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# Socialist Worker

## *Onto the Streets!*

# Do it the French Way!

THE WORKERS and students of France have shown us how to fight.

Instead of lying down and taking an increase in their pension age, they have launched a social revolt.

Millions have joined the one day strikes and these have been strengthened by mass civil disobedience.

Refineries, airports and railway stations have been blockaded.

Of particular importance has been the involvement of young students who have built barricades at secondary schools and universities.

In Ireland, by contrast the union leaders did NOTHING about the raising of the pension age from 65 to 67.

They barely even said a word.

No wonder the political establishment feel they can get away with even more attacks.

Over the last few weeks, the chorus for new attacks is being built up in the media.

The state-controlled RTE and the private media outlets owned by Denis O'Brien and Tony O'Reilly have dropped all pretence at neutrality.

They frame debates in terms of: 'Should it be €5 billion we cut or €7 billion?'

'Should cuts be frontloaded or not?'

These 'debates' are just excuses to bang the drum for a new economic war on the poor.

The media are preparing the ground for cuts in social welfare, water charges and the sell-off of semi-state companies.

Right-wing fanatics, like economist Colm McCarthy of 'Bord Snip', have been let loose to create a new Thatcherite horror story.

The plain fact is that there is no need for these cuts – they are only happening because the state wants to pamper and subsidise the wealthy elite who caused the crisis.

We could decide to stop putting



STUDENTS AND workers take to the streets to protest against Sarkozy

€50 billion into the banks and instead create one good state bank that would provide us with credit when necessary.

This would mean that bondholders would suffer because they wouldn't get their money back.

But who is more important: an unemployed family that will face starvation if social welfare is cut or a wealthy bondholder in Kuwait?

We could also seize the assets of the top builders.

Over the past year many big builders have been transferring their assets to their wives:

- Bernard McNamara transferred some of his assets to his wife in September 2009.

- Seamus Ross of Menolly Homes put three Dublin properties in his wife's name between February and July 2009.

- Gerry Gannon, part owner of the K Club, transferred assets to his wife in 2009.

- Liam Carroll also transferred assets to his wife in 2009.

It is the same story with Sean Fitzpatrick, the former boss of Anglo-Irish Bank.

He built up a pension fund of over €8 million but has transferred a considerable amount to his wife.

To make matters worse, it has been revealed that all the top builders who owe billions to NAMA are allowed to live on an 'allowance' of up to €200,000 a year while they

'work out' their loans.

According to the Sunday Business Post some are even claiming tax relief on interest payments they never paid.

The truth is that the Irish rich are laughing in our faces.

THEY caused the crisis but are delighted that WE will pay for it.

They have become so confident that they no longer try to cover their tracks.

But if the type of anger being expressed on the streets of France was brought to Ireland, the smiles would be wiped off their faces.

Socialist Worker is therefore appealing to our readers to mobilise for two important events that have been organised so far:

- On Saturday November 13th, the Right to Work Campaign will assemble at the Greystones DART station, the home town of Sean Fitzpatrick to stage a march on the theme: Pay up or Face Jail.

- On Tuesday December 7th, the Right to Work campaign will stage a Budget Night March on the Dail, assembling at 7pm Parnell Square.

Let the TDs who vote for a budget that attacks the poor know how you feel.

Other pre-budget demonstrations are being planned. We urge everyone to join these protests to bring the spirit of the 'French resistance' onto Irish streets.

**Inside: Report from the French strikes Pages 4&5**

# Children's Hospital in Chaos

By **CLLR JOAN COLLINS**,  
People Before Profit Alliance

IN OCTOBER, Philip Lynch, chair of the planned children's hospital at the Mater site, resigned under a cloud of questions.

Bertie Ahern, in one of his many politically devious manoeuvres, drove the idea of this new National Children's Hospital.

It was to be built in Dublin City centre, in Ahern's own constituency.

It would mean closing 3 hospitals: Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Crumlin; Tallaght Hospital Paediatric Department and Temple St Children's Hospital.

The Save Our Lady's Children's Hospital Campaign (SOLCH) has always strongly opposed this proposal.

Our voice was practically censored as all the experts and many hospital consultants supported the new hospital.

However, more recently many of these same consultants have said publicly they were wrong and do not now support it.

They do not believe it puts children's health



first.

One such consultant was the principled and eminent, late Prof Maurice Nelligan.

SOLCH was set up by parents and children in the local Dublin 12 area of the city.

The prime aim of the campaign is to stop the hospital from closing down.

It is a National Children's Hospital, easily accessible from all over the country.

It has built up a wealth of expertise and experience

on children's health and has a strong support network in the community.

It also provides much needed jobs in the community.

It has been a long and tough campaign.

Along the way, the HSE have attempted to close wards and newly built theatres.

The parents, children

and supporters of SOLCH successfully campaigned against these cutbacks.

The Chair of SOLCH has now called on Philip Lynch to publically state why he has resigned.

People power can still save our hospital.

For more information contact Cllr Joan Collins 086-3888151.

## Draconian Powers for Police

By **PATRICK MCKENNA**

THE GOVERNMENT has broadcast its contempt for migrant rights by providing Gardaí with unchecked power.

Gardaí will have the power to summarily deport people it deems 'unlawfully present in the state', according to new legislation passing through the Oireachtas.

The Immigration Residency and Protection Bill means people will no longer be able to petition the Minister for Justice for 'leave to remain'.

Its contempt is also on display in the bureaucratic harassment experienced by many migrants when claiming basic entitlements from the state.

The public recently received a chilling preview of the consequences of the Bill.

In October, Stefan Adami, from Slovakia,

hanged himself near his home in Tullow, Co. Carlow.

His suicide captured nationwide attention on RTE's Liveline radio show.

Stefan's despair over an ESB bill was fuelled by the Department of Social Protection, who had cut off his disability allowance.

Stefan's leg was amputated after a work accident with a tractor in 2008.

The Irish Independent reported that he had not gone to hospital initially because: "He feared the Irish authorities would find out he was working on a farm."

Before he committed suicide, he and his wife had gone without electricity and heat for three days.

Justice minister Dermot Ahern's Immigration Bill will ensure that the fate of Stefan Adami will befall many more migrants.

