

Socialist Worker

As Budget Comes Around We Need To

REVOLT

AGAINST AUSTERITY

ON FRIDAY 11 November Michael D. Higgins became the 9th president of Ireland.

True to form, his inaugural speech was full of flowery language about building a more 'inclusive and profoundly ethical society'.

He even invoked the memory of James Connelly.

But Connelly would have been appalled by this inauguration that was full of ruling class pomp and ceremony.

Higgins car was flagged by a 30 strong motor cycle cavalcade, a 21 gun salute was fired in his honour and a number of jets were scrambled to mark the occasion.

While the rest of us are told to live within our means, cost seems to have been the last thing on the organisers minds as a chair worth €3,500 was commissioned for the signing and Higgins spent the evening eating caviar with 1,700 of Ireland's most influential people.

Among the revellers were disgraced former minister Ray Burke, the head of the Irish Bank Resolution Corporation (Anglo) Alan Dukes, and Kevin Cardiff the secretary general in the Department of Finance.

Cardiff, who has just presided over a €3.6 billion accounting blunder, is the government's nomination for a plush new post



in the European Court of Auditors.

Ordinary workers are continually told about the virtues of personal responsibility, but top civil servants are free to make any number of errors so long as they work loyally to serve the interests of the rich.

Over the last three years, Cardiff has been at the forefront of the government austerity policies, and it is a reward for this service that sees him heading off to Brussels.

His last task before he goes is to help construct one last budget and the pain for ordinary families

will be considerable.

According to minister for public expenditure, Brendan Howlin, €700 million will be slashed from social expenditure next year alone.

On top of this the government are hoping to raise €600 million from so-called Labour Activation Policies and a series of smaller amounts from reducing payments to single mothers, mature students and people in rented accommodation.

The precise details of these policies are yet to be announced but it is clear that the scapegoating of marginalised and vulnerable people is set to continue.

Labour Activation Policies are particularly nasty.

Currently there are 450,000 people on the live register and the trick is to blame the victims by accusing them of being work shy.

The real reasons for the massive unemployment hardly matter as the intention is to accuse people of not searching hard enough to find a job, before cutting their dole payments and forcing them into so called jobs-bridge programmes.

All of this is designed to reduce the pay and conditions of ordinary families and leave the rich untouched.

The rich have been allowed

to transfer their property to their spouses so that NAMA does not seize their assets.

Last year the operating profits of non-financial corporations increased from €35.2 billion to €37.8 billion but investment fell from €7.5 billion to €5.8 billion.

In other words, the rich are cutting investment, stoking up further unemployment and hoarding their money. And this government does nothing about it.

Our kids are being deprived of a decent education and our hospital services are being vandalised – so the bankers and speculators can rest easily in their beds.

It is time we took a leaf out of the Greek people's books.

To date over 3 million Greeks have engaged in some form of resistance whether it is a protest, an occupation or a general strike.

This is the model that we need to follow in Ireland and the Dublin Trades Council Protest is the perfect opportunity to start.

On 26 November the Trades Council will have a protest against austerity starting at 12pm from Parnell Square.

That will be followed by an assembly hosted by the Alliance against Austerity where march participants will discuss proposals for

further action.

Proposals should be sent to allianceagainstausterity@gmail.com at least 24 hours before the march.

This needs to be the start of a sustained period of working class fight back that takes us up to the budget and into the New Year.

A Festival of Protests:

March Against Austerity

Sat 26 Nov 12pm

Assemble Parnell Sq, Dublin. Organised by the Dublin Council of Trades Unions. Supported by ICTU, SIPTU, INTO, UNITE, ULA, Enough Campaign and more.

Spectacle of Defiance

Sat 3 Dec 2pm

Assemble City Hall, Dame St. Organised by community sector workers, groups and caqmpaigns

Protest on Budget Day

Tue 6 Dec

Dail Eireann, Kildare St

Dublin Council of Trades Unions Announces Pre-budget Protest



Priors Hall: The Dream that turned into a Nightmare

By SINEAD MC CORMACK
(Priors Hall resident)

LIKE MANY I believed it beneficial to own property in order to have some security for the future. I now find myself with a home that is unsafe, uninsurable, uninhabitable and now unsellable.

Problems began as early as 2006 when the High Court ordered the site to be closed due to a breach in health and safety regulations. Then in 2009 we heard of fire safety issues that led to Dublin City Council moving all of their tenants out of Priors Hall.

Last month Dublin City Council (DCC) went to the High Court and gained an evacuation order on the entire complex. These fire safety issues also led to the insurance company pulling out leaving the entire building uninsured. On-going investigations also suggest structural issues in relation to the outer walls.

The problems seem to be endless and it seems unbelievable that we have been allowed to live in a building that is clearly unsafe for the last four years. Thomas McFeely of Coalport Ltd was ordered to carry out works to remedy the fire safety issues but in court on 4 November he was found in breach of this order.

This is some relief to the many residents who had no confidence in his abilities to do such works. DCC spoke of

approaching the minister for the environment in regard to funding any future works.

Facing a 30-35 year mortgage on a property that is clearly sub-standard, unsafe and uninsurable is simply unacceptable. While some banks have offered a three month moratorium we will still be subject to paying the interest for this period.

The government needs to step in and offer some real and lasting solutions.

The Taoiseach needs to address this issue and not use Priors Hall as a political tool.

I was sickened that rather than making a positive contribution to the problem he would prefer to focus on the fact that Thomas McFeely was an ex-hunger striker in order to get one up on Gerry Adams.

As share holders in many banks the government has the power to offer permanent solutions, not just quick fixes.

We should be offered mortgage transfers to safe secure properties, even debt forgiveness on the mortgages so that we can start again. These are real lasting solutions. Sympathy and understanding are only hollow answers to this dreadful situation. We only want what is right and we will continue to fight until we get it.

This is just the beginning for the residents of Priors Hall but we are prepared for a long road and we will walk it together.

By BRIAN O'BOYLE

FOLLOWING A constructive meeting of left-wing activists on 5 November, the Dublin Trades Council (DTC) has announced a pre-budget protest for 26 November. Mick O'Reilly (Vice President of the DTC) called the meeting in order to facilitate the widest possible support for a series of protests that aim to reverse the policy of austerity, shift taxation onto the wealthy and stimulate the economy with a jobs investment programme.

As well as members of the trades council there were members of the Occupy Dame Street movement, various trades unions (SIPTU, Unite, Mandate, TUI) and activists from the ULA, the



Socialist Workers Party, the Socialist Party, People Before Profit and Sinn Fein.

