

Socialist Worker

Scandal in Irish Water You pay – we profit



The man at the centre of the storm
Irish Water CEO John Tierney

THE scandal over Irish Water's payment of €50 million to consultants shows how the wealthier elements of Irish society may talk about 'shared sacrifice', but they ensure that they milk the system for what it is worth.

For the past five years, the mainstream media embarked on a campaign of bashing public sector workers, claiming that their 'inflated' salaries were to blame for the public spending deficit. One result is that the most recent Haddington Road agreement took another €1 billion from this unfortunate group.

Rip off

However the real rip off was going on at the very highest echelons.

Just look at the health service. More than 8,000 jobs have been slashed and workers have lost out on overtime rates as well as direct pay cuts. But some of the top managers who pushed through this policy were on top up payments.

Twenty-nine senior voluntary hospital managers, for example, were paid more than €1 million in contributions to their private pension funds out of public funds in the past three years. Twelve senior hospital executives have each been receiving gold-plated private Health Insurance of up to €5,300 a year.

With the setting up of Irish Water, the elite culture of entitlement accelerated. Take, for example, the role of the consultancy company, RPS.

The company specialises in pushing through projects which encounter local opposition. It was hired by Shell to try to surmount opposition to its gas pipe line in Mayo. It was also awarded a contract by the then Dublin City Council manager, John Tierney, to engage in public relations to garner support for the Poolbeg incinerator firm.

RPS was originally awarded €8 million but its contracts were periodically renewed until it finally won over €30 million from Dublin City Council. The pay outs to RPS only stopped after a complaint to the EU Commission by two local residents led to an investigation into breaches of EU law.

Before this occurred, however, there was clear evidence that RPS changed its reports to support the policy on waste management being promoted by unelected officials of Dublin City Council.

In a case heard before Judge McKechnie,

RPS was publically criticised for allowing its supposedly independent reports to be 'massaged' to suit the council's policy of promoting the Poolbeg incinerator.

Despite this ruling, however, two key executives of RPS have been appointed to senior positions in Irish Water by none other than John Tierney, the former head of Dublin City Council.

Jobs for the boys

Irish Water's new head of asset management is Jerry Grant. He was the former managing director of RPS until August 2012 when he resigned to set up a 'water consultancy service'. Elizabeth Arnett was the head of project communications in RPS until December 2012.

She is now head of communications and corporate services in Irish Water.

The propaganda that RPS mounted to promote the building of an incinerator in Poolbeg has cost the people of Dublin dearly.

Over €96 million has now been wasted on a white elephant that will probably never be used.

Yet key individuals from the same company now occupy senior position in Irish Water,

where they will head up a campaign to demand we pay for our water. They will claim that all of this is necessary for 'conservation'.

But if the estimated €1 billion that will be spent to install meters – by companies such as Sierra, owned by Denis O' Brien – was actually used to fix the leaking pipes, there would be far more conservation.

The real purpose of Irish Water is to create business opportunities for parts of Irish capitalism that feed off state contracts. The people of Ireland will be asked to pay about €300 a year to support this enterprise.

If they complain that the charges are too high, they will be referred to the Commission on Energy Regulation.

But one of the three key regulators on this body is Garrett Blancy, a former key figure in IBEC, the employers' organisation who consistently argued for water charges for domestic users in order to reduce costs on business.

The top echelons of the Irish state are controlled by a tight golden circle, formed from a network of top bureaucrats and former business interests. It will fleece its own population to subsidise profits.

And all the time it will talk about 'shared sacrifice'.



Who got what so far

ON Tuesday 14 January under pressure from the Oireachtas, Irish Water sent a detailed breakdown on consultancy spending to TDs.

It emerged that €44.8m will be paid to computer giant IBM; a further €17.2m to Accenture and another €4.6m to Ernst & Young.

In addition, solicitors McCann Fitzgerald will receive €970,000 while A&L Goodbody will receive another €2.9m.

The briefing document also says that KPMG will get €2.2m, while another €13.3m has been spent on 18 contractors "who were procured".

Source Irish Independent

Inside:

Page 2:



The scandal at Irish Water in detail

Page 2:



Bounty hunting the unemployed

Page 4:

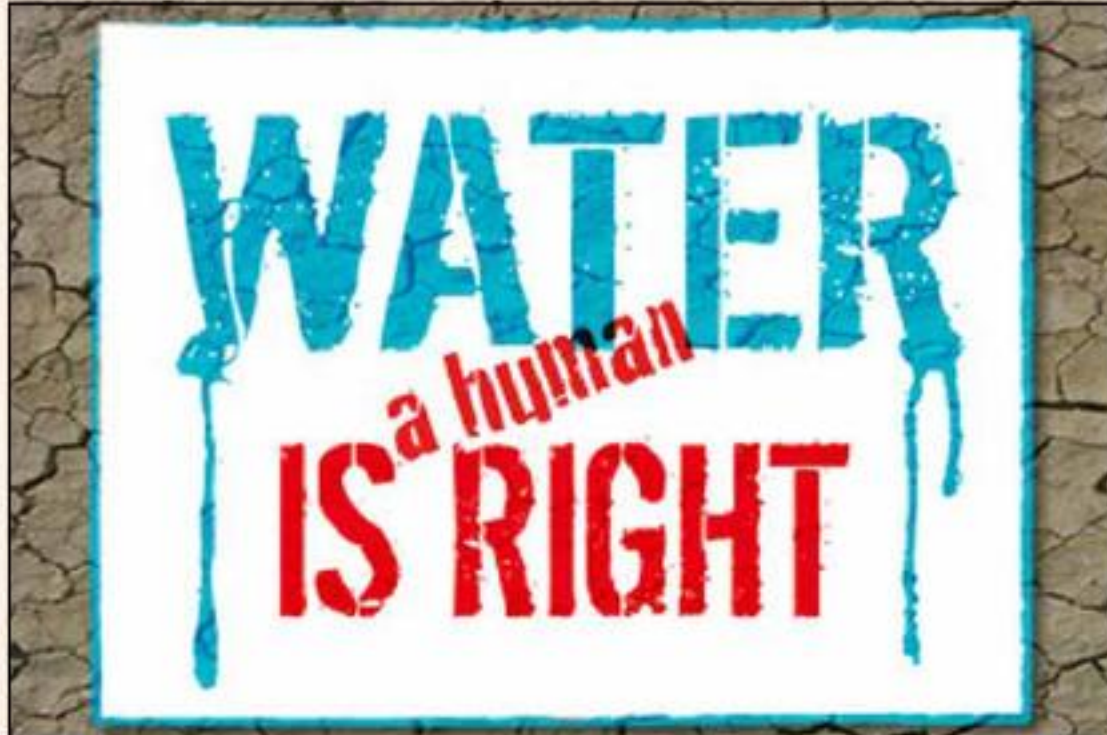


Revolutionary strategy for the local elections

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS Text JOIN to 086-3064070

Visit www.swp.ie; Facebook: facebook.com/SWPIreland; Twitter: @IrelandSWP

Irish Water: Jobs for the Boys



Above right: Irish Water's John Tierney holds up the meters that will be used to privatise our water

By Maeve Mc Grath

THE bad news on Irish Water keeps on coming.

