



**VOTE**  
**Eamonn**  
**McCANN**  
**FOR FOYLE**



**socialist environmental alliance**

**TURN THE TIDE**

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# Manifesto



**O**ur approach to politics is to put the interests of the working class first. Politics in Ireland, North and South, has long been dominated by Nationalism and Unionism demanding that other issues wait until the border question is finally settled. The result is two states dominated by capitalism and imposing a corporate agenda — and, within the North, two communities in competition with one another. Radical change is needed: we stand for action to bring this about. If elected, our candidates will declare themselves 'Others'. We are for the fullest respect for religious and cultural expression. But we reject the notion that religious background and political outlook should be one and the same.

The mass opposition to violence repeatedly demonstrated over the years is betrayed by politicians who cling to the old sources of dissension.

Nationalist and Unionist parties are at daggers drawn on issues to do with

"community". But they have a common agenda when it comes to the basics.

Curbs on public spending, private finance in schools and hospitals, and lower taxes on business dominate the Programme for Government agreed by the four-party outgoing Executive.

We stand for active resistance to this agenda. We will encourage and support union action for decent pay and job security and against privatisation. We will back campaigns in working class communities for non-payment of water charges.

We are part of and take heart from the global movements against capitalism and war. We totally reject the idea that the issues which are convulsing the world have nothing to do with politics here. We make common cause with all those across the world who are fighting for the same things. We wouldn't have taken George Bush's hand at Hillsborough except to twist it up his back and run him out the room.

We will campaign for the rights of women, including the Right to Choose. We want to

galvanise opposition to sexism, sectarianism, racism, homophobia, and discrimination against people with disabilities or on grounds of age.

When we use the word "equality" we won't just mean Catholics and Protestants having equal shares of what the current system can offer.

Any of our candidates elected will accept only the average industrial wage. What's left will go towards campaigning on the issues we are standing on.

We are out to build for the future a broad organisation open to all individuals and organisations who support these ideas and who agree to work together to make them a reality.

Our overall aim is a socially just and ecologically sustainable world from which exploitation and oppression have been cleansed, in which there is peace, and where the common people are organised to defend themselves against hatred, want and the abuse of power.

## Inequality

**T**he top quarter of earners in the North have 56 percent of income. The bottom quarter have six percent.

This doesn't show the true extent of the gap. It includes only earnings. The super-rich get their real wealth from property and profits, while those on the bottom aren't earners at all.

Here is the most glaring example of inequality in our society. But the four main parties can argue about equality for hours without giving it a mention.

How can we understand anti-social behaviour, drugs problems, crime, violence, etc. without taking this into account?

This highlights the reason we have entered the election. We regard class divisions, not community differences, as the defining characteristic of our society.

We believe that the higher up the agenda we make class issues, the less difficult community problems will become.

There are aspects of this beyond the Assembly's remit. But there are specific things Assembly politicians could do—for a start, stop all privatisation and PFI schemes, and stop promoting Northern Ireland as a low-wage economy.

At the lower end of the pay scale—particularly for women—public sector workers are better-

paid and more secure than in the private sector. Any party serious about equality would declare that it won't sit in an Executive which proceeds any further down the privatisation road.

The Invest NI website tells potential investors that the North offers "employment costs that are up to 32 percent lower than in the US and 25 percent lower than the EU average. . . ." This makes a virtue of poverty wages. A party seriously against poverty would refuse to operate this perspective in government.

Half of all children living below the poverty line are living in families with at least one adult working. Poverty isn't caused by idleness. Poverty among people working, especially in one-worker households, is steadily growing.

The way to tell the politicians of other parties that you want these issues to the forefront is to vote Number One for Eamonn McCann in Foyle.

## Women's issues

**T**he SEA has the most radical agenda of all the parties on women's issues.

We will work within the Assembly for high-quality, state-funded care for children, elderly and disabled people. Without this, women cannot take their full place in public life.

Fighting poverty and low pay will benefit women most, because it's women who are most likely to be poor.

Support for a woman's right to choose comes from the same agenda. We are not out to introduce abortion. Abortion is already part of life here. Up to 60,000 women from the North have had abortions in Britain since 1967.

Whatever a n y b o d y ' s personal pos-

ition on abortion, those who support workers' rights should support legal abortion on the NHS. Otherwise, it's one law for the rich, another for the poor.

