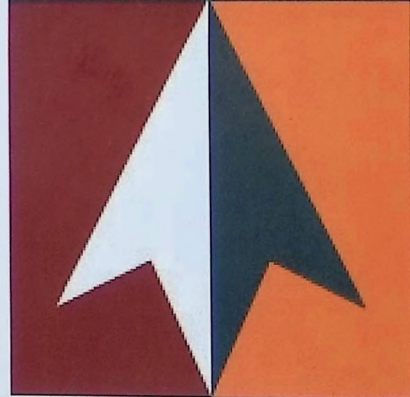


# Socialist Worker

## NATIONALISE THE BANKS



## KICK COWEN OUT



THE IRISH banks got the deal of the century.

Their loans and deposits guaranteed by the state – this has already cost taxpayers billions because the state now pays a higher interest rate on its own loans.

When that wasn't enough FF and the Greens, backed by FG, gave AIB, Bank of Ireland and Anglo Irish €7.5 billion – at a time when the government could have bought all the banks for €3.5 billion!

The government didn't even get

the majority share in the banks. The heads of the banks that caused the property bubble didn't even have to resign.

For anyone who wonders why banks make such large donations to right wing political parties like FF and FG you only have to look at this deal.

This deal should be scrapped – the banks should be nationalised.

They didn't share their profits during the boom, why should we bail them out (on their terms) dur-

ing the bust.

Now the government wants to cut more taxes on multinationals and the rich!

The 87 million 'loan' by the head of Anglo Irish to himself alongside the recent revelations about FAS executives shows how the Irish rich treat the state like a slush fund.

They are like pigs at the trough. And just like the pork producers they put their own profits ahead of everything – even if threatens our lives.

But the bosses solutions aren't working.

This year the economy will shrink by 5% - the 1930s depression was caused by a 10% shrink. Irish bosses have no solution but to attack workers wages and living standards.

They now want to extend the pay freeze and cut wages further.

The government and the bankers are attacking the most vulnerable in society.

Harassing people surviving on social welfare, cutting education

funds and community creches, and announcing €900 billion cuts in an already stretched health system.

We need to continue the protest movement that brought over a hundred thousand onto the streets before Christmas and force this government out.

Across Europe people are fighting back. Riots and strikes have hit Greece, Italy and France.

We need the same here to make sure workers don't end up paying for the recession.

To submit articles or letters to Socialist Worker you can contact us at

t: (01) 872 3054  
e: editor@swp.ie  
w: www.swp.ie

Contact the SWP in your area: COUNTRYWIDE

# SF & DUP fundamentalist attack on women's rights

By GORETTI HORGAN

WHEN THE Westminster Parliament decided in Oct not to debate extending the Abortion Act to the North of Ireland, women's rights activists warned that this was leaving women's health in the hands of 'an evangelical Taliban'.

Those warnings have now been shown to be all too true.

In Nov, the Assembly's Health Committee sent its response to the draft guidelines on abortion issued in July to Health Minister McGimpsey. The Committee is chaired by Iris Robinson, the MP and MLA who told the BBC that homosexuality is 'an abomination' and that it the duty of government 'to implement god's law.

However, many people felt that the presence of three Sinn Fein women on the committee would mean that it could not be too anti-woman in its response. Unfortunately, it seems that Sinn Fein is going along with the DUP fundamentalist approach to abortion rights.

The first paragraph of the committee's response says that it 'fully endorsed the statement by Professor John Keown who argued that "The starting point of the Guidance should have been a clear statement of the illegality of abortion in Northern Ireland: that it is a crime punishable by a maximum of life imprisonment to use any means with intent to procure miscarriage, and an offence to supply means knowing that they are to be used with that intent."

The Assembly Committee's response then goes on to

say that it "is concerned that there is no mention in the draft of the rights of the unborn baby and believe that it must be made clear that all those involved including health care professionals and counsellors need to take the rights of the child into consideration".

It also argues that an assessment of a woman's mental health "must always be carried out by a relevant and fully competent professional" - in other words, a psychiatrist.

What it doesn't say is that Prof Keown's response was written at the request of the Association of Catholic Lawyers in Ireland. So, an alliance of Catholic fundamentalists and Protestant evangelicals are now deciding on women's rights in the North. It is a disgrace that Sinn Fein are allowing this to happen.

## Love Music Hate Racism launched

LOVE MUSIC Hate Racism (LMHR) was launched recently in Cork and Dublin. The first Dublin gig had over 60 people and Cork showed "Who Shot the Sheriff", a film that documents the story of Rock Against Racism, which was set up in 1970s Britain, to fight the Nazi National Front (NF).

Rock Against Racism, together with the Anti Nazi League and anti racist activists, physically prevented the NF from mobilising on the streets and marching through immigrant areas.

Rock Against Racism's place has been taken today by Love Music Hate Racism. Joe Moore from LMHR Cork said, "The film and draws the parallels between England in the '70s and today's Ireland. Both were experiencing economic recessions, where bosses and establishment politicians use the race card to divide workers".

"Enoch Powell's 1968 "rivers of blood" speech gave encouragement to the ultra right to mobilise. In today's Ireland the whole political establishment is racist. Cork Fianna Fail TD Noel O'Flynn used Dail privilege to attack asylum seekers".

In 2004 a racist amendment was inserted into the constitution, whereby citizenship is based on blood and not place of birth, a recent law was passed in the Dail resulting in more serious penalties being imposed on people begging on the streets. This legislation will target both Travellers and Roma, as well as homeless people.

One of the policies of the National Front, if they got power was the repatriation/ deportation of all non white people living in Britain. Today's Irish government already deports non white residents. Since Michael McDowell was appointed

Minister for Justice in 2004 over 15 mass deportations to Nigeria have taken place.

While no organised group like the NF exists here at the moment, there are however small groups of nazis operating. At the moment they put up anti immigrant graffiti. However if they are allowed to continue they will attract others. A strong Love Music Hate Racism movement can combat them.