As if it wasn't bad enough that the Property Tax isn't going on local services, but on privatising water, it has now emerged that €50 million has already been handed over in "consultancy" fees. This is half of what has already been spent establishing the company.

John Tierney is the former Dublin

City manager, and is now the head of Irish Water. In a recent statement Tierney admitted to the massive spend, but instead of taking responsibility as Minister for the Environment, Phil Hogan has defended the €100 million as being "necessary." Predictably Eamon Gilmore also feels that the money was "well spent."

Corporate leaders such as IBM, Accenture, Ernst and Young, and Oracle are amongst the recipients of the €50 million. Moreover, despite reassurances from

Tierney that the consultancy fees in 2014 would not reach the 2013 level; the company will not be fully set up until 2015.

Track Record

In the last issue of Socialist Worker we reported on Irish Water's use of the Jobbridge scheme to get those on the dole to install water meters.

We also highlighted the fact that one of the contracts for putting down water meters went to a Denis O'Brien owned

company named: Sierra, which received a write-down of €110 million of its debts to Anglo-Irish bank.

Tierney's decision to give €50 million to consultants is in keeping with his background as City Manager. The Poolbeg incinerator, for instance, has had €95 million in public money spent on it so far. Another €50 million was thrown at research for implementing the problem ridden Leap Card, whilst €165 million went on "Metro North" – a rail system

from Stephen's Green to the Airport.

Services

Consultants didn't always grab massive paydays on the back of the public purse.

However the post WWII consensus that government's role is to provide vital facilities such as water and schools has been shattered by decades of neoliberalism. Instead private firms come in to tell governments that the private route is better for everyone before this is copper fastened by the likes of the Troika

In reality there are countless examples whereby privatisation has decimated the standard of our services, but few where the overall quality has improved and prices have fallen. Private means 'production for profit' and once again the ordinary workers will be left to foot the bill. Indeed we now have evidence that if people conserve their water they may be charged more for the water that they actually consume.

Fightback

Tierney's thuggish threat of reducing water "down to a trickle" for those who do not pay the charge is reminiscent of the threats made by Revenue and the government over the Property Tax last year. Bully boy tactics are a mainstay of how this arrogant ruling class treats the masses.

Water is a human right, and a nationwide campaign needs to emerge to combat this threat to such a precious resource.

Bounty hunting the unemployed

By James O' Toole

OVER the last few weeks the government has made serious mileage out of the supposed reduction in unemployment. Ministers are lining up to talk about the 3,000 new jobs created every month, but behind the facts lurks some ugly realities.

According to figures released by United Left TD Clare Daly, there are almost 80,000 people now on labour activation programmes such as Jobbridge.

Wages in the country have also been slashed by 17% and now the government are importing dozens of international "welfare to work" companies to hound any remaining unemployed people for a handsome fee.

Bounty hunters

The idea is to pay a bounty per successful head in order to put pressure on the unemployed to take more workfare style jobs.

This is an extreme case of blaming the victims and companies such as G4S security - the world's 3rd largest employer - have already expressed an interest in this new "market" in the poor. Indeed, they are even advertising on sites like active link for companies to contact them.

Just so our readers are clear - G4S supplies security equipment and services for use at Israeli prisons, checkpoints and settlements in the West Bank. In 2007, the Israeli subsidiary of G4S signed a contract with the Israeli Prison Authority to provide security systems for major Israeli prisons.

In Ireland companies like G4S, Serco and A4e will have the right to set their own prices and fees for "progressing" the unemployed.

People Before Profit Cllr Brid Smith called a protest at lunchtime last week to highlight the issue. About 25 people held a picket outside Joan Burton's offices at the Department of Social Protection in



PBP Councillor Brid Smith at last week's protest against 'Jobpath'

Dublin.

The latest "Jobpath" scheme is a continuation of the Government's authoritarian and conservative approach to unemployment, which has basically entailed punishing the poor with the threat of cutting off their dole if they don't accept working for less than the minimum wage.

Troika

The EU and IMF demanded more penalties for the poor if they refuse to accept this "activation" before they left.

They may be gone but pleasing them still seems high on the Government's agenda.

Just as with Jobbridge this scheme undermines the wages of workers as a whole

and should be opposed by everyone employed or unemployed.

In essence this is the start of a Thatcherite privatisation of welfare and constitutes a similar direction to that taken in the USA and Britain. An approach to welfare adopted by right wing US Republicans and British Tories is being introduced here by Joan Burton of the Labour Party.

With a continuing investment strike by capital in this country isn't it about time we realised that real job creation requires tackling the strangle hold the rich have over our resources and our ability to create real employment?

If you agree contact Socialist Worker at 0876574100

Victory to South Dublin County Council workers



South Dublin Council workers Occupy in protest

By Leah Speight

TWO weeks before Christmas council workers in SDCC brought an on-going dispute with their management to a successful closure.

Speaking to SW one of the workers said they never looked for trouble but when they were docked pay they had to act.

On 12 December after many weeks of frustration at the slow pace it was taking the union to resolve the matter, workers decided to take action themselves.

At 1pm the outdoor staff across South Dublin, arrived to protest at the doors of the main council offices in Tallaght.

History of dispute

In November the county manager of SDCC decided to deduct two days' pay from workers' pay packets.

Previously workers had always signed their timesheets with clerical timekeepers, but management wanted foremen to fill in the sheets.

This request was resisted by foremen, resulting in the council deducting pay from outdoor staff. By the week of the protest most staff expected their outstanding money before the Christmas break. When the pay wasn't there, it was

the final straw for long-suffering workers.

Resolving the dispute

The protest called at 1pm was soon followed by an occupation of SDCC headquarters.

Once inside the building workers made a spontaneous decision to stick together, and refused to go back to work until they received the money owed to them.

A message was sent back to union headquarters, pointing out that the grassroots members are the union and the decision to down tools needed to be supported by union officials.

A speech by their shop steward made it clear that workers would not accept 1913 style bullying by management withholding workers' pay, neither now nor in the future. The workers made it clear that they are united and would not cease their protest until they got what was rightfully theirs. The following day management agreed to return their pay.

SDCC workers proved that when workers take collective action they can win against bully boy management.

The protest and an inspiring speech by the shop steward were recorded by Socialist Worker on the day, and can be viewed on SWP.TV.

NEVER miss an issue of Socialist Worker

Six month subscription €15/£10ctg

Name _____
 Address _____
 Tel _____
 Email _____

I would like to receive _____ copies of Socialist Worker each issue
 Returns to PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, with a cheque/postal order or a bank lodgement receipt. Bank Details: Socialist Workers Movement, AIB, 37/38 Upper O'Connell St, Dublin 1. Account No: 95173469. Sort code: 90-11-24

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 Cameron 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 _____



What socialists say



Ariel Sharon: Death of a butcher



Ariel Sharon: brutality of Zionism

THE death on 11 January of former Israeli PM, Ariel Sharon will have little practical effect on the world.

