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Market rents bring down Swedish government.

PBP Councillor Madeleine Johansson explains how the genuine left can wield power from opposition.

This week the Swedish Prime Minister was forced to resign over a proposal to dismantle protection for renters. He lost a vote of no confidence which has resulted in the government collapsing.

Since 2019 the minority Social Democratic and Green government has been backed by and had policy input from the two centre right parties - The Centre Party and The Liberals.

The Left Party (former Communist Party) agreed to give provisional support to the government to keep out the far-right party, "Sweden Democrats".

However, if market rents were to be introduced, which was proposed in the initial Social Democratic/Green/Centre/Liberal agreement, then they would vote no confidence in the government.

On the 4th June the government published a proposal on the introduction of market rents in new build housing. In Sweden the vast majority of rentals are public housing which is built and managed by 100% local authority owned bodies. Anyone can apply for housing- there are no income limits- and pay rent that is set according to existing equivalent levels and takes into account affordability.

There are also, and increasingly so, private landlords who are bound by the same legislation as the public bodies. The new proposal would see rents set by "negotiation" or "agreement" between the tenant and the landlord. This would dramatically change the system in favour of landlords against tenants and result in massive rent increases.

The Left Party decided to stand by their promise to vote down the government in the case of introduction of market rents. On Monday the 28th June the Prime Minister Stefan Löfven was forced to resign and if another government can't be formed an election will be called.

The political situation in Sweden shows exactly how a party on the genuine left can play a crucial role while not taking up government positions. The Left Party is a radical party but has previously participated in government with the Social Democrats.

But by supporting a government on a case by case basis to keep out the far right, it has given them the power to pull their support when working class people are attacked.

As the Left Party leader Nooshi Dadgostar said: “We have done something that is considered unusual in politics - stood by our word.” The party has recruited more than 2000 new members in the last week and have seen their highest poll ratings in 15 years.

Here in Ireland there is a strong possibility of a Sinn Féin led government after the next election. It would be a huge step forward to see the end of FF and/or FG rule. But can we really trust Sinn Féin to carry out substantial change in the interests of ordinary people?

The experience in the North, and on councils in the Republic, of Sinn Féin in power leaves an awful lot to be desired. They have implemented devastating cuts to social welfare and public services in Northern Ireland and in the Republic they have even voted to sell off public land to private developers.

If there was a possibility of a Sinn Féin led left government, radical left TD's could support it on a case by case basis without joining such a government, in the same way that the Left Party has done in Sweden.

The radical left can then hold Sinn Féin to account to ensure that their promises are kept.

Too many times, the Irish working class have been let down by parties who call themselves socialist.

The radical left in Ireland should learn from what the Swedish Left Party has achieved from opposition and stand up for working class people.

The RED Network (incorporating Rebel Telly) are a network of radical socialists within the political party People Before Profit, a 32-county people power movement on the island of Ireland.

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