## Time to Tax the Rich

By **JOHN LYONS**

'THERE IS no pot of gold' is the usual refrain from Government ministers to justify low taxes for the wealthy in Ireland while attacking social welfare, health and education.

There is a pot of gold in Ireland and it is the vast wealth owned by the tiny few. Despite the latest crisis in capitalism, Ireland remains the 16th richest country in the world.

It is time to tax those who can more than afford to pay.

TCD economist, Dr. Michael Collins, a former member of the Commission on Taxation, recently reported more than 130 existing tax reliefs.

The majority of these favour the rich.

This means that the majority of €11 billion is lost in tax every year.

These elite tax breaks are the result of lobbying by the business elite.

At a time when the working class are under ferocious attack, the rich must be made to pay for the crisis they caused.

A few sensible proposals in this direction would be:

- Introduce a wealth tax on combined asset values exceeding €500,000;

- Tax all income over €100,000 at 70 percent;

- Cut all tax subsidies for property speculation and large private pensions;

- Impose a 0.5 percent 'Tobin tax' on financial transactions.

## From 'Snip' to Sell-Off

By **PATRICK MCKENNA**

SOME MEASURES in Colm McCarthy's infamous 'Bord Snip' report border on the psychopathic.

He proposes, for example, that children with special needs should pay for their transport to and from school.

Brian Lenihan could think of no better man to kick off the privatisation of Dublin Bus, Irish Rail, RTE, ESB, and Bord Gais.

Since Labour and Fine Gael agreed to cut Ireland's budget deficit to 3pc of GDP by 2014, the sell-off of state assets moves further up the

government agenda.

The usual suspects, right-wing economic experts, are being lined up to whip up public consent.

McCarthy is fawned over in the news media for his bluff, no-nonsense manner and his ability to clothe the most nakedly right-wing measures in the language of 'common sense'.

He wears the mantle of disinterested economist, but moonlights as an unofficial government mouthpiece.

Others among the ruling elite have very clear ideas about what to do with the cash raised.

Peter Bacon wrote the initial proposal for the despised NAMA.

He is now employed as an advisor to NAMA, and is also a director of Ballymore Properties.

Of late he has been granted airtime in news media to demand that cash from the sale of state assets should be used to reduce negative equity for home owners.

In other words, the general population should give up their assets to improve the loan books of banks.

The daylight robbery continues, unabated.

## Racist Scaremongering by 'Respectable' Newspapers

By **CHRIS BOYD**

A RECENT Irish Independent article by Emmet Oliver blamed a 'surge' of 'imported' workers for the jobs crisis.

In the same week the Irish Times ran an article hysterically claiming 'sham marriages', 'enable criminals or even extremist Islamic terrorists to infiltrate first Ireland and then the EU.'

The Irish government creates massive hurdles to migrant workers gaining permanent immigration status in Ireland.

All immigrant workers pay taxes such as VAT, PAYE and PRSI on top of work-permit fees and Garda National Immigration Bureau charges.

The Migrants Rights Centre of Ireland (MRCI) estimates that migrant workers contribute €3.5 billion to the economy.

In response to this scaremongering, Delphine O'Keeffe of the MRCI said:

"The actual number of new permits being issued this year is in the region of 0.1% (one in a thousand) of the workforce.

"Mr. Oliver's selective use of figures is sensational, irresponsible and undoubtedly will fuel anger against migrant workers.

"The real problem with our permit system is that workers do not have the right to freely change their employer.

"This is a leading factor of exploitation and undermines labour standards."

This serves the wealthy and the political elite and enables them to divide and conquer to make workers pay for their crisis.

When Irish workers are forced to emigrate to places like the UK or US they need to fight their new bosses' attempts to label them as criminals or 'illegals'.

At home all workers, whether 'local' or 'migrant' need to stand in solidarity and resist any attempts to make us pay for profiteering by bankers and big business.

We should all demonstrate together against the budget cuts at the Dail on 7 December.

## Labour two-faced on Expenses

By **PAUL O'BRIEN**

Cllr Hugh Lewis of the People Before Profit Alliance has proposed reducing the budget for councillors' conference and junket expenses to €1000 per councillor.

Only the two People Before Profit councillors supported the motion at September's meeting of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Council.

All of the Labour Party councillors voted against.

This is despite the fact that in Fingal, a member of the Labour Party proposed a similar motion with the support of the Labour councillors.

The Labour Party needs to take stock.

How can they justify spending €131,000 on junkets in Dun Laoghaire, while cutting local services?



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# Harney Threatens €1 Billion Health Cuts

By PEADAR O'GRADY

HEALTH MINISTER Mary Harney promises to slash €1 billion from Health in the budget.

Instead of taxing the rich, taxes and charges which target ordinary workers are being proposed.

**Medical Cards:** a €5 prescription charge (up from 50c) and cancelling medical cards by lowering eligibility incomes.

**Hospital Charges:** Inpatient charge increase from €75/day to €90/day and A&E charge increase from €100 to €125.

**Nursing Home Scheme:** to be means-tested and the amount of home value taken increased to 22.5%.

1500 jobs in health have already been cut and another 4,500 will be targeted.

Cuts to frontline services are not 'savings' they are cuts.

Any genuine 'savings' should be spent on improving health care not put into bankers and developers pockets.

Public Health academic at DCU, Dr Anthony Staines wrote in the Irish Times:

"We have a two-tier health service with a vicious bias against poorer people..."

"A decision to stop subsidising private health-care would save a lot of



money. "Private healthcare in Ireland receives very large annual subsidies..."

"...at least €500 million a year and perhaps as much as €700 million."

"At least €350 million is paid to people (hospital consultants' fees) who also hold public contracts."

This means we could 'save' over €1 billion by getting rid of the two-tier system altogether.

Getting rid of private healthcare would 'save' on the wasted private fees for accountants, lawyers and

hospital consultants but also the paperwork and profits for private hospitals and health insurance firms.

This money should be immediately put into developing desperately needed services such as those for dementia, disabilities, child protection and mental health.

Everyone should support the trade union demonstration on Saturday 27 November and a National Strike for the budget-day protests at the Dail on Tuesday 7 December.

