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# Socialist Worker

## UNIONS MUST FIGHT:

# PREPARE FOR NATIONAL STOPPAGE!

WHEN PUBLIC sector workers compare their pay packets this year with that of 2009, they will find that they have shrunk by an incredible 17-19%.

They are not alone in facing huge cuts.

Young people who are unemployed will now have to live on either €100 or €150 a week, depending on their age.

Over the Christmas period, many people turned off from politics and sought to make the best of the holiday season. But now the full reality of the government's savage cuts are hitting home.

To add insult to injury, the government is looking after the top state managers who earn over €160,000 a year by only imposing a cut of 3% on their incomes.

It is time for serious co-ordinated action that challenges this government. They should not be allowed to make such savage cuts without experiencing the full anger of Irish workers.

The only organisations that can mobilise on a large enough scale to inflict a defeat on this government are the unions. If they called their members out on a co-ordinated national stoppage, they could bring this country to a halt.

If they went further and invited every section of Irish society who has been hit by this rotten government to join them in mass street protests, they could bring the government down.

The problem is that the union leaders are hesitating. They should have given a clear signal that real action will start from January but instead some of them are already exuding an air of defeatism.

They are terrified of embarking on an all out battle that will defeat this government and establish a precedent of a driving a government from office through people power.

But they equally know that if they do nothing they will lose all credibility among workers and even provoke a greater internal crisis.

The truth is that the ICTU leaders have been talking from both sides of their mouths for the past few months.

On one hand, they made many correct points about the need to take on the top 5% of the Irish population and managed even to produce some good literature.

But in the narrow mind frame of the Irish union bureaucracy, this was only a manoeuvre to get themselves back into social partnership arrangement with the state.

Once the first impressive strike of 250,000 public sector workers was over, the theme of 'More for Less' became louder and louder. The ICTU leaders dropped virtually all demands for extra taxes, citing the absurd mantra 'we are where we are and nothing can be done' and concentrated on giving public sector conditions on a plate to the right wing government.

When the corporate media – owned by tax fugitives who want to scapegoat unions – berated that government for going soft, the union leaders main defence was 'But you have not seen what we are offering on the sale of conditions'.

These included giving away hard won gains of the past thirty years, such as right to overtime payment or premium payments for unsocial hours.

Then to their shock and disbelief the government threw all the concessions back at them. Their real agenda was revealed: Keep them talking – just as long as it would take to get the strike set for December 3rd called off.

And remember: this was just a replay of what happened in March of this last year – when the union leaders called off a strike because the government was willing to talk to them!

The response of union members must now be one of massive anger. If this government wants to play hard ball, then the message has to go back – we can play even harder.

Why should we sit quietly while a government that cares only for bankers and bond holders be allowed to slash wages and social welfare.

There must be preparations for a French style national stoppage. In 1995, in France public sector workers and social welfare recipients faced similar cuts to those which Irish workers are facing.

They responded with a series of national one day strikes and mass streets demonstrations – combined with an all-out stoppage from key sections.

Our response must be similar: We need a national strike that has as its goal: resistance to wage cuts and attacks on social welfare AND drive this rotten government out of office.

In the course of this re-mobilisation, an obvious question will emerge: What do we do with union leaders that were fooled twice and are clearly unable to lead a real fight?

The answer is equally obvious: Get rid of them. Reclaim our unions and put in people who are willing to lead a fight.

## Fascist BNP hold meeting in Larne



BNP Fuhrer Nick Griffin

THE FASCIST British National Party again attempted to organise in Larne, Northern Ireland, last month.

The BNP held a meeting in the town under the guise of the "British Heritage society" at Larne FC social club on the Station Road, as part of a campaign to set up in the north.

A leaked membership database claimed the BNP had about 100 members across Northern Ireland as a whole.

Around 40 of these people were at the meeting as well as at least two members from Larne.

An Ulster BNP sign was also displayed at the meeting.

The BNP is targeting Larne as a town particularly hard hit by the recession.

The town's major employer, FG Wilson, has cut over 700 jobs in the last 18 months to boost its profits.

Another reason is the presence in Larne of paramilitaries who have traditionally had links with the far right in Great Britain.

This latest meeting follows the distribution of leaflets last September in Craigyhill as the BNP attempts to gather support.

These activities have been described to us as part of a "recruitment process" currently being followed by the

BNP in Larne.

The party's website claimed that this public meeting also saw appointment of an organizer, Paul Stevens, for South-East Antrim.

A source who attended the meeting said that speakers told "racist jokes" at the commencement of proceedings.

Islam was branded the "epitome of evil" by one speaker.

Northern Ireland was described as the "next battleground" for the BNP. The idea was to stop immigrants "before they get off the boat."

They said "Britishness" was being "lost" and the BNP claimed their Christian ethos was stressed.

"Living space" was also required for the British people.

The BNP did not publicise the meeting for fears it would provoke a protest.

That Larne appears to have been chosen as a potential recruiting ground by the far right has caused alarm locally.

Socialists need to make sure they articulate the anger over the recession and the expenses and corruption scandals before the fascists.

This highlights the need for a broad People Before Profit Alliance across Northern Ireland with a bigger SWP at its core.

# Five years fighting Shell greed in Mayo

By KIERAN MCNULTY

LAST DECEMBER Judge Gerard Haughton in Belmullet District Court sentenced Maura Harrington, a leading anti-Shell campaigner, to nine months in prison for cutting a net beside Shell's compound at Glengad. She was released pending her appeal after spending a weekend in prison.

Shell to Sea spokesperson Terence Conway said: "This sentence is far above and beyond the supposed crime of €160 damage to a net, which Shell did not have the right to put there. This sentence shows just how biased towards Shell the justice system in this area has become. Maura Harrington has long had a principled opposition to the destruction of the community and the giveaway of Ireland's natural resources, and for this she has been criminalised by the Gardaí and the judiciary."

Throughout last summer the Rossport area of North East Mayo resembled something from a police state rather than supposedly part of a democratic society. On June 10th for example, thirty people appeared in court in Belmullet due to their peaceful protests against Shell's gas project in Ross Port.

Maura Harrington has been in prison four times and Niall Harnett at one stage faced spending up to eight months in prison. Both are activists in the Shell to Sea campaign. This is on top of the imprisonment of the Rossport Five in 2005, one of whom, Willie Corduff was recently severely beaten by masked security guards.

In anticipation of a protest against the Solitaire, the shell pipe laying ship, 350 Gardi, with Gardi RIB's, a Garda helicopter and Shell's private army of 200 Integrated Risk Management Systems' security guards was mobilised. Also two Irish Naval vessels have periodically been harassing local fishermen who are attempting to assert their right to fish.

All this is happening because the local community in Rossport oppose Shell's aim of laying their gas pipeline on land. The pipeline connects the Corrib gas field in to the gas refinery at Bellanaboy nine miles inland. There is a considerable health and safety risk from this high-pressure pipeline, which passes close to the homes of many local people.