The discussion was lively and there was a general consensus that the protest must be the beginning of a process of resistance.

Speaking from the floor, Richard Boyd Barrett (PBP TD) argued that "we must aim to link the grass roots trade union movement to the spirit of the Occupy Movement, and we must learn from their methods of building

inclusive resistance."

Unite the Resistance will host a general assembly directly after the official protest with the aim of enthusing wide layers of people for a mass struggle against the government's austerity.

Students Union calls for Occupation



ULA on the March

By MICHAEL WALLACE

officialdom to abandon their long standing adherence to ineffective lobbying. A left wing student activist campaign called Free Education for Everyone are urging all students to build for the USI march.

FEE plans to form a radical contingent on the march and argue for the mass of students to engage with the USI's planned occupation.

Join the FEE block at 12 P.M. at the ambassador theatre and resist these vicious education cuts being imposed by the FG/Labour government and the 'Troika'.

This marks a shift towards a more radical politics and should be welcomed by students. Some unions are even reported to have bought up to 300 tents in what is likely to be a mass campout.

Students should advertise this action as much as possible in order to bring the revolutionary spirit of the global Occupy Movement to the streets of Dublin.

Facing the prospect of inflated registration fees and cuts to supportive grants, students must take to the streets and encourage USI's

THE DUBLIN West by-election has again revealed a steady shift to the Left in Irish politics.

United Left Alliance candidate Ruth Coppinger scored an impressive 21% of the vote, only narrowly missing out on a seat in the Dail.

Topping the poll was Patrick Nulty, described in the corporate media as a Labour 'rebel.'

Nulty, widely regarded as the most left wing member of the Labour party, had promised to "stand up to wealthy vested interests."

However, the newest Labour TD immediately voted with the FG/Labour government to block a Dail debate on paying out €750 million to unsecured bondholders.

The further disintegration of the conservative right was spectacular.

The combined vote of FG/FF was down 6.5% from last February.

Fine Gael, the governing party of austerity, saw its vote plummet to just 12%, whilst

Fianna Fail is now wiped out in the capital despite having its entire organisation camped out in Dublin 15.

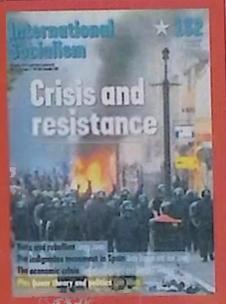
This result is a tremendous boost for the ULA, and forms a strong foundation for establishing the Alliance as the only true left wing alternative on a local and national basis.

International Socialism

★ A quarterly journal of socialist theory

Essays on:

"No one represents us": the 15 May movement in the Spanish state; Global cities, global workers in the 21st century; Once more (with feeling) on Marxist accounts of the crisis and more



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By IAN MCDONNELL

IN RESPONSE to speculation that the registration fee will be increased to €5000 in the next budget, the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) has called a protest in Dublin on 16 November.

This is a welcome move given the draconian cuts currently being imposed on the education system.

In a major departure from the conservatism of prior years, the USI have called for an occupation of Molsworth Street after the demonstration.

Workers Protest Against Bin Service

By LEAH SPEIGHT

ON 6 November bin workers held a lively protest outside Dublin City Hall.

The workers were outraged by the treatment they received at the hands of their employers, Dublin City Council.

At the end of September letters were issued to the workforce informing them of the privatisation of the bin service.

Nothing was given to workers in terms of re-deployment, offers of redundancy or options to stay in their current section.

One of the workers, Ciaran Doyle

said, "It's disgraceful to be treated so badly after 34 years of service and everything we have given them."

"They haven't even bothered to tell us about re-deployment, wages or anything."

Another long time worker of 32 years James Bohan said, "I am basically protesting against this privatisation, against the way men are treated and not being told what their terms and conditions are going to be."

"What's being done is totally undemocratic and it just shouldn't be happening."

A Labour Court hearing for the workers won't now happen until

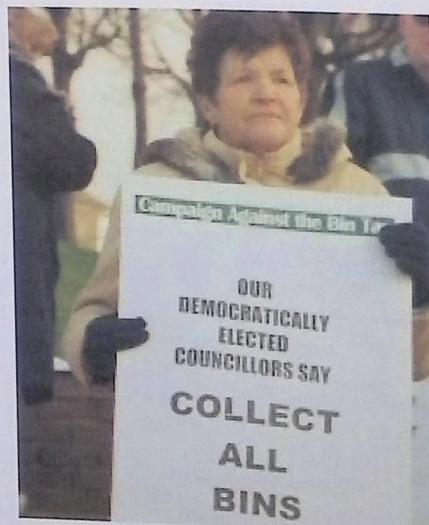
after 5 December, the date that the bin service will be handed over to private companies.

As a result management will be able to go ahead with the privatisation.

The similar decision by South Dublin County Council to privatise vital public services has resulted in extra charges and the loss of a waiver for low-income families.

The bin workers will protest again outside Dublin City Council on 21 November.

They need public support to stop privatisation and to help protect their jobs and services.



Vulture Capitalists' Circle NAMA

By BRIAN O'BOYLE

AS THE Eurozone debt crisis intensifies, a number of hedge fund and private equity firms have set their sights on the Irish property market. To date, the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) has shifted around €78 billion of distressed loans off private bank balance sheets. Everything from houses in Leitrim to London skyscrapers has become part of the national (bad bank) portfolio, and a number of well-known venture capitalists have moved in to make a killing. Venture capital specialises in stressed and impaired assets, buying them at rock bottom prices before stripping them down to squeeze out profit. Alternatively they may try to sell companies before loading them with extra debts. Either way the end result is less employment and assets raided for private reward. Over the last two years

the Irish elite have worked hard to develop favourable insolvency and restructuring regimes. Unlike the case in southern Europe it is relatively easy to shed workers under Irish law and this is one of the chief factors attracting these hedge funds. Already, Strategic Value Partners has bought a €1.3 billion stake in the Quinn Group, whilst a variety of equity firms have bought up €3.75 billion of Eircom debt. According to one industry insider 'Eircom is hedge fund heaven' and the vultures now have their sights on Bank of Ireland. Speculators including WL Ross and Co. have recently acquired more than 35% of the company. This is extremely bad news for Irish tax payers, who will be forced to make up any shortfall in NAMA. Having already paid off Irish bankers, workers are now being asked to 'pay on the double', whilst the most parasitic capitalists lick their lips in anticipation.



