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Ireland - Statement: Repeal the eighth! Defend the Right to Choose! Separate Church and State!

Friday 25 May 2018, by [Socialist Democracy \(Ireland\)](#) (Date first published: 20 May 2018).

Socialist Democracy urges all socialists and democrats who have a vote to cast that vote for repeal of the Eighth Amendment of the Irish Constitution - an amendment that has embodied the merciless ideology of the Catholic Church, empowered by the grip of the Irish state, to deny the democratic rights of Irish woman.

We can't see the future, however we are confident that the youth and energy of the repeal campaign will overcome the reactionaries defending the amendment and bring about a yes vote. We also believe that the single focus on repeal means that the opportunity to build a more radical movement of socialists and feminists has not been taken up fully and as a result there is a long and arduous struggle still to be fought for this central democratic right at issue - the right to choose - the right of women to control their own bodies free of the constraints of Church and State.

The pictures of groups of up to 50 volunteers gathering to leaflet and lobby are signs of a constricted campaign that needs to burst the bounds of the existing movement and find new channels for their energy. As long as the core of the campaign is limited simply to repeal, then poster and leafleting will be the main activities.

What difference would a Right to Choose campaign make?

Right to Choose would be a mass campaign on the streets. It would demand a united and democratic campaign rather than the national paper unity and local fragmentation that we have. It would refer back to the terrible history of servitude and death in the Magdalene Laundries and in the orphanages that faced many young women and their children and which were enforced by the alliance of Church and State. It would connect up with current events, saying how even today the care of women threatened by cancer is subordinate in a health service geared for profit and policed by the clergy.

The dangers come after the vote. The removal of the Eighth Amendment will be a terrible blow to the Church. However this is a blow they have long prepared for. The momentum of the repeal campaign, run largely within constituency boundaries, is towards the Dail, and this is a terrain where reactionary forces have the advantage. The strategy will be to fight on the issue of a 12 week window for abortion, to tie in chains a million other restrictions beyond that and to build in a freedom of conscience clause for medical staff that will lead to a long guerrilla war in the health service where working class women will be the casualties.

Many believe that Ireland is now a post Catholic society. It's true that the church has retreated in the face of widespread hatred as the more savage elements of their role were exposed. However they remain a central pillar of the gombeen society we live in. The state carried the can on the limited reparations and the Church walked away scot-free. Today the clerics are ensconced in our

legal system, our education system and in the health system. In the aftermath of the repeal vote we will need to mobilise to insist on the right to choose and to link that right to the more general restriction of workers' rights caused by the influence of the Catholic Church in Irish society.

Socialist Democracy, May 2018

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