

WORKERS



socialist, secular, anti-sectarian

Response to the NI Executive's Budget Proposals 2015-16

The Workers Party has responded in detail to the draft budget proposals of a number of Executive Departments. Details of these submissions can be found on the Northern Ireland pages of our web site: www.workerspartyelection.wordpress.com

The Workers Party does not believe that the Executive's proposed spending plans for the period April 2015 – March 2016 represent a fair, equitable or workable approach to our current economic situation. They will not improve the standard of living for people in Northern Ireland nor will they guarantee job creation or economic upturn. Conversely they will lead to a further erosion of public services, a reduction in the quality of life for all Northern Ireland citizens and the undermining of many already agreed Executive priorities such as a shared future, tackling poverty and social exclusion and promoting equality of opportunity for all citizens

Northern Ireland remains one of the most socially disadvantaged areas of the United Kingdom. Reductions in public expenditure will compound those difficulties – not address them. Northern Ireland needs to invest its way to economic and social recovery. We still have many legacy issues to tackle including underfunding of public services, and consequently we must assert the uniqueness of our position and seek investment and funding to tackle those long term systemic problems.

An austerity budget in 2015/16 will not only impact on the poor, the working poor and those in low paid employment, it will also remove many thousands of tax paying workers from economic activity with the downstream consequences that will entail. Further, austerity measures will erode the social fabric of Northern Ireland and have the potential to do irreparable damage to much of the community development and social cohesion work which has been secure in recent times. The implications of Welfare Reform proposals will further compound these problems and have negative economic consequences.

In this context proposals to reduce Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland are as obscene as they are flawed. With up to £400m removed from the Block Grant and no guarantee of a single new job being created this is folly on one level and morally repugnant at another.

There are many, many people in Northern Ireland who have yet to experience the tangible social and economic benefits of peace and a devolved administration. The budget proposals as outlined hold out no hope for them on that front.

If Northern Ireland is to prosper and its economy recover then it needs a major programme of capital and revenue investment. We need to invest to secure the limited achievements which have been secured and to establish a stable platform on which to build for the future. Cuts and austerity are not the solution: there are alternatives. A series of major public works programmes in housing, education, health and sustainable environmental projects can get Northern Ireland back to work, the economy moving and Northern Ireland citizens contributing and benefiting. That is the challenge that faces the NI Executive and Assembly. Only the lack of political will prevents it.

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