The Eurozone's Greek Tragedy

By BRIAN O'BOYLE

ON 26 October Europe's rulers once again tried (and failed) to solve their economic crisis. Having quietly decided that Greece was now beyond saving, the key objective was to prevent the crisis from bringing down Italy. This was to be achieved with three separate measures. First, the Eurozone banks were to be recapitalised to the tune of €106 billion. Second, the European Financial Stability Fund was to be increased from €250 bil-

lion (currently remaining) to over €1 trillion. Finally, holders of Greek debt were to take losses of 50% (up from 21%). Technically each of these 'solutions' brings its own problems. But the biggest difficulty for European leaders is the levels of resistance from the Greek working class. To date more than 35% of the Greek population have engaged in struggle. Alongside the much publicised occupation of Syntagma square, there have been 12 general strikes, 200 university occupations and a series of

mass protests. This spirit of resistance has made Greece the high-point of struggle in Europe and alongside worsening economic data; this has forced Papandreou (Greek prime minister) to initially promise a referendum on the IMF/EU deal, before bowing to ruling class pressure by forming a government of national unity. This clearly exposes the anti-democratic nature of the European project and the problems for the ruling class are only going to intensify. By engaging

in such heroic resistance, Greek workers have effectively allowed the crisis to spill into Italy. Despite the ECB buying over €100 billion of Italian bonds, the price of Italian government debt has now reached 6.85%. This is the same territory that forced the other 'PIGS' into bail-outs and Berlusconi has become the second high profile leader to be deposed by the markets. Italy has over €1.9 trillion of government debt and it needs to borrow over €300 billion next year alone.

If they cannot convince the 'markets' to lend this money they will be forced into default. This could trigger a catastrophic chain of events as money markets refuse to lend to governments, governments default and banks go bankrupt. European banks currently owe around €30,000 billion to capital markets and they in turn hold 80% of European sovereign debt. European capitalism is now more vulnerable than ever, and this suggests that austerity and resistance are only just beginning.



Syria and the Arab Spring

By AÍNE DILLON

ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT Bashar al-Assad is seeking to divide Arabs from Kurds, Christians from Muslims and Sunni from Shia, there is no sign of an end to the stalemate in Syria.

Intense battles rage in Homs which witnessed a general strike on 26 October.

Workers also downed tools in Daraa (for over eight days) forcing the Arab League to offer, and Assad to initially accept, a minimal reform agreement.

This week the Arab League have threatened to suspend Syria, yet still the repression continues.

Despite the killing of some 3500 Syrians, there have been no promises of military intervention from the leaders of the 'free world'. Opposition from Russia (which has a naval base at Tartous) China and Turkey have largely seen to this. A dictatorial regime with links to Iran is preferable to the uncertainty of what might emerge afterwards, and international calls for Assad to step down are largely cosmetic.

In a free election, Assad's Alawi (Shia) sect would lose to the Sunni majority. Military intervention risks the emergence of more radical Sunnis and even the destabilisation of Lebanon. Far from support for

democracy and human rights, when it comes to the Arab Spring, the actions of the EU/US have consistently been motivated by profit and geo-political influence.

Be that as it may, Syrian activists insist that the 26 October strike was merely the prelude to 'large-scale civil disobedience capable of overthrowing the regime.'

Taking their lead from the Egyptian revolution, these activists know the importance of linking the struggles on the streets with the power of the working class.

That is not to say that their aim is the overthrow of capitalism, but they understand that if their movement is to succeed then they need the power of organised workers. As the year of the revolutions draws to a close, the 'Arab Spring' is very far from over.

The Heroic Voyage of the 'Freedom Waves'

By KARL GILL

THE 'FREEDOM Waves' to Gaza initiative is a non-violent, civil society movement to challenge the unlawful and oppressive blockade of Gaza. Despite months of political, military, secret service and bureaucratic interference, the Irish Ship to Gaza, along with a Canadian Boat had managed to get organised to set sail on the Mediterranean Sea. Among the activists on the MV Saoirse was former Irish Rugby star Trevor Hogan, People before Profit Councillor Hugh Lewis and United Left Alliance/Socialist Party MEP for Dublin Paul Murphy.

At the beginning of October the Palestinian Authority applied for membership of the United Nations after securing an 83% vote by Palestinians. The United States and Israel are set to veto this proposal; however on 27 October UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) voted by 107 votes to 14 to make Palestine their 195th member. In her



statement on the decision, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova said "It is well know that funding from our largest contributor, the United States, may be jeopardized".

Unfortunately she was right. Obama immediately pulled all funding to UNESCO and Israel vowed to ramp up the building of settlements in the West Bank as a direct punishment.

It was in this immediate context, alongside years of oppression, violence and terror from the Israeli state to the people of Palestine, that the MV Saoirse filled up with aid, medicine and educational supplies and set sail to break the illegal siege on Gaza.

The first attempt during the summer was met with sabotage while the boat was still docked in Greece. This time around both boats were forced

to collide, as activists were sprayed with high powered hoses, had guns pointed at them and were boarded and arrested by elite Israeli Defence Force personnel.

Refusing to sign a statement of guilt meant that the activists could be held for 72 hours under Israeli law and all of them were taken into Israeli custody before eventually being released at the end of last week.

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 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

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

Phone.....



Working Class Struggle in the North- 1919



By MATT COLLINS

IT IS often assumed that the North of Ireland is immune to changes in the international world. The circumstances of sectarianism it is argued make the North a special case, devoid of the normal ebb and flow of class politics and by extension disconnected from the movements for change that emerge throughout the world. This couldn't be further from the truth. Whether it was during the economic crash of the 30s or the turbulent days of the 60s, politics in the North has always been shaped and coloured by the global political context of the time.

The international dimension of struggle in the North was perhaps most apparent during the period of revolutionary upheaval which began at the tail end of the First World War.

The horrors of war and the severity of the economic situation at home led to the emergence of working class struggle across Europe on a massive scale.

The Belfast General Strike of 1919 was an event of importance equal to any of these struggles.

Angry at working conditions in post-war Belfast organised workers began a demand for a shorter working week. By 1919 this demand had gained momentum and local meetings sprung up throughout Britain and Ireland. Responding to pressure from their members, the trade union movement then launched a determined campaign.

On 14 January, on the back of a huge wave of militancy in Glasgow, a ballot went out and as spontaneous walkouts occurred, up to 20,000 people marched on City Hall to vent their frustration. The result was a massive endorsement of industrial action and on 25 January workers acted in their thousands as power and gas stations shutdown.

A strike committee was formed which organised the strike and articulated the views of the workers. A picket committee was established and a press committee set up to counter the views of the bourgeois papers. By the end of January the Belfast nights were marked by an eerie darkness as the street lights dimmed throughout the city. Belfast went without light, heating, local transport or heavy industry - workers were showing their muscle.

