

Socialist Worker

NOT JUST COWEN...

GET ON THE STREETS TO DUMP FIANNA FAIL

FIANNA FAIL is in turmoil and they want to dump Brian Cowen. According to party insiders, Cowen has a communications problem because he does not use his spin doctors properly.

Normally, government Ministers get 'briefed' from about an hour before a major interview but the Taoiseach went straight on the airwaves with a massive hang-over and made a fool of himself.

But the real problem is not communications or hangovers – but Fianna Fail policies that serve and protect the wealthy.

If Cowen were replaced by Brian Lenihan or Micheál Martin, it would make no difference whatsoever. Lenihan, for example, is just as culpable as Cowen for the disaster that has befallen the country.

He made the absurd claim that Ireland had 'the cheapest bank bail-out in the world'.

So stupid has his behaviour been that the Financial Times has dubbed him 'the worst finance Minister in



the world'.

The real debate is not which Fianna Fail leader can best lead the country – but which of them need to be brought to trial for robbing the population.

A recent parliamentary commis-

sion report in Iceland recommended that key Ministers be investigated and brought to trial because of their links with the banking industry and the damage they have done to the country.

There is even more reason to take

this course of action in Ireland.

Cowen, Lenihan and the rest of the Fianna Fail cabinet have taken a series of measures that will cost us all at least €40 billion. They have poured money into Anglo-Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide in a totally

wasteful and desperate bid to save their rich friends.

Cowen was close to at least one Anglo-Irish director and these links need to be systematically investigated to establish how they influenced the reckless policies pursued by Fianna Fail.

The pretext for the huge bank bail-out was that it was supposed to 'protect Ireland's reputation' and this, it was argued, would reduce the cost of borrowing.

Yet the exact opposite has occurred. Interest rates on Irish government bonds has now risen to 6.4 percent – the highest in Europe.

As global speculators become increasingly nervous about the state of the economy, there is now real prospect, as David McWilliams has predicted, of a flight of capital.

The time for half measures are now over – the whole Fianna Fail government and not just Cowen has to be driven out of office. And then we must take measures to protect working people – not bondholders.

WE NEED A MASS MOVEMENT ON THE STREETS

THE NATIONAL day of protest on September 29th could be the start of huge mobilisations to drive this government out of office.

It is the day for an all-European wide action against the cuts in public services and the policy of reducing wages and increasing the pension age.

But the mobilisation is set to be far smaller in Ireland than it should be because of a deliberate strategy being pursued by union leaders who are members of the Labour Party.

Instead of building for the protest union leaders in IMACT and SIPTU have worked behind the scenes to play it down.

They have used the argument that 'people are not interested in protesting and will not turn up'.

Only the UNITE and other unions such as the CPSU have made a serious attempt to inform their members about the protests.

This cynical strategy is being promoted to give the Labour Party the best opportunity to

make electoral gains.

The union leaders do not want mass mobilisations on the streets and want instead to channel discontent into the safe ground of voting Labour in the next election.

They know that if people drive a Fianna Fail government from office, they are more likely to turn on Labour itself when it too implements cuts.

The contrast between how the Irish union leaders are behaving and their counterparts elsewhere is

shocking.

In South Africa recently, public sector workers engaged in a three week long struggle to win a 7 percent pay rise.

In France over 2 million workers have marched over rises in the pension age and have already won small concessions.

Even in Britain the Trade Union Congress voted unanimously the call to "support and co-ordinate campaigning and industrial action, nationally and locally,

in opposition to attacks on jobs, pensions, pay or public services'.

We therefore need a real fight inside the ranks of our own labour movement for a shift in strategy.

We need to follow the example of France and mobilise to challenge Fianna Fail and drive them from office.

But to do that, we have to fight inside our unions to dump the leaders who will not fight and replace them with those who are willing.

46a here to stay!

By KARL GILL

IN DUN Laoghaire Dublin Bus have decided to take the 46a bus from Monkstown Farm area and cut the number of 4/4a buses by a third in what has been described as a "Review of the service".

In reality, however, this is nothing but just another cut back attacking an entire working class community made up, in the main, by pensioners and young families.

Dublin Bus's thinking is that this route is not as profitable (due to pensioners bus passes) as the new proposed route down Kill Avenue; however a public service is not meant to be profitable, it is there to provide a service for the community.

With the help of the People Before Profit in Dun Laoghaire a rather large and angry campaign has built up around these latest cuts by Dublin Bus management.

The campaign recently held a protest that went from Bakers Corner and through the route of the proposed cut; the protest was well attended, with 200 people



from the community taking to the streets in anger.

At another protest, 70 angry residents, including pensioners and students, marched from Dun Laoghaire's main street to picket Fianna Fail and Green Party clinics nearby.

Despite the supposed openness of the clinics,

the arrogance of this government was reflected in the TD's staff's refusal to talk with a contingent from the protest.

Amazingly, the Minister for Sustainable Transport and local TD, Ciaran Cuffe, has applauded the cuts to the bus service in the area.

No amount of Dublin

Bus or government spin about "sustainability" can disguise the hardship these thinly disguised cutbacks will cause.

We have to be able to say no where ever we see cuts being forced upon communities and take lead from the people of Monkstown farm and fight back.

State gives millions away in asylum industry



By Ian MacDonnell

The government have awarded private companies contracts of up to €182 million to run "accommodation centres" for asylum seekers in Ireland.

Records recently released show that from 2002 - 2007 twenty eight companies were awarded €1 million each to manage such facilities.

The practice of sub-contracting such projects to private companies has, according to a recent report issued from the Dept of Justice, proven to be more expensive than state-run facilities.

The largest beneficiary of this practice was the Dundalk based firm, East Coast Catering Ireland, which won contracts that total at €47.5 million.

The firm own Baleskin reception centre in Co. Dublin, a pre-fab camp housing 450 inmates who are forced to live on €19.10 per week and are not allowed to look for employment.

The internment camp is managed by Dundalk businessmen Denis Williams and Bryan Burn.

In 2006 the firm made after tax profits of €1.3 million.