From the very start of their campaign, Shell to Sea has demanded that the gas be refined at sea but



Shell refuse this option, as it would lessen their profits. In October An Bord Pleanála announced a deferral of the decision on the 'modified' Corrib Gas onshore Pipeline, citing 14 conditions, which cast huge doubt over claims from Shell that the project is safe. There is also widespread local concern of the impact this project is having on local wildlife habitats and the quality of the local water supply.

One of the most galling aspects of Shell's project in Mayo is that the Irish people will receive almost no revenue for funding badly under resourced public services especially at a time when they are expecting us to take cuts in welfare, health, education and public sector pay.

It is estimated that there are approximately €350 billion worth of oil and gas off the Irish coast. Private companies like Shell and Exxon Mobile for vast profits will now exploit all of this. Apart from their activities off the Mayo coast, Shell is

also operating in the Doorish field off Donegal while Exxon Mobile is involved in extensive exploration and drilling in the Dunquin Field off the Kerry coast.

In 1975 the Irish Government would have held a 50 per cent shareholding in any oil or gas discovery and the extracting company would have had to pay royalties of 8 per cent as well as a tax rate of 50 per cent. This revenue to the exchequer has been progressively eroded, most notably under Minister Ray Burke, to the extent that Colm Rappale now describes the present regime as "decidedly soft by international standards".

The tax rate for example is 50 per cent in Britain and 78 per cent in Norway. The argument put forward by the government that they are insuring our future energy security does not stand up because we will be forced to buy back our fuel at prevailing market prices. Even if the government took just a 10 per

cent stake in the Corrib gas field it would yield €1 billion.

Ultimately Ireland should do what the governments of Bolivia and Venezuela have done and bring into full public ownership all our natural resources. One result of President Hugo Chavez's policies in Venezuela is that an estimated 350,000 lives have been saved by the increase in health provision with the number of doctors rising from 20 to 60 per 1,000 people.

Also public ownership of Ireland's natural resources is the only way of ensuring that the environment is protected and that the health and safety and civil rights of the local communities is guaranteed. Eamon Ryan as the Green Party Minister with responsibility for energy and natural resources should be held accountable for the current situation in Mayo and shown up for his hypocrisy as a onetime supporter of Shell to Sea.

See also www.shelltosea.com

## 2009 – a good year for hedge funds

THE GLOBAL hedge fund industry turned in one of its best years of performance in close to a decade in 2009, according to industry data. So while workers face savage cuts, hedge funds and their managers – the people who caused the financial crisis, are raking it in once again.

The average hedge fund returned 19 per cent to investors in 2009, according to Chicago-based data provider Hedge Fund Research. Other leading hedge fund indices report average returns of between 12 and 18 per cent, after fees. Some of the largest funds have fared even

better, Citadel, the \$13bn Chicago hedge fund giant run by Ken Griffin, has seen its flagship Kensington Global Strategies fund rebound close to 60 per cent this year. The London-based New York-listed GLG Partners, with an estimated \$14bn, has seen its equity market

neutral fund return 77.8 per cent for clients last year. Most of this rebound is the result of the government backed bailouts of the banks. Governments poured trillions into the financial sector giving the bankers zero risk chances to buy up on the cheap. In banker speak funds,

such as Citadel, have "exploited pricing discrepancies between corporate convertible debt and equity" to make money.

So the next time you're told were all feeling the pain and need to pull together for the sake of the country, think of these banksters who are feeling no pain at all.

## Campaign to save Louth County Hospital's Services



By GILLIAN SMITH

IN RECENT months there has not been a more contentious issue in Dundalk than Fianna Fail's decision to reduce services in Louth County Hospital.

The decision has been greeted with widespread palpable anger and disgust by the people of Dundalk and also by those living in the hinterland who are dependant on the hospital.

Decisions made by the government in relation to medical services are frequently deemed by the public to be outrageous and unjust but the decision to reduce or remove services in Louth County Hospital has evoked more than just outrage; it is considered abominable that Fianna Fail are willing to deny almost 100,000 people local access to a complete and fully functioning range of medical services.

Surely this is something to be considered a right and not a privilege in a modern first world country?

The proposed cuts to services in Louth County Hospital are:  
 ■ The closure of Accident and Emergency for twelve hours a day, forcing emergency patients to travel the extra distance to Drogheda for treatment.  
 ■ The transformation of the twelve hour Accident and Emergency into a minor injuries clinic, drastically reducing the number of illnesses and injuries it will be possible to treat in Dundalk.  
 ■ The removal of acute medical services which care for chest pain and heart and respiratory conditions  
 ■ The reduction of the hospital's 120 beds down to 33.

Consequently, the Intensive Care Unit will have to close due to the removal of these services.

The disgust and dismay these proposals have caused has led to the creation of the Save Our Hospital campaign, the website for which

features transcripts of election pledges signed by local politicians Dermot Ahern (Fianna Fail) and Mark Geary (Green Party) which clearly state that they both agree to oppose any attempts by government to undermine services in Louth Hospital.

For many months, the campaign's committee had been trying to arrange a meeting with Mr. Ahern to discuss the proposals and why he has not contested them.

Finally, on the second of December, members of the campaign's committee met in the Dail with Mr. Ahern, the Minister for Health, Mary Harney and a number of HSE officials in an effort to overturn the proposed cuts and reductions which have been described as 'cruel'. However, the two ministers insisted the planned reduction of services will go ahead. Spokesperson for the Save Our Hospital campaign, Anita McCann, said "[the committee] came away disappointed...but determined to carry on the fight on behalf of the people of Dundalk".

The full strength of the Save Our Hospital campaign could be witnessed in November when over 7000 people took to the streets of Dundalk and marched in protest to the town square.

While the Save Our Hospital committee has not yet announced its next steps, it can be presumed that in 2010 the campaign will be stepped up and will become an even stronger force opposing Fianna Fail's decision.

The people of Dundalk have made it blatant that they will not sit back while the government dictates what medical services they are entitled to.

A bold white and red 'Save Our Hospital' banner hanging high across the town's Earl Street functions as a permanent reminder of how dedicated the town is to retaining their hospital services and how they are unlikely to relent any time soon.

# Youth Against Dole Cuts

By KARL GILL

FOLLOWING THE recent disgraceful budget draw up by Brain Lenihan, a new campaign has been launched by the younger members of the Socialist Workers Party to fight the social welfare cut backs specifically aimed at young people.

The Fianna Fail/Green government have decided to make poor and working people pay for the recession, who they had no part in causing.

They are especially targeting young people by cutting unemployment benefit for under 21's to €100 a week and 22-24 year olds to €150 a week.