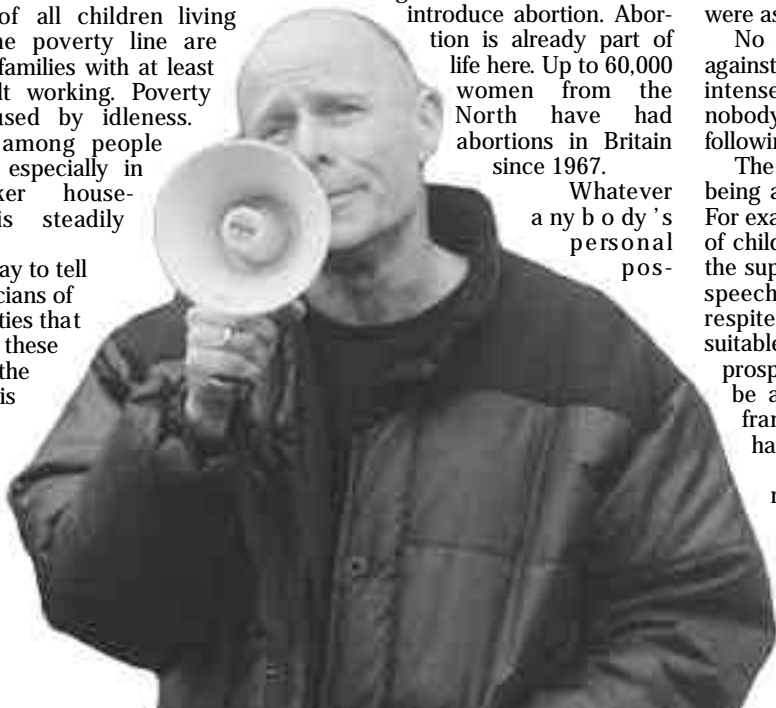
As things stand, women who can get the money together can travel across the water. But a woman with no resources is trapped.

The delays which result mean women from the North are three times more likely to have late abortions than women from Britain. Making abortion available on the NHS would remove the profit motive and ensure all terminations were as early as possible.

No one should be forced to go against their conscience on such an intensely personal matter. And nobody should be prevented from following their own conscience.

The right to choose also means being able to choose to give birth. For example, it's only when parents of children with disabilities enjoy all the support that can be provided—speech therapy, physiotherapy, respite care, financial support, suitable education and employment prospects etc.—that women will be able to decide in a positive frame of mind to have a handicapped child.

But all of these things require radical economic change which conservative campaigners can be counted on to oppose.





# Unemployment

This month, the government declared that the jobless rate in Derry is six percent, which is ridiculous. Maggie Thatcher changed the way unemployment was counted 18 times. On every occasion, Labour complained. But when they got into office they didn't reverse a single one of Thatcher's measures. The books stayed cooked.

If you define as unemployed everybody who has looked for work but not found any in the past four weeks, the figure for Derry isn't six percent, but 11 percent.

There are other categories, too, missing from official statistics: those who want to work but have given up looking; people on a New Deal scheme who would prefer a proper job; part-time workers who want to be full-time. Include these and the figure for the Foyle constituency was 24 percent last February and, after Desmonds, ShopElectric etc., is probably pushing 30 percent now.

And yet mainstream party spokespersons talk on television about how business is booming and Derry is "buzzing."

In a town where 6,000 people applied for 250 jobs in a department store, it's insulting that the unemployed have to prove they're "actively seeking work" to qualify for benefit. The merry-go-round of years of unemployment broken by training-for-nothing is insulting, too.

We need politics which puts unemployment back high up on the agenda. And whether it's the 300 jobs in Desmonds or the 600 under threat in the Water Service, or the other job threats to come, we need representatives who'll encourage a fight to hold on to the jobs we have.

# Wildcat bosses

Fire-fighters, bus-drivers, post office workers, etc. have all been recently accused of "wildcat" action. But the real problem is wildcat bosses.

In each case, managements took advantage of what they thought was a demoralised workforce to renege on pay deals or impose worse conditions.

In this situation, one of the reasons many workers hesitate to take action is a fear there'll be no public support. This is because there's no mainstream political voice clearly putting the workers' case. When a dispute breaks out, the main parties either back the bosses or appeal for "both sides to get together."

How could the firefighters "get together" with a management which was kicking them in the teeth? Or the bus workers, or postal staff?

Of the parties in Foyle, only the SEA can be counted on not to back the bosses or take the middle ground but to stand four-square on the side of workers struggling for decent pay and the right to be treated with dignity.

