

Anti-Austerity Alliance – People Before Profit

COMMON PRINCIPLES:
Radical Alternatives & Real Equality



General Election 2016

Common Principles: Radical Alternatives & Real Equality

The Anti-Austerity Alliance and People Before Profit have come together to fight the General Election. We want to establish a left wing parliamentary group in the Dail so that there will a strong voice for working people. This short document is a set of common principles agreed by the Anti-Austerity Alliance and People Before Profit. Both the AAA and PBP will issue more detailed and developed policies and manifestoes in the course of the election campaign.

A New Type of Politics

Ireland has been governed by a two and a half party system since the foundation of the state. The Labour Party consistently acted as a prop for the two main parties and thus helped prevent the emergence of a strong left party. Today the Labour Party's pro-austerity policies are leading to its demise. The AAA-PBP seeks to contribute to the building of a substantial left party and pledges to do politics in a new and very different way.

- ◆ Our TDs will act as a voice for people power. They will use their seats in the Dail to help mobilise their constituents so that people are empowered to fight for themselves.
- ◆ Our TDs will only take the average workers' wage and donate the rest of their salaries to community and political campaigning and organising.
- ◆ Our TDs will not take part in, and will expose, all forms of cronyism sponsored by the main parties. We will expose how judicial appointments are chosen from political supporters; we will attack the way political allies like David Begg are rewarded with positions on state boards.
- ◆ We will not join any government that includes Fine Gael, Fianna Fail or Labour. Even if these parties were a minority in the cabinet, they would operate a veto on any genuine left wing policies.
- ◆ We stand for a left government – one that excludes the establishment parties, reverses austerity and works to transform society and the economy to place people's needs at its centre, rather than profits.

For a real recovery – Re-distribute the wealth of the 1% in the interests of the 99%

The AAA-PBP is not just seeking a change of government but a change in the wider economic system. The incessant drive for ever greater profits is leading to attacks on the living standards of the majority and is endangering the very survival of the planet. Our economic policies, therefore, are not simply based on administering the present system but on bringing about fundamental change. This means our approach is very different to the mainstream parties.

Austerity has delivered a substantial recovery for the super-wealthy and the corporations. The wealth of the top 300 people has increased from €50 billion to €84 billion over the past five years. The bondholders continue to be paid €7 billion a year in interest alone. Corporate profits have increased significantly. A real and sustainable recovery for the majority is only possible by challenging the obscene concentration of wealth in the hands of this 1%, re-distributing this wealth and restructuring society and the economy in the interests of the majority.

End Austerity – Public investment to provide decency, quality public services and jobs for all.

AAA-PBP stands for:

1. Abolish austerity taxes and reverse the cuts –abolish water charges, property tax and USC (with a compensating tax introduced for those with high incomes). Reverse all of the cut introduced over the past 8 years. This includes the cuts to welfare rates, the telephone allowance, the introduction of prescription charges, the cuts to child benefit and One Parent Family Payment.
2. Invest in Health – build a National Health Service, free at the point of use and paid for through progressive central taxation, that will do away with the pattern whereby people pay three times – via private insurance, taxes and hospital charges for access to a dysfunctional health service.
3. Invest in education and childcare – invest in public crèches, reduce the pupil-teacher ratio, establish a maximum class size of less than 20 pupils in primary schools and instead of a ‘student loan scheme’, scrap the ‘registration’ fees and introduce truly free third level education.
4. Invest in Housing – transform NAMA into a vehicle to provide tens of thousands of social and affordable homes, using its massive resources. Implement rent controls and write-down mortgages to affordable levels.
5. Invest in Jobs - Develop strategic public enterprise and industry and invest in public infrastructure to create tens of thousands of new jobs in sectors such as agri-food, renewable energy, generic medicine, the arts & and heritage, public housing, childcare, education, IT and science, Forestry and Fishing.

Establish a progressive tax system to re-distribute wealth and fund a genuine recovery.

