

# Socialist Worker

# RESIST THE BOSSSES PLANS

One march is not enough

**ALL OUT**

ONE DAY GENERAL STRIKE NOW!

UNITED LEFT ALLIANCE

Defend  
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Farm



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

IN FEBRUARY 2009, the employers' organisation, IBEC, issued a document demanding that the wages of Irish workers be cut by 10 percent.

To achieve their goal, they orchestrated a media campaign to reduce public sector wages.

The Independent Group of newspapers owned by Tony O'Reilly and the private radio stations owned by Denis O'Brien led the way.

Eventually, this campaign succeeded in cutting wages by approximately 15 percent, when account is taken of an infamous 'pension levy'.

This offensive was designed to set a headline so that the wages of

private sector workers could also be reduced.

Last year, the 5th European Workers Survey showed that more Irish workers suffered from wage cuts than any other group, with the exception of those in Romania and the Baltic states.

48 percent of Irish workers experienced a wage cut compared to 16 percent across the EU generally.

But now the weak response of the unions has encouraged IBEC to go much further.

Alongside their allies in Fianna Fail and the IMF they are planning an all out assault on the wages of the lowest paid workers.

## Minimum Wage Cut

THE FIRST step in the latest campaign was to reduce the minimum rate of pay by €1 an hour – which amounted to an 11 percent pay cut.

IBEC claimed that the old rate was making the hotel and catering industries 'uncompetitive'. Yet hotels are a domestic industry that mainly competes with each other on the same level playing field.

A legal minimum wage cannot not make one hotel more 'uncompetitive' than the other.

Over the last two years, some EU countries have increased their minimum wage as a way of stimulating economic demand.

This is because low paid workers spend most of their money at home so an increase feeds into the wider economy.

### Shock and Awe

But the Irish employers are a particularly mean bunch and are determined to use the economic crash to implement shock and awe tactics against workers.

The attack on the minimum wage is only the first step.

Their next target is the tens of thousands of workers covered by Joint Labour Committee (JLC) rates and Registered Employment Agreements (REAs).

The former are legally binding minimum pay rates that apply to workers in areas like the grocery trade while the latter is paid to construction workers.

The JLC's do not just apply to basic pay rate but also establish overtime rates, sick pay schemes and pension conditions.

The aim of the employers is to do away with the whole system. They hate the idea, for example, of workers getting premium pay for Sunday working.

The Construction Industry Federation (CIF) – the building bosses' organisation – have also intimidated SIPTU into agreeing to a 7.5 percent cut pay cut in the

relevant REA.

However, the employers are pinning their hopes on a government review of the whole JLC - REA system which will be conducted under the watchful eye of the EU Commission and which must be completed before March 2011.

The IMF insisted that this review be part of the four year plan which the Fianna Fail-Green Party government agreed to as a condition of getting a loan.

If the IMF and the EU Commission succeed in abolishing the JLC/REA system, it will clear the way for an all out race to the bottom.

## We Need To Fight

UPTO now the union leaders have done everything to appease the employers. They pinned their hopes on the Croke Park deal and a similar private sector protocol as a way of avoiding conflict.

But despite promises in the Croke Park agreement, the government has cut the wages of new entrants by 10 percent and have changed the pension scheme. The evidence suggests that rolling over and flying the flag of surrender only encourages more attacks.

Nor is the Labour Party leader Eamon Gilmore of much help. He recently called for a

'negotiated three year pay freeze' in the private sector – even though pharmaceutical companies are making huge profits.

Instead of this cowardly retreat before employers, we need a new spirit in the unions that prepares to defend our interests.

We need national days of industrial action to drive the employers back and give each workplace confidence to stand up for their interests.

The time for retreating is over. In 2011, we have to learn how to fight.

## People Before Profit Alliance Election Candidates

By VANESSA O' SULLIVAN

With a general election looming, the People Before Profit Alliance have announced their candidates. It is hoped that a significant number of these candidates will win seats in their respective areas. But who are these candidates?

