

Socialist Worker

Labour-Fine Gael are wrecking the economy:

No EU-IMF Blackmail

Cancel the Debt!

AFTER THREE years of 'Austerity' – cuts in wages and public services – Ireland's crisis is getting worse.

The debts of the bondholders are now mixed with the national debt.

These debts have to be cancelled.

The bail-out for the Bankers is being paid for by cuts in the wages and services of workers who had nothing to do with causing the crisis.

The last budget took €1,000 million from workers but only €100 million from corporations.

The Universal Social Charge took €450 million in total from even the lowest-paid workers.

An asset tax on the super-rich of just 5% would take in €6,000 million but is not even considered by Labour and Fine Gael.

This is grossly unfair.

The debt burden is now €120,000 for every worker in the Irish economy.

Interest payments alone will be €10 billion a year by 2014.

That's as much as the entire education budget for a year.

This is unsustainable.

The unelected European Central Bank (ECB) and the IMF have repeatedly intervened in Irish economic affairs to prop up French and German Banks.

The Irish people have never been consulted by referendum, or by any other means, on whether we should pay these massive 'odious debts' (see box below).

This is undemocratic.

It shows the true nature of our ruling class.

Rich on strike

Bruton's attack on JLC rates for low paid workers and Howlin's slashing of services is meant to encourage investors with a low-wage, low-corporate-tax economy.

But these investors are on an investment strike.

In 2007, €50 billion was invested in the Irish economy; in 2010 this fell to €17 billion.

There is also 'capital flight'.

Last year €100 billion left the Irish

economy.

Deposits by corporations fell by 73% while ordinary deposits fell by only 13%.

Finance minister Noonan says we should all go shopping!

With what?

Decent jobs and wages would help boost the economy.

Capital controls could stop the flight of wealth.

If the rich are refusing to invest then we need to take their wealth to fund the jobs and services we need.

Enough!

Austerity is causing real harm to people.

Thomas Walsh was 65 when he died on a chair in an A&E corridor with 38 other people waiting for a bed in Tallaght Hospital.

There were no oxygen points on that corridor, no toilet, not even a sink.

EU-IMF in town...

- DEMAND JOBS, FAIRNESS & DEMOCRACY
- BAIL OUT PEOPLE NOT BANKERS
- SCRAP THE EU-IMF DEAL

ENOUGH!

DEMONSTRATE Saturday July 16th

2pm Garden of Remembrance, Parnell Square, Dublin

www.EnoughCampaign.org

Text JOIN to 0872886646

Why could Thomas not be put in a hospital bed on a proper ward?

In the last year 1,700 beds have been closed because of 'austerity' and Health Minister Reilly is closing A&E units across the country; cutting hospital budgets to bail out the bankers.

But across Europe there is an awakening of struggle inspired by the 'Arab Spring'. Tunisian and Egyptian mass movements demanding decent wages and living conditions have swept away their corrupt leaders.

They have demanded real democracy.

In Greece and Spain marches and demonstrations have grown in confidence swelling to tens of thousands and then millions to say 'Enough'.

Enough unemployment, enough bail-outs, enough corruption, cancel the debts.

The United Left Alliance convention saw over 300 enthusiastic members fill Liberty Hall in June.

Building a Left alternative in every community, helping to organise the fight for jobs and against cuts is now an urgent priority.

Building a strong demonstration against the EU-IMF visit on Saturday 16 July is an important step in building the spirit of resistance in Ireland.

We need to fight.

'ODIOUS DEBT' – Referendum Needed

In international law, Odious Debt is a 'national debt' where the lender knew that the money they lent was not to serve the interests of the people of that nation.

That debt is therefore considered 'odious' or immoral and does not need to be repaid.

Such debts are considered to be the personal debts of the regime or institutions that borrowed the money and not the debts of the state or the people.

Inside:



Labour's 100 Days of Shame, pages 4-5



'Indignant' Revolt in Spain, page 6

Cork protest against EU/IMF deal

IN JUNE, a meeting of over 50 people filled a local community hall in Charleville Co Cork to discuss the massive debt imposed on Ireland by the EU-IMF deal.

Organiser, Mick Ryan spoke of local anger at rising unemployment and emigration while money was wasted bailing out worthless bankers.

All agreed the Debt was not ours and should be cancelled by referendum.

The meeting agreed to support a protest in neighbouring Ballyhea every Sunday at 12 O'Clock until the debt is cancelled.

Rostrevor workers' raw deal

WHAT IS the reward for health-workers who stand up for patients and criticise poor standards at their workplace to inspectors from health watchdog HIQA?

Care workers at the disgraced Rostrevor Nursing home have been made redundant and even denied decent redundancy payments.

In protest, these healthcare workers occupied the nursing home to demand fair treatment.

Richard Boyd-Barrett, TD, has demanded Minister Reilly urgently find alternative jobs in properly funded HSE nursing homes for these workers who bravely reported elder abuse.

'CROKE PARK DEAL':

Time to fight the cuts

By KIERAN ALLEN

STATE OFFICIALS and union leaders have produced a joint report on the 'success' of the Croke Park agreement.

By this they mean the slashing of 5,300 jobs in the public sector.

Private Irish capitalists are refusing to invest and there is a need for the state to embark on a job creation programme.

Instead our leaders are collaborating in an economic 'austerity' programme drawn up by right-wing fanatics.

The aim is to slash wages and conditions for workers to boost profits.

But worse is to come.

The original Croke Park agreement which trade union members voted on was supposed to destroy a total of 17,000 jobs.

But the new Fine Gael-Labour government has turned the screw and wants to increase that to 25,000 job losses by 2015.

The original agreement also promised workers paid less than €35,000 they would share 'savings' to make up for pay cuts.