Over the coming months LMHR will be organising music, film screenings and poetry events in order to build up a network of anti racist activists to fight all manifestations of racism and fascism.

If you wish to get involved or are a musician, poet or artist contact Joe at 087 2994796. If you wish to get involved or are a musician, poet or artist contact Joe at 087 2994796.



## Italian education protests spread



by PIETRO TAVIANI

THE HUGE wave of protests by students, teachers, lecturers and school students continues to send shock waves across Italy.

The demonstrations are against the Berlusconi government's assault on secondary and higher education.

The ongoing protests have impacted into the workplace giving confidence to workers facing assaults on jobs, contracts and conditions.

Museums and galleries in Rome were shut as staff struck over fears of job cuts when contracts are renewed next month.

Unofficial strikes by

pilots and cabin crew led to over 300 Alitalia flights being cancelled.

The action was in defence of jobs as the state owned company was sold off to a group of private investors.

December also saw a general strike called by the main trade union federation.

## Cork workers occupy

ONE HUNDRED and fifty workers at Swissco organised a sit-in at their factory in Little Island near Cork city when the company failed to pay their wages for two weeks running to December

08. Swissco supplied pre-packed meals to the Musgrave chain. Some of the workers have been with the company from 1974. SIPTU represented 120 of their number

and for several days and demanded answers from the company.

The company was put into liquidation but the workers occupation meant they got their money.

## Mass deportation

FIFTY SIX Nigerians were deported on Thursday 11th December. This was the biggest deportation ever carried out by the government.

From Tuesday 3rd December the Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) raided hostels and asylum seeker accommodation centres around the country, arresting men and women and putting any children they had into "care".

These people were not accused of any crime, nor brought before a court.

Of the 56 deported, 16 were children.

The plane began its journey in London with 12 Nigerians deported from Britain.

The cost to the tax payer here, for the plane was €200,000, according to the Star.

Exploitation in restaurant industry

The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) launched a report in December exposing the exploitation of migrant workers in Ireland's Restaurants.

The report, Exploitation in Ireland's Restaurant

Industry, is based on the results of 115 one-hour surveys of migrant workers employed in restaurants in Ireland. They found

- 53% earned less than the minimum hourly wage;
- 43% worked in excess of the legal limit of 48 hours per week;
- 44% did not get rest breaks;
- 85% did not receive overtime pay or extra pay for Sunday work
- 84% did not receive a contract or terms of employment

# Occupations win for workers

By EAMONN McCANN

CAR COMPONENT workers in Derry and Chicago have both occupied their plants in a struggle to win what they're entitled to as their factories face closure.

Just over a hundred workers at Calcast in Derry won substantial concessions following a three-day occupation in the last week of November.

Calcast made engine parts for Ford SUVs assembled in Germany.

But the crisis in the US car industry led to cutbacks

in Germany and a dearth of orders for Derry.

Calcast's parent company, French-owned Montpet, tried to close the Derry plant as cheaply as possible, offering minimum legal redundancy and 30 days notice.

The workers insisted they were entitled to 90 days.

Union officials were as dumbfounded as management by the rank-and-file response and rushed to Derry to lead negotiations.

After three days, a settlement was agreed, giving higher redundancy and 74 days paid notice.

Some believed more could have been won. But most workers saw no realistic possibility of saving the jobs.

What's clear is that without the occupation the bosses would have imposed the miserly terms they'd offered first day.

On December 5th, workers occupied the Republic Windows & Doors factory in Chicago demanding the \$1.5 million in severance and holiday pay owed to them.

The bosses blamed Bank of America for refusing to extend loans to the company.

Workers were angry that the bank had received a \$25 billion bail-out from the Government, but wouldn't loan a few million to the company so workers could keep their jobs.

Both instances show that only militant action can win anything as industries are hit hard by the recession.

The global nature of both the recession and the resistance is plain from the parallels between the two experiences.

The need for workers to link their struggles on the widest possible basis has never been more urgent.

## Defending education in France



by SOPHIE DROUILLET in Paris

ON THE first week of December around 200,000 teachers and students took to the streets across France against the government's attacks on education.

The strike was called by all the teachers' and students' unions.

The right-wing administration of Nicolas Sarkozy wants to cut the education budget rather than focussing on improving teaching and learning conditions.

The government's aim could be summarised in one slogan: reduce the number of teachers to save money.

This will mean 13,500 job cuts for September 2009 and 3,000 job losses for special needs assistants in primary schools.

Teachers will have to work extra if they want to earn more instead of receiving increased salaries, which will lessen the teaching quality since teachers will have to

prepare more in less time.

This is all part of a more general plan that the government has of withdrawing from their responsibilities towards its people, for the benefit of their friends in big businesses.

They have already privatised the electricity and gas companies and

they want to do the same with the postal service and the transportation of goods by train.

They would rather save money on things that would benefit the people and spend it on sending more troops to Afghanistan, or helping their friends in the banks and big businesses who are

suffering in the financial crisis.

Fortunately, French people are waking up again: before the teachers the SNCF (The French National Train Company) went on strike, and this Saturday it was the post offices' turn. The country is stirring once again... let's keep up the fight.

## Galway students occupy Fianna Fail MEP office

ON THURSDAY 27th November Galway students occupied FF MEP Sean O'Neachtain's office in protest at the education cutbacks and the proposed re-introduction of fees.

Free Education for Everyone (FEE), a collective of NUI Galway students, or-

ganised the demo. FEE was set up from a public meeting of the Galway Socialist Workers Student Society alongside students from other societies and colleges. More and more students are joining the groups protests.

Luca Valentini, the protest organiser described the pro-

test, "A loud and colourful group of nearly a hundred students assembled outside the university library and marched towards Eyre Square".

"The demonstration continued outside the office of Fianna Fail MEP Sean O'Neachtain, which was picketed and subsequently peacefully occupied

by the protestors".

"The group is especially concerned about the 67% increase to college registration fees and the possibility of the reintroduction of full tuition fees".

