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Socialist Worker

STOP THE FG-LABOUR

BANK

ROBBERY!



Demand a referendum on EU-IMF Deal

FINE GAEL and Labour lied to the electorate and now they've done a U-turn.

During the general election they said they would insist on 'burden sharing': getting speculators and bondholders to pay for their own mistakes.

Now they want to put €24 billion of our money into bailing out the banks.

No wonder that the former FF Finance Minister, Brian Lenihan, was gloating.

The Fine Gael five-point plan stated that:

"We believe that Ireland may be left with no option in the absence of a renegotiated deal but *to write down the value of the bonds* in the Irish banks or face the prospect of a hugely damaging sovereign default."

Referring to the headquarters of the European Central Bank (ECB) in Frankfurt, Germany, Eamon Gilmore stated that 'It is Frankfurt's way or Labour's way.'

But when the unelected governors of the ECB told them to pay senior bondholders, they meekly did as they were told.

Frankfurt's way it is.

Any talk of a 'renegotiated deal' is shrinking to just tiny changes in the loan terms that will not put off a default.

European Bankers

The sole interest of the ECB is protecting Europe's bloated banking sector.

They knew that if Ireland did not pay for these bank debts, the 'contagion' would spread to Portugal, Greece and Spain.

In other words, working people all over Europe would be released from this debt burden.

So they told their minions in the Irish government to sacrifice their own people for the good of Europe's bankers.

They sold us out with barely a murmur.

Some of the rich sharks who hold Irish bank bonds could not believe their luck.

Just a week before the government's an-



nouncement on April Fool's Day, a rumour went about that AIB would not meet one of the interest payments on its bonds.

The value of these bonds then shrunk to just 20 percent of their face value

when they were sold on to the 'secondary markets'.

Yet now the lucky speculators who bought them up at that price are gloating at our expense because they will get

the full value of their bonds back.

This is all the more bizarre because most of the remaining bonds in AIB and Bank of Ireland are not covered by the state guarantee scheme devised by Fianna Fáil.

Co-incidentally, the total outstanding on the particular bonds AIB and Bank of Ireland comes to just over €24 billion.

Pensions Robbery

So even within the confines of official legality there is no need to pay these unguaranteed senior bondholders.

But the FG-Labour government will pay up.

They are showing that their first loyalty is to global capitalism rather than the people who elected them.

Most of the money for this bail-out is not coming from Europe – but from the Irish National Pension Reserve Fund.

This was set up in 2001 as a 'sovereign wealth fund' with the explicit aim of paying for public-sector pensions and social welfare after 2015.

That money could have been used to invest in public works programmes to create jobs.

It would have helped put people to work and created more wealth for the future.

But now it is just being handed over to bondholders and to the German, French and British banks that made a fortune supplying credit to Irish bankers in the boom years.

Why should we now pay their gambling debts?

We need to rise up against this shameless robbery of the population.

We should get on the streets to demand:

- Reverse the bank bail outs – make the bondholders pay their own debts.
- Scrap the EU-IMF deal – we should control our own economy.
- Demand an immediate referendum on the EU-IMF deal and the bank bail outs.

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HOUSING CRISIS

By MICK WALLACE

CENTRAL BANK data released this month show that 80,000 Irish mortgage accounts are in arrears for more than 90 days or have been restructured.

This is one in ten of all private mortgage accounts. Worse still, these figures were compiled before the savage budget cuts came into effect.

Also omitted are the recent interest rate hikes. When Permanent TSB increased its rates by 1%, this added €60 extra in repayments to every €100,000 borrowed.

And now, the ECB has threatened to increase rates over the coming months.

The idea that the same bank extorting large bailout repayments from working people could oversee such repossessions is outrageous.

There are solutions. Mortgage-to-rent schemes exist in other countries. This means families under threat of repossession can transfer their home to their local authority.

This way they get to stay in their homes and pay rent. Those who walk away from their home should be freed from their debt; so-called 'jingle-key' deals.

'Negative equity' means the debt is bigger than the value of a home.

House prices have fallen by 40%. The result is that 100,000 people are now in 'severe' negative equity (greater than €50,000). The Central Bank believes prices could fall further plunging up to 300,000 mortgage-holders into negative equity.

In this context, the FG/Labour Government's vague promises of help are insulting.

Their aim is to shore-up the failed private-housing market.

We need a system that puts human need ahead of making money from where people live.

March for Radiotherapy Unit in Derry



By GORETTI HORGAN

ALMOST A thousand people joined the march organised by People Before Profit in Derry to demand funding for the long-promised radiotherapy unit.

Health and cancer support groups have campaigned for decades for a radiotherapy unit to cater for people from both sides of the border who have to travel to Belfast or Dublin.

The long round trips mean cancer patients have to leave the support of family and friends for six weeks when they most need them.

The Irish government has pledged to contribute a third of the cost of building and running the unit.

The radiotherapy

unit in Belfast's City Hospital will not be able to cope with demand after 2015.

Leading cancer specialists in Belfast are alarmed by Health Minister McGimpsey's decision to cut its funding.

Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness have both said they want this decision reversed after the May Assembly election as if they had no say in it.

But Robinson admitted that the Executive has to agree all Ministerial decisions in advance.

People Before Profit and other campaigners are determined to keep up the protests in support of the Unit.

There have been too many broken promises for any one to believe the word of a government politician at election time.

Census Company Accused of Torture

By LEAH SPEIGHT

WHEN YOU fill in your census form, you think your information is confidential.

This is what the Central Statistics Office (CSO) tells us.

What they don't tell you is that a US company called CACI is doing the census, not the CSO.

Under the US Patriot Act, American firms are obliged to share secret information with authorities in Washington if requested.

In Scotland, public concerns over CACIUK having the census contract resulted in the Scottish government introducing extra security measures.

Duncan MacNiven, the Register General for Scotland, admits "it is impossible to rule out any possibility the US government" might want Scottish census data.

He also says CACI could be faced with the "invidious choice" between breaking US law under the Patriot Act and breaking British law.

Concerns in Scotland have led to calls for a mass



boycott.

But breach of confidentiality is the least of our concerns.

Torture

CACI is a provider of 'interrogation and translation' services for the US government including at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison.

In 2004 two hundred

and fifty innocent torture victims sued CACI International accusing their interrogators of taking part in torture.

