

RIGHT CHANGE

EQUALITY DEMOCRACY JUSTICE

"It shall be the first duty of the Government of the Republic to make provision for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being of the children, to secure that no child shall suffer hunger or cold from lack of food, clothing, or shelter, but that all shall be provided with the means and facilities requisite for their proper education and training as Citizens of a Free and Gaelic Ireland.

Likewise it shall be the duty of the Republic to take such measures as will safeguard the health of the people and ensure the physical as well as the moral well-being of the Nation.

It shall be the duty of the Republic to adopt all measures necessary for the recreation and invigoration of our Industries, and to ensure their being developed on the most beneficial and progressive co-operative and industrial lines."

Democratic Programme for the first Dáil, 1919

Policy Principles for a Progressive Irish Government

All men [and women] are born with equal rights, and in associating to protect one another and share public burdens, justice demands that such associations should rest upon a basis which maintains equality instead of destroying it.

**1867 PROCLAMATION
OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC**

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all of the children of the nation equally...

**1916 PROCLAMATION
OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC**

Right2Water

Water is a human right, essential for life and for all our human needs. As such, water provision and sanitation should not be subject to the profit motive or the free market and should be made available to all, free at the point of use, and on the basis of need, not means.

'Irish Water PLC' and domestic water charges will be abolished within the first 100 days of a progressive Government.

'Irish Water PLC' will be replaced with a single national water and sanitation board which will be solely responsible for the provision, transmission, sanitation, management and operation of the public water and sanitation supply in the public interest.

This policy will see a full referendum to enshrine a new Article in Bunreacht Na h'Eireann. The date of this referendum would coincide with the establishment of the new national water board.

Article 28 Section 4:2:1:

"The Government shall be collectively responsible for the protection, management and maintenance of the public water system. The Government shall ensure in the public interest that this resource remains in public ownership and management."

This policy will provide for an end to water meter installation and ensuing costs.

This policy will see conservation measures legislated for including mandatory planning permission requirements, incentivised and subsidised water saving devices, and a public education campaign.

Our water infrastructure is in desperate need of investment in order to upgrade the system and repair leaks. This policy provides for an investment of between €6 and €7 billion to be provided through a progressive taxation model, details of which are available in the accompanying 'Fiscal Framework Document'.

Funding our water services through progressive taxation measures will ensure citizens always have access to water based on their needs without the possibility of water shut-offs due to unpaid bills in the future. It will also ensure our water services will never be privatised and that Ireland remains with zero water poverty.

*** Acknowledgement** – The Right2Water Unions acknowledge the support and advice in framing the above referendum position of Seamus O'Tuathail S.C. and Treasa Brannick O'Cillin, candidate Barrister at Law Degree, The Honourable Society of Kings Inns.

Right2Jobs & Decent Work

"After the war people said, 'If you can plan for war, why can't you plan for peace?' When I was 17, I had a letter from the government saying, 'Dear Mr. Benn, will you turn up when you're 17½? We'll give you free food, free clothes, free training, free accommodation, and two shillings, ten pence a day to just kill Germans.' People said, well, if you can have full employment to kill people, why in God's name couldn't you have full employment and good schools, good hospitals, good houses?"

Tony Benn, Member of the British Labour Party

Everyone has a right to gainful and decent employment which would provide dignity, respect and a living wage. A full employment economy requires several layers: an expanding public sector including public enterprise; a growing cooperative sector, non-profit and labour-managed sector; and a growing public enterprise. At the very least, where people cannot find work, the state must act as an employer of last resort, directly employing people in socially productive activity.

A progressive government will vindicate people's right to decent work through a revolution in the workplace embodied in a far-reaching *Decent Work Act*. This will eliminate precarious employment, provide under-employed workers with the right to seek additional hours in their workplace when they become available, introduce the right to collective bargaining (by referendum if necessary) – enabling economic and political democracy, end bogus self-employment, and legislate for overtime and unsocial hours pay. Employers who refuse to recognise their workers' right to collectively bargain should not be able to avail of any tax refunds or benefit from any State assistance.