The other parties don't want issues like this on the political agenda. They want everything decided on an Orange-Green basis. We appeal directly to trade unionists and their families—this time, give yourself a voice, vote for a socialist.

# Protecting the environment

Protecting the environment is fundamental to the SEA. It is basic to both socialists and environmentalists that we should leave our children a better world than we inherited from our parents. We have to stop the drive for profit killing the planet.

There is a lot more the Assembly could do. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry's target is for 12 percent of electricity from renewable sources by 2012. Like the Green Party, we aim for 20 percent by 2010.

SEA activists were central to the successful campaign against an incinerator in the North West. Eamonn McCann will continue that work in the Assembly and will oppose incinerators proposed in other regions' waste plans.

Growth in waste by businesses using unnecessary packaging must be stopped.

Less than five percent of waste is recycled in the North—one of the worst records in Europe. We need a determined, publicly-funded strategy to reduce, reuse and recycle. Politicians who accept that all solutions have to be "market driven" and "economically viable" are a hindrance to progress.

Why must recycling be "econ-omically viable"? Landfill already costs us—environmentally, econ-omically and socially. Incinerators are more expensive still, particularly in relation to children's health. Why can't the money spent on landfill be devoted to publicly-funded recycling?

The blue bins were welcomed because most people want to help stop incineration and global warming. But many areas of the city still don't have them. And we have no kerbside collection of other recyclable material. There is much more to be done. Eamonn McCann in the Assembly will help get it done.



# Disaster of Iraq invasion

The horror now unfolding in Iraq was organised in Co. Down last April, where the SDLP, Sinn Fein, the Ulster Unionists and others provided Bush and Blair with cover.

The sole item on the agenda at the Hillsborough Castle summit was the post-war governance of Iraq. It was at Hillsborough that Bush and Blair agreed to cut the UN out and impose direct US/British military rule.

We see the disaster of the invasion on our television screens every night now. Bush and Blair have given birth to the monstrous thing they said they were going to war to prevent.

The Northern party leaders seemed oblivious to the implications and the irony as they arrived immediately after the war summit, "all to be lectured by the President and the Prime Minister on the need for a final move to a full and

lasting peace." The only journalist in the room, Peter Stothard, watched as, "The human chess pieces arrive, stand in a horse-shoe shape, and are severally and individually lectured."

Bush and Blair then went outside to greet the 500-plus journalists who had converged on Hillsborough. Had even one of the Northern party leaders taken an anti-war line and refused to greet Bush in protest against his war-plans, it would have been front-page world news. This may be the only occasion any of them will ever have to make a measurable impact on a major global development. But none of them stepped up to the mark.

On the back of a lorry outside Hillsborough Castle the night before, Eamonn McCann made the final speech at a rally called by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, pleading with Trimble,



Setting out on the Derry to Belfast walk against war in February 2003

Durkan and Adams even at that late stage to pull back. But of course they didn't.

It was the mandate they'd received at the last Assembly election which earned the party leaders their places in the line-up to be lectured.

The SEA asks for your Number One now, to give a mandate to those who lined up outside, against the war.



Anti-war demonstration outside Belfast City Hall



# Constitutional arrangements

**S**ocialists are opposed to the constitution in the South, which enshrines Catholic doctrine and the rights of private property. We are against the British constitution, with its hereditary monarchy. And we are against the constitutional arrangement represented by the Agreement, because of the way it entrenches sectarianism.

Throughout these islands, however, we get on with the business of organising to defend working class interests, opposing sectarianism, racism, etc., and fighting for a fairer society. We look forward to the day when constitutional arrangements will reflect a new reality.

It's regularly said by other parties that there's no alternative to the way things work under the Agreement except a return to war. What they mean is that they have no alternative. But we advocate a better way of working. It's expressed in our campaigning, in our statements and, briefly, in these pages.

Peace will be strengthened by the people on both sides who have been left behind advancing together. Peace is endangered by political elites who have lost touch with those they came from fighting over which community is doing better in the share-out of scarce resources.

We will work within the Assembly and, even more importantly, outside the formal arena. We see the future as lying not in people looking to MLAs to deliver things for them, but in people organising to change things for themselves. The main function of a MLA should be to encourage the marginalised and done down to mobilise and fight back.



Housing Action protest in Derry in 1968



Eamonn McCann singing on stage with Christy Moore at the 30th anniversary Commemoration concert in the Rialto, Derry

# Disability and equality

**W**hen it comes to people with disabilities, there is no equality.

The reform of the 11-plus suggested in the Burns Report—commissioned by the outgoing Executive—completely ignored children with disabilities.