Some of the ongoing lawsuits include victims who were subjected to electric shocks, being stripped naked and beaten, attacks by unmuzzled dogs, and family members being threatened with rape.

In Ireland our media and government have not even acknowledged this as a concern.

CACI is not a company that should have been awarded a €5.8 million contract with the Irish state.

The fact that the Irish taxpayer is paying a company accused of human rights abuses is an insult to the victims.

Bin Workers Fight Privatisation

By VANESSA O'SULLIVAN

BIN WORKERS in South Dublin County Council organised a 'day of action' in March over attempts to privatise the bin service.

The contract for services to 70,000 homes is set to go to private company, Greyhound.

The result of this decision saw the council produce a letter with an ultimatum on choices:

take the contract with Greyhound, be redeployed within SDCC or quit.

Because their pay increases have been paid as allowances, moving job will mean losing these and returning to a basic wage that is as much as €200 a week less.

People Before Profit Cllr Gino Kenny said:

"The question of waste management was taken out of the hands of the elected representatives by the previous government but we are looking at invoking section 140 of the Local Government Act 2001 to force the manager's hand on this."

"At the very least we will find out if a majority of the elected reps really are against this."

More action, strikes and solidarity are needed to win.

They Shoot Horses, Don't They?

By VANESSA O'SULLIVAN

PROTESTORS AT South Dublin County Council (SDCC) complained about the removal of their horses from Bawnogue by South Dublin County Council.

Disgracefully, the council issued a statement saying that all the horses that were impounded were 'put down'.

There is an ongoing campaign, assisted by

People Before Profit Cllr Gino Kenny, to get the council to provide a safe place to put horses in the area.

Cllr Kenny who attended the protest said:

"All we usually hear about when it comes to young people is 'anti-social' behaviour."

"Well this is pro-social behaviour for these kids and it is being ignored".

Everyone on the protest was adamant that the campaign is only getting started.



Young Protestors at SDCC

SIPTU: 'Slush-fund Partnership'

By JIMMY SMYTH

ALLEGATIONS of a 'slush fund' from public money operated by SIPTU officials are a disgrace to the trade union movement.

SIPTU has recently published the results of an internal inquiry.

The report shows that the HSE and other state

agencies paid €4.5m into an account.

The account was called the 'SIPTU National Health and Local Authority Levy Fund'.

Two senior SIPTU officials were the signatories on the account.

SIPTU are now trying to claim this had nothing to do with them!

At best this shows a complete failure of union oversight of large money transactions in its name.

Even if we are to believe the union's version, why did two of their senior officials operate a multi-million euro fund on behalf of state bodies?

Why did the HSE get involved in payments to a

trade union that they were not accountable for?

The roots of this fiasco lie in the social partnership policy SIPTU and other unions have pursued.

Trade union leaders have seen their role as keeping industrial peace.

In return they are invited into the corridors of power rubbing shoulders with cor-

rupt politicians and senior public sector executives.

It is then a small step to operating a slush fund of taxpayers' money.

This episode is an example of why we need a different approach to trade unionism.

One that is based on fighting for workers rights not grubby compromises with bosses.

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WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.
A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.
REVOLUTION
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.
To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.
AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR
War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.
The "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.
END RACISM AND OPPRESSION
We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

working class.
We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.
We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.
FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH
We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Brown government.
Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'
We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.
Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!
FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.
This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.
We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.
We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to
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Fine Gael: As Corrupt as FF

THE MORIARTY report shows that Denis O'Brien became a very rich man because he used his connections with Fine Gael to get state handouts.

This should not have taken 14 years and millions of euro to find out.

The facts:

Between March 1995 and June 1996, O'Brien or his companies supported 14 Fine Gael fund-raisers.

He or his companies donated £22,140 to Fine Gael at this time.

His mobile phone company, Esat and its Norwegian partner, Telenor, gave \$50,000 to Fine Gael.

FG never informed the Moriarty Tribunal of the Telenor donation which the judge said was made with 'false and misleading documentation.. designed to conceal the.. payment'.

FG only paid back the money 3 years later when it was publicly exposed.

The mobile phone licence was awarded by FG



minister Michael Lowry in 1995 to FG donor Denis O'Brien who eventually sold it on to British Telecom for €2.4 billion. O'Brien made a personal profit of €300 million from this transaction.

He went on to claim to be a resident of Portugal in order to avoid paying capital gains tax.

Lowry was the chairman of the trustees of Fine Gael.

Lowry and Phil Hogan – Enda Kenny's current enforcer – cleared off the party's debt in

record time.

FG treasurer Mark Fitzgerald claims Hogan met O'Brien to discuss the award but Hogan denies this.

Bribes and Handouts

Two key elements emerge from the Moriarty report.

First, that the richest Irish capitalists look for state handouts to make profits and also make donations to political parties.

These handouts take the various forms of special tax breaks, property

deals, state rental income or privatisation of state assets.

This system of bribing politicians means Irish society loses out as local gombeen men become global entrepreneurs.

Despite the endlessly repeated mantra that 'entrepreneurs create jobs, not the state', they are as dependent on state support as any addicts are to their fix.

Second, Moriarty demonstrates that there is nothing 'clean' or 'transparent' about Fine Gael.

Today Fine Gael has far outstripped Fianna Fáil as the recipient of corporate donations.

It operates the exact same strategy of running 'golf classics' to hide corporate donations as Fianna Fáil.

It also tries to hide and conceal how it doles out favours to its business backers.

But isn't this how bribery works?

It is time to get organised to put an end to this charade.

Dublin Bus Campaign Launched



By JOHN LYONS

UP TO 60 people gathered outside Dublin Bus headquarters on Friday 1st April to protest against the on-going cuts to the city's bus services.

People Before Profit TD Richard Boyd-Barrett spoke of the need to co-ordinate the various local bus campaigns

taking place across Dublin.

The protest was to mark the launch of a campaign to protect and improve our bus service.

Dublin Bus's new 'Network Direct Plan' proposes to take over 90 buses off the road.

The changes mean cuts in services across the city. Buses are being taken

out of estates and put on main roads in order to 'provide a more efficient service'.

In reality it means fewer buses, and longer distances to bus stops.

It also isolates older people, disabled people and those with small children who will find it difficult to access the new service.

These cuts are part of the wider austerity measures pursued by the previous government and continued by the Fine Gael/Labour government.