**JOAN COLLINS** is the candidate for Dublin South Central.

First elected to Dublin City Council in 2004, and re-elected in 2009, Joan has earned a well deserved reputation as a hard working, capable and experienced public representative. "Our country has been brought to its knees by the recklessness and greed of a wealthy elite, aided and protected by corrupt and incompetent politicians. We need real change, real fighters for ordinary people in Dail Eireann."



**Cllr. Joan Collins**  
Dublin South Central



**ANNETTE MOONEY** is the first time candidate for Dublin South East.

Annette is a former community nurse in the area and currently a trainee teacher. Annette is desirous to help overcome the current mood of despondency and despair, that sense of lethargy that is sourced in helplessness and fed by a government fleeing from responsibility. Annette believes that the time has come for politics based on people power.

**ANNE FOLEY** is the candidate in Cork North West.

Anne is committed to work for the people of Cork. It is her first time to run for the People Before Profit Alliance. Anne has been a

very dedicated activist and is more than willing to take the politicians down from their pedestals. Cork will finally have a representative that is willing to fight for ordinary people.

## Dublin Bus Xmas gift

By VANESSA O' SULLIVAN

DUBLIN BUS decided to give the residents of Ballymun and Clondalkin an early Christmas present. On the 22nd of December they announced the next phase of their 'Network Direct' Scheme. Having pulled and merged bus routes all over the city, the next round of alterations is being introduced for 2011.

Dublin Bus management plan to cut the 68 & 69 bus routes in half, to completely eliminate the 51 and 210 routes; and to take the 76/a/b away from Ballyfermot. They

also plan to merge the 51c with the 13, making one journey time close to 80 minutes one way.

People Before Profit Alliance councillor and Clondalkin resident Gino Kenny has condemned the latest round of cuts: "These cuts are the latest in a long line and are designed to make the most venerable people in society suffer. We will fight to protect all of the services that the community have built up over the years in Clondalkin". Plans to resist these cuts will be discussed with the residents of Clondalkin in early January.

## Adams Wants Clinton

ONE OF Gerry Adams first acts in campaigning for a Dail seat in Louth was to visit the Dundalk city manager's office with a letter from Bill Clinton suggesting that he might come again.

Adams grovelling before a US war criminal makes embarrassing reading for anyone who thinks Sinn Fein is a left-wing party.

Clinton sent 30,000 troops to Somalia and helped initiate a long drawn out war that has led to the death of tens of thousands.

He bombed a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, pretending it made



chemical weapons.

He enforced a sanctions policy on Iraq that led to countless deaths.

And he conducted a barbarous war on the people of Serbia to establish NATO control of the region.

But as Adams might say, at least he is OUR war criminal.

# Government plan to conscript unemployed

By KIERAN ALLEN

A NEW scheme to conscript 5,000 unemployed people to undertake community service will be rolled out from January 2011.

This will be the first of the new 'labour activation' measures being promoted by the IMF. 'Labour activation' is business peak for forcing people off benefit and making them do poorly paid work.

People selected for the new Tus programme will receive only €20 extra for working a 19 and a half hour week. They will have to continue working for at least a year or face the prospect of being cut off the dole.

No real training will be provided and the scheme is specifically designed to intimidate people.

The official Tus factsheet states that 'it will contribute to the management of the live register and act as a deterrent to those not eligible for welfare benefits'.

When the scheme was first mooted, government spin doctors stated that it would be voluntary.

But now Tus factsheet poses the question: 'Will it be obliga-



tory to participate if offered an opportunity?' and answers it by stating that 'Yes, it is obligatory to respond to the offer to participate made by the Department of Social Protection as all recipients of Job Seekers support must engage with the National Employment Action Plan.'

In their recent country report

on Ireland, the IMF acknowledged that the rate of unemployment would remain at a high 13 percent until at least 2015.

The government has no intention of creating real jobs. So its only answer is intimidation to encourage people to leave the country.

The move also represents a

deliberate downgrading of the community sector. During the boom years, real jobs were created in under-resourced working class areas.

But like much else, the government is now slashing community services and replacing them with poorly trained conscripts from the labour exchange.