As if the last budget wasn't bad enough, after they cut the dole for under 20's and abolished the christmas bonus for all social welfare receivers.

With no jobs in the country young people finishing school or college have no choice but to go on the dole.

If you're considering going back to college, well the back to education grant has been cut to the same extent.

So what are graduates and recently unemployed young workers supposed to do? How can anyone survive on €100 a week?

This government wants us to move back in with

## YOUTH AGAINST DOLE CUTS

Public Meeting

**Do you think he would live on €100/week?**  
**-Stop the dole cuts now!!**

With speakers from Socialist Worker Youth and Socialist Youth

**Wed 7th Jan 5pm Central Hotel (Exchequer St)**

For info contact 0871476982

parents or emigrate to find jobs.

To anyone who says 'it gives young people an in-

centive to seek employment' well where's the incentive for this government to provide employment, because

there aren't any jobs out there.

There should be a job creation scheme, so there is

less people on the dole, more people earning more money to have a better standard of living and more people paying tax.

Not every young person has the comfort of living at home, and if they do not every parent has the means to provide for them either and this can put a lot of strain on families.

Besides the fact that they want us to tidy up a mess we did not create, and it should be the people who caused the problem who pay for it, the whole thing of cutting young peoples dole differently is also discriminatory, once you turn 18 your a legal adult, so why is there 3 different dole payments for people who are all considered adults?

There will be a protest outside the dail on Saturday the 16th of January at 2pm to let the Mr.Cowen know exactly what we think of him.

We have launched a group on Facebook to organise a fight-back against these cuts, so just search for 'Youth Against Dole Cuts' and you'll find us.

Young people had no part in creating this recession and we should not be punished for the wrongdoings of the bankers and developers.

We need to get rid of this rotten government and fight for the right to a decent life!

## Fujitsu workers take strike action

By GERRY CARROLL

FUJITSU WORKERS across the UK have started industrial action against management's job cuts, attacks on pay and pensions. Friday 18th December saw the first ever national strike in the IT sector with over 1600 workers coming out including picket lines in Belfast, Manchester and Crewe.

The company is using the recession as an excuse to cut thousands of jobs – yet Fujitsu is a profitable company with a turnover of over 100 million last year. Not one job should be cut whilst the company is reeling in hundreds of millions in profits.

Industrial Action was initially planned in November but was called off after talks were held between the Union



and management. It soon became clear that Fujitsu's ruling group was hell-bent on pushing through pay cuts and attacks on pensions as well as job cuts.

Unite the Union estimate that the plans to close the final salary pension scheme will effectively mean a 20% pay cut

for its members. Despite the fat cat salaries of the bosses and their pension's schemes go untouched.

No doubt as the industrial action is stepped up on 7, 8, 11, 14 and 15 January we will see attempts in the media to attack and undermine the strike and its partici-

pants. One thing that must be made clear is not only is this a strike to defend jobs and conditions but it is one with a clear mandate from the workers with 83 per cent voting to take action against the bosses attacks.

What this Fujitsu strike shows is that provided they are organized -any group of workers can fight against pay cuts and job losses and really stick it to the bosses for trying to make us pay for the recession that was created by the ruling class –bankers, bosses and politicians.

The Stormont Assembly through both its major parties- SF and DUP have made it clear that there will be huge cuts in the public sector next year with estimates ranging from 350 million to 1 billion . Just like the Visteon occu-

pation last year the strikes like that of Fujitsu workers is the only force that can resist cuts in the public sector. Workers struggle and industrial action is what can defeat cuts in the public sector and cuts by bosses in the private sector.

The lesson from the Visteon occupation was that solidarity was key to ensuring the workers struggle was successful. We need the same in the New Year to ensure that the Fujitsu workers strike action is successful – the trade union movement must throw its weight behind the strikes in the New Year calling solidarity events called all across the north. 2010 can be a year of workers struggle and real victory- it starts on 7th January with the recommencing of the strikes.

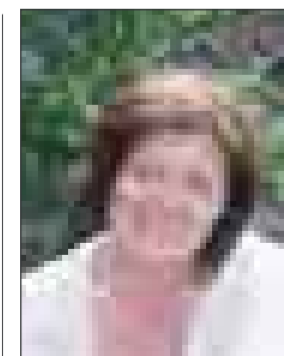
## Campaign keeps Crumlin Swimming Pool open

THE DECISION to keep Crumlin Swimming Pool open is a victory for people power.

In a statement Cllr Joan Collins said, "The community should give themselves a very big clap on the back for forcing this turnaround."

"In response to the initial statement from Dublin City Council a vigorous and determined community campaign to Save Our Swimming Pool S.O.S was set up".

"I am calling on DCC to make the same positive decision for Sean McDermott Street and Coolock swimming pools".



Cllr Joan Collins (PBP)

"The local campaign wants to investigate setting up a management board, made up of the pool workers, schools and parents, to give the pool a new lease of life so that it will be used to its full potential."

# Afghanistan - the graveyard of US power?



Swat valley after a drone attack.



By MARNIE HOLBOROW

It is difficult to believe now that Barack Obama fought his election campaign on the assumption that switching US troops to the “good war” of Afghanistan would be a vote-catcher.

Today, Obama is tripping himself up explaining to a war weary America what more troops will be doing in a war whose purpose has been forgotten. Afghanistan is rapidly becoming Obama’s failure.

In the opinion of Admiral Mullen, chairman of US joint chiefs of Staff in Afghanistan, this year will be the most violent yet.

The recent “surge” of 30,000 extra US troops reflect how ineffective the occupiers have become in the face of growing Taliban influence.

Extra US troops – and another 7,000 from Nato – was accompanied by Obama’s grandiose pledge to start transferring security duties to the Afghans and begin withdrawing US forces by July 2011.

The transfer of power from the occupiers to Afghans may be US official policy but those on the ground rule this out. Brigadier General Maharuddin Ghori, commander of Afghan forces around Nawa, believes it may be five years before Afghan troops can assume security duties from the Americans.

In reality, the notion of any US troops pulling out in July 2011 is sheer fantasy. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has already admitted that US troops have no definite leaving date. Robert Gates, follow-on Secretary of Defense from the Bush administration, days, has suggested that the 2011 deadline should be revised. “We’re not just going to throw these guys into the swimming pool and walk away,” is how the cynical war hand puts it. NATO chief, Anders Fogh

Rasmussen, is also in for the long haul. He recently declared in Kabul: “I know some are wondering how long international forces will stay; they are worried we will leave too soon,” he said.

“Let there be no doubt – the international community will stand with you and help in rebuilding your country until you are ready to stand on your own”. Perhaps he was inadvertently referring to Prime Minister Karzai, who has been dubbed the “one-man- no- vote” victor of the last election.

