the national question is the most all-encompassing. Any solutions to the day-to-day problems that will be discussed in subsequent sections are seriously hampered by the fact that there exists a border dividing our country in two. The existence of these two jurisdictions precludes any attempt at all-Ireland solutions, rendering them nowhere near as effective as they need to be. As a socialist-republican organisation, the CYM recognises that it will be impossible to establish a socialist republic in Ireland while 6 counties exist under direct imperial occupation.

2.1.1 Partition

Partition of North and South exists as an artificial division of British design to protect their strategic interests. Through the use of state forces such as the PSNI, and non-state actors such as the Orange Order and Loyalist paramilitaries, a sectarian statelet is maintained. This, combined with a political establishment in the south committed to upholding partition has resulted in the island of Ireland being split in two for over 100 years. A key aspect of maintaining and entrenching this partition is the Good Friday Agreement (GFA), the treaty that ostensibly ended the recent conflict, signed in 1998.

2.1.2 Good Friday Agreement

The GFA, far from being a document that ensures a more liberal and less sectarian 6 counties, has in fact solidified sectarianism as a guiding principle within the region. From a purely mechanical standpoint, the GFA requires that candidates for Assembly elections declare themselves as being Unionist or Nationalist representing either or community. While this is sold as being necessary to ensure that the interests of both communities are adequately represented in Stormont, but functionally it means that any party which attempts to build a cross-community base, across class lines for instance, is inherently disadvantaged by having their vote share count for less.

The voting process itself behind the GFA left much to be desired. Fundamentally, those voting in the 6 counties were doing so under a combination of duress and false promises. The so-called “peace dividends”, whereby the cessation of hostility would allow the 6 counties to build itself up economically, especially by becoming an attractive destination for foreign direct investment from the United States and Europe, failed to materialise. The 6 counties, especially Catholic communities, consistently rank among the highest in the UK in terms of poverty and unemployment.

Paramilitaries, especially from Protestant communities, also had a significant impact on the agreement's ratification. In the lead-up to the referendum on the GFA in the 6 counties, loyalist paramilitaries ramped up their indiscriminate terror campaign, consisting of sectarian bombings and shootings, resulting in the deaths of many Catholic civilians. These attacks, coupled with the above-mentioned economic promises, led to a heavily tarnished vote.

2.1.3 Normalisation

On an everyday level, a key feature of the GFA which has ensured sectarianism and continued British rule in the 6 counties has been the process of normalisation: whereby institutions designed to uphold British rule in Ireland are not considered as part of an ongoing colonial project as such, but are rather deemed to be normal aspects of life.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), are a key example of this. Fundamentally, their role has not changed since they replaced their predecessors, the Royal Ulster Constabulary. We can see this first and foremost in their name: the Police Service of Northern Ireland (incorporating the Royal Ulster Constabulary), highlighting the fact that the colonial order was assimilated and continued, rather than being replaced. If we compare the PSNI to their equivalents in the 26 counties An Garda Síochána or police services in the rest of the United Kingdom, their differences are laid bare. They are significantly more militarised, with constables armed while on duty, and being permitted to carry firearms while off duty, something unheard of south of the border. The size of the force also demonstrates the over-policed nature of the 6 counties: the PSNI are the third largest police force in the UK, after the London Metropolitan force and Police Scotland, though they are responsible for a population $\frac{1}{8}$ the size of the former, and an area less than $\frac{1}{5}$ of the latter.

The British Army presence is also consistently understated. Between 1969 and 2007, approximately 300,000 British soldiers participated in Operation Banner, with 21,000 troops being stationed in the region at one time at the height of the conflict. While this operation was wound up following the GFA, a subsequent operation, Operation Helvetic has

continued to operate in the region, with over 1,500 troops currently stationed in the 6 counties.

On a civilian level, the GFA's assertion of legitimacy to both the desire for a united Ireland and for the 6 counties to remain in the United Kingdom ignores the colonial nature of the northern statelet and unionism, and hamstringing efforts to develop cross-community solidarity by entrenching sectarianism in law. In an attempt to paint the causes of the conflict as purely ethnic and sectarian, lacking any colonial or anti-imperial elements, the GFA normalises colonialism and its supporting ideology. It also ultimately removes the mechanisms for achieving united Ireland from the hands of the Irish population. While the GFA does state that if a majority of the population north and south of the border demonstrate their desire to see a united Ireland, the governments in both London and Dublin are under a "binding obligation" to bring it about, it offers no time-frame. While Britain has a strategic interest in maintaining a direct presence on the island of Ireland, there will be no impetus for it to implement such a decision.

2.1.4 The Triple-Lock of Imperialism

Ireland's relationship with imperialism can best be described as a triple-lock: our sovereignty being divided between Britain, the EU, and the United States. Britain has been discussed extensively in the preceding paragraphs, and so all that is left is to discuss those further afield.

2.1.4.1 The European Union

The EU, regardless of its liberal rhetoric, is a direct continuation of the European imperial project. Formed in the aftermath of the Second

World War as a direct counter-balance to the socialist bloc, it has consistently served the interests of the capitalist class. Power resides, in the same model as the empires that preceded it, with the imperial nations at the core (France, Germany), while the peripheral states, such as Ireland and Greece are repeatedly stripped of their resources and exploited as sources of cheap labour. Principles such as freedom of movement, while advertised as being for the benefit of those seeking to work abroad, are almost exclusively used to transport cheap migrant labour into the imperial core, most recently from the newest additions in Eastern Europe. These ex-socialist states have also suffered internally, with fascist movements being promoted to ensure no resurgence of socialism, for instance in Poland and Hungary. Further afield, the EU has continued the European project of neo-colonialism in Africa, with France alone having over 5,000 troops stationed in the Sahel.

Economically, the eurozone has been utilised as a means of stripping member states of their currency sovereignty, to their ultimate detriment as was seen during the 2008 financial crash. By tying peripheral states to the European Central Bank (which is ultimately at the beck and call of the core members), they can be more easily exploited, and, in the case of an inevitable market crash, made to take the blame and shoulder the debt.