In order to provide equitable non-discriminatory access to the workplace a progressive Government will legislate for the right to publicly available, accessible, high quality affordable childcare, part-time, full-time and after-school provision.

This policy will also see the abolition of compulsory or exploitative elements of Government activation schemes such as JobBridge.

The future is wage-led – in particular, the ending of low pay. The medium term goal should be to make the *Living Wage* the statutory floor.

Exploitation of workers, particularly low-paid workers in vulnerable sectors, is exceptionally high in Ireland while inspections by the National Employment Rights Authority (NERA) and the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) is limited. Legislation providing for inspections from licensed trade union officials in relation to breaches of both employment and health and safety laws – in line with "right of access" laws in other countries like Australia and New Zealand – should be implemented.

The PRSI system should be expanded to include the self-employed in order for them to avail of the same social welfare benefits as all other workers.

We will defend the right to take effective strike action and will remove the obstacles contained in the Industrial Relations Act 1990 that are designed to prevent this. We will also reform the Insolvency Acts to put workers at the top of the queue in a liquidation situation and reform the Company's Acts to make it more difficult for private companies to split their assets and avoid their liabilities to their workers.

Right2Housing

“Housing is a human right. There can be no fairness or justice in a society in which some live in homelessness, or in the shadow of that risk, while others cannot even imagine it.”

Jordan Flaherty, award-winning journalist, producer and author

We believe that Housing is a basic human right, that this right should be enshrined in Bunreacht na hÉireann and that the obligation on the State to adequately house people should thereby be enforceable by the Courts.

As a direct result of the State’s failure to deal with this issue our country is now living through a homelessness epidemic.

Having a home is a social and economic right. Without it, a person has no security of person or identity. A progressive policy will develop a range of housing models to vindicate this right, starting with the ending of homelessness and the clearing of social housing waiting lists. The current crisis in rents should be addressed through rent controls and market based rent supplements in the short-term but in the long-term the state needs to intervene in the market to mobilise the investment required to modernise the sector, including the provision of income-related rental accommodation to low and average income earners. The State also needs to commence a national home building project. People should also be offered the opportunity to own their homes through limited equity ownership or non-speculative housing. Housing policy should be based on need and choice, not speculation.

People will be offered homes through a range of innovative models including limited equity ownership, or non-speculative housing, cooperative housing and community interest tenancies.¹ A new planning framework will incorporate anti-speculative policies (e.g. the Kenny Report) and socialise unused and derelict sites that will support sustainable housing development. We will provide adequately for Traveller accommodation needs in a culturally appropriate manner. Housing policy should be based on need and choice, not speculation and capital accumulation.

We will ban economic evictions and keep land banks held in NAMA in state ownership to be used as a building block for a public housing programme. Further, we will legislate for the reform of the private rental sector and legislate to give security of tenure and for improved rent regulation.

¹ These are just some of the alternative models to provision of housing – all based on non-speculative housing. For example, limited equity housing is comprised of a small mortgage/down-payment combined with cost-rental payment which provides ownership; however, when the house is sold the only return is the small mortgage inflation indexed.

Right2Health

“The social conditions in which people live and work can help create or destroy their health. Lack of income, inappropriate housing, unsafe workplaces and lack of access to health care systems are some of the social determinants of health leading to inequalities.”

World Health Organization [WHO], 2004

Healthcare is a human right, from ‘the cradle to the grave’. As such this Health policy encompasses physical health, mental health and emotional wellbeing, child care and elder care. Access to quality healthcare should not be dependent on income. The long-standing policy whereby successive governments promote and incentivise the private healthcare industry is inefficient and discriminatory against those on low incomes. The role of government should be to create a universal healthcare system free at the point of entry which provides the highest possible level of care for all citizens, irrespective of social or economic factors.

The current healthcare crisis in Ireland, where hundreds lie on hospital trolleys and tens of thousands wait more than 12 months for appointments must be addressed. Any future government must acknowledge errors in past policies and invest in the mental and physical wellbeing of the nation, instead of a private industry. A well-funded and efficient public healthcare system would provide economic and social benefits for individuals and wider society in general.