He had been in a coma for eight years since a stroke in 2006. But it does have some symbolic significance.

Just as Nelson Mandela represented for hundreds of millions of people the struggle for equality and freedom, so Ariel Sharon very much represented the opposite.

He expressed, perhaps more than any other single individual, the brutality of Zionism and its racist oppression of the Palestinian people.

The fact that Obama paid tribute to them both tells you a lot about the American president.

Zionism

Sharon was a lifelong Zionist militant.

In 1940, aged 10, he entered the Zionist youth movement Haganah.

At 14, joined the Gadna, a paramilitary youth organization, and after that, the underground paramilitary force, the Haganah.

In short, in his youth he was what is known as a terrorist.

When the State of Israel was established in 1948 the Haganah became part of the Israeli Defense force and Sharon rose rapidly through the ranks becoming an 'outstanding' Israeli military commander i.e. exceptionally good at killing Palestinians and Arabs.

In the 50s he headed Unit 101, a paratroop battalion, responsible for reprisals against Palestinian resistance fighters, which carried out various massacres.

Politics

On the strength of his military career he became a leading

right wing politician with the Likud Party and served as Minister of Defense during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which claimed 20,000 lives.

He built up his career on the basis of championing (illegal) Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands and served as Prime Minister from 2001-2006.

Shortly before his stroke in 2006 he formed his own Zionist Party, Kadima.

However, of all his many crimes there was one which stands out and which will be forever associated with his name, branding him with infamy.

This is the terrible massacre of Palestinian men, women and children at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in the Lebanon in 1982.

Slaughter

Over three thousand civilians were slaughtered in two days in the most brutal fashion.

The actual killing was done by Lebanese Christian militia but the Israeli Defense Force, under Sharon's command, assisted the whole operation surrounding the camps to prevent the Palestinians escaping.

In 1983, a UN commission, chaired by Sean Macbride, found Israel including, and especially, Ariel Sharon, directly responsible.

Sharon was obliged to temporarily stand down, but in the racist state of Israel this atrocity did his political career no harm.

Perhaps the best way socialists can mark his death is with the cry that 'In our thousands and our millions, we are all Palestinians!'

The war on women

By Goretti Horgan

THERE can be no doubt that the war on women is real – everywhere we go, we are bombarded by misogynist images.

The fashion industry, which has an annual revenue of \$250 billion in the USA alone tells us what we should wear while the cosmetic industry, worth an estimated \$55 billion in the USA alone, tells us how we should look.

Whatever age you are, however healthy you are, there are profits to be made by making you feel bad about yourself.

The United States is the biggest cosmetic market in the world, with an estimated total revenue of about 54.89 billion U.S. dollars and employing about 53,619 people in 2012.

The leading beauty cosmetic company in the United States in 2011 was Procter & Gamble, making up 14.2 percent of the market.

Although dipping slightly, generating only 29.5 billion U.S. dollars in net sales as compared to 29.9 billion U.S. dollars the year before, the company continued to be the leading beauty cosmetic company during the 2012 fiscal year.

The cosmetic industry seems to be continuously developing, now more than ever with the advent of internet companies.

About 7.2 billion U.S. dollars was generated by online shops and mail-order household sales in 2010. The United States is the biggest cosmetic market in the world, with an estimated total revenue of about 54.89 billion U.S. dollars and employing about 53,619 people in 2012.

The leading beauty cosmetic company in the United States in 2011 was Procter & Gamble, making up 14.2 percent of the market.

Although dipping slightly, generating only 29.5 billion U.S. dollars in net sales as compared to 29.9 billion U.S. dollars the year before, the company continued to be the leading beauty cosmetic company during the 2012 fiscal year. The cosmetic industry seems to be continuously developing, now more than ever with the advent of internet companies.

About 7.2 billion U.S. dollars was generated by online shops and mail-order household sales in 2010.

The United States is the biggest cosmetic market in the world, with an estimated total revenue of about 54.89 billion U.S. dollars and employing about 53,619 people in 2012.

The leading beauty cosmetic company in the United States in 2011 was Procter & Gamble, making up 14.2 percent of the market.

Although dipping slightly, generating only 29.5 billion U.S. dollars in net sales as compared to 29.9 billion U.S. dollars the year before, the company continued to be the leading beauty cosmetic company during the 2012 fiscal year.



The cosmetic industry seems to be continuously developing, now more than ever with the advent of internet companies.

About 7.2 billion U.S. dollars was generated by online shops and mail-order household sales in 2010.

Neoliberal globalisation

Globalisation had the potential to be good for women, freeing us from the drudgery of rural life and the 'squinting windows' of the village.

But neoliberal globalisation has instead seen women forced to join a 'race to the bottom' with men.

The result is that a National Women's Council / TASC joint report on Women, austerity and inequality found that the pay gap between women and men has narrowed, but only because everyone is now earning lower wages.

Both North and South of the border, women have been hit hardest by austerity.

Lone parents have been particularly targeted: there have been cuts to the One Parent Family Payment, Child Benefit for third and subsequent children and the Back to School clothing and footwear allowance.

North and South, lone parents are expected to find paid work once their youngest child is seven (South) or three (North).

If the Welfare Reform Bill is pushed through Stormont, lone parents will be expected to work once their youngest is one year old – although child care is scarce and expensive across the whole island, with some households paying more than 40% of their income on it.

The earnings disregard which had helped keep many lone parents in the South out of poverty has been cut several times, making it harder for a lone parent to make ends meet.

The Department of Social Protection has stated that it will be reduced further to €60 per week by 2015.

Media attacks

At the same time, lone parents are attacked in the media and made out to be 'scroungers' – despite the fact that Community Employment (CE) schemes are dependent on lone parents to operate.

Yet, single parents struggling to hold down a CE job have had support payments for their children cut by €30 per child.

Women are also disproportionately targeted through the Universal Social Charge (USC), because the highest rate of payment comes into force at a rate barely above the minimum wage.

Water charges are likely to have the same kind of high basic charges which will hit the poorest hardest.

The impact of neo-liberal policies in the North are equally devastating for women: the massive cuts there have been in public sector jobs such as nursing, care staff, teaching, special needs classroom assistants, civil services etc.

But when A&Es in local hospitals close and children or older people have to wait for 8-10 hours in crowded A&Es further from their homes, it is women who generally have to sit with them.

As the cuts bite, this is now becoming a routine waiting time in the North's A&Es.

When household budgets are slashed further by welfare reform, it is women who will have to queue for the food banks and women whose mental health will be further damaged by trying to stretch ends that simply don't meet.

But throughout history, it is women who have also led the fight against austerity.

Women usually manage the poverty, so it is they who have stood up and said it is better to starve fighting than to starve on our knees.

Over recent years, we have seen examples of women fighting back against neoliberalism and its austerity.

