

www.swp.ie

Text JOIN to 086-3074060

# Socialist Worker

# MARKET MADNESS!

- **ICTU Must Call a 24hr General Strike**
- **Support the United Left Alliance**

NOT HAPPY that they have bankrupted the country, the Fianna Fail/Green government are bent on destroying what's left of the economy.

The government are begging for loans from the EU and IMF with strings attached which will impoverish us for decades to come.

The pension reserve fund will be robbed of its €17.5 billion to bail out the banks.

The interest alone on the EU/IMF bail-out 'loan' will be €10-12 billion every year.

Their 4-year plan attacks the minimum wage, pensions, health and welfare benefits to boost profits for business.

Increased taxes on capital, like Capital Gains Tax, amount to only €140 m; less than 1% of the total.

Lenihan and Cowen shout about the deficit but evade the question of the need for bank bail-outs or their refusal to tax the super-rich in Ireland.

First they bailed out the reckless borrowing of the developers with NAMA.

Then they bailed out the reckless lenders in Anglo, AIB and the other Irish banks with the Bank Guarantee and serial bail-outs.

Now, with the EU/IMF 4-year plan they are bailing out those reckless European banks who lent money to the



OVER 100,000 people marched in Dublin against FF/IMF cuts

reckless Irish banks!

Even those bankers didn't expect to get paid in full.

But our leaders insist: 'We will pay in full or the markets won't have confidence in us and lend us money!'

### Markets Not Happy

The results of Fianna Fail playing 'keep the markets happy' has been devastating.

450,000 workers are unemployed, 14% of the workforce.

6,000 a month are emigrating.

350,000 people with mortgages are in arrears, 40,000 in

default and 10,000 facing imminent repossession. Poverty rose from 180,000 people to over 250,000 last year.

Slashing the minimum wage and taxing the poorest with income tax, VAT and service charges will devastate living standards, cause untold suffering and make the economy even worse.

In recent national polls the majority of Irish people now support defaulting, that is, not paying senior bondholders and they want a wealth tax to fund services.

Getting Fianna Fail out is necessary but won't stop the bail-outs.

What then is the Alternative

to Fianna Fail?

Fine Gael too are a right-wing party for the rich who want to tax workers and slash services.

But are Labour any better?

Eamon Gilmore has promised to keep to the ridiculous target of a 3% deficit by 2014.

Pat Rabbitte says they will work with the IMF plan.

In a coalition with a right-wing party Labour have always been pulled even further to the right and implement attacks on workers.

It is Labour Parties in Greece, Portugal and Spain

that are implementing the 'austerity' programmes there, getting workers to pay for the bankers' crisis.

Workers in Ireland need a real, radical, political alternative.

We need the United Left Alliance that fights and stands up for workers, resists cuts in wages and services and makes the rich pay for their gambling mistakes.

The Left will have the biggest impact when the most vibrant, united community and trade union campaigns are supporting them.

The UNITE trade union is calling for a campaign of strikes and protests says Regional Secretary, Jimmy Kelly:

"We have begun plan-

ning for a campaign of civil disobedience and industrial action that will make clear the level of anger and fortitude that exists among the people who political leaders have failed utterly."

The Alliance will refuse to do deals with FF and FG but will support left-wing policies supporting workers, communities and services.

Cllr Richard Boyd Barrett said at the United Left Alliance launch rally:

"The presence of a number of genuine Left TDs in the Dail offering a visible political alternative will be a massive pole of attraction to workers, unemployed and young people, and can become a real factor in the unfolding crisis."

## There is an Alternative

- End the bank bailouts.
- Take top developers' assets into public control.
- Tell EU: Ireland won't keep 3% deficit target by 2014.
- Introduce a wealth tax on combined asset values exceeding €500,000.
- Tax all income over €100,000 at 70 percent.
- Nationalise Ireland's natural resources.
- Develop state-owned industry.
- Create a public-works programme to put people back to work.