"The widespread cuts to public education is outrageous and clearly shows the

priorities of this government. Fianna Fail and the Greens clearly neglect the importance of education. The only way to achieve success, according to their views, is to collude with the interests of the corporations and no space is left for culture. Universities, at best, are seen as recruiting agen-

cies to be exploited by the industry".

New policies implemented at NUIG mean that laboratory tutorials given by first year postgraduates will no longer be paid.

Luca said, "We claim a primary role for culture and public education".

### People Before Profit support housing protests

PEOPLE BEFORE Profit (PBP) helped organise protests by residents of O'Deveny Gardens and Michael's Estate whose developments were abandoned by McNamara builders when the economy crashed.

PBP has also been petitioning for public support for their four demands to the government and to Dublin City Council to deal with the housing crisis:

1. The government and the council should be the driving force behind a massive new round of house building, to provide affordable housing and jobs for those in the building trade.
2. Empty developments should be taken into public ownership and made available as social housing.
3. There should be a halt on repossessions.
4. The legislation aimed at preventing begging on the streets only serves to criminalise the homeless and should be repealed.

Colm Stephens, People Before Profit candidate Dublin City Council in the Inner City Area said 'I am backing this protest because after years of relying on greedy property developers to supply housing needs the result is exorbitant prices and houses and apartments left empty.

'Dublin City Council should revert to the policy of providing social housing directly.

'After the withdrawal by millionaire developer Bernard McNamara from the PPP schemes this model is now dead.'

### WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.

A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

#### REVOLUTION

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

#### AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.

Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

#### END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

#### FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

#### FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

### Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to  
SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

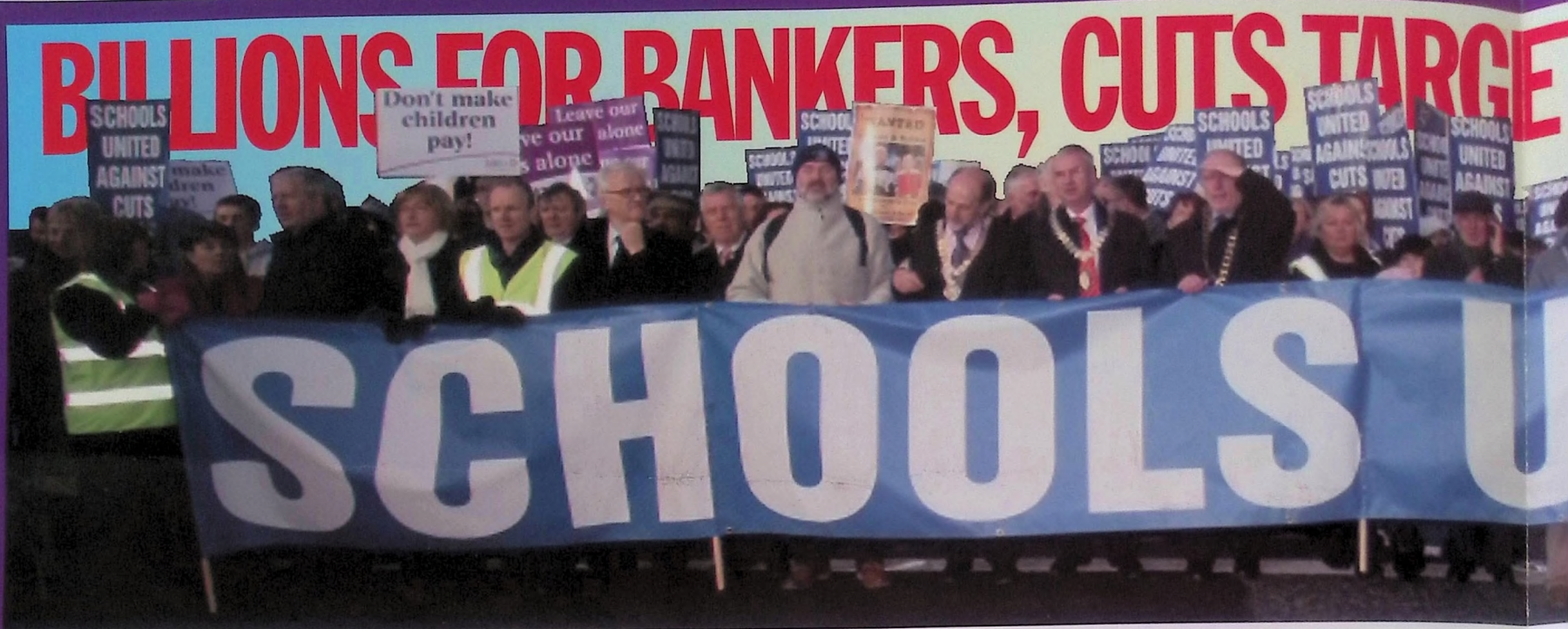
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Address.....

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# Communities march to demand

THE GOVERNMENT'S changes to the funding of community childcare schemes will be a disaster for working class areas. 30,000 families rely on these creches to be able to work.

From last September rather than give a grant for every child in a creche the government made anyone not on basic social welfare apply for a subvention.

Weekly childcare costs could double. The new funding scheme will mean cuts in creche services in Spring 2009.

Elsie Kelly who runs a creche in the Coombe, Dublin said, "Community creches should be for everyone, not just for people on Social Welfare."

These funding changes will hit minimum wage earners hardest.

"People have already left because its too expensive."

"The only other help that's available is the 'early start' scheme - but that only cover two hours in the mornings".

People in some of the poorest communities will not be able to afford childcare.

Families who struggled the hardest to get themselves out of poverty and into work will lose out.

People will be forced to give up their jobs because they can't afford childcare. This is a classic poverty trap.

Community childcare is a vital element of the social support of disadvantaged communities - 92% cater for the most disadvantaged communities according to Dublin Inner City Partnership.

It offers children a safe, secure learning environment. It also provides the local community with jobs and training opportunities.