## Belfast Brought To A Stand-Still By Student Protests



ON THE 9th December 2010 students took to the streets of Belfast in protest against the Tories/Lib Dem increases in tuition fees and in defence of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

As the vote to increase tuition fees was going through the House of Commons in London, students walked out of approximately 15 different schools across

Belfast, with feeder marches joining them from Queen's University Belfast and Belfast Metropolitan College.

The student protestors marched to the gates of Belfast City Hall and after holding a peaceful demonstration there, a large number of school students moved into the middle of the road to occupy it. Soon everyone was out, with chants of "WHOSE

STREETS? OUR STREETS!" ringing through the air. The police were not far behind, but it was approximately an hour and a half before the riot squad arrived and formed a human battering ram, shoving their way into the mass of students.

Eight people, including prominent anti-fees activist and SWP member Gerry Carroll, were arrested and made to sit in the back of a van for several hours without food, water or access to toilet facilities. Six were released immediately.

Gerry was later released on bail after being charged with committing a Provocative Act, Resisting Police and Obstructing Lawful Activity in a Public Place — charges Gerry strongly denies.

We are calling on everyone who supports to the right to protest to come to Belfast Magistrates Court, on the 5th of January 9.30 am. Show your support and call for these ludicrous charges to be dropped.

## Soldiers Treated like Slaves

By JAMES O'TOOLE

THE ARMY spent the Christmas clearing pavements, shovelling snow and transferring patients from one hospital to another.

Without them meals on wheels would not have been delivered, health workers would not have made it to work and many roads and pavements would have remained covered with ice and snow. Some soldiers were placed on call and had to spend 12 hours a day in barracks.

The government has stated that these on call soldiers, who missed days at home over the Christmas period, should not get paid as the army does not receive overtime.

Pdforra, the soldier's union, has said that there is immense anger amongst soldiers who were away from family over the festive period.

The union is demanding a discretionary payment for the troops.

It is absolutely outrageous that the government would use soldiers as slave labour and then penalise those who, through no fault of their own, were left sitting on call in barracks.

For one soldier's family and friends the Christmas period ended in tragedy.

A 50 year old soldier in government buildings shot himself with his pistol.

His body was found by colleagues. With public sector pay cuts and chunks taken by this government from army pensions this terrible event may not be the last.

Many soldiers, out of uniform, joined the massive union marches against the cuts.

Soldiers need the support of the rest of the workers movement.

## International Socialism

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# Attack on the Minimum Wage

By LEAH SPEIGHT

IT LOOKED certain from early in 2010 that the minimum wage of €8.65 was to be reduced. Initially debated on RTE's The Frontline in early February, after many months of media debate, it was cut by one euro by the Fianna Fail/Green Party government in last month's budget.

The government has claimed that the decision to reduce the minimum wage will affect only 4 percent of the working population. They have failed to reveal, however, that the attack on the minimum wage will affect many working sectors, and all those employed in them.

Retail, hotel and grocery are just some of the sectors benchmarked from the minimum wage. In reality the 12 percent cut will be reflected in all the pay scales of these sectors, not just the 4 percent on €8.65.

Exploitation already exists; most of these jobs have reduced their staff and increased the work load of employees. Many may be forced out of their jobs,

to allow for staff on new cheaper rates of pay.

Retail is one example. In 2006 the Registered Employment Agreements for retail (drapery, footwear and allied trades) were updated. When one takes into consideration that this was the height of the boom, the rates to be paid to retail workers was shocking.

For the first two years the rate of pay was €7.65. By year three it increased to €7.69.

Adding three years on from 2006 brings you up to 2009 when the minimum wage was €8.65. Despite the huge profits by retailers, the expected rate of pay for the workers was less than any other sector. Either way employees in retail were still on minimum wage after three years.

It would take five years service before they earned €9.81 an hour. Profits at no stage were reflected in the pay slips of workers.

Despite claims of losses, many big retailers have opened new stores recently, including River Island, H&M and New Look to name but a few.



# Mass Defection from SIPTU

By KIERAN ALLEN

UPTO 2,000 fire-fighters and ambulance staff are expected to defect from SIPTU and IMPACT and join the Psychiatric Nurses Association (PNA).

