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Socialist Worker

NO PAY CUTS!

WE NEED A 24 HOUR NATIONAL STRIKE

PUBLIC SECTOR workers have had enough. They will not be bashed around any longer by an IBEC inspired media campaign to cut their wages.

Last February, the employers' organisation declared that it wanted the pay of ALL workers cut by 10 percent year.

They got their way when the government imposed a 7.5 percent pay cut under the guise of a 'pension levy'.

For many workers that meant a loss of over €4,000 a year.

The weakness of the union response encouraged IBEC and the government to come back for more.

A huge propaganda campaign against public sector workers has again been whipped up by the corporate media.

Most of that media is owned by two tax fugitives – Denis O'Brien and Tony O'Reilly – who claim to live outside Ireland for more than 183 days a year to avoid tax.

But now a backlash among public sector workers has begun.

Over 5,000 public sector workers have attended mass meetings called by the 24/7 alliance, which groups together front line staff.

At a huge meeting in the Helix centre in Dublin City University, for example, the whole



hall rose to its feet in thunderous applause when an ambulance paramedic declared,

'They want to cut our pay and allowances so that we are driven back thirty years. We have to go back to the militant trade unionism of thirty years ago.'

We need to put an end to this social partner-

ship rubbish and start fighting'.

Other public services unions such as IMPACT have balloted overwhelmingly for strike action to resist any pay cuts.

The backlash has terrified the government. They know that they could face a social explosion as guards and soldiers have publicly

stated that their loyalty to the state is a two way street.

This is why, suddenly, Cowen and Lenihan have opened up talks with the union leaders.

But workers should watch carefully that we are not stabbed in the back.

The official leader of the ICTU Public Service Committee is Peter McLoone of IMPACT – the same man who turned a blind eye while the corporate sector ripped off FAS in an expenses scandal.

McLoone and SIPTU's Jack O'Connor were the main figures who called off the mobilisation on March 30th and allowed the government to impose the pension levy.

We cannot let them sell out again.

Over the next few weeks, Socialist Worker urges you to

- **Put the grassroots in control.** Hold regular mass meetings in your work and take votes on the action you want. Start to forge links with other workplaces in your area.

- **Prepare for a 24 hour strike on November 24th.** Unless the government climbs down fully, this must go ahead. That means no pay cuts and no attacks on allowances.

- **Drop the talk of 'More for less'** It means more work with less workers and we are already stretched.

NI: Only coordinated resistance can defend jobs and services

THE NORTH is set for a wave of savage cuts as the Executive imposes measures decreed by the Treasury.

Only coordinated resistance can defend jobs and services.

Funds for voluntary organisations and community groups are being slashed.

Women's groups and old folks' homes are in the firing

line.

Health and education boards are being forced into year-on-year cuts. Civil service and local council jobs are being prepared for the axe.

Finance Minister Sammy Wilson says he wants ANOTHER £370 million in cuts agreed by Xmas.

The other Executive parties

are complaining. But they have all backed his basic strategy. They all voted through the budget.

The DUP and Sinn Fein are leading the charge for more privatisation and the job losses certain to follow.

In June, Daithi McKay and John O'Dowd were first on their feet to welcome Wilson's Local

Government Bill easing the way for council facilities to be flogged off to private firms.

The November 6th rallies must be the first step in a serious fight-back.

The trade union movement should stand with grass-roots community organisations to FIGHT FOR EVERY JOB, RESIST EVERY CUT.

When (not if) the parties betray their election pledges and try to impose water charges, the unions and Communities Against the Water Tax must move into action again immediately.

At Stormont, they are all neoliberals now. We need a united movement of working-class resistance to confront them.

NO PAY CUTS— KEEP OUR ALLOWANCES— DEFEND OUR CONDITIONS

Public sector workers are entering the most decisive battles in decades. By sticking together and taking militant action we can win. On the way, we could also drive this unpopular government from office. But if we hesitate or retreat, the power of our unions could be decisively weakened. We need a clear strategy to win and here are Socialist Worker's proposals for that.

1) COUNTER THE MEDIA PROPAGANDA

DENIS O'Brien is the largest media baron in Ireland, alongside the O'Reilly family. He owns Newstalk, Today Fm, FM 104 and has a minority stake in the Independent Group of Newspapers.

He is also a tax fugitive who avoided paying €55 million in taxes to the Irish state by moving to Portugal.

In 2003, he gave his opinion on the country

'There is too much shite going on inside Ireland. I think people are too negative to politicians, Government and entrepreneurs. We are fast turning into a communist state. People should be thankful .. but instead they are screaming like spoiled children'.

O'Brien's aim is to re-programme the population to that they appreciate their betters.

This is why his media bashes the unions continually and pumps out propaganda against public sector workers.

To win we have to counter the lies of the corporate media.

Lie No 1: Public sector workers are earning 25 percent more than private sector workers.

This figure comes from a quack study undertaken by the ESRI – which has a policy of advocating wage cuts.

It was not based on a detailed comparison with similar grades but used overall averages.

Wages may diverge according to educational level or union density but don't fall for the Big Lie technique.

Lie No 2: There is a bloated inefficient public sector that costs too much.

The only comprehensive study on the Irish public sector conducted by the OECD stated that

'general government employment represents 14.6 percent of the total workforce, which is relatively low among other OECD countries.'

Lie No 3: The pension liability for public sector workers is too large.

The public sector cannot go bankrupt so there will always be workers to fund the pension schemes.

Public sector workers pay 13 percent of their wages in pension contributions whereas the state only pays 3 percent as its employer contribution. Normally employers pay twice as much as workers.

You can help counter lies like these—circulate a socialist paper in your job.

Contact our circulation department on info@swp.ie or text us on 086 3074060 to order copies on a sale or return basis.



2) ALL TOGETHER – NO DIVISIONS

THE GOVERNMENT is not only trying to divide us public and private sector workers but will also try to foster divisions within the public sector.

It has a number of options on how to reduce the public service pay bill and will use them to sow divisions.