In Ireland specifically, the EU has had major negative impacts on domestic industries, such as farming and fisheries, by greatly favouring large capitalistic enterprises over smaller independent ones. The 26 counties' membership of the eurozone ensured that it was crippled following the 2008 crash, with the neoliberal Fianna Fáil government (and their Fine Gael successors) only too happy to enforce the EU's

mandate on austerity. This is because the relationship between the 26 counties and the EU is a neo-colonial one, with our dependence on Britain being replaced to a degree with a dependence on the EU. As an organisation, the CYM is engaged in educating both our members and our peers on the reality of the EU's role in Ireland. This culminates in our agitation for a referendum on the 26 counties' membership of the bloc. While we recognise that this will not bring about a socialist republic, it is a prerequisite, as no such formation can exist while our membership is maintained.

2.1.4.2 The United States

Finally, the United States, as in much of the world, exerts considerable pressure over Ireland in the political, economic, and cultural spheres.

The most direct manifestation of US political dominance is in the use of Shannon Airport by the US military as a stopover and refuelling centre for their personnel being sent to overseas bases, primarily in the Middle East. Shannon has played a vital role in the US and NATO's "War on Terror", and has had the effect of undermining the "neutrality" the 26 counties touts to the globe. As long as the US military has a presence in Ireland, it can never be considered an independent nation.

Economically, multinational corporations fill the role of neo-colonialism in Ireland also occupied by Britain and the EU. These companies extract value from Ireland, but leave nothing in return. Internationally, the south is notorious as a tax haven, with corporations such as Apple and Google racking up massive bills. On a local level, they are totally un beholden to communities who they exploit, or to the local areas that they ravage. Internally, a system of labour aristocracy is implemented

to impede organisation and solidarity amongst workers: for instance, software developers are treated significantly better, with much better pay, than manufacturers. With these multinationals being some of the primary employers in urban centres, this has the effect of hamstringing the development of labour movements more broadly. As the primary realm of industry these companies come from is tech, a reindustrialisation of the country to revive local industry is necessary to break their hold.

Culturally, the US's grip on Irish society is the most pervasive. Through film, music, television, and celebrity culture, Irish people are exposed to a flood of content that only serves to repress their own culture. These cultural products ultimately serve the goals of US cultural hegemony: an enforcement of capitalism as being the only viable economic system, fanatical adherence to individualism over any collective action, and a propagation of the idea of the US being leaders of a "Free World", usually in opposition to a communist enemy. The CYM, in response to this, is committed to the development of a counter-culture that celebrates collective action, and Irish culture, so as to decolonise the minds of our youth.

2.1.5 Gaeilge

Gaeilge is a vital aspect of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland. The suppression by British administrations, as well as the neglect by southern ones, has led to the language being decimated in everyday use.

The CYM dedicates itself to the promotion of the language both within and without the organisation. Within the organisation we look to organise language-classes for members to improve their level, as well

as encouraging the use of it generally as the first language of the organisation. In Ireland more broadly, we agitate for an Irish language act in the 6 counties, as well as working in coordination and solidarity with Irish-language activists and organisations island-wide. In the 26 counties, we wish to see the protection and consolidation of na Gaeltachtaí, with a mind toward their re-structuring and eventual expansion.

2.1.6 The Protestant Community

The Protestant working-class in the 6 counties pose a question that up until now socialist republicanism has failed to successfully act upon: how can this working-class population be drawn into the class-struggle against capitalism and imperialism?

Unionism as a tangible force has effectively collapsed. The old system of maintaining the Protestant working-class as a labour aristocracy (through preferential treatment in housing and employment) at the expense of their Catholic peers is no longer possible, with austerity decimating both communities. Young Protestants are therefore left adrift, without political vision or representation that can guarantee their interests. These young, working-class Protestants have as much of a part to play in the revolutionary process as Catholics, having the same class interests, both suffering from low wages and skyrocketing rents. Protestants have played leading roles in republican and socialist struggles since their inception, such as Wolfe Tone and his comrades in the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798, Jack White of the Irish Citizen's Army, or Madge Davison, the first General Secretary of the CYM. The segregation imposed by groups such as unionist politicians, loyalist paramilitaries, and the GFA acts as a means of impeding class solidarity, and maintaining the dominance of the capitalist class, on

both the Catholic and Protestant parts of the divide. The interests of young Protestants do not lie with a political unionism which can offer them nothing more than a blind loyalty to Britain, but rather with their class both north and south of the border, in the fight for a socialist-republic.

2.2 Housing

The housing crisis in Ireland is one that affects young people not just in their pursuit of a roof over their heads, but also in employment, mental health, and working class power.

Housing in Ireland is run almost exclusively on a privatised level, with private landlords hoarding properties so as to produce an artificial scarcity. Young people are therefore faced with an ever increasing cost and decreasing supply. The state has effectively washed its hands of this issue, leaving the situation to develop in a not only exploitative, but also anarchic direction, with little to no planning in the building of new housing. Urban centres are therefore more likely to see new developments that benefit the ruling class, such as office blocks to draw in more FDI, instead of housing for those expected to work in them. In the 6 counties, scarcity is exacerbated further by segregation: Protestant areas are given preferential treatment when it comes to public housing supply, and the threat of Loyalist paramilitaries driving any Catholics placed in the area from these homes, leaves Catholic areas struggling with both high demand and serious scarcity.

Another major issue is dereliction. It is a common sight to see many houses that could be on the market lying empty, as the cost of renovations is not considered by their landlords to be worth the cost.

Our own Connolly Barracks was one such property before its occupation.