## Wexford Marchers Plan Dail Protest



By LIZ BURTON

MORE THAN 800 people marched through Wexford Town in a second demonstration to save Wexford General Hospital.

The 'Motorway Action Group' joined the protest and intends to play a role in the future.

The chant of: '35 billion for the banks - nothing for the hospital', got a great response.

Local politicians stayed away and some even tried to stop the protest from going ahead.

One of the marchers, Peter Redmond, told Socialist Worker:

"The elected representatives of the country are not listening and people will have to get used to taking their protests to the streets to be heard."

"I think a protest outside of the Opera House on the opening night might have had more of an impact."

Another protesting health worker told Socialist Worker:

"The main message that I hope got across today is that our service is for our use, to save lives, and that it is crucial that we don't lose it..."

"People will die if it's lost..."

"The basic things you need to do your day's work are in very short supply."

"A ward has closed and there is a lack of dignity for patients on trolleys; it is a disgrace."

"The managers expect you to divide yourself up into many pieces to effectively give one-to-one care when there is a large ratio of patients to nurses."

Protestors are now planning to march with the other campaigns-against-cuts at the budget-day protest at the Dail on Tuesday 7 December.

This is only the beginning.

## People Power Wins in Seafront Campaign

By DARYL SOUTHERN

IT IS a victory for the Save Our Seafront (SOS) Campaign.

Dún Laoghaire Rathdown Council has released its long-overdue proposals for the redevelopment of Dún Laoghaire Baths.

This will mean a fully public amenity with a swimming pool, cafe, public viewing area and a walkway around the Baths joining Newtownsmith and the East pier.

People Before Profit Cllr Richard Boyd Barrett welcomed the proposals as: "A 180 degree turn from previous misguided schemes to build high-rise apartment blocks or reconstruct the entire seafront."

The turnaround came following a determined series of public demonstrations against the Council's failure to progress development of the site.

In a statement, Cllr Boyd Barrett, who also chairs the SOS Campaign, announced that: "At long last the Council

has put forward a plan that looks something like what the public asked for."

He described the reversal as, "a victory for the public and the Save Our Seafront Campaign".

Importantly, the proposals include a structure which retains the existing pavilion and will not over-reach the existing height of the baths building.

However, there remain areas of concern such as changes to the East pier and the People's Park.

Addressing these concerns Cllr Boyd Barrett said: "Public views should inform the final plan before work on the baths begins."

The proposals are due for public display in the coming weeks and will be on view in the County Hall in Dún Laoghaire.

This victory clearly shows that 'People Power' can win.

For more information contact Richard Boyd Barrett 086-7814520

## Student Protest Against Fees

By IAN MCDONNELL

UNEMPLOYMENT IS at 14%, and graduates are leaving the country at a rate of over 1,000 a week.

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) have called a national student protest on Wednesday, 3 November.

The union called the protest as a warning to the government's next budget.

The USI are concerned that Fianna Fail are planning to raise the registration fee to €3,000 and cut the maintenance grant by 10%.

USI has launched its own pre-budget submission. However many of its demands are extremely weak.

It only calls for a 'cap' on the €1,500 Registration Fee.

USI should be demanding the fee to be scrapped altogether.

Student services should be funded entirely through taxing the rich.

We should also seize assets like the €450 billion in proven oil and



gas reserves sold to Shell for a song.

USI, like any trade union, is led by timid careerists with an aversion to confrontation.

Students should join Free Education for Everyone (FEE), a left-wing coalition which is active in most national universities.

Left-wing students should help build this movement that puts pressure on local unions to fight and forges links with frontline staff.

After the November Demo we should build a strong student contingent for the Budget-day Protest at the Dail on Tuesday 7 December.

FEE can be contacted at nuimfee@gmail.com.

## Monsanto Gets Guns Prison Punishing the Poor

By JAMES O'TOOLE

THE MOUNTJOY prison riot in October involved over 70 prisoners.

It follows one in September where prisoners barricaded themselves in and refused to move.

With grotesque overcrowding, reduced access to family members and a 'zero tolerance' regime, Irish prisons like Mountjoy are a powder keg.

New hardline governor Ned Whelan has restricted prisoners' access to their children and family members.

His response to the riot was to send in prison guards with batons and dogs.

There are 3,000 working class people locked up in Irish prisons for not paying fines.



The conditions they face are deteriorating all the time.

The intended capacity of Mountjoy is 489, yet there are

sometimes over 680 locked up there. During one tour of inspection it was found that inmates had to share a bucket for a toilet. They were not allowed 'slop out' the bucket over night.

Up to four men would have to share a bucket in front of one another.

Prisoners are obliged to eat in these cells.

With December's budget set to slash and burn living conditions for workers, the amount of people jailed for poverty will massively increase.

Any further cuts in welfare payments for young people will force many into crime.

What's the system's response? Punish the poor for their poverty!



By PATRICK MCKENNA

A RECENT Nation magazine report revealed a match made in hell.

Blackwater, the band of murderous mercenaries unleashed by the US on the people of Iraq, has teamed up with Monsanto, the biotech giant which patents genetically modified (GM) seeds.

Blackwater provides intelligence, training and security services to Monsanto.

It helped infiltrate activist groups Monsanto had found troublesome.

Racket

Monsanto's control of crop production is secured through punitive litigation and aggressive lobbying for so-called 'Intellectual Property' rights or patents.

To top it all, it calls in paramilitaries to enforce its protection racket.

'Intellectual property' rackets keep profits high.

But they don't just involve lawyers and money - they also involve guns.

**WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR**

<p>Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>REVOLUTION</b></p> <p>The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.</p> <p>To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much</p>	<p>greater political and economic democracy.</p> <p><b>AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR</b></p> <p>War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.</p> <p>The "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.</p> <p><b>END RACISM AND OPPRESSION</b></p> <p>We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the</p>	<p>working class.</p> <p>We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.</p> <p>We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.</p> <p><b>FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH</b></p> <p>We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Brown government.</p> <p>Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'</p> <p>We want to see an Irish workers republic where all</p>	<p>workers gain.</p> <p>Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!</p> <p><b>FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY</b></p> <p>To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.</p> <p>This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.</p> <p>We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.</p> <p>We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.</p>
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# Is Sharing a Crime? – IRMA Thinks So

By IAN MAC DONNELL

INTERNET SERVICE Provider (ISP), 'UPC', recently won a High Court action; accused of breaching copyright through file-sharing by its internet subscribers.

