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Socialist Worker

*** NAMA deal saves billionaire bankers and developers**

*** €1bn cuts proposed in Social Welfare**

Kick Cowen out

BRIAN COWEN has the look of a man who knows the end is near.

This is a weak and despised Government.

Already two FF TDs have resigned because of pressure from the protest movement. Sligo TDs Jimmy Devins and Eamon Scanlon resigned because of mounting pressure from the cancer services campaign that is protesting against cutbacks in Sligo hospital.

If we can get two out we can get them all out!

The only thing keeping the Greens and FF in Government is a craven desire for power.

They are intent on saving their skins and pushing through the savage cuts in the McCarthy report – An Bord Snip (see centre pages).

We need people power to kick them out.

Build the momentum of protests

This September will see a rising protest movement against the cuts.



Thomas Cook workers' occupation

On Saturday September 19th there will be a march against the bank bail outs demanding: Bail out jobs and public services, not billionaire bankers and developers.

On the 30th September SIPTU

has call a community sector march against cuts in community services.

In October there will be a mass protest at the Greens special convention.

We need to make these dates

hammer blows against the government.

One protest won't be enough, we need an atmosphere of continuous protests in the country culminating in the protests on these dates to get them out.

Occupations show the way

The rising anger over the economic crisis, the NAMA swindle and the cuts is expressing itself in rising workers militancy.

The magnificent fight of the Thomas Cook workers shows how to win.

They succeeded in winning mass public support because of their determined action.

Their call for solidarity and their willingness to break the law in order to mount the most effective campaign possible got results.

It's a lesson all other workers should take on board. Bosses use the courts to frustrate workers struggles.

We need to be prepared to ignore the courts if its what it takes to win.

Socialist Worker played a key role in building support for the Thomas Cook occupation.

If you want help building resistance in your workplace or community contact us on (01) 872 2682.

Port workers still fighting redundancies

By MADELEINE JOHANSSON

THE DOCKERS working for Marine Terminals Ltd in Dublin Port are on their sixth week of picketing. The dispute began when the company, owned by the UK based Peel Group, implemented forced redundancies, reduced wages and worsened working conditions.

Peel Ports is the second largest group of ports in the UK.

They are part of a larger commercial enterprise involved in property development and land speculation. The group also owns major airports in Britain, including the Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

The company has been known for smashing unions in every area in which they operate, and believed they could do the same here.

But the workers keep fighting, and with the support of the local community, who have been working on the docks for generations, they organised a protest of



Recent rally in support of the port workers

250 people on the 28th of July. Another such protest is planned for the 10th of August.

At the moment there are scab workers inside living on the premises, who were brought in from Britain, Belfast and Kildare. The company took a High Court injunction which prevents ef-

fective picketing, making the ports fully operational.

The company has even had the audacity to take several individuals to court for breach of that injunction.

The case was heard on the 6th of August, and all individuals freed of the charges. As shop steward John 'Miley' Walsh said: "The worst of-

fence was walking slowly in a tight circle."

This behaviour by MTL is another way of frightening the workers, not to mention the private security employed at the site.

These bully-boy tactics and the way employers use the State and the Courts to break workers is becoming

more widespread, as could be seen with the brutal ending of the Thomas Cook occupation by the Gardai.

Big business is not only blaming redundancies on the recession, but many job losses are a direct result of the economic crash.

With companies like the Peel Group, where 49% of shares are owned by Deutsche Bank, the credit crunch has a direct effect on workers rights.

Financial institutions, while being bailed out by taxpayers (Deutsche bank received \$6 billion from the US federal reserve in 2008), are putting pressure on businesses to lower wages.

This also suits the employers who can make higher profits if wages are lowered. So while the bosses and bankers who created the financial crisis are getting off scot free, it is the workers who have to pay for it.

Workers need to unite to fight against the greed of the fatcats, and against a system that puts profits before people.

Carrolls Joinery workers six weeks on strike



Fighting job loss at Carrolls Joinery

By VANESSA O'SULLIVAN

CARROLL'S JOINERY is the latest employer to try to take advantage of loyal workers. The manufacturing plant in Ballintaggart, near Callen Co. Kilkeny, was the first of over 10 companies opened and is the first to close after 45 years in operation.

On the 17th of July the Company, owned by IBEC member Frank O' Toole, made all but 4 office staff redundant. Claiming they cannot afford any more than statutory redundancies, which is 2 weeks for each of the 48 workers for each year of service. Redundancies up until January of this year was 4/5 weeks for each year of service.

After trying to negotiate within the Labour court, where they have lost before, the courts found in favour of the workforce and 'recommended' that the company doubled their offer. Unfortunately the company, whose head office is situated in Dublins Park West (Unit 50), has refused.

The workers have found no other option but to picket outside the head office. The company made €50m in one year alone and with no major competitors continues to be profitable.

One worker had this to say: "The labour court awarded us what we are intitled to. We gave our employers every opportunity to be reasonable. We

were very flexible and even agreed to the 2 week deal if it was in instalments but they refused and laughed at the suggestion. Likewise, they laughed at the court's recommendation. They walked in with some numbers scribbled on the page, making a joke of the court. The Labour court should be binding, it cuts out the hypocrisy of the employers."

Another worker explained: "We're all confused by the decision to close our plant in Ballintaggart. They own the property, which is 3 or 4 times bigger than any in Dublin. There is no rent, as there is on other properties so there was really no reason to close it. We doubt they'll sell the property because they've kept on 4 staff. We're worried that we'll be replaced by cheaper workers with less experience. We have put our lives into this company, most came straight from school, between 10 and 45 years ago. €1.3 million is not much to ask for between 48 of us. All their companies have been built on our backs and we deserve some respect from the owner's of this company."

The men from the plant, supported by SIPTU and UCAAT, have been up every day for the past 2 weeks and need support.

The Socialist Workers Party fully support the Carroll joinery workers and will stand with them until they are paid in full by the company.

Lenihan attack on minimum wage

A NUMBER of government ministers have recently raised the possibility of reducing the minimum wage. Michael Martin, the foreign affairs minister, said that Ireland had the second highest minimum wage in Europe and that its future should be open to discussion.

Brian Lenihan, the finance minister, said: "Clearly if the minimum wage becomes an impediment to job-creation the government has to look at it."