The current housing crisis is fundamentally by design. By maintaining insecurity in tenants, the building of working class power becomes all the more difficult, and landlords' power can therefore go unchallenged. The fact that many TDs in the 26 counties and MLAs in the 6 are landlords, further compounds the situation, as they are unlikely to legislate against their own interests. However, the problem goes deeper than this. Public perception of public housing is that it is of markedly inferior quality than that available on the private market. "Right to buy" became a popular scheme among governments in the 1980s and 90s, following the Thatcherite tactic of undercutting community solidarity in council estates by creating a new strata of home-owners, more likely to support conservative policies. Those left in council housing were those who could not afford to buy. As they were abandoned by the emerging neo-liberal state, the properties fell into disrepair and the stereotype develops.

Finally, in the 6 counties, on top of all the reasons just mentioned, the segregation does the work of enforcing sectarianism, so important to the ruling class as discussed in the previous section.

Only radical change in the provision and perception of housing can end the current crisis. Much more public housing is required to address the immediate scarcity brought on by the over-reliance on the private sector. An immediate rent-cap to curtail the extortionate rents currently being charged in the private sector is also necessary to combat the worst excesses of landlordism. On a legal level, the right to housing must be enshrined in the southern constitution, as a basis for mandating

governments to provide the above solutions. Fundamentally however, while the capitalist system exists and housing is treated as a commodity rather than a right, the crisis will never be truly solved.

The CYM is committed to various actions to combat the current housing crisis. We engage in occupations, both to reclaim and highlight dereliction in our communities, most notably Connolly Barracks in Cork. We are actively engaged in agitating within our communities, in tenants unions, and in the resisting of evictions. We are also committed to agitation in the south for a referendum on the subject of making housing a fundamental right enshrined in the constitution.

2.3 Education

As Marxists-Leninists, we view education as one of the most critical aspects in the development of effective cadres. However, much of the education provided to the youth comes in the form of state-run or state-supported schools. Education in Ireland follows the pattern laid out by Padraig Pearse in his essay *The Murder Machine*: “Education should foster; this education is meant to repress. Education should inspire; this education is meant to tame. Education should harden; this education is meant to enervate”. What he said of the English administration at the time, is true of our capitalist class now: “[They] are too wise a people to attempt to educate the Irish in any worthy sense. As well expect them to arm us”. The education systems in the 6 and 26 counties primarily serve one purpose: the enforcement and entrenchment of capitalist hegemony in the youth, and the eradication from them of any form of working-class consciousness.

The root of many of the issues, especially in the 26 counties, is the overwhelming control that the Catholic Church has had, and continues to have on the education system. The vast majority of state primary and secondary schools are still owned by the Church through a system of religious orders, and many of those that are not will proudly proclaim a “Catholic ethos”.

The method in which subjects are taught also serves to enforce a neo-liberal ideology. The firm division of subjects into different camps; sciences, humanities, etc. seriously undermine the development of class consciousness, especially in STEM subjects. A strict “disciplinary” mindset leads to the so-called “hard sciences”, and especially their implementation, being considered above or outside their social contexts. Even in the social sciences, material simply enforces capitalist ideology. History, for example, serves the purpose of myth-building for the state. Our namesake, James Connolly, is depicted as a leader of the 1916 Rising, but no attention is paid to his socialist politics and organising that was the bulk of his life. This division extends into universities, with graduates who are trained simply to enter the workplace lacking an understanding of the material implications of their work. For instance, an engineer, who may be brilliant in their field, but who goes to work for a British arms manufacturer, and is either oblivious, or uncaring of the oppression their work brings to bear.

Working conditions of both staff and students also leave much to be desired. Long hours and poor salaries for staff have the inevitable outcome of negatively affecting student learning outcomes. For students, the development of the grinds industry has essentially established a second, near-compulsory schooling system in the 26 counties, with the demands of the Leaving Certificate necessitating the

taking of grinds, especially in subjects such as Maths and Gaeilge. Gaelscoileanna in much of the country are restricted to the middle-class, with many working-class communities never given the option to engage in their education through the language.

In universities, staff and students are very deliberately kept separate by university management, in an effort to restrict any development of solidarity between the two. However, as the university and its profits are built on the exploitation of both staff and students, it is integral that these groups develop solidarity together.

There are myriad solutions to the problems facing education on our island, but below are listed a few. To make education more egalitarian and accessible to the entirety of the population, it is crucial that it be state-funded through all levels. From primary to tertiary. Adding to this, fee-paying institutions must be abolished, to remove the automatic advantage they hand to the bourgeoisie. In the 6 counties, it is also vital that schools become integrated, removing a significant barrier to cross-community interaction and solidarity present from childhood. In the south, the intensive curriculum forced on students (7 subjects at Leaving Certificate, compared to 3 at A-Levels in the 6 counties) must be changed, so as to make grinds and their surrounding industry unnecessary. Finally, gaelscoileanna in the south can no longer be permitted to be the domain of the wealthy. Rather, provisions must be made for them to be accessible to all, with the eventual aim of their being the standard, in line with a parallel expansion of na gaeltachtaí.

The CYM is actively engaged on university campuses in a numerous ways. Our members actively engage in, and run for positions in student's unions across the island, and push a platform that develops solidarity not just between students, but with staff as well. Our most

direct manifestation on campuses is through the Connolly Youth societies, which serve as the mass student organisations of the CYM.

2.4 Healthcare

Time and again, the healthcare systems north and south of the border have demonstrated their inability to properly serve the needs of the Irish people. Years of underfunding due to austerity measures have led to health issues for Irish youth becoming exceptionally severe.

Factors such as high levels of unemployment, and housing instability, have led to a mental health epidemic among the Irish youth. Ireland's suicide rate stands as one of the highest in Western Europe, with the 6 counties ranking among the top 15 in the world. Working-class communities suffer from chronic substance abuse issues, compounded by the state's approach of treating drug use as a criminal issue, rather than a health one.

When it comes to the healthcare system directly, the situation is just as dire. The National Health Service (NHS) in the 6 counties, and the Health Service Executive (HSE) in the 26 are systematically underfunded by their respective governments. This has led to widespread issues among healthcare workers such as poor pay and conditions, further harming the quality of care available to those who need it. The services also face the pressures of privatisation, with sectors regularly being sold off, to the detriment of both staff and patients.

