

Ireland Could Be the One To Say ‘No!’ to the Troika

Nessa Childers is a member of the European Parliament representing the East constituency of the Republic of Ireland. She was interviewed by EIR's Nina Ogden and Gene Douglas, editor of the LaRouche Irish Brigade website (<http://laroucheirishbrigade.wordpress.com/>), in the Dublin offices of the European Parliament, on April 24.



Childers, a member of the Irish Labour Party, recently resigned from her political group in the Irish Parliament to dramatize her opposition to the austerity policies being imposed on European Union countries by the “Troika.” Her father, Erskine Childers, was the fourth President of Ireland.

As the interview began, Ogden told Childers that she had been following her, from the U.S., before Childers’ resignation. Here is an edited transcript of the discussion.

Nessa Childers: So you have been following me, and now after this, the CIA and MI-5 will be following me, too!

Ogden: Well, that’s par for the course, you know.

Childers: Yes. . . . I understand, and you know, I come from a kind of revolutionary background, and I think, at some level, that has influenced me politically, and I don’t even understand it myself. I’m a cultural melting pot myself, I’m not completely Irish, and I think that’s all in there somewhere.

So do you want to ask me questions? I’m not an economist, but I can talk about political justice.

Ogden: We know you have been against these austerity measures for a long time, and we want to know what your thinking is about that.

‘Agendas Behind Curtains’

Childers: It has to do with justice, and it has to do with vested interests, as well, and with “agendas behind curtains,” as Poul Rasmussen, who was the head of the party of European Socialists, said about two years ago at a meeting I was at. It struck me, what he said, because the English was slightly turned around and it is more powerful than “hidden agendas”: “agendas behind curtains.” And he was operating at quite a high level at that stage. He

was the former Prime Minister of Denmark. There were negotiations going on, and he said he suddenly sensed this—and he’s good at pattern recognition I think—and he sensed that there were “agendas behind curtains.”

And you begin to see this when you are in the EP [European Parliament]. You begin to see the enormous forces ranged against you, if you are anti-austerity: financial and political. You can sense them, and you can see the patterns, as if your man is going down into some sort of safe place, and he puts on these glasses, and suddenly he sees the outlines of these alarm systems. You begin to see those agendas and to sense them, and you begin to think that something is very wrong! And that there are forces operating to keep us in these positions.

In Ireland as well, you know: This is why I exposed the Financial Services Clearinghouse and their operations in Leinster House [the Dail, the parliament of the Republic of Ireland—ed.]. I think that this isn’t right! There’s a moral aspect about this. It’s about people not fitting into spreadsheets. They cannot; they are human beings. And my former profession comes into it as well. I was a psychotherapist for 25 years. I wasn’t a politician. And I signed a code of ethics, and I began to feel that I was colluding in something that was actually indefensible,

and that I would never be able to defend it personally.

Ogden: Good.

Childers: And I did begin to feel that I wasn't prepared to bear it any longer; and what could happen to me in the future if I started to work in that field again, and what would people sitting across, behind the couch, or behind the table; what would they see me as? Perhaps being to blame for maybe a suicide! Out there, there are huge amounts of suicides, and it's the tip of the iceberg. There's huge amounts of chronic anxiety and depression from insecurity and insecure employment, and I don't want to be held responsible beyond what any of us can be. And at that stage, I thought, something had to be actually done.

And that's where things get difficult, because you know, I chose deliberately to try and destabilize the system. That's the way I was brought up, you see. It wasn't enough simply to resign, but I had to actually go into the power structure and to actually shake it, and bring it down, because that is the only thing left.

There Are Troikas Everywhere

Gene Douglas: This follows on, I think, neatly, from what you have said already: Why do you think that the Troika is so insistent on austerity, when a lot of leading economists have said that it's exactly the opposite, that it's the wrong direction to take? Why is there this insistence on austerity when it is proven to be so destructive?

Childers: Well, what a half-plan has it proven to be! The economists that are hostile to austerity in the United States, they are regarded as the East Coast versus the West Coast economists, and they themselves have been in major conflicts with their own profession, with people who do believe in fiscal discipline. I think the thing to think of there, is, in Europe the construction of the Troika is definitely influenced by some member states, by Germany, Finland, and the Netherlands.

You have to try to understand what happens in Germany. The German people think that their taxpayer money is being misused. They see themselves as the victims in all of this. There are multiple reasons. The bit that worries me the most are the hidden reasons, where they are tied up with bond markets; and there are other people who probably know quite well who those people were, and that's the bit that I think is part of it. The Cypriot situation was absolutely shocking, and mismanaged; and they now face something like a 20% contraction of their economy. And I would say that their

presence in the euro is, for them, 50-50—whether they'll be in the euro or not.

Douglass: Their Parliament was told, "We're going to turn off your money unless, in three days, unless..."

Childers: They said that to us, too!

Ogden: They [the Cypriots] voted reluctantly, and then the conditions were supposedly changed, but now they can't bear it.

