



CLAIMING OUR FUTURE

a progressive movement for an equal,
sustainable and thriving Ireland

An Ipsos/Mrbi poll in April recorded 23% satisfaction with the Coalition Government and 73% dissatisfaction. The level of dissatisfaction is up 16% from October 2011. Nothing changes however as the current government races to the levels of unpopularity enjoyed by its predecessor. Welcome to democracy Irish style!

We have had all sorts of economic analyses of the causes of our crisis. Poor regulation, groupthink at the top, excess availability of savings and so on. We have had little analysis of the political decision making that enabled these various causes to play their part.

There has been some appetite for naming and blaming responsible politicians but none for looking at the political systems that got us into this mess. Now we have a new set of politicians following the same path with the same levels of popularity there is an urgent need to explore what is wrong with our politics.

The multi-flawed Celtic Tiger was a creation of this politics. It was political decision making that enabled this particular model of development, diminished our capacity to regulate the financial sector, ceded all power to the markets and failed to redistribute the huge wealth that was and continues to be held by a small minority. Yet we seem content to continue with the same political systems.

It is not that these political systems are getting any better. We have been promised dramatic reform. All we are getting is a Constitutional Convention with the limited agenda to examine the length of the Presidential mandate and the voting age. The political appetite for reform only stretches to issues such as the number of days the Dail sits and the manner in which expenses are disbursed.

European democracy is being diminished with the dominance of the Council, and in particular Germany and France, and the exclusion of the Parliament. National democracy is being diminished with Ministers regularly hiding behind the demands (real and imagined) of the Troika. We never had local democracy. At the level of the workplace democracy is diminished with the failure to recognize the right to collective bargaining.

A reform agenda should, by way of example, be seeking a more effective parliament by abolishing the party whip system, empowering committees to initiate legislation, and separating cabinet from parliament with Ministers appointed from outside parliamentary politics to secure greater capacity and accountability to the Dail. It would devolve powers to local government and develop local funding streams. It would develop deliberative forms of citizen engagement in national and local governance. It would secure trade union right of recognition.

We need to develop and advance demands for a democracy that is capable of realizing real change in our society and economy, based on equality and environmental sustainability. Claiming our Future is organizing a national event to identify these demands and how best to advance them. It is being held in Croke Park on May 26th on 'Reinventing our Democracy'. Participate in this debate by registering on www.claimingourfuture.ie.