It could, for example, go for a frontal assault and cut wages by 7 percent across the board – or vary the figure according to different wage scales.

Or it could implement the McCarthy recommendation for cuts in allowances that many front line staff receive. These are payments for unsocial hours, Sunday working or specialist training.

Public sector workers need to stick together to resist this tactic – even though some union leaders may be consciously or even unconsciously trying to divide them through manoeuvres.

One example comes from the IMPACT General Secretary, Peter McLoone. The ballot in his union was for strike action if 'core pay' was touched. This raises the obvious question; what about non-core pay or allowances which affect IMPACT members in the health service and local authorities?

The only way to counteract these manoeuvres is for everyone to adopt a policy of resisting ALL pay cuts and attacks on allowances.

3) ESCALATE TO WIN

NOVEMBER 5TH has been billed as a major protest – not a strike. But if we are to win, we have to strike hard before the government even drafts its budget.

That escalation starts with a mobilisation of the 24/7 alliance on **November 11** when 1,000 workers in uniform will march on the Dail. Off duty Gardai and soldiers are scheduled to take part.

November 24th has been proposed as a day of national shut down and this must now go ahead.

Pickets should be placed on all public buildings and work should cease for a 24 hour period.

Any backtracking from this position

will only encourage the government and the corporate media to go on a further offensive.

The previous decision to call off the March 30th strike led to huge demoralisation and emboldened the government to go further.

A retreat now would have even more calamitous consequences.

The union movement should also encourage police and soldiers not to allow themselves to break a movement that is in their own direct interest.

The message has to be crystal clear: We escalate before – and, if necessary after the budget – to stop these attacks.

4) DON'T GIVE MORE FOR LESS

SOME UNION leaders have already

sent out signals for a possible sell out by talking about public sector workers giving 'More for Less'.

But public sector workers did not cause the crisis and there is no reason why we should do more work with less staff.

IMPACT members should call their leaders to task for making statements, claiming that their members must 'give more flexibility and productivity' to transform the public sector.

The problem in the public sector arises from the growth of overpaid managerial layers who have used PMDS systems to enforce more paper work on their staffs.

Cut out that managerialism – and you will get a better public service.

Workers who are already coping with harsh cut backs have nothing more to give.

As John Kidd, from SIPTU's Firefighters puts it

'There is no flesh on the bone.. Just look at the figures. There are 700,000 people in Winnipeg and they have 1,500 firefighters. If Dublin was operating to equivalent figures, we would have 2,500 firefighters – but we have less than a thousand.'

'Our case load just keeps going up. Some time ago, we dealt with 25,000 cases a year – but it has jumped to 90,000. How do they expect us to do more for less'

Instead of making concessions to right wing arguments which attacks the public services, we should be demanding more investment to create more jobs.

Harney's VIP Expenses

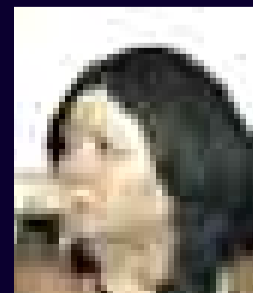
MARY HARNEY, is one of the greatest opponents of public sector unions.

But she and her husband, former FAS boss, Brian Geoghan, have run up a €100,000 in VIP expenses over three years.

Harney has given a new meaning to penny pinching by her assiduous claiming of expenses.

Her expenses for 2006-2009 include:

- €40,000 on limousine hire.
- €3,138 for her husband's flights
- €137 Breakfast for two at Chicago Hotel
- €113.15 for laundry washing in Prague
- €191 for use of drinks bar at hotel room
- €10 to get the husband's suit pressed



The Real Deal: Coke workers show company the power of Solidarity

NEGOTIATIONS between Coca Cola and their striking workforce have finally commenced after a sustained campaign of protest.

The dispute began over nine weeks ago when the company demanded a 60 percent pay cut from some of its staff.

The company has made €210 million in profit in the first six months of 2009 but felt that it could use the recession to enforce a new round of 'savings'. 'They wanted more profit for their shareholders and they wanted us to sacrifice' said Ritchie.

The company would not even talk about a lower pay reduction but instead moved to sack 130 workers. These were told that they were being 'outsourced' to three subcontracting firms.

Under the Transfer of Undertakings Act, workers are supposed to maintain the same pay rates and conditions if outsourced – with the exception of pension arrangements.

But when workers contacted sub-contracting companies such as Daly's and Kiely's they found that this might not be the case. They would be employed on a reduced level of wages and they



Coca Cola striker in protest picket

might not even have a job after a few weeks!

'They wanted us to work for minimum wage rates – even though I had been with Coca Cola for over thirty years. How was that supposed to help the country?'

'Today I can pay taxes and contribute to society. But if I

am outsourced on minimum wage rates, I will pay no tax and will need to get Family Income Supplement for my family. That will cost the state. It makes no sense', Terry explained

The Coca Cola workers, however, did not accept their company's plans lying down. They balloted by 101 to 4 to

take strike action and with the help of a former retired shop steward they set up a dynamic and active support group.

Two marches were organised, with nearly a thousand people attending the second one. A social was organised in Ballyfermot to keep up morale and delegation were sent into

the colleges to get students to boycott Coke.

At a thirty strong meeting of activists in UCD, Irish workers spoke alongside a supporter of Colombian trade unionists. The students present agreed to mount a week long information campaign on the strike to reinforce an existing boycott of Coca Cola products.

Meanwhile the SIPTU promoted a major information campaign on the strike and others went further and pushed for a nation wide boycott.

These actions have now forced Coke Cola to start talking to their staff, The workers went to the Labour Court under a Section 20 provision which bound them to the outcome – even though Coca Cola was not present.

By and large the recommendation was favourable to the workers and Coca Cola has been forced to negotiate on its terms.

The outcome of these negotiations is not yet known but it is already obvious that sustained solidarity action can force the biggest multi-nationals to start treating their workforce with respect.

Dockers force MTL to give their jobs back.

MARINE Terminals Ltd, who imposed redundancies on their workers in July, have been forced to give them their jobs back.