People Before Profit councillors Brid Smith and Gino Kenny pledged to continue to fight against these savage cuts to a vital public service.

MTL Dockers Fight On



By JOHN LYONS

GERARD MCDONNELL, the former MTL dock worker charged for mounting a 'floating picket' during a strike again on Friday April 1st.

His case is now going

to be heard in front of a jury in July.

Strikers and socialists demonstrated their support outside the court.

One former striker said he was appalled by the lack of support shown by his union, SIPTU.

It has not contributed in any way to Gerard's legal fees, which at this stage are mounting.

The case highlights the vindictiveness of the State in pursuing a worker 18 months after a strike on a nonsense charge and the need for a fighting trade union.

Half a Million 'March Against Cuts' in London



By JAMES O'TOOLE

THE BRITISH TUC had reckoned on 100,000 people turning out in London on March 26th but over 5 times as many marched.

This makes it the UK's biggest ever trade union march.

Mark Serwotka of the PCS union called for those who had marched together to now 'strike together'.

There was a party atmosphere on the march.

But after dark, riot police took their chance to move in with batons.

The state and the right-wing press have whipped up a panic over Trafalgar Square, and used it to downplay the mass march.

That's because they are terrified of the power that workers have when they come together.

But everyone who marched knows how big the protest was.

And they are more confident now than they were before the demonstration.

Time and time again, protesters said the march must be the start of large-scale resistance to the Tories.

They can see the enormous potential power workers have to bring the Tory government to its knees.

Libya: Rebels Ask NATO to Leave

By JAMES O'TOOLE

IN A letter addressed to French President Nicolas Sarkozy, published by the French daily *Le Figaro*, Libyan rebels thanked France for its assistance but stated that they wanted the intervention to end.

Rebel spokesman and former government official, Mahmoud Jibril said: "We do not want outside

forces. We won't need them. We will win the first battle thanks to you. We will win the next battle through our own means."

Sarkozy is not to be trusted as his first reaction to the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia was to offer the government support in crushing the democracy movement.

As the NATO intervention in Libya

drags on it looks ever more likely that the country may end up partitioned with east Libya as a western protectorate.

This is a war for oil and domination by greedy western interests.

Real support for the revolution would mean money, medicines, food and arms supplied to genuine revolutionary forces.

PORTUGAL IN CRISIS

By JAMES O'TOOLE

THE PORTUGUESE government collapsed in March.

The Labourite Prime Minister resigned as parliament voted down his latest round of austerity cuts.

Rather than burn their bondholders, Portuguese bosses will try to follow

Greece and Ireland to look for funding in an EU-IMF deal.

In return those bureaucrats will demand even deeper cuts.

The attacks on wages and public services in Portugal have seen massive working-class resistance.

There was a general strike by hundreds of thousands

of workers and huge protest marches in November.

This has meant the ruling class are unsure about forcing through their austerity plans.

More strikes and protests will be needed to make sure Portuguese workers are not forced to pay for an EU-IMF deal like the one foisted on workers in Ireland.



COILLTE: 'Marketisation' is Privatisation by stealth

By LEAH SPEIGHT

THERE HAVE been many warnings to the Irish public about the proposal to sell off public forests. To date a petition to save our forests has been signed by over 30,000 people.

Just recently, People Before Profit councillor, Melisa Halpin successfully passed a motion to safeguard our forests at a meeting of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

PBP Cllr Hugh Lewis commenting on the Labour Party claim that they would not allow state forests to be sold said:

"With a FG-led government every asset is under threat regardless of who is propping them up."

In truth, unlike with the planned sell-off of ESB or Bord Gáis, selling off Coillte was never part of FG plans.

This is documented in their 'NewERA' policy.

Privatisation in any state or semi-state sector means increasing profits for private interests.

This can mean selling off assets, like trees, piecemeal while keeping the semi-state otherwise intact, or outsourcing services to 'for-profit' private companies.

The option to sell off later is increased when there is some element of buying and selling introduced.

Bringing in a profit element like this is known as 'commercialisation' or 'marketisation'.

To prepare the ground, Bord na Móna and Coillte are to be merged into a new company 'Bioenergy and Forestry Ireland (BFI)'.

FG says BFI is "to become a global leader in the commercialisation of next-generation bio-energy technologies".

With ESB and Bord Gáis sold off, any new energy networks will no longer be state-owned, but rather privately-owned companies.

A National Recovery Wholesale Bank (NRWB) will be created, and will provide funds to private companies to allow the retrofitting of homes with poor energy ratings.

Installation of 'smart meters' in every home is part of what FG calls the construction of a 'smart energy grid'.

This grid is FG's ambitious move to reliance on 'bio-energy' by 2030.

According to FG getting domestic renewable energy (wood, gas, wind, wave, etc) to the grid will protect Ireland from rising oil prices.

None of the rhetoric or fancy slogans in the NewERA policy holds any credibility or concrete

research.

Firstly, the most obvious protection to Ireland against imported oil prices is to take back Corrib Gas into public ownership.

This was the biggest sell-off of our natural resources in the history of Ireland for private profit.

FG have no intentions in their energy plans to reverse this.

Rhetoric about creating jobs is also farcical, when selling our state networks will mean the loss of jobs for many workers.

Burning Money

FG state in their NewERA policy that:

"A thriving competitive private sector is essential for economic recovery."

The simple fact is FG will burn our bogs and forests to enhance private profit in a private market.

Not only will this be destructive to our economy, their moves are also environmentally unsound.

The loss of the natural beauty of forests is important but the argument of biomass as 'carbon neutral' depends on large forests with adequate replanting.

Forests are a natural absorber of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide.

At present we have the lowest rate of forestry in the EU.

Considering the years it takes a forest to grow after re-plantation, moves by FG to increase the burning of forests would be an environmental disaster.

It is widely agreed that we need to increase our forests from 7% of land to 17%.

Coillte's purpose under the 1988 Forestry Act was to manage the public forest resources wisely for the benefit of the country.

While Coillte has been investing money into many private projects for private profit, no progress has been made on increasing the size of our forests.

Information on Coillte's negligence can be found in reports by forestry contractors (Oireachtas debate 2010), and from The Woodlands league.

Despite a European Court of Justice ruling that it is a state company, Coillte is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act.