- the right of access to all healthcare services regardless of income will be vindicated through free primary health and dental care, heavily subsidised prescription medicine and access to tertiary and outpatient services free at the point of use. In addition, we will substantially increase investment in nursing home care and mental health services.
- this policy provides for the right to accessible, high quality affordable care, including respite care, for vulnerable adults

The care of the vulnerable elderly and vulnerable children is increasingly commercialised. The complete absence of a public care infrastructure and the commercialisation of personal care coincide with a rise in forms of employment that are forcing people to live in ways that are so time-pressed that they have no time to care for those they love. The rise in precarious, insecure, and/or 24/7 working, long costly commutes and emigration make ‘caring’ unsustainable over time.

Civil society organisations are both the means and expression of more engaged citizens. The fundamental democratic role of these organisations should be acknowledged and actively supported. We will support community-focused policies and investment which will build on the voluntary activities of people and communities – in particular, in rural areas through strengthening the local infrastructure from re-opening Garda stations and post offices, to more developed infrastructures such as transport, telecommunications and housing. As part of this approach, we will place community arts at the heart of cultural policy increasing access to and participation in arts

and cultural initiatives. We will reverse the cuts to community development programmes and restore the autonomy of these groups to engage in critical action.

We will validate the importance of unpaid caring in families and communities in a constitutional amendment that removes the gender-biased article 41.2.2 (that assumes that only women are carers) and replaced by a care-recognition article that is gender neutral; a significant investment in caring in the community including supports for carers, and a new child-raising allowance that allows parents to spend more time raising their new-born children.

Right2Debt Justice

"Blessed are the young for they shall inherit the national debt."

Herbert Hoover, 31st President of the United States

The past recklessness of financial speculation is imposing an intolerable burden on people's future. Debt justice requires a European Debt Conference to restructure and write-down sovereign debt throughout the Eurozone; the introduction of a Financial Transaction Tax in order to repay states for the private bank debt they assimilated; the effective repudiation of Anglo-Irish debt through retention of the Anglo-Irish bonds in public, an end to bank-driven mortgage debt resolution through a state led and democratically accountable programme of restructuring and writing down of mortgage debt with a halt to evictions on the basis of inability-to-pay; and restructuring of money-lending debt which traps people in 100 percent interest loans.

Four further steps to address the debt crisis, in Ireland, Europe and Globally:

- Build alliances with progressive citizen-led movements in Europe to develop and promote alternative proposals for realistic and responsible debt reduction strategies for people across Europe.
- Establish a Debt Audit to determine the level of debt attributed to the private financial sector as a first step in recouping that money from those who caused this crisis, and fully participate in the UN Committee on Sovereign Debt Restructuring
- Establish a moral case for debt repudiation and compensation by means of a popular debt audit that will also be a tool for public, grass roots, education
- To acknowledge that we already have a nationalised banking system and to halt privatisation of these banks and build a public banking system. This system will be rooted in responsibility to communities in addressing mortgage arrears and provide an accountable and transparent method/ source of social credit for social needs, rather than for private profit.

Right2Education

"I speak – not for myself, but for all... I raise up my voice – not so that I can shout, but so that those without a voice can be heard. Those who have fought for their rights: Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity. Their right to be educated."

Malala Yousafzai, youngest ever Nobel Prize Laureate

Everyone has the right to education. The provision of education should be truly free – without the necessity for 'voluntary contributions' – up to at least primary degree level. The provision of professional and technical education should be affordable and available to all and should be equally accessible.

Three basic priorities for any new government should be:

- 1** To reduce the ratio of students to teachers from among the highest levels in the EU to the lowest.
- 2** The restoration of and increased provision of Special Needs Assistants (SNA's) – which should be seen as an investment in the most vulnerable of our children.
- 3** Investment in early childhood education should be provided in line with a progressive childcare policy which would facilitate the option for parents to enter or leave the workforce.

Education is an investment in the future of the nation whereby we can develop a productive and cohesive society. More funding for the apprenticeship programme and a coordinated jobs policy promoting labour intensive industries should form part of any future government education programme. A modern dynamic economy is dependent on well-educated citizens, increasing employment opportunities and providing the opportunities to create new services and technologies.