Eurostat, the EC's statistical office, adjusted Ireland's minimum wage to reflect purchasing power based on the cost of living here. When measured on this basis, the Irish minimum wage drops four places to sixth on the table, worth less than that paid in the UK, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

WATERFORD HOSPITAL PROTEST



Solidarity protest held outside St. Otter's Hospital at the hearing by the LRC into the closure of St. Bridget's Ward, St. Patrick's Hospital. Supported by the Waterford Council of Trades Unions, relatives of patients and campaigners for the retention of the St Bridgits ward, until the new Community Nursing Unit comes on stream.

Protestors have maintained a lunchtime protest at the threatened hospital for over 8 months. The HSE have cited fire regulations as the reason to close the ward but have been unable to produce the regulations when asked by the union. The campaign is ongoing and the LRC has scheduled a new hearing on September 2nd. Photo: John Power

Banks Put Profit Before People

IRISH LIFE and Permanent increased its variable interest rates in July despite the European Central Bank reducing their interest rates to an all time low.

This will hit already struggling families hard. Without the guarantees provided by the Irish taxpayer IL&P would go out of business.

Now it wants to increase profits on the backs of taxpayers.

Councillor Brid Smith of the People Before Profit Alliance said, "My phone has been hopping all day.

"The people I represent are angry that their mortgage repayments are being increased when many of them have lost their jobs or have had wage cuts imposed on them.

"Anyone with a job is paying extra in levies.

"The people running

BANK OF IRELAND STRIKE



500 workers at the Bank of Ireland went on strike at the end of July to demand the company implement the Labour Court recommendation on pay. Workers said they would escalate the action in September if they do not receive satisfaction. Workers picketed the Bank of Ireland head office in Baggot Street and the offices of New Ireland Assurance on Dawson Street, which is owned by Bank of Ireland.

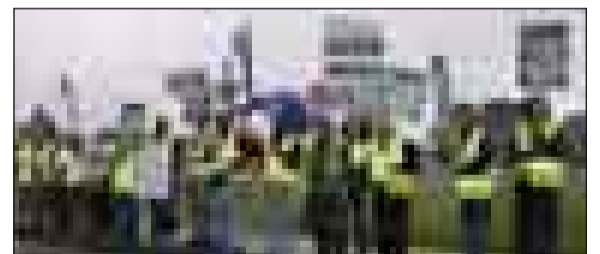
Irish Life and Permanent have no idea how difficult it is for people to manage

in current circumstances. "The government needs to tell IL&P that

this decision has to be reversed. "The public should

show their anger at this disgraceful decision by picketing IL&P".

Mr Binman: 13 weeks on strike



WORKER IN Mr Binman refuse collection company are in their 13th week of strike.

The workers are members of the Unite union and have called on users of the Mr Binman service to cancel their contracts.

The company tried to get the High Court to stop the workers picketing but failed to get an indefinite injunction.

One worker spoke to Socialist Worker said, "The company wants to

call us all in individually and sign contracts. If we don't go back in united we feel we'll all be gone in six months".

In the past few weeks they have organised mass protests at Mr Binman depots in Waterford and Clonmel. Nearly 1000 people came to the protest in Waterford and almost 300 to the protest in Clonmel. The workers plan to organise similar protests in Dungarvan and Limerick in the coming weeks.

Eyewitness account of the Thomas Cook occupation

By JAMES O'TOOLE

ON FRIDAY 31st of July, without any notice, high-ranking managers of Thomas Cook in Britain flew into Dublin to meet their workforce. The Dublin visit was aimed at getting rid of their whole workforce. The managers didn't expect any trouble; they had even booked return flights for later that afternoon. But they were in for a massive shock. Rather than accept the redundancy package the management offered, the workers fought back.

Antoinette Shevlin, a Thomas Cook worker, described what happened: "The lock-in began because senior management from Thomas Cook arrived to the Dublin retail shops last Friday and called the staff together to say that the shops were being closed early due to staff demonstrating for a better redundancy package on the previous Wednesday.

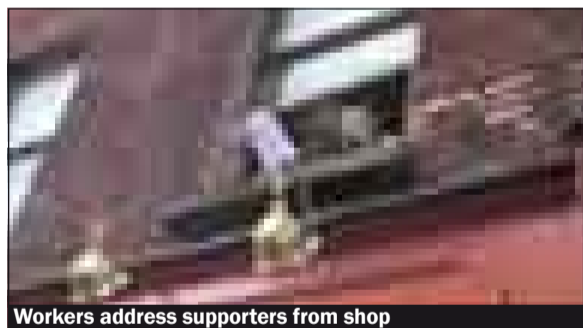
They requested that the staff leave in an orderly fashion and that they would receive their redundancy in due course. Thomas Cook had ended the negotiations by telephone on the 23rd July without the redundancy package being agreed on. Also, they gave a closing date of the 6th September, but if the staff protested they would close the shops earlier on the 7th August and the staff would only receive statutory redundancy.

The offer they had made was for 5 weeks per year of service but bearing in mind that Thomas Cook are predicting profits of over 400 million this is a derisory offer. When the lock-in began, I received a phone call from the SWP asking if there was anything they could do to help. They offered to place a picket outside the shop and they stayed for the duration of the lock-in. The response we got from the public was overwhelming. Also, the support from the SWP and other trade unions was very much appreciated as it helped to highlight our plight."

Thomas Cook is owned by some of the largest banks in the world, such as the Royal Bank of Scotland Group Plc, Commerzbank AG, and BayernLB. Many of these banks, not least RBS, were recipients of bailouts last year, at the same time as they gave their bosses obscene bonuses. As for Thomas Cook, its Chief Executive Officer, Manny Fontenla-Novoa, saw his bonus soar from £2.89m in 2007 to more than £7m last year – a rich reward for getting rid of 2,800 workers. Thomas Cook's remuneration committee also handed its Chief Executive a 34% increase in his base salary for 2009, up from £633,000 to £850,000.

Managers evicted from the shop

The workers locked themselves in the upstairs office and left the shocked managers downstairs in the shop. Kieron Shorthall, Thomas Cook worker, led chants out the windows until the press arrived an hour or two later. The press photographer wanted a picture of Avril, an eight and a half month pregnant worker, and the workers came downstairs with management scowling. The company's press officer and the managers attempted to push



Workers address supporters from shop

the photographer out the door but were themselves evicted from the premises. Two of the managers left in tears – but these weren't tears of emotion, they were tears of frustration that the workers had dared to make a stand.

Antoinette described the elation in the shop: "The mood inside the shop was very upbeat as we felt we had the public's vote for what we were doing. Also, the help that was given to us by way of donations and food greatly encouraged us."