But Labour Minister for Public Sector Reform, Brendan Howlin, has just ruled this out.

So now workers are covering for the loss of ever more colleagues – while getting NOTHING in return.

Government Ministers have also been asked to promise no further public sector pay cuts in the next budget.

They have consistently refused.

The game plan of Croke Park is clear.

It is a programme designed to destroy union conditions that were built up over decades – and then to impose even more pay cuts.

That is why resistance is the best option for workers – in the public or private sector.

Anger at Bruton JLC plans



A demonstration at the Dáil on 22 June coincided with a ULA motion to protect the JLC system against Minister Richard Bruton's vicious attacks. During the recent elections SIPTU urged its members to vote Labour. Chants at the Dáil made the message clear: "Eamon Gilmore hear us clear, we don't want your cut-backs here." Shop steward Phyllis Kearns spoke to Socialist Worker: "If Sunday is meant to be an ordinary day why aren't the Dáil and the banks open? We have fought hard for our JLCs and REAs and now they're decimating them."

Labour attacks children in need



Richard Boyd-Barrett, TD, at June Dáil protest

By CREA RYDER

SPECIAL NEEDS educational provision is being slowly dismantled.

The number of hours allocated to Special Needs is being cut by 10% by Labour Party Education Minister, Ruairi Quinn.

Special Classes will also be cut, putting further burdens on overstretched teachers.

Waiting lists for Psychological

Assessments, Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy mean it is years before a child will actually get the resources in school that they require.

It was agreed to hold another protest on 13 July at 6pm outside the Dáil.

It was also agreed to have a Special Needs contingent on the ENOUGH protest against the EU-IMF deal on Saturday 16 July.

Save Loughlinstown Emergency Dept

By WILL SHANNON

A PACKED and angry meeting of hospital workers, local residents and health professionals expressed outrage at the proposed cuts to Loughlinstown hospital's A & E service.

Loughlinstown Hospital A&E serves 160,000 people in South County Dublin and Wicklow and treated 21,000 patients last year.

Cuts will cause further overcrowding in St. Vincent's hospital where patients are already waiting on trolleys.

The proposal to cut this service is the direct result of the IMF demanded cut of nearly €1bn to the health budget last year.

Richard Boyd Barrett said:

"It is utterly unacceptable to shut down the 24 hour emergency service in Loughlinstown Hospital.

These IMF cuts are going to kill people."

50 people took part in a follow up protest at the hospital two days later.

A further protest on Saturday 9 July will march from St Annes' Church in Shankill to the hospital.

Justice for Rachel

By JOHN LYONS

ON FRIDAY 17th June the 'Justice for Rachel Peavoy Campaign' held a lively two hour protest outside the Dublin City Council offices in Ballymun.

Rachel, a mother of two boys, died in early January in a flat in an almost empty block without proper heating during the coldest winter in Ireland for forty years.

The protestors, gathered behind a large banner, marched up and down the Ballymun Road with tremendous local support.

Catherine Greene,

spokesperson for the campaign said:

"This was in breach of Rachel's basic rights for re-housing.

"Despite living in intolerable conditions, her pleas for re-housing for her two young boys and herself were completely ignored by Dublin City Council and others who were in a position to help.

"We need justice for Rachel and all other vulnerable people who are living in unfit accommodation at present; Rachel's family and friends demand that this never happen again."

Protest at Dublin Bus HQ



By MICHAEL WALLACE

ON 19 June, up to 100 members of People Before Profit and local community groups staged a

protest outside Dublin Bus HQ in O'Connell Street.

Richard Boyd Barrett, TD, said: "People are becoming prisoners

in their own homes as a result of cuts in bus services."

"This is an attack on the most vulnerable people in our society.

"Cuts are a preparation for privatisation."

FG Transport Minister Varadkar is slavishly following EU/IMF demands to cut and privatise public services.

Already, a strong campaign of resistance has forced Dublin Bus to back down in some areas.

We must keep the pressure on and fight to protect all our public services.

By LEAH SPEIGHT

Many workers are disgusted with Bruton and Labour for attacking pay rates including Sunday rates and rates for experienced workers.

Speaking to Socialist Worker one worker, Betty Short said:

"I haven't had a pay raise in four years.

"I am here nine years and earn just over the minimum wage.

"They are also changing our shifts."

The REA for retail grocery entitles staff to sick-pay; Betty didn't know this and told us she has never received sick-pay.

Another worker in retail, Jessica Flanagan said:

"It's unfair we don't get paid correctly; I wasn't aware it was the law that you get time-and-a-half in retail.

"We only get time-and-a-bit."

Tara Farrell who works in an outlet that promotes 'fair trading' told us:

"We used to get double pay a few years ago, now it's time-and-a-half."

On Bruton's plans to cut wage rates:

"It would make such a difference even though it's a small amount; it's a struggle to pay bills now."

The unions must now stand up and fight to protect these vulnerable workers.

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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
SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

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Address.....

.....

Email.....

Phone.....



International News

'Outraged' Greeks: Democracy on the streets

By IAN MCDONELL

GREECE'S LARGEST labour union the GSEE has called another 48-hour general strike for June 28th-29th.

This is part of a series of strikes and protests currently eroding the government's resolve to impose a €28 billion IMF austerity deal.

Greece's ruling PASOK party are committed to slashing wages and services from ordinary people in order to pay off the debts of eurozone financiers.

The main political parties are in broad agreement.

However recent polls indicate that 80% of Greeks are opposed to making any more concessions to the EU-IMF.

The peaceful movement of millions of Greeks, 'The Outraged', has organised daily protests in Syntagma square outside parliament and demonstrations swelling to tens of thousands every Sunday night.

500,000 protested on 5 June.

The mass demonstrations have established assemblies



which pass resolutions deciding what demands the movement should pursue.