Don't be surprised if there's more to come...soon, let's hope so.

County Council Crisis in Donegal – FG/Labour hang on by the skin of their teeth

By Niall Mac

LAST week's decision to reject the budget by Donegal County Council was the first time this has happened for over 30 years in Ireland.

After 30 hours of horse trading over the annual budget, Sinn Féin and Fianna Fáil failed to agree with the proposals put forward by the Fine Gael/Labour coalition.

They did this believing that this decision would collapse the council.

Little did they know that the County Manager had a trick up his sleeve. Elected councillors purely form a rubber stamp function in this pretence for democracy.

After the vote was taken and councillors had resigned themselves



to focusing on their re-election, the County Manager – Seamus Neely – (line managed by Minister Phil Hogan) announced that the rules allowed for a further extension for negotiation.

Then on Monday 13 January the sitting parties managed to get the vote over the line when Independent John Campbell switched his vote and one FF

councillor was absent from the chamber.

Disagreements
The initial disagreements centred around the establishment of Irish Water, the introduction of domestic water charges in October 2014, unfinished housing estates, and cuts to roads and council housing maintenance.

These issues have surely not

gone away and People Before Profit in Donegal has called for a mass gathering to discuss setting up an alternative to this sham democracy of the political establishment. It's time to make Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Labour accountable for their decisions. They have all deliberately misled the Irish people at national level and at local level.

They have put our economy and people's lives at risk through corruption and neglect. They must be taken to task for this deceit and corruption.

We now call for a public meeting to decide where we go from here in respect of allowing the electorate to exercise their democratic rights.

Interested parties should contact 00353831499332.

Revolutionary strategy for the local elections

The People Before Profit Alliance will be standing about fifty candidates in the local elections in May as well as Brid Smith for the Euro elections. Here Kieran Allen looks at the strategy behind this development.

It is over five years since the Celtic Tiger crash and there are important shifts happening in Ireland's political landscape.

The level of mobilisation against austerity by Irish workers has been lower than in Greece, Portugal and Spain.

The main reason has been the skilful way, the political establishment have used the media to deploy divide and rule tactics.

Yet they could only get away with this because social partnership took organised workers 'out of the equation of protest,' as the SIPTU leader, Jack O' Connor recently put it.

Labour Party control of the unions also played a huge role.

Two key defeats last year greatly assisted the government and led to wide scale demoralisation on the left.

These were the intimidation of people into paying the property tax and the robbery of a further €1 billion from public sector workers through the Haddington Road agreement.

On-going crisis

We have entered a long systemic crisis in global capitalism and the period will inevitably be characterised by these types of defeats punctuated by rebounds from workers.

This arises because the politics which have dominated Irish labour before the crash – social democracy

and forms of left nationalism - are not adequate to cope with the new situation.

But even though confidence among workers is currently low, this coincides with a deeper politicisation.

There are two indicators of this.

One is the growing class sentiment in Irish society that has given rise to a popular 'them' and 'us' understanding of the crisis.

The second is the evidence of the opinion polls.

Prior to the crisis the two main right wing parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, commanded over 80 percent of the electorate.

Today that has declined to 50%.

About 40 percent of people are looking to either Sinn Fein or independents.

So while workers may not be

confident enough to fight, they want to support political voices that get the Labour Party off their backs – and speak to their concerns.

Electoral campaign

This is why People Before Profit has embarked on one of the most ambi-

tious, electoral offensives mounted by the Irish left in decades.

But while devoting considerable effort to these elections, People Before Profit is not a conventional electoral machine.

Its candidates are all pledged not to take part in any junkets; to oppose any deals with right wing parties; to reject any budget that cuts public services or promotes privatisation.

Instead of telling the electorate what elected PBP candidates can do for them, the message is very

firmly one of encouraging mass resistance.

People Before Profit candidates openly declare that they will use both the election campaign itself and any seats won to promote resistance and self-activity from the mass of workers.

This advocacy of 'people power' and opposition to any deals with Fianna Fail, puts People Before Profit well to the left of Sinn Fein.

Broad based

People Before Profit also differs both from mainstream parties and the experience of the Irish left up to now.

It openly acknowledges that it contains different political elements – some of whom are open revolutionaries such as those who are members of SWP; and others who believe that serious reforms can be wrestled from the current system though struggle.

Rather than being composed of a number far left organisations who fight each other over their distinctive 'programmes',

PBP is a non-sectarian organisation which unites long standing political activists with individuals who have emerged from Ireland's social movements.

Candidates of People Before Profit, for example, have a record in fighting in such networks as SIPTU Grassroots, the anti-property tax campaign; the home helps movement, and SPARK – Single Parents Advocating of for the Rights of Kids.

The next few months will be vital in helping to re-shape the Irish left.

Electoral victories by PBP will be a signal of both a desire for more organised resistance and a sign that a new, more popular left is emerging.



Meet the candidates



Nicky Coules

THE People Before Profit candidate for Tallaght South is Nicky Coules.

Nicky, a retired plumber, has lived at Suncroft Drive, Jobstown, since the estate was built some thirty years ago.

While the People Before Profit branch in Tallaght was formed only last year, its members have been particularly active in pushing the interests of the "have nots." When a racist outrage occurred at Cookstown Industrial Estate they were swiftly on the scene petitioning against racism.

A stall, subsequently held, at the Square saw people queuing to add their signatures.

Likewise, when Gardai abducted a Roma child from her parents, Nicky and his comrades organised a picket of Tallaght Garda station.

Nicky said at the time "working class people in Tallaght have enough problems trying to cope with austerity without racism showing its ugly head."

More recently Nicky and his team accompanied by PBP councillor Geno Kenny leafleted workers at Lufthansa in Rathcoole pledging support in any action they may decide to take in defence of their jobs.

It is the policy of PBP to encourage people to act collectively in their own interests. As individuals

we are powerless.

Acting together we will be unstoppable.

PBP demands the repeal of the Property Tax and its replacement with a Wealth Tax.

Its councillors, including Nicky Coules, will (with your vote) work tirelessly to this end.

All PBP candidates are pledged not to participate in the "junket culture" which allows councillors to claim considerable expenses from the public purse.

If you would like to learn more or become involved with his election campaign text join to 086 8532326 You can follow Nicky on facebook at Nicky Coules People Before

Profit Tallaght South Local Election Candidate



David Gaughran

David Gaughran is the People Before Profit candidate for the

Cabra/Finglas ward in the local elections in 2014.

David, who lives in Fassagh Road, Cabra, has campaigned for many years on issues that defend working people and the unemployed from the effects of austerity.

He helped organise the 'Right to Work' campaign as well as the 'Save the No.19 bus' campaign and at a local level was involved in the 'Anti-Household Charge' campaigns. He is also active in human rights campaigns and in the anti-war movement and the struggle to stop the US military use of Shannon Airport.

David pledges that if elected he will not participate in a 'junket culture' or the usual cronyism practised by the establishment political parties.