A Progressive Government will secularise the education system and promote an education model that develops critical thinking with an active citizenship focus.

Multi-nationals benefit from a highly educated workforce therefore a proportion of corporation tax should be ring fenced to fund third level education following the elimination by this Government of fees.

Right2Democratic Reform

"A community is democratic only when the humblest and weakest person can enjoy the highest civil, economic, and social rights that the biggest and most powerful possess."

Asa Philip Randolph, leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement

We need to undertake a programme of substantial democratic reform. There must be real and meaningful reform of our local and national democratic processes which would put citizens at the heart of decision making. We will vindicate the right to greater democracy throughout the economy, society and, most importantly, the political decision-making process: popular initiation of constitutional referenda and parliamentary legislation; the right to recall TDs; citizen nomination of Presidential candidates; direct elections to the Seanad; and parliamentary committee membership and chairpersons, overseas voting and mandatory voting for all electorally registered citizens.

Citizens should be strongly encouraged to participate in the electoral process. Elections should be held at a convenient time for the vast majority of the population.

Our Parliament is a key function of our democracy to which many of our citizens feel disconnected and disempowered. We will enact parliamentary reform measures that will address the number of sitting days, holiday terms, numbers of members in chamber, a curbing of the whip system, election for Ceann Comhairle by secret vote and other measures to address parliamentary behaviour.

Government Ministers and TD's to draw down pensions on reaching normal (State) retirement age. In the event of proven corruption by public representatives, including Ministers, the forfeit of pensions should occur.

We will reduce the powers of local county Managers and transfer those powers and accountability to locally elected representative councillors.

Hosting one general election every five years provides too large a gap for real democratic representation – particularly as there is no accountability for broken political promises subsequent to an election. A reduction in the electoral cycle in General Election's from five years to four years should be implemented in order to provide more collective democratic accountability.

Corruption in democracy is democracy denied; therefore, we will establish an Anti-Corruption Agency on a par with the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) to investigate and recoup to the state any assets and incomes accrued through political corruption. This agency, with similar wide-ranging powers to CAB, will investigate public and corporate financial corruption, fraud and tax evasion.

Any functioning democracy requires a diverse media and media ownership should not be disproportionately in the hands of a small number of wealthy individuals or corporations. We will expand the Irish media landscape, facilitating democratic ownership and participation by community groups, NGO's, civil society groups and trade unions.

Right2Equality

"When I was poor and I complained about inequality people said I was bitter, now I'm rich and I complain about inequality they say I'm a hypocrite. I'm beginning to think they just don't want inequality on the agenda because it is a real problem that needs to be addressed."

Russell Brand, actor, entertainer and author of *Revolution*

The right to equality encompasses social and economic rights which are implied and un-enumerated rights in our Constitution. These rights should be protected in legislation which will address the issues of poverty.

We respect women's right to bodily autonomy and self-determination. We will campaign for repeal of the 8th amendment and we will legislate for abortion in Ireland.

We stand for the separation of church and state in education, health and other areas while affording due respect for those people who wish to practice their religion.

Many people still face workplace and service-related discrimination based on disability, gender, age, colour, sexual orientation, Traveller status, ethnic origin, family status, marital status and religious/other beliefs. We will run major education and mobilisation campaigns to end discrimination both in the workplace and in services generally, and we will introduce stronger sanctions for breaches of equality legislation; we will repeal Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act; we will democratise the national and secondary school systems.

We will reform the work permit system to make it easier for workers to leave exploitative employment situations without threatening their immigration status.

Improving access to work for migrants, including reforming Ireland's labour migration policy, revising the eligible categories of employment, revising the right of employees to change employer and lowering the salary threshold required for new employment permits for sectors where a shortage has been identified.

Over 4,000 people are consigned to Direct Provision centres, including over 1,500 children. Detainment in these Centres represents a form of institutional abuse that denies adults and children basic human rights. We will end the system of Direct Provision and we will ensure that the children of asylum seekers suffer no discrimination in relation to health or education due to their parent's asylum status.