A support stall outside the store collected thousands of signatures a day with donations pouring in and groups of workers praised the bravery of the workers.

In response to the occupation and action from Thomas Cook's lawyers, the High Court sat on the Bank Holiday Monday to declare the workers in contempt for not appearing before a previous session of the court. This gave the Gardai the green



Workers and supporters outside shop

light to smash the occupation.

The police waited until 5am to make their move. The streets were completely empty by that stage and the number of supporters outside had dwindled to about 13 or so activists (nine from the Socialist Workers Party, one from the Socialist Party and a few others). We knew it was about to happen when a taxi came speeding around the corner and stopped in front of the store. The driver said, "I don't know what you've done but there's about 50 cops coming out of the station."

Straight away we saw two columns of Guards marching around the corner. We shouted into the office, "they're here!" Some of those inside who were awake began phoning the Press, while others, who had been sleeping, began to wake up. All of us outside linked arms and sat in front of the door shouting, "this is a peaceful protest" but the Guards threw us out of the way and then, after securing the street with barricades, used a metal ram to smash in the glass. It was at this point that Avril went into labour.

An ambulance was called but her partner was held back and not allowed to accompany her as she was under arrest. The police read the Court Order to those inside and began to take them out one by one.

The workers were taken to Bridewell station and then to court in the afternoon. Protesters began to gather over the course of the day outside the Four Courts chanting loud enough for those inside to hear the level of support they had from family, friends and other workers.

Antoinette said: "As everyone knows, it all ended in the early hours of the morning of the 4th August. It was an experience I hope I will never have to go through again. It was very frightening and the show that was put on by the Gardai was very excessive and a complete waste of taxpayers' money. We were not dangerous criminals, just ordinary working class people fighting for our rights. Having said that, though, the Gardai treated us very well when we arrived in the Bridewell Station. Thankfully, in court, the judge saw us for what we really were and we were set free. At least someone in authority had some



Gardai attack occupation

sense. We will always be grateful for all the support shown to us in our hour of need."

Another Thomas Cook worker, Kieron Shorthall, told assembled reporters: "I'm proud of what I've done."

And he should be, because the Thomas Cook workers have shown how to fight back against redundancy: they occupied, they were released without charge by the High Court, and they forced the company back to the negotiating table. But not only that, they forced an entire nation to question the relationship between the courts, the State and the multi-millionaires who run companies like Thomas Cook.

Revival of militancy

The Thomas Cook occupation and protests across the city and country show a beginning of a revival of workers' militancy



Workers outside court

We're beginning to see a recovery of strike figures in this country, with protests, strikes and occupations bubbling up. In response, the bosses and the state are using everything at their disposal to silence and break dissent. They are determined to break wage agreements and break with the idea of a right to decent redundancy payments.

The breaking of the Thomas Cook occupation by the state is the latest in a series of actions taken by the High Court against workers, from the workers at MTL in Dublin Port to the Electricians. The High Court is being used again and again to limit and break worker's struggles. If workers don't start breaking the law, the law will break the worker's movement.

If the High Court is used as a weapon to break working class struggles, then in order to defend our wages, to protect employment agreements, it is in our interest to take actions that break the laws that destroy our struggles. Laws that jail protestors and break occupations render strikes ineffective.

We need support from the organised working class for these struggles. We have massive power and strength in our numbers and ability to shut this economy down. It's about time that we used it.

Victorious cleaners get their jobs back

By MADELEINE JOHANSSON

AFTER 24 days of picketing, the cleaners at the Custom House won their jobs back.

The 13 cleaners were previously employed by the cleaning contractor, Eco Facilities Management.

In May, the company lost the contract to Schorman Cleaning. The employees received letters from Schorman welcoming them to the company, giving the impression that the normal transfer of undertakings agreement (TUPE) would be observed.

But on the 22nd of June, the cleaners received a second letter stating that Schorman would not be taking them on.

They brought in their own workers, reducing their hours from four to two and a half hours.

To save their jobs, the cleaners started picketing the Custom House on the 1st of July. The building holds the offices of the Department of the Environment and Minister John Gormley of the Green Party.

The Department refused to admit responsibility for the workers and claimed they could do nothing for the strikers.

It was only after the People Before Profit Alliance staged a lunch-time protest and a picket at the Green Party convention, and the organising by SIPTU of a 250 strong mass picket closing down the building for two hours, that the Department decided to cancel the contract with Schorman.

G4 Security was then awarded the contract and on the 24th of July the cleaners were told that the 10 union members would be employed under their previous terms and conditions.

This is a victory for contract cleaners and workers in general. It shows that workers can win if they fight against attacks from greedy employers.

Join the Socialists

For more information and to join the Socialist Workers Party contact us on 011-911-1111

www.socialistworker.com

COMMENT

NAMA:

The biggest heist in history



Happy bankers: Governor of the Central Bank John Hurley (right) with the director general Tony Grimes (left) and deputy director general Brian Halpin

by SEAN KELLY

WHILE UNEMPLOYMENT continues to soar, the property crash deepens, and Irish capitalism's crisis worsens, more bad news for workers has emerged from details about the government's bail out plan for the banks and the rich: the idea of creating the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA).

NAMA will pay the worst-run banks in the world huge sums of money, maybe even €70bn, to takeover bad loans the banks made to a small group of greedy and stupid builders and developers.

Irish banks borrowed the money from other banks and investors all over the world. They then gave about €90bn of crazy loans to the developers, often for pie-in-the-sky schemes such as Sean Dunne's plan to build a 37-story tower on the Jurys/Berkeley Court site in Ballsbridge, Dublin.

Most of these loans can't be repaid and the land and building sites where they were supposed to be built aren't worth anywhere near as much as the banks thought they were at the height of the boom. For example, it emerged last week that one group of companies belonging to Liam Carroll, a rich property developer, owes about €1.2bn – but his portfolio is probably now worth about €275m, at the most. This example tells us a lot about the scale of the property crash. And it has further to go.

In response to the crash and the rising tide of bankrupt developers, the government thinks NAMA will resolve this crisis for Irish capitalism. NAMA will takeover the loans in the hope that this will let the banks pay back some of their debts and allow the banks to lend again, or so the government claims.

How much the government will pay for the loans is one critical question here. Almost everyone agrees that the government can't pay too much, but just about no-one believes Cowen's cronies will do the right thing.