Instead he will use his position to inform, build and organise grassroots resistance to fight austerity measures that impact on the people of Cabra and Finglas: namely cut-backs, water taxes and other service charges.

All People Before Profit members promise to fight to repeal the Local Property Tax if elected.

David is a member of the Cabra branch of the People before Profit Alliance and the Socialist Workers Party - if you would like to learn more or become involved with his election campaign text join to 087 1215344.

Follow him on twitter @ Gaughranpbb

Is Ireland out of the intensive care ward?



Signs of recovery for the rich

By Brian O'Boyle

ON 15 December Ireland exited its Troika 'bailout' to much fanfare from the political establishment.

In a television interview to mark the occasion, Enda Kenny assured his audience that their "sacrifices were bringing hope into the economy and making a real difference".

He also spoke of the "shackles coming off" in an "important moment for Ireland psychologically".

Micheal Noonan, recently named 'European Finance Minister of the Year' praised the 'heroes and heroines' of austerity, whilst Jose Manuel Barroso fawned over the ability of Ireland to get back into the financial markets.

A little over three years ago Ireland was squeezed out of these markets with interest rates on 10 year bonds reaching 15%.

Last week the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) managed to sell almost €3.75 billion of government bonds at a rate of 3.5%.

Such is the confidence of global

financiers that over €14 billion was actually on offer.

Financial speculators clearly have faith in the security of their investments, but then again, why wouldn't they? Whilst successive governments have imposed relentless austerity on Irish people, the speculators who caused the crisis have been paid back in full.

Michael Noonan regularly speaks about the 85% of heavy lifting that's already behind 'us.' In reality, the €65 billion handed over to the global financiers will crush the country for decades to come.

Some recovery for the rich

At 12.5%, unemployment is now at its lowest rate since 2009 with 28,322 fewer people signing on compared with 2013.

Growth is also predicted to return with IBEC (the employers union) forecasting a GDP expansion of 2.8% and the government expecting around 2.2% over the next 12 months.

House prices in Dublin have also started to rise, prompting predictions



Meanwhile 40,000 more children have been pushed into poverty

of an increase in the flagging construction industry.

All in all, things seem a little brighter for the rich than they have for some time.

But before they start cracking open the champagne; there are a number of clouds that remain on the horizon.

First off, take investment.

Investment in the Irish economy simply imploded after the property crash in 2008.

From a high point of €48 billion in 2007, 'Gross Fixed Capital Formation' fell to a low point of €16 billion in 2011.

Thereafter it rose slightly to €17.5 billion, but this still represents less than 50% of the investment levels of the Tiger era.

Without adequate investment the economy will struggle to recover long term regardless of the current triumphalism.

Next let's look at the employment figures.

Although there has been some recovery here, the vast bulk of the new jobs (around 85,000) have been

created by labour activation policies.

IBEC talks up the fact that 60,000 more people will receive a pay check next Christmas.

However unless the new jobs are actually sustainable any recovery is likely to be still born.

What about the prospects of an 'export led recovery'? Government Ministers regularly point to Ireland's ability to exit the crisis through Foreign Direct Investment and exports into Europe.

The problem here is the ongoing malaise in the global economy.

Despite a significant increase in competitiveness over the last five years, the value of Irish exports has already begun to wane and actually fell by 6% in the first six months of 2013.

Finally let's assess the levels of debt in the economy.

According to the CSO, Irish government debt now stands at a staggering €180 billion.

The entire size of the Irish economy is only around €130 (once foreign profits are taken into account) and this

shows the sheer scale of the problems facing the Irish rich.

If the debt is priced at 3.5% per annum, then the country needs to grow at over 5% a year just to pay interest! This is the dirty little secret that no one in the establishment wants to talk about.

However, sooner or later it will become apparent that the Irish state is basically insolvent.

When this happens expect the current austerity to shoot into overdrive.

No recovery for workers

Whatever about the prospects for the rich, it becomes increasingly clear that any recovery will not improve the lives of workers.

Corporate leaders regularly purr about the strides they've made in improving their 'competitiveness'.

But this is merely business speak for slashing wages, terms and conditions.

To date, workers have seen their wages reduced by 17% and face the prospect of working for longer at the end of the lives.

Ireland is also seriously out of sync when it comes to paying income taxes.

Workers here start paying the top rate at just €27,000, adding to the unusually high rates of indirect taxes and compounding the difficulties faced by families struggling to pay property taxes and water charges.

Unsurprisingly this has helped to drive deprivation levels through the roof.

A full 22% of the population is now defined as living in poverty - up from around 11% before the crisis.

Almost 200,000 children are languishing in poverty and mental health has deteriorated significantly.

This is the reality for ordinary people in 21st century Ireland, and it will remain so whether the economy recovers or continues to stagnate

Mental health- Mental system

By Micheal Wallace

ALTHOUGH defenders of capitalism have attempted to claim otherwise, there's been a strong connection between the economic crash and a spike in the numbers of people taking their own lives.

Some high profile tragedies that have made international headlines hint at this growing crime being perpetrated by the world's rich and their political servants.

The statistics

When a 77-year-old pensioner, Dimitris Christoulas, was reduced to searching for food in the rubbish to survive, he killed himself outside the Greek parliament.

A 53-year-old Spanish woman, Amaia Egana, threw herself from the balcony of her apartment as bailiffs attempted to evict her for being unable to pay a mortgage she would still have had to pay even after repossession.

Closer to home, Fiacra Kelly, just 37, was hounded to death by a bank demanding mortgage repayments on an apartment in Priory Hall he had been unable to live in for 2 years through no fault of his own.

A series of studies has finally revealed beyond doubt a direct link between the global recession and this massive spike in suicides.

And although these statistics are often under-reported and merely the tip of the iceberg (for every one suicide, approx.

30/40 make attempts), this dreadful crime is still bigger than anyone could have imagined.



A study in the British Medical Journal reported that there was an appalling 5000 additional suicides across the world in 2009 compared to when the crash began a year earlier.

In the same report, there was also an equally shocking increase of 100 suicides in Ireland in the same period.

Currently Ireland has one of the highest suicide rates in Europe, 15% higher in 2012 than pre-recession levels.

The country also has the 4th highest rate in the EU among young people with

155 teenagers and young men taking their lives in 2011 alone.

Another report released late last year by the National Suicide Research Foundation discovered a large majority of the victims of recession-linked suicides here are predominantly males between the ages of 15-44 with up to half of them unemployed workers in construction or the production sector such as factories.

Research Director Ella Arensman said that the study "confirmed suicides

among men in Ireland rose sharply as the economy went into severe recession." She found the findings "shocking and extraordinary."

Cutbacks

While the destruction of people lives resulting from rampant levels of unemployment, savage austerity, debt levels and threats of repossession are impacting disastrously on the mental health of growing numbers of people, services designed to help them are

suffering shameful cutbacks.

In Ireland, health service budgets and specialist staff have been slashed by successive governments with funding for mental health services reduced by €200 million since 2006.

