

Socialist Worker

SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE BUS STRIKE

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism

FIGHT PRIVATISATION — FIGHT LOW PAY

PAY THE BUS DRIVERS

"I HAVE not had a day off since Christmas.

And there are many others like me, working seven days a week just to earn a living wage".

Eugene drives a Number 13 bus from Summerhill. He has been in the job twelve years. His flat rate after stoppages is £210 a week. He has little choice but to do a 55 hour week.

This is the real issue behind the bus drivers strike. Management at Dublin Bus have been putting out propaganda about bus drivers earning £22,000 a year. But that figure only comes after drivers work around the clock on rest days and weekends.

Drivers who need new accommodation face a nightmare trying to live on this wage.

Rob has moved over from Britain where he used to drive a bus in Bristol.

"I did not want to spend the rest of my life renting a bedsit so I tried to buy something. The only place I could get was a one bedroom apartment. But the mortgage payments still took up 60 percent of my net wage."

Turnover

The pay is so low that Dublin Bus is now

POVERTY WAGES USED TO SUBSIDISE DUBLIN BUS

EVERY BUS service needs a government subsidy to run a full service. But Dublin Bus receives the lowest subsidy in Europe.

The government wants Dublin Bus drivers to subsidise the service with poverty wages. Here are the comparable figures for other European cities.

City	Grant/Subsidy
Athens	50%
Barcelona	39%
DUBLIN	4%
Helsinki	55%
London	14%
Paris	57%
Rome	74%
Strasbourg	46%

THE LOWEST BASIC RATE IN EUROPE

DUBLIN Busworkers start on the lowest basic rate in Europe. Here are the weekly wage rates for 1st year drivers in different European cities.

Copenhagen	£385
Berlin	£340
Paris	£326
Stuttgart	£321
Brussels	£278
Dublin	£204

facing a huge turnover of staff.

"When I started in November 1998 I was given an aptitude test and asked for a full drivers' licence. Eighteen months later they had scrapped the aptitude test and now they do not even ask for a full drivers licence. The turnover is huge because they do not pay drivers' properly" said Rob from Conyngham Road.

"Recently an ad appeared in the *Evening Herald* for a loader with Aer Lingus. It said that a full drivers licence was required. Beside that ad there was one for Dublin Bus which said that no driving licence was needed. It just shows how desperate they are to get anyone to work for them" Eugene added.

On top of the poor pay levels, Dublin Bus drivers have a terrible pension scheme.

No matter how long a driver has been with the company, they come out with a pension of just £56 a week. And even though driving is now one of the most stressful occupations, there is no provision for an early retirement scheme.

Prison officers and psychiatric nurses can retire at 55 but a bus drivers can only go at 60 if they have 25 years of service.

The situation is so bad that SIPTU has won an overwhelming vote for strike action on this issue. Politicians in Dail Eireann have put in for a 28 percent pay rise.

But these cossers have the cheek to tell one of the hardest working groups of workers in this country that they don't deserve a decent basic rate.

It is time that workers got their fair share of the Celtic Tiger. That starts by paying the bus drivers the 20 percent they deserve.

There's no Partnership in the Celtic Tiger

THE GOVERNMENT says that it is going to adopt a hard line against the bus drivers because it has to defend social partnership.

Because the ICTU voted to accept a pay rise of 5.5 percent for workers next year. Fianna Fail say they have to 'hold the line'.

But workers never voted to stop groups like busworkers getting decent wages.

They never agreed to

confining bus drivers to a miserable basic wage that forced them onto long hours of overtime.

Voted

The NRBU is not a member of the ICTU.

It never voted on the partnership deal and always claimed its right to pursue wage rises through free collective bargaining.

Even though the boss-organisation IBEC voted to accept the new partnership deal, there is

nothing to stop their members declaring super-profits that increase by much more than 20 percent.

There is nothing to stop house prices or rents rising by 20 percent next year.

So why should wages be the only item that is controlled in the Celtic Tiger.

The reality is that social partnership is a fraud.

How can bosses be partners with workers

when they can sack them and discipline them?

How can the super-rich be partners with workers when they will not share the huge profits

they made from the Celtic Tiger.

The busworkers are setting an example for every other group in the country.

Instead of meekly accepting the crumbs the bosses throw us, it is time to reclaim what is ours of right.

HOW TO WIN

We have given enough No more productivity

DUBLIN BUS say that they will only pay drivers what they deserve if they agree to new productivity measures. Management want to squeeze more out of workers rather than telling the government openly that they must give higher subsidies to Dublin Bus.

As Peter Bunting, the General Secretary of the NRBU said "It's like saying we have to pay for our own pay increase".

Here are some of the measures that management are demanding:

- ★ Contracting out of 200 buses. This will mean a non-union force which can be used to scab on future strikes.
- ★ More weekend working and unsociable hours.
- ★ An extra hour on the working week
- ★ Removal of travelling time

"This would make the job unbearable. Drivers would be under more stress and our pay packages would shrink. We have given enough to Dublin Bus already and we are not giving any more" said Eugene a driver in Dublin Bus.

THE RIGHT wing Fianna Fail government are determined to make an example of the busworkers. They know that militancy is rising among workers and they want to hold up the busworkers as an example to anyone who dares to look for more than the terms of social partnership.

This is why they will throw everything at the bus drivers in the hope of defeating and demoralising them.

But this government is racked by corruption scandals and can be beaten back. The key is adopting a strategy that fights with everything we have.

That means:

★ **Unity between SIPTU and the NRBU.**

The NRBU have called the strike and SIPTU members have backed it.

This unity must be maintained.

There should be no attempt made to undermine the NRBU position by negotiating on the management's terms for extra productivity. NRBU and SIPTU should cast aside

the old divisions and strike together to win this strike.

★ **Call out the DART, Irish Rail and Bus Eireann.**

The strike can win if Dublin grinds to a halt. When businesses realise that absenteeism is increasing and people are not coming into their shops they will scream at this government to pay up.

This is why it is so crucial to involve other transport workers.

Why should the DART continue to be run by NRBU members when their colleagues in Dublin Bus are on the picket line?

Picket

Why should SIPTU members run Irish Rail services to outlying suburbs and neighbouring counties when their comrades are supporting a picket line?

★ **Forge links with the soldiers union, PDFORA**

The government will eventually try to bring in the army to break the strike.

If this happens army lor-

ries should be met by mass pickets.

But even before this, busworkers should start to forge links with the soldiers union, PDFORA. Soldiers are drawn from working class areas.

Many joined the army to defend their country- not to break strikes of fellow workers. If links are created now, the government will not be able to use soldiers as strike breakers.

★ **Organise collections among other workers**

NRBU members are not receiving a penny in strike pay.

As the action escalates, the government will hope that it can starve them back to work.

But big collections form other trade unionists can prevent this.

From next week on 'Support the Busworkers' collections should be organised in as many jobs as possible.

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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I want to get *Socialist Worker* every fortnight

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