But regardless of how much the government decides to pay, Irish workers are going to be stuck with the debt and will end up paying billions each year to cover the losses that will emerge. NAMA will try to sell them bit-by-bit over the next ten years, but there's so much

junk in amongst the €90bn portfolio that the losses will soon stack up.

The key problem with NAMA is that it has been dreamt up by delusional bankers, financiers, economists, and bureaucrats who cannot see how deep the crisis really is. They think the economy will be back on its feet in no time, but the madness of the property boom and the fallout from its crash means the prospects for Irish capitalism are dire. Rather than consistent economic growth and rising profits, further shrinkage and more bankruptcies are on the cards.

So while Cowen's cronies say we're all getting a good deal here, in fact the only good deal is for the banks and the rich – the ruling classes the government is afraid to touch. Meanwhile the government wants to cutback critical social services, slash wages, raise taxes on workers and use the might of the state to smash any fight back.

It's not time for NAMA. It's time for an alternative Irish economy to be made.

BORD SNIP:

Attacks the poor to save the bankers

Savage cuts proposed

THE REPORT from the Bord Snip uses the guises of an objective examination of public spending to produce an agenda of attacks on the poor. The €5 billion cuts package can only deepen the recession and cause even more unemployment.

The agenda of measures include:

- Cutting 17,000 jobs from the public sector – even though one in six workers will already be unemployed next year.
- Slashing the health service – even though Ireland's is threatened with a swine flu epidemic and there are already concerns about how it would cope.
- Increasing the pupil teachers ratio and reducing special needs assistants
- Slashing social welfare and forcing medical card holders to pay new prescription charges.

Who are An Bord Snip?

By KIERAN ALLEN

THE REPORT from the Bord Snip is an agenda for a huge attack on the poor and public services. It was drawn up by a cabal of neoliberals and was biased from the very start.

It is chaired by Colm McCarthy, a right wing economist who originally was known as the 'dean of the Doherty and Nesbitt school of economics'.

This was a group of neo-liberals who met regularly in a famous pub in Baggot St to promote their agenda with the political elite.

It included such luminaries as Moore McDowell and Sean Barrett. Later, McCarthy worked with a



Maurice O'Connell



Pat McLoughlin

business consultancy firm, DKM, before taking up employment in UCD School of Economics.

DKM issued consultancy reports for the construction sector and McCarthy was clearly in his

element analysing trends in this 'free market'.

The other members of an Bord Snip, include:

■ Pat McLoughlin, a former deputy CEO for the HSE. Ironically,

A kick in the teeth for Rural Ireland

Jack Roche, Chairperson Rural Transport Network rebuts An Bord Snip Nua recommendation that the Rural Transport Programme is expendable.

THE RURAL Transport Programme provides access to essential services through cost effective transport.

It combats rural isolation and enables people to participate and live independently in rural Ireland.

These services make a key contribution to the local economy by supporting and promoting access to vital community services and business.

Without Rural Transport individuals will suffer, rural communities will suffer, we will be at a disadvantage nationally and our obligations to tackle

environmental impact and develop sustainable transport through EU agreements will not be met.

The findings in the report regarding the Rural Transport Programme are incorrect.

The only availability of private sector bus alternatives would involve passengers having to collectively pay the full cost of respective services to local private operators. Obviously Rural Transport Programme passengers cannot afford to do this in the vast majority of cases; if they could, they would have developed these services themselves years ago.

Therefore a real alternative is not available as the report suggests.

In addition, the vast majority of regular Rural Transport Programme passengers are not car owners and do not have access to a car owned by a family member or friend.

Therefore this is not a reasonable argument. For the small percentage of regular Rural Transport passengers who do have access to a car, we should be continuing to persuade them to leave the car at home and travel on shared affordable and accessible bus services which are more

sustainable in the long run, both environmentally and economically.

It is bizarre to think that the Government is currently about to roll out funding for Smarter Travel to get people out of cars and yet the report suggests putting regular bus users back into cars again!

Rural Ireland is in a state of shock at the blatant anti rural bias of this report, which contradicts existing government policy on so many levels.

It must be understood that the people of rural Ireland will strenuously resist axing their services.

Organise NOW to stop the cuts

THE REPORT has been deliberately published in the holiday season in the hope that it is bedded down and normalised in political discourse.

The government's strategy is to use the menu framework to invite in the union leaders to discuss how the 'more for less' philosophy can be implemented.

Some of the union leaders have already signalled that they will play ball with this strategy.

IMPACT's Peter McLoone, for example, has already agreed that the public services need to

be transformed so that there is more work done with less staff but the only question for him is: will it be done through partnership or confrontation. McLoone is, it should be noted, the same union leader who presided over the junket scandal in FAS.

Trade union members need to urgently organise to force individuals like him out of office. To fight back effectively, we need to take back our union from a bureaucracy that has now entered a deep level of collaboration with this terrible government.

We also need to build anti-cuts committees in as many areas as possible.

The people of Ballyfermot, Dublin have already shown how 'mobilisation' and 'people power' can force the HSE to keep open respite centres for the elderly.

We need to bring together representatives of different organisations who are affected by the cuts at local level and form broad coalitions to resist them.

A key element in this mobilisation will be the organisation of the unemployed

and those on social welfare.

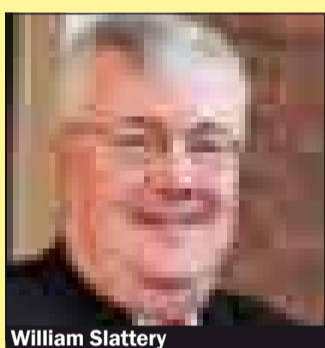
If you want to help in building a campaign of resistance to the cut backs, contact Socialist Worker at (01) 872 2682.

The fightback needs to be organised urgently, and at its heart needs to be those who totally reject the philosophy of the neo-liberal wage cutters, social welfare and education slashers and jobs destroyers.

Instead we need the values of solidarity, fighting working class organisation and real democracy—in a word Socialism.



An Bord Snip chair and right wing economist Colm McCarthy



William Slattery

McLoughlin resigned from his €165,000 post in 2005 because it would not guarantee him a sufficiently high pension. The Department of Finance had, apparently, not agreed to a ten year



Mary Walsh

pension top up for this over-paid executive. Yet this same individual was then chosen to sit on a committee to decide on public expenditure cuts!