In particular, popular demands are that the government cancel the debt,

increase taxes on high earners and punish the responsible politicians.

The Greek people toppled an unelected fascist junta in 1973 and can bring down the

current IMF-ECB junta.

If the Greek people can force their government to cancel the debt, it will encourage other eurozone countries to cancel debts too.

The people of Ireland should copy their Greek counterparts and take to the streets on Saturday 16 July to protest against our own EU-IMF puppet government.

UK Strike: 'We need millions out'

By JIMMY SMYTH

AS WE go to press 750,000 public sector workers in Britain and Northern Ireland are set to strike in defence of their pensions.

The Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government has launched a major attack on public sector pensions including higher contributions for more years for lower pensions with the end of 'final salary' schemes.

While the 'Con-Dem' coalition government is pretending to negotiate, their real agenda became clear when chief secretary

to the Treasury, Danny Alexander (Lib Dem), told a think-tank in June that:

"It is absolutely wrong to pretend that public servants can be insulated from the pressures that everyone else is facing ... It is the employees who are benefiting from longer life and generous pensions, but it is the taxpayer who is picking up the tab."

Union leaders reacted angrily to these and other 'diktats' with PCS leader Mark Serwotka saying Alexander's comments, "prove we were right when we described the talks with the government as a farce". The strikes are being



'Unite the Resistance' rally in London. (Pic: Kelvin Williams)

organised by education and civil service unions, but are pulling in a wide range of support.

The strikes are a result of pressure from rank and file union members and activists who want unions

to co-ordinate industrial action for maximum impact.

Building among ordinary union members has been continuing in the run up to 30th June, with 800 trade unionists, students and activists meeting in London.

Speaking at the meeting, Mark Campbell, a lecturer at London Metropolitan University, captured the mood of the audience:

"30th June is a start – but it's just a start.

"We need millions out.

"That will be a general strike and that will bring this government down."

Councillor Hugh Lewis joins 'Irish Ship to Gaza'

By CLLR MELISA HALPIN

IN LATE June the Irish Ship-to-Gaza group set sail on the *Saoirse* as part of 'Freedom Flotilla 2'.

The 25 passengers on the *Saoirse* will sail along with 1,000 concerned citizens in ships from countries such as the USA, France, Canada, Italy and Spain.

The Flotilla is an international effort to undermine the stranglehold that the Israeli state continues to force upon the 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza.

Fuel, electricity, imports, exports and the movement of people in and out of Gaza have been choked off, leading



PBPA Cllr Hugh Lewis with Richard Boyd-Barrett, TD

to life-threatening problems of sanitation, health, water supply and transportation.

The people of Gaza have called on the peoples and

governments of the world to challenge an illegal, immoral, and irrational Israeli naval blockade that is causing incalculable human suffering.

The Flotilla is responding to that call. The primary aim is to bring urgent medical and building supplies and to help establish

a permanent sea lane between Gaza and the rest of the world.

Speaking to *Socialist Worker* Cllr. Hugh Lewis said:

"The average age in Gaza is 17.

"Gaza has over 45% unemployment and its people and economy have been strangled by Israel in an effort to dehumanise its 1.4 million inhabitants.

"We represent the majority of the world that want to see an end to this apartheid system."

"The recent democratic revolutions across the Middle East have given confidence to those oppressed in the region; we hope to bring that spirit with us."

Taliban talks: A defeat for Empire



By DONAL MCFHEARRAIGH

AFTER TEN years of slaughter with tens of thousands dead, Obama and the US ruling class have finally admitted defeat in Afghanistan.

They have been forced to seek negotiations with the Taliban.

A resistance movement largely made up of poor farmers has defeated the greatest military machine in human history.

The United States still has about 200,000 military personnel in Afghanistan, half of them troops, half of them contractors.

Far from being a 'peace president' Obama put over two-thirds of that number there.

The first surge was in 2009 with a second in 2010.

But the US still wants an agreement for permanent bases in Afghanistan to dominate central Asia.

The US still tries to paint the war as largely a civil war with the US military in the middle.

Karl Eikenberry, the US ambassador in Kabul, said last week:

"America has never sought to occupy any nation in the world.

"We are a good people."

In fact the source of all the violence is the US-led war and occupation.

The Taliban are not some medieval force; they are a reaction to 40 years of war and occupation, first by the Soviets then by the US.

The Taliban's main motivation is a desire to end foreign occupation of their country.

Many in the West fear a return of the Taliban and supported the war because it ended their repressive regime.

Ten years of war and slaughter with tens of thousands of civilians killed has proved that the rule of the West is far more brutal.

A defeat for the US in Afghanistan means a weakening of Imperialism everywhere.

The Arab revolutions show that real freedom and democracy is won, not by NATO bombs, but by people rising up themselves.

Usually rebelling against the very regimes installed and funded by the West.

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WHAT DO SOCIALISTS SAY?

Wouldn't we be better off without unions?

By JOHN MOLYNEUX

WHEREVER YOU go among working people in Ireland you hear complaints about the trade unions.

'The union let us down', 'the unions have done nothing', 'the unions are useless' etc.

There is no doubt that these complaints are justified.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions, SIPTU and the other unions have failed to give any kind of significant lead.

This failure is one of the main reasons why there has not so far been mass resistance by the Irish working class to the bank bail-outs and cuts.

For example, last week the FG/Labour Government introduced legislation to raise the retirement age for those under fifty to 68 years of age – a horrible attack on the lives of working people – without any attempt by the unions to mobilise opposition.

But just criticising unions on its own, even accurately, runs the risk of putting workers off joining or participating in the unions.

This can encourage employers and right-wing politicians who argue that the trade unions should be discarded: a serious mistake.

Falling trade union membership greatly weakens the workers' movement.