Rather than moves to start burning our forests we should be ensuring 17% of land is dedicated to forestry.

Fast-tracking by FG for private market interests will burn our forests, and a hole in our pockets.

A campaign to save our forests is an important task for the Left.

Referendum on

As the Bank stress tests show the banks still in freefall demand a referendum on the IMF-EU deal to



David Drumm and Sean Fitzpatrick

ON 29th of September 2008, eight men risked the future of millions of their fellow citizens, to ensure Irish capitalism survived the current banking crisis; no matter what.

Earlier that day, Sean Fitzpatrick and David Drumm (Chairman and CEO of Anglo respectively) pleaded with their four senior counterparts at AIB and Bank of Ireland to help.

Fearing they would all go under if Anglo collapsed, these six top executives wasted no time in meeting

with Taoiseach, Brian Cowen and finance minister, Brian Lenihan to put Irish taxpayers on the hook.

Before the night was over, a 'bank guarantee' scheme was concocted to ensure that 'corporate Ireland' would survive the crisis on the backs of working people.

As a strategy, the guarantee scheme set out to calm the nerves of corporate investors.

The Irish sovereign would pay outstanding debt obligations if private banks were *insolvent in the*

future (become unable to repay all their debts).

This offer would obviously have been madness if one suspected (as it turned out) that the banks might be *insolvent already* (given the huge €440 billion of debt and the total Irish 'tax-take' was less than €40 billion a year).

At the time, we were told that the banks only needed the guarantee so they could borrow the liquidity (cash) they needed to pay the debts that were immediately

due.

Indeed Brian Lenihan could brazenly announce that the Irish strategy for solving the banking crisis amounted to the 'cheapest bailout in the history of banking'.

Fast forward 2½ years and we find the State no longer in control of its economic policy, a government thrown out of office for economic treason, and a banking system no closer to being revived.



Icelandic Protestors

EU-IMF Bail-out

Call, economist **Brian O'Boyle** explains why we should bail out Irish and EU bankers and speculators.

All this despite a 'bailout' that has already cost in excess of €80 billion!

That is €80,000 million or €80,000,000,000!

To put this in context we are talking about giving away €10 million euro every day for the next 25 years.

Imagine all the schools and hospitals cancelled to pay back the debts of wealthy speculators.

Lies and Profits

The very fact that we are (officially) unable to challenge this madness throws up the most serious questions for the nature of our democracy.

The idea that eight men (no women) can make such a momentous decision is bad enough. But when they have now admitted that they were lied to about the solvency of the banks, one wonders exactly why we are continuing to pay?

Officially, the reason given is that, once the State has given a guarantee, it cannot renege without losing its reputation.

But the real reason is that the fate of Irish capitalism is inextricably linked to bailing out the banking system.

Contrary to common belief, banks do not get most of their resources from the savings of working people.

Some money does come from personal savings, but the vast majority comes from the retained earnings of corporations (profits).

During the 'Celtic Tiger' Corporate Ireland amassed over €225 billion in 'after-tax profits'. While a lot of this went into investment (or abroad), a sizeable chunk was recycled through banks as loans to other businesses, interest-bearing bonds, stocks and shares etc.

This chunk of profits would all be threatened if the Irish banking system were allowed to collapse.

So when we hear that there is simply no way that the banking system can be allowed to fail, what we are really being told is that there is simply no way that Irish bosses can be allowed to lose their retained profits and political position.

Seen in this light it becomes obvious why the state was willing to risk its future.

European Capital

Now that the gamble has been seen to backfire, it is the EU and IMF's turn to protect the interests of its wider ruling classes.

Under the rules of capitalism, 'private risk' is supposed to be the flipside of 'private reward'. Before the banking collapse the rewards for private investors were simply enormous.

The Celtic Tiger was booming, and in this context German, French and British capital found its way into Irish banks (primarily Anglo), before being lent out to property developers and mortgage-holders.

Following this 'money trail' is extremely important as it means that we know how the collapse of the 'bubble' should have played

itself out.

Let us suppose, for example, that a German corporation like BMW chose to speculate (by lending money to a German bank) instead of making cars.

It should be expected then that if the price of a housing estate in Leitrim fell that this would impact all the way back up the economic chain (building developer loses, Anglo-Irish Bank loses, Deutsche Bank loses and BMW loses).

However, the Irish government, realised the implications of this for its own capitalist class of developers, Bankers and stockholders.

This is why they stepped in to guarantee the losses, diverting the costs onto the Irish people.

However, because Ireland has taken on the debts of the international gamblers, European Capital is, not surprisingly, stepping in to make sure it gets its money back too.

In essence, the EU-IMF deal is a way of making Irish workers' pay for losses that would otherwise have been incurred by Irish and European capital.

The strategy is remarkably similar to that of a loan shark

who gives money to a child and then offers a loan to the parents (at high interest) to pay the debts of their errant offspring.

In this analogy, Irish workers are the parents while Irish and European speculators/bankers are the kids.

This loan will be paid back out of precious and desperately needed wages and pensions.

Instead of Irish and European banks incurring the losses for their reckless behaviour, Irish tax-payers will now lose their future earnings for years to come.

The legacy of this deal will be a massive drop in living standards and a serious challenge to the organised power of the working class.

Over 400,000 workers have already lost their jobs, and those still in work have seen their wages and conditions continually undermined.

Iceland

Before the State sinks into an abyss we need to find out whether the ordinary people of Ireland are actually in favour of this so-called 'bailout'.

A referendum on the EU-IMF

deal is primarily a referendum on who should pay for this economic crisis.

For all of those who believe that the cost of this crisis should be borne by those who created it, it would be a chance to challenge the idea that nothing can be done.

The ruling class continually plays the 'apocalyptic card' that default means the whole economy will grind to a halt.

This is nothing more than blatant scaremongering.

For evidence, one need only look to the example of Iceland.

Having engaged in a default demanded by a mass-movement of ordinary citizens, Iceland is now showing signs of GDP growth, real wage increases and a growth in exports.

All of this was done once the banking debts were thoroughly rejected.

A mass movement to end the bail-outs is a crucial part of the mass movement needed to fight back against the failures of capitalism and its corrupt bosses.

A political movement of organised workers will be needed to get rid of this rotten system for good.