■ Maurice O Connell, a former

governor of the Central Bank. At one stage, the Central Bank was informed of how bogus non-resident accounts were being set up to avoid DIRT tax but did nothing. O Connell defended this inactivity even though it led to a loss of €100 million from state revenues. Subsequently, he issued warnings about 'over-spending' on social welfare.

■ Mary Walsh, A partner in Price Waterhouse Cooper, the top accountancy firm that is close to big business.

■ William Slattery, the managing director of State Street International. This company specialises in administering hedge funds. These are gambling pools which allow the wealthy to engage in vast specula-

tion. Many of the hedge funds have located in Ireland to avoid paying any substantial tax because they are offered a special scheme which links them to the notorious Caymen Islands. Slattery used to work with the Central Bank as a regulator for Dublin's IFSC but, like many regulators, jumped ship to help service the hedge funds. Having a proponent of hedge funds make recommendations on public spending is a scandal in itself.

These individuals are drawn from, or are close to, the political elite. There was never any prospect that they were going to demand swinging cuts on those on top salaries. Their target was always the poor and public sector workers.

COMMENT

Will Obama push Israel to make peace with Palestine?



Barack Obama, right, meets with Israeli opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu

By JULIEN MERCILLE & CLAUDIA SABA, Irish Anti-War Movement Steering Committee (pers. cap.)

OBAMA HAS been pressuring Israeli PM, Netanyahu, to freeze the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and to accept the goal of establishing a Palestinian state, but Israel is showing resistance.

This apparent disagreement, at a closer look, is a dispute over style rather than substance. In reality, US and Israeli interests converge to a large extent and Obama perseveres in the path of massive US support to Israel.

Firstly, we should not lose sight of the key issue regarding the settlements: those already established in the West Bank seem to be acceptable to the US, and the dispute is only about their expansion, not their dismantlement.

So even if settlement expansion is frozen, the establishment of a viable Palestinian state would be near impossible because Jewish settlements in the West Bank physically divide the Palestinian population and have already swallowed up much Palestinian land.

In any case, if Obama really wished to stop settlement expansion, he could simply decrease US aid to Israel. Instead he supports increasing US military aid to Israel to \$30 billion over the next 10 years. This is a 25% increase over military aid under Bush.

As for the establishment of a Palestinian state, Netanyahu gave a speech in June pretending to accept this goal. But he placed so many conditions on such a "state" that it would be unviable.

For instance he said that all of Jerusalem will remain under Israeli rule, not a single refugee will be allowed to return to Israel, and Israel would control the air space and the border crossings of the Palestinian state, turning it into a West Bank version of the Gaza Strip.

In the meantime, the Obama administration is pursuing a detente with Syria. George Mitchell, the American Middle East envoy, recently announced that the US was lifting certain sanctions imposed on Damascus by the Bush administration.

This is a welcome development but again one wonders how much substance it contains. Israel occupies the

Syrian Golan Heights, which must be returned to Syria. But will Obama be able to push Israel to make moves to this end, or at least to put the issue high on the agenda?

The discerning observer would place the current American-Israeli bickering into the wider context of US-Israel cooperation:

Alongside the planned \$30 billion to Israel, Obama is tacitly supporting Israel's 200 nuclear warheads while repeatedly raising the threat of a time and again unconfirmed Iranian nuke.

Nor does Obama seem preoccupied by the West Bank separation wall, which is under continued construction five years after the International Court of Justice ordered it torn down. This while Israel still maintains 600 checkpoints in the Occupied Territories.

The US continues to ignore Hamas notwithstanding the party's democratic mandate since 2006. Whatever one thinks of Hamas, this policy shows that American talk of promoting democracy in the Middle East is a bad joke.

The US administration does not seem to flinch at the fact that Israel is still holding Gaza under siege. This at a time when Israeli soldiers involved in the Gaza onslaught six months ago, have come forward with documented crimes committed by the Israeli military in Gaza, which led to the deaths of 1,400 Palestinians, including 300 children.

The soldiers' testimonies were published by "Breaking the Silence", an organization of former Israeli soldiers. They mention the use of white phosphorus in densely inhabited neighborhoods, the massive destruction of buildings unrelated to any direct threat to Israeli forces, and the use of human shields by Israel's military. The evidence suggests that this is not the result of a few bad soldiers' behavior but of actual Israeli military policy.

The use of civilian human shields in combat by Israeli troops was illustrated by a soldier who said: "Sometimes a force would enter while placing rifle barrels on a civilian's shoulder, advancing into a house and using him as a human shield."

An alternative economic agenda

By SEAN KELLY

ALL THE mainstream, well-paid media commentators tell us 'there is no alternative' to their plan for bailing out Irish capitalism.

The People Before Profit Alliance have set out an alternative plan. Here are some key elements of the alternative economic agenda:

■ Nationalise the banks and create a state banking system. Organise the credit system to eliminate financial speculation and to support job creation. The banking system should be run by elected representatives of the Irish people and trained financial experts employed on public sector pay scales for the benefit of ordinary people.

■ Consolidate and Create a State Construction Agency and embark on key infrastructural projects to create jobs and stimulate the economy. Infrastructural development projects for a public works programmes should include:

- A fully integrated rail and transport network for major cities
- A housing insulation programme to reduce energy



- usage
- National networks of state regulated, publicly owned or franchised crèches, care homes for the elderly, and of sheltered accommodation for those who need it
 - A network of primary health care centres with developed preventative medicine systems, thus reducing reliance on hospitals
 - An emergency social housing and schools building programme to clear the decades-long waiting list for accommodation
 - A proper re-cycling industry

- financed through direct taxation, particularly of wealth
- Develop new strategic industries, including:
 - A generic pharmaceutical industry to contribute to the global replacement of 'big Pharma'
 - Pioneering forms of technology to support a shift to preventative medicine
 - Support for agricultural co-operatives that pioneer the development of organic food
 - Re-opening of closed factories by their workers to produce goods people really need

■ A new, fairer tax system including a fair tax on all income and profits, legislation to close the tax fugitive rule which allows the wealthy to avoid paying taxes, a tax on all income over €100,000 at a surcharge rate of 70 percent, and an end to inheritance tax allowances on all large business and large farms

■ An expanded and re-oriented public sector which will reclaim ESB and Eircom, reverse the cuts on the public transport network and other sectors, end Public-Private Partnerships, prevent managerialism and artificial performance targets, and democratise how the public sector is run

■ Schemes to create the real foundations for a 'knowledge economy' by investing in education and creating new openings for 'second chance' learners

■ New rules to regulate private capital

■ Protection for state pensions and limits on how pension funds are invested

■ Laws to make Ireland a genuinely egalitarian and multicultural society that respects human rights and values the contributions of all.