Instead it's necessary to make a distinction between the trade union leaders and the rank-and-file members of unions, and between the leaders and the union organisation as a whole.

A self-serving bureaucracy

Unions are run by a combination of elected leaders and appointed officials.

However, in almost every case these leaders and officials have one thing in common: they are paid much more than the workers they claim to represent, and have much better conditions of work.

Crucially their pay, conditions and jobs are not tied to those of their members.

If Jack O'Connor accepts pay cuts or redundancies for SIPTU workers, he doesn't take a pay cut or lose his job himself.

This leads to a situation where union officials develop different interests and attitudes from those of the rank-and-file; and they tend to sell out.

There are some individual exceptions, but it is important to understand that this is a general problem; it has existed in the trade union movement since its foundation, and not just in Ireland, but in all countries.

For example the British

TUC utterly betrayed the British General Strike of 1926.

The fundamental organisation of the working class

The ordinary trade union members, on the other hand, are a substantial and crucial part of the working class – the more conscious part of the class.

They are precisely the people amongst whom any mass movement for social change must be built.

But should we try to win over the workers without their unions?

No!

Trade unions are the most fundamental organisations of the working class.

Unionised workers have in general better pay, holidays, pensions and other benefits than similar workers in non-unionised jobs.

This is because of a history of organized struggle for better conditions.

Unions are essential for the defence of workers' basic class interests against the attacks of the employers.

If you are a worker in a factory or an office, a hospital or a building site, what organisation can link you and the maximum possible number of your fellow workers?

Clearly it is the union.

If you are a construction worker in Dublin or a teacher in Cork, what organisation can link you to the maximum number of construction workers or teachers in the rest of Ireland? Clearly it is the union.

Building resistance through a union

No other organisations in capitalist society, either in Ireland or internationally, bring together comparable numbers of workers.

If you want to defend your job, wages or conditions, and want to change society, you need to be a member of your appropriate trade union.

You must work within it to make it fight.

This is true whether the union leadership is straight or crooked, left-wing or right-wing.

When the officials take a step forward we should welcome it and use it to build the resistance.

If they take a step back or sell out we should expose them and oppose them.

Trade unions are not the only organisations workers need – they also need campaigns and a political party – but they are vital.

The working class is the main force for change in society.

If we want change we must all work in and with the unions.

Labour's 100 c



Gilmore and Kenny

By CLLR MELISA HALPIN

A YEAR ago the Labour Party made history by becoming the most popular party in the state for the first time.

Eamon Gilmore was also the most popular candidate for Taoiseach at 46%.

With Fianna Fáil driving Ireland into an EU-IMF gutter, many people looked to the Labour Party as the way out of our economic troubles.

Gilmore's popularity rose every time he made a left-wing speech against the 'Bank Bail-Out' and against swingeing pay cuts.

Instead of 'Frankfurt's Way' Labour prom-

ised to renegotiate the EU/IMF Deal and make the bondholders share the pain.

There were promises to guarantee every citizen equal access to health care, improve child literacy standards and increase the stock of social housing.

Labour also promised to make Ireland the best place to grow up and grow old.

All this helped Labour to win more seats than ever before.

They were in a fantastic position to stick by the people who had voted for them and remain out of Government.

This would have forced Fine Gael and the remnants of Fianna Fáil together in a

right-wing coalition that attempted to force working people to pay for the crimes of the bankers and developers.

Instead, just as in 1992, they walked into the arms of Fine Gael, and we have witnessed 100 days of shame.

Labour Betrayal

Despite Labour's election promises there has been no renegotiation of the EU/IMF Deal.

There has been no burning of the bondholders; they have been mostly paid off.

There has not even been a reduction in



Student March, 2010

Days of shame



versed, attacking JLC agreements was a vicious assault on 250,000 of the lowest paid workers.

With Gilmore silent, some Labour backbenchers made grand speeches in defence of the lowest paid.

But when it came to a vote in the Dáil to keep the wage agreements, Labour just fell in line with Fine Gael.

Quite shockingly, the first 100 days have also seen the pension age go from 65 to 68 for anyone currently under 51, with obedient support from Labour.

Labour Attack Education

Ruairi Quinn has been particularly shameful as Education Minister. Last November students protested in Dublin against the introduction of college fees last with Labour support.

However just five days before the election, Ruairi Quinn quietly changed this position.

Announcing that Ireland was "in receivership" (his favourite get out clause), Quinn claimed that fees were now inevitable.

The party that promised to improve literacy standards sat back and watched its own education minister cut both Special Needs Assistants and Resource Teaching hour's for schools.

The promises of putting children first and improving literacy led many concerned parents, teachers and special needs assistants to believe that Labour would be different.

Instead, they saw a cut of 10% in the provision of special needs for next September.

Labour Slash Health and Housing

Another shameful act of the Labour Party is their support for the new social housing policy.

One of the last acts of Fianna Fáil in Government was to bring in a new social housing policy.

The new Minister, Phil Hogan of Fine Gael made some changes, but in essence the policy remains the same.

There will be no new houses built, with thousands thrown off housing lists as the rules get tightened for those who actually 'need' a house.

And who is the Minister for Housing?

Labour's Willie Penrose.

And what about guaranteeing every citizen equal access to health care?

Our health service has been in crisis for well over a decade.

Hospital closures and cuts to services have seen tens of thousands protest in towns across the country.

The least we could have hoped for from Labour's participation in government was that things would not get worse.

Instead, Labour have stood by while FG Health Minister James Reilly threatens A&E's across the country and announced an end to the Fair Deal Scheme, the ONLY available state funded scheme for elderly people to access nursing homes.

Labour are supporting Reilly to privatise the health service with a Dutch model of marketisation ("Universal Health Insurance") that will move us toward US-style for-profit health chaos.