NATO's Bloody History

By **KEN OLENDE**

MANY PEOPLE who are horrified by what Western intervention has done in Iraq or Afghanistan still see no alternative to supporting a no-fly zone over Libya.

Western governments encourage this—and point to the 'successful' humanitarian intervention in Yugoslavia to back up their case.

During a recession at the end of the 1980s, various leaders in Yugoslavia attempted to head off a wave of workers' resistance by stirring up tensions between the various ethnic groups in the country.

They managed to drag the country into a civil war and Yugoslavia dissolved into several smaller states.

Television images showed civilians being shelled and strafed as they were 'ethnically cleansed' from their homes.

No-fly Zone

The first combat missions in NATO's history were part of a so-called 'humanitarian intervention' to save these civilians.

The intervention was divided into two distinct phases.

The first was over Bosnia, 'Operation Deny Flight', between 1993 and 1995.

This implemented a 'no-fly zone' for all sides in the conflict, but was specifically targeted against Serb forces.

It pretty much halted flights by military planes—though not helicopters, which were harder to monitor.

In the only air battle, US fighters shot down five Serb planes.

But nothing in this policy stopped destruction by sniper fire or artillery.

The war intensified and casualties rose.

So by 1994, NATO escalated the operation to include air strikes on ground targets, particularly tanks in fighting around Gorazde and Sarajevo.

Bombing Serbia

The next phase of the intervention, in 1999, began where this one finished.

Britain and the US bombed Serbia for 78 days, supposedly to protect civilians in Kosovo.

More than 9,300 combat sorties hit military targets—but they also managed to bomb trains, bridges, the Chinese embassy in Belgrade and a television station.

NATO ended Serbian control over Kosovo, which became a United Nations protectorate.

When Western leaders talk about the 'success' of the no-fly zone policy, this is what they look to.

But this was not a 'no-fly zone'. It was a display of naked imperial power, which killed many civilians.

Nevertheless, General Joseph

W Ralston, vice chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, was pleased with the policy.

He said in September 1999 that, "Despite the weight of bombs dropped, Serbian civilian casualties were amazingly light, estimated at less than 1,500 dead."

Not only had the no-fly zone escalated into an active campaign of bombing, but it had failed to achieve its stated objectives.

And our leaders are less keen to recall attacks on the people who were supposedly being protected.

One notorious air strike slaughtered at least 60 people in a refugee convoy of tractors and trailers.

This was so far from the image NATO was trying to spread that its media spokesperson General Giuseppe Marani told a press conference:

"When the pilot attacked the vehicles, they were military vehicles.

"If they then turned out to be tractors that is a different issue."

Popular Uprising

In Serbia itself, it was a popular uprising which overthrew Serbian dictator Slobodan Milosovic—not NATO airstrikes.

And the NATO action triggered the "ethnic cleansing" of Albanians in Kosovo that it was supposed to prevent.

Instead of helping the people it claimed to protect, this "humanitarian intervention" created and bolstered artificial states, allowing warlords, strongmen and gangsters to dominate. Neither did it end discrimination or oppression.

NATO had been set up during the Cold War supposedly to defend the West against aggression from the Soviet Union and the countries of the Warsaw Pact.

Now these had collapsed, but rather than dissolving itself, NATO openly revealed its role as a tool of Western imperialism.

Whatever politicians said at the time, NATO's decision to intervene was based on its strategic interests, and specifically trying to expand its influence into areas that had been in Russia's sphere of influence.

The expansion of Western attacks through the 'war on terror' in 2001 was a direct extension of this policy, not a diversion from it.

And it continues in Libya. 'Humanitarian intervention' is still a way for Western powers to get their foot in the door—and that is why they are interested in Libya, where they want to keep control of oil production.

The Bank Bail-out is costing us far too much!

2 Events

CALL FOR A REFERENDUM ON THE IMF/EU DEAL

1 Open Meeting To be addressed by
Mick Wallace Independent TD
Richard Boyd Barrett People Before Profit TD
 special guest speaker **Lilja Móseddóttir** MP from Iceland
 plus **Andy Storey** (Afri & UCD Lecturer)
Jimmy Kelly (Regional Sec, UNITE) **Rita Fagan** (Community Activist)

Tues. 5th APRIL 8pm
Gresham Hotel O'Connell St. D1

2 DEMONSTRATION at the Dail at 6pm
 on **Kildare St**
Wednesday 6th APRIL

IMF (The Banks)

'Humanitarian interventions' mask an imperial lust for oil

By SIMON BASKETTER

THE REVOLUTIONS in the Middle East have thrown the imperial powers into crisis.

That is because the control of the region has been at the heart of the West's project for more than 100 years.

The great powers have used every means at their disposal to maintain their grip throughout that time.

In the 19th century the world's then dominant powers, Britain and France, took over parts of the Middle East using military power.

They installed compliant regimes in other areas.

Britain was mainly interested in using the area as a staging post to expand its empire eastwards.

That was one reason for seizing Egypt in 1882.

The rest of the Middle East remained outside the West's direct control until the First World War.

Italy joined in the imperial scramble, taking over the area that is now Libya in 1911 (see below).

The areas that now make up Iraq, most of Saudi Arabia, Syria, Jordan and Palestine were under the control of the Ottoman Empire, which was centred in Turkey.

During the First World War, Britain convinced Arab leaders to revolt against this empire, which was allied with Germany.

In return, it claimed it would support the establishment of an independent Arab state in the region.

Britain's leaders were lying, of course.

Their real motivation was oil.

oil

Western companies paid minimum sums to local rulers to gain control of areas thought to contain oil.

Just as today, representatives of the great powers disguised their theft and domination.

They used words such as 'liberation' and 'self-government' to justify their imperial intervention.

French and British officials encouraged the playing off of Sunni against Shia Muslims—and Christian against Muslim—as it suited their aims.

The secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 carved the region into British and French spheres. British and French diplomats simply drew lines on a map, dictating the fate of millions.

They used a ruler—which explains why the borders of many Middle Eastern countries are remarkably straight.

This act of imperial horse-trading demonstrated that neither Britain nor France would permit the creation of genuinely independent Arab states.

The region's oil was now lubricating the wheels of international diplomacy.

Every redrawing of the political map generated resistance. British officials imposed kings on Iraq and Egypt, only to face pressure from independence movements a few years later. Britain strengthened the role of the tribal sheikhs, who became their local tax collectors and law enforcers.