The strike reached a decisive moment as transport workers pressed for all out action in line with the rest

of Belfast's workforce. Had this happened, the power of organising industry would have potentially been in the hands of the newly formed Strike Committee. But it was at this point that the committee discouraged the transport workers action and essentially abandoned further escalation. The potential of workers vying for power worried those who saw the strike as being separate from politics. As one leader would later admit "the strike committee wasn't sure it could run the city."

With state power still in their hands the elites were allowed to play their final card, violent repression. The government swiftly moved troops from Dublin to crush the strike. Pitched battles were fought between soldiers and workers at all major pickets and resistance was fierce. Unfortunately, it was not to be and the Belfast workforce returned to work on a new 47 hour week.

The strike did not mark the end of militancy - during the 1920 local elections 12 seats were returned under a Labour banner, 5 of whom were strike leaders. The tragedy was that most of the best organised and most militant workers were disconnected from each other. No effective socialist organisation which could promote rank and file workers unity whilst connecting with the political struggles nationally was formed. The limitations of the official trade union leadership were shown by their refusal to handle all things 'political', ultimately rendering themselves obsolete when faced with decisive questions. As the labour movement retreated the forces of nationalism and reaction made ground.

As workers self-activity decreased so too did the possibility of a revolution in Ireland which had the power of the working class at its heart. 1919 was potentially a watershed moment, where the path of a different direction in Irish politics came into sight.

It was a moment where the revolutionary fervour of workers thousands of miles away inspired a movement of workers in Belfast.

It is a lesson we should remember today, as the struggles in the Middle East inspire a new mood of resistance across the globe. In 1919 Petrograd came to Belfast and it should come as no surprise if at some time in the future the spirit of today's revolutions makes their way to Belfast once more.

Across the world, the Occupy! Strike

BY DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

CAPITALISM ISN'T working—that's the verdict of millions of ordinary people around the globe who are taking to the streets to protest.

The system has not looked so fragile for decades. From the Eurozone to the US the crisis is ripping through the world's economies. We are now facing into another recession, but for most of us the last one never ended!

Bosses and politicians want us to believe that austerity is the only alternative.

But less and less of us are falling for this line. We can see from Greece that the bosses' solutions only make the crisis worse.

Instead the full force of people's anger is directed against the bankers and often against the capitalist system itself.

The impact of austerity and the global economic crisis has been severe.



OCCUPY

Unemployment has rocketed, especially among young people with 48% jobless in Spain, 43% in Greece and 29% in Italy.

No wonder the International Labour Organisation reported recently that "the risk of social unrest has increased significantly" since last year.

In the US, the very heart of the beast, resistance from below has exploded across the country.

The Occupy movement has taken root and, significantly, it is now making links with the power of the organised working class.



Unions get behind Occupy movement

"You're damn right Wall Street occupiers speak for us. They do in Pittsburgh, they do in Chicago, they do in Oakland, they do in San Francisco, they do all across the country. And I think what we need is, we need more militancy."

— United Steelworkers of America president Leo Gerard

THIS MONTH will see a general strike in Portugal. Greece has already seen 15 general strikes, and the imposition of a unity government.

In Britain and Northern Ireland workers are voting on joining a three million strong public sector strike on 30 November.

The Occupy Day of action on 17 November saw the 23,000 member California Faculty Association, representing professors, lecturers and other staff in the California State University system, go on strike.

In New York, the day of action was endorsed by major unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 32BJ, the 1199SEIU health care union, Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100, the United Federation of Teachers, the Communications Workers of

America, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and a wide range of community groups and issue-based campaigns.

And in Ireland the trade unions are finally getting off their knees — the Irish Congress of Trades Unions is supporting the 26 November pre-budget march against austerity. That will bring thousands of people onto the streets.

The demonstration, followed by a general assembly is the best opportunity to bring the movement of the 99% forward in Ireland.

The question of whether or not to link to the unions was answered by the magnificent general strike in Oakland, California on Wednesday 2 November.

Fifteen thousand people blockaded the US's fifth biggest port in the clearest example of the power of the trade unions when they get behind the occupy movement.

The strike came after Scott Olson, a US marine veteran, was seriously injured by a police-fired tear gas canister during a violent police raid on the Oakland Occupy camp.

Following the blockade that successfully shut the port 30,000 marched to the square where the

police had earlier attacked the occupy camp.

The Oakland occupation's "labour outreach committee" has drawn together socialist and syndicalist radicals with more

traditional trade union activists. This has two effects — providing solidarity for the occupation from the organised working class and bringing more militant tactics into the working class.

A Tactical or a Perma

THERE IS an unresolved tension in this alliance - should the link-up between occupiers and workers be restricted to tactical coordination? Or can it go deeper, taking the radical energy of Occupy Wall Street and channelling it into strikes by workers?

Some see the occupation's organisation and tactics as an alternative to, or substitute for, traditional trade union methods. Others, typically activists with socialist politics, see the occupation as a galvanising force for much wider working class struggle — and see in occupy a potential rank and file organising forum.

To date in Ireland there has been resistance from some in the Occupy camps to even a tactical link up with the trades

unions. But it is hard to see how the movement can grow unless we form wider alliances — especially with the power of organised workers. In other occupy camps around Ireland people are enthusiastic about the possibility of forming wider alliances — the Belfast Occupy camp is building support for the November 30 strikes for example.

Another opportunity to build alliances is on budget day — 6 December. Occupy should make a call to surround or 'Occupy' the Dail, and try to bring the trade union movement with it.

There is a palpable sense that this is the start of a new chapter in radical politics worldwide, and this time the stakes are higher than ever.

There is Occupy

Across the world, the call goes: Occupy! Strike! Re-

BY DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH



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traditional trade union activists. This has two effects — providing solidarity for the occupation from the organised working class and bringing more militant tactics into the working class.

A Tactical or a Permanent Alliance? A Camp or

THERE IS an unresolved tension in this alliance — should the link-up between occupiers and workers be restricted to tactical coordination? Or can it go deeper, taking the radical energy of Occupy Wall Street and channelling it into strikes by workers?