The July 2011 deadline is all the more unlikely because it could take up to 11 months for the entire contingent of 30,000 new troops to be in place. (How many of those, one wonders, will be availing of hospitality at Shannon in the meanwhile?). Everybody from Washington to Kabul knows of the logistical problems – General McChrystal included. It is a measure of Obama’s desperation – fanned by setbacks in healthcare, the economy and global warming – that he is winging it on empty promises about withdrawal.

## The quagmire

The main reason the US invaded – to root out Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden – has become something of a joke.

Others about women’s freedom have been seriously undermined by testimonies from Afghan women who claim that rapes still go unpunished and that women are more in danger than they have ever been.

Stopping the trade in opium is no longer talked about especially as Afghanistan continues to supply some 92 percent of the world’s supply of opium, which is used to make heroin. In a country which the UN development programme has rated at the bottom of virtually every development indicator including infant

mortality, life expectancy, and literacy, it is obscene that the war has driven up opium production.

Afghanistan, quite simply, is a war that cannot be won. The country has not been named the graveyard of empires for nothing. From the Greeks to the Mughals, from the British to the Russians, Afghanistan has resisted – in geography and people.

Its sheer scale defies domination. East of Kabul snow-covered peaks protect the eastern province of Paktika. Hundreds of miles away the Mars-like red desert of southern Kandahar province flanks Nawa, the ISAF patrol base in the Helmand Province. Larger than Iraq, Afghanistan maybe on the crossroads of western interests but it is also a place that has never been conquered.

Its peoples also defy the simplistic, empire-based notions of nation. In the gas-rich north bordering the Central Asian republics, Uzbek war lords have proved dangerous and vicious US allies. Women’s rights activist Malaya Joya, described one of these leaders, Ismail Khan, as the real terrorist that the west should shun. Further to the East, in the land rich with emeralds, lapis lazuli and opium, Tajiks have lent their support to Karzai’s government but are also close to the Taliban. To the west, alongside Iran, lies the ancient city of Herat a centre of learning dating back to the 15th century and whose Shia descendants so harried the soviet occupiers. The south is made up of Pashtuns who survive on poppy cultivation and who criss-cross the border with Pakistan, in Waziristan and the Swat valley, an area North East of the famous Khyber Pass. South Waziristan and the surrounding region have been described by US officials as “the most dangerous place on earth” since it is supposedly where al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden is hiding. The US has launched many

## AFGHANISTAN TOLL

■ There have been major losses of civilian lives since the invasion in 2001 – possibly as many as 7,500. A UN mission recorded 1,013 in the first six months of 2009 alone which was a 24% increase on the same period the year before.

■ Tens of thousands of Afghan civilians are also thought to have been killed indirectly as a consequence of displacement, starvation, disease, exposure, lack of medical treatment and crime and lawlessness resulting from the war.

■ There have been 1,1551 deaths of coalition troops in Afghanistan since 2001. 942 US soldiers have been killed, 242 British, 134 Canadian, 30 Danish, 36 French and 34 German. Irish soldiers serving with the British troops have also been killed.

■ Seven members of the Irish Defence Forces are currently deployed in Kabul as part of the International Security Assistance (ISAF) which is a back up force to the NATO led invasion. Ireland is also contributing to the deadly technology employed in Afghanistan with a Dublin company, Acra Control Ltd, supplying material for the US drones which have killed civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

bloody attacks on Swat Valley. Driverless and cowardly drone planes have blown up wedding parties and killed those misfortunate enough to simply live in this forsaken spot.

What is going on in SWAT valley highlights how Afghanistan is a political tinder-box.

What the US generals refer to as “Af-pak” is not just an imperial term of abuse, it reflects the political reality that the British colonial “Durand Line”, the 1,600 mile border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, is as fictional as Kipling’s jungle book.

The boundary has always been disputed and there is toing and froing in all manner of trades and people the between Afghanistan and FATA (the Federally Administered Territorial Areas of Pakistan as this part is known. Hilary Clinton may rail against Pakistan for not clamping down on terrorism, but the reality is that the Pakistan Zadari government chooses to be ambiguous,

especially when so many of its citizens oppose the US presence in the region.

EU occupiers are also nervous about a long and protracted war. A speedy withdrawal is becoming politically important to the various governments. There have been many casualties amongst US and British soldiers – now over 1300 – but alarmingly large numbers of other European soldiers have also lost their lives in this futile war. A year ago, near Kabul ten French soldiers lost their lives on one day.

Furthermore, amid the greatest crash in the US economy for sixty years, the cost of the war mounts ever higher. Obama may be forced to ask congress for \$100bn to fund continued operations in Afghanistan. Even Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Speaker, has said Obama can do the lobbying the House members himself because she refuses to do it.

## Vietnam and Afghanistan

There are some similarities between the war in Vietnam and Afghanistan. Local

resistance is uncowed and opposition to the imperialist attacker spreads out beyond the region itself.

In both cases, the occupied land is politically connected to a bigger balance of power. Vietnam was the flashpoint of the cold war; in Afghanistan, despite its supposed goal of a “war on terror”, it is the war theatre of the middle east.

The link between Palestine, Iraq, Lebanon and Afghanistan, and possibly Iran, is not just one made in the Pentagon; anti-war movements for the last decade have increasingly made the connection.

One of the lasting legacies of the massive world-wide opposition to the war in Iraq in 2003 is a shift in popular opinion about the right of Palestinians and the more widely accepted view that Israel is an apartheid state.

However, in one respect, US military intervention is different to the cold war.

Today the US, relatively weaker in economic terms and badly needs other to

support its imperialist strategies. NATO was set up for this purpose, but the last decade has highlighted the degree to which the US now absolutely depends on the support of its allies.

The war in Afghanistan highlights the role of international institutions, such as the UN in the securing of “legitimacy” for US war aims. Regional groupings, such as the EU, see their interests as interwoven with the US’s.

At the time of Vietnam major countries such as France and even Britain saw fit to stay aloof from military engagement.

Today, for both economic and political reasons, the EU has increasingly acquiesced to the Washington consensus of the market economy, part of whose shock doctrine is to terrorise the middle east into submission and, as outlined in one Nato report, to shift the gravity of power inexorably eastward.

Afghanistan has become part of reconstituting the West grip on world power, mainly prompted by the rise of China.

The US has used its military power to fashion a geopolitical order based on the capitalist market economy in directions that suits it.

Politically, with radicalism within immigrant communities within its borders and the backdrop of political crisis, it suits some European countries to tag along, variously under the themes of anti-terrorism and secularism, behind this aim.

It is this fact that sees unlikely countries such as Sweden, and Ireland, proving their loyalty to the free market American way, sending their neutral military personnel to occupy Kabul behind the ISAF pro-Nato flag.

But US strength – being able to corral the EU behind its phony war on terror – can also be its Achilles’ heel. Participating in occupation also involves casualties and this can re-invigorate

anti-war movements across Europe. Opposition to Germany’s involvement in the war in Afghanistan has become a popular plank of the growing New Left.