Business, political elite behind Lisbon 'civil society' groups



Generation Yes launch April 2009

By MARK WALSH

FOLLOWING THEIR defeat in last year's referendum, Ireland's business and political elite are mounting a much more determined campaign to bully and manipulate the Irish electorate into voting Yes to the Lisbon Treaty.

On top of legal 'guarantees' which do not change either the "content or application of the Treaty" and dire warnings of Ireland being left in "financial isolation" in Europe if we exercise our democratic right to vote No again, the Yes side has also set up a number of 'civil society' groups to push for a Yes vote.

When we think of civil society groups we have an image of ordinary decent citizens coming together as community groups or charities in support of a particular cause without being 'political'. This is the image the Yes side wants its 'civil society' groups to project.

Several groups have been set up, some with the specific aim of targeting groups that voted No in the last referendum. The Government's Millward Brown IMS research showed that young people and women tended to vote No. The Yes side has responded by launching a group called 'Generation Yes' in April and 'Women for Europe' at the end of July.

Other groups include 'We Belong' and 'Ireland for Europe'. We Belong claims that it will be "driven by the workers and the youth of Ireland," even though some of its funding came from a recent bash in the Shelbourne Hotel, "where various fat cats ... with a European vision were wined and dined and bled for money to support a business friendly Europe that will be facilitated by a Yes vote."

Ireland for Europe seems to be targeted at the wider public. Just as the French establishment tried to use celebrities like actor Gérard Depardieu to persuade the French to vote for the EU Constitution in 2005, Ireland for Europe had Seamus Heaney reciting a poem at its launch meeting in The Button Factory in Temple Bar in June. Heaney, Robbie Keane and other celebrities will no doubt be wheeled out during the campaign.

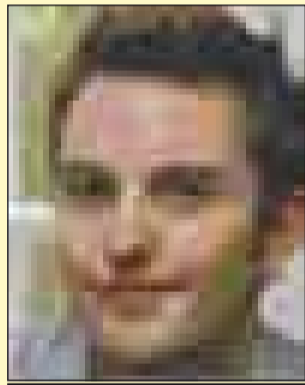
But because such celebrities are unlikely to know very much about the detail of the Treaty, there are a number key establishment figures behind the celebrity façade. These are the ones who are likely to participate in any real media debate around the Treaty.

They are: Brigid Laffan, Jean Monnet Professor of

European Politics at UCD; Pat Cox, former PD and former President of the European Parliament; and Brendan Halligan, chair of the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA). Former Fianna Fáil general secretary Martin Mackin (now with Public Relations company Q4) is also involved.

There is substantial overlap between the membership of the IIEA and Ireland for Europe. In addition to Laffan and Cox, IIEA members include figures like former Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald; Labour TD Ruari Quinn; former president Mary Robinson; Taoiseach Brian Cowen; Director of the European Commission Representation in Ireland, Martin Territ; and chairman of British Petroleum, Peter Sutherland.

As a former EU Commissioner, a former director of the World Trade



Andrew Byrne

Organisation, and member of the European Round Table of Industrialists, Peter Sutherland has been at the heart of the neoliberal transformation of the European Union since the early 1980s.

In spite of these links to the establishment, Green Party member and 'chief of operations' of Ireland for Europe, Andrew Byrne, has no difficulty maintaining the pretence that these groups represent civil society. As he said recently in reference to the Yes side's failed campaign last year, "I'm not prepared to let politicians mess this up again... [it is] important that the campaign [is] led by civil society..."

This is the deeply dishonest mantra of these so-called civil society groups. In reality, they represent the same political and business elite that is bent on implementing the savage cutbacks in the Bord Snip report and setting up NAMA to bail out the banks.

The Lisbon Treaty is the third element of the neoliberal onslaught they intend to unleash in the autumn. Another strong No vote on 2nd October could deliver a major blow to that project.

NO to the war in Afghanistan NO to Lisbon

By MARNIE HOLBORROW

OVER 250 people turned out in Dublin to a debate on Wed 15th July on the war in Afghanistan entitled *Obama's War: should foreign troops withdraw?*

The size of the meeting showed that there is considerable interest in this NATO-led war. The run-up to the Lisbon treaty is focussing people's minds on what an expanded EU military role will mean.

The meeting countered some of the myths about this war. Sahar Sabar from the Revolutionary Association of Afghan Women spoke movingly about how defending women's rights in Afghanistan means something very different to accounts relayed to us by Obama and Brown.

Afghan women, Sabah reminded us, will fight for their own liberation and no amount of bombing of their families will bring it to them.

One speaker, Tom Carew reiterated George Brown's argument that the fight against terror ran from the mountains of Afghanistan to the streets of the west.

The fact is, however, that this war has made a terrorist attack more likely not less, a fact that speaker Jonathan Neale, a US socialist, pointed out.

The reality is that Obama's surge will not win this war because the occupation creates in its wake not only more deaths, but greater instability.

The flimsy reasons given in its justification have become exposed and laid bare the underlying motivation of Western strategic interests in this vital crossroads in the centre of Asia.

The mood in Britain is turning against this war. More than 50% now want the troops home.

The numbers of young servicemen killed has now exceeded those killed in Iraq. In just 24 hours in the first ten days of July 15 British soldiers were killed bringing the total to 187.

The high casualty rate is due to Britain's involvement in Operation Panther's Claw, the ominously named recent assault which involves 4,000 US troops and 650



US-trained Afghan soldiers ahead of next month's elections.

EU war
This war gives a foretaste of what the new militarized Europe.

NATO and ISAF - International Security Assistance Force working together blurs the distinction between occupation and aid, NATO members and traditionally neutral

countries.

Traditionally neutral Sweden has 500 troops in ISAF in Afghanistan, something that is unacceptable to many in Sweden.

A handful of Irish military are also operating there - and we in Ireland have not been asked if we want them to be there.

US, NATO and ISAF support the discredited Karzai government which depends on some of the most brutal rulers in Afghanistan, the northern war lords. Malaya Joya, the Afghan MP courageously speaks out about these real fundamentalists in Afghanistan.

She has described how the puppet parliament running in the US spotlight in Kabul is a cover for terrorizing power exercised by local lords outside Kabul.

One example is the former governor of Herat, Ismail Khan. He set up his own "vice and virtue" squads which terrorized women and smashed up video and music cassettes. He had his own "private militias, private jails".