The Irish Recorded Music Association (IRMA), representing labels like Warner Music, Sony BMG and EMI, had been pushing Irish courts to force ISPs to disconnect these 'pirate' internet users.

The record companies lost the court case on the grounds that Irish law does not currently allow for ISPs to disconnect users for online activity.

According to one judge, Peter Charleton, the 'gap' in current legislation is not in line with EU law.

A similar court case was taken by IRMA earlier this year against Eircom.

In an out-of-court agreement, Eircom cravenly offered to threaten to cut access for suspected illegal file-sharers and provide their internet (IP) address to IRMA.

## Conflicting Capitals

While record companies will push to enforce bans on breaches of copyright, ISPs have an interest in ensuring that they remain free from liability for illegal downloading.

The ISPs understand that 'policing' the Internet would take up a huge amount of their time and money and lose them customers.

The shareholders of the ISPs and those of the Record Industry are therefore, locked in a commercial standoff.

ISPs in Ireland are currently obliged to cooperate with record companies in the prosecution of those breaking copyright laws. But the ISPs don't want to take the initiative in stamping out 'piracy'.

The argument provided by the record companies to clamp down on illegal downloading



is standard neo-liberal nonsense.

The greedy shareholders of record companies are frustrated that their monopoly over the distribution of music is being undermined through online file sharing.

However a study at Harvard University in 2002 challenges that there are losses at all.

The researchers concluded that:

"While downloads occur on a vast scale, most users are likely individuals who would not have bought the album even in the absence of file-sharing."

## Incentives

The corporations also claim illegal downloading 'dis-incentivises' bloated multi-millionaire artists like rock group Metallica from performing.

The idea that the money 'incentive' of musicians, footballers or artists is a necessity is challenged by the high quality, non-commercial art and sport that exists.

The fact that GAA players don't receive the obscene salaries seen in Premiership football doesn't render GAA of lower worth.

Likewise, non-commercial products are often as good if not better quality than their commercial counterparts.

Free-software is a good example. Linux (a non-commercial PC operating system) is considered by many to be more efficient and reliable than its main counterpart, Microsoft.

The vast majority of writers and artists do not benefit from corporate control of the arts and would be able to earn a decent livelihood in public jobs if these corporations were properly regulated and taxed.

## 'Pirate' Music?

There are numerous methods of downloading free music from the Internet.

One of the most popular is through using peer2peer (P2P) file-sharing software.

Frostwire is one such piece of software at <http://www.frostwire.com/>.

Likewise, software exists that allows Internet users to download YouTube files.

One such file is YouTube Downloader 2.6.2.

Unfortunately, downloading is not without its setbacks.

P2P file-sharing networks tend to be infected with viruses.

Users equip themselves with anti-virus software, such as AGV.

The record companies wish to bring about a situation where people can be punished for the 'crime' of sharing their music files with others over the net.

Surveys of public attitudes show strong support for sharing and the majority of people do not consider it a crime.

## Control

The giant record corporations see the growth of 'legal' download sites as a chance to cash in on the growth of the internet.

Threatening people with prosecution is their way of herding people towards their 'legal' products.

Of course, it will prove extremely difficult for the record companies to enforce their agenda, given the large amount of people who download and the speed at which P2P software develops.

The struggle for control of the internet will continue until workers, including all types of artists and media workers, wrench control from the hands of the profiteering corporations.

# France shows

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

IN A spectacular fightback against president Nicolas Sarkozy's pensions bill, the trade unions in France have called two more days of general strikes.

The attacks on pension rights are part of the European austerity plan to force workers to pay for the crisis caused by the bankers and employers.

French workers have responded magnificently.

Sarkozy wants to make them pay more for their pension and to work to 67 before they get a guaranteed full pension.

The Irish media try to belittle the struggle by claiming the French are work-shy and that the 'reform' means only two years more work to age 62.

In reality, Sarkozy, along with the other governments in Europe, want to push the retirement age up to 67 or 68.

The Irish Government has already imposed an increase to 68 years.

## Mass Strikes

Mass strikes, demonstrations and student protests have paralyzed France.

Regional capitals like Marseille, Toulouse and Lyon have seen marches as big as Paris.

On Tuesday 12 October, 3.5 million people joined marches and strikes.

The Eiffel Tower in Paris



had to close.

330,000 marched in Paris, 230,000 on Marseille, 140,000 in Toulouse and tens of thousands in other cities.

On Wednesday 13 October, all-out strikes began in oil refineries and energy workers, dockers and some other sections struck.

Rail-workers are only providing an 'escargot' (snail) service.

On Thursday 14 October thousands of school students and some university students joined the battle.

Council workers in Marseille have refused to collect any rubbish for weeks.

Even workers at the Louvre in Paris joined the strike and refused to open the museum.

La Voix du Nord newspaper reported a union

meeting vote for a continuous general strike:

"For? All hands went up. Against? No movement in the room.

"Abstentions? Same."

## Support

Polls report up to 75% public support for the protests against the pension 'reforms'.

On Saturday 16 October

## "We need a continuous general strike"

PETROL SHORTAGES were spreading as all 12 of France's oil refineries joined a continuous strike.

Total Oil's six refineries are at a standstill.

Some 2,700 of France's 12,600 petrol stations had run completely dry.

The main fuel lines to Paris are cut and riot police have moved in forcefully to smash pickets on fuel depots.

But this did not stop the revolt.

Striking workers piled up tyres in front of a refinery at Grandpuits, East of Paris, defying a legal order ordering them to reopen.

Other workers and residents formed a 'human chain' to defend the refinery workers from the police.

Meanwhile, school students continued the battle.



## Action to Win

Pierre Brossat, a dockers' union representative at the port Fos-Lavera, told Socialist Worker:

"We are not prepared to see our livelihoods taken away for profit.