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Galway Protests

By VANESSA O'SULLIVAN

THERE WERE minor scuffles outside the Ardlaun Hotel in Galway on Monday 11th September after a group of protesters gathered to 'greet' Flanna Fail politicians attending the party's annual pre-Dall think-in.

Members of the campaign group 'Galway Says No To Health Cuts' mobilized at short notice to protest against the government's disastrous policy of healthcare cutbacks.

In true Flanna Fail style, they had a heavy garda presence at the hotel, which was completely off-limits to the public, amid fears of a repeat of the scenes witnessed last year's event in Athlone when riot police were deployed to repel a protest by

hundreds of angry farmers.

The protest in Galway came two days after 600 people marched from the gates of Merlin Park Hospital to Eyre Square to demonstrate against healthcare cutbacks.

The determination of this group is an example of the anger against proposed cuts to health services in the region.

The HSE has denied the closure of Merlin Park Hospital; however, residents in the area are doubtful of this and are sending a message to the HSE that they dare not close their hospital.

A further protest is planned for Saturday September 25th, meeting at 2pm outside Galway Cathedral and marching to the University College Hospital

National University of Ireland Maynooth Protest

By IAN MACDONNELL

NUIM STUDENTS staged a protest against Minister for Tourism Mary Hanafin on Thursday 16th September.

She was invited by the university to open the new lontas building.

NUIM's student union organised the protest, which saw somewhere in the region of 50 people in attendance, a small but considerable turnout given that NUIM doesn't resume fully until the 20th September.

Among those present were a sizable contingent of political groupings, including members of the SWP, Sinn Fein and Labour Youth.

The event also drew interest from first year students being shown around the college as part of their orientation week.

The minister was met with booing and jeers upon her arrival, and was quickly hastened into the building by an envoy of security.

As the minister's visit ended, she was escorted out through the rear of the building, to avoid the angry crowd of students.

NUIM's Student Union boycotted Mary Hanafin's visit on account of Fianna Fail's handling of the economy and its implications with regards education and employment.

While the Green Party's veto on the re-introduction of full fee's is technically non-negotiable, the cabinet are considering increasing both the student services charge to €2,500 per year & reducing the maintenance grant by 5%.

It was on these grounds that the student union called the protest.

Initially, the union had decided not to attend the ceremony, but later decided to arrange a "guard of dishonour".

NUIM's union executive sent a letter to the president of the university, John Hughes, highlighted that "The cabinet is considering further cuts to basic student services and

to the third level sector in general.

It is unclear to us why the University should be honouring the Minister, even though she is a notable graduate, at this time".

The letter concluded with "We cannot applaud any member of this cabinet while our students and graduates remain so vulnerable".

The decision of NUIM's Student's Union to officially boycott a ministerial visit while a small step, is, within the context of student politics, a move in the right direction.

Last year, for instance, NUIM's union executive met with the then Minister for Education, Bat O'Keefe, in secret; they also issued a statement in support of students crossing picket lines when the staff were on strike.

Contrasted to last term, the current situation is much improved.

The executive, as it

stands, is composed of around four members of the Labour party.

The boycott and protest also mark a discernible shift away from the idea that student unions should act as service providers as opposed to political bodies.

The task falls to socialist students to push their own respective unions as far as possible on matters like ministerial visits.

However, we should recognize that there are limits as to how far the reformist/left are willing to go.

This understood, grassroots organization and recruitment should not be substituted by trying to win over those of a liberal disposition.

It is also important to consider the fact that the Labour party are going into coalition with Fine Gael, whose proposed graduation tax would see the average graduate incur a debt of €12,000.

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Obama's wars

IN FEBRUARY of this year President Obama set a date for the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraq, declaring that 'while the country they will leave behind will not be perfect, the United States will have reached its "achievable goals" and must move on.'

One assumes that the murder of over one million innocent Iraqis was one of America's "achievable goals".

After seven years of an illegal war waged upon the people of Iraq the United States "must move on", leaving behind 50,000 American troops to 'train and advise Iraqi security forces, protect diplomats and civilians working in Iraq, and continue the counterterrorism fight against al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups', according to the U.S. president.

The date for the withdrawal was set for late August.

And so less than three weeks ago approximately 90,000 U.S. were withdrawn from Iraq.

So where is their next destination?

Obama has plenty of options of where next to deploy his troops, for the United States is currently waging war on many fronts across the world: from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Yemen to Latin America and



Africa, where US soldiers entered Somalia in January of this year.

It seemed to many in early November 2008 that "change had come to America" when Obama was elected U.S. president after eight years of the most reactionary, war mongering administration led by George W. Bush.

Alas, it was not to be. Obama has managed in two short years to prove that he is every bit as much of a war monger as his predecessor: as president he is continuing a long American tradition;

namely, the endless pursuit of war and domination.

The massive 'city within a city' embassy in Iraq's capital, Baghdad, is being expanded, and will cost the American taxpayer \$1.8 billion a year to maintain for who knows how many years to come.

In Afghanistan and Pakistan the Obama administration is constructing mega-embassies, another firm indicator of America's intent to dominate the region and exploit the natural resources therein for the foreseeable future under

the point of their military might.

Indeed, Obama is on track to spend more on defence than any other president has in one term of office since World War II, with the American Congress giving the green light to the Pentagon's budget of over \$700 billion in January of this year, and this at a time when 14.9 million Americans are currently unemployed, the largest number since statistics began to be compiled in 1948.

Certainly, American mili-

tary budgets appear to be unaffected by the wider crisis in global capitalism, as the U.S., in 2008 alone, accounted for over 40 per cent of global military expenses, eight times as much as China, its nearest rival.

These are the costs of maintaining and expanding the American empire across the world.

Change has not come to America, Obama proving to be "Bush with a human face".

But what of the thousands of Americans who mobilized to campaign on Obama's behalf and the millions who voted him into office?

Having had their illusions shattered by the widening gap between his actions and his rhetoric over the past two years, where are they to turn?

With 44 million Americans (one in every seven residents) living below the poverty line and millions more barely surviving above that line, with unemployment heading toward 10 per cent (over 14 million currently unemployed), can ordinary Americans survive and thrive in a country whose president is prepared to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on military missions across the world at a time of such want at home?