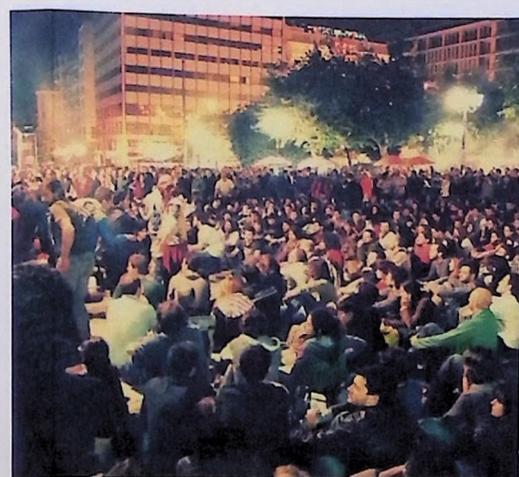
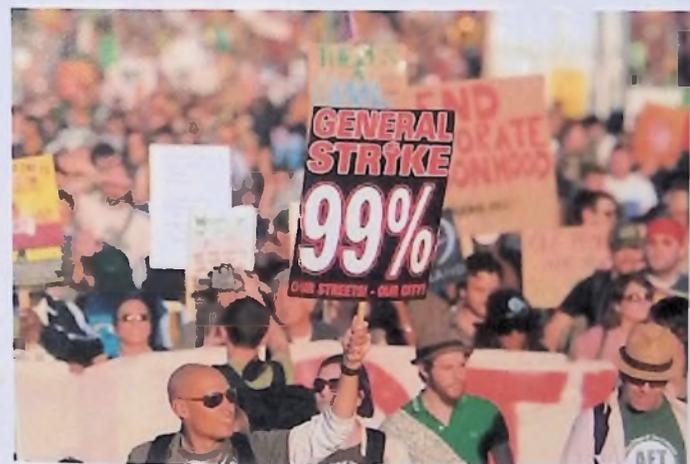
Some see the occupation's organisation and tactics as an alternative to, or substitute for, traditional trade union methods. Others, typically activists with socialist politics, see the occupation as a galvanising force for much wider working class struggle — and see in occupy a potential rank and file organising forum.

To date in Ireland there has been resistance from some in the Occupy camps to even a tactical link up with the trades

unions. But it is hard to see how the movement can grow unless we form wider alliances — especially with the power of organised workers. In other occupy camps around Ireland people are enthusiastic about the possibility of forming wider alliances — the Belfast Occupy camp is building support for the November 30 strikes for example.

Another opportunity to build alliances is on budget day — 6 December. Occupy should make a call to surround or 'Occupy' the Dail, and try to bring the trade union movement with it.

There is a palpable sense that this is the start of a new chapter in radical politics worldwide, and this time the stakes are higher than ever.



There is a world to win—and Occupy Wall Street is part of a global movement that has risen to meet that challenge.

ONE OF the debates the movement in Ireland surrounds the relationship between the camp-ou and building the wider movement.

The camps were a crucial first step in organising the movement. They offered space where activists could come together and gave focus to build a new movement around.

However there is no danger that people will see the camps as the movement. This would limit their appeal and organisational ability.

If we restrict the movement to those who are willing or able to campaign it will inevitably be very small minority.

This is why the crucial question is how the camp

...and, the call goes out... Strike! Resist!



Politics and the Occupy Movement

IT IS tempting to think that if we ban organised politics from the occupy spaces and marches that this will make our movement stronger because people will relate to each other as individuals.

We should not kid ourselves that simply because there are no banners on our protests that government parties – FG and Labour, or FF will join our protests.

These parties support the system and want to save it.

Restricting ‘political’ banners therefore simply means restricting the radical left.

Refusing to acknowledge politics just dumbs’ the movement down.

It can also lead to ridiculous situations like when

people were not allowed to criticise ex-government ministers like Eamonn Ryan when he came to speak at Occupy Dame Street because that was ‘political’.

Eamonn Ryan was one of the government ministers who voted through the bank guarantee scheme and the EU-IMF deal!

Political parties, whether declared or not, represent real currents in any movement.

They reflect real divisions in the movement rooted in people’s experiences of struggle.

You have those on the right who want to defend the system or at most make cosmetic changes, those in the centre who want to regulate or reform the system, and those on the left who want to get rid of the system altogether and replace it with a more equal society.

We see from Spain that just banning parties doesn’t stop politics.

Despite huge protests and occupations the right-wing Popular Party won a landslide election victory.

Rather than running away from political debates the movement needs to put forward its own alternative. That also means an electoral alternative – like the ULA here.

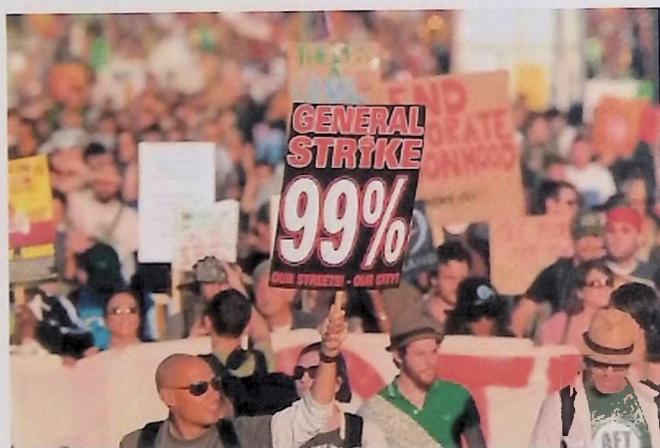
As soon as you question the system you have to answer the question ‘what you will replace it with?’

You have to learn from previous movements against capitalism.

This is precisely what the socialist and wider workers movement has to offer the Occupy movement.

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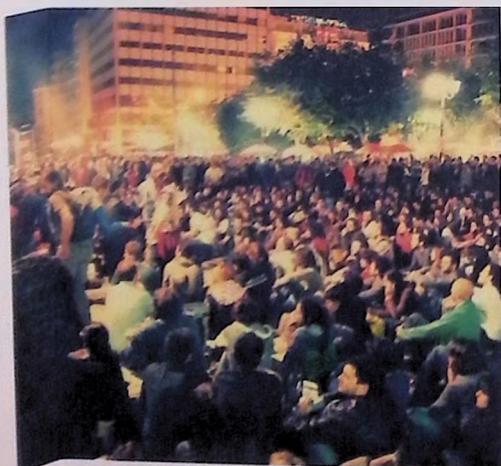


Permanent Alliance?

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ONE OF the debates in the movement in Ireland surrounds the relationship between the camp-outs and building the wider movement.