After more than 110 days on strike the dockers have won against this union-busting company.

When SIPTU went into the Labour Court on the 28th of September, MTL sent a letter saying they were not going to turn up to the court. They had refused to negotiate with the union, and have showed no interest in resolving the issue.

But the militancy and determination of the workers have forced them to accept the Labour Court recommendation and re-hire the workers.

The solidarity from the local community, and from dockers around the world has been extraordinary. Several marches and protests have been organized by the support group, which included workers, locals and political parties.

The International

Trade Federation also gave massive support and promised to slow down ships going to MTL. Although this was important, it was the actions of the workers themselves going out on boats, picketing Deutsche Bank and Dunnes Stores and keeping up the morale at the picket line, which made sure the victory.

The promise of the workers and the support group to escalate the strike if MTL did not accept the Labour Court recommendation, showed the company that they were not giving up.

The dispute is not yet over, however. Terms and conditions and pay and voluntary redundancies still have to be negotiated by the company and the union. Given the history of the company you can never be sure what will happen.

But the dock workers have shown that these companies can be fought and they are an inspiration to all workers in this country facing the greed of the employers.

Why is there no education for my daughter?



James Mc Donagh and his daughter Angel

JAMES MC Donagh, is demanding education, medical treatment and proper housing for his special needs daughter Angel Mc Donagh (11 years).

James and Angel hit the national headlines when he walked into the special Green Party convention in the RDS, demanding to speak to Green leader, Minister John Gormley and was forcibly evicted by security and Gardai.

As well as failing to provide schooling for Angel for the last year, the state has failed to provide her with the occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy she needs for her condition.

Recently, James approached Cllr Richard Boyd Barrett of the People Before Profit Alliance (PBPA) to seek assistance in highlighting Angel's case and organising a campaign on her behalf..

James Mc Donagh said: "I have no choice but

to protest. I have done everything to try and get Angel into a school that can provide for her needs. Every school I have gone to refuses to take her, saying they don't have the resources or no longer have them because of cutbacks.

'I've been given the run-around by every agency of the state - despite daily appeals to one or other or all of them.

"I tried to bring my daughter's case to the attention of John Gormley and the Greens at their conference.

"Instead of helping me, they physically threw myself and Angel out, with the help of security and Gardai. It's a disgrace. What am I supposed to do?"

"They have money to bail out banks and pay Brendan Drumm massive bonuses but refuse to provide my daughter with education and proper care. How can that be right?"

Green Isle Foods Engineers enter third month of Strike



Green Isle picket line in Naas

AROUND 35 Engineers, members of the TEEU, have been on strike at Green Isle Foods in Naas, Co Kildare since 31st August.

This follows the sacking of eight of their number on trumped up charges in an attempt to break trade unionism in the factory.

The company, a subsidiary of British-based Northern Foods, refuses to recognise unions and refuses to engage with the TEEU side in seeking to resolve the dispute.

Strikebreakers have been brought in from England and put up in a hotel to try to break the strike.

The Green Isle factory makes pizzas under the Goodfellas brand, which the strikers are calling for shoppers to boycott.

One of the picketers told Socialist Worker: "Green Isle Foods have received €42 million in IDA grants over the years. Still they refuse to recognise our union or co-operate with the LRC. We are picketing continuously. We have circulated leaflets pointing out their dispute and calling on people to use their conscience when shopping."

Kildare Trades Council has backed the strikers and has called a March for Justice in Naas to support the strikers on Saturday 31st October, assembling at 2pm outside the Kildare County Council offices in Devoy House, Naas.

Collections and contributions to the strike fund; Current account, Uster Bank, Main St, Clane. Account No 10215914, Sort Code 985454.

Stand up for your rights

By PAT GREGG

MY COLLEAGUE and I are currently involved in a dispute with our former employer Ardmac Ltd. of Swords.

We were both put on "temporary lay off" recently while the company had sub-contractors working on jobs we could have been sent to.

I staged a peaceful protest at the Microsoft site in Clondalkin on the 9th September. At this time I spoke to a Senior Manager of Ardmac who promised me my job back if I lifted my peaceful protest, which I did. But up to this point I still have not been reinstated.

Since then my colleague and I have been constantly lied to by members of Ardmac Management and Directors. Because of this my colleague and I placed a peaceful protest at the Microsoft site again last Tuesday 20th October.

Because of these intimidating tactics, we have decided to escalate our protest and will be staging a peaceful protest at a High Profile site starting next Tuesday 27th October.

We, the people, need to stand up for our rights.

NEO NAZIS SHOWN THE DOOR IN TRALEE

A PLANNED gathering of Neo-Nazis in Tralee collapsed recently.

Shocked locals became aware very shortly beforehand that groups of Far-Right supporters from Eastern European countries had booked rooms in The White House B&B, Tralee

for the 24th of October.

Radio Kerry reported that they were to be joined by Irish Fascists. Nazi bands were also due to play in the function room of the building.

The event was to form part of a birthday celebration for Czech Neo-

Nazi organiser David Kalo, who lives in Dublin.

The SWP in Tralee was contacted by Anti-Fascist Action and alerted about the Nazi gathering, and we in turn contacted the press.

In the meantime the owner of the hotel was made aware of the racist and anti-

Semitic nature of the bands.

One of the bands' names, "Juden Mord" translates as "Jewish death". Between 70 and 80 people had planned to attend.

Once the owner of the venue understood the nature of the booking he cancelled it.

Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to: **SWP, 100, The Green, Dublin 1**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Phone: _____

Occupation: _____

Political views: _____

Other: _____

SWP

The Myth of Competitiveness



Chinese workers produce various components at a manufacturing plant in Guangdong province. Chinese top leader Hu Jintao warned that the country's competitiveness in trade is gradually being eroded away.

By BRIAN BOYLE

IF THE mantra of collective responsibility (we're all in this together) is the dominant catchphrase in modern Irish discourse, the need for competitiveness is certainly not far behind.

Taken together, these myths provide a powerful narrative for a national elite desperate to ensure that while they caused the current economic crisis, they won't be the one's paying for it.