The death toll amongst British soldiers may yet re-ignite opposition to a British government whose spending on war seems an obscenity in these recession-dire times. Ireland’s increasing identification with EU militarization, as shown by its small number of military deployed in Kabul, is the other side of the same blind loyalty to US market capitalism that it showed in the boom years.

Furthermore, in the tensions of economic recession, as has often been the case in the past, imperialists often look to conjuring up other enemies to deflect from opposition at home. Some of Obama’s posturing about US security around the Detroit flight suicide bomber, was surely not unconnected to his own beleaguered political standing.

There is some evidence that the lull in the US anti war movement that followed Obama’s election is coming to an end. In a recent New York Times/CBS News poll, just around the troop surge debate, while 55 percent say it’s not a good idea to set a date to remove troops, almost 60 percent say they don’t want these troops to stay there for more than two years, and just over 30 percent say troops should come home within a year.

Ireland has a huge anti-war sentiment that, from Derry to Galway, Shannon to Dublin has drawn together sizeable protests against Israeli aggression in Gaza and Ireland’s involvement in the war in Afghanistan.

Early in 2010 may well see the anti-war movement forced to mobilize again around the crazed violence of this obscene US-EU occupation of Afghanistan.

# Abortion ABC

By SINEAD KENNEDY

THREE IRISH women who are challenging Ireland’s laws on abortion at the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) finally had their case heard in December, after a five year wait.

The women are challenging Ireland’s restrictive abortion law on the grounds that the law jeopardised their health, their wellbeing and violated their human rights.

Abortion is illegal in Ireland in almost all circumstances. Indeed, Irish abortion law is among the most draconian in the world.

There are no provisions to allow for abortion even when the woman’s health is at risk, where the pregnancy is a result of rape or/and incest, where the foetus will not survive outside the womb or where the pregnant woman decides that continuation of the pregnancy is not in her or her family’s best interests.

The experiences of the women, known as A, B and C to protect their identity, are illustrative of the reality faced by thousands of women in Ireland.

Ms A was single, unemployed and living in poverty when she became pregnant unintentionally. She had four young children, all in foster care as a result of problems she had faced as an alcoholic.

She decided to have an abortion to avoid jeopardising her chances of reuniting her family.

She had to have her abortion in a private clinic in Britain. She had severe difficulties getting the money together and out of desperation was forced to borrow the money from a money lender. Her difficulty in getting the money together delayed the abortion by three weeks.

Ms B became pregnant unintentionally. She had taken the morning-after pill but not only did it fail it also gave rise to a significant risk of ectopic pregnancy. She was not prepared to become either a single parent or run the risks associated with an ectopic pregnancy.

Ms C had been treated with chemotherapy for cancer over the course of three years. The cancer went into remission and she became unintentionally pregnant.

She was unable to find a doctor willing to make a determination as to whether her life would be at risk if she continued to term or to give her clear advice as to how the foetus might have been affected. Worried that her cancer would relapse she decided to have an abortion.

These three brave women represent a tiny fraction of the 138,000 Irish women who have been forced to travel abroad in order to access safe abortion services.

Opinion polls and research consistently show that their has been a dramatic increase in support since the 1992 X case for access to abortion.

A 2004 Crisis Pregnancy Agency study found that 90% of 18-45 year olds support abortion in certain circumstances, with 51% stating that women should always have to right to choose an abortion. In 2007, an Irish Times Behaviour and Attitudes Poll found that 54% of women believe the Government should act to permit abortion.

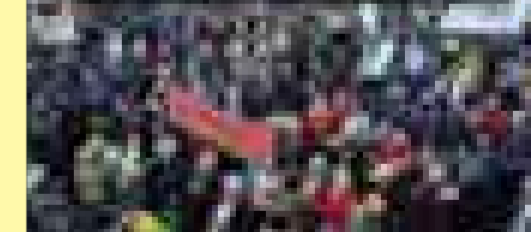
However successive Irish governments, including the Labour Party, have failed to legislate for abortion rights, even for the minimum protection afforded by the 1992 X case Supreme court judgment.

If these three women win their case, the ECHR judgment will establish a minimum degree of protection to which Irish woman seeking an abortion to protect her health and well-being would be entitled. The judgment is expected within six to nine months.

Pro-Choice activists will be organising a series of events over the coming months to highlight the number of women who travel abroad every day to access abortions and the political parties that consistently ignore their plight and refuse to provide free safe and legal abortion for women in Ireland.

## Anti-capitalism, Liberation & Socialism. Socialist Workers Party (Galway Branch)

# Marxism



Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2010  
Richardson’s, Eyre Sq., Galway  
12 noon-4.30 pm

Marxism is an annual event of Socialist Politics to debate and discuss major issues of the day. Free & open to the public.

12 noon:	Melisa Halpin on 'Oppression of the Palestinians' / 'Oppression of the ...'	Melisa is a member of the SWP Political Committee
1 o'clock:	Kieran Allen on 'A Rebel' guide to Marxism'	Kieran is author of 'Ireland Economic Crash' & 'The Celtic Tiger & the Myth of Social Partnership'
2.30:	Brian O'Boyle on 'The Crisis is Not Our Fault: Marxist economics'	Brian is a radical, Marxist economist & analyst
3.30:	James O'Toole on 'The next election: Can the Labour Party deliver change?'	James is a member of the SWP Political Committee

# Viva Palestina!

By COLM BRYCE

AS SOCIALIST Worker went to press, the Viva Palestina convoy of 250 vehicles were about to enter Gaza, after a week of delays caused by the Egyptian government.

[The Viva Palestina convoy of medical aid to Gaza finally arrived in Gaza on 5 January after facing enormous obstacles from the Egyptian government.]

After travelling more than 3,000 miles through Europe, Turkey and Syria, the convoy of 250 vehicles, including ambulances from Derry and Cork, arrived at the Jordanian border with Egypt at the Red Sea port of Aqaba on 26 December. The Egyptian authorities refused the convoy permission to cross the border for the final four hour trip to the Rafah crossing into Gaza.

This was part of a concerted crackdown on protests to mark the first anniversary of the Israeli military attack on Gaza last year which killed 1400 Palestinians and wounded 5,000.

Gaza has been under siege for the last three years, as part of Israel's rejection of the democratic election of the Hamas government in 2006.

The people of Gaza have had no access to cement or other building supplies needed to rebuild up to 20,000 homes, hospitals and schools after last January's military assault.

Food supplies, under the UN food programme, on which 75 percent of Gazans rely, are also restricted.

The aim of the convoy, carrying mainly medical supplies, was to break the siege and draw attention to the ongoing siege.

The Egyptian government is the second largest recipient of US government aid, after Israel.

The Mubarak government is a key ally of the United States and has run Egypt as a virtual police state since 1981, regularly suppressing protests and strikes and torturing political opponents.