Elsie explained, "Access to education in your first five years impacts on the rest of your life. The social skills learned will effect your chances in life. Special needs can be identified earlier allowing help and prevention schemes instead of addressing the damage at ages 12 and 13".

Most projects cater for children seriously at risk.

This includes hungry children, children of parents who have addiction and/or health problems, children with emotional and behavioural problems and children who would be in care without this additional support.

The way the new funding is designed means once staff are lost the project will have to take less children, and in turn will get a smaller grant.

It will start a downward funding cycle. Many creches will close.

Elsie Kelly said "Because of the changes in how we get funded we're not sure how much funding we'll actually get until next April."

We are forced to rely on overdrafts from banks".

Bernie, a creche worker in Clondalkin said, "We already have people dropping off because they can't afford the fees any longer."

If the funding is cut our creche could lose two full time workers".

She continued, "Some people

are intimidated by the new forms you have to fill in."

They want the forms filled in and returned in September, the busiest time of the year. Also any late comers will not be allowed to join the scheme".

Most projects are worried that there will be an impact on quality of the service, particularly if experienced staff are lost. But most likely creches will have to cut services, such as after school projects.

Elsie Kelly explained, "Most of the qualified childcare workers started out on CE schemes in creches. We will lose those skills and the high quality childcare they provide".

These cuts will impact heavily on women from working class areas. Childcare is a key support for women entering employment, education and participating fully in all aspects of society.

Women also make up almost all of the workers in the sector.

There are also serious concerns that the effects of this programme will be felt disproportionately on newly arrived immigrant families as many of them do not qualify for the social welfare payments and therefore, there is uncertainty as to whether they will qualify for subvention.

These cuts will mean more families in crisis and place disadvantaged children in greater danger.

State funding of the sector is the most effective and efficient way to provide the service. Free pre-school education should be right like in other EU countries.



## Traveller education protest

THE IRISH Traveller Movement (ITM) has protested against the cuts in grants for Traveller students.

The enhanced capitation grant for Traveller Children will be cut by 50% from September 2009.

Paula Madden of the ITM said, "We still need to continue to address the still very poor outcomes in schools for Travellers in comparison to their settled

peers." ITM Director Damien Peelo said: "The ITM has serious concerns that the decision to cut the enhanced capitation is a knee jerk reaction to saving money."

Mr Peelo said that the grant money is used for books, materials (Home Economics, Art, PE), uniforms and other education support resources to encourage

Traveller participation in schools. Cutting the funding will mean that more Traveller children will not have the basic requirements to participate in schools and will also not benefit from education support and integration programmes.

"Cutting this budget so severely is an attack on the most vulnerable in our education system and not acceptable," Mr. Peelo said.

## Community drugs schemes face

MINISTER OF State for Drugs and Housing, John Curran is making savage budget cuts to drug projects across Dublin. Projects face a minimum of a 7% cut in funding.

There will be no pay increments, no programme costs increase, no national wage agreements catered for.

A community drug worker in Dublin

explained, "Drug misuse and poverty go hand in hand. Cutbacks in the area of drug support services are a short-term reaction of the government to a funding crisis and will only escalate a serious problem which is already at crisis point. Cutbacks will lead to a much larger spend of the public purse in the longer term".

"Communities fought

hard and long for drugs task forces and drug projects to be established in the areas most affected by drug misuse and poverty.

"Communities realised, long before the government, that if the drugs issue was to be addressed, community based, long-term projects working from a supportive and preventative philosophy are the best way

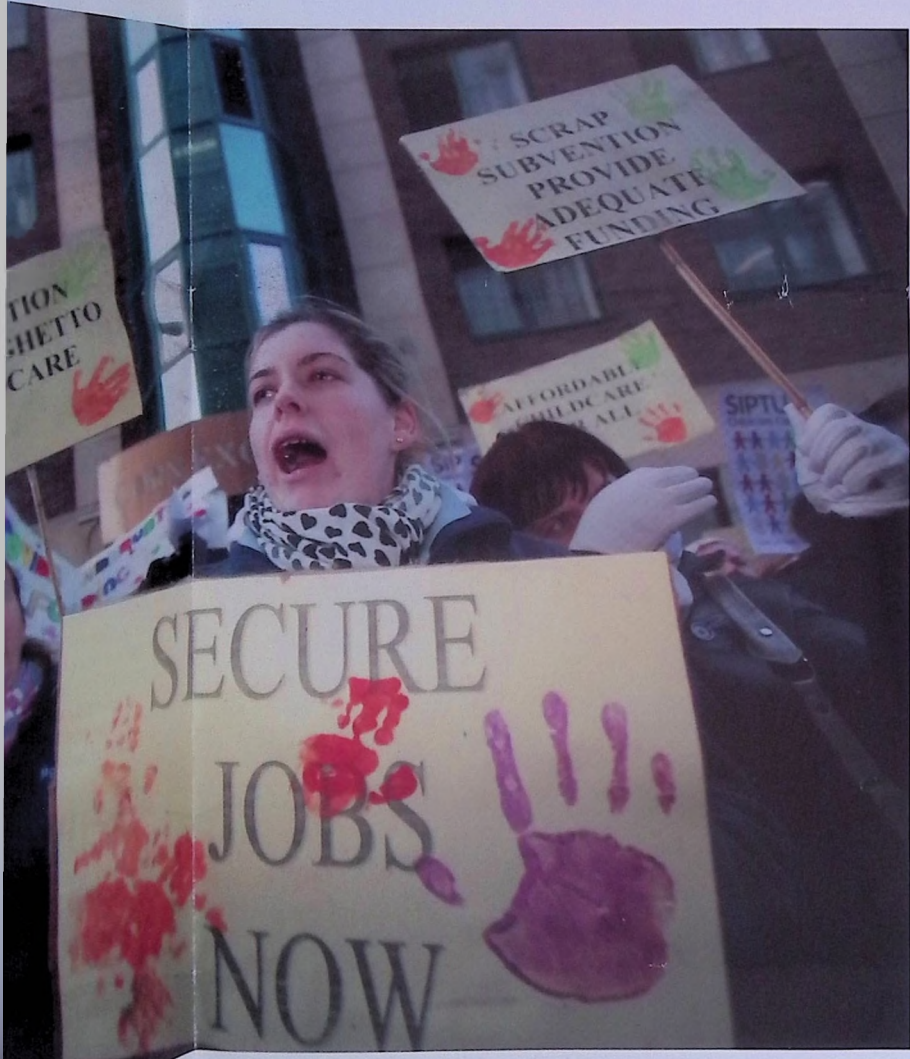
to address local community. Worker community will be asked to increment 4-day week.

