



They fought for social justice
in their generation.

Now it's our turn.

The Politics of Labour Youth is a short pamphlet intended as a brief outline of our organisation's political approach and structure. It affirms our determination to build and grow and to play an influential role in the Labour Party, the Irish left and beyond.

"The only true prophets are those who carve out their own future"- James Connolly

Join Labour Youth

Email us at youth@labour.ie, text us 'join' to 086 3787395 or return the form below to Labour Youth, 17 Ely Place, Dublin 2.

Name: _____ Email: _____
Address: _____ Mobile: _____
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www.LabourYouth.ie



The Politics of Labour Youth



The Politics of Labour Youth

This short pamphlet is intended as an introduction to the Politics of Labour Youth.

While it is not intended to serve as a comprehensive guide to our organisation, this document gives a brief outline of our structure and provides the reader with a summary of our political approach. It affirms our determination to build and grow and play an influential role in the Irish Labour party, the Irish left and beyond.



Our organisation is determined to play its part in providing a formidable opposition to inequality, discrimination, war mongering and environmental destruction. We hope to build, in co-operation with others, a Socialist future where genuine democratic control over economic, political

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and social life becomes a reality for all people. As young socialists, we are determined to build a society which gives true fulfilment to the promise of our country to *“Treat all the children of the nation equally”*, as declared in our proclamation of independence. This equality is our goal and this pamphlet introduces our mission.

We invite you to work with us in building a new Republic based on the fundamental principles of solidarity and equality. This New Republic will not come into being unless people organise for it and it will not be realised without opposition from those who continue to exploit the vulnerable in our society. Labour Youth re-affirms our determination to work alongside all those who share our aims in the hope of a making the socialist future a reality.

In the words of James Connolly, founder of the Labour Party, *“The only true prophets are those who carve out their own future”*.



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Who we are

Labour Youth is the Youth section of the Irish Labour Party. We are organised through a branch structure. Our annual conference makes the decisions that determine our policies and campaigns. An elected executive is responsible for the day to day running of the organisation. The Labour Youth Council is made up of representatives of every branch and is open to all our members. It meets at least 5 times a year to determine our direction between conferences. We operate in an open, democratic and fraternal manner.



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We believe that genuine social change comes from the ground up. In our view the best way to transform society is through the direct intervention of ordinary people - workers, students, the unemployed, new immigrant communities and many others coming together to campaign and work for a better world.

Where we come from

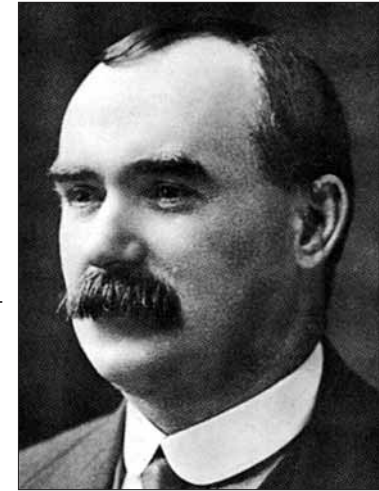
Labour Youth was founded in 1979. Throughout the 1980s some, though not all, of our members were active in the Militant Tendency while others were part of the broader organisation Labour Left. Labour Youth threw itself into the struggles of that decade. In the 1990s, Labour Youth built and developed its campaigning capacity and was active in campaigns such as the X case, the divorce referendum and the fight to make third level education free and more accessible. In 1999, Labour Youth and Democratic Left Youth, along with the senior parties, merged to form a stronger organisation. In this decade, Labour Youth members have been to the fore in campaigns against third level fees, racism, war, homophobia and we have fought for trade union rights, women's rights and better public services.

Labour Youth members are also active in Labour Party constituency parties across Ireland. We are represented on the Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) through our elected Chairperson and strive to play a full role in Labour party affairs.