The move reflects the growing mood of discontent at the grassroots of the unions.

This same mood was also in evidence during the mass booping of

SIPTU's Jack O Connor at last November's Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) rally.

1,300 workers have already left the old unions and many more are expected to follow.

One immediate result will be the transformation of the PNA, a union that has remained outside the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and was not so trapped in partnership structures. Its

annual conference in 2011 is expected to change its name to reflect the fact that its membership is now composed of three divisions of emergency front line staff.

John Kidd, the former SIPTU convenor of the Dulin fire-fighters, spoke to Socialist Worker about the reasons behind the move.

'Employers across Europe are pushing for

the privatisation of the fire-service and we had little confidence that SIPTU would resist.

Reports even reached us that a prominent SIPTU official had not ruled out privatisation when he was speaking at an international conference.

'We were also pretty angry about the way that SIPTU promoted the run-down of the fire service under a 'transformation

agenda' linked to the Croke Park deal.

'There was a recent meeting in the Dublin union branch where Jack O Connor and Patricia King of SIPTU HQ addressed about four hundred fire-fighters.

But they could not or would not answer simple questions about the re-deployment of staff from control rooms.

'In my books when you reduce or re-deploy staff, there is more work left for other workers to do. And these are worker who have already taken pay cuts!

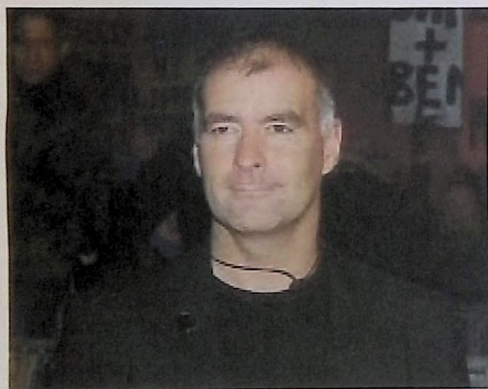
'The last straw for me was the revelation that SIPTU had received money from a HSE slush fund. How can you have people representing you who are getting money from management?

It is a disgrace that an employee of SIPTU and someone who is sometimes known as the fourth national officer have not been compelled to give a full explanation of what happened. Have the members of SIPTU even seen a union report on the whole affair yet?

'If the unions continue to implement the Croke Park agreement, I think there will be many more members following us out the door.

'The only way forward is for Jack O Connor and Joe Flynn, the two officers who are most responsible for the recent direction of the union, to step aside and face a new election from the whole membership'

# Socialist found guilty



By JIMMY SMYTH

FORMER SCOTTISH socialist MSP, Tommy Sheridan was found guilty of perjury in December. The court case followed a £2 million investigation by Scottish police into the outcome of a libel case Sheridan had won in 2006 against the Murdoch owned News of the World. The editor at that time was Andy Coulson, who is now David Cameron's press secretary.

Sheridan's only crime was to be a consistent fighter for working class people and to win a libel case against the Murdoch press. He was one of the leaders of the Poll Tax rebellion and was imprisoned for his activities. He has also been imprisoned for protests against the use of Faslane naval base by nuclear submarines.

When the Scottish Socialist Party was formed Sheridan won their first seat in the devolved parliament in 1999. He was joined at the next election by another five SSP MSPs. In 2001 Sheridan helped bring an end to the hated Warrant Sales

which under Scottish law allowed bailiffs enter the homes of the poor and value goods for later public sale, to satisfy an unpaid debt. This was a favoured tactic during the Poll Tax campaign.

The only ones celebrating Sheridan's conviction will be our rulers and their press allies. The current editor of the News of the World even had the temerity to claim the verdict was a vindication of investigative journalism and that it upholds the paper's tradition of holding the powerful to account. Sheridan is to be sentenced later this month.

# Mary Harney's Corporate Cronies

GINO KENNY, the People Before Profit Alliance Councillor for Clondalkin, has challenged Mary Harney's pattern of appointments to state boards, claiming that she displays a deliberate class bias against working people.

'Mary Harney is responsible for the largest number of appointments to state boards but she has systematically used her position to promote corporate cronies.