But even their support for the British administration failed to contain an explosion of anger in 1920, when the League of Nations awarded Britain a mandate over Iraq.

British troops eventually put down an insurrection in Iraq, and crushed protests and strikes in Egypt.

Colonial officials followed a two-pronged strategy—brutal repression of mass protests coupled with an effort to forge an alliance with local elites.

Discredited Arab leaders also have a long pedigree—every imperialist intervention has found local rulers willing to



US President Barack Obama with Saudi King Abdullah



War, crushing the Arab armies. Following this defeat it became "pragmatic" for the Arab regimes to end their hostility

to imperialism.

Egypt and others embraced the US and made peace with Israel. Regimes that

refused to do the same faced isolation and military attack. The "Arab front", as the US called it, was broken. Now came heavy repression and the transformation of the region into pro-US dictatorships.

They adopted neoliberalism, and this, along with the concentration of oil wealth in the hands of a few families, left Arab societies more polarised.

The Middle East is still the "greatest material prize in history".

This is why the West continues to look to client states or intervention to preserve its interests.

One of the aims of the wars on Iraq in 1991 and 2003 and Afghanistan in 2001 was to reassert US dominance.

Instead, it exposed its limits. But oil remains capitalism's obsession—and it needs to keep a strong guard over it.

Most of the Middle Eastern states were firm allies of US imperialism—until the outbreak of the revolutions this year threw the situation into flux.

The Arab ruling classes remain firmly integrated into global capitalism.

A number of dictatorial regimes backed the United Nations resolution on intervention in Libya.

Some—including Saudi Arabia—have already sent troops to repress the movement in Bahrain.

But the intertwining of the struggle against imperialism and the Arab regimes opens up the possibility of ridding the region of outside influence and moving to a truly democratic society.

The West's history of intervention in Libya

THE SHADOW of imperialism has dominated Libya's recent history.

As part of the 'Scramble for Africa' an Italian occupation took over the area from 1911.

In 1934, Italy adopted the name Libya as the official name of the colony, which it ruled with brutal force.

Following its colonial ruler Italy's defeat in the Second World War, Britain and France took over running the country.

Libya became independent under the pro-British and pro-US King Idris in 1951.

Later in the decade significant

oil reserves were discovered.

Muammar Gaddafi took power after the overthrow of King Idris in 1969.

He closed US and British bases, and partly nationalised foreign oil and commercial interests.

The West saw him as an enemy. US president Ronald Reagan sent warplanes to assassinate Gaddafi in 1986.

The missiles missed and hit a residential area of Tripoli, killing some 100 innocent people.

Two years later, Pan Am Flight 103 was bombed over Lockerbie, claiming 270 lives.

Libya was blamed for the

bombing in the run-up to the 1991 Gulf War.

After years of considering Libya a pariah state, the West lifted the sanctions against it in 2004.

Firms have their eyes fixed on the country's oil.

In 2007 BP chairman (and former Fine Gael attorney general) Peter Sutherland signed its exploration deal with Libya's National Oil Corporation, with Tony Blair looking on.

In 2008, Britain's imports of Libyan oil increased by 66 percent.

British exports to Libya also increased by 50 percent.

cooperate with the occupiers.

By the 1920s, the sheer extent of the region's oil reserves had become clearer—and oil was becoming the key commodity for global capitalism.

Ruthless Intervention

In the 1950s, Britain's foreign secretary Selwyn Lloyd put the West's argument with brutal simplicity: "At all costs these oilfields must be kept in Western hands."

"We need, when things go wrong, to ruthlessly intervene."

The US became the dominant power in the Middle East after the Second World War. It has pursued a twin-track strategy to secure its control.

One is backing the Arab rulers. The US fears that popular resentment in Arab countries could erupt and push the rulers to challenge its interests, or that revolution could bring about fundamental change.

Such fears were underlined when Egypt's nationalist president Gamal Abdul Nasser challenged the West in the 1950s and 1960s.

And they were stoked further when revolution toppled key US ally the Shah of Iran in 1979.

This is why the US backs Israel, a reliable ally that acts as a "watchdog" in the region.

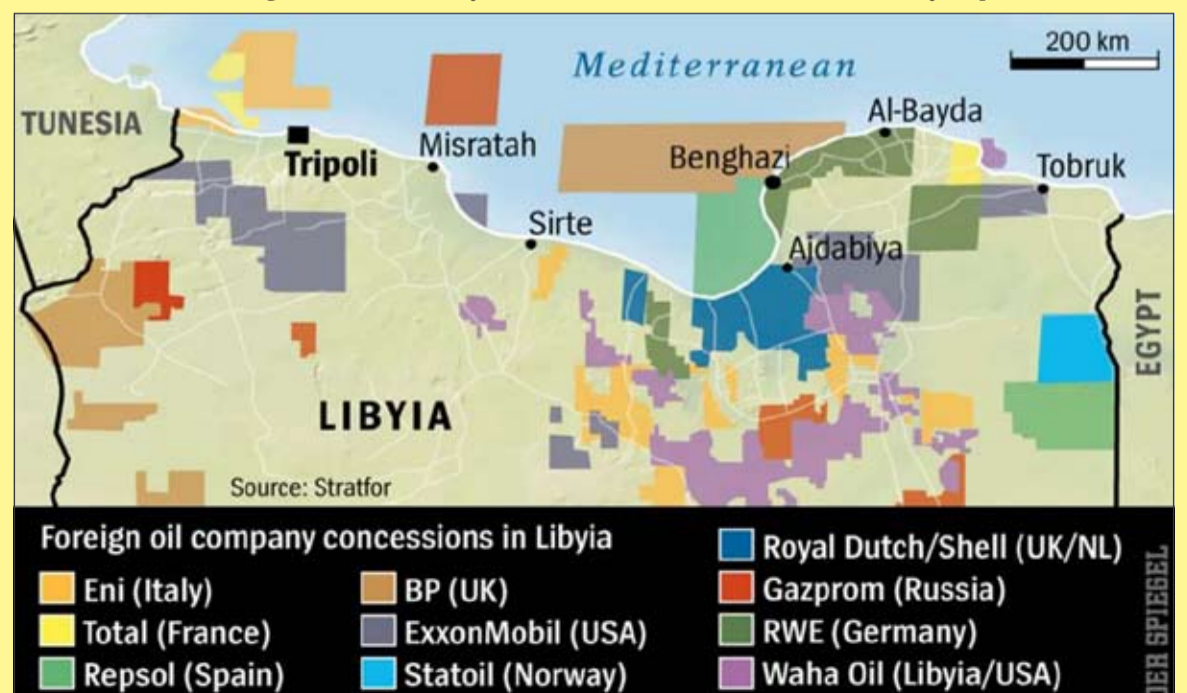
Israel was crucial to breaking the challenge posed by Nasser, and remains vital to the US today.