Resistance-Not reformism

As an electoral formation the Labour party's first ambition is always to get into government.

If the economy is booming Labour can win some reforms to help its supporters, but when the system is in crisis their only job is to manage capitalism in the interests of the rich.

Like Fine Gael, Labour are committed to the idea that governments cannot create jobs but only the conditions for job creation.

This essentially means attacking the living standards of working people to make it more favorable for capitalists to reinvest.

This explains why they are so willing to attack public services and workers pay as this is demanded by the logic of capitalism.

Like its social democratic counterparts across the EU the Irish Labour Party is fundamentally wedded to the capitalist system and this is the ultimate reason why they are acting against the interests of those who have voted for them.

The last 100 days have merely confirmed what socialists have always known.

It is now time for working people to organise themselves to fight for their rights.

Protesting against the EU-IMF deal on Saturday 16 July can mean the next 100 days will not be shameful as the last.

Sinn Féin: 100 days in opposition

By BRIAN O'BOYLE

AS RECENTLY as 2007 Sinn Féin were for a 'Pan Nationalist Alliance' aligning with the SDLP in the North and with Fianna Fáil in the south.

It is an aspiration towards a unified nation that stands behind all of Sinn Féin's concrete maneuvers.

Sinn Féin are supposedly advocates of democratic socialism in the south at the same time as they are implementing Tory cuts backs in the North.

This inconsistency can only be squared once one understands that it is the needs of the nation that comes first.

The nation ranks 'above' the interests of all classes and all manner of sacrifices and betrayals are fine as long as the green path to that goal remains in view



– the working class can wait.

This explains why Sinn Féin can tack left when the mood of the working class demands it. But it also explains why they will never challenge the logic of capitalism.

Like Labour, Sinn Féin is ultimately interested in parliamentary success and keeping their national ruling class happy.

To form coalitions, Sinn Féin try to appear respectable by distancing themselves

from working class action in the hopes that they can do a deal with the establishment.

The Irish working class has just come through seventy years of being duped by the economic nationalism of Fianna Fáil.

Pulling on the green jersey means getting in bed with the Irish ruling class and this is the last thing we need as we try to build a more equitable society based on real socialism not empty rhetoric.

Riots in East Belfast: Blighted by poverty



East Belfast's Newtownards Road, the site of the riots.

By SEÁN MITCHELL

LARGE PARTS of East Belfast have been left behind in 'the new Northern Ireland'.

Whilst this is not a rationale for sectarianism, poverty and inequality certainly feed it.

The riots at the end of June were orchestrated sectarian violence – but also an outcry of anger against the poverty faced by many in the area.

Any effective challenge to sectarianism has to begin by recognising this.

Until the middle of the last century, there were tens of thousands of jobs in East Belfast – the shipyard alone once employed 30,000 people.

Over the last fifty years jobs have been decimated.

What is left of industry in the area has been further eroded by the economic crisis.

Since 2008, thousands of jobs have gone in the few remaining factories, like Shorts and Bombardier.

New employment has largely been low-paid and precarious work in call centres and the service industry.

This trend will continue in the new 'Titanic Quarter' that has been trumpeted as a solution to social deprivation and joblessness.

In 2009, average gross weekly earnings in East Belfast were £30 less than 2008 and 14% less than the Belfast average.

The starkest divide in East Belfast isn't between Catholics and Protestants, but between the affluent and the poor.

Six wards, including Ballymacarrett and The Mount where the riots exploded, are ranked among the most deprived 10% in Northern Ireland.

Three, Gilnahirk, Hillfoot and Stormont, rank in the top 10% most affluent wards.

In The Mount, nearly half of school pupils are eligible for school meals, meaning their family lives on benefits, or earns less than £13,910 per year.

This compared to just 2% receiving school meals in Gilnahirk.

In 2008, life expectancy for people in the Stormont district was 7 years and 8 months longer than those living in The Mount, just two and a half miles away.

Many workers, in East Belfast and beyond, have not benefitted from the peace process and recently have seen their situation worsen.

Youth unemployment is rampant – over a third of JSA claimants in East Belfast are 18-24 years old.

The riots are another example of the crisis within Unionism.

Where once Unionism could offer the illusion of

advancement for Protestant workers, the DUP and UUP are now reduced to sectarian manoeuvring, and are complicit with the nationalist parties in a massive programme of cuts.

A year ago, Peter Robinson lost his Westminster seat for East Belfast in a reaction to the double jobbing and dodgy financial dealings of 'Swish Family' Robinson.

Peter and Iris Robinson together made £572,000 a year and owned homes in Belfast, East London and Florida.

The contrast between the avarice of politicians like the Robinsons and the poverty faced by the Protestant workers they pretend to represent couldn't be greater.

Robinson's seat went to the Alliance Party, which represents the upwardly mobile, suburban middle class.

The Alliance Party talks vaguely about uniting Protestants and Catholics and overcoming sectarianism, but its Assembly manifesto was more right-wing economically than any other party.

It called for water charges, higher tuition fees, lower corporation tax and increased private sector management of the public sector.

Between the 2010 election in which it ousted Robinson and the recent election, its share of the vote declined by 10%.

Should class struggle erupt on the streets and in the workplaces, the Alliance Party will be its first victim, with events and circumstance ushering them back to the sidelines.

Much has been made of the collapse of the PUP in East Belfast.

It is suggested that the PUP had articulated the concerns of Protestant workers, its demise leaving them with no voice.

But the PUP collapsed because of its failure to articulate the concerns of Protestant workers in the first place.

Its feeble attempts to raise economic issues were marred by sectarianism, ongoing links with the UVF and its defence of that organisation's murderous behaviour.

Only a clear, non-sectarian class politics can give voice and coherence to working class anger.