As with many of the topics we have covered in this programme, much of the blame for the current state of healthcare in Ireland can be laid at the doorstep of austerity. Cuts to public healthcare, especially in the disability care and mental health sectors were some of the first

implemented by Leinster House and Stormont. The mass unemployment and housing insecurity that followed the crash simply served to exacerbate the failures of an already crippled system, leading to the issues that we observe today. As privatisation became the rule, young people saw every aspect of their lives increasingly commodified, causing community wide problems of mental health issues, which themselves gave rise to widespread substance abuse. In the 6 counties, these issues were further compounded by post-traumatic stress, both direct and inter-generational, arising out of the conflict, a condition made considerably worse by the uptick of paramilitary violence that accompanied the subsequent economic and political instability in the region.

As these issues are allowed to fester, they lead to a development of chronic health issues that turn people into lifelong patients, forced to seek private care due to the waiting lists and lack of specialist care endemic to state services. This scarcity of resources is then used as a tool to undermine solidarity among working-class communities, especially in the 6 counties, where people are forced to fight over the scraps left over from the state-led dismembering of services.

Only through an island-wide, 32 county nationalised health service can we see the problems discussed above be addressed. Such a system would guarantee that comprehensive healthcare services are provided to all, with adequate pay and acceptable conditions for staff. Funding for mental health services must be given greater priority, with a shift towards a social model of treating conditions, that places the onus of care on society, rather than the blame on the individual. Community based initiatives would also be a vital component.

However, the CYM recognises that such a system will never come to be established without the formation of a socialist republic in Ireland.

Capitalism has neither the means, nor the will to address the problems we have already described. The socialist model of health, exhibited best in the Republic of Cuba, has demonstrated itself to be the superior of any capitalist system. When people are prioritised over profit, the whole of society benefits.

That does not mean that we can simply stand by and do nothing under the current system. The CYM opposes any attempts at further privatisation of either the NHS or HSE, and will constantly strive to organise in working class communities to help fight against attempts to privatise services and reduce funding for mental services and treatment facilities. Within the organisation we are also committed to the development of a healthy counter-culture that opposes substance abuse, and provides a space for members free of the commodification and individualism they experience in the rest of their lives.

2.5 Workers' Rights

In capitalist society there exists an unresolvable contradiction between the bourgeois and working classes. While productivity has risen over the last two decades, this has not been paralleled by a rise in wages, which have stagnated, failing to keep up with rising living costs. Within the workplace, precarity has increased exponentially, with fixed pay and terms, once staples of employment in the previous century, now being unattainable for the vast majority of workers. The brunt of these new working conditions has fallen on young people, who find themselves facing serious challenges brought on by casual and precarious employment. They find themselves fundamentally alienated, from themselves, their co-workers, and even their work itself, unable to effectively experience or build solidarity within their

workplace. This is compounded further by their being cut-off from effective trade union representation. The rights of workers are constantly under attack, the last point on the agenda for politicians either on the island of Ireland, or in the EU, who's responsibilities and interests are only to enhance the profits of the ruling class by exploiting Irish labour.

The situation in which labour currently finds itself can be traced to the current dominant ideology of capitalism: neoliberalism. With the 1991 dissolution of the USSR, western capitalism found it no longer had a viable threat on the world stage, and so abandoned any pretence of acknowledging the interests of workers. What followed was a forward march to privatisation in every sector, from healthcare, to housing, to education. The attacks on unions that had been gaining ground since the 1980s, now came to a head with the rise of social partnership, with the state, employers, and unions all ostensibly working together, which in reality meant the complete defanging of unions in the interests of capital.

This new philosophy has led trade unions to become disconnected from the working class. They have become top-heavy with bureaucracy, populated almost entirely with career officials, who see a stable (and therefore lucrative) relationship with both the government and employers as more important than fighting for the rights of the working class. The focus has shifted from attempting to organise in new areas and attract new members, to maintaining their old membership lists to keep a steady income from dues. Where unions would once be consistently representing their members in the workplace in the event of disputes, this role has now been filled by Human Resource departments working on behalf of the company. Workers now find

themselves totally at the mercy of their employers, with any mediation being conducted entirely on their terms.

The root cause of all the above issues is capitalism's inherent nature. In order to propagate their wealth, capitalists must expropriate the wealth created by workers, and inflict poverty wages and precarious work, while undermining any attempts at working-class organisation. While the capitalist system continues to exist, these contradictions will never be overcome. With that in mind however, there are several short-term measures that must be implemented to improve the conditions of the working-class.

The minimum wage as it stands is incapable of providing a decent standard of living for workers, who consistently struggle to afford basic necessities such as rent, education, or a healthy diet. A damning aspect of the minimum wage is that it is distinct (and considerably lower) from the living wage (the amount recognised as being the minimum necessary to maintain a decent standard of living). This discrepancy must be done away with, the minimum wage being brought up to, and maintained at the living wage level. This must be extended across the board, including the bringing in line of apprenticeship wages, and the scrapping of the lower minimum wage for under-18s.

Outside of payment in the workplace, existing provisions surrounding parental leave, sick pay, and holiday pay must be expanded, as they currently create a scenario whereby workers continue to work despite being heavily pregnant, in desperate need of childcare, or are suffering from sickness or injury.

Employment contracts, which dictate the rights of workers and responsibilities of employers, are also heavily weighted towards the

latter. While zero-hour contracts, for instance, are illegal in the 26 counties, it is very easy for employers to circumvent this, for instance by contracting an employee for 3 or 4 hours a week. The restriction on such contracts must be expanded upon and rigorously enforced. In the 6 counties, a ban must be implemented, as zero-hour contracts are still legal in the statelet. Provisions of probation within contracts, that restrict an employees rights for a certain period of time after their start date, must also be banned, with full rights granted to employees regardless of their tenure.