The myth of collective responsibility is doubly fortuitous.

On the one hand, it allows those most centrally implicated in causing the crisis, to brand their accusers as 'backward looking' and 'unconstructive'.

On the other hand, it fosters a false sense of togetherness at a time when those very elites are working to mould and shape our public opinion.

So it is that the problem of 'competitiveness' has once again raised its head.

Competitiveness is the touchstone of policy in capitalist economies and especially so in a small open economy such as Ireland.

Calculated on the basis of the real exchange rate (the exchange rate multiplied by relative prices) it measures an economy's ability to sell its exports abroad, and allows policy makers to gauge how competitive the country will be in the future.

Export earnings are the primary source of foreign reserves and at 58% of GDP (the size of the economy) Irish exports are a significant part of national wealth creation.

In this context it is easy to understand the preoccupation, and yet if one were to listen exclusively to the mainstream commentariat, one would assume that Ireland had decisively lost its edge against leaner and more efficient economies.

This is not so. In fact according to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Irish exports have actually increased by 4.2% in the twelve month period to June 09 (from 7.2 billion to 7.5 billion).

The composition of Irish exports is extremely specific with organic chemicals, medical and pharmaceutical goods making up almost 40% of the total

number.

These industries pay higher than average salaries and as Ireland is holding its own in these markets, there is little reason to suspect that the wage bill is an impediment to further sales.

If exports remain buoyant why the incessant calls for increased competitiveness?

This is where the myth of 'competitiveness' dovetails nicely with the myth of 'togetherness'.

Thus while we are all told to shoulder the burden, IBEC and its media acolytes consistently argue that belt tightening should be restricted to working class pay cuts and stringent reductions in our public services.

No mention of profit cuts to improve competitiveness, or a tax on wealth to improve our fiscal position.

Not a bit of it. Indeed, when it comes down to it Brian Lenihan has been very explicit, arguing at a recent Chamber of Commerce reception that "there is simply no pot of gold to be taken as part of our recovery".

And yet according to the Bank of Ireland Wealth Report in 2007, the top 1% of the population had assets of €100 billion while the Celtic Tiger was responsible for creating 33,000 Irish millionaires.

Even if some of that wealth has been destroyed, there is still a lot left over. So much for national solidarity!

While it is surely true that wealth has been lost in the madness of the latest speculative free for-all, 15 years of unhindered growth has ensured a legacy of wealth inequality that is unsurpassed in the rest of Europe.

Stated differently, Ireland is now the most unequal society in the EU and while the rich are pleading poverty, their real intention is to ensure that the conditions that existed before the crisis are re-established after it.

Collective responsibility is obviously a lie.

So there should not be a 'shame consensus' built around an elite agenda, but a real solidarity of working people (public, sector, private sector and the unemployed) who demand that those that caused this crisis can never be allowed to do so again.

YOUR GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROPAGANDA

IN THE run up to the budget, a host of economic experts are warning of dire consequences if the population does not behave itself.

The mantra is to accept pay cuts, reductions in public services and bank bail outs.

Myth 1: We should listen to experts. They have studied economics and the government is only taking their advice.

The economists who appear regularly on the media are pro-capitalist and do not know how their own system really works.

None of them saw the crash coming and so their cures should be treated with utmost scepticism.

The top economics institute, the ESRI, claimed that the Irish economy would grow by 3 percent in 2009 and that an extra 24,000 jobs would be created!

Others such as Eunan Halpin wrote that 'conditions for a spiral down and a recession are not present'.

Irish economics is totally dominated by right wingers who promote attacks on wages rather than on profits. They have been turned into a new priesthood by the media so that we will do their bidding.

Myth 2: But the government has to borrow over €20 billion and so cutbacks are

necessary. If we don't take the 'hard medicine' now, it will be worse later.

The huge government deficit is a symptom but not the cause of the crisis. Before 2007, for example, there was no deficit as government revenue was €65.1 billion and spending was €64.6.

The economic crash has wiped out many tax revenues. VAT rates have fallen; PAYE taxes are down, property taxes tumbled and more is being spent on social welfare payments.

But the cutbacks have made matters worse. You can see this easily through simple figures.

In October 2008, the government claimed that the budget deficit would rise to 6.5 percent of GDP and that cutbacks were needed.

But in January 2009, the budget deficit had risen to 9.5 percent – and so more cuts were demanded in an April budget.

Yet, after all these rounds of cutbacks, the budget deficit has now risen to 13 percent. In other words, all the sacrifices have been wasted because the debt is even higher.

The reason why this occurs is simple. If personal consumption is already depressed through unemployment and wage cuts, reductions in government spending only add to the slow down in the economy. There is even less money to go around and a spiral of economic

depression sets in.

So instead of digging a deeper hole, we need to embark on a jobs programme that puts people back to work.

Myth 3: We need pay cuts to become more competitive. That is the only way to increase exports and create jobs.

More propaganda! According to the US Bureau of Labour Statistics, Irish labour costs are lower than those in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Holland and Sweden.

One reason is that workers on put in longer hours than their counterparts in other parts of the EU. Workers receive only 29 days in public holidays compared to an average of 34 in other countries.

Irish employers make the lowest social security contributions in the EU. They pay approximately 10 percent of employment costs compared to 45 percent in France and 35 percent in Italy.

As Brian Boyle points out in the accompanying article, Irish exports have actually risen in the last years – in comparison to major fall-offs in other county's exports.

Moreover, the main export sectors pay above the average Irish wage – so the right wing argument makes no sense.

Myth 4: We must rescue banks because otherwise they will not

WIDE TO

MIC GANDA

provide credit and the life blood of the economy will dry up.

The rescue of the private banks has already cost the population €11 billion through capital injections into AIB (€3.5 Billion) Bank of Ireland (€3.5 Billion) and Anglo-Irish (€3.8 billion)

NAMA will cost another €20 to €30 billion because the government is lying when it claims that only 20 percent of its loans will default.