# Wave of Student Protests and Occupations

## People Before Profit Alliance Election Candidates

By VANESSA O' SULLIVAN

WITH AN election looming, the People Before Profit Alliance has announced their candidates under the United Left Alliance. Each issue of SW will feature three of these potential TD's.

**Cllr GINO KENNY** is the candidate for Dublin Mid-West. Active in the SWP since 1994 he has been involved in many community campaigns in Clondalkin. This will be his 4th time on the ballot box and he is currently a councillor for PBPA.



"Never has there been a time when people are crying out for a radical alternative. I appeal to anybody who wants a revolutionary change in Ireland: come and join our campaign. It's your 'patriotic duty' to revolt!"



**JOHN LYONS** is the candidate for Dublin North Central. John is currently living in Ballymun. An experienced activist and organiser building resistance against the cuts, he is standing in a general election for the first time. "It's time to take this country back. We need to take control and run the economy so that it meets the needs of the many and not the profits of the greedy few."

**SEAMUS O'BRIEN** is the candidate in Wexford. Seamus has been fighting the healthcare cuts and he is currently the main organiser of the 'Save Wexford Hospital' campaign. Seamus is building to link up the country's different hospital campaigns. With his political commitment to ordinary workers he intends to shake the Dail out of its complacency, alongside the United Left Alliance.



By IAN MCDONNELL

FACING SOME of the most severe austerity seen in decades, Europe is experiencing a wave of student occupations & protests. On 3 November last, 40,000 students marched through Dublin against the potential re-introduction of fees and 2,000 staged an occupation of the department of finance.

The police responded with riot squads, and proceeded to brutally sweep students off the streets in clashes that lasted between three to four hours. Days later, 50 thousand students marched through London in opposition to austerity. Thousands occupied the conservative party HQ.

Students in the UK have occupied 12 major universities in November alone, including University College of London and Cambridge University. Most occupations are still in progress. Meanwhile, student activists in Ireland are planning national actions in response to the budget. Students involved with the FEE (free education for everyone) in NUI Maynooth, have recently called for a march on a local Fianna Fail TD's office on December 9th. FEE branches in NUI Galway, IADT, NCAD, QUB and UCD



are planning nationwide actions, ranging from marches to occupations.

As Fianna Fail desperately continues to pass the burden of financial speculators and bankers onto the backs of ordinary people, the students will have an important role to play. Throughout history students can be a powerful source of energy and ideas for change. However student movements have been most effective when they link up with the workers' movement. The presence of a United Left Alliance in Universities and workplaces can help to forge these links.

## Swords Ambulance Cut



By JOHN LYONS

DUE TO budget cuts and HSE mismanagement a vital service for North County Dublin is under threat. The Swords Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB) ambulance is to be taken out of service due to budget cuts. The ambulance covers a very large area of North Dublin and its loss would clearly be a matter of life and death. This ambulance averages 4800-5000 calls per year. Management informed unions at a meeting in October that funding for the Swords ambulance was cut by the HSE. The HSE also owes money to the City Council for the provision of 11 other Fire Brigade ambulances. DFB fire crew are also paramedics so in desperation the fire tender itself will be sent to more and more medical cases. Fire cover in the area will obviously be reduced as a result. The annual cost of 1 DFB ambulance is €85 an hour! What is the price of one life?

## Disney Nightmare Before Xmas for Laura Ashley Strikers



By LEAH SPEIGHT

OUT IN the cold on Grafton St, 22 Laura Ashley shop workers are still on strike. As they protest, refurbishment of the premises for new owner Disney goes ahead. Disney is far from the 'friendly' company image they promote. The truth behind Disney toys is anything but a fairy-tale. A report released by China Labor Watch in November is shocking. Children work as much as 80 hours a week, including 40 hours of forced overtime. Gloves for handling hazardous chemicals are not worn as it slows down their work rate. Disney executives removed a healthcare plan for its 2150 employees in the USA.