The constitution of Afghanistan is irrelevant in these private fiefdoms.

In Malaya Joya's words

"US POLICY is driven by geopolitics not personalities. Afghanistan is in the heart of Asia, so it's a very important place to have military bases - so they can control trade very easily with other Asian powers such as China, Russia, Iran and so on.

But it can be changed by Americans. I say to Obama - in my area, 150 people were blown up by US troops in one incident this year. If your family had been there, would you send even more troops and even more bombs? Your government is spending \$18m (£11m) to make another Guantanamo jail in Bagram. If your daughter might be detained there, would you be building it? I say to Obama - change course, or otherwise tomorrow people will call you another Bush."

MALAYA JOYA, Afghan MP and author of new book 'Raising My Voice' is published by Rider at £11.99.



Malaya Joya

Irish war effort

AS PART of the new revamped EU military, members of the Irish army are assisting this terrible war. Counter-insurgency against the Taliban is their designated task. Yet the British are changing their minds about the Taliban: "the insurgents", it seems, are less the pariah fundamentalist block that was the original justification for the war.

Lieut-Gen Simon Mayall, deputy chief of the British defence staff now believes that there are three groups to the Taliban: a first tier of Taliban commanders the hardliners around Mullah Omar; a second tier who control large numbers of Taliban fighters in Pashtun-dominated southern Afghanistan and who could be negotiated with; and a third tier who this general classifies as foot soldiers "with no strong commitments".

This talk is just another way of saying that the war cannot be won militarily. Many deaths down the road, the generals with the politicians backing are changing their tune. This about-turn allows ideological concessions that may come back to haunt the warmongers - and boost the opposition to the war.

Yet just as the war seems set to be a disaster, Ireland in rowing further in behind it. US troop traffic through Shannon has grown this year with 130,922 soldiers passing through in the first six months.

The number of US troops going through Shannon between January and the end of June was 130,922 - up 4.8 per cent on the corresponding period last year.

Over and above this, politically Ireland is immersing itself ever deeper in the militarisation of Europe. Already the NATO-EU-IASF operation in Afghanistan represents the blurring of the boundaries between occupation and peace-keeping.

When all available state funds should be spent on keeping jobs and services, Lisbon will cop-perfasten this new aggressive empire.

That is why we need to oppose Irish involvement in Afghanistan and oppose Lisbon Treaty a second time.

The Irish Anti war movement is holding a peace conference on September 5th in Shannon to highlight these issues and contribute to the No vote to Lisbon.

International Peace Conference

War, NATO and the Lisbon Treaty

Saturday 5th of September
2009 Park Inn, Shannon
Airport, Co. Clare, Ireland

Speakers

Cllr. RICHARD BOYD BARRETT, Irish Anti-War Movement

JOE HIGGINS (MEP), Socialist Party

REINER BRAUN, The Anti-NATO Network

JOHN FEFER, Foreign Policy in Focus USA

CHRISTOPHE VENTURA, Parti De Gauche

TOBIAS PFLUGER, Die Linke

JEREMY CORBYN, British Labour Party

ED HORGAN, Peace & Neutrality Alliance

PATRICIA MCKENNA, The People's Movement

Say no to racism. Close down the BNP call centre now!

By GERRY CARROLL

IT WAS revealed in the Belfast Telegraph last month that the Nazi British National Party are operating a national call centre in Dundonald- in East Belfast.

The BNP are a fascist party who emerged from the National Front in 1982. Despite attempts by BNP members to present themselves as acceptable politicians with suits the truth remains that they are still a Nazi party who want an all white Britain.

The BNP have tried to rebrand themselves as representing 'British people' and being concerned with 'identity' – the language may have changed but the message is still clear.

They want a country with only white people in it – they continue to deny that the holocaust happened because they ant to repeat it.

We have to be clear when it comes to the BNP call centre and calling for it to be closed down. They are a Nazi party who want to smash democracy and send millions of trade unionists, non-whites, LGBT people and anyone else who doesn't fit their 'national' plan to the gas chambers.

The Nazi organization is using the call centre in Dundonald as a base for operating and building up bigger a fascist organization across the water.

In the past year racist attacks have risen – the most notable being the attacks in South Belfast where 100 Roma's were forced out of their homes.

At the same time we are seeing racist statements edging into the media- such as 'British Jobs for British Workers' or 'Local Jobs for Local people'.

The BNP whilst only having a handful of members within Northern Ireland could grow in this climate. Closing down the call centre would send out a message that we reject the Nazi's and all their fascist

filth.

It would also be a defeat for the Nazi's in Britain if their call centre was closed down. In Britain they have gained some confidence after getting Nick Griffin and Andrew Brons elected to Europe - it would be an embarrassing defeat if they had to close up their fascist call centre here.

The recession requires us to step up the fight against racism. Historically we have seen that racism and attacks on migrants have fed on peoples' fears about the state of the economy and fears about the jobs.

In the North the fight should be two pronged. Immediately we should push hard for the Nazi's to be kicked out of their call centre in Dundonald but also there is another longer term fight which must be waged.

If you look beyond Sammy Wilson's disgraceful comments about racism not existing there is a much more dangerous argument emerging around immigration and migrant workers. Wilson wants to have a debate about immigration but doesn't want to be branded a racist.

Sammy Wilson has jumped from climate change denier to finance minister. He has quickly laid the boot into migrants and anyone else seeking to come to Northern Ireland for a better life. It's no coincidence that this is coming from the new finance minister. The attacks on migrants are used to justify the cuts that Stormont will be making in the next months. Wilson and others in the assembly want migrants to be blamed for the economic crises instead of the main culprits- the bankers, the bosses, politicians and the economic system we live under.

As well as campaigning for the BNP call centre to be shut down we must take up the racist drivel spewed out regularly about migrants. They are not a threat and they are welcome here.

Disabled protest Bord Snip cuts

By SEAN MORAGHAN

MARGARET AT Kerry Network of People with Disabilities (KNPDD) spoke to Socialist Worker, she said, "In response to the proposed cuts in the Governments McCarthy Report we are organising a protest on the streets of Tralee for the 17th of August at 2pm.

"We have worked for the recognition of the equal rights of people with disabilities their families and carers for at least 14 years now".