There will be redundancy projects that stream last year's funding 2009.

Some re



# to defend creches



## chemes facing savage cuts

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to address drug misuse in local communities".  
 Workers in some community drug projects will be asked to forego their increments, some to go on 4-day weeks.  
 There will certainly be redundancies. New projects that came on stream last year may not get funding renewal in 2009.  
 Some regional drugs task forces got a 35% funding cut.  
 Most drug projects are linked to HSE services so the HSE cutbacks impact even more heavily on these communities.  
 Cuts in family support such as social workers, childcare, counselling services, psychiatric services, nurses in methadone clinics are devastating.

In many drug projects where one or two workers are directly funded through the HSE essential workers have not been replaced due to the recruitment embargo.  
 One local drug project has lost 2 posts in a very small team. In another there a nurse working in the methadone clinic may not be replaced if she changes jobs.

### WHAT WE THINK

## Unite to fight cuts

THE CAMPAIGN of protests by the teachers unions have shown the depth of anger at the cuts – over 100,000 people have marched around the country, and the bailouts for the bankers who created the mess.

The crisis facing the government and the bosses is so deep they will try everything to bail the rich out and dump the costs on workers.

We need to unite every sector of society who are facing cuts to defeat this government.

Teachers, parents, students, health workers, community service workers all need to come together.

The government is talking about another 'mini-budget' at the end of January.

Every area should organise a local 'Stop the Cuts' march for the end of January to keep the pressure on government TDs.

We should not be taken in by FG populism.

They are more hysterical in their hatred of the public sector than even FF.

Parties that attack public sector workers should not be given a platform at the protests.

We need a voice that will genuinely express the demands of the protest movement.

People Before Profit (PBP) is building such an alternative voice. PBP has organised the biggest local protests at TD's offices against the cuts, such as 100 people at Sean Haughey's office in Artane.

If we keep up the protests and unite everyone who is against these cutbacks under one banner we can force this government out.

# Nationalise the Banks: Socialise Credit

UP TO €10 billion of the funds that have been saved by the Irish people through a National Pensions Reserve Funds is to be used to bail out the banks.

This follows a €400 billion insurance guarantee which Irish taxpayers have already given to these greed obsessed institutions.

The National Pension Reserve Fund has total assets of €18 billion – so more than half of it will be used to 're-capitalise' the banks.

This fund was originally designed to pay old age pensions in the future and to guarantee the pensions of public sector workers.

The Irish banking system is sinking below a mountain of debt.

The banks have refused to disclose the figure and, incredibly, have been given a clean bill of health by the Financial Regulator.

But total bad debts range between an estimated low of €15 billion and a high of €30 billion.

The debts arose a direct result of the insane logic of capitalism itself.

The banks formed a tight triangle with the builders and the Fianna Fail party to stoke up a property boom.

They borrowed vast sums on international wholesale markets and then lent these out to fuel the property market.

As long as the housing bubble lasted the banks and the builders made vast fortunes and re-cycled a small proportion back into the coffers of Fianna Fail.

But when the bubble crashed, they ran to the government looking for a bail out.

No such bail out is being offered to the victims of banks who were enticed into taking out huge loans to buy houses and apartments at exorbitant prices.

Foreclosures are due to rise at an astonishing rate next year but people will be told that there is no money in the state's coffers to help them.

This makes it all the more shocking to see the National Pension Reserve Fund being risked on a murky enterprise to save the Irish banks.

The official excuse for this astonishing scam is that the banks are the motors of the Irish economy and, as credit lines have dried up, funds must be injected so that they can loan money to industry.

But this argument makes little sense.

The Irish banks have lost approximately 95% of their value as their share prices have fallen.

Collectively, they are currently worth about €3.5 billion euro.

If the government had any responsibility to society at large rather than to the corporate elite, it would have rushed through emergency legislation to seize the assets of the banks.

That measure could have been justified as punishment for the economic criminality that the banks engaged in.

Since 2005, for example, their loan book grew by 200% as they deliberately hyped up the property market – even though they knew that a crash was inevitable.

Their callousness meant that tens of thousands of working people were duped into buying property with enormous debt.

Even if this measure was considered 'too radical',

the government could have introduced legislation to nationalise the banks by simply compensating shareholders at the present market value of €3.5 billion.

This would have allowed them to sack the bank boards and to amalgamate the Irish banks into one financial unit that served the credit needs of the population.

Had they done so, they would have retained a further €6.5 billion to advance credit to help the public.

In brief, such a nationalisation – if it were undertaken to weaken capitalism and not resuscitate it – could have laid the foundation for the socialisation of credit.

Socialisation means that credit could be issued for enterprises whose primary purpose was to create jobs through new forms of social investment.

Under such a regime, credit could help found industries which paved the way for a switch from an old fossil fuel based economy to a new, green forms of energy.

It could have been used to create openings for an alternative industrial base to replace the failing model of an economy dominated by US multi-nationals.

The provision of social credit, might for example, have laid the basis for creation of a generic pharmaceutical industry or for an industry that developed to support preventative medicine.

Or it could be used to support the creation of public works projects that employed tens of thousands of unemployed building workers.

In fact for a wide variety of creative solutions that private enterprises refuses to engage in.

Such a form nationalisation is also the only way to break the cycle of speculation that has brought the global economy to its knees.

What we are getting instead, however, from the right wing FF-Green government is support for existing bank shareholders.