The low paid workers on a \$13 an hour average wage are also being pressured into part-time contracts. In February of this year some even went on hunger strike. Disney made \$3 billion profit last year. As recently as June this year, a long time union activist was sacked after speaking out against promotion and scheduling conditions. Leigh Shelton of 'Disney is Unfaithful' told socialist worker: "Their battle to hold on to healthcare and keep their jobs full-time has waged on for nearly three years now." She said she hadn't known of the Laura Ashley workers' situation but offered solidarity on "how we could collaborate." As one bad employer leaves Grafton St with its workers on the street, another one arrives.

## Galway United



By KIRAN EMRICH

THE GALWAY Unites Against Cutbacks Campaign protests on Saturday 4 December against budget cuts. The campaign is backed by Galway Says No to Health Cuts, FEE, Hope 4 Disability, AMACH LGBT, and various other groups and individuals. The demo begins at 1pm at Galway Cathedral and will march through the city to the Spanish Arch. The budget attacks workers to pay off bankers and does not have the consent of the majority of people.

## Strike at Drogheda Hospital

By LEAH SPEIGHT

ACCORDING TO Unite union a strike at Our Lady's Hospital Drogheda is centered on safety and outsourcing. The 300 workers affected involves general porters, household staff, healthcare attendants and food supplies. Unite members voted 87% in favour of strike action, because of an unwillingness on management's part to engage through the Labour Relations Commission. Most of the low-paid staff have faced increasing workloads over recent years. According to Unite regional officer Claire Keane: "The scale of this work has escalated to unsafe levels. Despite the threat of

industrial action, management has continually turned their back on issues which we see as critical for staff and patient care and safety." Unite union rep Ann Griffin hopes: "All the outstanding issues will be resolved in the Labour Relations Commission on Tuesday 30 November." "Management will start to communicate with Unite in the hospital." "There has been a lack of consultation with management over outstanding issues the past four years." The strike is now on hold for 7 days pending negotiations. Workers at Drogheda hospital rightfully expect to be treated fairly and with respect by management.

Never miss an issue of Socialist Worker

Six month subscription €15/£10stg

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive \_\_\_\_\_ copies of Socialist Worker each issue

Return to PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, with a cheque/postal order or a bank lodgement receipt. Bank Details: Socialist Workers Movement, AIB, 37/38 Upper O Connell St, Dublin 1. Account No: 85173469. Sort code: 93-11-36





# ism for the Rich; ne Poor



## Interview with Greek Socialist Panos Garganas

Greece is battling IMF bail-out austerity programmes for the past year. Panos Garganas of the SWP sister organisation in Greece tells of the struggle against the IMF there



**SW:** How has the IMF plan impacted on the Greek Economy?

**PG:** It is getting worse—this is clear from the latest results.

The predictions at the beginning of the year were for a contraction.

They were hoping it would be anything between 1 and 2 percent.

Now it's heading for between 4 and 5 percent.

The tourist industry is badly hit.

Construction in August was at the lowest point in 15 years.

These are areas on which the Greek economy depends, so obviously the crisis is getting worse in terms of the recession.

And it may get worse also in terms of the fiscal crisis, although the government are proudly announcing that they have cut the deficit by 40 percent in the first seven months of the year.

But there are doubts whether this will continue, because they've been very tough in the area of cuts, but they're doing badly in the area of state revenue.

The recession is hitting their plans.

They were hoping for more money through raising VAT from 19 to 23 percent, but that's not working in the recession.

Things are getting worse in terms of economic activity and in terms of the fiscal crisis.

**SW:** There's clearly been a formidable response by the Greek working class movement to the austerity measures—six general strikes in as many months during the first half of 2010.

But how would you assess in more depth the response, both at the rank and file level where, as you've already said, there's considerable combativity, also, in terms of the trade union leadership, given that the most powerful wing of the union bureaucracy is aligned to Pasok (Greek equivalent of the Labour Party), the ruling party?

**PG:** During the summer the government tried to confront truck owners and owner-drivers, who were out on strike, by imposing military discipline and ordering them back to work, to break up the strike.