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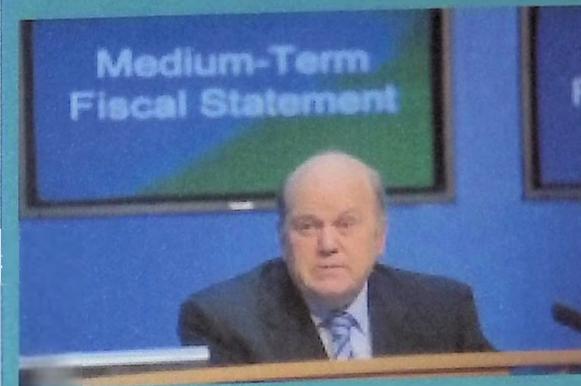


can link up the wider movement. This is a strategic question of how we can increase our numbers.

Refusing to link up with the trade union and wider workers movement – with its parties and traditions – will mean cutting ourselves off from the mass organisations of the working class who have the power to shut the system down.

It will also cut us off from a movement that has been fighting capitalism and putting forward ideas for alternatives to capitalism for over 200 years.

Budget 2012: The Slash and Burn Continues



By JAMES O'TOOLE

THE INCOMPETENCE of the bureaucrats that inhabit the department of finance was clearly exposed over the last few weeks as they found that €3.6 billion had been misplaced by an accidental error in book-keeping! But did the government come up smiling like someone who had just found a spare tenner down the back of the couch? Absolutely not. Just like when they secured hundreds of millions in lower interest payments, the government was quick to announce that there would be no change in their policy of ‘deficit reduction’.

Labour Party minister, Brendan Howlin, was first out of the blocks, announcing that €700 million would be slashed from social expenditure next year alone. This is almost exactly the figure that was recently given to unsecured Anglo bondholders and it underlines both the madness of the system and the real priorities of the current government.

Contrast the millions given to the already rich with cuts to the special needs of our most vulnerable children - 10% of one-to-one resource teaching hours have been cut, SNA support has been ‘halved or eliminated’ and the pupil-teacher ratio has been increased.

Overall, there will be €1.6 billion in increased taxation and €2.2bn in spending cuts, including a €750m reduction in capital spending.

Some of the previously planned transport projects that will be shelved include the A5 motorway to Derry (which was a much praised and highlighted ‘cross-Border initiative’) and the Dart underground.

It seems that this government prefers a ‘jobs bridge’ programme to the building of real infrastructure that would get some of the 450,000 people currently unemployed back into paid employment

Marx and the Alternative to Capitalism

Outlines Marx's life and the development of his work, then goes on to clearly explain his key theories, including historical materialism and surplus value. The second section examines alternatives to capitalism, the concept of “anti-capitalism” and provides concrete, contemporary examples of Marx's theories being put into practice in today's world. Available from www.bookmarks.uk.com



The Children’s hospital is also being put on hold until the government comes up with ‘outside exchequer’ funding. So far all they’ve come up with (and remember this is for the care of our sick children) is to sell off the National Lottery and try and convince the buyer to part with an upfront payment.

Bad debts or bad health?

If the government had not accepted the bad debts of the banking system there would be no need for such external assistance.

In 2007 debt repayments accounted for around 3% of the total taxes, but this will rise to around 14% in 2012 according to the Medium Term Fiscal Statement. This is a colossal €4.76 billion of tax payer’s money representing around 10 new children’s hospitals every single year.

In the post war period strong growth meant that the elites could reconcile the maintenance of a welfare state with profit making and capital accumulation.

But since crisis returned to the system in the early 1970’s there has been a 30 year assault on the historic gains of the working class. The choice now facing us is therefore stark. Either we continue to bail out the bond holders and the speculators or we start to rebuild the welfare of the many.

The Labour Party believes that it can somehow nurse capitalism back to health and then at some magical point in the future redistribute the wealth that is subsequently created. But it must be obvious to everyone with any sense that this is reckless utopianism. In order to nurse the capitalist system back to health they are prepared to destroy the health of thousands.

It’s time we started putting the welfare of citizens above the welfare of the markets.

Is This What Democracy Looks Like?

By WILL SHANNON

FROM THE streets of Cairo to New York City people in their millions are demanding more genuine forms of democracy. But what exactly does the term mean? Stated simply, Demos Kratos is political rule by the majority.

But if this is true then why can the vast majority of citizens disagree with a government policy (such as bailing out the banks or the use of Shannon airport as a virtual US military base) without having any influence?

In reality, life in liberal democracies, despite pockets of limited choice, is dominated by the power of unelected capital. Representative (parliamentary) politics is the natural bedfellow of capitalist production as it allows for the appearance of democracy within the constraints of a class society. Bourgeois nation-states require capitalist activity to generate their revenue and the interests of the people will always play second fiddle to the interests of capital so long as the state is required to facilitate profit-making and accumulation.

The birth of capitalist democracy

The rise of capitalism in Europe, first through merchant trade and later through mass industry broke through the barriers of the old society – feudalism. Feudalism was a period of human history where near stagnation of society prevailed. It was ruled by a strict hierarchy in which the aristocracy (Royalty, Lords church establishment etc.) tied the majority of the people (the peasantry) to the land. Most people would die not far from where they were born and they toiled all their lives in terrible hardship.

Within this system, the force of the capitalist class, the rich town dwelling middle-men sought to break the power of the aristocracy. While the feudal system was based on tying peasants to the land, capitalism relied on the freeing of those same people from farming to work as wage labourers in the towns. As the material wealth of the capitalists' grew, they inevitably came into conflict with the aristocracy in a battle for ruling class supremacy.

The high point of this conflict was the French revolution, the historical event that liberal historians often pinpoint as the birth place of modern European democracy. Its slogans 'Liberty,



DOES CORPORATE rule mean the end of democracy?

Equality and Fraternity' became the rallying call for the rise of millions against the repression of the old order.

The revolt led to a government who partly in fear of the masses gave male (but not female) property owning adults the right to vote for representatives in the assembly. In return, the capitalist class took complete control of wealth creating enterprise.

Many people immediately understood the danger of this and in Britain the aspiration for genuine democracy was pushed by the Chartist movement - one of the first working class movements in the world. Among their demands was annual parliaments and universal male suffrage for everyone over 21 years without property qualifications.

The separation of politics and the economy

The fact that the main trade union demand throughout 1800s Britain was universal suffrage is telling. Movements for democracy took hold not because of people's infatuation with democratic principles, but rather because they wanted to give themselves better lives by making sure our rulers couldn't have a completely free reign.

In most western capitalist countries the vote was extended eventually to all adults during the course of the twentieth cen-

ture. However, as the vote was extended, parliaments seemed to hold less and less real power.

Today's liberal democracies still operate on the basis of a (formal) separation of politics and economics. The politics of the state and its apparatuses, regardless of the reality, is seen as the remit of the government. The world of work is where the bosses dictate.