Market inequality undermines economic efficiency and social solidarity. Alongside strategies to end low-pay we will establish a High Pay Commission to propose measures to reduce income inequality.

Right2Sustainable Environment

“Our economic system and our planetary system are now at war. Or, more accurately, our economy is at war with many forms of life on earth, including human life. What the climate needs to avoid collapse is a contraction in humanity’s use of resources; what our economic model demands to avoid collapse is unfettered expansion. Only one of these sets of rules can be changed, and it’s not the laws of nature.”

Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate*

The dominant economic model is ‘at war’ with the natural world. Unfettered capitalism and globalisation continues to place unsustainable burdens on the Earth’s natural assets including its water, its air, its fauna and flora and threatens the very continuation of mankind.

Fighting climate change is not a ‘cost’ – it is a necessary strategy for human survival which simultaneously provides another means to promote a collective and democratic economy. The first steps in this struggle will be the introduction of a *Green New Deal* – a sustained and substantial drive to bring all buildings in the residential, commercial and industrial sector up to the highest level of conservation necessary, to expand and upgrade the quality of public transport with significant reductions in fares, the increased mobilisation of R&D to urgently progress the development of ocean/sea based renewable energy to complement other forms of green technology.

We will legislate for ambitious and binding climate change targets, including a ban on fracking, a transposition of the Rio de Janeiro Agreement into domestic law and we will use Bolivia’s Law of the Rights of Mother Earth as a guide.

A Progressive Government will make protection of the rights of Mother Earth a Constitutional imperative subject to democratic control and declare that natural resources, including water, are a public good and cannot be privatised.

We further commit to encouraging and supporting local campaigns against corporate threats to the environment and to launch a major public education campaign, including in schools, on the dangers of climate change and the threats posed by corporate exploitation of the environment.

Right2National Resources

“That’s the standard technique of privatization, defund, make sure things don’t work, people get angry, you hand it over to private capital.”

Noam Chomsky

The assets of our nation were declared in the 1916 Proclamation as belonging to the citizens of Ireland, a Proclamation which also pledged to cherish all the citizens of the state equally.

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is one of the biggest threats to people’s ability to provide labour, social, and environmental protection and represents a proposed transfer of economic and political sovereignty from the Irish citizens to multi-national corporations. A progressive government will oppose TTIP through whatever mechanisms possible. Should TTIP be ratified without the consent of the Irish people a progressive Government will provide for a referendum on our continued membership of the European Union. Opposition to the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) should also be a priority for this government and any other trade agreement that contains an Investor State Dispute Settlement mechanism (ISDS).

This government will re-commit to neutrality and a non-militaristic foreign policy starting with the banning of the use of Irish airports for military purposes.

In Northern Ireland, we will work for the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and the Saint Andrew’s Agreement. Further, we will provide full support to the people of Northern Ireland in their rejection of austerity – to be vindicated through

inter-governmental negotiations. A Progressive Government shall actively promote economic, social, cultural and political co-operation on an all-Ireland basis which will help to promote the development of unity among people and undermine sectarianism and division.

Solidarity with the developing world will be reinforced through meeting official development assistance targets and political, diplomatic and economic assistance with victims of occupation; in particular, the Palestinian people. Trade sanctions should be implemented against countries who breach international laws – up to and including the banning of imports of all goods. The Ambassadors of countries who committ war crimes should be expelled.

Further, we will join with other progressive Governments to restrain the undemocratic activities of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Indigenous Sector: We need a prosperous indigenous enterprise sector – to provide decent jobs, social security, and economic growth where money is reinvested in local communities. We need a plurality of enterprise models to maximise the shared benefits of growth throughout the economy in the areas of infrastructure, manufacturing, services as well as in the areas of caring, community and the arts.

Rejecting privatisation, we will expand public enterprises into new economic activities and provide for local government enterprises and new business models based on co-determination between public, private and civil society ownership.

We will promote worker-owner co-operative enterprises, whereby workers share in the decision-making process, and

in the risks, profits and benefits. In these companies the right to work is prioritised and employment-security is an integral objective of the business model limited wage differentials promotes sustainability. We will establish institutional supports for this sector to provide access to capital, patient banking and management assistance; provide employees the option of buying out companies that close down and introduce tax incentives for new cooperative ventures.