"We do a hard and physical job and are not going to work until we drop.

"The initiative for this strike came from union members.

"They want action to win.

"That means continu-

ous strikes, and a general strike that closes down the economy and hits the bosses."

The postal workers' section of the Sud-PTT union announced:

"Faced with the anti-democratic obstinacy of the government...we must step up the pressure and give ourselves the means to paralyse the country."

The call for a general strike of more than one day is popular but it will take immense pressure on union leaders to get it.

Bernard Thibault, CGT general secretary said:

"It does not match the practice by which we manage to increase our strength."

But many workers disagree.

They need to push hard to win it.

## A movement built from

WHEN THE protests over pensions began in France in May, nobody expected them to become such a serious revolt.

Most of the union leaders knew they had to respond to such a major attack. But, says Patrice, a health worker:

"They expected to have a few stage-managed protests and then it would end.

"But the enthusiasm and determination of the strikers surprised everyone.

"And then they (union leaders) had to call more serious action to catch up."

Virginia, a teacher, adds:

"The protests in June and on 7 September surprised us all.

"Suddenly everyone was on the streets!

"And it came days after

# s how to fight

## The student uprising

ON TUESDAY 19 October almost 1,000 of France's 4,300 secondary schools were on strike.

600 schools were blockaded.

In several areas school students barricaded roads and fought back against police attacks.

Unions estimate over 20,000 students marched in Toulouse, 8,000 in Rennes, 5,000 in Bordeaux, 3,000 in Reims and thousands in many other towns right across France.

Police fired flash-ball rounds – a so-called 'less lethal' alternative to live ammunition – seriously injuring students in Paris, Bordeaux and Lyon.

One student was shot in the face with a rubber bullet by the police and



hospitalised.

Britany Bidounga, a 16-year-old student from Paris, helped blockade her school for a week, dragging wheelie bins and old furniture to create a barricade over the entrance.

She spoke to Socialist Worker:

"Sarkozy only listens if the youth flood the streets and

the petrol dries up.

"We've come this far, why stop now?" Isabelle, a school student said:

"We are also here because we hate what he has done in attacking the Roma and by saying young people are criminals.

"The newspapers and some politicians say we are being

used, but we can make up our own minds and can see what is happening.

"I would like all schools to stop, and the workers too."

This workers' and students' revolt has the power to break the austerity offensive – if they can escalate to win.

## How do we make Irish unions fight like the French?

EVERYONE IN Ireland wishes we could be more like the French.

Everyone agrees we need to get out on the streets and get rid of this government.

But why doesn't it happen?

Just over year ago we had big protests here just like in France. 120,000 workers marched against the cuts.

In the North, union leaders are helping build a fightback against Tory cuts, bringing tens of thousands onto the streets.

The problem is leadership.

The union leaders and the Labour Party in the South have opposed calls for strikes to defeat the Government.

They have deliberately demoralized the workers' movement.

Instead they brokered a rotten 'Croke Park' deal.

But even that wasn't enough for the bosses who want still more cuts.

The good news is that despondency is lifting.

People are angry again and want action.



Union leaders in France are just as weak and spineless as here.

But in France there is a strong radical left and grassroots union movement that can push their union leaders to take action.

### Movement

We need a similar movement in Ireland.

Workers can impose their own solutions to this crisis.

A strong resistance movement needs a strong left to overcome the spineless compromising of Labour and

union leaders.

You can organise by getting your local trade union branch to take action.

Pass a motion supporting the protest against the cuts on Saturday 27 November in Dublin and calling on the ICTU to call a strike on budget day Tuesday 7 December.

Get your union branch to support the 'Alternative Economic Action Programme' that makes the rich pay for the crisis.

A united workers' movement can make the bosses pay and build a society where people come before profit.

## Will the EU help overcome Ireland's Economic Crisis?



BY KIERAN ALLEN

DURING THE debate on the Lisbon Treaty, the political establishment argued that it was merely a 'tidying up operation' that would have little impact on national sovereignty.

Opponents, however, pointed to Article 136 which gave power to the EU over member states' 'budgetary discipline' and to 'set out economic policy guidelines for them'.

So today it is perfectly clear that the political establishment was lying and their opponents were correct.

The EU commission is now 'stress testing' Irish budget plans for December and is insisting that the government reduce the budget deficit to less than 3% by 2014.

Even the conservative Economic and Social Research Institute thinks that this will bring disaster.

It has warned that attempts to cut €15 billion or more from the economy could lead to a 'prolonged recession'.

The cuts figure represents about one tenth of the entire economy in one year and fanatics like Bord Snip's Colm McCarthy think it justified.

As the lies over the Lisbon Treaty have been exposed, the political elite have changed their argument.

They now suggest we have 'no choice' but to adhere to the EU 'Growth and Stability Pact' because the EU is helping us overcome the banking crisis.

Without their help, it is

suggested, the ATM machines would seize up, there would be no money to pay social welfare and the economy would not function.

These claims are just more lies.

The Growth and Stability Pact is the centre-piece of the neoliberal bias in EU decision-making.

It is designed to seal off economic policy from popular influence and give local elites the political shelter to drive through attacks on their own population.

When they are slashing spending on hospitals and schools, they can pretend that they have 'no choice'.

Yet, in the period 1999-2007, there have been 25 breaches of the Growth and Stability pact and only five countries never breached it – including Ireland and Spain.

Since the crisis broke out in 2008, France, Germany, Italy and Britain have all been in breach of the Growth and Stability Pact.

So the claim that every country MUST adhere to this figure is simply a lie.

But even if it is a lie, is it a necessary lie in order to help countries get out of difficulty?

Is not the EU helping Ireland by providing credit when no one else will give it?

At present the Irish government is writing 'promissory notes' for Anglo-Irish Bank and other banks.

These notes are taken to the European Central Bank and function as guarantees which allow these banks to draw down billions in credit.

This is supposed

to be the main way the EU is helping Ireland.

However, once again the political elite are lying.

First, interest rates are being charged on these promissory notes – even though Lenihan and the FF-Green government tried to conceal this fact up to recently. It amounts to about €1.5 billion a year.

