



Welcome to the September Claiming Our Future E-newsletter where you can check out news about Claiming Our Future's upcoming October Assembly on Saturday October 15th and our third national event - Claiming Our Future Ideas 'An Economy for Society' to be held in Cork on Saturday November 5th.

We're also we getting ready for our Budget Campaign timed for the month of November in the lead up to this years budget. We've also included some COF local groups news from Cork and Leitrim along with a brief report on our youth event 'Rattle The Cage'.

In the dates for your diary section we have news from Social Justice Ireland, TASC and FEASTA.

Best wishes,  
**The *Claiming Our Future Team.***

## **Claiming Our Future September 2011 Enewsletter**

**In this issue...Some questions...Economy for Society.. October Assembly..  
A budget campaign ...Cork-To Tax or Not To Tax?..  
People Power in the West...Rattle the Cage...  
Social Justice Ireland ...TASC...Feasta...**

**Some questions:**      SEEKING AN ECONOMY FOR SOCIETY

Claiming our Future is developing a further policy theme with a national event on 'An economy for society' to be held in Cork on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The event will be preceded by debate on [www.claimingourfuture.ie](http://www.claimingourfuture.ie) and by local events around the country. A thematic working group is currently preparing support materials and can be contacted via [richie@claimingourfuture.ie](mailto:richie@claimingourfuture.ie).

We have an economic system that is failing in its own terms against the only measure of success used - economic growth. It is also failing in terms of society with high levels of unemployment, inadequate funding of public services and growing inequality. Do we keep plugging away at this or should we not explore alternatives?

Current policy is supposed to restore the boom times. Even if it could these were times of extraordinary concentration of wealth with the top 1% holding

34% of the wealth and the richest 10% of households earning eleven times more than the poorest ten percent. These were times of unsustainable greenhouse gas emissions. Greenhouse gas emissions fell by an unprecedented 5.4m tonnes (nearly 8%) in 2009. This was due to the economic recession and prompted the EPA to state that without economic recession Ireland would have been a long way from its Kyoto targets for 2013. Do we want to go back to where we were or should we not explore alternatives?

Traditionally we have defined the success of our economic system in terms of GDP. Prosperity has come to mean wealth, income and possessions. There is a growing demand for alternative approaches to measuring economic success. Measurement should take account of the social and environmental costs of the current economic system. It should factor in a broader understanding of prosperity that encompasses issues such as well being, health and community.

Economic growth is essential to sustaining our current economic system. The absence of economic growth reflects the failure of this economic system. There is a growing understanding of the unsustainability of relentless economic growth in a finite planet. There is a growing recognition of the social impact of relentless economic growth which commodifies people, relationships and values.

Alternative ideas for and new approaches within economic systems have emerged with a capacity to better connect the economy, society and the environment. There are approaches such as the green economy, steady state economy and sustainable economy. There are local economy approaches and approaches involving robust regulation of corporations.

These are some of the questions and ideas that need debate across different sectors of civil society if we are to build a powerful force to demand an economy for society. This debate is timely as the twentieth anniversary of the 1992 UN Earth Summit approaches. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development committed Governments to a model of sustainable development that included the eradication of poverty, environmental protection and the reduction and elimination of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. The ambition in agreeing this Declaration has yet to be matched in its implementation.

### **Economy for Society Diary Notice:**

#### **CLAIMING OUR FUTURE IDEAS – AN ECONOMY FOR SOCIETY A NATIONAL DISCUSSION**

**Our economic model of development** is failing us. When judged by purely economic measures such as GDP growth is stagnant. The economic system doesn't serve society - unemployment is high, public services are being cut and wealth and income are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few, creating damaging inequalities. It is bad for the environment - natural resources are rapidly diminishing and ecosystems on which we all depend are being destroyed.

**It's time to talk about alternatives. It's time to talk about an economy for society.**

**Claiming our Future** in association with PlanBetter (part of IEN the Irish Environmental Network) is organising a national discussion on our economic system in **Cork**. Individuals and people from across a wide range of civil society organisations will talk through the issues on **November 5th**.

A working group will be organised to implement the ideas discussed and to promote an economy for society.