Western powers have launched a series of wars to retain their dominance.

The first attempt to crush the Arab nationalists during the Suez Crisis in 1956 ended in humiliating failure for Britain, France and Israel.

But Nasser and other nationalist leaders attempted to limit the scope of the revolutions, though any blow to imperialism was a threat to the West.

So in 1967, Israel launched its Six Day



SF/DUP Consensus for Privatisation and Tax-breaks

By SEÁN MCVEIGH

ON 5 May is a real chance for the electorate to put People Before Profit MLAs in to fight the public sector cuts agenda being pushed by the DUP/Sinn Fein led Executive.

In the run-up to the election the main political parties have tried to present themselves as defenders of public services.

Both Martin McGuinness and Peter Robinson have defended a new radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry which was shelved by health minister Michael McGimpsey due to 'lack of funds'.

This position is at odds with the record of both parties.

The whole period of devolution has been characterised by a Stormont consensus which has seen the



Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness, the DUP's Peter Robinson and the other Stormont ministers join Tory ministers Owen Paterson and David Gauke in demanding tax-cuts for the rich

Executive push through policies which hurt working people.

This consensus has

included the extensive contracting-out of public services to private companies; 'disposal' of

public assets; the imposition of a 3% 'savings' cut on all

Executive depart-

mental budgets; and the agreement to implement the Tory cut in the block grant of £4 billion.

The consensus between the parties was noted by commentator Liam Clarke who, writing in the Belfast Telegraph, said:

"The parties have not yet developed policies that distinguish them in purely economic terms. "Sinn Fein uses more left-wing language than the DUP, but they are at one on a range of issues, from corporation tax to health."

Tax breaks for the rich

On March 24 the Tories published the consultation document 'Rebalancing the Northern Ireland Economy'.

Its main proposal is to cut the corporation tax rate paid by the rich in Northern Ireland.

McGuinness must have been delighted as his party has been campaigning for a reduction in corporation

tax for years.

The document considers reducing corporation tax in the North from 26% to 12.5%; the same rate as in the Republic.

Corporation tax could end up even lower.

One 'scenario' considered by the document is: "Setting the UK rate in Northern Ireland at zero and allowing the NIE (Executive) to vary the rate upwards."

Under EU rules, cutting Corporation Tax will result in a cut to the block grant from London of £300m or more.

This will have dire consequences for public services.

These plans will require legislation in the Assembly.

We need People Before Profit MLAs as an alternative voice and to lead a mass resistance campaign against these proposals.

FILM REVIEW:

Chauvet Revisited

Cave of Forgotten Dreams, Dir. Werner Herzog

Reviewed by John Lyons

WERNER HERZOG'S new documentary, *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, is a marvellous cinematic experience.

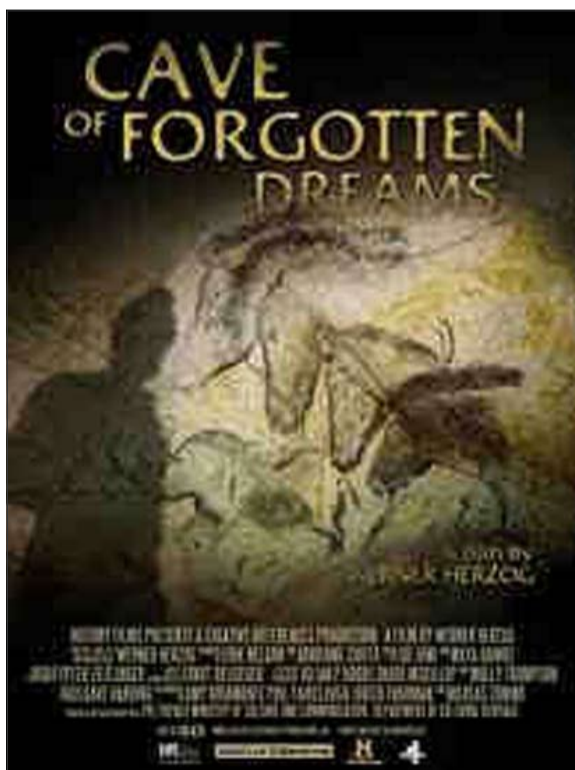
Herzog brings the viewer face to face with the world's oldest know artworks – the prehistoric cave paintings of the Chauvet Cave in the Ardeche region of Southern France, believed to be 32,000 years old.

The cave was discovered by three explorers in 1994 and what an extraordinary discovery it is: the viewer is confronted with the most amazing images of bears and bison, horses, lions and rhinos created by the hands of our most distant ancestors. Watching the film one feels a direct connection with our Palaeolithic forbears.

Cave of Forgotten Dreams is an astonishing documentary, made all the more so as it is filmed in 3D, which brings to life the artistic renderings of daily life as it was thirty millennia ago.

Such is the fragility of the underground cave it remained closed to all but a few fortunate scientific experts, until the French Ministry of Culture allowed Herzog limited filming access.

With three other



cameramen, all with battery-operated cameras and head-lamps, Herzog has managed to capture an authentic sense of wonder that the artwork evokes.

Herzog canvasses a range of opinion from the various experts who are allowed down there with him: palaeontologists, archaeologists, art historians and even a perfume specialist, who speculates about the smells of resin and wood that might have prevailed back then.

To these comments, Herzog adds his own sense

of wonder and existential shock.

Herzog playfully remarks that the superimposed drawings of animals' legs in different positions create the sense of movement and the cave drawings are, in his opinion, "proto-cinema".

The Chauvet Cave and its contents represent, as he puts it, "the beginnings of the modern human soul".