'Of the total of 291 new appointments due to be made before February 2011, Mary Harney will appoint 96. This is three times higher than any other Minister.

'But Mary Harney has consistently displayed a class bias in who she has appointed to these boards. Her appointees are often drawn from a narrow golden circle.

The Health Services Executive provides a good example of Harney's bias against working class people.

Harney's two latest appointments to the HSE board are:

- Frank Dolphin, a director of a Rigney Dolphin, company that out-sources business process from both the public and private sectors.
- Nuala Hunt, a chartered accountant and tax consultant.

'These two figures from the



corporate world will deepen the overwhelming class bias of the HSE. Even before these appointments, the HSE was dominated by figures drawn from the corporate elite.

There are no trade unionists or representatives of community organisations on the HSE board.

'Despite the fact that Mary Harney claims to represent the working people

of Clondalkin in the Dail, she clearly thinks that people who are drawn from our social class could not help in running a health service.

'In Mary Harney's outlook, an accountant who serves the wealthy elite must know more about how to run a health service than representatives of patients who rely on the public health system.'

## 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.

## Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to  
SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Name.....

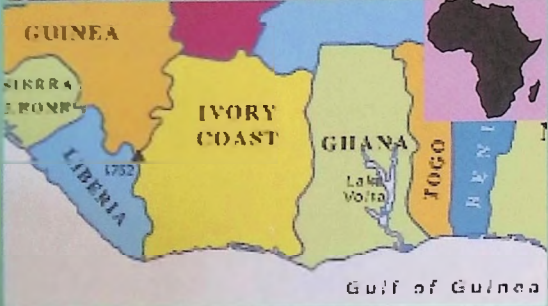
Address.....

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# Imperialism isn't the answer in the Ivory Coast



By KEN OLENDE

THE US and the European Union are stepping up the pressure to decide who will govern in West Africa's Ivory Coast. Most observers declared that Alassane Ouattara beat sitting president Laurent Gbagbo in the election on 28 November 2010.

Gbagbo, who refuses to accept defeat, claims the intervention is an imperialist ploy.

He was a trade union organiser who came to power in 2000 after mass protests against military rule following a fixed election. But once he became president he implemented harsh pro-market policies.

A civil war began in 2002, dividing the country between the largely Muslim north and the mostly Christian south. Some 9,000 United Nations (UN) troops from African countries have staffed a buffer zone since 2004. The 'common sense' view is that only external intervention can restore democracy.

Gbagbo keeps some popularity through opposition to the West. His claims that the country's problems flow from France, the former imperial power, make a lot of sense to many Ivorians.

## Support

Mani Tanoh, a socialist from neighbouring Ghana, told *Socialist Worker*, "Almost all the left in Africa supports Gbagbo, seeing him as anti-imperialist. The French left, which has many links to Ivorian socialists, tends to support Ouattara in the name of democracy. But socialists shouldn't support either. Both attacked independent voices in the media and the unions, even before they started fighting each other. Both were involved in vote rigging and encouraged ethnic bigotry."

The French maintained their empire through divide and rule. Catholics in the south were encouraged to think of themselves as more authentically "Ivorian". This

ignored the fact that a small majority of the country's population is Muslim. Ouattara, who is a Muslim, has become the West's favoured choice.

In the 1980s he was deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), then head of the West African Central Bank. Pro-Western president Houphouët-Boigny, who ruled for 33 years, made him prime minister of Ivory Coast. Now he has looked to popular support, calling a general strike against the government.

## General Strike

Mani said, "The response of Ouattara's call for a general strike has been very mixed, with a lot more success in his strongholds in the north. But a solid transport strike has stopped buses across the country. The stronger the working class basis of the movement the more it cuts across ethnicity and religion. The call was a tactic by one element of the ruling class, but it gives the possibility of mass participation."

The violence on the streets is real. A special session of the UN human rights council in Geneva reported 173 killings and 90 cases of torture or ill treatment. However foreign intervention will not resolve the situation.