Many of the above-mentioned solutions require legislative action, but as an organisation, the CYM are engaged in several actions to advance the agenda of the working-class. Broadly, as a Marxist-Leninist organisation it is our responsibility to raise the consciousness of our class, highlighting the contradictions between the interests of ourselves and our exploiters, the bourgeoisie. In our workplaces, we engage in a concerted effort to agitate and educate on the importance of trade unions to young people, in an attempt to make it easier and more accessible for them to join and engage with them. We have discussed previously the issues with present trade unions, and it is only through the mass participation of young people that they can be steered in the direction of becoming a strong representative of the working-class.

2.6 Civil Rights

The principle contradiction within capitalist society is that between classes. However, capitalism has proven itself adept at fostering division within the working class, along lines such as gender, race, religion, and nationality. This has led to the working-class facing challenges which

have their origins in class relations. These challenges manifest in varying forms of prejudice and bigotry, such as misogyny, homophobia, sectarianism, and transphobia. These prejudices materialise in all aspects of life, creating additional divisions, and hindering the development of class solidarity. In the 6 counties, the usual aspects of prejudice are found, with the added dominating presence of sectarianism between Catholic and Protestant communities. In the 26 counties, which has fostered a reputation internationally for its supposed social progressivism, much of the prejudices which prevail are obscured. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the CYM as an organisation to challenge these prejudices wherever they arise, and to educate and organise our class towards their opposition.

2.6.1 Women

The CYM is a Marxist-Feminist organisation, understanding Marxist-Feminism as an integral part of Marxist-Leninism and Socialist-Republicanism. Under capitalism, women face the issues of the working-class to an even greater degree, through the dual oppression of capitalism and patriarchy. Issues that never arise for men do so daily for women, such as the lack of access to reproductive healthcare (abortion services, contraception), inadequate or unaffordable childcare, and unpaid labour expected of them in the form of housework. The barriers that are created by this inability to access these services, and the mental and physical toll of housework, impact women in their search for gainful employment, as well as in political representation, leading to a cycle of invisibility and propagation of the issues.

In society generally, it is accepted that women's primary contribution is their sexuality, with wholesale objectification in the form of advertisements, media, and pornography enforcing this view. The outcome is predictable: a sense of possession of, and entitlement to women's bodies on the part of men, that leads inevitably to regular instances of sexual and domestic violence, abuse, and femicide.

Why is this the case? Patriarchy is not an invention of capitalism, but became an integral aspect of the system as it developed. During the period of primitive accumulation in the 16th and 17th centuries, women saw their rights, privileges, and respect within their communities stripped violently, so as to confine them to the home. There they saw their role restricted to that of homemaker, and more clinically, reproducers of the proletarian labour necessary for capitalism's development. As women became more and more atomised within the nuclear family, the ideology of individualism was enforced, and passed down between generations. As capitalism developed and became more sophisticated, it became more and more clear that women's sexuality was an incredibly effective advertisement for products, and so objectification became wholesale.

How could the barriers placed in the way of women be lifted? Some solutions would be provision of services to mitigate the issues that build the barriers in the first place. For example, the provision of childcare and reproductive health services, and the reorganising of housework as a collective responsibility, to remove the weight of homemakership. With those barriers removed, women would be able to participate more fully in political and mass organisations, bringing their issues to the forefront of those movements. We also support the implementation of Clare's Law (allowing women to request information about potential abusers) in the 26 counties as a positive step toward the prevention of

domestic violence and the right to receive information in order to make informed decisions about one's relationship. In the 6 counties, we support an expansion of present provisions, to allow women's aid organisations to make the disclosure requests by proxy for the applicant should they not wish to interact with law enforcement

As an organisation, the CYM is involved in various activities and initiatives to promote the cause of women's liberation. Regular education is carried out within the organisation, on topics such as consent, reproductive rights, and women's liberation. Misogynistic attitudes are regularly combated through this education, and a system of reprimanding and challenging misogyny and male chauvinistic attitudes is in place. More broadly, we regularly engage in campaigns surrounding women's issues, such as the Repeal the 8th campaign, as well as with feminist organisations.

2.6.2 LGBTQ+

Oppression of the LGBTQ+ community has been a staple of capitalism since its inception. As with other groups, they face capitalism as members of the working-class, with an added layer of discrimination on account of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

While same-sex relationships have been given legal recognition on par with any other relationships, they are still considered abnormal from a societal standpoint. This manifests in several ways. For instance, LGBTQ+ face a public stigma surrounding their sexual relationships. This stigma further arises in the daily occurrences of street harassment experienced by LGBTQ+ people, as well as in regular instances of hate crimes.

There is a dearth of LGBTQ+ specific services and supports, for example in the case of transition healthcare, of which there is only one service in Ireland, which insists on an invasive psychiatric model of care. This has led to the LGBTQ+ community experiencing disproportionately high levels drug and alcohol abuse, as well as mental health issues and suicide. This coupled with a propagation of a false and imported culture within the media, focused on hyper-sexualisation and stereotypes, has left the community in a dire situation.

Patriarchy, and capitalism's rapid uptake of it, are once again at the centre of blame. The LGBTQ+ community does not conform to the family structure promoted by capitalism, and so present a challenge to its hegemony. This is alongside the impact and influence of religious institutions on government and society, established before capitalism, and working hand-in-hand with it since.

What is to be done to alleviate the issues facing the LGBTQ+ community? At the core are access to both education and healthcare which respects their identity. However, simple access is not enough; rather, any efforts should result in education that is led by the LGBTQ+ community, for the LGBTQ+ community. From a legal standpoint, while relationships between same-sex couples have been recognised, and recognition of a transgender identity is permitted within the binary framework of male/female, no such recognition exists for non-binary people. On a community level, the lack of sober and non-commercial community spaces for socialising is a serious detriment to the health and well-being of the community and must be rectified.

