

An FG/FF coalition? Now it looks possible

FINE Gael has abandoned its plan to introduce a Cabinet with equal representation of men and women. The 50:50 split was intended to be announced if the party had returned to power with Labour, but political realities have forced it to be moved to the back-burner.

As it happens, gender quotas in the general election were a good thing. Some constituencies elected women for the first time in history, and many older men realised that their sex, and dynastic service to their parties, would no longer be the only credentials they needed to secure nominations to run as candidates. That lesson has now hopefully been learned forever, and we certainly look forward to seeing the different influences women bring to whatever government is formed.

An insistence on the retention of the plan for Cabinet, though, could easily have been a stumbling block in talks between Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil as they dance around the idea of a grand coalition, or at least a minority government with support.

Already, we have seen Fianna Fáil row back on its pre-election statement that those who had not paid their water charges would not be pursued. Now, the party says, any arrears must be collected directly from their wages.

And so, one by one, it seems the stumbling blocks are being removed and that progress is being made. Whether a marriage between the two main Civil War parties proves to be one made in heaven or in hell, there is no denying that we need a government and we need one very soon. Too many issues – housing, health, education and the economy – need immediate attention. We would like to see more women at the Cabinet table but for now, it's far more important that the best people, regardless of their sex, get the jobs – and then get to work.

Storm over cups

WHEN is a recyclable coffee cup not a recyclable coffee cup? When it comes from Insomnia or Costa, it seems.

Both café chains print the recycle label on their takeaway cups, but because these contain composite material that is impossible to separate, their cups are incinerated instead.

The chains should stop fooling people. We have, from a very slow start, become one of the world's best nations at recycling. We are all familiar with what goes in our two, three, or even four, domestic wastebins, and most of us are diligent about separating our rubbish.

That's why, when we buy takeaway coffee, we usually do so with clear consciences. It is good to hear that at least the cups are not going to landfill sites but nonetheless, it is also time that any cup that really cannot be recycled should not bear a logo suggesting that the opposite is true.

Craic agus cleaning

IT looks like the St Patrick's Day festivities are set to give a €1billion shot in the arm to the economy – with shops, pubs, restaurants and hotels all reporting bumper business. No doubt the bookies did well out of Cheltenham, too.

This is good news and vindicates the strategy, started 21 years ago, to turn what was a single day of celebrations into an entire weekend of events that finally put the birthplace of St Patrick on a par with the big American cities that once stole our thunder on March 17.

But others deserve a pat on the back, too. Yesterday morning at 9am, we sent photographers around Dublin city centre to see if there were mountains of litter left behind by revellers. Instead, the city was absolutely spotless. To all the people responsible for making sure that we no longer have to speak of Dirty Dublin, congratulations and thank you.

WHY THE LEFT

Socialism should have been consigned to the ash-heap of history when the Berlin Wall fell. Instead, it is back with a vengeance at home and abroad. Yet this discredited creed – espoused by Sinn Féin, Richard Boyd Barrett et al – has caused nothing but misery, death and destruction. It MUST be rejected

SHORTLY after the fall of communism in 1989, I was lecturing a group of university students on the topic of 'Marxism'. I intended to show why this so-called 'philosophy' was not only discredited but also deeply dangerous. The Berlin Wall had fallen and the grim reality of what lay behind the Iron Curtain was obvious for all to see.

After the lecture, my students asked why on earth we were studying something that had led to so much genocide and untold misery. The fact that Karl Marx exerted such influence on recent history was irrelevant. A system, after all, can only be judged by its consequences, and communism had been revealed as something monstrous.

According to *The Black Book Of Communism*, published in 1997 by a future German president among others, communism was responsible for the deaths of 94million souls. Under Chairman Mao, 65million Chinese perished. Lenin, Stalin and their fellow dictators in Eastern Europe succeeded in killing 30million. Pol Pot has the special distinction of having massacred one third of the Cambodian population in just four years.

Add to that the living hell endured by those who escaped the forced famines, the gulags and, of course, the 'great leap forward' in China. The terrible poverty, the hopelessness and the intense fear that you might be reported for crimes against the Communist Party.