Change must come to America, and soon.

News from France

THE DECISION by the French government to deport 300 Roma to Romania and Bulgaria earlier this month should not be tolerated.

The French authorities have, this year alone, deported 8,300 Roma gypsies to Romania and Bulgaria, in addition to the 10,000 they deported in 2009.

This is a disgrace. The actions of the Sarkozy government have created a diplomatic crisis within Brussels, drawing fierce criticism from the European Commission's justice commissioner, Viviane Reding, who compared the Roma with that of Jews during the second world war, adding "I personally have been appalled by a situation which gave the impression that people are being removed from a member state of the EU just because they belong to a certain ethnic minority".

That one of the most pow-

erful countries within the EU can discriminate and deport a group of people blighted by poverty, segregation and poor health and education can not be allowed to go unopposed.

Unsurprisingly, Sarkozy has an ally in Italy's Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, whose own government has taken similar action against the Roma in the recent past. Indeed, there is evidence of widespread discrimination of the Roma in many European countries.

A common refrain one hears is that "the Roma are a financial drain on a country's resources in these times of economic hardship", thus the financial crisis is being used to disguise the racist motives of many conservative governments throughout the EU.

A stand must be taken by the European Commission to defend all ethnic minorities from such racist actions.

French workers strike

7TH SEPT: Over two million French workers went on strike to protest against the French government's plans to raise the retirement age from 60 to 62.

Despite widespread disruption caused to trains, planes and public services throughout the country, the strike was supported, according to opinion polls reported in the Guardian, by two-thirds of French people. "It is about time the government reacts," said Francois Chérèque, leader of the CFDT union, claiming the "massive" turnout had given the protesters moral authority to

demand changes to the bill.

Indeed, the Sarkozy government must be aware that the last time a French government attempted to overhaul the pension regime, under the leadership of Jacques Chirac, they were defeated after mass street protests crippled public services.

The pension reform bill has since cleared its first main hurdle when it was approved by the lower house of the French parliament. Unions, however, have called for workers to down tools again on 23 September as the bill winds its way through parliament

South African workers struggle

WHILE UNION leaders in Ireland have done everything to dampen struggle, workers elsewhere are showing how to fight and win.

A confrontation by 1.3 million South African public sector workers has currently been suspended. The strike, which involved militant action over a three week period, saw the total closure of schools and government offices.

The government was forced to make an offer of a 7.5 percent salary increase, a \$104 a month housing subsidy and back pay for the period when workers were on strike.

But many workers thought that this was still not good enough. They wanted to se-

ecure their full demand for an 8.6 percent rise and a €130 a month housing subsidy. They responded with a massive text campaign denouncing the union leaders.

The strike has thrown up the question of workers relationship with the ANC government. Many workers look to the South African Communist Party but a debate is now raging within it about its relationship to the ANC.

Meanwhile the militancy of the South African workers shows just how bad the Irish union leaders have behaved. The Irish collaborate in wage cuts - while their South African counterparts in South Africa press for wage rises!

A fantastic victory secured by Irish anti-war protesters

TONY BLAIR chose Dublin as the location to launch the book tour of his autobiography. A Journey, no doubt viewing Ireland as the ideal location for historical reasons: between them Bertie Ahern and Blair had managed to produce an imperfect peace agreement in Northern Ireland in April 1998, for which the majority of this island's population voted to endorse.

Blair assumed that he had built up a lot of goodwill amongst the people of Ireland. No matter that over 100,000 people marched through the streets of Dublin in February 2003 to oppose the illegal US/British invasion of Iraq.

And so it was he came to Dublin on Saturday 4th September. Upon his arrival Blair, protected by 50 gardai from Store Street station and other city centre stations, was greeted by over 400 anti-war protesters on O'Connell St.

The protesters remained in the pouring rain for over three hours, the mood was angry and the gardai were heavy-handed.

The protesters let the people of Dublin know that there was a war criminal in their midst and reminded Blair that he will not be allowed to forget the part he played in the murders of hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis.

Following the magnificent protest in Dublin, Blair was forced to cancel his major book-signing in London the following week, for fear that the scenes from Dublin would be repeated.



WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR
War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.

The "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION
We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH
We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Brown government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

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Fine Gael's Economic Policies



By IAN MAC DONNELL

ENDA KENNY declared recently that Fine Gael would need ten years to fix the Irish economy. When asked about cutbacks, the leader of Fine Gael claimed that there would be pain ahead but refused to specify.

On the issue of further reducing public expenditure, he claimed the public would "participate in helping to deal with that, provided they see that it's fair".

Fine Gael is attempting to re-brand itself as the "fair" alternative to Fianna Fail. However, aside from their differing perspectives on the bank-bailout Fine Gael's general economic policies are strikingly similar to those of Fianna Fail.

Public sector reform

Fine Gael supported the Croke Park deal, insisting however that it didn't go far enough: "the Croke Park deal falls far short on the scale of reform needed to transform our public services.

While it does include some welcome and long-overdue reforms in the areas of staff redeployment and flexible hours, the deal leaves the core structural weaknesses of the system untouched".

This confirms the view expressed by Fine Gael's then finance minister Richard Bruton, who claimed earlier this year that 40,000 public sector jobs would have to be cut due to the state's inability to fund "inefficient" state monopolies.

Needless to say, inefficiencies within the public sector occur precisely because of the

extent to which it is under-funded.

According to the OCED Ireland spends less as a percentage of GDP on its public services than any other country in Europe.

Privatization

On the privatization of state assets, Fine Gael's "NewEra" economic strategy proposes to "sell ESB International, Bord Gais and ESB PowerGen & Supply".

Of course, the privatization of ESB is precisely what's pushing up the cost of electricity for ordinary people, as prices are set artificially high so as encourage customers to switch providers and allow the state to sell off the remaining assets.

In 2000 when the ESB was run as a state monopoly, Ireland had the third cheapest electricity in Europe, now we have the third most expensive.

Fine Gael proposes to stimulate the economy through a mixture of public/private funding.

Their "NewEra" economic document points out the need to ascertain "commercial borrowing through key semi-state companies, which will not count as government expenditure".