State money will be used to encourage the entry of private equity funds into the banking industry.

These are commonly known as vulture capitalists because their primary aim is to push through a quick re-structuring that guarantees them a high rates of profit.

These funds will continue to be controlled by Boards of Directors who will be joined by former political hacks such as Dick Spring and Allen Dukes who are supposed to look after the public interest.

The former currently operates as a businessman while the latter is employed as a lobbyist for multi-national firms.

As board members they are obliged to look after the interests of bank shareholders first.

If the rescue plan is ever completed, the banks will be sold back to private interests who will then resume the path of speculation that has brought us to the current impasse.

At a time when government cuts are causing immense social suffering, these moves expose the limits of a political system that is confined to the logic of capitalism.

Now more than ever, we need a political alternative that challenges the rule of the greed merchants.

# Stop Israel's terror in Gaza



Palestinians mourning their civilian dead

US AND EU have blood on their hands.

Israel is committing mass murder in Gaza, and the US and EU are giving their blessing to the slaughter.

Gaza's hospitals and morgues are bursting with the dead and the injured.

Israel's barbaric assault, which began last Saturday, has killed hundreds of Palestinians.

It plans to kill many more. Israel's defence minister Ehud Barak has said that Israel wants to "widen and deepen the operation".

Western leaders blame the Hamas resistance group for the conflict.

Brian Cowen and the Irish media go along with this, or at best portray it as a clash between two sides that are equally to blame.

But Israel is a terror state, armed with F-16 fighter jets, helicopter gunships and tanks, that is attacking a largely im-

poverished and isolated people.

The West has backed Israel to the hilt.

Israel has launched its new onslaught in an attempt to wipe out any resistance to its dominance over the Palestinian people.

It wants to destroy Hamas, which won the Palestinian elections in January 2006, because the organisation leads the struggle against its people's oppression.

The Israeli ambassador to Ireland should be expelled until the attack

stops, if not until the UN resolutions are implemented by Israel.

The last few days have exposed the shameful hypocrisy of Western leaders.

George Bush says there cannot be a ceasefire until the Palestinians surrender

to Israel's demands.

They ignore the fact that, while a "cease-fire" held from June to November, no Israeli was killed by rocket fire from Gaza.

Israel broke the ceasefire on 4 November forcing the Palestinians to respond.

Israel's economic blockade of Gaza over the past year and a half has cut off supplies of the most basic necessities, such as food, medicine and water.

A ceasefire on Bush's terms would allow the blockade to continue, with tens of thousands of Palestinians suffering from malnutrition, disease and poverty.

Anger at the slaughter has sparked mass demonstrations across the world in solidarity with the Palestinians, calling for an immediate end to the Israeli bombing and the blockade of Gaza.

Millions of people are also demanding that Gaza's borders are opened.



Part of a protest in Dublin

## Why is this assault taking place now?

ONE FACTOR in the timing of the attack is the Israeli election planned for February. Outgoing prime minister Ehud Olmert and his Kadima party's candidate, current foreign minister Tzipi Livni, needed to bolster their flagging popularity.

This dovetailed with two more longstanding ambitions. The first is to shake off the humiliation Israel's army faced at the hands of Hizbollah in 2006.

The second was to impose its dominance over the Palestinians – and the wider region – by overthrowing the democratically elected Hamas administration in Gaza and prove it could



still serve the interests of the US in the region.

Some in Israel may also have feared that the election of Barack Obama would mark a turning point in relations with the US and wanted to act before his inauguration. But the solidarity

Obama's advisors have extended to Israel instead suggests considerable continuity with George Bush's administration.

The root causes of the aggression stems from the nature of Israel – a racist state founded on the mass expulsion of

the Palestinians and intrinsically bound to US imperialism in the Middle East.

The setbacks faced by the US in both Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as its inability to contain Iran, all make it more likely to back Israel.

Regime change in Gaza would show that both Israel and the US still have the power to bully and subdue weaker governments in the region.

This is clearly intended as a warning to Syria and Iran. Indeed, the Israeli government has repeatedly claimed that Hamas is a proxy for Iran.

Any hope of lasting

peace in the Middle East will only be realised if there is justice for the Palestinian people.

This means an end to the racist state of Israel and the so-called "war on terror", which has produced more wars and instability.

It is only a global mass movement of ordinary people that can bring about this change.

More instability lies ahead. The growing economic catastrophe is heightening the tensions in the capitalist system.

States will seek to shift the burden of the crisis on to each other, clashing as they try to improve their position at the expense of their rivals.

### BARACK OBAMA:

## Is this where change will come from?

BARACK OBAMA's picks for his administration include Hillary Clinton, James Jones and Robert Gates.

"Power concedes nothing without a demand," said the abolitionist Frederick Douglass. "It never did, and it never will."

Those words are worth reflecting on for anyone who hoped that Barack Obama's election as president would, by itself, produce a new course in Washington.

To judge from his appointments to Cabinet and staff positions, Obama's "new" course is more like 10 years old, picked up used from the presidency of Bill Clinton.

People who pushed through deregulation of the financial system and who carried on the genocidal U.S. war on Iraq.

One exception to this not-so-new course is a veteran of the same-old course under George W. Bush. Defense Secretary Robert Gates will stay on under Obama, to finish the job he started after taking over from Donald Rumsfeld of repackaging the occupation of Iraq and escalating the war on Afghanistan.

Gates was a prime architect of the 2007 "surge" of combat troops that escalated the violence in Iraq.

The relative stability established since – not primarily as a result of the surge itself – has led to a bipartisan consensus that unites Republican hawks and both pro-war and "antiwar" Democrats: a highly conditional withdrawal of some U.S. troops, maintenance of an apparatus of occupation with the acquiescence of the Iraqi government, and the further projection of U.S. power in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the region.

Short of bringing back Rumsfeld or asking Dick Cheney to stick around, it's hard to think of an appointment more diametrically opposed to the promise of change that inspired tens of millions of people to vote for Obama.