France's record of intervention in post-colonial Africa is appalling—its low point being the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Its almost 3,000 troops defended a "safe zone" that the government that carried out the killings used as a corridor to get its troops out the country. Military intervention from Western or African forces will not stop violence across Africa.

The solution is for ordinary people to fight for real change from below. Mani said, "It's not abstract to talk about an uprising from below. It is only ten years since we saw Ivorian workers on the streets bringing Gbagbo to power after the military tried to fix an election."

# The High Life Property Deal



## It's one law for the

THE LIFESTYLES these supposedly 'debt-stricken' developers are able to maintain is shocking.

Gerry Gannon, of Gannon Homes, who owes €1 billion to the banks, still lives in a gated mansion with his wife, where they enjoy the views of the Howth peninsula.

Most people struggle to get through the cost of Christmas. Not Gerry Gannon.

Footage showed him laden down with shopping bags from exclusive department store, Brown Thomas.

Gerry transferred 29 properties to his wife's name.

Margaret Gannon now owns 74 hectares in Loughlynn Co Roscommon, a house on St Fintans road in Howth, 52 acres of land on Carrickbrack road in Howth, apartments and houses in Portmarnock, Malahide, Cabinteely, Templeogue, Artane and Clontarf.

He also gave her the deeds of a Victorian house in plush Dublin 4.

NAMA is about to sign off on



GERRY GANNON

a future business plan prepared by Gerry.

The chief executive of NAMA, Brendan McDonagh, claims they will pursue developers for the full amounts.

With this in mind we look at some of the other top ten developers who between them owe €17 billion.

Unlike Gerry Gannon who had no comment, Cork man Michael O'Flynn is not media shy.

Michael, who also owes €1 billion, believes he hasn't done anything wrong.

O'Flynn Construction built Ireland's tallest building The

Elysian.

O'Flynn is also a well-known horse owner.

This year alone his success in racing saw him earn close to €100,000.

He was given huge loans by banks but provided no personal guarantees on these loans; therefore NAMA does not have access to any of his earnings.

O'Flynn was shown flying to a horse race in a €3.5 million Augusta corporate helicopter.



MICHAEL O'FLYNN

During the programme, Frank Daly, chair of NAMA wanted to know why some of these developers were swanning around in helicopters and Bentley cars.

So too do we, it's a lifestyle most of us could only dream of.

Another horse owner, who annually sponsors a race meeting at Fairyhouse, is Seamus Ross.

Chief of Menolly Homes, Seamus transferred to his wife Moira a €1 million Georgian property on Harrington St, and two commercial properties in Lucan and Lower Rathmines road.

As well as receiving land in Drumlish Co Longford, Moira, with her husband, legally took a loan out in UK Barclays Bank to the value of €5.1 million.

As this UK loan is out of the reach of NAMA, the Ross couple bought a 5,700 sq ft luxury villa in Nueva Andalucia in Spain.

We shouldn't forget to mention the developers who fled Ireland.

They didn't emigrate like the thousands with no money who

can't get w

Tycoon owes €600 Switzerland

As Quinn assets to re the capital would have

The most Dunne and now reside

They pay while waiting renovations a new home \$2 million.

Formerly of Ballsbridge ownership Greenwich

Gayle has questions got the cap property.

She said residence a legitimate interest.

However Act 2009 t ered under



BRIAN COWEN with developer friends Johnny Rohan and Richard Barrett

## ...Another

IN THE public interest we should balance our look at the 'one law for the rich' with a look at the 'law for the poor'.

'The less you owe the more they chase you', is a fair comment.

Especially when you look at stories of ordinary people jailed for small fines.

In Ashbourne Co Meath a jobless dad was sent to jail over a litter fine.

On Joe Duffy's 'Liveline' radio show Christy Rooney explained that his 12-year-old son had stuffed a plastic bag into a pile of cardboard.

It was clear on CCTV that this was unknown to Mr Rooney.

He pleaded with Meath council that it was an innocent action by his son, and that he was unable to pay the fine on his low income.

Mr Rooney said they would not listen and brought him to court.

In Navan court he was fined €300 and given 2 months to pay €1,062 in costs.