We will establish a new basis for supporting indigenous enterprise through job creation agencies through a programme of *Companies of Excellence* which can lead the modernisation of the indigenous sector; in these companies employees and employers accept co-responsibility as the fundamental principle of managing the company: commitments to R&D, investment, innovation, labour rights and participation. This will form the basis of sectoral planning frameworks to grow Irish businesses in a coordinated and focused way.

Income Supports: A major reform of income supports to provide security for people in paid work and out of employment is required: pay-related unemployment and sickness benefit; pay-related state pensions; enhanced family supports (maternity benefits, paid paternity benefit, care and family leave and child-raising allowances). A priority will be the introduction of a 'cost of disability' payment and the ending of child poverty and deprivation which focuses on access to adequate resources and quality services along with enhanced labour market and social protection supports for one-parent families. We will bring all social protection payments up to the Minimum Essential Standard of Living over the medium-term. These reforms require moving from a welfare system based on poverty-avoidance and means-testing to a system based on social solidarity and

mutuality through an enhanced social insurance system and universal payments in which everyone benefits including the full participation of the self-employed. To this end Basic Income strategies will be actively explored.

This effective *New Social Contract* will be funded by a long-term phasing in of an enhanced *social wage*, or employers' social insurance, to the average paid by employers in other European countries.

Natural Resources: The natural resources of Ireland belong to the people of Ireland. The campaigns over our oil and gas reserves, woodlands, clean seas, archaeological and heritage sites, and community life point to the growing issue of 'resource democracy'. We will constitutionally enshrine the ownership of natural resources with the Irish people. Natural resources will be entrusted to public and transparent control providing people the right to benefit from sustainable developments.

A national programme of repatriation, and subsequent public ownership, of surrendered natural resources will be initiated with those who seek, or who have been allowed to secure, access to our natural resources free or without proper reimbursement/value to the Irish people. Where this requires negotiations these will have the objective of securing maximum value to the Irish citizens from their resources in a manner applicable in similar sized nations with potentially similar resources such as Norway. We will bring under public ownership the gas and oil resources off the Irish coast to allow revenue and profits to be used for the Irish people and the Irish economy.

Public Banking and Insurance: The fundamental lesson of the crisis is that we cannot rely on private banking based on short-term shareholder interests. We need a national public banking system for both households and enterprises – one with a mission statement that makes the bank partners in people's living standards and business success, and promotes the public interest. We will promote public interest and mutuality in banking and insurance. To this end we will set up Public Banking and Insurance Review to promote public banking and an insurance system based on mutuality and co-operation rather than profit.



This document is the outcome of an extensive consultation process between individuals, community groups, trade unionists, political parties and independent representatives – all of whom have been involved in the anti-water charges movement. Approximately 150 detailed submissions were received and two separate conferences of 200 activists made amendments to the policies identified.

The purpose of this process is to help facilitate a new type of politics which will deliver a fairer Ireland for all. One that is based on the principles of democracy, equality and social justice. We have identified ten basic policy principles which we believe should be the minimum obligation for any progressive Irish government. The right to water, decent work, housing, health, debt justice, education, democratic reform, equality, a sustainable environment and national resources, are a priority for the people of Ireland.

The Right2Water Trade Unions have published a fiscal framework document which would allow for more than €9 billion in spending over four years. This increased spending would not only improve our public infrastructure, but would help to create a fairer, more equal society with greater investment in jobs as well as our health, education and housing systems which are consistently starved of resources. More information on this fiscal framework is available at www.right2change.ie or www.right2water.ie

If we are to achieve our collective goal of a more egalitarian society based on the principles of democracy, equality and social justice, then we need everyone to play their part. The Right2Water Trade Unions will be bringing the Right2Change policies on a tour across the country in order to hear from you and ensure you have your say.

We believe the people of Ireland deserve and are entitled to much more than the current political system has delivered. We want an end to corruption and an end to cronyism. We want to empower people and promote solidarity, community spirit, respect and above all unity. Together we are stronger and together we can change our country.