That didn't work. The government was forced to go into dialogue with their unions to turn them back.

The strong tactic was practically destroyed.

And if it didn't work for truck owners—people would say they could be easily isolated from the working class (since they are owners, they're not even working class)—the government won't be able to use it against, for example, power workers and other powerful sections of the working class.

Yes, the general strikes did not bring down the government, which would be the only way to avoid the measures being voted for in parliament.

But they were not a failure in terms of creating a movement that provides the background for every sector that will fight in the coming months.

But the trade union bureaucracy is accepting this argument that the general strikes failed and suggesting that we should try other tactics.

Sections of the left also accepted the argument and say we should now orient on the elections.

And we have to argue that there's no other way but to fight back and build a strike movement, using the general strikes of the past six months to build this movement up.

**SW:** As you just said, the stakes are very high in Greece: to defeat the austerity measures really requires bringing down the government.

**PG:** So there are many areas where there will be bitter strikes in the coming months.

We'll see whether we'll be successful in generalising them and producing a wave of general strikes in support of these groups of workers.

That's what's at stake!

could expect to see savage attacks on working people as the IMF/EU bailout would put Irish workers €100 billion in debt.

This, quite simply, is 'socialism for the rich' and 'barbarism for the poor'.

It represents a last-ditch attempt by the neoliberals to avoid paying for a crisis that was entirely of their own making.

As socialists we have to understand that this is not a bailout for anyone other than the exploiting class of capitalists.

People are currently under the mistaken belief that the IMF is some neutral arbiter or 'honest broker' stepping in to weed out cronyism and to rejuvenate the economy.

This could not be further from the truth as their real agenda is to make the working class pay for the economic crisis through ever more savage forms of oppression and exploitation.

The only way to ensure that we are not forced to pay for their crisis is to stay on the streets and fight for socialism not the barbarism of the IMF.

and a massive hit for international capital.

Instead the Irish government moved quickly to 'socialise the debt' in order to ensure that their cronies in Anglo were bailed out by the Irish tax-payer.

This process was fully supported by the EU as it meant that the Irish people would now be liable for the debts of the German and British banks (each of these are owed around €100 billion).

Over the next few years we

## The Euro

THE ABILITY of Europe's elite to make key economic decisions has been central to the development of the 'Euro-zone'.

Elected governments give power to 'unelected bankers' mandated with looking after the interests of capital. In the 'bubble years', the euro seemed to be succeeding in currency markets without serious constraints on member countries' sovereignty in taxation. In Europe there is no mechanism for harmonising monetary policies like interest rates or money supply, a fault line exposed by the current crisis.

Over the last two years, European capital has been massively bailed out by European tax-payers.

While governments have guaranteed the private debts of the rich as 'sovereign' public debts, it has become obvious that they could not afford to pay them.

Under the 'rules' of capitalism the banks

should have taken a massive 'hair cut'. However the bail-outs mean instead that workers will borrow to pay with their future earnings, and pay interest for the privilege!

Because governments don't currently have the money to afford this, they are being lent it by the self-same capitalists at 5% interest.

In Ireland interest payments alone may reach €10-12 billion each year.

Prospects for a decent society are rapidly meeting the limits of capitalism. The government's 'four year plan' would

effectively seize assets from every person in the State for years to come.

In this case it is obvious that the 'normal rules' no longer apply.

This is naked class warfare.

The only solution is to seize their assets instead (including our natural resources), to take to the streets and to drive the government and its IMF handlers out of Ireland for once and for all.

Only by breaking capital's rules can we achieve a society based on human need and human dignity as opposed to capital greed and human misery.



# Can the Labour Party Bring Change?

By KIERAN ALLEN

EAMON GILMORE sounded good for a period.

As soon as he took over the Labour Party leadership, he broke with the 'Mullingar strategy' of agreeing common policies with Fine Gael before the election.

He denounced the 'two-and-a-half party' system which relegated Labour to an add-on to the dominant right-wing parties.