My friend, the late philosopher Jacques Derrida, was arrested and imprisoned by the Czech Communist authorities in 1981. Of that experience he later wrote: 'Until one is touched by something like this, one cannot imagine what a paradise of liberty we live in.'

Yet now, in this our paradise of liberty, we have political parties that still style themselves as 'socialist'. Even after a century of communist cruelty and despair, the Irish left continues to peddle the same old Marxist dogma that devastated half the globe. Without a hint of shame, Sinn Féin, People Before Profit, the Anti-Austerity Alliance and independent TDs like Mick Wallace and Clare Daly, proudly wave the red flag.

This also extends to Britain, where Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn is a self-

confessed Marxist. Before his election as leader last year, Corbyn said that Marx 'was a fascinating figure who observed a great deal and from whom we can learn a great deal'. Given that we have already learned more than enough about the ruinous effects of Marxism, a comment like that ought to be dismissed as delusional. The fact remains, however, that Mr Corbyn is not only tightening his grip on the Labour Party, but riding the crest of a popular wave.

And then there is the ubiquitous figure of former Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, another self-declared Marxist who is currently advising everyone from the Irish left to Corbyn to the Scottish Nationalists. Not content with having brought his country to the brink of ruin last summer, Dr Varoufakis is now intent on doing likewise here and elsewhere.

On the eve of our recent general election, he demanded that the Irish electorate 'send Michael Noonan packing'.

You might think, following the mayhem Varoufakis and the Syriza Party visited upon Greece, that the socialist surge in Ireland, Britain, Spain and Portugal

SATURDAY
ESSAY



by Mark
Dooley

would have diminished. You might think that the litany of horrors perpetrated in Marx's name would be enough to consign his wretched system to the trash heap of history. On the contrary, not only are socialists and Marxists back in force, but they have consolidated their position in Irish politics.

Sinn Féin currently holds 23 seats in the Dáil, while People Before Profit and the Anti-Austerity Alliance have six. Add the left-wing independents and you have more than 30 seats held by people committed to a radical socialist agenda. Put simply: there is a sizeable socialist faction at large in Dáil Éireann.

Why is this? Why is it that even after all the atrocities and economic destruction, such discredited politics can still exert such a hold on the imagination? Study

the policies of those parties and you will very quickly see that they are full of the same empty slogans that characterised the communist manifestos.

We are told that everything, from the health service to our education system, must be nationalised or subject to state control. We are told that we must have a society founded on equality and 'social justice'. We are told that the wealthy – 'developers, bankers and investors' – must bear the highest tax burden for they are somehow responsible for most of our social and economic woes.

One of the reasons socialism refuses to go away, is that Marx predicted capitalism would one day give way to communism. Capitalism and the democratic order is, he said, an ideology that serves only the interests of the

powerful and wealthy. Not until that order is smashed will the ordinary workers finally realise how much they have been enslaved.

It doesn't matter that Marx never told us what this new communist utopia would look like. The only thing that matters is that the political system as we know it is overthrown.

Of course, that will require a revolution because capitalists and democrats won't relinquish power without a fight.

AT one level, this is intoxicating and inspiring. The idea of casting off the chains of custom in the name of 'social justice' is something that thrills the heart of those who long to change the world.

For grown-ups, however, it is rightly considered a danger to the rule of law and to the carefully crafted consensus upon which democracy depends.

As we saw at the beginning of the new parliamentary term last week, and as we regularly witness on our streets, the left are

IS NEVER RIGHT



Socialist surge: Sinn Féin's Mary Lou McDonald celebrates after being re-elected last month

impatient when it comes to compromise, negotiation and consensus. They are quite happy to contravene the established customs of Dáil Éireann. They are quite happy to break the law in pursuit of their 'ideals'. And, in questioning the decisions of the courts in relation to Thomas 'Slab' Murphy, Sinn Féin has shown that it has scant respect for judicial independence.