Remember that the most important issue in Obama's crucial early victories in the Democratic primaries was the Iraq war.

He insisted on his opposition to the invasion before it took place and hammered

his main opponent Hillary Clinton for voting as a senator to authorize the war.

Obama's national security adviser will be retired Marine Gen. James L. Jones, who shared a stage during the campaign with not Obama but John McCain, and was considered a possible vice presidential running mate.

Socialist Worker has always argued that the Republican and Democratic wings of the bipartisan political establishment agree on the aims of U.S. war and empire, and differ on tactics.

The outlines of Obama's administration show that sometimes, they don't even differ on tactics.

At the same time, it will be important to resist the impression that the die is cast – even before Obama's inauguration – for a four- or eight-year rerun of the Clinton era.

Some of the faces from those years may be returning to the White House, but they can't bring with them the same conditions of economic boom times and conservative political dominance that shaped the Clinton presidency.

On the contrary, the Obama administration is faced, even before taking office, with the worst crisis of the economy since the Great Depression – and the conservative stranglehold over U.S. politics for a quarter century under Republicans and Democrats alike has been broken.

Even the most dyed-in-the-wool neoliberals and triangulators from the Clinton years can't respond with the same old answers.

What will the new answers be?

That's the most important question, and it depends crucially on what workers do to make their voices heard and demands felt, regardless of who sits in Obama's Cabinet.

A new era has opened up in American politics, but the shape of that era – the pace of change, the priorities that get set – is still to be determined.

The challenge now is to connect the high hopes and expectations in Obama that led to the massive turnout on November 4 to every opportunity to mobilize those voices.

# Talk peace, make war (and money)

By EAMONN MCCANN

ONE RELEVANT fact which didn't emerge during the Raytheon 9 trial in June was that the SDLP did more than any other party to bring the arms firm to Derry.

The morality of the arms trade was made clear by Raytheon CEO Dan P. Burnham at the Farnborough Air Show in 1998 when he said that: "Growth in the global arms industry is set for a reawakening as the peace dividend era comes to an end and political instability returns... The odds are that the benign international relations we've witnessed in the past few years have been a honeymoon period. We are set for more growth..."

The following year Burnham stood on the steps of Derry Guildhall, flanked by John Hume and David Trimble (the pair's first joint appearance since collecting their Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo) and a selection of Direct Rule Ministers to announce a Raytheon plant for Derry. The plant would help "secure and underpin a peaceful and prosperous future," declared NIO man George Howarth.

Dismissing any suggestion of a contradiction in presenting an arms company as part of a peace dividend, the SDLP



Dan P. Burnham and John Hume

explained that they'd received an assurance that the Derry facility would not be involved in arms-related activity. They said they'd withdraw their welcome if ever it turned out otherwise. (Sinn Fein took the same line.)

At the Raytheon 9 trial in Belfast, a senior Raytheon executive confirmed that the Derry plant was involved in two major military projects--Astor (Airborne Stand-Off Radar system) and in JETTS (Joint Effects Tactical Targeting System, a system allowing control of artillery bombardment and aerial bombing from a distance.)

It's since become clear that the SDLP had lobbied for the



Astor contract to be awarded to Raytheon as part of the price for the company coming to Derry.

Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act reveal that in February 1999 the Industrial Development Board wrote to Mr. Hume: "Raytheon is still very focused on the MoD programmes...The bottom line: this could mean no project in Northern Ireland if Raytheon's competitors are awarded the MoD business."

The "MoD business" is specified in the letter as the Astor contract.

Seven months later, two months after the Guildhall announcement, in October 1999,

Direct Rule minister Adam Ingram said: "Extensive lobbying by the Secretary of State and myself, together with local politicians including David Trimble, Seamus Mallon and John Hume, has influenced a decision which will bring further opportunities to people here. The contract will lead to Raytheon accelerating the establishment of its software development centre in Derry."

So, not only was the SDLP leader aware he was bringing an arms manufacturer to the town, he had lobbied for an arms contract for the Derry plant to persuade the company to come. The SDLP (and Sinn Fein) then spent years insisting it didn't believe arms production was taking place at Derry.

Nationalism lies behind this hypocrisy. The SDLP and Sinn Fein both put their highest priority on the interests of the Nationalist community. So, any company which can bring jobs to a Nationalist city is welcomed. And sod the rest of the world, including the people of Lebanon crushed to death or blown to bits by Raytheon weapons in 2006.

Only a socialist, internationalist vision can offer an alternative to this narrow, shortsighted approach.

COMMENT

## Lisbon II: NO means NO

By SINEAD KENNEDY

SHOCKED BY the Irish electorate's refusal to obey their betters and vote in favour of the Lisbon Treaty earlier this year, the Irish political establishment has gone into overdrive and colluded with the EU establishment to make us vote again next Autumn.

They have abandoned even the pretence that will respect the people's No vote. No effort has been made to address any of the concerns people had around key issues such as neutrality, workers rights, public services and democracy.

We have been promised that protocols and clauses to cover Irish voters concerns will be added to the new treaty when Croatia joins the EU. Can we trust them - The same people who overturned three referendum NO votes?

Indeed they are attempting to use people's real fears about the current economic crisis to frighten people into a Yes vote.

In October of this year, as world economy faced a meltdown government Ministers and members of the establishment went out of their way to intimidate and threaten the Irish people over Lisbon. We were told that the only reason that Ireland's banking system hadn't collapsed like Iceland was a result of our membership of the EU. Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan complained that the No vote was threatening the Irish economy, while the Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin went so far as to say that Ireland would have gone the way of Iceland were it not for our full EU membership.

The Icelandic banking system collapsed due to the extreme neoliberalism of the Icelandic government that effectively turned Iceland into a gigantic hedge fund. Indeed it is this very neo-liberalist economics that is at the heart of the Lisbon Treaty.