As an organisation, the CYM is committed to combatting queerphobic attitudes and beliefs, as well as reprimanding such behaviour among its

members. Education is conducted regularly on LGBTQ+ issues both internally, and with guest speakers. Our demonstration ethos towards Pride is to remove it from corporate influence, and build spaces not designed for profit.

2.6.3 Disability

Ireland's disabled community off-times find themselves totally forgotten by social movements, but face a slew of issues and barriers unique to themselves.

On a day-to-day basis they face a lack of services and accessibility aids that can make carrying out their daily lives incredibly difficult, if not impossible. When interacting with the state, this sense of being forgotten is exacerbated by the definition of disability held and enforced by the ruling class: that it is the fault of the disabled person, and subsequently their cross alone to bear. This viewpoint radiates outwards into society at large, where they are stigmatised and alienated.

When disabled people do need to avail of the state for support, the process they must go through is invasive, extensive, and in many cases humiliating. If these supports are made available, the workers that provide the care are in most cases overworked and underpaid.

While conditions for disabled people in Ireland were already poor, the austerity policies following the 2008 financial crash worsened them exponentially. Disabled people were not viewed as productive members of society, and so cuts to their supports were viewed as acceptable.

From a broader policy perspective, the model by which disability is understood is sorely lacking. As mentioned above, a disability is understood to be the fault of the disabled, and is therefore their problem (the medical model). This narrow definition and attribution of responsibility drastically undercuts any attempts at solidarity with the working-class more broadly.

However, a possible solution to this is an adoption of what is known as the social model: that a disability arises as a result of interactions between the disabled person and their environment. If the proper supports and accessibility aids are in place such that the person can engage regularly in their daily life, they are no longer considered disabled. It is obvious as to why this model has never been adopted under capitalism; to do so would acknowledge the responsibility of the state to its citizens, and also that a disabled person is as valuable as an abled one. In practice this approach would lead to an easier access to supports, more accessibility in public and social settings, and a great sense of solidarity between disabled and abled people.

As an organisation, the CYM mobilises against austerity measures, such as cuts to supports, and campaigns for meaningful improvements in line with the social model. We also hold regular education on disability issues, as well as strive to make the organisation as a whole more accessible.

2.6.4 Racism

As a capitalist society, racism is pervasive in Ireland. Minorities are regularly the victims of assaults and harassment. Police profiling and

harassment are all too common, and the issues that face other minorities with regards to improper access to healthcare and education, and disproportionate levels of substance abuse abound. Ireland does, however, have certain aspects to its racism that make it different to other countries.

The first among these is that the bulk of "societally accepted" racism is directed at Mincéirí (commonly referred to as Travelers, or the travelling community), a group indigenous to the island. A traditionally nomadic group, Mincéirí face systemic racism in almost every aspect of their lives. Halting sites, areas where caravans are parked and Mincéirí are designated to live, are almost always located on the worst ground available, many being devoid of basic services such as running water. Life expectancy for Mincéirí sits at an average of 60 for men, and 70 for women, 15 years less than the settled population. On top of this, constant surveillance by Gardaí is common leading to an exceedingly high incarceration and profiling rate among the community. In terms of education, their nomadic lifestyle leads to Mincéirí being unable to access consistent education, which leads to disadvantages further on in life in terms of employment and housing. On a day-to-day level, they find themselves barred from many avenues of public life, with many pubs and restaurants operating unofficial "No Traveller" policies.

Ireland's membership of the EU has left many economic migrants at the mercy of the union's freedom of movement. Many migrants, especially from Eastern Europe, are brought to Ireland with the promise of a better life, and are instead met with low wages, poor living conditions, and systemic discrimination. The extreme example awaits those from outside the EU: Direct Provision is a legal requirement for those seeking asylum in the 26 counties, in which asylum seekers must

await the results of their case in various centres around the state, often in cramped conditions lacking adequate food or cooking facilities (due to the majority of centres being repurposed hotels) without the right to work, and with poor prospects for their children. There is no constitutional guarantee that a child born in the 26 counties will be granted citizenship, and many of these children are left in legal limbo for much of their lives.

The nominal independence of the 26 county Free State led to a desire among the new bourgeoisie to ingratiate themselves into the European capitalist order. Being a young capitalist state emulating more established ones, it strove to adopt policies and practices from the continent. And what is more European than racism?

Racism in the Irish context is, fundamentally, an import. Ireland never had colonies of its own that necessitated the development of a racial hierarchy as a means to assert dominance. There was no historic power imbalance between ethnicities in the way that it exists in Britain or France. As the Free State developed more and more in a neo-colonial direction during its consolidation following the civil war, so more and more did its racial politics come to reflect this. Mincéirí were the first to experience this racism, with the state ruthlessly enforcing the criminalisation of nomadism codified under British rule. Due to the fact that Mincéirí are a white population, assimilation was pursued wholesale in an attempt to wipe out any culture that may differentiate them from the settled population. In this respect, the state's actions resemble most those carried out in the United States and Canada towards American Indian, First Nation, and Inuit populations.

How can this be rectified? Through the integration of minority groups into local communities and Irish society by removing the barriers to their

inclusion. It must be recognised that the vast majority of minority groups are members of the working-class, and as such it is vital that solidarity be developed across ethnic lines.

The CYM is committed to a policy of integration within the organisation, not assimilation. We are working towards developing solidarity among our comrades, rather than promoting liberal concepts such as “allyship”. Tokenism on the part of government initiatives must be rejected, as must the same overtures from capitalism attempting to rebrand itself as inclusive. On a practical level, this means engagement with groups committed to the development of these solidarity links, in the migrant and Mincéir communities.