They base this figure on a comparison of the loan book of Barclay's bank in the 1990s. But many of the loans NAMA will take responsibility for are already 'impaired' and the assets backing them are based on the re-zoned price of land.

The Irish Glass Bottle site in Ringsend provides a good example. Speculators took out a loan of €450 million to purchase a few acres. But today the land is only valued at €60 million.

In other cases, €9 billion of interest has already been 'rolled over' by banks who handed them over to NAMA. So clearly, many more builders will default – and that will cost Irish society dearly.

NAMA is therefore only a pretext to rescue the wealthy elite who run the banks.

Once they get the money, they will use it to pay off their huge debts to foreign bankers

And as David McWilliams points

out they will probably use the rest to purchase Irish government bonds which pays 5.70 percent in interest. These bonds raise funds to cover the national debt which has grown because of NAMA!

So instead of providing credit to risky, small businesses in a recession, the banks will sit just back and watch the profits roll in.

You say that the government deficit is only a symptom of the problem. What is the underlying cause of what is going wrong?

Irish capitalism crashed because the greed for profits led to a crisis of over-production in housing. There are now a quarter of a million unoccupied dwellings – even though 50,000 people need accommodation. It shows the madness of the market.

Once the crash occurred, the rich slammed on the breaks and staged an investment strike. Some of their money was certainly wasted on speculation but they are also hoarding the rest and moving money out of the country.

Since 2007, gross domestic fixed capital investment has fallen by 42 percent. The investment strike is not just in construction but there have also been serious falls in investment in machinery and equipment.

The fall in capital investment is four times higher than Germany and three times higher than the US or Britain. In

reality, this takes us into the territory of the Wall St crash of 1929.

No solution to the crash can be found until this issue is resolved. Either the capitalists who control this wealth will be allowed to hoard it until they blackmail society to accept their demands – or we take it off them. This has now become the decisive issue for Irish society.

So what is the SWP's solution?

We can start by introducing a host of punitive tax measures to transfer wealth. So all income over €100,000 should be taxed at a surcharge rate of 70 or 80 percent; tax fugitives should be made to pay taxes retrospectively; an annual wealth levy should be introduced.

Even these measures would require huge popular pressure to break the resistance of a wealthy elite who think that 'taxes are for the little people'.

But in themselves they are barely adequate for the scale of what is happening.

The reality is that we need large, popular working class mobilisation to foment a social revolt that takes control of the wealth of this society.

This means starting with a general stoppage and escalating it until such a point that we take control of the factories, office and all the means of production.

Nothing less will save us from the huge sacrifices that the elite have planned for us.

DFID hypocrisy over access to abortion

By EAMONN McCANN

THE HYPOCRISY of the British Government with regard to abortion in the North was clear last month in a document published by the Department for International Development (DFID).

The hypocrisy of the four main Northern parties was clear from their reaction to the document. Or rather, their lack of reaction.

The document set out guidelines for making abortion safer for women across the developing world:

"In countries where abortion is legal, DFID will support programmes that make abortion more accessible.

"In countries where it is illegal...DFID will make the consequences of unsafe abortion more widely understood and will consider supporting processes of legal and policy reform...DFID supports safe abortion on two grounds. First, it is a right... Second, it is necessary."

But the Government of which Foster is a member refuses to support the same right for women in a region which remains constitutionally part of the UK.

There hasn't been a word about this contradiction from Sinn Fein, the DUP, the Ulster Unionists or the SDLP.

The contradiction is not new. Mo Mowlam, when Secretary of State, explained that while she personally favoured the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act, she didn't think it politic to push her views for fear of "stirring up the tribal elders".

This factor hadn't been considered decisive in relation to Scotland, where, although the Edinburgh Parliament has much wider powers than the Stormont Assembly, abortion remains within the remit of Westminster and the 1967 Act is the law of the land.

Westminster took this view despite the fact that, in Scotland, the Catholic bishops and leaders of fundamentalist Protestant churches sing from the same hymn-sheet on abortion.

Both New Labour and the Tories recognised that on this issue the Scottish elders don't speak for the tribes. Well, the same applies in the North.

But the main British parties won't contemplate the exclusion of abortion from the devolution of justice - and the main Northern parties will neither push them on the issue nor indicate that they'll push the Executive for action once justice is devolved.

DFID operates in Brazil, where the Catholic Church claims 76 percent of the population and stridently proclaims its opposition to abortion.

In March, Archbishop Sobrinho of Recife



Archbishop Sobrinho of Recife

of a nine-year-old who had been raped and impregnated by her stepfather, because she had helped the girl procure an abortion.

The doctors who'd performed the termination were thrown out, too.

All of Brazil's bishops supported Sobrinho.

But nobody believed that this signified majority opposition to termination of the child's pregnancy.

And there's been no hint of the DFID team abandoning its guidelines in the country.

It's good enough for the women of Recife but not for the women of Rasharkin.

The DFID guidelines will likewise inform its programmes across sub-Saharan Africa, where religious and many political leaders are fundamentally anti-choice.

But the Department feels free to campaign for access to safe abortions. OK in Addis Ababa, verboten in Aughnacloy.

Once justice is devolved to Stormont, women seeking the right to choose will be left at the mercy of the DUP and Sinn Fein, neither of which shows any sign of budging an inch on the issue.

The case for a women's right to choose is based on the proposition that when a woman with an unwanted pregnancy, having considered her own circumstances and the arguments for and against, and consulted her own conscience, the choice whether or not to continue the pregnancy must be hers.

On what rational basis should political and/or religious elders have a right to overrule her choice?

Once the issue is devolved to Stormont - effectively to Sinn Fein and the DUP - the odds against women winning the right to choose will soar.

But then, women in Ireland are well used to fighting against the odds. They'll win on this issue in the end.

And they'll win the more quickly if there's a serious campaign for the right to choose and to expose the hypocrisy not only of the London Government but of the Northern parties.

Obama's New War in Pakistan

Faced with a failure in Afghanistan, US President Obama has decided to extend his war into Pakistan.

At stake is a longer term project – the creation of a pipeline which would carry oil from the Gulf via Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India – the TAPI project.