They also propose that the national pension reserve fund be used as a pool from which investment in semi state companies can take place.

The fund will be replenished through the money made from the eventual privatization of assets that are invested in.

In other words, Fine Gael plan to use the pension

fund to invest in public projects, and then sell them to wealthy shareholders once they become profitable enough to replenish the fund.

Labour coalition

While may consider Labour the party who will be able to curb Fine Gael's right-wing policies, the fact is that they advocate much of the same.

For instance, Labour's state investment bank proposal is essentially a strategy to raise funds through the privatization of public assets.

Labour aim to incentivize private companies to partially fund/manage public projects through offering them loans, in the hope that the money lent can be repaid through the profits generated.

On public sector reform, Labour remained neutral on the Croke Park deal.

However, most of the senior union officials who pushed for a yes vote are active members of the Labour party.

The Croke Park deal resulted in a five year pay freeze, a ban on strikes and industrial action, forced redeployment under threat of dismissal and the potential loss of up to 20,000 jobs. Many senior Labour party figures have since warmly welcomed the Croke Park deal.

What is increasingly clear to many is that both Fine Gael and Labour will, in the short-term, attempt to tackle the budget deficit by driving down wages and slashing public spending. The people will pay again. Sounds sadly familiar!

Fianna Fail Devastatio

By KIERAN ALLEN

Fianna Fail is talking as if there is an economic 'recovery'. Is there any basis for this?

There is a species of right-wing economist who thinks that economic crises are caused by negative talk.

They have no understanding of how their system works and, still less, any inkling that it is prone to periodic disruptions. So a crash must come from something outside the system – such as bouts of pessimism.

The solution is to talk positive and everything will be fine.

The only evidence Fianna Fail spokespersons use for recovery is a projected rise in Gross Domestic Product by 1 per cent. Yet this is a singularly fake measure because it does not take account of repatriated profits. Ireland functions as a major tax haven so corporations often artificially declare high profits in Ireland – and then later repatriate them back to the US. So this distorts GDP.

A more reliable measure of economic health is Gross National Product – and this shows a continuing decline of about 1 per cent this year.

A year ago, the financial press was praising the Irish government for taking tough measure. But now they seem to have turned against them. Why is all this happening?

An economic crash disorients the rich.

They want the state to provide economic injections to get their economy moving – but they do not want to pay the higher taxes to fund it.

A year ago, they were looking at Ireland with interest to see if the alternative model of outright neo-liberal policies might offer another way forward. Ireland was seen as a gung ho exponent of cutting wages and brazenly subsidising banks.

But now the experiment is seen as a clear failure – by the very people that the government courted.

The Economist ran a head-



line 'Ireland's crippled banks and sluggish economy spell big trouble'.

The New York Times ran a piece by Simon Johnson, a former director of the IMF, where he wrote that, 'The numbers make Ireland look similarly troubled to Greece, with a much higher budget deficit but lower levels of public debt.... There is no simple escape, but if the government hopes to avoid a sovereign default, the one overriding priority should be to stop bailing out the banks'

The Financial Times was even more devastating. Their editorial noted that 'Dublin fears that cutting loose Anglo's bondholders will kill demand for Irish sovereign debt. The opposite is true, as record-high sovereign spreads show.'

In other words, bailing out Anglo-Irish to save the 'bondholders' has been a waste of

resources. It is only pushing up interest rates on Irish government bonds. Something, co-incidentally, Socialist Worker has been saying for some time.

But why exactly are interest rates on Irish government bonds rising – and what effect will this have?

When a government borrows money, it issues bonds and agrees to pay interest rates.

At the moment, Ireland has to agree to interest rates of 6.4% - which is one of the highest in Europe and has reached level last seen during the Greek crisis.

The interest rates are higher because the wealthy people who provide the loans think that there is a danger that the Irish government will default. So to settle their nerves they

demand more money.

They have two main reasons for concern.

The first is that the bank-bail outs have become a black hole and no-one appears to know how much it will cost. In order to hide the full extent of their economic crimes, the FF government drip fed out the news about the Anglo Irish bail-out. During the summer, for example, Lenihan casually announced that it would cost an additional €10 billion more than he originally estimated.

A report from the odious Goldman Sachs showed the level of concern among the rich 'Providing an independent estimate of the bailout costs will be an important first step. In addition, the Irish government should (and, we expect, will) accelerate the speed of its fiscal adjustment.'

In other words, they want

s Financial n of Ireland



in so far as it goes – but the scale of the problem means that they are often on slippery ground.

They often, for example, combine a demand for more taxes on the rich – with claims that public sector workers must give ‘more for less’.

Scandalously, they accept the terms of Croke Park agreement which will lead to the loss of 17,000 public sector jobs.

The revolutionary left agrees with the reformists that more taxes must be imposed on the rich – but asserts that this does not go far enough.

We propose more specific measures such as:

Bring the economic criminals to trial. A parliamentary commission in Ireland has proposed that three former cabinet Ministers be brought to trial for destroying their economy.

There is even more reason to this in Ireland.

This measure is necessary to strike fear into the wealthy as a whole – so that it is made perfectly clear that consequences will flow from any actions that sabotage the well being of the population.

Cancel the debt – no more for bondholders. It has become a pointless exercise trying to appease the global rich. A new government must make a clear announcement – they will no longer suck money from the suffering of the Irish people.

Stop the Bank Bail-Out – Recover money already spent.

Not a penny more must be spent on banks – they should be instantly nationalised and re-organised as a good state bank that provides credit on a non-profit basis.

Take the assets of the rich – re-organise the economy under workers control.

At present we are being made fools off.

Johnny Rohan, for example, owes NAMA over €700 million – but his company, Treasury Holding, is charging the state €700 million to run a convention centre. He got this deal through his Fianna Fail friends.

Their assets of the rich should be seized to pay for their debts and economic sabotage.

strong, organised left will be really needed.

OK. But what is the left arguing for. What exactly are your solutions?

There are in fact two Lefts who are contending for influence in Ireland.

One is the Labour Party and reformist axis of the left. They accept the parameters set by capitalism and seek to devise more radical solutions than offered by the current government.