The Egyptian regime is vehemently opposed to Hamas and has supported the Israeli blockade in an effort to crush Hamas in Gaza.

It recently announced plans to construct a massive steel wall along the border with Gaza, penetrating 19 meters into the ground, to prevent smuggling of essential supplies by Gazan residents.

The 'Gaza Freedom March' attracted over 1300 international participants from 43 countries, including author Alice Walker, Filipino Parliament member Walden Bello and former European Parliamentarian Luisa Morgantini from Italy, and aimed to enter Gaza at Rafah and march with up to 50,000 Palestinians to the Erez border crossing with Israel to demand an end to the Israeli siege.

On Sunday 28 December, two days before the march was due to take place, the Egyptian government cancelled permission for the march.

More than 20 of the marchers, including 85-year-old Holocaust



Derry Anti-War Coalition rally at the Diamond, Derry on 27 December 2009 to mark the first anniversary of the Israeli war on Gaza and to support demands to allow the convoy through

survivor Hedy Epstein, Caoimhe Butterly from Dublin and John Hurson from Tyrone launched a hunger strike against the Egyptian crack-down and called protests in Cairo, which were met with hundreds of riot police. 300 French activists camped outside the French embassy for three nights, surrounded by riot police.

Supporters around the world called demonstrations and phoned embassies to demand the convoy be allowed to go ahead.

On Saturday 2 January, all 250 vehicles that make up the Viva Palestina Convoy were loaded onto a Turkish cargo ship in the port city of Latakia in Syria.

The ship set sail late in the evening for El Arish port in Egypt. The 500 members of the convoy were flown overnight from Syria to Egypt.

In a message to the convoy Noam Chomsky said, "Despite the media blackout, which is a disgrace, this is turning out to be a really spectacular triumph, "I think, and it's hard to express properly my admiration and respect for those who are directly engaged."

"It has to be a shot in the arm for the people in Gaza, and might stir up some opposition to the dictatorship in Egypt, which is exposing its brutality daily."

"And I think a lot of people are going to come back home really invigorated."

As a result of the international pressure, the Egyptian regime struck a deal to open the border for three days and allow just 100 of the Freedom March participants to enter Gaza.

This offer was rejected by many of the march participants, who instead attempted to march

from Cairo to Rafah on Monday 3 January but were again met with widespread police brutality.

During meetings in Cairo while they were delayed, the Gaza Freedom marchers, led by a delegation of South African trade unionists, who instead drew up a 'Cairo Declaration' calling for a massive campaign of boy-

cott divestment and sanctions against Israel along the lines of the movement against apartheid in South Africa.

They have called for an international tour of Palestinian and South African speakers to raise support for the boycott campaign, especially among trade unionists.

One of the declaration organisers Greg Dropkin, speaking at the launch in Cairo, said, "We don't just want to tell people, 'Don't buy Israeli vegetables'; we want to go to the workers who are involved in selling these vegetables."

"We want to go to the people who are running the warehouses

where they're stored [and] to the people who are transporting them. We want to go to everybody in a unified way and make clear what we're doing here."

More information on the Cairo Declaration can be found at [www.gazafreedommarch.org](http://www.gazafreedommarch.org)

Information on the convoy can be found at [www.vivapalestina.org](http://www.vivapalestina.org)

## Iran: Regime faces growing protest movement

**New protests by hundreds of thousands of Iranians against the government have raised the stakes on both sides. Nima Soltanzadeh reports**

THE OPPOSITION movement that emerged after the president election of June 2009 has defied the government clampdown by using official events to organise mass demonstrations.

The latest round of demonstrations began on December 7th, 2009, the official Students' Day, which marks the killing of three students during protests against the coup that installed the Shah as dictator in 1953.

This time thousands of students in Tehran, Kerman, Mashhad and other cities turned the rallies into anti-government demonstrations.

They clashed with the security forces and student members of the Basij militia.

As student protests continued and spread to seventeen universities all over the country, the death of Grand Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri on 19 December ignited wider protests.

Having criticized president Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Khamenei, he had become one of the leading

figures of the opposition movement.

His funeral in Qom turned into a mass rally and was marked by skirmishes between mourners and security forces.

Bigger protests erupted on the seventh-day commemoration of his death that coincided with the Shi'a Tasua and Ashura ceremonies on 26 and 27 December.

Ashura marks the death of the third Shi'a Imam, Hussein, a grandson of Prophet Muhammad, whose small band of supporters fought the repressive army of Yazid in the seventh century.

Symbolizing the fight against injustice, Tasua and Ashura have attained an important place in the Iranian history as a mobilizing force against tyranny.

Tension was building up in the run up to these celebrations as the opposition movement announced to once again take to the streets and the government and conservative clerics warned that they would crush those who "exploit" religious ceremonies.

In a show of courageous defiance, hundreds of thousands of Iranians took part in the Tasua and Ashura ceremonies.

Not only the youth, but also older people participated

in demonstrations in Tehran, Tabriz, Ardabil, Mahabad, Qom, Shiraz, Isfahan and Najaf Abad.

The government unleashed the Basij militia and plain clothes security forces.

More than 500 people were arrested and nine were killed, among them the nephew of Mir Hossein Mousavi.

The government has responded by widening the crackdown, arresting more activists, journalists and assistants of opposition leaders Mousavi and Karroubi.

It also attempted to rally support, but the pro-government demonstration in Tehran drew only tens of thousands, not the hundreds of thousands that the opposition has attracted.

However, unlike the regime of the Shah, the Islamic Republic still has a social base of support, though it has been eroding rapidly in the last months.

As a result, tensions are building up in the conservative camp. The alliance between president Ahmadinejad, Supreme Leader Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guard Commanders is hardening, but becoming more isolated.

They still control the military, although they must

be concerned that in the last weeks some of their troops have refused to shoot at demonstrators.

Internal tensions are increasing on the opposition side as well.

The recent protests highlighted the radical spirit developing inside the movement.

Unlike six months ago, the slogans are not confined to elections. They target the authority of Khamenei.