The promise of Ireland holding on to its commissioner is also a joke. "Our" commissioner, Charlie McCreevy, is the most hated man in Europe. The Eu Parliament wanted him sacked. He is the most right wing commissioner in the EU. He is desperately trying to stop any regulation of the banks and hedge funds that caused the economic disaster. Charlie McCreevy represents the bosses of the EU. We need to scrap the EU commission and get more democracy, not more unelected rightwing bureaucrats like him.

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets in recent weeks to protest over the recent budget. People are angry about being asked to vote yet again on a referendum. Both Irish and European elites fear that Lisbon is ultimately unwinnable.

Yet the Irish ruling class is facing into a real, deep and unprecedented crisis. They want and need Lisbon to go through, not least, because it will open up aspects of the public sector to privatisation and ultimately, for them, that will mean profit.

## Afghanistan & the Triple Lock

By DETTE MCLOUGHLIN

THE TRIPLE Lock requirement supposedly keeps Irish neutrality trebly secure.

The UN, the Cabinet and the Dáil must all agree a certain military action before Irish military can become involved. But what's the catch with the 7 Irish military men operating in Afghanistan under the auspices of NATO's International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan (ISAF)?

The UN retrospectively legitimised the illegal invasion of Afghanistan by the US and Britain.

The ISAF was established initially for 6 months by UN Security Council resolution 1386 in December 2001. On 2nd July 2002, the Cabinet authorised that 7 members of the Irish Defence Forces should participate in the force. But there was no Dáil debate.

Under the Defence Acts, the Government is allowed to despatch a contingent of not more than 12 members of the Permanent Defence Forces without seeking a resolution from the Dail. Defence (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 1960, provided the rules for despatching Irish troops abroad, limiting that despatch to serving with a 'particular International United Nations Force'.

Cabinet approval has been given each year since then, most recently June 24, 2008. It should be noted that the ISAF is UN authorised but NATO-led since 2003.

David Morrison writing in Irish Political Review (<http://www.david-morrison.org.uk/ireland/irish-expert-taliban>).



htm) explains:

"When ISAF was established, it could reasonably be said to have a peacekeeping role.... However, in the intervening 5 years, ISAF's role, and area of operation, has been gradually changed by the Security Council. It has now taken over the "warfighting" role in southern Afghanistan... In addition [UN] resolution 1510 required ISAF to "work in close consultation" with "the Operation Enduring Freedom Coalition", which was certainly not engaged in peace-keeping."

What are the Irish troops doing there? According to the Irish Examiner in March 2007:

"The army has sent its top explosives expert to battle the Taliban".

In October 2008, Tom Clonan in the Irish Times

agreed, but noted that at least one of the men was involved in "counter-propaganda" duties. Irish neutrality looks anything other than secure with this famous Triple Lock!

If President Obama seeks more Irish troops for some further imperialist folly the Dáil will be able to use the presence of 7 Irish soldiers in Afghanistan as a precedent for

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# Socialist Worker



## Assembly slashes public sector

# BREAK WITH MARKET TO SAVE JOBS

By  
**EAMONN  
McCANN**



THE MASSACRE of jobs in the North is set to continue. But far from trying to come up with a remedy, the Executive plans to slash more jobs in the New Year.

The policies of the main parties remain based on the interests of one community vis-à-vis the other. The common interests of workers are ignored.

The parties say their hands are tied by the Treasury. But they were able to bring the Executive to a complete standstill over an Irish Language Act and devolution of policing.

When it comes to joblessness, poverty and attacks on the public service, however, they claim there's nothing they can do.

Private companies are trying to weather the storm by throwing workers overboard. AVX in Coleraine has gotten rid of 33 jobs. Calcast in Derry has closed with 110 jobs gone.

Ulster Carpets in Portadown has jettisoned 34 jobs. Major retailers like Woolworths, Halfords, Homebase, MFI, Currys and PC World are imposing closure or cut-backs.

More than a thousand workers at hi-tech Seagate are on temporary lay-off over Xmas and the New Year. Part of Du Pont's Derry plant is on short-time.

Meanwhile, the Executive promotes the lie that the public sector is "bloated" and forges ahead with privatisation. Revenue and Customs want rid of 3,400 jobs---190 in NI.

The Housing Executive wants to cut 450 full-time jobs: sixty temporary staff are already gone. Two hundred job losses in the Water Service were announced in September, with more



Private companies are trying to weather the storm by throwing workers overboard

to come.

Class-room assistants and care-workers have been dismissed as Departments slash budgets to meet the three-percent year-on-year cuts demanded by the Treasury and imple-

mented by the Executive. The pattern is the same across the public sector.

Bumper Graham of the public service union NIPSA says: "Overall, there will be a minimum of...a five percent cut in services each year over the next

three years...You are talking about 10,000 people losing their jobs.". That's 15 percent of the Executive's entire workforce.

Obama in the US is advocating a New Deal-style programme of public

works to combat unemployment and sustain consumer spending. But such mild reformism is apparently too radical for Stormont.

The global collapse has pricked the bubble of unregulated capitalism almost everywhere. But the Northern parties still put their trust in the market.

Workplace 2010---the plan to sell off and hire back virtually every public building across the North---has been suspended, but only because of the crash in property prices. The plans stay in place, Peter Robinson says.

Schools, hospitals and other public services are still being put at the mercy of private finance. Two new schools for Derry were announced this month---both to be built by PFI. The SDLP and Sinn Fein rejected concerns expressed by trade unions.

The theory that slashing the public sector enables private business to grow looks more ludicrous by the day. Peter Robinson's announcement in April that up to 5,000 jobs would be created in the financial sector in the North seems now like a sick joke.

But it seems nothing will dislodge the DUP, Sinn Fein, the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP from their embrace of Right-wing economics.

Putting all their emphasis on an Orange-Green agenda, they have no ground to stand on to confront the neo-liberalism of New Labour.

Indeed, even as Gordon Brown backs away from full-blooded neo-liberalism in the hope of winning back disillusioned Labour voters, the main Northern parties, tied to the politics of community rather than class, implement policies which undermine the interests of their own working-class voters.

They think they can get away with it because class politics are impossible in the North. They need to be taught different.