So the Labour Party, for example, accepts that Ireland has to cut its budget deficit and agrees that this must fall to below 3 per cent of GDP by 2015 or 2016.

They then argue that the deficit has to be closed by more taxes on wealth – rather than attacks on the poor.

Some of this is fair enough

some stage.

This can happen in a number ways.

It may be triggered by external sources. If Greece default, which is likely, this would panic the global rich and they would demand their funds back from Ireland.

When Ireland could not pay, the money would flee – just as it did in the South East Asia crisis over ten years ago.

Or, it could be that the world enters a double dip recession – and Ireland’s exports figures which are currently quite healthy also start to fall.

Or it could be that the bank bail-out escalates so much that there is no money left in the state’s coffers.

A default would produce chaos and there would be calls to bring in the IMF to sort us out. It is at this point that a

to know how much it is going to cost – and then some real signs that the government is going to force the population to cough up.

Second, the more perceptive commentators are aware that the government’s slash and burn policies are deepening the recession.

The more the state cuts, the more it decreases consumer demand as people have less money to buy goods.

It becomes a vicious cycle that cuts into the tax base – and so the state moves to even more vicious cuts.

Now even the global rich think it is not working.

Will there be a default – and what effect would that have?

A default means that the Irish government may simply be unable to pay the debts at

Time to Protest?



BY JOHN LYONS

IRELAND IS currently experiencing the worst recession in its history; with the financial fallout from the property and credit booms of the Celtic Tiger period Irish economic activity has declined at a rate four times as great as that of any other European country.

Not only did Ireland experience the biggest property and credit bubble in world history but due to the actions of the current Fianna Fail/Green Party we now have the most expensive bank-bailout the world has ever seen.

Fears of national bankruptcy stalk the country.

With government economic policy currently being dictated by the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the international money markets, Ireland has had three major budgets since late 2008 which have inflicted financial pain on those least responsible for the state of the country’s finances.

Public sector pay has been significantly reduced, a wide-range of social welfare benefits has been savagely cut, and there have been cut-backs across the whole range of public services that the majority of the people in this country depend upon.

The cost of the financial crisis is being borne by the ordinary people of Ireland; indeed, with the multi-billion Euro bailout of the Irish banks the costs of the current crisis will reach into the future and affect the lives and living standards of people in Ireland for many years to

come.

So what are the people to do?

Do we sit back and listen and watch as those who have felt no economic hardship talk and debate on the airwaves and on television the ins-and-outs of the government’s next budget in December, a budget that will seek to find at least €3 Billion in cuts and taxes?

Now, more than ever before, protest is needed.

Despite what mainstream media commentators would have you believe, the people of Ireland have been fighting back, from the pensioners who immediately went on the offensive to protect their medical card entitlements

from government cutbacks, to the magnificent regional hospital protests throughout the country that have seen tens of thousands hit the streets, not to mention several protests against NAMA and the Right To Work protests in Dublin which gave people an opportunity to voice their opposition to the current government’s economic agenda.

But there is an elephant in the room – the unions.

Over the past two years, as their members pay was under constant attack from government, the union leaders offered little-to-no real resistance.

In February 2009, 120,000 public sector employees marched through the streets of Dublin; in November, over 300,000 of them went on a one-day strike in protest over the government’s plans to attack their pay again.

The anger was

there amongst the people, the willingness to fight the government was everywhere evident but the movement was brought to its knees by its own leaders.

Unfortunately, ‘In Ireland,’ as one recent commentator has stated, ‘the workers’ movement was chloroformed by social partnership.

Union activity on the shop floor declined, attendance at meetings shrank; time-serving hacks took up posts on union committees.

Overall, union membership shrank from a half to one third of the workforce.

The recession has created a crisis for this type of trade unionism.

It is therefore inevitable that a rebirth of struggle will be accompanied by a major battle inside the workers’ movement to oust the collaborators who brought the movement to such a low point’.

Ireland has a long and proud history of protest and struggle, as even the briefest glance of the history of the 20th century demonstrates.

At this time, when the country is on the verge of national bankruptcy, with a government that will do anything to appease the international markets and do nothing to tax the wealthiest in society, it has fallen onto the shoulders of every man, woman and child in Ireland to carry the burden of this latest crisis.

The time will come soon, however, when the people will say ‘no more’ and demand that the rich pay for the crisis created by their own greed and folly.

How can we get rid of capitalism?

BOOK REVIEW:

Crack Capitalism Author:
John Holloway

Reviewed by Ian MacDonnell

JOHN HOLLOWAY is one of the predominant voices within the anti-globalisation movement. His last book: *Change the World Without Taking Power* (released in 2002) sparked much debate.

Following again the autonomist tradition, Holloway proposes in *Crack Capitalism* that state power should not be assumed, rather it should be avoided. He argues that in assuming state power, the traditional socialist movement condemned itself to reproducing the forms of exploitation that it sought to abolish.

Holloway proposes that socialist struggle ought not to be directed against the seizure of the institutions that dominate our lives, but rather against the 'concept' of wage labour that solidifies their hold over us. We must carve out 'cracks' in the existing system; social spaces where the logic of capital is to some extent suspended.

However Holloway in *Crack Capitalism*, as in his last work, fails to acknowledge the extent to which the state (particularly in the era of neo-liberalism) seeks to commodify space and time, closing the available 'cracks'.

Post-industrial society?

Holloway deals with the development of modern capitalism and its implications for the class structure in chapter 24.

He highlights the increased financialisation of the global economy, the relative decline in manufacturing and the increase in service jobs.

Holloway quotes the Italian autonomist Paolo Virno: "Post-Fordism is the surpassing of the society of labour within capitalism itself; a society in which wealth is produced not by the work of individuals but by science or the general intellect; a society in which there is no longer anything that distinguishes labour from labour time."

While Holloway admits that there remains (for the vast majority) a clear distinction between wage labour and "other forms of doing", he proposes that the economy is largely 'post-industrial'.