This bill is being picked up by predominantly working-class taxpayers and represents yet another subsidy to rich Irish bankers.

Second, the main reason why the EU is providing this credit is not 'to help Ireland' but rather to get the Irish population to subsidise foreign banks.

The main capitalist banks in the eurozone countries have an exposure of €402 billion to banks and financial speculators in Ireland.

If these defaulted, they would bring down a considerable chunk of the EU banking system.

British capitalists have an exposure of €186 billion while Germany capitalists have €176 billion.

If the Irish banks do not pay their debts, this would trigger a black hole for the financial industry in these countries.

So the EU has stepped in to make sure that 'Ireland' pays these debts.

In other words, it wants to fleece workers in Ireland to make sure that rich people in both Ireland and the EU get back the money they gambled.

And to add insult to injury, the EU pretends it is helping us.

## ment m below



big protests against Sarkozy's attacks on the Roma.

Activists used the opening provided by the union leaders' support for action to take the struggle to new levels.

This meant pushing for continuous strikes in some key industries. But striking and spreading the example, was mainly up to rank and file activists.

"They gave us the chance – and we took it," says Patrice.

# France: The Spectre of 1968

by Liam Cummins

AT AN election rally, French president Sarkozy, declared: "In this election, it is a question of whether the heritage of May '68 should be perpetuated or if it should be liquidated once and for all."

If elected, he promised to break with what he described as the 'cynicism' of the "gauche caviars" (like champagne socialists).

He blamed those on the Left for a crisis of "morality, authority, work and national identity".

He accused them of systematically taking "the side of thugs, troublemakers and fraudsters against the police".

In 1968, while students were battling the police, the 13-year-old Sarkozy had to be restrained by his mother from joining a right-wing counter-march up the Champs-Élysées.

But Sarkozy's hatred of 1968 is not just a matter of morality or law and order.

At its heart this hatred reflects the fear of the French ruling class of a moment when they almost lost control completely.

It is a fear that has contributed to many of the victories and reforms won by the French working class over the last forty years.

None of this is down to an inherent French tendency to protest.

In fact only months beforehand André Gorz, a French leftist, had written that: "In the foreseeable future there will be no crisis of European capitalism so dramatic as to drive the mass of workers to revolutionary general strikes."

In the early months of 1968 in France, as in many other countries at the time, there was a series of left-led student protests.

These were relatively small initially.

For example, in Nanterre University in Paris, on an overcrowded campus of 12,000 students, only 142 took part in an occupation of the administration building.

But it was the reaction by the authorities to this minority which created wider support from other students.

The university rector and Minister of Education announced the shutting down of the university and sent in the police.

An escalating cycle of repression and demonstrations followed, gathering increasing support.

The movement spread to other universities (such as the Sorbonne in central Paris) and to the secondary schools.

There was also an increasing involvement of young workers inspired by the fact that the students were prepared to fight and to resist the police.

But the significant turning point was, what has come to be known as, 'The night of the Barricades', 10/11 May.

The police sealed off the bridges across the Seine, blocking the students into the area around the Boulevard Saint Michel.

Taking the logic of the situation, the students declared the



Posters from France 1968 calling for factory occupations and black and white unity against racism.

area a liberated police-free zone, building barricades throughout the area.

At two in the morning, thousands of the hated CRS paramilitary police were sent in to break the barricades.

Tear gas and baton charges were met with resistance.

The police were repeatedly beaten back, taking them over four hours to regain control.



A one day national strike was called for the 13 May in protest against the police brutality. The demonstration that day was the largest in Paris since 1944.

Hundreds of thousands marched behind a banner: 'Students, teachers, workers, solidarity'. The demonstration dispersed peacefully.

And that should have been the end of it.

The union leaders' objective had been to placate the growing pressure from young members.

A leader of the CGT union later wrote: "The CGT thought that everything would stop there, that there would be a good day of strikes and a good demonstration".

However, on the following day workers at Sud Aviation in Nantes took further action. They had been holding a fifteen minute strike each Tuesday against short-time working and loss of pay.

However this time, after the fifteen minutes stoppage, young workers in one section refused to go back to work and marched around the plant getting sup-

port from the other sections.

They blockaded the manager in his office.

That night two thousand workers barricaded themselves in the factory.

News of the Nantes occupation spread to other plants.

Workers in factories in Rouen, Beauvais, Orleans, Flins and Le Mans followed by occupying their workplaces the next day.

Within two days the major Renault Billancourt factory in Paris was occupied.

By the Friday every Renault plant in the country, the Aerospace industry, shipyards and the metalworking industries were closed.

Over the weekend railworkers began to occupy their depots.

The following Monday saw walkouts in insurance, banks, shops and the print industry. By now between nine and ten million were on strike.

Throughout the country nothing moved.

A leader of the CFDT union confederation later wrote: "Put yourself in the shoes of our lads."

"In a few days they learnt many things."

"First of all that action pays... On top of this was the power of the demonstration on 13 May: there had been nothing like it since the Liberation... People had never imagined them so strong..."

"The result was workers discovered it was possible to fight, and that when you fight well, not only is there a chance of winning, but the risks involved are quite small..."

"From that, to action to resolve old problems, was only a small step".

The mobilisation of workers and students exercised an important attractive force on other layers of society.

Doctors, architects, economic planners and other professions, even the clergy, were all involved in contesting their roles in capitalist society.

Film-makers withdrew from the Cannes Film Festival competition to hold discussions on issues including how to rescue the film industry from the profit motive.

Professional footballers oc-

cupied the headquarters of the Football Federation.

The Odéon, the national theatre in Paris was occupied and used as a center for debate and discussion.

A banner hung inside declared: "When the national assembly becomes a bourgeois theatre, the bourgeois theatre becomes a national assembly."

Some 7,000 people attended daily discussions.

For two weeks the question was: who rules, the workers or the government?

A deal was brokered by the union leaders - for a 35% increase in the minimum wage and a 7% increase in other wages.

But an attempt to sell it at a mass meeting of 15,000 in the Renault Billancourt plant failed.

Sensing the mood, the union leadership suggested that the agreement allowed for the continuation of the strike for its own local demands.