In other words the state is constructed so that the army, the judiciary, the police and top civil servants are virtually immune to democracy. Each of these institutions claims to support the people equally. But each of them is dedicated to maintaining a status quo in which capital is held by a tiny minority.

Neoliberal democracy

Significantly, this process has been accelerated with the rise of neo-liberalism. Writing in 2005 the Marxist geographer, David Harvey claimed that "Neoliberals' are profoundly suspicious of democracy.

Governance by majority rule is seen as a potential threat to individual rights and Neoliberals' therefore tend to favour governance by experts and elites."

This was incredibly prophetic, given that just this week we have witnessed the deposition of two democratically elected governments in favour of unelected technocrats. In both Greece and Italy the 'markets' have demanded (and secured) the resignation of politicians that were no longer able to their bidding.

This suggests that even the limited forms of democracy associated with liberal society and now under threat. Capitalism is in serious crisis and the ruling elites are imposing technocrats to try to save their system.

The recent suggestion that the Greek people would be asked their opinion on the IMF/EU deal was met with universal condemnation by Europe's rulers. Papandreu was unable to fully enforce austerity on Greek workers and it was this 'failing' that

has ultimately cost him his job. Berlusconi was not even given the chance to implement austerity, such is the fear that Italian workers' in struggle could bring down the Eurozone.

In Ireland the ruling class has not yet had to resort to unelected technocrats as the politicians are fully committed to doing their bidding.

Having derided the blanket bank guarantee in 2008, the Labour party are now part of a government that just last week gave €715 million to unsecured bondholders.

Like the Fianna Fail government before them, FG and Labour still refuse to let Irish tax payers know who the bondholders are, never mind entertain any idea of not paying them.

The message is clear. Capital is willing to humiliate any government that doesn't submit to its will and the Irish government are more than happy to play ball.

Workers democracy is the only solution

In a world in which 2,000 companies control over half of global production, the depths of the economic crisis are reminding the ruling class that liberal democracy is an optional add-on when it comes to managing the system. Capitalist production is simply incompatible with any form of meaningful democracy and as the crisis deepens we must look to alternative ways of organising our lives.

Throughout the last two hundred years it has been workers' in collective action that have brought about meaningful changes. It was workers struggle that first won the right to vote. It was workers struggle who fought to defend those gains. And it will be workers' struggles that eventually decide the shape of any future democratic structures.

Socialism is fundamentally the belief that democracy should

be spread to all corners of our society. Economic production should be organised to best provide for the needs of everyone and exploitation and oppression should become a thing of the past. Previous workers' struggles have shone a light on the potential for democracy to become much deeper.

In the midst of all the great working class uprisings, independent committees of the movement have sprung up to one degree or another where official society has retreated. During the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 workers' councils ('soviets') emerged as structures to unite all workplaces for a common purpose, ultimately taking state power from a sell-out government in October 1917.

Workers' councils have also played important roles in the revolutions in Portugal in 1974 and Iran in 1979. More recently the revolutions across North Africa have prompted people to take over the running of their neighbourhoods, form defence committees and challenge the state.

Now more than ever, we are living in a time where the call for "Real Democracy Now!" is a call with revolutionary potential, and the job of all socialists is to fight for genuine democracy on the basis of workers control and human liberation.



Available from Bookmarks
www.bookmarks.uk.com



THE CHARTISTS rally, London in 1848.



THE PETROGRAD sovlet (workers' council) in 1918.

IN TIME 10:28:11

By VANESSA O'SULLIVAN

AT FIRST glance 'In Time' looks like just another Hollywood Blockbuster. Unfortunately, as the movie develops, you find out just how true that is.

A great movie concept, in which time is the new currency, 'In Time' had the potential to make a critical statement about the world in which we currently live.

The background story is relatively interesting. In some future world the ruling class have devised a way to make us live forever, but there is just one catch. You only live until you're 25 at which point you only have one year's credit before you die.

From then on you must earn more time to stay alive and the ruling class makes sure that prices keep rising so that people keep working hard and the

population stays under control.

The main plot follows Will, 25 for 3 years, who by chance saves the life of a 106 year old. To repay the debt, this mysterious billionaire with over a century on his clock gives Will his time. This provokes Will to leave the zone he 'belongs to' in order to make a better life. However, the time keepers, responsible for keeping people in their proper places, soon catch up with Will, accusing him of murder. Will is forced to go on the run with a young heiress as a hostage. Having been robbed of their time by the systems bullyboys and left for dead in the Ghetto, they are literally left living day to day, minute to minute.

They quickly hatch a plan to steal back the time accumulated by the heiress' father over the years, breaking into time banks to giving time back

to the people. This sends the 'markets' into freefall and breaks down the barriers between rich and poor. It is a very interesting concept but as one movie goer told SW "It was alright and highlights how crap most of us with nothing have.

But you have people like Justin Timberlake, who is completely unbelievable in the role.

The story is put on the back foot for the relationship between the lead characters which is an awful shame." This happens a number of times where the storyline is unnecessarily diverted to bring up another Hollywood moment and even the revolutionary action is all carried out by the individual hero and his beautiful side kick. Overall it is just worth watching but I would advise waiting until it comes to the small screen.

BOOK REVIEW

Will the Revolution be Televised?



Reviewed by Nicola Curry

JOHN MOLYNEUX'S latest book *Will the Revolution be Televised?* is an important contribution to current debates about the role of the media, providing a critical analysis of the pro-capitalist bias that is necessarily built into it.

Molyneux argues that all media is politically, socially, ideologically and culturally biased.

This is not because of some secret conspiracy or hidden power. But rather because the sheer volume of potential news stories means that choices have to be made as to what will be reported.

Events or issues that are selected as 'news worthy' largely reflect the values of media outlets; who ultimately claim that their coverage is fair and balanced, and that they are simply 'giving us what we want'.

Molyneux argues that as large sections of the media are owned by private capitalist's or capitalist states they naturally support capitalism.

Further, given that these organisations

are hierarchal and undemocratic, the pro capitalist bias of the owners saturates the entire style and content of news coverage, current affairs and entertainment. Thus, the capitalist worldview becomes the 'common sense' worldview.

The book examines the roles that light entertainment and advertising play in promoting and reinforcing capitalist values and ethos.

Molyneux clearly illustrates that program makers are more interested in ratings and profits from advertising than reflecting real life experiences.

Even so called 'reality' TV shows like *Big Brother* are highly competitive and artificial, as they are heavily controlled by program makers that reproduce rather than challenge capitalist ideology.