When the two months expired, he was taken to Wheatfield prison.

Relatives of Mr Rooney came up with

# High Life of NAMA Property Developers



BY LEAH SPEIGHT

RTE'S PRIME TIME programme: 'Carry on regardless', an investigation of corruption among building developers, showed the truth of this old saying like never before.

For fear of libel, RTE stressed they were not suggesting developers had done anything fraudulent or criminal.

Close to one million people watched the programme and the facts spoke for themselves.

Toxic loan agency NAMA, Brian Lenihan claimed, is 'not a bailout'.

According to him, when NAMA bought a developer's loan from a bank, NAMA would rigorously pursue that developer's assets to repay the loan in the interest of the taxpayer.

The establishment of CAB (criminal assets bureau) meant criminals could no longer flaunt their wealth unhindered.

## Legislation

One could have expected similar legislation to remove assets from developers unable to repay their bank loans.

However, any assets, like cash or houses, that these developers transferred to their spouses prior to 2009, appeared to be out of the reach of NAMA.

NAMA seemed to expect developers to voluntarily hand over their assets in good faith.

## Defraud

But there is a legal principle used in Irish law: "Assets that are disposed of in a bid to defraud, or prejudice the rights of a creditor are voidable".

Variations of this principle are used in family, divorce, land and bankruptcy cases.

To date NAMA hasn't initiated a single court case against developers transferring assets to their spouses.

Most of the asset transfers shown on Prime Time, occurred in the nine month period just before the establishment of NAMA.

## One law for the rich...

Elysian.

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We shouldn't forget to mention the developers who fled Ireland.

They didn't emigrate like the thousands with no money who

can't get work.

Tycoon Derek Quinlan who owes €600 million now lives in Switzerland.

As Quinlan tries to sell some assets to repay debt, he avoids the capital gains tax of 25% he would have to pay in Ireland.

The most brazen of all is Sean Dunne and his wife Gayle Killilea, now residents of the US.

They pay \$17,500 rent a month, while waiting for \$1.5 million of renovations to be completed on a new home Gayle bought for \$2 million.

Formerly known as 'the Baron of Ballsbridge', Sean denies any ownership of this new home in Greenwich, Connecticut.

Gayle has refused to answer questions about where she got the cash for such a lavish property.

She said that her place of residence and finances are not legitimate matters of public interest.

However, in the Defamation Act 2009 the following is covered under a defense of public



BERTIE AHERN with his friends Sean Dunne and wife Gayle

interest: "the management of publicly funded companies or institutions".

NAMA is a publicly funded institution; funded by Irish taxpayers.

In this way, Gayle's husband, along with other developers, Joe O'Reilly, Johnny Ronan, Richard Barrett, Bernard McNamara, are all of public interest under NAMA.



GERRY GANNON

business plan prepared

Executive of NAMA, Michael Donagh, claims they are developers for the time.

In my mind we look at the other top ten developers between them owe

Gerry Gannon who had not, Cork man Michael Donagh, not media shy.

Who also owes €1 million he hasn't done wrong.

Construction built all the building The



MICHAEL O'FLYNN



Johnny Ronan and Richard Barrett

## ...Another law for the poor

IN THE public interest we should balance our look at the 'one law for the rich' with a look at the 'law for the poor'.

'The less you owe the more they chase you', is a fair comment.

Especially when you look at stories of ordinary people jailed for small fines.

In Ashbourne Co Meath a jobless dad was sent to jail over a litter fine.

On Joe Duffy's 'Liveline' radio show Christy Rooney explained that his 12-year-old son had stuffed a plastic bag into a pile of cardboard.

It was clear on CCTV that this was unknown to Mr Rooney.

He pleaded with Meath council that it was an innocent action by his son, and that he was unable to pay the fine on his low income.

Mr Rooney said they would not listen and brought him to court.

In Navan court he was fined €300 and given 2 months to pay €1,062 in costs.

When the two months expired, he was taken to Wheatfield prison.

Relatives of Mr Rooney came up with

the money to get him released.

Christy Rooney was treated unfairly, and both the courts and Meath Council knew he hadn't the means to pay.