However, as US loses control of large swathes of Afghanistan, Obama's response has been to send an extra

20,000 troops and to pressurise the Pakistan government to attack Pashtun areas inside its own country.

Pashtun areas were originally cut by a British-imposed line, artificial line, called the Durand Line, which just divides their territory in half.

Pashtun militants – often labelled the Taliban by an ignorant Western media – have been at the forefront of resistance to US rule.

The Pakistani government first permitted the CIA to fly drones armed with missiles, which killed a few militants but hundreds of civilians in the tribal areas.

Now the war has escalated as 30,000 Pakistani troops have been ordered into the Waziristan, bringing terror and the displacement of million of civilians.

Reports on the full horrors of the war have been severely restricted.



PAKISTANI SOCIALISTS SPEAK OUT

A small left exists in Pakistan and here Riaz Ahmed of the International Socialists of Pakistan talks about the background to the crisis

What is happening in Pakistan?

Pakistan is in a state of chaos. The whole society has been damaged by the US's "war on terror". Pakistan's rulers are divided and there is no effective civilian government. The military dominates, but it too is divided.

The military wants to support the US war – but for its own reasons and to gain its own advantage. But all around, exploitation and corruption continue, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.

What are the US and its Nato allies trying to do?

US president Barack Obama has signed a bill giving Pakistan an aid package of \$7.5 billion over the next five years, as part of his so-called "Af-Pak" strategy to win the

war in Afghanistan.

The scheme is similar to US agreements with Egypt and Israel.

It is full of rhetoric about helping Pakistan to develop, but contains conditions which seek to dominate the country by establishing an ever larger permanent military presence.

This would mean both the expansion of the Pakistani army and the establishment of US bases.

But, the main aim is to get Pakistani soldiers to do the fighting against the Taliban and Al Qaida – and so take the casualties.

What is the response in Pakistan?

People see the US and Nato acting like an occupying force. There is real anger at the increased US military presence.

The only exceptions are a few in the governing elite – often financiers – who see their future tied to the US.

The military's public response has been to call for stepping up the war against the Taliban while distancing itself from the US government.

It makes no public criticism but is happy to see parties such as the Islamist Jamaat Islami campaign against the deal.

The army top brass are glad that they now occupy areas including Swat and South Waziristan which they have never been able to do before.

There has been a big reaction against the use of the private security company Xe, formerly Blackwater, which is notorious for the atrocities it carried out in Iraq.

The 200 houses bought for US "staff" in Islamabad and the discovery of hand grenades in the boot of a Dutch diplomat's car have also stirred up opposition.

It's important to remember that we only know about these things because the Pakistani security services leak everything that exposes what the US and its allies are doing to the media.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani military's own atrocities are kept secret.

What about the recent attacks in Islamabad, Lahore and Rawalpindi?

We are told the attacks are the

work of the Taliban, but the only evidence is information given by the Pakistani military.

The Taliban's ability to launch such attacks is very limited, and Al Qaida is even weaker.

It's just as hard to get reliable facts about military operations. The Swat offensive in April and May created several million refugees. Thousands were killed and thousands more arrested. Terrible atrocities were committed, but not one person has yet been put on trial.

A quarter of a million people have fled South Waziristan in the last few days because of the bombing that prepared the ground for the army offensive. But not a single photo has been released of the operation.

It is probable that the recent attack on GHQ – the army's headquarters in Rawalpindi – wasn't carried out by the Taliban at all but was a mutiny.

We haven't seen any of the bodies of those killed. The only survivor of the GHQ attack turns out to be a member of Jamaat Islami, an organisation which openly supports the

military and, for good measure, accuses the Indian secret service of being responsible.

Why has the state been losing control of the situation?

It has been weakened by its growing involvement in imperialist ventures.

It manages to hide atrocities carried out during military operations because the country's rulers accept they are necessary.

But at the same time entire districts have been taken over by "warlords", and the ruling class doesn't have the power to do anything about it. The state's power still exists but it is shrinking and it is unevenly distributed.

There is a serious possibility of a military take-over. Even if the top of the military wouldn't act, a takeover by junior officers using anti-imperialist rhetoric is also possible.

Divisions in the ruling class have left it standing naked in front of the ordinary people. That gives revolutionaries the chance to expose it and build a fightback against imperialism and war.

A Mexican union fights for its life

ON OCTOBER 10, in the middle of the night, Mexican federal police occupied more than 100 electrical installations across central Mexico belonging to the public power company Luz y Fuerza del Centro.

Simultaneously, a total of 44,000 workers – members of Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME), Mexico's electrical workers' union – were fired.

The government claims some 8,000 to 10,000 workers are eventually to be rehired, but with their union contract and union representation eliminated. This represents the most direct attack on the Mexican labor movement in the country's recent history.

The union busting is a political move, engineered to bolster the government of Felipe Calderón, and to rally support behind his National Action Party by blaming the unions for Mexico's problems.

The SME and its allies have responded to the campaign against them with various mobilizations, including a mass march in Mexico City on October 15. Roughly 300,000 people attended, despite its being called with only a few days' notice.

Iraqi unions fight for independence

UNDER THE dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi trade unions were held in the regime's tight grip.

When that regime fell, independent trade union activists emerged from the underground and quickly set up new, and free, unions.

Today those unions are united as the General Federation of Iraqi Workers and are a beacon of hope to the Iraqi people who have suffered for so long.

But they are once again under threat of state control.

The Iraqi government is attempting to wrest control of the unions, and the unions are fighting back.

They have launched a global campaign in defence. You can sign their petition by going to the website <http://www.labourstart.org>

Sectarianism in the North is getting worse

OVER A decade after the Good Friday Agreement, there are now almost twice as many "peace lines" in Belfast than there were when it was signed.

Last year saw over 1,500 sectarian incidents reported to the police; this was 50% more than the number of racist attacks in the same year.

While the huge level of racist attacks rightly provoked a great deal of concern, the growth in sectarianism didn't.

This year, things are even worse. By September of this year, there had already been as many sectarian attacks reported to police as in the entire 2008.