Plant by plant workers voted to continue the strike.

With all in crisis around him President De Gaulle flew to Germany to meet with the head of the French army, General Massu.

On his return the following day De Gaulle called for a general election.

This was a direct challenge to the Communist Party (PCF), the leading influence in the unions, but whose political perspective was primarily electoral and despite its name, reformist.

They had to wind down the

strike so as to appear in control and respectable for electoral purposes.

The strike movement had started spontaneously, but for it to continue it required a deeper level of coordination with the perspective of challenging for power.

The forces of the revolutionary left who had that perspective were too small and did not have the roots in the working class to be able to provide an alternative leadership to the PCF.

Nevertheless although significant forces did return to work, some sections continued on strike for almost another month.

Ultimately the hopes of '68 were not realised, but the shock they gave the system still frightens Sarkozy, over forty years on.



Further reading: Chris Harman - *The Fire Last Time: 1968 and after*



# Legal sectarianism

By EAMONN MCCANN

THE SINN Fein/DUP plan for dealing with sectarianism in the North is to keep the Catholic and Protestant communities apart.

Under their *Cohesion, Sharing and Integration* (CSI) document, each side should consolidate its own position while respecting the separate identity of the other side.

No coming together or fading away of sectarian division: 'Separate but equal' or 'Benign apartheid' at best.

July's CSI is in keeping with the 1998 'Good Friday' Act requirement for 'good relations' policies.

The *Shared Future* document of 2005 has now been replaced by the

2010 CSI strategy.

The difference says something ominous about how the two main parties have come to understand 'good relations'.

In 2005, the over-arching aim was to break down sectarian divisions.

The 2010 draft seeks to maintain the division in a manageable way.

The highly respected Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust noted that boundaries regarded as permeable in 2005 are seen as permanent five years on.

It's envisaged that the children of the future will be born as either Catholic/Nationalists or Protestant/

Unionists and ever more shall be so.

There is no perspective for the possible emergence of different senses of identity altogether.

Integrated housing, for example, will be seen as not just naivety, but as contradicting the approved understanding of Northern society.

The latest (2009) *Life and Times* Survey of attitudes shows that a large majority in the North would choose, if they could, to live and work in a mixed environment and send their children to mixed schools.

Policy-makers could ask: Why not?

The CSI document, seems mun-

danely to ask: Why bother?

The DUP and Sinn Fein have gotten where they are today by presenting themselves as the most robust advocates of their 'own' community's interests.

The CSI strategy might have been designed to confirm that pattern of political allegiance.

The message is that there's no need to see politics any other way than the way they always have been seen.

Some current arguments over integrated education are a diversion.

The real intent of the two parties is to be found in their written proposals.

## BOOK REVIEW

# The end of Capitalism?

Book review by PATRICK MCKENNA

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK, *Living in the End Times* (Verso, 2010)

For isolated individuals in a crisis, self-help books have a strong attraction.

They can promise personal salvation for any reader, through the power of positive thinking. Think the right thoughts, and things will work out.

Slavoj Žižek's latest book, *Living in the End Times*, won't appear in the self-help section of too many airport bookshelves.

For one, he believes you should accept the possibility you might end up dead resisting the forthcoming capitalist apocalypse.

But there is an overriding concern with how you ought to think.

The problem, for Žižek, is that our responses to the ravages of the capitalist system are formed, by the ideology of that system, in ways we may never fully grasp.

Sadly, we can't just shuck off capitalist ideology as though it were a boiler suit and sunglasses. As with Marx, the point is to change the world, but crucially for Žižek, that means a lot of interpreting.

To show us how we might go about this task, he draws on a bewildering range of cultural references, from *Kung Fu Panda* to Kafka, St. Paul to Sarah Palin, with a fair few wicked jokes thrown in.

This might sound fun; the sort of thing to keep your friends amused over Sunday brunch.

But it also involves getting dragged backwards through hefty thickets of continental philosophy and psychoanalytic theory.

Can Žižek show us anything useful about how the world ought to be changed?

His clownishness is put to good use exposing the dubious ideology that lurks beneath many liberal-progressive dreams of harmony.

But since his writing is mostly speculative, he rarely makes a claim that can be evaluated objectively.

And he has written far shorter books than this one, saying more or less the same thing.



# Two-faced and anti-social

By VANESSA O'SULLIVAN

THE *SOCIAL NETWORK* is concentrated around Harvard student Mark Zuckerberg's desire to get one up on society. After being dumped by his girlfriend, he gets drunk and starts blogging about her. A joke from his friend, and future Facebook co-founder, Eduardo Saverin, convinces him to set up a site rating women in Harvard. In 4 hours he had brought down Harvard's whole system, just for fun.