"It would be a mockery of Ireland's record to date, where we all worked together with limited resources to achieve the greater inclusion of the most marginalised to now stop this work. When we signed up to the UN Charter for Human Rights Ireland showed an excellent example of working together to improve the lives of all of our citizens going a long way towards realising cherishing all of the children of the nation equally. We won't be softened up for the "inevitable" cuts in our next national Budget!"

"We say NO to cuts to social welfare, Rural Transport, Community and Voluntary sector supports, RAPID, Community Services Programme, closure of rural garda stations Education for young people with disabilities, minimum wage and Christmas bonus for the poorest in Ireland. These proposed cuts have a strong anti rural bias and we won't take them!"

"We say YES To capping earnings by fat cat TDs and Civil Servants at at least €100,000 per year inclusive of all expenses and perks surely they can live on that?"

There are savings to be made but we must all work together to come up with solutions not penalising the most vulnerable".

■ Assemble at The Pikeman statue, Denny Street, Tralee Monday 17th August at 2pm.

5000 march for equality



Several thousand people turned out to the Belfast PRIDE parade at the beginning of August. The anger at Iris Robinson - the NI Health Minister that said gays had a curable disease, was still palpable. Over 50 people left their names for the SWP network.

OVER 5000 people marched against the unequal civil partnership bill last weekend and called for full equality for LGBT couples. The march was organised by LGBT Noise.

The new legislation brings in civil partnerships and automatic inheritance rights for gay and cohabiting couples.

But it still discriminates against LGBT couples when it comes to children and next of kin rights.

LGBT Noise is demanding the full equality that would come with full civil marriage not just civil

partnerships.

Get political

The LGBT rights movement is getting re-politicised after years of lobbying right wing politicians.

It's good to see marches that are protests rather than just celebrations – we are still far from equality.

Ireland has changed a lot since the dark days of the Catholic Taliban regime but the recent child abuse scandals shows that those conservative institutions still play a key role in the southern state.

We can't simply appeal to this state for change – we need people power to change it.

As the economic crisis intensifies conservative politicians in FF and FG will try to use scapegoats – immigrants, single mothers, LGBT people – to deflect anger away from themselves and their failing system.

The LGBT rights movement needs to make links with these movements and the wider workers movement.

The fight for sexual equality is part of and is advanced by progress

for equality in other parts of society. If we stop the cuts in health, education and public services it will create a more equal society in general and make it easier to fight for full LGBT equality as well.

We need to break from community and identity politics and become part of the broadest possible movement for real progressive change.

But we also need to be clear that it is capitalism that perpetuates oppression and division, until we get rid of this system we will always have to fight against inequality.

Shell to Sea activist jailed for 8 months



Niall Harnett, imprisoned

NIALL HARNETT, PRO of the Rosspoint Solidarity Camp and an activist who has been calling a halt to Shell's Corrib Gas Project in Co. Mayo, was sent to Castlereagh prison on Thursday July 30th.

Niall is due to serve two four month sentences consecutively, totalling a period of up to eight months in gaol.

Niall will be appealing the sentences and he could be out now if he was willing to accept

the bail conditions imposed by the judge. However the judge wanted Niall to give an undertaking that he'd stay away from the Shell sites in Mayo, which Niall is refusing to accept.

Niall was arrested and jailed because the Judge claimed he tried to break a Garda's arm. This is totally untrue. The judge chose to believe his evidence over clear video evidence showing Niall was peacefully protesting. There were also many defence witnesses who contradicted the Gardaí.

This sentence is potentially the longest given to anyone involved with the campaign.

A spokesperson for the camp said, "He is missed greatly by all of us here at the camp, and we would urge people to write to Niall. It doesn't matter whether you send short

postcards or long letters, the important thing is that Niall knows there is support and solidarity for him".

Niall's prison address is :
Niall Harnett prisoner No: 59513, Castlereagh Prison, Harristown Co. Roscommon

Belfast traffic wardens win re-instatement

BELFAST TRAFFIC wardens have won their jobs back.

The company, NSL Services Group, was told to offer the dismissed traffic attendants their jobs back or a compensatory payment.

Some 25 traffic attendants, members of NIPSA, were sacked in April after going on strike against NSL Services Group over changed work practices.

The workers protested their treatment at the Belfast premises of NSL — formerly called NCP.

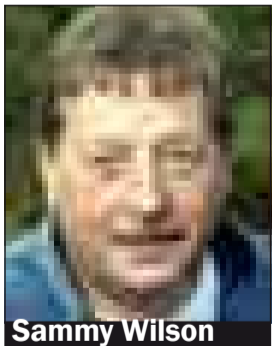
Socialist Worker

**Capitalism creates poverty,
racism and sectarianism**

UNITE TO DEFEND JOBS AND PUBLIC SERVICES

By **EAMONN McCANN**

THE BEST way to counter right-wing politicians like Sammy Wilson and racist organisations like the BNP is to campaign for politics which bring people together on a basis which has nothing to do with the community or the country they come from.



Sammy Wilson

When we link arms to fight together for a better future, the differences between us don't matter.

As the recession bites, workers are more and more being

treated like dirt.

Since the beginning of August, Ulster Bank has announced 250 job losses across the North. Stream International has threatened the same number in Derry.

BE Aerospace has shed 88 jobs in Co. Down. Belfast engineering firm Central Services has closed, with 50 jobs lost.

These are just the most recent examples. And the jobs massacre seems set to continue.

At the same time, the housing crisis



Visteon workers stood up to bosses

worsens. Only around a quarter of houses promised by the NI Housing Executive in 2000 have materialised.

The collapse of the greed-fuelled construction sector has made the prospects even worse.

The public sector is under constant at-

tack. Everywhere, community services are being cut back. The young and the elderly on some of the most deprived estates are being abandoned.

These are the conditions in which hatred can thrive. A glance at the areas where the ugliest recent incidents of racism

and sectarianism have occurred makes the point.

Many decent people and organisations denounce and distance themselves from the hatred and violence.

But what's really needed is a grass-roots response which links opposition to sectarianism and racism to a fight against the conditions in which they thrive.

This means supporting every group of workers who stand up to bosses out to destroy jobs.

It means opposing the repossession of homes by any means necessary and pushing for the takeover of houses left empty by recession-struck developers.

It means young and old organising to fight for their rights.

It means giving no quarter to those who would try to justify or "understand" sectarian or racist attacks.

Working-class people are right to be angry at the way we are being treated.

The best way of ensuring that anger is not directed against one another is to organise so that it is directed against capitalism.

We need socialist leadership in our unions and communities. Otherwise, the way will be left open to sectarian and racist parties.