Countries in the EU badly hit by massive levels of unemployment and vicious austerity have also seen the numbers of people taking their own lives soar.

In Greece for example, official data showed that suicide had soared 26% in 2011, the highest in 50 years.

In the UK, with youth unemployment now at 20% and the Tory/Lib Dem government about to cut billions more from the welfare budget, an extra 1000 people between 2008-10 were driven to suicide as a result of rising joblessness and austerity, according to a study in The Lancet.

The study's author, David Stuckler, pulled no punches about the connection between the misery being heaped on working class people by governments pandering to the demands of 'the market'

"The financial crisis puts lives of ordinary people at risk, but it's much more dangerous when there are radical cuts to social protection..."

"Austerity can turn a [suicide] crisis into an epidemic."

The only cure to this recession-related suicide epidemic is to take wealth back through progressive taxation before using it to fund real jobs at a decent wage, increase social spending and give people back their livelihoods and dignity again.

Egypt: Revolutionary activists face state crackdown

by Judith Orr

THE military regime in Egypt is carrying out a serious crackdown on socialists and activists who played leading roles in the 2011 revolution.

"The counter-revolution is showing its teeth," said Wassim Wagdy, an Egyptian Revolutionary Socialist currently living in Britain. "It has been killing the Muslim Brotherhood. Now it wants to put us away."

At least 2,665 people have been killed since the military coup last July, according to a human rights report issued last week.

That is more than twice the number who died during the overthrow of dictator Hosni Mubarak.

Revolutionaries face a wave of arrests under a new anti-protest law.

On January 5 ten activists in Cairo, among them brother and sister, Alaa Abdel-Fatah and Mona Seif, received sentences of one year, suspended for three years.

Revolutionary Socialists Mahienour El-Massry and Hassan Mostafa in Alexandria were sentenced to two years in prison on Thursday 2 Jan, along with four other activists.

They were charged with organising a protest without permission under the new protest law and attacking



security forces.

"The police know where Mahienour and Hassan are—they are the most high profile revolutionaries in the city."

The media has denounced the

Revolutionary Socialists as enemies of the state and "fifth columnists" working with foreigners.

One private satellite channel, Al Kahera Wal Nas, has even broadcast

tapped private phone conversations between targeted activists.

The TV host Abdel-Rehim Ali claims he has 5,000 such recordings he will release.

Wassim said the attacks are more bitter because "sections of the left—in particular the Stalinist left—are supporting and sometimes celebrating the counter-revolution."

The regime wants to snuff out the revolution using the same repression that maintained Mubarak.

"The revolution broke the wall of fear of the power of the police and the state," said Wassim.

"But walls of fear can be rebuilt. That's what the state is trying to do now. If the revolution doesn't go forward it will go back."

Mahienour is defiant. "The state keeps imagining that with its laws, prisons, and dogs it can protect itself," she said.

"But even if you gather all of us in prison, the revolution will continue."

When the state has attacked revolutionaries in the past international solidarity has made a difference. Such solidarity is vital today.

■ Sign the statement calling for the release of all political detainees: bit.ly/198m6YT

'We are not afraid' - Egyptian Revolutionary Socialist speaks out against state crackdown

By Mahie El Massry (inset)



WE protested outside the court when police convicted of murdering Khaled Said in Alexandria during 2010 were being retried this month. The case is an important one in the Egyptian Revolution.

Khaled's murder showed the brutality of the regime and police against the people. It showed the torture that was part of everyday life. It was part of what brought people onto the streets in 2011.

The way our recent protest was treated shows that the police are still the same. And we know that they are still torturing people in police stations.

After 3 July when the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Mursi was removed as president, there was all this talk of "reconciliation" with the army and police. People said the police have changed.

But they haven't. The new protest

law is now being used against us in Alexandria. Outside the court we got together on the pavement and chanted, "We will not forget police brutality! We will not forget Khaled Said!"

Illegal

The second most senior security officer in Alexandria got on a megaphone and said we were on an illegal protest. He announced they would move in to break it up in ten minutes.

Immediately they turned water hoses on us. Then they beat several protesters. One of our comrades in the Revolutionary Socialists, a doctor, was beaten with an illegal weapon—an American stick—made of metal. We were showered with his blood.

We moved away to the other side of road. Then they started spraying

us with pepper spray and tear gas. Pepper spray entered the comrade's large wound. They arrested several people. One was a young man who was just passing by on his way to campus and had started running to get away from tear gas.

They are still in detention. We went to the police station to ask when they would be released. The police said their detention had been extended, which is illegal. Activists are being arrested in many parts of Egypt. Arrest warrants have been issued for me and other activists.

Stopped

When I heard this I stopped being active for two days, but then I thought, "This isn't right. We are not criminals". I have been to the security directorate to bring food and clothes for comrades in detention.

If they want to take us they know

where we are. The protest law is about holding back our movement so people get scared and stop being active. It isn't about attacking the Brotherhood—they have made them illegal already. It isn't about stopping terrorism as they claim. It is about stopping the workers' movement

We have had a bit of a wave of strikes in recent weeks. We are seeing many movements in workplaces and factories and protests in universities.

We have the problem that many people still have illusions that the police and army will bring stability. But we have seen this before and people are now awakening and beginning to see through these lies.

In Alexandria our priorities are stopping the protest law and our other target is the constitution. So I am optimistic. The military will not stop our struggle. We will show we are not afraid.

Support for socialist journalists in Greece as court case against Workers Solidarity begins

by Dave Sewell

SUPPORT has poured in from across Greece for the newspaper Workers Solidarity - Socialist Worker's sister publication.

Its editor Panos Garganas, journalist Katerina Thoidou and publisher Tasos Anastasiades were set to stand trial on Thursday 9 January.

They are accused of defamation by Ioannis Andriopoulos, a lawyer on the Golden Dawn payroll. The accusation relates to an article about his attempt to overturn a law granting citizenship to second generation migrants.

"We've seen a wave of solidarity," Panos told Socialist Worker. "As well as many unions we're now seeing local councils pass resolutions to support us. The courts have to take this into account."

Journalists' union leader Dimitris Trimis has pledged to testify that the article was true and that they should have the freedom to say it.

Supporters of the paper say workers are rallying to defend it. "We've gathered dozens of signatures from the Agios Savvas hospital," said Stella Myrissiotti in



Journalists' union leader Dimitris Trimis (right) at a solidarity meeting for the Workers Solidarity Three (Pic: Workers Solidarity)

Athens.

"Many people tell us they will be there outside the court. They are angry that the murderous gang of fascists dares, after all its crimes, to try to sue the anti-fascists."

The trial is one of several court

battles against fascism currently underway in Greece.

The Keerfa anti-racist and anti-fascist coalition is supporting the family of murdered Pakistani worker Shehzad Luqman.

The state has tried to keep the

trial of his murder separate from the trial of Golden Dawn's leaders, even though one of the alleged killers had Golden Dawn leaflets.

The trial of Workers Solidarity is also an attack on the left and the workers' movement that has made

life hard for the Greek government.