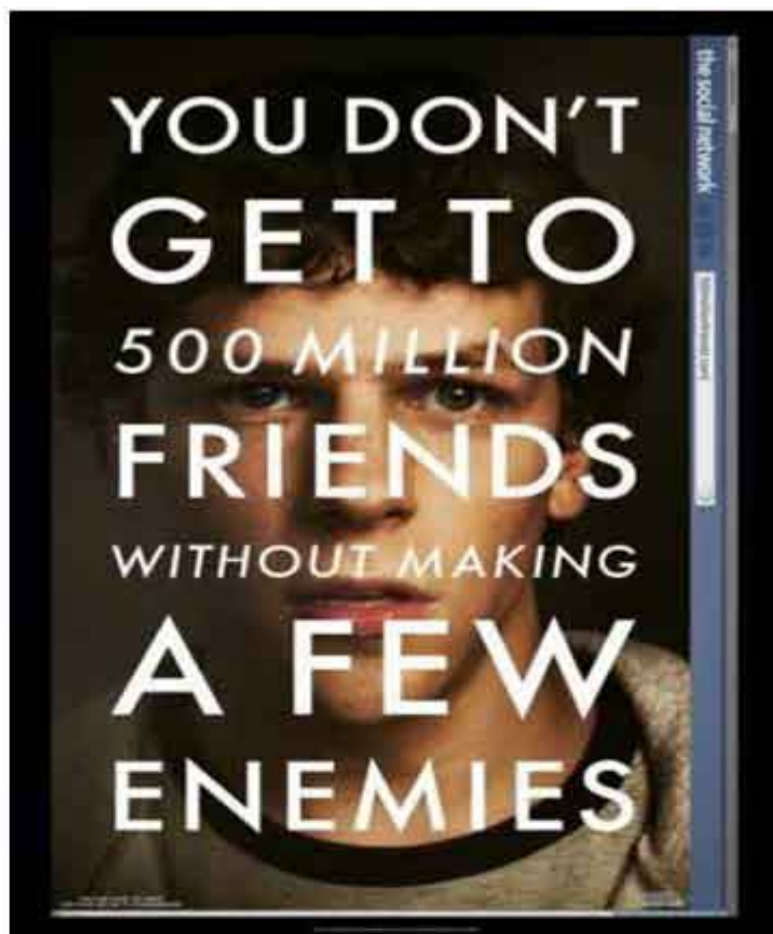
Proposal

The movie moves swiftly on to a proposal from the Winklevoss twins, a pair of rich sorority owners. They suggest a website called 'The Harvard Connection', a site exclusive to Harvard students. Zuckerberg declines the offer and sets up a similar site, in his opinion a better one, with the help of his friends.

This prompts a lawsuit by the twins, claiming Zuckerberg stole their idea. The movie cuts between the testimonies given from the Saverin and Winklevoss lawsuits.

We see the founding of Facebook, its aftermath and Zuckerberg himself through multiple points-of-view. However, the movie isn't just about Facebook.

This could have been about the invention of the radio or a medicine and it still would have been as interesting because ultimately it's



about human behavior. The *Social Network* shows all the rage, vindictiveness, pettiness and pain that can come with success. More importantly though, it proves

that no matter how rich, successful or well known you get, it is a hollow victory if you have abandoned all of your true friends for fame and fortune.



Enron reviewed by MADELEINE JOHANSSON

ENRON IS the story of the rise and fall of one of the biggest multinationals in history.

It is also one of the greatest examples of the absolute greed and madness of finance capital.

The play opens with the battle for the company's future between Claudia Roe and Jeffrey Skilling.

The former is for expansion into the third world by building power plants, while the latter sees the future in finance and stock market trading.

Skilling's offer convinces CEO Ken Lay – and why wouldn't it? – when you can seemingly make profits out of nothing.

Enron becomes the most successful and influential business model of the 1990's. That is, until 2001, when the company collapses revealing enormous debts and unimaginable fraudulent activities.

Writing a play about financial crisis, with economic terms like 'hedge funds', 'mark-to-market' and 'raptors', and making it understandable and enjoyable at the

same time, is not an easy task. But Lucy Prebble's play does exactly that. There is spectacular symbolic imagery such as velociraptor dinosaurs in the basement of Enron storing up the debts, or the 'cowboy' traders of the financial department.

What is missing is a character to empathise with, but perhaps that is the point.

As thousands of Californians suffered power shortages, and people died because of it, Enron made huge profits manipulating the markets.

Written in 2009, *Enron* is certainly a political commentary of the 90's, but it seems to be even more suitable for our times.

When one of the characters asks the audience: "Do you guys like hedge funds?" your mind instantaneously moves from the Enron building to the IFSC on the Quays.

The only difference is the Enron bosses went to jail while our fraudsters still walk free.

# THE FIGHT BACK BEGINS

By JOHN LYONS

ON SAT 23 October, over 15,000 people marched through the streets of Belfast in angry protest to George Osborne's 'Comprehensive Spending Review'.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) organised the march to protest the British finance minister's planned cuts.

These cuts could see the Stormont Assembly lose £4bn (€4.5bn) over the next four years and cause job losses in the region of 30,000 to 50,000 across the public and private sectors in the North.

Union rank-and-file members had travelled from every corner of the North and, even as the march left St Anne's Cathedral, the mood of the protestors was one of anger. As the Unison, Unite, SIPTU, NIPSA and other trade union banners paraded through Belfast city centre, many onlookers applauded militant chants, with some joining in.

The protestors marched up Royal Avenue in the pouring rain toward City Hall where a range of speakers addressed the crowd from the stage.

Peter Bunting, ICTU assistant general secretary, said the elite of the financial world had caused a ca-

tastrophe that the poorest people in the UK were set to pay for.

He told the rally that even though international financiers had created the crisis, but the Government's cuts would attack the most vulnerable instead.

"Over 30,000 public and private sector jobs are facing Osborne's axe here in Northern Ireland, as he slashes away at the essential services which all of us rely on."

Other union leaders followed, recounting the unfairness of punishing working people to pay for the crimes of bankers.

The oratory received a receptive response from the crowd.

But still the language was too vague.

It fell to the last speaker to outline the actions that have to be taken to successfully fight the cuts.

Eamonn McCann, People Before Profit and Derry Trades Council member, said that united working-class action was needed.

"Only a mass revolt from below will defeat the proposed cut-backs and job losses." "Strike action and a campaign of mass civil disobedience will be required in the times ahead if the working class is to resist the Tory/Lib Dem attacks".

This is what the crowd had come



to hear, suggestions for the fight ahead.

The lesson of the past is that union leaders can be great on rhetoric and still criminally weak on action.

It is up to rank-and-file members in the North to ensure that their leaders are not allowed to talk like fighters and fight like cowards.

The stakes are high: if the Tory attack is allowed proceed, then 30,000 public sector workers will be thrown on the dole, which will

have a knock on effect on the private sector, resulting in even more jobs lost.

Public services will be devastated and lives put at risk.

So, it falls to the workers, not their union leaders, to drive their unions' resistance.

They will look to Stormont to plead on behalf of the 'devolved nation' for a better deal, a strategy that can only end one way for workers: in defeat.

Trade unionists and anti-cuts

campaigners must come together and plan the way forward, with co-ordinated union action such as strikes always an option.

In the spirit of the protests in France, McCann ended the rally by warning that:

"The protest today is only the beginning of a movement of resistance.

"The only thing that will defeat the Tory/Lib Dem 'coalition of cutters' is the roar of an angry workers' movement."

**Inside: France shows how to fight Pages 4&5**