

**People Before Profit**



**MANIFESTO ON**

**YOUTH AND EQUALITY**





*Ireland in 2016 is not a welcoming place for young people. Discrimination based on age is actively inscribed in state policy and the implied agenda is to encourage young people to emigrate in order to alleviate the jobs crisis.*

*Despite much talk of a new Ireland, conservative ideas still dominate the lives of the young. Irish women are forced to travel to Britain for an abortion and there is even a 14 year jail sentence for those who take an abortion pill. Religious education is compulsory for many.*

*Irish society often turns a blind eye to the issues affecting young people. There is inadequate support for those who are experiencing difficulties in mental health. Drug use is widespread among young people but the state views it as primarily a criminal issue rather than developing any real strategy to regulate and decrease drug dependency.*

*In this manifesto, People Before Profit outlines its steps to build an alternative Ireland that is fit for young people.*

## END ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS:

Increasingly young people are being forced to take zero hour contracts that give no security. Zero hour contracts should be outlawed. Employers should be legally obliged to provide contracts which specify regular hours. The Terms of Employment Information Acts 1994 to 2012 must be amended to require employers to provide a statement of working hours which are a true reflection of the hours required of an employee. Use of 'on-call' hours should be exceptional and require permission.

## NO TO STUDENT LOANS:

It is believed that the Cassells' report on higher education will suggest that Ireland follow Britain, Australia and the US in introducing student loans. Fine Gael have already endorsed the idea of student loans. People Before Profit is totally opposed to this proposal because:

1. It leads to higher student fees as the management of Third Level institutions work on the basis that loans give them more flexibility to increase fees. Since loans were introduced in Britain, fees have risen from £1,000 maximum to the current £9,000 maximum.
2. It saddles young people with huge debts
3. It will involve extra pay outs to the banks as the state guarantees these loans and there is a high default rate.

All parties need to come clean on their attitude to student loans before the Election.

GRANTS: The current student grant assumes that students can live on €83 a week but in reality they need double that. People Before Profit believes that there should be a liveable maintenance grant and, as a first step, students on the maintenance grant should get access to the Free Travel scheme.

Post-graduate education should be open to those who have demonstrated the capacity for further study in their undergraduate years. We should not go backwards to the days when only the children of the elite could undertake such degrees. People Before Profit, therefore, advocates a return to the situation prior to 2011 when post-graduate maintenance grants were available.

There also should be an end to the bar on part-time students accessing



grants. The pro-rata Student Contribution for apprentices should be abolished.

## **ABOLISH JOBSBRIDGE/NATIONAL INTERNSHIP SCHEME:**

This scheme is not working. There is inadequate training. Job prospects are poor as only 27% of participants find full time employment afterwards. The €50 a week that is given on top of social welfare payments is totally inadequate. A poll conducted by the National Youth Council of Ireland found that 52% of young people feel exploited by the scheme.

## **ACCOMMODATION:**

There are 80,000 students in Dublin but only 3,000 student accommodations places. Those in rental accommodation are facing large increases and often do not benefit from the recent two year only rent rise regime.

People Before Profit believe that NAMA property should not be sold off to the US vulture funds. Some of it could be used instead to create student appropriate accommodation. Outside term time, such accommodation could also be used for the growing market of back-packer tourists.

We also favour proper rent controls that tie rent increases to the Consumer Price Index.

REPEAL THE 8th: The constitution should not contain an article that devalues the lives of women. Women should not be forced to travel to Britain – at a cost of between €800 and €1,000 to have an abortion to sustain Irish hypocrisy.

People Before Profit favours the repeal of the 8th Amendment of the constitution and support the immediate removal of an article in the Protection of Life in Pregnancy Act which criminalises women who take or assist others to take an abortion pill. The maximum sentence of 14 years is barbaric.

To reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancies, we will introduce legislation to impose a maximum price on emergency contraception to force price reductions.

We will introduce a new curriculum of sex education in schools which will be factual and not designed to impose a religious morality on pupils. The current Relationships and Sexuality programme is inadequate as it allows schools to discuss sexuality in the context of their religious ethos.

## **VOLUNTARY RATHER THAN ENFORCED RELIGIOUS TEACHING:**

Young people should not be forced to say prayers or attend religious instruction in schools. It should be voluntary and take place after school hours. There should be no discrimination in access to publicly funded schools on religious grounds – specifically, there should be no baptism barrier. Teachers should not be hired or fired on the basis of their views on religion.

## **MSM BLOOD BAN:**

End the outright blood donation ban on men who had sex with men. Blood donations should be judged on an individual basis.

## **MENTAL HEALTH:**

Mental Health funding should be increased to at least 12% of the health budget (versus current 6%). We should establish 24/7 community mental health supports. We should ensure funding of a proper counselling service in third level institutions.

## **DECRIMINALISE DRUG USE:**

A study in one university showed that 75% of students had taken illegal drugs. Criminal conviction for drug use has implications for a young persons' future career. The criminalisation of drugs has also led to unregulated consumption that can also cause serious health risks.

People Before Profit believe that drug dependency should be viewed as a medical problem, not a criminal one. We favour the decriminalisation of drugs on the Portuguese model and the non-commercial legalisation of cannabis similar to the Colorado example. 14 years ago Portugal decriminalised all drugs. Today in Portugal 3 out of every million people die from overdosing, the EU average of 17.5 per million.

## **VOTING RIGHTS:**

People Before Profit will propose the holding of a referendum on extending voting rights to 16 year olds as has occurred in Scotland, Austria and Brazil. We shall make voter registration easier by allowing for online registration with a PPS number.

## **STUDENT NURSE PAY:**

A survey by USI of student nurses found that 95% considered emigrating upon graduation. This would represent a huge loss for the Irish taxpayers who help fund training and a catastrophe for an already stretched health service. One of the main reasons for the young nurses' discontent was pay. Currently student nurses are paid less than the minimum wage and their 36 weeks work period in hospital is no longer reckoned for incremental purposes.

People Before Profit believe that student nurses and other young people should be paid the full minimum wage and the 'training' loophole should be removed.



## CLIMATE CHANGE:

Our planet is under threat because of global warming yet our government does not take reducing carbon emissions seriously. Enda Kenny's speech at the Paris Climate conference, where he indicated that Ireland needed more time to meet 'aggressive targets', was a disgrace. The needs of big farmers and the agro-export industry must not be put ahead of the need to save our planet.

- We need to act now to achieve an agreed Paris target level of CO<sub>2</sub> mitigation to achieve 2 degrees centigrade reduction in unison with other European countries. The Climate Change Low Carbon Development Bill 2015 showed Ireland is way off track and will have major challenges post 2020 in decarbonising its economy. We favour investment in not-for profit, publically owned renewable energy projects. Our aim is to achieve the decarbonisation of our economy including agriculture.
- We need proper investment in affordable public transport.



- We need retrofitted buildings to increase energy efficiency.
- We need substantial investment in renewable energies and serious divestment in fossil fuels.
- We are for making Fracking illegal. It has been banned in the State of New York, after a report by the Department of Health found that the environmental impact of fracking when it goes wrong is detrimental to the natural eco-system, drinking water and human habitation.