It's a remarkable fact that not one of the Executive parties commented on this shameful omission.

Despite equality legislation, discrimination against people with disabilities remains legal. Exam boards aren't obliged to make "reasonable adjustment"—large-letter papers, for example—to give disabled people an equal chance.

The result emerged in last year's NI Labour Survey.

People with disabilities are twice as likely as others to have no qualifications — 44 percent compared to 20 percent.

Only 12 percent of disabled people have a higher qualification, compared to 23 percent generally.

This is a disgrace.

And it's a greater disgrace that it's not regarded as a disgrace.

People with disabilities suffer inequality, too, in health provision, access to employment, transport and appropriate housing.

These things affect relatively small numbers. But the people they do affect are affected hugely.

But issues like this don't fit into the conventional framework of politics here—one of the reasons for voting for a different set of priorities.

# No water charges

**I**t seems every single party is opposed to water charges. But water reform was discussed in Assembly committee prior to suspension. No party unequivocally ruled out water charges then—not one.

Some Executive parties say now they'll support non-payment. The test is this: Will they say they won't remain in an Executive which brings in water charges?

None of them has given this pledge.

The SEA can be counted on 100 percent to oppose water charges and help build community-based campaigns of non-payment. And we'll blow the whistle at the first opportunity on any proposal of this sort in future. We won't sing dumb and then rediscover our radicalism when an election looms.

# More concrete — because Ryanair says so . . .

**O**ne party leader spoke for the SDLP, the DUP and Sinn Fein when he wrote last month (Derry Journal, October 17th): "Ryanair . . . find it more cost-effective to fly larger planes. . . The airports servicing these flights must be able to accommodate them. . . Hence, Derry City Council has an urgent decision to make."

Thus, the main parties in Foyle stand shoulder-to-shoulder in favour of a new slab of concrete being slammed down on the countryside, flattening homes.

Because Ryanair says so.

And because everything has to be done according to Ryanair's timetable, alternatives from the Donnybrewer residents aren't considered.

City councillors won't publish the various reports they say the runway decision was based on—the Pricewaterhouse Report, the Robertson Technical Feasibility Study, the Logue Report into the last Ryanair-City of Derry fiasco, etc.

The whole process has been characterised by shiftiness and

secrecy.

The future of the airport, and the jobs of airport workers, has been put into the hand of Ryanair, which will have a role not unlike Marks and Spencer's in relation to Desmonds.

This is a microcosm of what's happening globally. The Donnybrewer issue is tiny compared to millions in India being driven from their homes so dams can be built to service new industry, or social services slashed in Latin America as structural adjustment programmes

are clamped onto country after country. But deep down it's the same issue.

It's unaccountable big business telling us we can have economic development on their terms, or not at all. Any party with even a dim spark of radicalism left would see that, and stand up for the people whose homes stand to be demolished. But when it comes to facing corporate power, they are all conservatives now.

We want the books opened—all studies, reports, documents, min-

utes of meetings and correspondence with Ryanair etc. published. We want an informed public debate before any bulldozer moves in. The people have a right to know who's doing what in their name.

It's development dictated by big business which has created an ugly vista along the most beautiful river in Europe. These people are philistines and vandals who appreciate nothing except the profits column on a balance sheet. Eamonn McCann in the Assembly will amplify opposition to their agenda.

# The fraud of privatisation

**T**he sudden closure of ShopElectric exposed the fraud of privatisation. The shops were part of the old Electricity Board. They were bought out from the public sector by a management group in the 1990s. This group then sold them on to a three-partner consortium—which in turn flogged them off last June to Northern Retail. Now they're gone, leaving customers and workers in the lurch.

How much money was siphoned out of ShopElectric in these deals into the pockets of private individuals? Why hasn't this information been made public? Why haven't the main parties made an issue of this?

At the time of the management buy-out, we were told that the dynamic private sector would guarantee a bright future. The fuddy duddy state sector had no future, the propagandists insisted. But like the railways etc., etc., privatisation has proven a disaster for everyone—apart from the fat cats who have run off with the cream.

This shows the need to turn the tide on privatisation, which under the four-party Executive has also affected our schools and hospitals and transport and water services.



Marion Baur and Eamonn McCann, Socialist Environmental Alliance

Turn the tide . . .

# Vote Eamonn McCANN for Foyle