Coleraine town saw more than a trebling of sectarian attacks in the five months between April and September.

The beating to death of catholic community worker Kevin McDaid was the result of one of those attacks.

Levels of sectarianism in the town are so bad that the principals of two local primary schools

wrote to the First Minister and the deputy First Minister to seek help for their children. The Office of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) is charged with ensuring equality and 'a shared future' in the North.

The principals were most disappointed with the waffly reply they received. They wrote again to OFMDFM saying:

Our children are under threat, suffering emotionally and physically...

Who else can we appeal to for help before this state of affairs gets even worse and another generation is tainted with bitterness and regret?

The DUP and Sinn Fein cannot address the question of sectarianism because they each need the competition between communities to continue if they are to stay in power.

During the 1998 referendum on the Belfast Agreement, socialists were condemned for refusing to support it. We were against

paramilitarism, so why did we not support the Agreement?

We were clear then that it was precisely because the Agreement did nothing to tackle sectarianism – in fact, was likely to make matters worse – that we were against the Agreement.

Unfortunately, things have become even worse than we had feared they would.

As politicians fight 'resource wars' for their rival communities and turn every political debate into a 'them' and 'us' argument, it's no wonder those communities still see the other side as the enemy.'

That's why strikes like the Postal Workers dispute are so important in the North. They show that the real 'them' and 'us' is about class, not community.

As poverty gets worse in both communities, we need more strikes and campaigns where Protestant and Catholic working class people come together to challenge the rule of the sectarian parties running Stormont.

Shut down the BNP call centre in Belfast



OVER 100 people in Belfast and over 40 people in Derry protested against Nick Griffin's appearance on the BBC last week.

The lively protests chanted "Nick Griffin we know you, Hitler was a Nazi too", "BNP off the BBC".

A small counter protest of a dozen BNP supporters were protected by the PSNI.

One of the main calls that came from the protest was the demand to shut down the BNP call centre in Dundonald, East Belfast.

The call centre, located at unit 5 Carrowreagh industrial estate, Dundonald, raises over 1500 a day for the BNP.

A meeting organized by the Anti-Racism Network (ARN) to launch the campaign to shut down the Nazi call centre will be addressed by leading trade unionists and Anna Lo MLA and current Belfast Lord Mayor.

For more details visit www.swp.ie

Friday		
6.00pm-7.30pm	Hamas, Hizbollah and the Taliban: The Left, religion and resistance movements Kevin Wingfield (editor of swp.ie website)	Raunch culture, pole dancing and porn – sexism and the system Sara O'Rourke (Organiser for the People Before Profit Alliance)
8.00pm-9.30pm	OPENING RALLY: STRIKE, PROTEST, OCCUPY: PEOPLE POWER ON THE RISE Panel of speakers including Richard Boyd Barrett (People Before Profit Alliance) Die Linke MP from Germany John Kidd (Convenor of Dublin Fire Brigade and leader of 24/7 Alliance) + speakers from Stop the Cuts campaign	
10.00pm - 12.00 midnight	Conference Club	

MARXISM 2009

A WEEKEND MEETING OF SOCIALIST DEBATE & CULTURE
16-18 NOVEMBER 2009
DUBLIN HOTEL, DUBLIN (DUBLIN MARXIST STUDENTS)

Tickets for the event cost €30 waged, €20 unwaged, €10 school students and includes access to all meetings, cultural events and conference clubs.
 Tickets available from: (01) 872 2682 (South) 07534269417 (North)
 Or buy your ticket online at www.swp.ie/marxism09/
 Or write to Marxism 2009, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8 (cheques/POs payable to Socialist Workers Party)

Marxism 2009 is an annual festival of resistance and socialist politics. We have debates and discussions on the major issues facing the world today. There is also a lively Culture Zone with films, interactive art and cultural events.

Saturday						
10.00am-11.15	1989: The end of Utopias? Goretti Horgan (Lecturer in the University of Ulster)	I am Spartacus: Slave revolts in history Theresa Urbainczyk (UCD Classics lecturer, author of 'Slave Revolts in Antiquity')	Culture Zone Film screenings, art exhibitions and informal talks (check at event for final line-up), eg Yeats, Art and Fascism Paul O'Brien (author of Shelley and revolutionary Ireland) Constructing Utopia: Bauhaus +90 Sinead Kennedy (lecturer in English NUIM) © or copyright – Home taping to Torrent seeds: Is file sharing a crime? Sheamus Sweeney (lecturer in media studies DCU)	Engels, anthropology and women's oppression Madeleine Johansson (SWP organiser)	Are we seeing the end of Fianna Fail? Melisa Halpin	
11.45-1.00	Migrants, work and discrimination - The rise of racism in Ireland Bernadette McAliskey (S.T.E.P. Migrant Workers' Support Project Northern Ireland), Siobhan O'Donoghue (Director Migrant Civil Rights Centre)	Marxism and Culture Terry Eagleton (Author of The Ideology of the Aesthetic, and Literary Theory: An Introduction)		Boycotts, roadmaps, resistance: How can Palestine win freedom? Claudia Saba (Palestinian socialist)	Sodom today G'morrah the world: LGBT liberation and socialism Ailbhe Smith (Lecturer in equality studies) Lisa Connell (LGBT equality candidate in local elections 2009) Crea Ryder (SWP)	
2.00-3.15	After the Ryan report: The church and state in Ireland today Christine Buckley (Director of the Aislinn education and support centre at Jervis House in Dublin and one of the first former residents to go public on her experiences in the Goldenbridge institution), Mary Smith	The Young Marx: From philosopher to revolutionary Kieran Allen (Lecturer in Sociology in UCD, author of The corporate takeover of Ireland, and The Irish economic crisis)		The Blues: The sound of rebellion Dermot Connolly (Organiser for People Before Profit Alliance)	What is Alienation? Peadar O'Grady (Marxist psychologist)	
3.45-5.00	Is Ireland a Democracy? Fintan O'Toole (Deputy editor Irish Times) Donal Mac Fhearraigh (editor Socialist Worker)	Imperialism and Global political economy Alex Callinicos (Prof of politics UCL and author of 'Imperialism and Global Political Economy')		A revolutionary in the council chamber Cllr Hugh Lewis (People Before Profit Alliance councillor)	Rosa Luxemburg: The heretical Marxist Die Linke MP	
7.00-9.00	Where now for the left? Brid Smith (People Before Profit Cllr) Declan Bree (Ind councillor, ex Labour TD) Jim Barbour (NI Fire Brigade union) Paddy Healy (Tipp Workers Action Group) Die Linke MP from Germany	Race and Class in the US after Obama Brian Kelly (US socialist, history lecturer QUB and author of 'Race and Class in the Alabama coalfields')		Climate change: Is a Green New Deal possible? Owen McCormack (editor of the busworker, driver Dublin Bus)	Are people too greedy for socialism? Gerry Carroll (VP University of Ulster Students Union, Jordanstown)	
9.30-11.30	Conference Club (Room 1)			Cultural event (Room 2)		