Of course, it is no surprise that judicial independence was always the first thing to go in communist countries. The actual courts were replaced by 'People's Courts', which simply worked to purge the enemies, and exonerate the friends, of the Communist Party. That they did so with ruthless efficiency explains why so many millions were dispatched to mass graves.

When, in October 2015, Gerry Adams visited Cuba, he claimed that the new rapprochement between Cuba and the United States will 'present many challenges', but that 'such challenges are part of the revolutionary struggle'.

The Castros have governed Cuba for more than 50 years. Why, then, is there still a need for revolution and struggle? What, in other words, are they still struggling towards?

The simple answer is that this

'longing for total revolution' cannot end until the communist paradise has been achieved. So long as capitalism survives, the revolution, and the party that pursues it, must persist. Not until the old world order is abolished, and we all enjoy a state of utopian socialist liberty, can we cease the struggle.

When Sinn Féin and the Anti-Austerity Alliance call for the abolition of water charges, people can either agree or disagree with them. For that is a policy issue that can be democratically debated like any other. However, would any of those people who back Sinn Féin on water charges enjoy living in a society where they could neither buy nor sell as they pleased? A society where everything was under the control of a state apparatus – an apparatus that routinely fails to run anything effectively? A society where people are targeted simply because of how much they earn, irrespective of the fact that such people provide the jobs and tax revenue to keep the country going?

Both Sinn Féin and People Before Profit assume that profit is intrinsically evil.

They assume that wealth is always earned at the expense of some group or class – people who are exploited

and not sufficiently paid for their services. That is why both parties scapegoat the 'wealthy', who are, for them, the new 'bourgeoisie'.

First, what incentive would anyone have to invest, develop or employ people, other than profit?

The profit motive is what makes economies tick and without it they would simply grind to a halt, as it did in the old Soviet Union. It is profit that enables businesses to operate effectively and entrepreneurs to create employment.

MOREOVER, the so-called 'wealthy' did not become so by exploitation or extortion. They made their money by hard work, risk and entrepreneurial innovation. Why, therefore, target their wealth, unless, of course, you believe that they earned it unjustly or you are simply driven by resentment at their success?

All of this is, of course, masked under the banner of 'equality', but we all know that there is no such thing as equality.

It is true that we are all equal before the law, but people have intrinsically different ambitions, talents,

beliefs and abilities. How, therefore, are you to suppress these differences without resorting to force? The question, it seems, answers itself.

If you want to know what all this looks like in practice, take a glance at the socialist experiment that Sinn Féin has already undertaken in West Belfast.

That benighted heartland of socialist republicanism boasts the highest levels of child poverty, the highest level of welfare dependency and the highest housing waiting lists in the UK. It also receives just 1% of job creation funds.

In other words, the so-called 'anti-austerity' policies of the militant Irish left lead only to one thing: perpetual poverty. Of course, like the communists before them, that is exactly how they like it.

For when you give people the skills, training and dignity to escape the poverty trap, they very quickly realise that, for all its faults, the capitalist way of life is far preferable to any other on offer – most especially the socialist alternative.

They also see the lunacy of opting for revolution over reform, resentment over accommodation and intimidation over democracy. And when that realisation dawns, the left very quickly loses their support.

Far better, therefore, to keep people dependent on the State so that you are assured of their vote.

Put simply, socialist politics is so intellectually and morally deficient it beggars belief why anyone should still subscribe to it. Gerry Adams, Mary Lou McDonald, Paul Murphy, Richard Boyd Barrett, Jeremy Corbyn and Yanis Varoufakis are but the latest in a long line of pseudo-Marxists who refuse to accept how politically and ethically vacuous it is.

The Communist crimes of the last century should have cured people of the temptation to peddle such dogma. And yet they continue to do so as if those crimes, and all the associated misery, never happened.

As we face into a new Dáil term, in which politicians of a socialist persuasion are preparing to cause as much trouble as they can, we should think hard about where their longing for total revolution may one day lead us.

And then we should challenge them to say what moral justification they could possibly have for promoting a cause whose only legacy is murder, despair and mayhem. In the end, of course, there is no justification, which goes to prove that the only thing we can still learn from Marx is why the left is never right.