

Socialist Worker

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REPEAL NOT REPLACE!

Leo Varadkar has promised a referendum on Repealing the 8th Amendment for some time in 2018. As we explain in our centre page articles this is far too slow because every day Irish women are suffering and put at risk by the current state of the law.

Nevertheless there is likely to be a referendum and some stage and it is likely that the Irish people who voted Yes to Marriage Equality will vote Yes to repealing the cruel and repressive 8th Amendment. This Amendment enshrines conservative Catholic dogma in the Constitution and thus imposes it on us all. It's long over due for it to go!

Now those who fundamentally reject a woman's right to choose, who really don't want women to achieve equality and freedom will wage a rear guard action to REPLACE the 8th Amendment with some restrictive new clause in the Constitution.

They will try, if they can, to confine the right to abortion to cases of rape, incest and fatal fetal abnor-



mality or where the woman's life is in danger. And they will try, if they

can, to make this constitutionally binding.

We say this is not acceptable in the 21st century. The constitution is

no more the place for dealing with a woman's health issue than it is for dealing with male health issues. There are no constitutional clauses on vasectomy or prostate cancer.

It is also more restrictive than the recommendation of the Citizens Assembly which, absolutely rightly included social and economic conditions as grounds for abortion.

This is vital because in reality it is social and economic conditions that hinder and prevent working class women from accessing abortion. The rich have always been able to access it.

Socialist Worker says simply and emphatically that the issue of abortion can and must be decided by one person and one person alone – the individual woman herself.

Only she has to carry the fetus and only she has to birth the child. Only she can decide whether or not she is able and willing to do this. We call for 'Free, Safe and Legal Abortion – A Woman's Right to Choose' and will settle for nothing less.

Is Leo a Liar?

Leo Varadkar presents himself as a liberal progressive, neither of the left or the right, and much of the media, in Ireland and internationally, buys into this image. He's gay, he's half Indian, he's modern – he must be progressive.

But those who look beneath the PR spin at the reality of his record and policies will find a very different story.

Varadkar has always been known as a tough economic neo-liberal – that means a right winger and an absolute believer in the virtues of the free market.

That means he is strongly opposed to workers' rights and to trade unionism and he is strongly pro-business and bosses.

The way he ran his campaign for the leadership of Fine Gael confirmed this. His appeal was to the right wing of what is Ireland's most right wing party.

His two main themes were his attack on 'Welfare Cheats' and his claim that he wanted to represent 'those who get up early in the morning.' These are classic themes of



the hard right.

They play to the idea that the main problem in society is the feckless lazy poor at the bottom, many of whom are on the fiddle if not outright crooks. This is often very much the

views bosses have of their workers who they always think should be working harder.

And it is designed to get the middle classes and the upper ranks of the working class to focus their

resentment downwards onto the poor not upwards against the super rich.

FactCheck

But in fact both Varadkar's campaign slogans were based on lies.

In launching the welfare campaign his Department of Social Protection claimed they were preventing welfare fraud to the tune of €500 million a year.

As the Journal.ie showed in a careful FactCheck this was a fantasy figure based on vastly inflated statistics. The Journal concluded:

'From our analysis, even following what appear to be especially high multipliers used to estimate savings, that figure is closer to €51.9 million – just 16% of the €318 million officially estimated by DSP'

That's 16% of a figure that's only 3/5 of Varadkar's headline claim.

And the notion of representing those who get up early ignored the fact that the vast majority of those who get up early are low-paid workers: street cleaners, office cleaners, nurses, factory shift workers, building workers, super market workers and others whose wages Varadkar wants to hold down!

There's a lesson for us all here. Look beyond the smiling face and the open necked shirt, the spin and the PR. Look at the reality of his policies and their consistent bias towards the bosses and the rich.

As Socialist Worker goes to press we await the outcome of the Jobstown Trial. Whatever the verdict in this very important case we say:

SOLIDARITY WITH JOBSTOWN: PROTEST IS NOT A CRIME!