Childers: It's like Iceland, you know, they're forcing their politicians to go and confront... You see, that situation in Cyprus was not good; it gave the Irish government a reason for saying, "Oh, look what they're about to do in Cyprus, to pull the rug." In fact, we don't really know what what they would have done. They didn't actually do it in the end, because the Cypriots showed the jugular. They gave in under threat. The threat: That is another moral aspect. There are Troikas threatening countries everywhere. What happens is, they threaten governments, and then governments threaten their own representatives. It's like an awful repetition of something.

We have the public employee, the Croke Park negotiations¹ here, and they were negotiated with a threat! And what happened there is quite interesting because I think we're at the limits of where that is effective. That can cause a scorched-Earth attitude in people where they just think, "That's it! We're at the end of it; I'm not going to be threatened with that anymore by anybody!" I can see a kind of a weak reduction of bullying really, from Troikas to governments and then governments to their own people, and their own representatives.

The Grenade in the Ballot Box

Ogden: And actually that was going to be our last question. The sense is, that what your resignation is part of, I think, is the kind of feeling that's going on throughout Ireland and throughout the other countries in Europe: that enough is enough. That nobody believes the spin any more. And for the unions to turn down the Croke Park II agreement, is really significant. I think it has a lot to do with what's going to happen in the Labour Party with you and your colleagues, as a whole.

Childers: I wouldn't bet on it. I've come to wonder what is going to really crack this edifice. You see, it's got to do with masses of people. And you never know what's

1. The Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (Croke Park Agreement) is a series of austerity measures demanded by the government of public service trade unions—ed.

going to happen there. We seem to be quite quiescent in Ireland, you know, in many ways. It's what Rory Quinn [Minister for Education and Skills] described as "the grenade in the ballot box." People seem to wait until elections, and then they destroy political parties. I have grave concerns about that, because I think it'll be too late, and I don't know what's going to happen....

Ogden: You're bringing up, that you have to have a positive solution. You can't just say "We're against this," and then people go crazy.

Childers: We need to spend money. I think we have to do; our banks need to be recapitalized, as the next thing that has to happen. They are not functioning, absolutely not functioning. I don't think that's going to be easy. I think the other European states are going to move back from that. But I think our debts have to be written down. I don't think we can pay them. I would be concerned that that has to be done in a strategic way. Because I personally would be very concerned, not from the point of view of the philosophy of it, but I couldn't advocate a disorderly default, because I think people are there. We could end up in a most disastrous situation. There are other kinds of defaults, and many economists would say it's going to happen anyway, unless we do something, and I think those debts are still unsustainable. We've just pushed them out....

You know you wonder sometimes whether people have been captured—it's the Stockholm Syndrome²—by people that they have no power to stop, certainly with individuals...

Ogden: I have to tell you, that's what *you* are for!

Childers: You're dealing with group minds—that is what one of the trade union people said to me—so instead of getting angry, they are trying to please the people that have power over them. If that is the case, that's actually a benign explanation. The other explanation is, that some of them have been captured by vested interests. So I don't know. Both are entirely possible, of course, too, but I seem to be immune these days to the Stockholm Syndrome....

Glass-Steagall Is the Key

Ogden: I think leadership is moral leadership. From what you described, that means moral leadership.

2. The Stockholm syndrome, or capture-bonding, is a psychological phenomenon in which hostages develop positive feelings toward their captors.

Childers: But that means upsetting people now. And I don't find that easy. And to actually lead a bit of a parliamentary party, and to begin to sort of confront them, I found that I have to do that, unlike the other people that left; they had to vote, and they lost. I had to do something very deliberate. You know, no one wants to be hated by people, or to take up that position. But I did. You know, I suppose I was brought up from a very young age to think about democracy. And where, if you saw it beginning to erode, that you couldn't *not* take action, that you had a duty, an actual duty, to do something about it, which of course led to my grandfather running guns, and my grandmother.

But you know, Ireland *could* provide the leadership, as you were just saying; I was just thinking, we stood up in those days to the British Empire, a tiny country of, what would it be, two and a half million people, if not less. So, we *could* be the ones that say "No!" That's a very powerful statement, you know, if Ireland says "No," that would resonate in the memory of Irish people. At this point, I don't know what is happening to Irish people. I think that they're too exhausted to fight. I think that they have gone into a sort of a helpless state.

But that's what governments are for, to defend their people. I was brought up to believe that the first reason to be a public representative is to defend the people you represent. But instead, we're defending the Troika. And in my opinion, that's a symptom, perhaps of something which does come from the past, you know, where we learned to play games—probably quite successful to some degree—games behind the scenes. You see, I think it's gone beyond that stage. I think it will require hard political power, to stand up now to these people. That means making threats of a kind.

Douglas: I just wanted to say, while I agree with you totally on what you just said there, that we in Ireland have tended to play these games, while pushing for our own agenda, but I just have to say that I think we have been really unsuccessful. In doing that, we've never really achieved—you know, still we have a divided country, and now we're under the yoke of this Troika, which is another sort of imperial master, if you like.

So I think we have tried in various ways, but unfortunately, it really hasn't worked. But I think, again, as you were saying, that this is a real critical time at present, and I think there is possibly a breakthrough available to get beyond this type of imperialism. I think Glass-Steagall is the key to it.