The task of the left in the weeks and months ahead is to build a movement in the workplaces and in the hardest hit working-class communities that can concretely raise class demands that cut across the sectarian divide.

We have to fight hard to unite workers, in East Belfast and elsewhere, to fight for the resources that are being robbed from us every day.

'Indignant' Revolt in Spain

Michael Wallace describes the spread of the spirit of the 'Arab Spring' to Spain and how Ireland's protests against the EU-IMF deal can be the beginnings of our own revolt against the dictatorships of Capital.

On 12 June, protesters began to dismantle the sprawling tent camp in central Madrid, the symbol of resistance and defiance to the combined austerity attacks of the bankers and politicians.

The Spanish ruling class thought they could breathe a sigh of relief.

How wrong they were!

Juan Lopez, a spokesman for the 15 May movement of protests against austerity and corruption, fired off a warning: "The Madrid camp was...the flame that set the movement afire.

"Now we must go another way.

"This is just the beginning of the citizen's movement."

An early indication of this new spirit of determination was on 14 June, when over 4,000 peaceful protesters successfully blocked the gates of the Catalan Parliament.

Though the corporate media and the two-party political establishment attempted to proclaim the end of the movement over supposedly 'violent' incidents outside the Parliament, they were completely discredited.

Footage came to light showing plain-clothes police infiltrating the pickets to provoke incidents among the protesters.

These incidents completely discredited the media and right-wing campaign.

The blockade was to prevent MPs from entering and voting on the most savage attack on social spending since Franco, involving 10% cuts in public spending and social welfare.

This was a remarkable show of solidarity with activists in Athens, who also encircled the Greek parliament at the same time, where MPs were to debate their latest austerity measures.

'The Indignants'

On 19 June, the results of the Movement's new change of tactics were truly astonishing. Organised by the Movement of the Indignant, almost one million people protested in over fifty massive demonstrations across the country.

Many gathered to fight against the so-called 'Pact of the Euro', agreed by EU leaders and bankers in March.

It threatens even greater cuts to wages, pensions and social benefits all across the 'Eurozone', including the Irish working class.

A staggering 300,000 people took part in the Barcelona demo alone, chanting anti-capitalist slogans such as: 'Make the bankers pay', and: 'Like Greece — general strike now!'

Another 150,000 marched in Madrid, 80,000 in Valencia, and 50,000 in Seville.

The change in the point of resistance and struggle was visible everywhere.

Massive columns of people descended on the city centres from the outskirts, successfully organised by new neighbourhood assemblies, who now meet regularly to plan a course of action.

One such example of this new form of struggle is the movement against house repossessions and evictions.

For instance, hundreds of



protesters stopped a Lebanese family from being evicted from their home in the Tetian district of Madrid.

The family were unable to make mortgage payments after the father was made unemployed two years ago.

The inept government moratorium on 'some' mortgages excludes the most vulnerable families, while banks often refuse to sign up to it.

Widespread mortgage fraud and abusive contract terms to help maximise banker profits fuel the injustice and anger of those threatened with repossession.

In the first three months of 2011 alone, 15,400 families were evicted from their homes. The movement, only a couple of months old, has already halted evictions across the country.

This remarkable resistance stands in stark contrast to the two largest trade unions in Spain, the CCOO and UGT, who, though they had organised a highly successful general strike in September 2010, failed miserably to follow this up with further industrial action.

Worse still, they then signed the notorious 'social pact', with

the government and employers, which reinforced attacks on workers and raised the retirement age from 65 to 67.

If the Spanish trade union leadership has their 'social pact sell-out', the Irish trade union leaders have their 'Croke Park sell-out'.

The Irish pension age was also increased to 68, quickly rushed through the Dail in June with the support of Labour, and the silence of the union leadership.

Political bankruptcy is rife too.

The Spanish Prime Minister Zapatero's ruling Socialist Party (PSOE) and Gilmore's Labour Party also share a lot in common too.

While Labour worship at the altar of austerity and grovel at the feet of the EU/IMF, Zapatero has hammered workers, pensioners and the unemployed, while dutifully refusing to increase taxes on the wealthy.

Spain and Ireland

As with Ireland, the Spanish economy lies in tatters. The numbers without a job soared to 21.3% recently, a 14 year high,

and almost half of the population under 25 are out of work.

Spain's unemployment rate is the highest in the industrialised world.

Spanish debt as a percentage of GDP is expected to reach 88% by 2013, while there is an estimated €165 billion in potential toxic bank debt.

A bailout for Spain would be impossible for the EU/IMF as it's the seventh largest economy in the world.

The country's collapse under a weight of government and banking debt would almost certainly spell the end for the neoliberal 'euro project'.

In both Ireland and Spain, the ruling classes have attempted to force the terrible burden of private banking debts on the backs of the working class.

In Spain, the people are fighting back, taking inspiration from events in Egypt and Greece.

As the terrified autocrats in the EU/IMF watch with horror, the people across the EU are becoming an irresistible, unstoppable force in their demands for general strikes, an end to austerity and to the tyranny of the markets.

In Spain the combination of

high youth unemployment, betrayal by the union bureaucracy and Labour Party and inspiration from the Arab Spring combined to produce a new movement.

Spain has a strong autonomist left and many social centres and a lot of the activists who called the initial protest in Madrid have been involved in social housing campaigns.

So there were networks of individuals organized nationally who could call protests.

Autonomism

Autonomism is the idea that social movements should develop organically. As Chris Harman explains:

"The autonomists hold, essentially, that each individual or group should protest in their own way, without bowing down to any centralised, still less hierarchical, structure.

"Any form of self activity is as valid as any other and if they are allowed to develop freely can constitute a 'swarm' or 'multitude' of different challenges to the present system that can destroy its hold.

"Such views do not differ essentially from the arguments used by anarchists during the time of Marx and Engels."