The government only just got its next budget through parliament last week. It faces ongoing strikes in health and education.

Hospital worker Maria Alifieri said, "We have been fighting closures and layoffs, and against the Golden Dawn Nazis' attempt to organise blood donation for 'Greeks only'."

"Workers Solidarity supported all these struggles. Many hospital workers buy and read it."

Workers who occupied state broadcaster ERT for almost six months to stop its closure have also pledged to support the paper.

ERT occupier Gavrilos Kasimatis said, "Throughout our fight Workers Solidarity showed us solidarity and now we must do the same."

"We will be outside the courts, and call on everyone who supported us to support Workers Solidarity as well".

■ Thanks to Nikos Loudos, Aleka Donou and Workers Solidarity journalists

Anger and defiance in Tottenham after inquest conclusion into Mark Duggan's death

by Annette Mackin

A jury inquest conclusion that Mark Duggan was lawfully killed by police has caused anger and defiance on the streets of Tottenham.

Police shot Mark in Tottenham, North London, in August 2011. Many people there expressed disbelief at the inquest decision in light of overwhelming evidence against the police.

Ahasen was born and grew up in Tottenham. He told Socialist Worker, "I was so shocked when I heard."

"I think people in Tottenham are thinking now – what if the shoe was on the other foot? What if Mark had shot a police officer?"

"Police always get away with it – look at what happened to Smiley Culture."

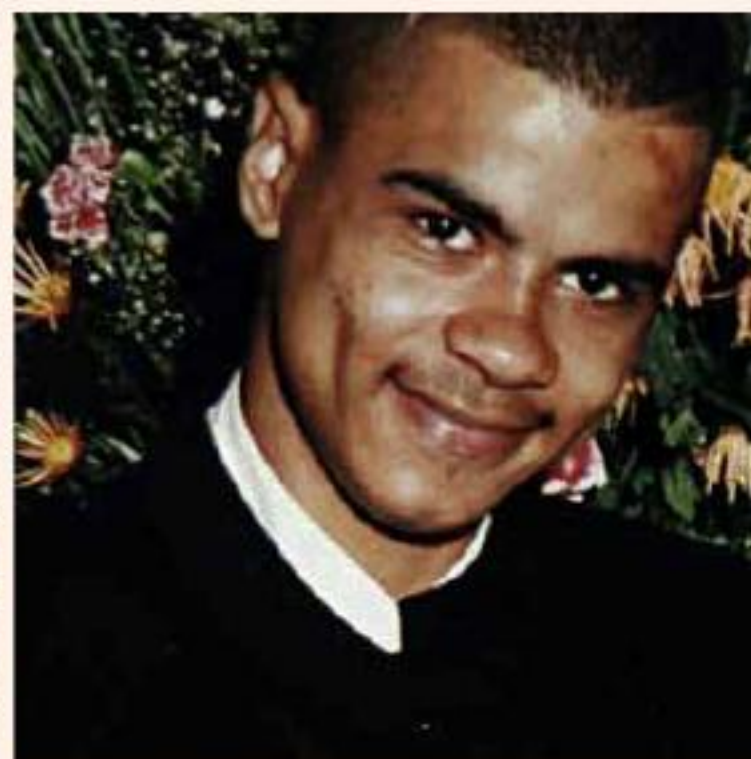
"They make out there's justice and it's a balance thing – but there's no justice, there's just us."

The jury in the inquest reached the conclusion of lawful killing by a majority of eight to two. But they concluded that Mark did not have a gun when he was shot.

They also concluded by nine to one that it was more likely than not that Mark threw a gun to where one was found nearby. It was found 7.34 metres away from where Mark was shot.



Left: The scene on Ferry Lane after the police shooting (Pic: The Duggan Inquest); Right: Mark Duggan



This contradicts key evidence given throughout the inquest.

After boxing in the minicab in a "hard stop" police were immediately out of their vehicles.

Police

One officer, known as W42, was shot in his radio by a police bullet. W42 told the inquest that he was out of his vehicle and on the pavement as the minicab doors were sliding open.

He then said that he saw Mark getting out.

Leslie Thomas QC asked W42, "Did you see anything being thrown from the cab?" W42 replied, "No, sir, I didn't."

W42 then said he had his eyes on the

cab at all times in the run-up to the stop. He said he did not see anything being thrown from the vehicle.

There were just 10 seconds between the hard stop and the shooting. There was no opportunity for Mark to throw a heavy handgun over seven metres in a concealed way.

There were no fingerprints or DNA from Mark on the gun or on the sock it was wrapped in.

Mark wasn't wearing gloves when he was shot. If he threw the gun, as the jury believes, there would have been fingerprint evidence.

The conclusion has deepened the mistrust of police on the streets of Tottenham.

Derek Roberts' son was a friend of Mark. He told Socialist Worker, "I remember very clearly when the shooting happened. My son said to me, 'Dad I know him, that's my mate'."

"The police locked down the streets soon after."

"I remember getting done under the sus laws back in 1980 when I was just walking down the streets with my friends. I couldn't believe it."

"Now I'm scared to walk down Tottenham High Road because the streets are so hot – there seems to be a cop on every corner."

South Africa's largest union breaks with ANC and calls for new workers' party

by Ken Olende

SOUTH Africa's largest union withdrew electoral support for the governing African National Congress (ANC) in a historic move at a special conference last month. It went on to call for a new workers' party to be set up.

Some 1,200 delegates attended the special congress of South Africa's metal workers' union Numsa from 17 to 20 December. They represented 338,000 workers.

The conference was called as a response to a crisis in the ANC, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the trade union federation (Cosatu). This alliance has effectively governed the country since 1994.

This crisis developed out of the failure of the government to deliver for working people. It became public after the Marikana massacre of striking miners in 2012 and the strikes that followed.

South Africa faces a general election this year. The ANC, like the Labour Party in Britain, assumes it will have the active support of the trade union movement.

But the Numsa conference's closing statement bluntly said, "For more than 20 years we have been urging our members to swell the ranks of the ANC and SACP."

"Swelling the ranks has merely resulted in delivering more working class victims, like lambs to the slaughter by the ANC's bourgeois leadership."

The conference decided the alliance was beyond repair. It called on Cosatu to

break with the ANC and the SACP.

Ultimatum

This ultimatum calls Cosatu's bluff as it tries to appear more oppositional and regain credibility after its unions lost thousands of members following Marikana.

But it is almost unthinkable that the federation will actually break with the alliance.

Numsa states that it will set up "a new United Front that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities, in a way similar to the United Democratic Front of the 1980s".

It said, "For this to happen our members and shop stewards must be active on all fronts and in all struggles



Numsa members (Pic: Numsa)

against neoliberal policies, whether these policies are being implemented in the workplace or in communities."

In addition it announced plans

to "explore" the establishment of a Movement for Socialism to prepare for a new socialist party.

The conference went on to call for the resignation of president Jacob Zuma and police chief Riah Phiyega. It also demanded a fuller investigation into the Marikana massacre than the current official inquiry.