AAA-PBP stands for:

1. Make the corporations pay their taxes – as an immediate start, establish a minimum effective rate of corporation tax of 12.5%, impose a Robin Hood tax on financial speculation and increase employers’ PRSI. Full payment by Apple of the back taxes that it owes the Irish people.
2. End the tax exile status granted to Irish billionaires. In 2013, just 13 individuals paid a levy of €200,000 for the privilege of avoiding Irish taxes. Billionaires like Denis O’Brien should pay their full taxes in Ireland.
3. Cut corporate welfare, which includes massive subsidies to private landlords, subsidies to low pay employers and tax breaks for developers and corporations.
4. Tax the wealthy – introduce a Millionaire’s Tax on wealth and increase income tax for individuals who earn over €100,000.
5. Establish a debt audit commission to investigate the origin of Ireland’s national debt and implement a strategy of debt repudiation of odious bankers’ debt.

Decent work for all

The government's proclaimed recovery is based on the expansion of low pay, part-time and precarious jobs. Ireland now has the second highest rate of low pay in the OECD and one in four workers earn less than the living wage. A job is no longer any guarantee of not being in poverty.

AAA-PBP stands for:

1. Increase the minimum wage to a living wage immediately and outlaw zero hour and "if and when" contracts.
2. Give trade unions an automatic right to negotiate for members
3. Abolish JobBridge, Gateway, Jobpath and other schemes which are about exploitation of the unemployed. Replace them with a Real-Jobs scheme based on proper education, apprenticeship schemes and public investment in jobs.
4. Stop outsourcing and privatisation of public jobs
5. Reverse the increases in the retirement age and restore 65 as the norm.

Equality

Irish society is going through a rapid period of change, with people seeking an end to oppression and the domination of the church. The tremendous victory of the marriage equality referendum demonstrated that the socially conservative silent majority that the mainstream parties have hid behind does not exist. Despite Labour's much vaunted equality agenda, they have voted against holding a referendum on the 8th amendment and outlawing discrimination against children in access to primary schools.

AAA-PBP stands for:

1. Hold a referendum to repeal the 8th Amendment ban on abortion, and legislate for the right to choose.
2. Outlaw discrimination against children in access to primary schools on religious grounds and remove faith formation from the mainstream school curriculum.
3. Lift the ban on gay and bisexual men giving blood. Work to support real equality for trans people.
4. Recognise traveller ethnicity and invest in appropriate housing and facilities
5. Separate church and state – properly funded public schools and hospitals, with no church control.

Solidarity instead of war, racism and corporate profit

AAA-PBP wants an end to the role of Ireland internationally as a backer of imperialist war and the primacy of corporate profit. We stand against oppression and war internationally and for solidarity rather than racism and division. We should stand alongside peoples across Europe in seeking to build a democratic and socialist Europe in the interests of the millions, not the millionaires.

AAA-PBP stands for:

1. Stop US troops and warplanes using Shannon airport, withdraw from the EU Battlegroups.
2. Oppose the oppression of the Palestinian people – recognise the Palestinian state and oppose the EU-Israel Association Agreement.
3. Halt the negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) which would enshrine corporations' right to profit above the rights of workers, consumers and the environment.
4. Close the direct provision centres, welcome refugees and give them the right to work.
5. Joint action of movements, left parties and unions across Europe against the undemocratic austerity agenda pushed by the European Commission, Council and European Central Bank. For a democratic and socialist Europe of the millions, not the millionaires.

Environment

We desperately need an end to the destruction of the environment, which is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people each year. It is only possible to achieve a cleaner, healthier and sustainable environment by not undermining it by a feverish pursuit of profit. We recognise that climate change will not be tackled by market mechanism but will require deeper and structural changes in our economy.

AAA-PBP stands for:

1. Invest in renewable energy resources. Take Ireland's oil and gas resources into public ownership and ring-fence them to speed a just transition to a green economy. Immediately ban fracking.
2. Stop all attempts to privatise our forests, instead invest in their expansion under public ownership
3. Establish community renewable energy projects on un-used Coilte and other publicly owned land.
4. Promote a national housing insulation programme to reduce energy consumption.
5. Reverse the cuts to city bus fleets and cut the fares to encourage people out of their cars.
6. Promote a rainwater harvesting programme to support conservation of water.