So although people talk about 'new ways of protesting' and state that 'political organisation is outdated' these arguments have arisen whenever a new movement arrives, whether in the time of Marx or during the upsurge in May 1968.

The problem is though that when a movement rises it can be easy to put aside tactical and political differences for the sake of unity but questions will inevitably arise.

How do we deal with police violence?

What is the nature of the State?

The anti-globalisation movement, like the movements in the 1960s, when faced with these and other tactical questions began looking for political means by which to move the protests forward.

In Brazil the movement fell in behind Lula, in Italy behind Refondazione Comunista. Once in power though these parties let the movement down.

What's the answer?

To oppose reformist or top-down political formations is not to prohibit or exclude political organisational forms.

The opposite of bad 'top-down' political organisation is 'bottom-up' or revolutionary organisation.

All parties are not the same.

A revolutionary party is not something separate from the movement but is the driving force, a body that should unite the most determined elements in the movement so that they can co-ordinate their actions and learn from one another and from the whole history of previous working class movements and revolutionaries.

History has shown the cost of activists not constructing such an organisation.

Here in Ireland, with a rotten union bureaucracy who are tied to Labour, the fight back will begin on the streets and hopefully begin to lift the spirits of the union rank and file.

The working class has the great opportunity to fight back when the EU/IMF visit Dublin 16 July.



Tony Cliff: A life in the struggle

Tony Cliff, founder of what became the Socialist Workers Party, was a tireless fighter for socialism – here Ian Birchall, author of a new biography of Cliff, tells his story.



Tony Cliff speaking to striking miners in Bentley, south Yorkshire, in January 1985

TONY CLIFF was one of the most remarkable individuals on the British left in the later 20th century.

Cliff (originally called Ygael Gluckstein) was a Jew, born in Palestine in 1917.

His parents were very much part of the Zionist community.

Even as a child, Ygael had a passion for equality.

He was shocked that there were no Arab children in his school.

That shock set him on the road to being a revolutionary.

He joined a left-wing Zionist organisation, and at the same time began to question the disastrous policies of Stalin's Russia.

In 1938, along with a few comrades,

he set about building the Revolutionary Communist League.

It never had more than about 20 members.

But it contained both Jews and Arabs and tried to offer a socialist internationalist alternative to Zionism.

Permanent Revolutionary

In 1946 he moved to London, to fight imperialism at its core.

But the British authorities did not make Cliff welcome.

For four years he lived in Ireland, separated from his wife Chanie and their first child.

Cliff joined the British Trotskyist organisation, the Revolutionary Communist Party.

But Cliff believed the analysis Trotsky had left at his death did not fit the post-war world.

As Cliff used to put it, it was like finding your way round the Paris metro with a map of the London tube.

In particular Cliff was caught up in the debate about the nature of Russian society under Stalin.

Was it some form of workers' state, in a distorted form, or had the heritage of the 1917 revolution been destroyed?

But Cliff's basic argument was simple: "If the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class, then you cannot have a workers' state without the workers having power to dictate what happens in society."

A Russian worker was a victim of the

same system as a worker in Britain.

Cliff's concern was always to hold to the fundamentals of Marxism, but to relate them to the world around him.

As he put it years later: "If you sit on Marx's shoulders you see far, but if you sit on Marx's shoulders and close your eyes, you don't see very far at all."

1968

Around 1960, things began to change.

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the events of 1968, with the student revolt and the general strike in France, enthused Cliff.

For over 20 years revolutionaries had been isolated.

Now there was a chance to build the

International Socialists, as the group was now called, into an open revolutionary party.

In 1977 the International Socialists became the Socialist Workers Party.

The party played a key role in building the Anti Nazi League, which made a real impact in confronting and turning back the racist right.

Now the wave of industrial militancy was beginning to decline.

With great sadness, Cliff had to argue to his own comrades that things were getting tougher and that excessive optimism could damage the organisation.

Like all of us, Cliff had his weaknesses and made mistakes.

His ferocious defence of his ideas meant that he sometimes quarrelled violently with his comrades.

Throughout the miners' strike of 1984–85, Cliff addressed meetings in support of the strike (picture, above).

When it ended in defeat he must have felt it was unlikely he would see a revolution in his lifetime.

Yet he carried on speaking, writing and above all encouraging younger comrades.

He was still addressing meetings a few weeks before his death in 2000.

At a time when universities are closing down their history departments, the socialist movement has to take responsibility for its own history.

I hope my book will be a small contribution.

(Full article: www.socialistworker.co.uk)

Tony Cliff: A Marxist for his Time by Ian Birchall is available pre-publication only from Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop, www.bookmarksbookshop.co.uk.

It's stg£22 in hardback or stg£15 in paperback.

Many of Cliff's writings are available on the Marxist Internet Archive at <http://bit.ly/cliffarc>

REVOLUTIONARY CLASSICS:

Socialist Worker continues our series on classic novels with Paul O'Brien reviewing *If This is a Man* by Primo Levi.

WHEN, OVER thirty years ago, I read *If This is a Man* by Primo Levi, which details his experiences in Auschwitz concentration camp, I knew I had made the acquaintance of an extraordinary writer and a rare and wonderful human being.

Levi was born in Italy in 1919 and joined the resistance movement during the war.

He was captured in 1944 and sent to Auschwitz.

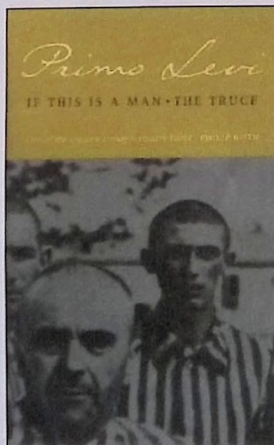
In the camp Levi observed everything. He drew on all his mental energy to memorise every detail, in case he should survive.