Then, in a crucial moment, the Labour Party came out against the bank guarantee scheme in September 2008.

Sinn Fein, by contrast, caved into the talk of the 'national interest' and voted for the scheme.

Over the past two years Gilmore's speeches in the Dail have given voice to the huge anger in Irish society.

He has branded Cowen as 'either a fool or a liar' and as an 'economic traitor'.

All of this helps to explain Labour's spectacular rise in the polls but also the fear this has generated in the Independent Group of newspapers.

Labour now has a distinct possibility of becoming the largest party in the state and leading the next government.

But if that were to happen, what would the outcome look like?

## Lower Expectations

One ominous sign is evident in the latest shift in Labour's rhetoric.

On a recent Ryan Tubridy show, Gilmore said that he would not reverse the cuts introduced by Fianna Fail.

This was no slip of the tongue as he also recently issued a press statement containing the following:

"It simply will not be credible for politicians to tour the country promising to reverse every cut or to deliver to every local project.

"The task for the next Government is too great for us to promise to fix everything overnight. If Labour comes into Government in the spring, we will not be able to press a button and rewind the 2011 budget."

His aim was to play down expectations of change because Labour is already committed to the overall budgetary framework of deficit reduction.

Here is Gilmore again: "Despite the difficulties that go with it, Labour has stood by the target of reducing the deficit to 3% by 2014."

Labour disagrees with Fianna Fail and Fine Gael when it opposes €6 billion cuts this year, but instead wants €4.5 billion in cuts now and greater cuts in coming years.

It also wants more taxes and fewer reductions in public spending.

This approach also helps to explain Labour's attitude to the



WILL EAMONN GILMORE (above) save FG like Dick Spring saved FF (Inset)?



subsidy of capital and an absolute commitment not to levy any more taxes on them.

And this is precisely what Labour intends to do.

It proposes to establish a Strategic Investment Fund from money that accumulated in the national pension reserve fund and to use it to support private business.

It also endorses Public Private Partnerships (PPPs), which are schemes whereby private businesses are allowed to milk state funds to design, build and operate public services.

The National Convention Centre, for example, was built under a PPP and will cost the state an incredible €800 million.

## Capital

Instead of any further taxes on capital, Labour has called for an end to property tax breaks (even Fianna Fail now agrees to this), and will also eventually advocate property taxes on private homes.

It will use a think-tank like TASC to give a slightly left-wing gloss to this, claiming that people's homes are an asset and so should be taxed.

But in a country where over 70 percent of the people own a home, it is another imposition on the majority. But that is the kernel of the issue.

It is precisely because Labour seeks to manage a weakened and wounded capitalist system rather than overthrow it, that it will be inevitably forced into attacking its own support base.

This is the experience elsewhere.

In Greece, Spain and Portugal the attacks on the population to subsidise capital is being carried out by Labour Party governments.

The last great surge of support to Labour came in the Spring tide of 1992 when the then Labour leader, Dick Spring, launched vitriolic attacks on the 'Golden circle'.

Yet he soon agreed to a tax amnesty for the rich.

Labour's collapse before the altar of capitalism will be even quicker this time.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the wider question of paying off the bondholders of the banks.

It has not opposed the IMF's entry to Ireland but has rather claimed that Fianna Fail is unable to negotiate properly with them.

Labour suggests that it could strike a better deal.

It favours repaying the bank bondholders because, as Joan Burton put it:

"The Labour Party has never advocated 'burning bondhold-

ers' or 'sovereign default', but there is room for hard-headed negotiation to ensure appropriate burden sharing."

All of this indicates that the Labour Party is not committed to any seriously radical measures.

A small minority in the party might favour the Keynesian solution of increasing public spending to stimulate demand but the leadership is committed to the dominant elite consensus of cuts, paying bondholders and endorsement of the IMF.

## The Two Faces of Labour

This arises from the nature of the Labour Party itself.

Social democratic parties give some voice to working-class discontent with the system and tend to forge close ties with the trade union bureaucracy.