Holloway echoes the argument made by autonomist writers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, that today 'immaterial labour' is dominant, that is, labour that does not produce a material product, particularly 'services'. Holloway expresses the same opinion though using different language; for him there is a crisis in 'unitary labour', the traditional concept of waged labour.

The Global Economy

The late Chris Harman (SWP) in his 2002 polemic against one of the seminal works of the contemporary autonomist movement 'Multitude' (by Hardt and Negri), argued that the modern economy is not 'post-industrial' but in fact still largely characterised by industry.

While the total number employed in manufacturing through the developed world has decreased since the 1970s, on the whole it is 25 million higher than in 1951.



John Holloway author of *Crack Capitalism* debating socialist strategy at the Marxism conference in London

Within many advanced nations industrial employment is actually higher than in the '70s; Japan and the US being two examples. In 1998 the number of US workers in industry was nearly 20% higher than in 1971.

While Industrial employment has, as a fraction of the global economy, declined, this is due to technological advances leading to an increase in productive output, not a decline in the significance of global manufacturing.

Moreover, it's important not to see the relocation of capital from places like the UK to peripheral regions as being indicative of some massive decline in industry.

The growth of the service sectors in Europe or the US serves to provide money to buy the commodities being produced through Chinese Industrial expansion. The proportion of employment in manufacturing in the Chinese economy is higher than ever, and continues to increase.

Many autonomist and post-modern scholars attempt to support their argument that immaterial labour has become dominant by recourse to the fact that employment in the service sector continues to rise as a percentage of the global economy.

However, people who put food into tins are considered to be employed in manufacturing, whereas those who put burgers in boxes in fast-food outlets are in the service sector; but the activity is no less 'material'.

Waged employees in both service and industry, according to Harman account for about 2 billion people internationally, with an equal number of semi-waged workers (peasant labourers etc). In all, the waged working class, together with non-waged agricultural producers, are still the cornerstone of the modern economy.

Labour's Dual Character

In chapter 13 Holloway deals



with Marx's theory of primitive accumulation.

He then illustrates how the distinction between labour and leisure varies through different economic systems.

In the process he provides a romanticised portrait of hunter-gatherer societies, pointing out that aboriginal tribes in the 19th century would "obtain in two or three hours a sufficient supply of food for the day, but their usual custom is to roam from spot to spot, lazily collecting it as they go along".

In another passage he states that fifteenth century Europe was in comparison to the puritanical epoch "one long, outdoor party, punctured by bouts of hard labour".

The idea that medieval peasant life was, between harvesting and sowing crops, "one long outdoor party" is naive to say the least.

His analysis of pre-capitalist society is supposed to remind us that 'unitary labour' is not the only class, together with non-waged agricultural producers, are still the cornerstone of the modern economy.

The Zapatistas

One of Holloway's favourite examples of autonomism in action

is the Zapatistas/EZLN, and he draws upon them as an example of "cracking capitalism" throughout the book.

The EZLN are a revolutionary peasant movement situated in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas.

Holloway attempts to project the Zapatistas as something new, a post-left movement free from the dogmatic constraints of traditional socialism.

The Zapatistas newest venture is their 'other campaign', an initiative designed to gain support beyond their indigenous base.

Holloway writes that: "We try to give it shape as the other campaign, for example, and it surges in other forms that do not fit our institutional preconceptions."

However, the Zapatistas fit our existing understanding of institutional struggle very well.

The EZLN do not adhere to the organisational pluralism that Holloway (and other autonomist scholars) attribute to them; rather they work according to a strict unitary programme.

Their latest strategic document (the sixth declaration) must be accepted by all who wish to participate in their 'other campaign'.

Within the 'other campaign' exists a body known as the 'sixth commission' whose task is to ensure that the campaign does not deviate from the EZLN's tactical line as set out in the 6th declaration.

As explained by a leading member of the EZLN: "The Sixth Commission is the spirit of the Other Campaign, because if the Other Campaign goes ahead and we abandon the Sixth Declaration, comrades, we will end up like sand scattered by the wind and everyone will be abandoned, and this way we won't succeed, because the Sixth Declaration contains certain 'recommendations'." (Comandante Zebedeo, Monterrey, Mexico, May 5, 2007).

This appears to be a clear

warning against the brand of theoretical and organisational pluralism that Holloway advocates.

Strategy

Holloway exhibits a certain post-modern antipathy towards 'grand narratives'.

He also considers any unified strategy necessarily authoritarian.

His perspective is contradictory, however.

He disagrees with unified strategy only within the context of larger struggle, although he has no problem with the unitary nature of the Zapatistas.

Most organisations have set foundations, and coherent strategic aims.

Autonomism as an intellectual trend tends to glorify 'small strategy' and denounce larger strategy on the basis that it negates various smaller perspectives through subordinating them to a set 'totality'.

However, numerous perspectives are negated when decisions are being made within any organisation, irrespective of size.

Unless the workers of Mexico unify with the Zapatistas, the Mexican army will keep them pinned down in the southern corner of Chiapas, where they experience mass poverty and destitution.

Unified strategies are essential in giving various struggles the potential to realise their aims.

The Party

The capacity of a polymorphous movement to resist state and market expansion is minimal.

While localised struggle may be able to temporarily suspend neo-liberal encroachment, disparate organisations are unable to de-construct the means by which the market expands.

In order to neutralise capital accumulation, the question

of state power needs to be considered.

As explained by Lenin (in *State and Revolution*) the structural mechanisms by which the market imposes its domination rest in state institutions, the courts contain the laws which allow for the exploitation of the working class, and the police/army exist to enforce those laws.

It therefore follows that any popular movement which aims to democratise the economy needs to confront and eradicate the capitalist state power and to do this requires a workers' state and a revolutionary Party.

What is to be done?

Isolated movements of peasant smallholders, students and the unemployed, while conducive to anti-capitalist struggle, are not enough.

Various struggles need to unify with the workforce.

The special significance attributed to workers within Marxism is not due to irrational snobbery; rather it is a matter of who has both the interests and, vitally, the power to overthrow the capitalist system; the peasantry can't strike or take over factories or transport but can combine with workers who can.

The working class play a pivotal role insofar as they generate the wealth required to fund capitalist state repression and this situates them in an advantageous position to end it.