*What is your vision for social progress?*

*Does our economic system contribute to this vision?*

*How does economic growth serve society, the environment and the economy itself?*

*Do we need: Stronger regulation of corporations?*

*Technological innovation?*

*A new localism?*

*Education for change?*

*A steady state economy?*

*What do we need to do to advance alternatives?*

*What do I need to do?*

**JOIN THE NATIONAL DISCUSSION IN CORK ON NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup> 2011.**

**You can register your place from September 15<sup>th</sup>**

**Email [richie@claimingourfuture.ie](mailto:richie@claimingourfuture.ie)**

**FIND OUT MORE ON: [www.claimingourfuture.ie](http://www.claimingourfuture.ie)    [www.economyforsociety.ie](http://www.economyforsociety.ie)**

**Claiming Our Future News**

**Assembly**– Claiming Our Future are holding its second Assembly of those engaged in the work of the movement on October 15th in Dublin's Tailors Hall, An Taisce, Dublin 8. The Assembly has been convened to update and discuss the current and proposed work of Claiming our Future and to finalise and adopt Claiming Our Future's strategy document. The preparation of this strategy document arose from the first Assembly last March. People volunteered to join the coordinating committee to assist in preparing this document to set out what Claiming our Future is, what it plans to do and how it will organise itself. It was agreed that a draft document would be put to a second assembly which is now being organised.

**A Budget Campaign**– Claiming our Future is developing a campaign in the lead up to the budget and after the budget. The campaign will promote that we have choices in relation to this budget. It will seek a balance between taxation and spending cuts that would reflect a commitment to equality, a focus on taxing those who hold wealth, a commitment to protecting the incomes of those living in poverty and an emphasis on responding more effectively to unemployment. This campaign will seek to advance the values and policy themes developed at the RDS event last October. The messages and strategy for this campaign are now being developed and it is hoped to mobilise wide debate on and support for these issues.

**Cork Claiming our Future are organizing** an information/discussion type meeting pre-budget on the 5th October, "Budget 2012 – To Tax or not To Tax". Dr Tom O' Connor, lecturer in Economics and Social Policy, will address - Why we should pay tax, where Ireland is in terms of taxation relative to Europe etc, what kinds of taxes, and how taxes can help create a more equal society. Current thinking about the budget deficit seems to be focused on two thirds cuts & one third taxes – is this fair and does it hurt poorer people more who lose services but have to pay universal taxes? Does it leave those who have wealth & can pay much more off the hook etc? We hope this will stimulate a lively and engaged discussion amongst participants. Cork venue To Be Confirmed, Time 7pm.

### **Leitrim Claiming Our Future- People Power in the West: Gas Fracking coming to an area near you.**

In the Oscar nominated movie *Gasland* there is a warning that resonates at the end. The movie gives a harrowing introduction to the new gas extraction procedure that is Hydraulic Fracturing allowed to operate unregulated in the U.S. It documents the negative risks of injecting large quantities of chemical laden water to split rock to access gas, including pollution of ground, water and air, observed ill health to people and livestock, and vast industrialisation of rural landscape.

It warns to be vigilant that this is something that can happen to you. For communities in the North West of Ireland this warning has come true. In the dying days of the last government, companies were granted initial licences over the mineral rights of the areas of the Lough Allen and Clare basins. The huge land mass covers over 8000 acres including parts of Leitrim, Cavan, Donegal, Sligo, Mayo Monaghan, Roscommon, Clare, Cork, Limerick and Kerry.

The companies sell the promise of hundreds of jobs in a time of recession, and an opportunity for the country not to be reliant on imports for energy. But they do so in the context of peer reviewed research warning of large levels of greenhouse gas emissions with this so called clean procedure, of results confirming the correlation of methane in water to the industry denied before. The EU has issued warnings that regulations are insufficient to govern this form of industry. France has seen enough and banned the procedure, and moratoriums are in South Africa, Westphalia and New Jersey.

The project will mean hundreds of drilling wells in Leitrim alone, and coupled with the concern over population health and farming from spillages and pollution already documented has sent out warning bells. The Irish government's unwillingness to engage with communities has meant people feeling that their interests are secondary to those of large business speculators.

In this context, concerned citizens have decided to rely on each other. The innovative mobile cinema bringing *Gaslands* to local villages, hundreds of people in the Leitrim antifracking network meeting weekly in parish halls, and communicating through social mediums. Reaching out through the production of bumper stickers, tee-shirts, posters, leaflets. Visibility of support is spreading,

to marts, in older members groups, priests on local radio, art exhibitions, and coverage in newspapers. This level of mobilisation is unprecedented, evidenced by packed halls at local consultations. And why has this issue captured the public? The need for sustainable jobs in farming and tourism, respect for the land, the protection of natural resources for future generations and ultimately the right to self determination.

It has a national dimension about values. Our concern about global warming but willingness to risk public health and wellbeing to extract fossil fuel, and the prioritising of the rights of big business to the individual. Standing up for principles sometimes means action rather than word. Leitrim Claiming Our Future supports the antifracking network in their call for government to ban Hydraulic fracturing in Ireland.