His book is an explanation of the past and a warning for the future.

The survivors of the extermination camps were not the true witnesses.

Those in full possession of the truth were the drowned, the submerged, the annihilated.

Primo Levi speaks for them – the Jews, the gypsies,



and the homosexuals who were erased from history without a trace.

This book is about heroes, about men and women who refused to be reduced to beasts, who somehow found the strength to retain their humanity.

Levi does not avoid describing the terrible things

the inmates did to survive.

With real humanity he describes the 'grey zone' – where compromises had to be made – the domain of the privileged prisoner.

Death by starvation was the prisoners' normal destiny.

To obtain extra food, privilege was necessary and collaboration with the system was the main way to obtain it.

Levi tries not to judge, but to explain, and in the process he unwraps layer by layer the human condition.

His friendship with Lorenzo, who risked his life to bring Levi an extra soup ration each day, is a triumph of human dignity.

During his life Levi was never recognised as a literary writer – he was pigeonholed as a witness and chronicler of the Holocaust.

He was more than that; he was a beautiful writer, a lover of words and poetry – a Dante of our time.

Defending Marx?

James O'Toole reviews Marxist critical literary theorist Terry Eagleton's new book, *Why Marx was Right* published by Yale University Press.

TERRY EAGLETON'S new book, *Why Marx was Right*, is one of a number of recent releases that tackle the question of the validity of Marx's main ideas and their continued relevance for the 21st Century.

Eagleton very eloquently tackles a number of common objections to Marx: that his ideas have no relevance in 'post-industrial Western societies' or that 'Marxism is a form of determinism' and 'is a dream of utopia'.

In the course of doing this, Eagleton also reveals Marx as a person whose passion for human emancipation and fluidity of thought is obvious.

However there is a problem with the book in the defensive nature of the presentation.

The author bends the stick too far, when for example he

Terry Eagleton

why
marx
was
right

states that "Marxism holds out no promise of human perfection" and "envy, aggression, domination, possessiveness and competition would still exist" under socialism.

Now I'm no utopian but

I think that Marx's theory of alienation and his great hope for our future ability to collectively control our social environment deserves a more positive and optimistic formulation.

Eagleton has a habit of presenting Marx's ideas and then offering an objection such as the need for a police force because of certain inevitable crimes.

He then presents himself as really clever for spotting these supposed blind spots.

With friends like these!

I would recommend that anyone interested in an introduction to Marx's ideas start with either the recent *Marx and the Alternative to Capitalism*, by Kieran Allen, *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx*, by Alex Callinicos or *How Marxism Works* by Chris Harman.

Socialist Worker

East Belfast riots – Anger diverted into sectarianism

FIGHT THE TORIES!

in Stormont & Westminster



Construction workers from East Belfast protest at job cuts in April.

By GORETTI HORGAN

THE RETURN to the streets of organised loyalist gangs in paramilitary regalia, as seen during the UVF attacks on the Short Strand in June, is a sinister development.

One that raises fears of paramilitary-organised sectarian violence over the summer months.

There have been warnings for some time now from people in loyalist working-class areas that the UVF were recruiting, organising and training young people for a summer of discontent.

There is no doubt, (see page 5 inside), that working-class Protestants have much to be discontented about.

As Socialist Worker regularly points out, the narrowing gap between poverty levels in Protestant and Catholic sections of

the working class is not because Catholics are better off, but because Protestants are worse off.

But this is not what the UVF's discontent is about.

The UVF wants to flex its muscles on two major issues.

It fears that the Historical Enquiry Team, which is investigating unsolved murders going back to the 1970s, is about to use 'supergrass' evidence to arrest large numbers of its members.

And it wants funding from the government to employ its members as 'community workers', as an ongoing reward for its ceasefire.

It has warned again and again that it 'won't be able to stop' sectarian violence if it's not given more resources.

What this means, of course, is that it will organise sectarian violence if it doesn't

get what it wants.

Over a decade since the Belfast Agreement, sectarian divisions remain rife in the North. Despite the rhetoric of politicians on all sides about 'a new Northern Ireland', the Assembly is a barrier to change, institutionalising sectarianism in how it operates.

This means that issues like education, health and public transport can end up entangled in sectarian rows.

To make matters worse, workers here are facing unprecedented attacks, with jobs and services being slashed.

In this situation, workers can blame politicians, bosses and bankers – or they can blame other workers.

Whether it's migrant workers or 'the other side', there will be those trying to get us to blame each other for the crisis in capitalism.

This is easily done during the Orange marching season.

In the wake of the attacks on Short Strand, and the 'internment' of Marian Price of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, justifiable outrage is felt by many; at the attacks themselves, at the feeble response of the PSNI, and at the hypocrisy and double standards of the media.

Militarists in the nationalist community ('dissidents' in the language of the establishment) will attempt to channel this outrage into support for their dead-end strategy of re-launching an 'armed campaign'.

This must be rejected as delusional, dangerous and counterproductive.

The Socialist Workers Party aims to unite workers from across every religious and ethnic community across Ireland, North and South, to resist the cuts and fight for a new society free from sectarianism.

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East
Belfast
Poverty:



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Workers
strike to
defend
pensions:
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We believe Protestant workers have as much a stake in that fight as anyone, and call upon the trade union movement urgently to mobilise against sectarianism and against the wider attacks on working people.

Over the summer months, there is potential for a return to large-scale sectarian violence. But there is potential also for a united fightback.

This autumn should see massive strikes by workers across the North with unions such as NIPSA, FBU and UCU all balloting for industrial action.

This type of strike action has the potential to stop the Tories (whichever flag they hide under) in their tracks and unite workers from all communities.

It is in the heat of common struggle that the chains of sectarianism can be broken.