While Holloway is committed to overthrowing the capitalist system his ideas on how best to approach this task practically are significantly flawed.

Crack Capitalism should be read with these criticisms in mind.

Cracking capitalism means the seizing of state power by the masses so class society and the need for a state can be dismantled by them; rather than hoping the capitalist state will simply fade away by itself.



Fianna Fail pushes for College Fees

THE HUNT Report on the future of Higher Education is due to report in the next few weeks and will call for a return of university fees.

Colin Hunt, who chairs the committee is a former special advisor to Brian Cowen at the department of Finance and to Martin Cullen at the Department of Transport.

After leaving these positions he went on the chair the capital Division of Macquarie Partnerships, a small bank which specialises in putting together consortiums for Public Private Partnerships.

PPPs are a massive rip-off which will cost the Irish state €5.6 billion in the coming years.

The state agrees to pay a steady income stream to private companies for the provision of state services – at a cost that is far higher than if it organised it itself.

Hunt, who directly benefits from these costly PPP schemes, will make

the hypocritical claim that there is not enough money to fund higher education and that fees are required. Fees may also be tied to particular courses – so that, medicine, for example will cost far more than doing an Arts degree.

There are currently two main models on how fees might be introduced. One is a student loan system, where either the state or a private bank puts up a loan which graduates must later pay back.

The other option is a graduate tax, which would kick in after a certain income threshold for all who hold degrees.

The most likely option is a student loan scheme.

But this would lead to huge hardship and would discourage participation in higher education from poorer income groups.

If students are faced with the prospect of paying off €30,000

after graduation, then a number of consequences follow.

First, they are more likely to emigrate in order to escape this debt burden. In Australia, there is an estimated \$10 billion in uncollected outstanding loans.

This risk for bankers, naturally, provides them with an excuse to raise interest rates – thus adding to the problem. In New Zealand, figures indicate that it takes 17 years for the average student to pay off the debt.

Second, high levels of debt are more likely to discourage students from poorer income backgrounds.

Those who already have money are less afraid of paying off loans because they know they can draw on family support.

Single income families or mature students or the children of lower paid workers would not wish to risk carrying high debt burden at an early

age. Third, student fees will have a detrimental effect on the education process.

It will create a 'customer' culture whereby education is seen in entirely instrumental terms. Subjects that do not lead to well paid jobs will be avoided – even though these are necessary for the benefit of society. Greater conflicts will arise between students and staff over marking – the fear of extra debt will haunt students who are forced to do repeats.

The registration fee for entering colleges has already risen from €190, when it was first introduced, to €1,500 – a 780 per cent increase.

The new threat of fees will further turn higher education into a privilege which only a few can afford.

When the country is wracked by a jobs crisis, the last thing we need are barriers which prevent access to education.

TV REVIEW

Freefall - The Night the Banks Failed

By JOHN LYONS

WITH THE two-year anniversary of the Fianna Fail/Green Party decision to guarantee the entire Irish banking system no doubt in mind, RTE's recent broadcast of Freefall-The Night The Banks Failed was welcome viewing.

This two-part documentary sought to examine the origins of the latest crisis in global capitalism, and in particular, focused on the home-grown evolution of the crisis, the fall-out of which has seen Ireland experience the worst recession of any developed country in the Western World, with 450,000 people currently unemployed, 300,000 in negative equity and the most expensive bank bail-out in world financial history.

Freefall traced the origins of the present crisis in capitalism to the emergence, in the early 1980's, of neoliberalism, a development which witnessed the promotion of "light-touch" regulation of financial institutions and the relaxation of capital controls, thus allowing vast amounts of money to flow across the globe without any regulatory restrictions.



Irish Financial Services Centre (IFSC), symbol of financial greed during the Celtic Tiger

The neoliberal ideology was embraced enthusiastically by the ruling elite in Ireland, who created the Irish Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in the late 1980's.

Ireland soon began to attract international financial institutions to Dublin with a regime of low corporate tax and little-to-no regulation of their businesses.

In time, Ireland became known as the Wild West of European finance, where massive profits in the millions were being made and no questions asked.

This regime soon spread to the Irish banking system and by the early years of the 21st century, with the introduction of the Euro currency, the banks, ever eager to find new ways to make massive profits, stoked up the biggest property and credit bubble the world had ever seen, with Irish house prices in the mid-2000s the most overvalued than at any other time in world history.

Freefall excellently highlighted the complete abdication of governmental responsibility during the Celtic Tiger period and exposed the reckless greed of the politicians, bankers and other vested interests at the top of Irish society, who all believed that the economic boom could last indefinitely.

Sadly, as we know to our cost, a crash was sure to follow.

The fallout from the greed and hubris that fuelled the Irish property and credit boom and bust has been devastating.

Ireland is on the verge of economic ruin, with billions of Euros being wasted trying to save the corrupted Irish banking system.

And all the while the Irish people have been under ferocious attack from the very government that blew the boom.

Emigration is once again a fact of life, unemployment is nearing half a million and there is still no sign that this government is going to make the rich pay for their crisis.

Freefall ends by casting doubt on whether the current crisis-prone system we live under, capitalism, can be reformed and regulated so as not to inflict such financial devastation upon the people again.

Capitalism has survived many a crisis before and can surely do so again, for every time the rich get into trouble it is the people who pay. Let's not let that happen again, the time to fight back is now.

Guide to left-wing blogs

By IAN MACDONNELL

It is easy to overlook the world of blogging as the preserve of nerdy amateurs; however, you are as likely to find decent left-wing literature in the blogosphere as you are looking through party publications.

That said, the following is a guide of the blogs I have stumbled across in the hope that you will find something worthwhile.

Notes From The Front - <http://notesonthefront.typepad.com/>

Michael Taft is a known Keynesian economist, a member of the Labour party and researcher with the UNITE union.

While Taft might not share the SWP's perspective position with regards the solution to the current crisis, his analysis as to what has gone wrong (and how the government are making it worse) is brilliant. His blog provides a valuable source of data for anyone interested in formulating a

coherent case against Fianna Fail's "deflationary" economic policies.