<http://www.gopetition.com/petitions/ban-hydraulic-fracturing-for-natural-gas-in-ireland/sign.html>  
<http://what-the-frack.org/>

**Claiming Our Future** held its first **youth** event in Dublin on August 31<sup>st</sup> 2011 at the Wood Quay Venue in Dublin and was organised by the wonderful Ciara Begley from Trinity College Dublin. The 2010 US film 'Inside Job' about the economic crash was shown on the night to some fifty young people on the night who discussed the current Irish economic crisis. Discussion centred around the questions linked to the forthcoming Claiming Our Future Ideas event 'An economy for society' to be held in Cork on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

### **Dates for your Diary:**

#### **Social Justice Ireland Policy Conference to address Sharing Responsibility in Shaping the Future - September 14, 2011**

Social Justice Ireland's annual Social Policy Conference will address the issue of 'Sharing responsibility in Shaping the Future'. It is time that responsibility for shaping the future was shared in a meaningful way between all stakeholders in the interests of the common good. But sharing responsibility raises questions such as:

Why should responsibility be shared?

How can responsibility be shared in a real and meaningful manner at local, national and international levels?

How can people ensure their voice is really heard or that future generations are protected?

These and many related questions will be addressed from a variety of perspectives by an international and national panel of speakers at this Social Policy Conference.

**Date:** Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011  
**Registration:** 9.15 a.m.  
**Conference:** 9.45—5.00 p.m.  
**Venue:** Tara Towers Hotel, Dublin, Ireland.  
**Conference Chairperson:** Ingrid Miley  
**Conference Fee:** €75 (Members of Social Justice Ireland: €50)

**TASC** host a major seminar on incomes in **Cork** on **September 29th**. This event is being organised in partnership with FEPS, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies, and will be held in the Metropole Hotel. The seminar will be divided into three sessions focussing on 'Why incomes matter to recovery'; 'What's enough? The right to an adequate income', and 'Working floors', looking at wage floors in Ireland and Europe.

The seminar starts at 9.45 a.m. (registration from 9.15 a.m.), and will run until 4.15 pm; soup and sandwiches will be available.

The **TASC Annual Conference** will be organised in partnership with FEPS, and will be held in Croke Park on Saturday, October 15th; it will be preceded by an Expert Round Table on Financial Regulation on October 14th. A light lunch will be available on both days.

A highlight of Saturday's plenary will be a panel discussion (In this together? Ireland, Portugal and Greece – Escaping the Debt Trap) featuring Prof Yanis Varoufakis (University of Athens), Prof Stuart Holland (University of Coimbra) and Tom McDonnell of TASC.

The closing keynote address will be given by Professor James K. Galbraith of the University of Texas at Austin.

Full details of both events available on the TASC website (<http://www.tascnet.ie/>)

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**FEASTA** - The Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability

"Designing systems for a changing world"

National Strategies for dealing with Ireland's debt crisis Exploring the options

Thursday afternoon 22nd - Friday 23 September 2011

Mont Clare Hotel, Merrion Square, Dublin

Ireland's current national economic and monetary strategy has been described as 'relying on the kindness of strangers'. Very few alternatives to the current policy have been properly explored. There are plausible reasons for this - the fear of an adverse market response, the lack of intellectual leadership, perhaps the vested interests of the status quo.

Whatever the reason, alternative strategies that Ireland could adopt to deal with its unprecedented debt crisis need to be fully explored and debated. Feasta's autumn conference will examine measures that this country could adopt to secure its economic future which do not

leave it reliant on external factors, largely outside of its control.  
This two-day event will address several key questions - Can Ireland rely on global economic growth to resolve its public debt crisis? What is the relationship between energy, the crisis and future economic growth? What about private debt problems including mortgage debt? Can the Euro survive? Should Ireland plan for a Euro-zone break up? Is anything to be gained by leaving first? Could a new Irish currency working in parallel with the Euro be a better solution?

Registration:

1.00pm Thursday 22nd Sept.

Conference:

Thurs 2.00 - 5.30 p.m

Friday 10am - 4pm

Conference Fee:

€80 full conference, €60 one day, €250 Corporate Fee, concessions for Feasta and IEN members.

Advance booking is essential.

Conference website: <http://www.feasta.org/debt-conference>

Conference programme: <http://www.feasta.org/debt-conference/programme.pdf>

Register: [http://www.feasta.org/debt-conference/registration\\_form.php](http://www.feasta.org/debt-conference/registration_form.php)