Supporters of Socialist Worker in South Africa belong to the Democratic Left Front. It issued a statement saying, "This Numsa Congress marks a decisive end to the era of national liberation politics."

"Numsa has broken new ground and has thereby opened space for a genuine mass-based political alternative to emerge, led and controlled by workers and their communities."

Tax revolts and 'pitchfork protests' - if the left don't fight austerity then other forces will

Sylvestre Jaffard asks if the protests against governments of the centre left in Italy and France are the shape of things to come

Italian Right

IMPORTANT, radical and contradictory movements have shaken both France and Italy in recent months. Tax rises and subsidy cuts have been at the forefront in both places, but the social forces at play are not quite the same.

In Italy the "pitchfork protests", a movement of the self-employed and small business owners, have spread from Sicily to various cities. They demand tax cuts for small businesses.

The far right Northern League and the disgraced former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi have voiced their support for the movement. So has populist Beppe Grillo, whose 5 Star Movement had a surprise success in last year's election.

Italian socialist Franco Turigliatto has argued that, in the absence of a strong left, the movement is leading to a consolidation of ultra-reactionary and fascist tendencies.

France

MEANWHILE in France, a widespread wave of anger took hold of the Brittany region in the autumn.

Sacked workers in the food industry have led the way calling for a ban on layoffs. And local bosses have seized on discontent with a new "eco-tax" to try and wrestle concessions from the besieged centre left government of Francois Hollande.



Protest against the eco-tax and in defence of jobs in Quimper, France, November 2013

They have also blamed the end of some European Union subsidies for the layoffs.

Tens of thousands of workers have marched—with bosses' organisations

also present.

Part of the left, including the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) and some unions, have taken part in order to promote their own demands and stop

the bosses taking the leadership of the movement.

Other organisations, such as the Front de Gauche led by Jean-Luc Melenchon, steered clear and dismissed it as entirely

reactionary.

Instead, it decided to attack the government's taxation policy from another angle.

It called for a demonstration in Paris against the rises in VAT, which over 10,000 people attended on 1 December.

The NPA also participated in this march in order to push for left unity. Marches and strikes continue in Brittany.

What the events in France and Italy show is that in a period of prolonged crisis, social explosions will always occur.

But they don't necessarily take a progressive direction, especially if the labour and trade union movement have not opposed austerity.

It also shows that nothing is written in advance.

Socialist activists have a crucial role to play in order to give confidence to workers so they can take the initiative and lead other impoverished layers of society.

If not, the forces of the right and the far right will leap at the opportunity.

As things stand the forces of the right are forging ahead in Italy, while in France the outcome is still open.

It will take a stronger, unified, radical and non-sectarian left to score some much needed victories.

Sylvestre Jaffard is a member of the NPA in Paris

Haass talks fail to unite

We need to Fight Sectarianism & the Cuts

THE main parties in the Assembly offer no way forward for the vast majority of people in the North.

The clearest sign yet of this was the failure of the much trumpeted Haass Talks—touted by pundits and politicians alike as the best hope for a solution to the resurgence of sectarianism—to produce any substantive agreement between the main parties.

Haass was supposed to overcome the recent divisions around so-called 'cultural' issues: namely flags and parades.

But its failure to reach a resolution is indicative of an even deeper rot in the Assembly.

Mainstream intransigence

Despite going through seven drafts, the proposals were rejected by both the DUP and the UUP.

What's more, the final draft was a watered down document, with much by way of rhetoric but little in terms of concrete detail.

The flags issue, which has caused so much consternation of late, is a case in point.

Haass' proposal for a new 'Northern Ireland Flag' was quickly shot down, as was Sinn Fein's proposal for two flags or none on government buildings.

Unionist proposals that the Union Jack fly on designated days outside Belfast, but be restored permanently at Belfast City Hall was clearly aimed at shoring up their electoral chances by playing to hard-line loyalists.

But this was never going to be acceptable either.

In the end, Haass proposed to set up a 'Commission on Identity, Culture and Traditions', a flagrant attempt at kicking the political football into the long grass if ever there was one.

It was the same story with parades: The DUP delegation at Haass included Mervyn Gibson, head of the Orange Order, which has been directly responsible for ratcheting up tensions over the past year.

Unionists wanted the abolition of the Parades Commission; SF wanted some sort of deal, and was probably prepared to make concessions to which nationalist residents in places like North Belfast would have had



strong objections.

But in the end all that was proposed was that an Office for Parades, Select Commemorations, and Related Protests be formed—the Parades Commission with a different title.

Tory austerity

Conspicuous by their absence was any

representative from London.

Certainly, the British Government was a key mover behind the scenes in the negotiations, but publicly it preferred to present itself as a neutral observer.

Indeed the British government has been almost completely mute in the face of ongoing trouble arising out



of the flag protests.

By any measure, the programme of Tory austerity is having a disproportionate effect on the North, and any sensible observer would note this as a contributing factor to the resurgence of sectarianism.

The Tories never once balked at the millions of pounds spent on 'secu-

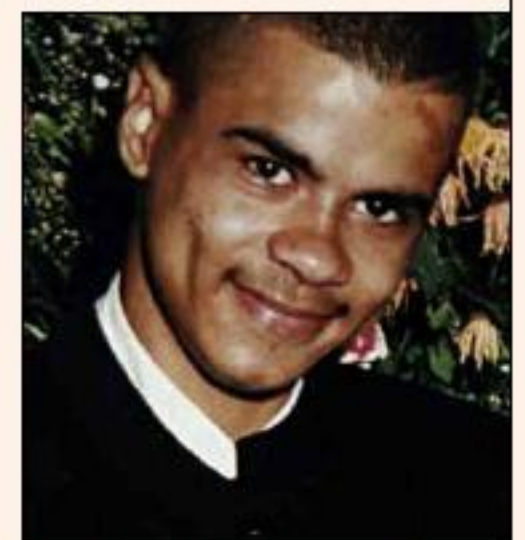
Inside:

Page 3:



The war on women

Page 7:



Mark Duggan killers get off scot free

riety' during the troubles, but when it comes to resolving the legacy of that conflict, the Government doesn't want to foot the bill.

Unfortunately both Sinn Fein and the DUP are willing accomplices in this agenda.

Avoiding the causes

Haass was doomed to failure because it was never serious about tackling the issues which caused both the conflict here and its legacy.

The political structures in place in the North have not only proven consistently incapable of challenging sectarianism: they are part of the problem.

This is partly why there is widespread exasperation among ordinary people at the lack of progress in moving forward.

As politicians bicker over flags and symbols, services are allowed to continually deteriorate.

The recent crisis in the Royal Victoria hospital is just one example with the shortage of staff and the cutting of A&E services causing a backlog that put lives at risk.

Fortunately the protests that were held after this shambles showed that another way is possible.

By linking issues like the cuts in health with a robust opposition to sectarianism we can begin to map out the way to a real alternative to neo liberalism and communalism in the North - something Haass could never do.