A must-see cinematic experience that underlines how art is mankind's ultimate expression of immortality. (Showing at the IFI until April 14)

REPORT:

Corporation Tax Fraud Exposed

Driving the Getaway Car? Ireland, Tax and Development, Dr Sheila Killian, UL, (Report on behalf of the Debt and Development Coalition Ireland)

Reviewed by Jimmy Smyth

DURING THE new government's short-lived honeymoon period corporation tax (CT) was a dominant issue.

The newspapers and broadcast media were full of politicians and pundits vehemently stating there would be no compromise over the 12.5% rate.

FG Minister Simon Coveney said it would be 'economic suicide' to change it.

Former PD leader Michael McDowell told Enda to 'stand up to Sarkozy'.

FILM REVIEW:

Route Irish: Loach's latest movie

Dir: Ken Loach

Reviewed by John Lyons

Route Irish, Ken Loach's latest film, is his first attempt to tackle the legacy of the Iraq war.

It doesn't come off.

The film's title refers to the death-trap highway connecting Baghdad airport with the US-held Green Zone in the city centre, a route that many of the private security contractors that operate in Baghdad travel every day.

Loach uses the murky and murderous world of these private contractors in Iraq,



The CT rate we were told time and again was a 'red-line issue'.

In reality the whole episode shows how willing the new government is to bend to corporate interests.

The dominant view remains that the 12.5% CT rate cannot be touched, unless you want the ground to open-up and swallow us.

Irony doesn't touch it given the earth-shattering devastation the banks continue to wreak with another gift of

€24bn from the taxpayer.

This ideologically charged atmosphere goes some way to explaining the toothless nature of, and at times almost apologetic recommendations in DDCI's latest report.

The recommendations are qualified by: "none of which would incur any significant cost to implement".

This point doesn't appear just once but three times in the report.

Furthermore on several

occasions the report seems to imply its all just a mistake when it describes the 'inadvertent consequences' of policy decisions.

This stance is sharply contrasted with the Christian Aid report *Death & Taxes* from 2008 which identified how Irish politicians have designed the country for tax-dodging.

The one thing both reports agree on is that the Irish tax system allows multi-national companies to minimise the tax they pay by using countries like Ireland.

This robs other countries of the money they need for pensions, schools, hospitals and welfare that multinationals and their cronies care little about.

Whatever way you look at it, poor and working people lose.

The DDCI report can be downloaded from: www.debtireland.org



effectively given legal immunity by the Allied military powers after 2003, to explore the legacy of the war from a British perspective.

Fergus and Frankie are best mates from Liverpool, ex-British army guys attracted to Iraq for a massive payday.

When Frankie comes back in a coffin – having apparently died in crossfire on *Route Irish* – Fergus uncovers evidence that Frankie was silenced for kicking up a stink about murderous abuse.

The film is in effect an action crime thriller as Fergus investigates and then seeks

revenge for his best friend's murder.

But it doesn't work.

Loach exposes the sordid world of private security contractors; hired mercenaries, given free rein to roam and rampage throughout Iraq as they provide security to the corporations who profit from the deconstruction and reconstruction of the country.

However, the film's pace and tone is uneven, the plot is clumsy and the characters lack depth.

Route Irish will not be

regarded as one of Loach's best works but it does contain some powerful moments and valuable insights: the waterboarding scene reveals the futility of torture as, ultimately, the tortured will give whatever answers the torturer wants.

The subject matter of *Route Irish* deserves a more considered treatment than that offered by Loach.

Socialist Worker

On May 5th

VOTE FOR PEOPLE POWER

**People Before Profit Alliance
candidates for the Assembly:**

Foyle – **EAMONN McCANN**

North Belfast – **DYMPNA McGLADE**

West Belfast – **GERRY CARROLL**

South Belfast – **BRIAN FALON**

Mid-Ulster – **HARRY HUTCHINSON**

THE PEOPLE Before Profit Alliance (PBPA) is standing candidates in the Assembly and Council elections on May 5th.

PBPA stands for mass protests and grass-roots campaigning to stop the attacks on working people by the Tories in London and the Executive parties in Stormont.

The elections give people a chance to send a clear message to the Stormont Executive that we reject the cuts they are planning and want a society that puts the needs of people before profit.

Behind all the talk of budget deficits across these islands lies a very basic injustice.

The recession was caused by the banks and big business.

Now the banks are back making profits and paying bonuses but we are still being asked to repay the public money that was used to bail them out.

That's what's behind the massive cuts to benefits, jobs, pensions and public services that are on their way.

Wages are frozen or in decline, jobs are being lost, pensions cut. VAT, rent and fuel are rising.

Public services are cut to the bone or sold off to private profiteers.

Older and disabled people are taking some of the worst hits – and all the time the bankers and the rich have seen their profits soar.

Tax Dodgers

The five biggest UK banks are set to make £52 billion in profit this year – that's a billion a week.

Bankers' bonuses this year were £7 billion.

Vodafone made £3.4 billion in profit last year and paid just 1% in tax – compare that to the tax the rest of us pay!

This is the real scandal.

Over £125 billion in tax is avoided by big business each year; a fraction of this would wipe out all the cuts proposed by the Tories.

There is no crisis or recession for the rich and powerful.

Instead, wealth is flowing into their back pockets and we are being made



March at Altnagelvin

to carry the cost.

Blame

The Stormont parties don't oppose the ConDem policies; instead they argue over how much and how fast to cut.

Not one of them has said that there shouldn't be cuts at all.

They have all been trying to pretend they oppose the cuts that ministers from other parties are bringing in, while hiding the cuts that their own party Ministers are imposing.

But does anyone seriously doubt that once the Executive meets after the election, they will go ahead with the budget?

Those cuts to the public sector will mean the loss of thousands of jobs for health-workers, teachers and classroom assistants?

Real Alternative

If elected to the Assembly, People Before Profit candidates will provide a radical opposition in the Assembly.

They will be a voice of opposition to the Executive's plans for cuts and a voice encouraging people to resist through people power on the streets.

In recent weeks we have seen university and college lecturers take strike action to protect jobs and pension rights, a huge demonstration in London against the cuts and student protests against increased fees and cuts.

These are examples of the kinds of

action PBPA candidates support.

They will use their position in the Assembly to help organise and magnify the voice of those opposed to making working people pay for the crisis caused by the banks.

For more information about the election campaign, see www.peoplebeforeprofit.ie or on facebook 'Eamonn McCann for the Assembly'.