And recent media storms like the phone-hacking scandal in Britain expose how self-serving, dishonest and corrupt the mainstream media is.

However, Molyneux also analyses how we can combat and ultimately transform the media; arguing that alternative sources of influence and

opinion like *Socialist Worker*, help develop and communicate an alternative anti-capitalist worldview.

Will the revolution be televised? The recent events in Wall Street have shown that given a choice the mainstream media would not televise the revolution.

The Occupy Movement was initially ignored by the mainstream media.

It now gets headline coverage due largely to people power forcing anti-capitalist voices into the mainstream.

Molyneux argues that during high points of struggle and mass resistance, when the masses themselves are 'the news', the media's influence over people's thinking is at its weakest.

A very accessible read, Molyneux's book certainly offers valuable insights into how we can read the capitalist media against the grain.

Warning: You may be unable to digest mainstream media passively once you have read this book.

Will the revolution be televised? A Marxist analysis of the media by John Molyneux

BOOK REVIEW

MICHAEL MOORE

AT NEW YORK TIMES

BESTSELLING AUTHOR

stories from my life

HERE COMES TROUBLE

by CRAIG PARR

Michael Moore's latest offering, *Here Comes Trouble*, charts his life from humble beginnings into a documentary tsar and political activist. The book starts with Moore at the height of his fame and most controversial: "I am thinking of killing Michael Moore and I'm wondering whether I can do it myself," announces Glenn Beck live on TV. Moore tells us how his friends warned him, "There is no man in America, other than President Bush, who is in more danger than you."

Moore seems to quite enjoy the notoriety. On 23 March 2003 when George Bush invaded Iraq with over 70% support in public opinion polls in the US, Moore denounced him during his Oscar acceptance speech for *Bowling for Columbine*. He shouted, "Mr Bush, shame on you, shame on you - any time you have the Pope and the Dixie Chicks against you - your time is up."

Moore's first attempt at making documentaries was made after a call from James Ridgeway, a political columnist from the *New York Times* who wanted to make use of Moore's good media contacts. Ridgeway wanted to make a documentary on the rise of the extreme right wing in the Midwest in the wake of the Reagan recession.

Moore's sharp wit and ease with



others got him access to the Nazis and information others simply could not get. He seemed born a natural documentary maker. Moore is a good writer and the stories that make up the book are fascinating. What the book lacks is real insight into where his political ideals and insights come from. Yes, we get the street he lived on as a child - and even his birth - which I remain unsure as to how Moore remembers. We get his school years, and his description of how his career began to take off, but we don't get the sparks of conviction that led to Moore creating some of the most hard-hitting and popular documentaries of our times.

Why I'm going to Marxism by Peadar Hopkins - A new member of the SWP in Sligo

AFTER YEARS of hoping for a decent Labour Party I have finally come to the conclusion that revolutionary politics is the only way to fight against capitalism.

As a new member of both the Socialist Workers Party and the United Left Alliance I am hungry for new ideas and Marxism seems like a great place to start learning.

You could go up and down the country for four years and not find all of the information that will be there under one roof.

I'm particularly interested in whether we can burn the bondholders as I often find myself in arguments with right-wingers without the full facts to back up my case.

I also want to hear about conspiracy theories as I think all of the stuff about the Rothschild's etc really just muddies the waters.

The whole weekend seems to be a melting pot of ideas that I'm basically interested in. It will also be great to meet up with lots of like-minded people.

We need to build-up the confidence of ordinary people and Marxism will hopefully be a great place to start.

Contact Socialist Worker: Email: editor@swp.ie

Socialist Worker

As workers support strike action on 30 November..

THE FIGHTBACK HAS BEGUN

THE BALLOTS which have closed for the 30 November strikes show that workers in the North are ready to strike to save our pensions and public services.

Results already in, indicate that 69% of ATL workers, 66% of NIPSA and 76% of Unison workers have voted to down tools on 30 November.

These are truly excellent results which show that people haven't bought into the government's lies about cuts and the deficit.

Cameron and his friends are so frightened about the strikes that they suggested workers should go on strike but only for 15 minutes.

Stormont and Westminster are terrified as 30 Nov will be the biggest day of industrial action since 1926, with hospitals, schools, civil service and the transport systems grinding to a halt.

It is a day of resistance for everyone facing unemployment, higher costs of living or the closure of public services.

Despite claims that we are 'all in this together', figures show the gap between rich and poor is actually increasing.

Banker's bonuses are up £52 billion and the FTSE100 bosses salaries up by 49% in the past year. Yet still they want to make us pay.

Tories and their lackeys in Stormont want to make people pay more of their wages into pension contributions.

A part time nurse who earns £17,000 a year for example will be forced to pay an extra £100 a month into their pension.

How can people be expected to pay this on top of a three year pay cut plus rocketing food and fuel prices?

The Government wants us to



THE MAGNIFICENT strike by UNISON members earlier this year

believe that our pensions are gold plated or that we are somehow privileged for having one.

Pensions are only a small part of the wealth that workers have had stolen from them throughout their working lives.

We bloody earned them, and we shouldn't be forced to rub pennies together when we have retired because the government wants to protect the bankers.

Even more sickening is the fact that after 15 years MPs are guaranteed a cushy pension of £25,000 a year.

The top bosses are even more pampered, receiving an average annual pension of £224,000 or 34 times the average in the public sector.

But the strikes are about more than pensions.

It's an explosion of anger at the deep inequality at the heart of the

system combined with a fury at being told by a government of millionaires that our services have to be slashed to protect their own backs.

One question which will come up on most picket lines will be which side is Stormont on.

Truth be told, Stormont is imposing the exact same austerity as the Tories across the water.

The problem is not that there is no alternative, but that Stormont is wedded to the idea of cutbacks, public sector attacks and making working people pay.

The Good Friday Agreement promised people jobs and investment, today all we are guaranteed from the Assembly is cutbacks and misery.

But with the wave of revolt coming on 30 Nov and beyond we have the chance to roll back the Stormont austerity agenda.



No Cuts No Privatisation

Make N30 a Festival of Resistance

It has to be said that Stormont is very weak when confronted with opposition.

Take Water Charges, Parking Taxes, the Public Assemblies Bill and Student Fees.

Stormont was defeated on all four issues when they were faced with huge outcry and, more importantly, struggle on the streets.

The same is true with regard to fighting the cuts; it is a battle we can and must win.

After 30 November we need to keep up the pressure. One day in itself won't be enough to stop the cuts but it shows that big industrial struggles are back on the agenda and that our side is ready to win this war.

Inside Page Four: The 1919 Belfast General Strike