Sunday						
10.30-11.45	Workplace Occupations: The seeds of socialist revolution Tom Hagan (Waterford Crystal occupation), John Maguire (Visteon Belfast occupation)	Lenin: Revolutionary democrat or bloodthirsty dictator? James O'Toole (Organiser for the SWP)	Sunday night Cultures of Resistance gig	150 years since 'The origin of the species' Is Darwin still radical? Pat O'Sullivan	David Harvey's Marxism Alistair Fraser (lecturer in NUIM)	
12.00-1.30	NAMA, the Shock doctrine and Ireland's economic crash Vincent Browne (author, journalist, broadcaster), Kieran Allen (author of The Irish economic crisis)	Teamster Rebellion: The class revolt in the US in the 1930s Colm Bryce		'In the days when you were hopelessly poor, I just liked you more' The Smiths and socialism Colin Coulter (lecturer NUIM)	Marxism and philosophy Sinead Kennedy (lecturer NUIM)	
2.30-3.45	Northern Ireland: Why socialists were right to say NO to the Belfast Agreement Eamonn McCann (author, journalist)	Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the relevance of Marx Brian O'Boyle (lecturer in economics)		Servants of the State? Writers, Intellectuals and Capitalist Crisis Joe Cleary (lecturer NUIM)	WWII: Was Ireland wrong to stay neutral? Liam Cummins	
3.45-5.00	The Logic of 'Capital' Alex Callinicos	Afghanistan: Obama's Vietnam? Memet Uludag (Turkish socialist), Richard Boyd Barrett (Chair of the Irish Anti-War Movement)		Ireland's Apartheid: Healthcare inequality in Ireland Jo Tully (Irish Nurses Organisation Exec p.c.)	Ideology, false consciousness and commodity fetishism Marnie Holborow (lecturer DCU)	
5.15-6.00	CLOSING RALLY: MAKE CAPITALISM HISTORY					

Socialist Worker

SUPPORT THE POSTAL WORKERS

DEFEND OUR PUBLIC SERVICES

THE POSTAL workers are absolutely right to strike to defend their working conditions and to stop Peter Mandelson's plans to privatize the postal service.

Royal Mail bosses and the government are using every weapon they have against the public service and the workforce.

■ Documents leaked last week show that Royal Mail bosses have a clear plan to smash the power of the CWU.

■ Royal Mail is employing 30,000 temps to reduce the backlog.

■ The Association of Chief Police Officers said that it was closely monitoring the situation and had issued guidance to forces on dealing with large-scale strike action.

Bosses hope to inflict a defeat that will change the industry forever. And disgracefully the Labour government backs them all the way.

What a scandal that Lord Mandelson and Co are mobilising such efforts in order to attack basic trade unionism.

Assembly politicians from SF through to the DUP claim to support the postal workers but they have just announced plans to slash 370 million in public spending and privatize public services.

This is the same agenda as the Labour government and Mandelson. It will mean cutting public sector jobs and closing hospital wards.

The Labour Cabinet want to use the postal workers as an example to the whole working class of the need for sacrifice and the impossibility of serious resistance.

For our side this should be a spur to intense action, a call for everyone to support the postal workers.

Postal workers can win—so long as they stand firm and get support from the wider forces inside the working class. There is massive public support for a fightback to defend the public service, resist job losses and to hit back at the millionaires at the top of the industry.

It is part of a much bigger war—over public services, jobs, union rights, and pay and conditions at work. It's about who will be made to pay for the economic crisis.

A victory for the postal workers would show everyone that resistance is possible and that workers can win.



Show your support

■ Join picket lines – get a delegation from your workplace to visit the picket line.

■ Collect money for the postal workers. ask your Socialist Worker seller for a collection sheet, and send money to: CWU National Hardship Fund: c/o Tony Kearns, CWU, 150

The Broadway, Wimbledon SW19 1RX. Cheque payable to 'Postal Workers Support Fund'.

You can pay the money in directly to Unity Trust bank account no: 20194129, branch sort code: 08 60 01. For the London hardship fund,

pay to account 20232065, sort code 08 60 01.

■ Build support groups. They have been set up in many areas. For details of one near you ring 020 7819 1175.

■ Demand the TUC and other trade unions organise massive fundraising and full solidarity.

Bosses' plan is revealed

THE DOCUMENTS leaked a week ago detail Royal Mail's assault:

■ The industry will be run on the bosses' terms and the will not be allowed to get in the way. RM say they will deliver "the necessary 2009 changes with or without union agreement," and that "Putting transformation on hold because of non-agreement is not an option".

■ If the union blocks cuts, job losses and new work patterns then RM will "consider programme of reducing relationship with union."

Throughout the dispute "any non-agreement...must mean the union lose."

If union reps resist then "serve notice on current IR framework and facilities/release agreement and substitute legal minimum."

■ They may want to replace the union because "actively down-dialling the role of the union is likely to succeed only if alternative forums for employee voice are available."

■ Management has ministers support and have "positioned things in such a way as there is shareholder [government], customer and internal support for change without agreement".