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The Labour Party

As suffrage was extended across the industrialised world, trade unions formed Labour and Socialist parties to represent ordinary people. The Irish Labour Party was founded in 1912 when James Connolly and James Larkin put a motion to a Trade Union Congress meeting in Clonmel to create a political wing of the trade union movement that would represent Irish people locally and nationally. However, we trace our roots back to the 19th century. Socialists like Michael Davitt played a key role in the Land League movement and Labour representation committees were formed in the late 19th century to stand in local elections.



Labour Youth believes in a fully democratic and inclusive Labour Party. We strive to use all avenues available to us to promote our political approach. We view the Labour Party's national conferences as being particularly important. At the 2005 conference, for example, we put forward a motion insisting that the removal of the US military from Shannon airport was to be a pre-condition of any post election deal that put Labour in government. This motion was overwhelmingly passed. We want to ensure that power of decision making lies with ordinary members of the Labour party.

We are committed to a Labour led government. We oppose the concept of Labour entering into a coalition as a minority partner to either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael. We argue that coalition formations on the basis of FF/FG domination damage Labour party support and prevent the development of a genuine left alternative in Irish politics.

Left Co-operation

Unity and co-operation throughout the left is a core objective of Labour Youth. The sort of Left unity we believe in involves like minded people coming together to campaign on issues they agree on.

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Campaigns like Shell to Sea, the anti war movement, Boycott Coca-Cola along with many others have all gone from strength to strength as a result of the co-operation of different groups and individuals on the left. Labour Youth wants to build on this.

We wish to strengthen links with other organisations on the left within a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect. We do not expect agreement on every issue but we believe that where agreement does exist, genuine political engagement and co-operation is essential. In addition to making links with others on the political left, we strive to establish good working relations with Trade Unions, community groups and other social movements.

Internationalism

The Labour movement has always understood that our struggle is international. Labour Youth affirms its commitment to internationalism and global solidarity. We are affiliated to the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) and the Young European Socialists (ECOSY) and have fraternal links with groups in Palestine, Latin America and elsewhere. The Labour Party is a member of the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists (PES).



We played our part in the mass movement against the Iraq war and we insist that Ireland's shameful role in supporting this war, as represented by the facilities on hire to the US military at Shannon airport, must be brought to an end.

It is for this reason we take part in campaigns such as Boycott Killer Coke, formed in 2003 in response to the call by the Colombian trade union Sinaltrainal for support to help defeat trade union repression in Coke bottling plants in Colombia.

Here in Ireland, we are determined to end the scourge of racism. We actively opposed the government's 2004 "citizenship referendum" and argued that it was government policies, not the emergence of immigration that was the root cause of bad public services. We stand for a fair, transparent and compassionate asylum system and support anti-deportation campaigns, such as the successful campaign to prevent the deportation of Leaving Cert student Olunkunle Eluhanla in 2005.

We believe that the natural resources of our planet should be owned by and operate in the interests of us all - not for the mega-profits of powerful elites.

We offer solidarity and support to the Left, Trade Unionists and Social movements who form part of our international movement. We are particularly active in campaigns against war mongering. We played our part in the mass movement against the Iraq war and we insist that Ireland's shameful role in supporting this war, as represented by the facilities on hire to the US military at Shannon airport, must be brought to an end. We operate on the principal that solidarity knows no boundaries and share James Larkin's conviction that "*an injury to one is the concern of all*".

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Environmental Protection

All political parties now profess great concern about the environment. However, the advantage of the analysis of the Left is that we are in a position to link the environmental threats to the economic policies that cause them. As a result, we can argue for measures that link up environmental protection with other questions of public policy and present them as a co-ordinated strategy to defeat the neo-liberal model of development.



Labour Youth is in favour of the polluter pays principle. However, pollution begins at the point of production, not the point of consumption. In practise, this means big business and industry must be held to account for the waste it produces. For example, industry must be held to account for the vast packaging that is now produced. This is why we oppose the bin tax as a regressive stealth tax, arguing instead that the cost of producing and recycling rubbish must be borne by those who produce it in the first place.