2.6.5 Sectarianism

Sectarianism is an issue pervasive throughout Northern society, enforced through both official and unofficial channels. State institutions such as Stormont and the PSNI enforce this in a variety of ways. Catholics are subject to vastly more stop-and-searches than their Protestant counterparts, and are victims of profiling more generally. Catholic areas suffer from a serious housing crisis as a result of both state inaction on public housing, as well as Loyalist paramilitary intimidation making Protestant areas uninhabitable for Catholics. This paramilitary intimidation and violence is ubiquitous, and in some instances goes as far as the ethnic cleansing of areas. Education too is segregated. While integrated schools do exist, the vast majority of schools are segregated.

More violent and verbose displays of sectarianism manifest in the form of rioting and explicit Loyalist celebrations. Frequently, rioting is used and encouraged by the Unionist establishment to direct the anger and

resentment of Protestant communities, especially among the youth, away from the source of the problems (capitalism and Unionism) and towards a convenient scapegoat (Catholics). The bonfires and parades of the 11th and 12th of July are further manifestations. While many participants would not consider themselves sectarian, these events have an explicitly sectarian character, often involving the burning of Catholic regalia, such as tricolours, as well as effigies of Catholic politicians. The marching on the 12th is a clear-cut case of triumphalism, celebrating a victory over the Catholic enemy, while subsequently asserting dominance over Catholic communities by directing their marches through their streets.

The British presence in the 6 counties is the direct cause of sectarianism in the region. Through a policy of divide and rule, Britain established a loyal sub-section of the working-class who, as a result of their position as a labour aristocracy, came to identify with the Protestant hierarchy, rather than with Catholic workers. This had the effect of undercutting radical movements who were forced to rely on one community or the other, rather than being able to organise across both. For instance, republican movements in the last century drew almost exclusively from the Catholic community, while communist groups were generally Protestant, seriously hamstringing the effectiveness of both.

Integration is the key to overcoming sectarianism in the 6 counties. Theatres such as education and housing must become cross-community endeavours. Loyalist ideology must be challenged, through the organisation of alternative cultural events celebrating the history of cross-community movements such as the United Irishmen. The workplace is currently where most cross-community engagement happens, and as such trade unions are the most immediate vehicle for overcoming sectarian divides.

The CYM is engaged in multiple anti-sectarian efforts in the 6 counties. Our members engage in de-escalation efforts at interfaces during periods of violence. We are a cross-community organisation, with both Catholic and Protestant members. We also maintain active links with Trademark, the anti-sectarian unit of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

2.7 The Sex Trade

The sex trade is an industry that is rapidly expanding across Ireland. It continues to prey on vulnerable groups, exacerbated by increased austerity. However, it is a nebulous industry to analyse and, subsequently, providing support to its participants can be difficult. Established methods of organising such as unionisation may not be effective as there is very rarely an accountable employer to organise against *en masse*.

It is precarious work both in terms of job security, as well as via threats to the physical and emotional well-being of its participants. It is an industry whose participants are overwhelmingly women, and increasingly come from particularly socially vulnerable backgrounds, such as asylum seekers, or single mothers. Many women find themselves unable to access secular and non-judgemental services to care for their well-being, whether they are remaining within the industry or wish to exit. Neither jurisdiction on this island has succeeded in providing comprehensive, fit-for-purpose legislation that places the stigma and blame where it belongs: on the buyer, and the state. Participation in the industry carries with it risks of pregnancy, sexually-transmitted illnesses, sexual/physical violence, and isolation from the wider community due to the shame of the trade being incorrectly placed upon the seller.

The sex industry must also be examined from a class perspective. Primarily it is rich buying poor, oppressor buying oppressed. This intensifies the power imbalance even further, denying those in the trade due autonomy, respect, and choice. Beyond individual harms, there is a wider reach. The sex trade further dehumanises women and other vulnerable populations in the eyes of men and negates the possibility of class solidarity on a cross-sex basis. Effectively, it further divides the working-class by sex, teaching them to see each other as adversaries, objects, and commodities, rather than as natural allies.

Work within the traditional labour market has become particularly inhospitable to young people, especially those who are socially vulnerable or may not be able to balance a suitable employment while in pursuit of higher education. It is no coincidence that when austerity is further imposed upon our class, more people are pushed into the sex trade through necessity and must engage in sex work in order to manage the rising costs of living. There are many reasons that women in particular are pushed into the trade in Ireland, such as rising childcare costs rendering them unable to hold traditional non-flexible employment, lack of mental healthcare and addiction services, as well as the degradation of relations between men and women leading many men to see women, first and foremost, as sex objects.

While the sex trade is an international, and well-funded industry, it is not insurmountable. It is vital that those that sell sex are enabled to organise into suitable trade unions or advocacy groups of their choice, that can campaign, from an informed perspective, to pass representative, comprehensive, and effective legislation. Membership of these organisations must not be open to pimps or buyers. Comprehensive, secular services must be provided, specifically equipped to work with those involved in the sex trade, including

services both for those who wish to remain, and those that wish to leave. The latter must be supported through the funding of fit for purpose and community informed right to exit services. Legislation is also vital to protect those selling sex or other services, and must be drawn up in consultation with the community. Finally, preventative measures are vital, such as increased funding to childcare, healthcare, and community development, to mitigate and eventually remove the risk of women being pushed into the sex trade. The Connolly Youth Movement does not support the criminalisation of the selling of sex, and believes it should be legal in order to facilitate full engagement with available services and organisations for those in the sex trade to increase their agency and autonomy. However this does not mean that we view the relationship between buyers and sellers as being an equal one devoid of a massive power imbalance and exploitation, and we unreservedly condemn the buying of sex.

The CYM is engaged at every level at its disposal in opposing the sex trade. Internally, it is committed to educating its members on the realities and complexities of the trade, to spur a cultural shift that encourages men and women to view each other as natural allies, rather than adversaries and objects. We advocate for the aforementioned right to exit services, as well as services of the same suitability for those who cannot, or do not wish to exit the trade (either immediately, or at any point). This includes care for sexual, physical, and emotional health, safety planning services, and a method of reporting violence and abuse that does not require the involvement of law enforcement. The involvement of police services invariably acts as a deterrent to participants seeking justice and a method of recourse. More broadly, our members are involved in the organisation of precarious workers in the traditional labour market, which will in turn prevent them from being pushed into the sex trade against their will.