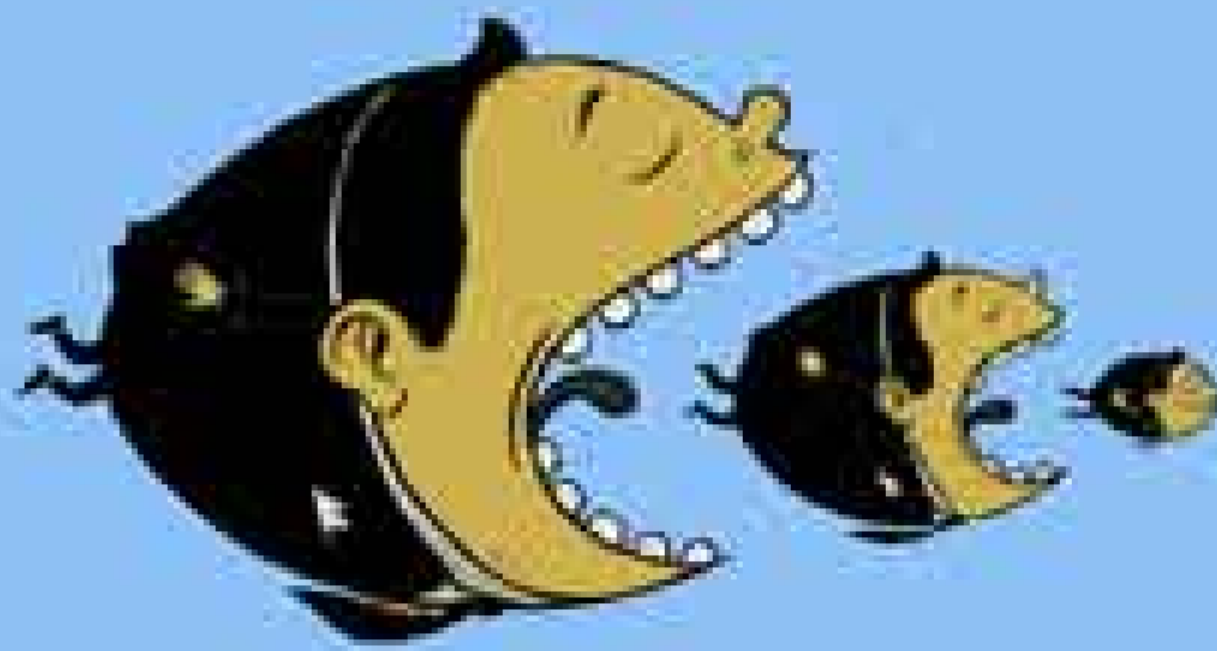
And, importantly, some protesters have started to fight back against the Basij and security forces, building barricades, throwing stones and even attacking police and Basij buildings.

This is already worrying the leadership of the movement around Mousavi, who would like to see a compromise with the conservative forces.

The key question for the movement now is whether it can move into the workplaces, turning the street protests into mass strikes, as happened in the revolution of 1979, and as we saw a glimpse of last summer.

Linking up with workers is vital if the protesters are to avoid brutal state repression—and transform their movement into one with the potential to make a revolution.

# The global financial crisis & the relevance of Karl Marx



## A review of Chris Harman's *Zombie Capitalism*

By MARK WALSH

THE GLOBAL economic crisis has sparked a renewed interest in understanding this capitalist system.

A number of books have recently been published on the subject, notably a new edition of David Harvey's *The Limits to Capital*, Joseph Choonara's *Unravelling Capitalism*, and Chris Harman's *Zombie Capitalism: Global Crisis and the Relevance of Marx*, the subject of this short review.

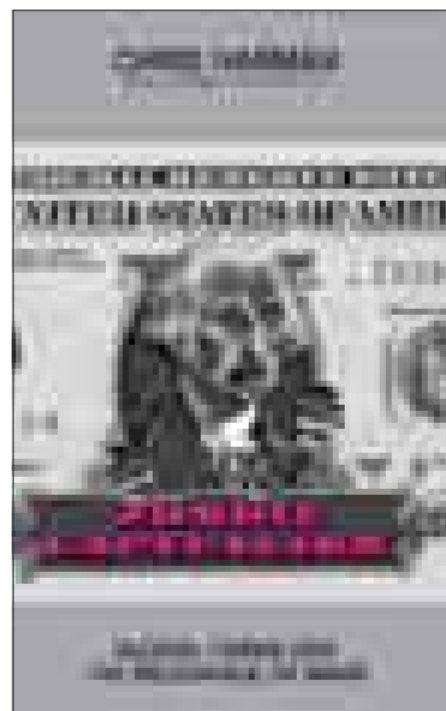
In recent times we've become all too familiar with the concept of a zombie bank. We have our very own zombie bank in Anglo Irish Bank.

As John McManus put it in the Business Section of the *Irish Times*, Anglo's "reputation and balance sheet are in tatters. It has in effect stopped lending, and will be transferring most of its loans to the National Asset Management Agency... it is in effect a zombie."<sup>1</sup>

The title of Harman's book compares the condition of banks like Anglo to the current state of capitalism. Capitalism is a zombie system in an "undead state, incapable of fulfilling any positive function, but representing a threat to everything else... seemingly dead when it comes to achieving human goals and responding to human feelings, but capable of sudden spurts of activity that cause chaos all around."<sup>2</sup>

The book opens with the stark reminder that the chaos is only going to get worse. "We live in an unstable world, and the instability is going to increase... It is a world which is destroying its own environment, and the destruction is going to increase... It is a world where people are less happy than they used to be... and the unhappiness is going to increase."<sup>3</sup>

This instability has even had an impact on the writing of the book, which he began as an updated edition of a book he wrote 25 years ago, *Explaining the Crisis*. He had



to change his original 150,000 word draft significantly in the light of the crisis. What he expected would happen in the future had actually begun to happen in the present.

It was the credit crunch in 2007 that began to "sweep the candyfloss away to provide a glimpse of the reality of the underlying system"<sup>4</sup> and that's really what Harman seeks to do in the book: to sweep away the candyfloss, the obsession of mainstream economists, and to focus instead on the underlying system, the way in which capitalism really functions, which can ultimately provide an explanation for the crisis.

The starting point for this explanation is Marx's *Capital*. Harman devotes a couple of chapters to reviewing the concepts Marx originally used to describe the capitalist system. But capitalism is an ageing system which has changed since Marx first analysed it. In the next section of the book, therefore,

Harman goes "beyond Marx" to analyse the role of the state, which has become much more significant since Marx's time.

The rest of the book builds on these foundations. Harman demonstrates in the most in-depth empirical detail the broad relevance of Marx's analysis of capitalism to today's global crisis, from the growth of capitalism through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to an account of what he calls the "new age of global instability." The early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century began with the delusion that capitalism had reached a new level of almost permanent stability.

Only a few years later, however, the credit crunch of 2007 and the subsequent crash of 2008 exposed the reality of global instability. These events were triggered by so-called 'innovation' in the financial sector, which Harman deals with in the chapter on "Financialisation and the Bubbles that Burst."

In the final part of the book, he looks at the "new limits of capital" which activists are increasingly forcing onto the agenda of mainstream politics: peak oil, global food shortages, and climate change.

Having provided a comprehensive account of the chaotic growth and imminent threats posed by the capitalist system, having described the problem we all face down to the last detail, he poses the inevitable question: what are we going to do about it? If this is what's happening, if this is what is confronting us, what are we going to do, and, more importantly, "Who can overcome?" The answer is that only we, the oppressed majority of the global working class, can collectively provide an end to the capitalist system.