With regard to Climate Change, we see the Irish government's policy of buying Carbon credits from poorer countries of the world as a form of environmental imperialism. It is true of course that everybody must play their full part in the fight against Climate Change. However, we must not be distracted away from the root caused of the problem. The massive oil companies, for example, will not respond to moral pressure. The pursuit of ever great profits from the ever increasing major carbon producers means that we can not follow a "free market" policy to continue unchecked and expect action on Climate Change.

One of the reasons why renewable and natural energy resources are not being developed is because it is often not immediately profitable for big business to do so. Public investment in renewable and natural energy will reap long term, sustainable benefits. We extend this approach to public transport. Investment in public transport in Ireland remains lower than anywhere else in Europe. This investment must be put in place if carbon emissions are to be tackled and provides yet another example of why relying on "free market" policies to tackle climate change will not work.

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The Socialist Future

The world we live in is deeply divided. Over 1 billion people - 1 in 6 people around the world - live in extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$1 a day. Meanwhile, in Ireland, society remains divided along class lines where 1% of the population control 34% of the wealth excluding residential property.

The possibility of Socialism is often excluded from mainstream political debate. However, the rise of the Left in Latin America, particularly the success of the Venezuelan Revolution, has succeeded in putting the possibility of a Socialist future back on the agenda. The agenda of that Revolution - led by the people; the grassroots of all activism, working in close co-operation with President Hugo Chavez - has great relevance for people all over the world. The use of natural resources to fund public services, the expansion of public ownership, the vast schemes to eliminate poverty and illiteracy, the extension of democratic control and the establishment of an independent, anti-imperialist foreign policy are some features of the "21st century Socialism" of the Venezuelan model and we applaud them.



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In the words of Labour Party President, Michael D Higgins, "*The banner of Socialism should be raised whenever and wherever Labour Party members meet*". We are determined to work with others to develop and promote a model of 21st century Socialism for Ireland. We insist that public ownership is put back on the agenda. Why shouldn't the vast oil and gas reserves that exist off the west coast of Ireland be used for the public good - i.e. funding for health, education, housing and the elimination of poverty - rather than given away for nothing to Shell and Statoil? The disaster of the Telecom Éireann privatisation - which has led to rising prices and vast broadband shortages - only really benefited a tiny few while the community in general has lost out. This ought to be a warning sign to the Irish public that key utilities must remain in public hands.

In Ireland, more and more people are being forced to rely on the so called "free market" to sustain their lives. The public sphere continues to be undermined so a wealthy few in the private sector can make a killing. Nowhere is this truer than in the spheres of Health and Housing. Public lands are handed over to private companies for shockingly low prices while health services fail to expand to meet the demands of a rising population. There is less social housing being built now than ever before and wealthy developers profit vastly from housing construction while young people are left with lifelong mortgages and vast debt.

We reject the marketisation of public services, arguing instead for public investment over the subsidisation of private profit and demand an increased say for communities in how public services are run

The housing and health crises did not take place on their own. They have taken place because of the ruthless application of the neo-liberal model which facilitates private profit for a few and leaves the rest reliant on the "free market". We reject the marketisation of public services, arguing instead for public investment over the subsidisation of private profit and demand an increased say for communities in how public services are run. In housing, we want to see a massive extension of social and affordable housing schemes and a sharp reigning in of the development lobby because we believe that housing is a right, not a commodity we should rely on the "Free market" to provide. We extend this rights based approach to all public services.

Join with us



If the sort of politics laid out in this pamphlet appeal to you, why not consider joining our organisation? We have over 1,000 members and we are active in colleges, schools, workplaces and communities throughout Ireland. Membership is open to young people under the age of 26.

There is no time to lose in building up support for a new Republic. The future is in our hands and we can all play our part in resisting war and environmental destruction and building a new society which buries the neo-liberal nightmare that is deepening inequality and ruining public services once and for all. However, to this, we need to work together. To join, or to receive more information, contact us at youth@labour.ie or go to www.labouryouth.ie.

Labour Youth online

www.LabourYouth.ie



<http://LabourYouth.bebo.com>



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Labour Party - www.labour.ie

Young European Socialists - www.ecosy.org

International Union of Socialist Youth - www.iusy.org