2.8 The Environment

Climate breakdown is the most immediately pressing issue facing the working class, and the world at large, today. As temperatures rise globally, ecosystems are faced with total collapse, threatening the extinction of countless species, and the planet as we know it. This destabilisation of the climate will exacerbate already frequent climate disasters and the humanitarian crises that result. As sea level rise, desertification, and as extreme weather events continue and intensify, mass displacement of human populations will result, leading to greater and greater strain on Earth's finite resources.

Capitalism will, however, continue at its present pace, over-exploiting these resources in the ceaseless drive for increasing profits. This will further damage the natural world, worsening the situation for all. Conflict is, then, the most likely outcome. The capitalist nations will seek to secure what little resources remain for themselves, resulting in wars that will do nothing but further enrich capitalists, and cause an unforgivable loss of life. The massive amount of resources needed to pursue these wars, and indeed wars in the present (the US military for example is the world's greatest polluter), will only deepen the crisis.

As capitalism is a for-profit system, it requires constant exploitation of natural resources, purely to produce profits for the capitalist class. The primary culprits behind the climate crisis, for example fossil fuel industries, are also the most highly profitable, generating billions annually. With so much to lose, it is unlikely that capitalism will be willing to abandon its most lucrative sources of revenue.

Historically, the exploitation of natural resources has gone hand in hand with global imperialism. Empires expanded into the global south for the purposes of stripping the raw materials and transporting them back to

the metropole for the purposes of generating capital, and with this expansion came extreme repression and brutalisation of indigenous populations. While the old empires may have fallen, their mantle has been taken up by modern multinationals, who carry out the same mission through globalisation and neo-colonialism.

With the destruction of the planet being such a lucrative enterprise, it is little wonder that the political will to address it does not, and indeed cannot, exist under capitalism. Where do we go from here? The short amount of time available to address the climate crisis necessitates that any solution be radical and revolutionary. Anything less is a wasted effort.

In the short-term, an increased transition to renewable energy is vital, conducted in a manner that respects employment while placing the burden on capitalists, rather than the working class. Land must be reclaimed for public use, and put towards the development of community spaces. Public transport and infrastructure must be developed to replace the current over-reliance on personal vehicles, especially in rural areas which have suffered from the lack of these services to a crippling degree. While renewables are being developed, nuclear energy must also be explored as a potential solution.

However, we recognise that the climate crisis is an international issue: ecological and environmental boundaries do not follow political borders. In this global tackling of climate change, multinationals must no longer be considered sovereign entities, granted the same rights as individuals, but must rather be dealt with for what they are: the destroyers of our planet.

We also understand that there is no purely technological solution to the current crisis. While a transition away from the most destructive extractive practises to more sustainable ones is vital, any such action which does not also recognise the systemic problems of capitalism which have caused the present crisis will only perpetuate a “green imperialism”: the oppression and exploitation of the global south for the resources necessary to make the just transition in the global north. As stated by Brazilian socialist and ecologist Chico Mendes: “Ecology without class struggle is just gardening”. We therefore see national liberation as a vital component of the solution, as a means of countering this “green imperialism” of the capitalist system. The climate crisis will only be solved through a concerted global effort of socialist construction, wherein the extraction of resources and production of energy is based solely on the needs of the people and society.

The CYM will agitate for the realisation of the above proposals, participating in environmental campaigns with the goal of shifting the objectives from liberal reforms to revolutionary political change. We will participate in actions within our communities through the reclaiming of green spaces, and the construction of community gardens to promote environmental consciousness among the youth of the working class.

Conclusion

In the pages above, we have outlined the problems that capitalism brings to bear on our class. At first glance, by its sheer breadth, they may seem insurmountable. They are present, as we have stated, in every aspect of our lives, from the food we consume when we get up, to our education and workplaces, our leisure time, and even in our dreams.

However, despite all this, there is nothing more powerful, nothing more indomitable or indefatigable than the working-class united and acting as one. This programme takes the first step in this development of unity and class consciousness. Its purpose is to educate our class on who its class enemies are, and what the realities are of the capitalist system they propagate. It serves as the blueprint so we can go forward to agitate in our workplaces, communities, and universities, and organise our comrades for the overthrow of capitalism, and the beginning of the organisation of a socialist society.

While the task ahead may seem daunting, we can always take comfort in the words of our namesake: "Our demands most moderate are, we only want the earth".



TEN POINT PROGRAMME

Anti-Imperialism: We strive for an Ireland free from all imperialism and colonialism: the end of the British presence in the north, American presence at Shannon, and Ireland's withdrawal from the European Union.

Civil Rights: We strive for a fair society that resolutely tackles all forms of bigotry and discrimination, such as misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, racism and sectarianism.

Culture: We strive for a revolutionary culture that provides an alternative to substance abuse, individualism and the domination of Anglo-American culture through the promotion of health, collective concern, and a radical Irish culture.

Education: We want a free, secular, and integrated education system; with the abolition of tuition fees and a curriculum that promotes the unity between social sciences and natural sciences.

Environment: We demand a revolutionary resolution to the climate crisis that guarantees workers do not suffer for the capitalist-induced crisis.

Gaeilge: We want the protection and promotion of the Irish language across the island and the expansion of na Gaeltachtaí.

Healthcare: We want an all-Ireland public health service which properly addresses mental health and substance abuse, committed to public welfare and not private profit.

Housing: We demand an end to the housing crisis through a public housing programme, private rent caps, and an end to vulture funds.

Internationalism: We want an Ireland that actively stands in solidarity with the anti-imperialist causes and the struggles of the oppressed throughout the world.

Worker's Rights: We strive for a comprehensive system of worker's rights; a repeal of anti-trade union legislation, a living wage at all ages, and an end to precarious work.