Taft's blog may prove a tad in depth for those unfamiliar with economic terminology, however wikipedia should prove helpful.

Cedar Lounge revolution - <http://cedarlounge.wordpress.com/>

Winner of the 2009 best political blog award.

This blog has been around for a while and is fairly well known within the left-wing blogging .

Made up of numerous writers, it tends to deal with current political issues as well as left wing/labour history.

The posts on political history tend to be good.

Circumlimina - <http://circumlimina.wordpress.com/>

Personal favourite. What distinguishes this from the other blogs has to be the style; every post has a poetic quality.

The issues covered range from football to technology, although it is predominantly political in

context.

The sole blogger (dublindillatente) has a keen eye for local political issues and tends to keep up to speed with the Labour Parties shenanigans. Highly recommended.

Dublin Opinion - <http://dublinopinion.com/>

The home of Conor McCabe, frequent contributor to Irish Left Review.

Dublin Opinion contains some hard hitting economic material while retaining light-hearted appeal.

Far as blogs go it covers a lot of ground, from posts such as "Irish employment by industry 1951-1971" to the slightly less in depth "Put Tony Blair's book in the crime section of your bookshop".

The Irish Liberty Forum - <http://Irishliberty.wordpress.com/>

This isn't exactly a left wing blog; in fact it is a bastion of right wing libertarianism.

The people who post here are

the sorts who think Obama is a communist, the gold standard will save us and that the tea party movement represents "the little guy".

Full of Randites & Friedmonites, this blog will keep you laughing until the early hours of the morning.

Thought lack of regulation precipitated the sub-prime crash? Think again, apparently it was too much regulation (smothering market forces and whatnot).

Irish Labour and Working Class History - <http://Irishlabour.com/>

Excellent blog, it tends to cover Ireland left wing history in depth from political parties to unions, each post is well researched and offers something new. The pictures it uses are brilliant and gives it certain ambience. It covers events from the Dublin Lockout & Limerick Soviet, to lesser known pieces of history like the involvement of Irish volunteers in the Spanish civil war.



FIGHTING THE CUTS

THE SCALE of the cuts will become clear in late October with the publication at Westminster of the Comprehensive Spending Review. This will involve a drastic reduction in the block grant to the North, and put the onus on Stormont to slash health and education, community services etc.

All the parties say they are opposed to the cuts. But none has pledged to refuse to implement them. We can expect no end of finger-pointing as each denounces other Ministries' cuts while defending their own as less destructive and having been forced on them.

Sinn Fein is already arguing in advance that they would be able to fight harder if it wasn't for weak-kneed parties holding them back – the standard excuse of every party that wants to be seen as Left-wing but also wants to stay in coalition with the Right.

In fact, all of the Executive parties have already imposed cuts - the so-called "efficiency savings". Sinn Fein has been no better or worse than the DUP, SDLP etc. Education Minister Catriona Ruane has slashed the Extended Schools and Youth Service budgets, leading to a loss of jobs and frontline services.

The Stormont parties will put up a fight only insofar as they are forced to by pressure. This makes rank-and-file organisation in communities and workplaces all the more vital.

by EAMONN MCCANN

GRASS-ROOTS ANGER has pushed trade union leaders in the North into organising an active campaign against the cuts.

But rank and file organisation in workplaces and communities will be the key to carrying the fight forward.

Support is growing for ICTU rallies in Belfast and Derry on September 29th and a major march in Belfast on October 23rd. Major unions are running buses to both events.

The response to leaflets and petitions has been overwhelmingly positive. Thousands are willing to fight and are looking for a lead.

News reports of British TUC bosses considering strike action has signalled a possible sea-change.

The scale of cuts threatens basic union organisation. If 30,000 public sector jobs



go across the North, 30,000 members will be lost to public sector unions.

There's no option but to put up a fight. Calls for a co-ordinated one-day stoppage against the cuts would find an echo.

But that means staying focused on action and keeping up the pressure.

The main strategy of the ICTU leadership is to appeal to Stormont to work with the Scottish and Welsh administrations for a better deal for "the devolved nations and the English regions".

Politicians

This means putting the specific interests of workers and

deprived communities in second place to keeping on-side with right-wing politicians in each area.

It would make the rallies and marches into no more than safety valves, allowing the rank and file to let off steam.

Looking to the Executive to lead a fight is futile.

For a start, despite welfare being a devolved matter, the Stormont parties rushed through legislation to get rid of Incapacity Benefit and to force lone parents and others into taking rubbish jobs or losing their entitlement. "Blame the Brits!" they cried then.

We can expect more of this. It's a recipe for letting Nationalist parties in particular off the hook.

Instead, trades unionists and anti-cuts campaigners in the North should be lining up with the hundreds of thousands in Britain who are taking the fight to the Tories.

We should be backing the calls for co-ordinated union action, including strike action. There should be contingents from the North on the Right To Work demonstration at the Tory conference in Birmingham on October 3rd.

People Before Profit challenges police over "child abuse"

by EAMONN MCCANN

THE PSNI has arrogantly insisted that it will continue to publish "mug-shots" of children, even though its own human rights adviser has criticised the practice.

On July 30th, the police in Belfast released

14 pictures of young people they wanted to interview about rioting in Ardoyne on the Twelfth. The Belfast Telegraph described them as "the wanted youths and young men".

Some of them were clearly under age. In court none of these

could be named. But the police had already identified them and blackened them as criminals.

This breaches a number of articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In Derry in August, the PSNI distributed

pictures of young people allegedly involved in riots to houses across the city.

Some of those targeted were not only under-age but had had nothing to do with rioting or any other unlawful activity.

One youngster sent

to bring a brother with learning difficulties home was pictured in the local media as if on a wanted poster.

The constant demands of all mainstream parties to "support the police" has made some senior officers think they

can be a law unto themselves. Supt. Jon Burrows of Derry, for example, is regularly respectfully interviewed in local media as he swats away concerns about children's rights.

A People Before Profit meeting on the issue in Derry

brought together youth workers and the parents of a number of the young people concerned.

As a result, judicial review proceedings are under way. The case will provide a focus for campaigning against this latest abuse.