How we set about this task depends on our understanding of the system: where it has come from and where it is going. *Zombie Capitalism* aims to provide us with this understanding so that we can make more informed and conscious decisions about where to channel our activism.

# Why Copenhagen Failed

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

TO ANYBODY interested in the future of the earth's climate, the conclusion of the Copenhagen conference represents either colossal disappointment or profound rage.

The financial pledges—that rich nations made to poor nations will do nothing to combat global warming. The few climate related agreements that were made were of zero substance, especially when compared to what the situation demanded.

The sorrowful outcome, however, could have been predicted in the conference's first week, based on two seemingly unrelated events: The conference showcased the largest police action in Denmark's history (involving the mass arrest of "troublemakers"); while also producing the largest ever boom in limousine rentals. Both happenings helped reveal the true nature of the conference, spelling doom for climate progress.

Contrary to the hopes of billions of people, the talks were a purely elite affair. Many of the thousands of delegates sent to the conference were not looking to save the planet, as advertised, but were looking out for the national interest of their native governments.

Most of these countries are dominated by the "special interests" of giant corporations.

Big business in the rich nations used the conference as a cynical maneuver to maintain their economic dominance over the "emerging business" in the developing countries. This fact was at first obscured by technical language, until the now-famous "Danish Text" was leaked to the press in the first week of the conference.

This document was a conference proposal written by the U.S. and England, though submitted by Denmark. The Danish Text proposes that developed nations—the U.S., Europe, Japan, etc.—be allowed to pollute twice the amount of developing countries—China, India, Russia, Brazil, etc.—for the next fifty years.

If enacted, the corporations of the developing nations would be forced to function under an incredible economic handicap. Their governments would have, of course, rejected such nonsense, giving the U.S. delegates the needed excuse to blame China for the failed talks (the U.S. media has done this with absolute disregard for facts).

The Danish Text also proposed to move future climate talks out of the realm of the "too-democratic" UN into the U.S./Europe dominated World Bank. Obama has thus surpassed his predecessor in the realm of global arrogance.

Instead of building upon the foundation of

the already-insufficient Kyoto Protocol, the Obama administration demanded a whole new structure, something that would take years to achieve. The Kyoto framework was abandoned because it included legally binding agreements, and was based on multi-lateral, agreed-upon reductions of greenhouse gasses (however insufficient). Instead, Obama proposed that "...each country set its own rules and to decide unilaterally how to meet its target."

This way, there is zero accountability, zero oversight, and therefore, zero climate progress.

Any country may make any number of symbolic "pledges" to combat global warming, while actually doing very little to follow through—much like billions of dollars rich countries pledged to Africa that have yet to leave western bank accounts.

Obama's maneuvering to ruin Copenhagen was correctly assessed by Canadian writer Naomi Klein, who said that Obama, like Bush, is "using multi-lateralism to destroy multi-lateralism."

This means that Obama is participating in international organizations like the UN Copenhagen conference, with no intention of reaching agreements. Once the U.S. blames its overseas rivals for the failure to "cooperate," a more independent path can be struck.

The failure of Copenhagen is also another example of a increasingly conflict-ridden world, based on the emerging economies challenging the rule of the old powers. The unbridgeable national conflicts are not the result of bad policy from naive leaders, but an inherent feature of capitalism.

Giant corporations in different countries are constantly growing and competing with each other for a very limited global marketplace. This vicious competition pushes all other social issues into the background—human needs are subordinate to blindly chasing profits.

Such an irrationally competitive system cannot be smoothed over with good intentions and on-paper cooperation. Deeper, conflicting corporate interests between nations are the motor force pushing countries further apart the more cooperation is needed.

As long as governmental policy is dictated by the corporations action on climate change is doomed. Thus, the battle to save the environment and end war must include a fight against these corporations, who wield a political/economic vice grip over society. Only by publicly controlling these billionaire-owned mega-enterprises can the peaceful and cooperative impulses of the earth's people find their full expression.

# Socialist Worker

## Executive wants to slash services

# Organise now to fight back!

By **EAMONN McCANN**

THE NORTHERN executive intends to slash the services working class families depend on in 2010. Workers must organise themselves to fight back.

None of the mainstream parties can be depended on to defend the interests of those bearing the brunt of the cuts.

All the Executive parties - the DUP, Sinn Fein, the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP - have agreed to the cuts.

Finance Minister Sammy Wilson slipped out the news just before Xmas, on December 21st, when most minds were on other things.

The Belfast Newsletter reported: "Finance Minister Sammy Wilson said the dramatic tightening of the public purse was agreed in principle at an executive meeting held last Thursday.

"Mr Wilson said the figure [of £370 million] came as 'no surprise' to the ministers, who he added, would have to find ways of making the savings.

"We...cannot spend money which don't have, it's as simple as that', said the East Antrim MP.

"I don't want to speculate on which departments will be facing the biggest cuts.

"This report will be put before the Assembly in the New Year.

"After this is complete, then the ministers will have to go to their departments and come up with how they are going to make the savings, which we all agree need to be made."

Wilson's Newsletter interview has been virtually the only public mention of the overall level of the cuts



Finance Minister Sammy Wilson

being agreed. There has been little reaction from MLAs - none at all from DUP or Sinn Fein MLAs.

The plan is that £200m will be slashed from current expenditure - public service jobs, wages, running costs - as well as £172m from capital spending - building roads, hospitals, schools etc.

## Jobs will go, services will go

This is on top of the three percent year-on-year cuts already being imposed in line with a Treasury edict.

Wilson hinted that water charges are back on the agenda. Deferral of the charges had contributed to the "hole" in public finances, he claimed. He didn't

acknowledge that the "deferral" had come about as a result of mass determination not to pay the charges.

"Another decision will have to be made on whether or not to defer the water charges for 2011, but the cost of putting off these charges is rising significantly year on year."

Bringing in charges in 2011 will mean making the decision this year. But there hasn't been a cheep out of the parties which pledged prior to the last Assembly election that they would never agree to water charges.

All four Executive parties are gearing up for a Westminster election in a few months and an Assembly election next year.

The skirmishing is already under way. But the planned attacks on working class rights and services don't figure.

The DUP, Sinn Fein, Ulster Unionists and the SDLP are at daggers drawn over policing, the Irish language, Orange parades etc.

The Unionist parties are battling over which of them can be counted on to deliver on "the Orange agenda". Sinn Fein and the SDLP are fighting it out over which will better represent Nationalism.

The common interests of the working class are simply ignored.

Workers will have to organise themselves - just as we did to defeat water charges.

The Socialist Workers Party has been at the heart of this resistance.

We believe that the priority now should be for all those ready to fight back, whether in parties, campaign groups or as individuals, to come together in a mass movement of resistance to offer a new way forward.