In Ireland, virtually all SIPTU officials are members of the Labour Party and union resources are made available to Labour at election times.

But while it gives voice to working class discontent, the Labour party leadership is fully committed to running capitalism and operating inside the framework of EU neo-liberal policies.

This includes the Growth and Stability Pact which limits state borrowing to less than 3 percent of GDP.

Here, however, it faces a huge difficulty.

To run capitalism in a way that provides some crumbs of comfort for workers, you need to firstly ensure that capitalists make sufficient profits.



DAVID BEGGS, ICTU, Jack O'Connor and Patricia King, SIPTU



## CAMPAIGN AGAINST CUTS CAN ROCK STORMONT

### People Before Profit Calls for a United Left

By EAMONN MCCANN

BOTH THE DUP and Sinn Fein head towards the New Year with a spring in their step.

Neither believes it faces any serious challenge in its 'own' community.

As far as Orange-Green issues are concerned, they are right.

Hard-line Unionists and 'disident' Republicans cannot be written off.

But they don't have the strength or momentum to cause the main parties concern.

The major test for the Executive partners will come when they face opposition from within their communities to their cuts agenda.

At first sight, the DUP and SF appear to have sharply different approaches.

The DUP says that the cuts are unwelcome but necessary.

At the same time, Peter Robinson promises that:

"We won't allow vital services to be steam-rolled.

"We will defend the most vulnerable in society."

Sinn Fein declares that:

"We fundamentally disagree with the Tory government's slash and burn approach to the economic crisis, but we are nevertheless forced to deal with the consequences of its approach."

It is obvious these are not entirely incompatible positions.

The budget negotiations will be dragged out, marked by grandstanding, ultimatums, bluster and threat.

But the two parties will agree a package in the end, involving major job losses and cuts to public services.



TRADE UNIONS protesting against the cuts on October 23rd

As far as cuts are concerned, as in so much else, the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP will offer only paler versions of the DUP/SF approach.

#### Jobs and Services

The question which arises is how, against this background, workers and working-class communities can fight job losses and defend services.

To put trust in any of the Stormont parties as they talk to one another behind closed doors makes no sense.

What's needed is organisation at

grass-roots level to fight back.

This means resistance to job cuts, up to and including strike action – if possible with official trades union backing, if necessary without it.

Communities should organise to show support for the workers involved.

Management spokespersons, media commentators and mainstream politicians will try to focus the frustration of the public on 'selfish' trade unionists.

The only effective answer will be solid numbers from the community on the picket lines and at rallies and meetings spelling it out that a cut in public sector jobs means

a cut in the services they deliver, that 'an injury to one is an injury to all'.

We will stand together or fall apart.

The same is true of campaigns to save care for the elderly, to prevent the closure of hospital wards, classrooms, schools, prevent cut-backs in ambulance and fire services, defend funding for voluntary and community services.

Workers in these services should stand four-square with the campaigners against cuts.

The campaign should aim to prevent home repossessions.

Threats of eviction over mort-

gage or rent arrears should be met by mass resistance.

Only action along these lines will force the Executive to back away from a cuts agenda. But none of it will happen without organisation.

This is why People Before Profit wants to pull together and work with all union, community and campaigning groups and individuals for coordinated action.

The campaign for the May assembly election should be a campaign for action against the cuts.

It should be used to strengthen anti-cuts groups and encourage the emergence of groups where none exists.

We should use the platform of Stormont seats to amplify grass-roots voices against the loss of jobs and services and use the credibility of winning seats to back up activity on the ground.

This perspective transcends the communal divide, involving common organisation of people in the bottom half of society in both communities.

#### Defending

It holds the key to combating sectarianism as well as to defending rights and living standards.

Registering as 'Others' and remaining outside an Executive based on political barter between communal representatives, People Before Profit can offer a real alternative.

We urge left-wing and grass-roots groups across the North to sink their differences for the purposes of the election and join with us in giving the parties which accept cuts and sustain communal politics a real run for it this time.