The figures of people jailed for non-payment of fines has doubled from 2008 to 2009.

In 2008 the figure was 2,250 people jailed; by 2009 it jumped to 4,806.

A TV licence is €160; it costs €2000 a week to put someone in jail.

Derek Quinlan, who fled to Switzerland, has been employed by the state to collect overdue fines imposed by the courts.

The tycoon whose debts are part of NAMA is now director of Tazbell, the company that received the contract from the Dept of Justice.

One shocking revelation in RTE's programme is that developers being bailed out by the taxpayer through NAMA are also receiving rent payments from the state.

It is like as if you took over your landlord's mortgage but still kept paying him the rent as well.



DEREK QUINLAN (centre) with Brian Cowen at the Deloitte Companies Awards

Treasury Holdings, bailed out by NAMA, is behind the national convention centre and receives payments of €2.5 million a month in rent from the state.

Johnny Ronan and Richard Barrett of Treasury Holdings also own the building NAMA pays rent to.

The total this pair receive in rent paid to them by the Irish state is €50 million a year!

While more people join the unemployment register €5 million a year in rent is

paid to developers for the use of their social welfare offices.

Bernard McNamara's wife will get €100 million off the state during the lifetime of the lease, for the social welfare office in Bishops Square.

We're paying for the mess they got us into.

How much more can we pay now to fund their lifestyles?

How much longer can we put up with the injustice of 'one law for the rich'?

# Life of NAMA Developers



## For the rich...

programme, Frank NAMA wanted to some of these devel- wanning around in and Bentley cars. we, it's a lifestyle could only dream

orse owner, who an- rs a race meeting at s Seamus Ross. Menolly Homes, fferred to his wife lion Georgian prop- ngton St, and two properties in Lucan athmines road. receiving land in Longford, Moira, band, legally took JK Barclays Bank to €5.1 million. loan is out of the A, the Ross couple 00 sq ft luxury villa talucia in Spain. n't forget to men- elopers who fled

emigrate like the th no money who

can't get work. Tycoon Derek Quinlan who owes €600 million now lives in Switzerland. As Quinlan tries to sell some assets to repay debt, he avoids the capital gains tax of 25% he would have to pay in Ireland. The most brazen of all is Sean Dunne and his wife Gayle Killilea, now residents of the US. They pay \$17,500 rent a month, while waiting for \$1.5 million of renovations to be completed on a new home Gayle bought for \$2 million. Formerly known as 'the Baron of Ballsbridge', Sean denies any ownership of this new home in Greenwich, Connecticut. Gayle has refused to answer questions about where she got the cash for such a lavish property. She said that her place of residence and finances are not legitimate matters of public interest. However, in the Defamation Act 2009 the following is covered under a defense of public



BERTIE AHERN with his friends Sean Dunne and wife Gayle

interest: "the management of publicly funded companies or institutions". NAMA is a publicly funded institution; funded by Irish taxpayers. In this way, Gayle's husband, along with other developers, Joe O Reilly, Johnny Ronan, Richard Barrett, Bernard McNamara, are all of public interest under NAMA.

BY LEAH SPEIGHT

RTE'S PRIME TIME programme: 'Carry on regardless', an investigation of corruption among building developers, showed the truth of this old saying like never before. For fear of libel, RTE stressed they were not suggesting developers had done anything fraudulent or criminal. Close to one million people watched the programme and the facts spoke for themselves. Toxic loan agency NAMA, Brian Lenihan claimed, is 'not a bailout'.

According to him, when NAMA bought a developer's loan from a bank, NAMA would rigorously pursue that developer's assets to repay the loan in the interest of the taxpayer. The establishment of CAB (criminal assets bureau) meant criminals could no longer flaunt their wealth unhindered.

### Legislation

One could have expected similar legislation to remove assets from developers unable to repay their bank loans. However, any assets, like cash or houses, that these developers transferred to their spouses prior to 2009, appeared to be out of the reach of NAMA.

NAMA seemed to expect developers to voluntarily hand over their assets in good faith.

### Defraud

But there is a legal principle used in Irish law: "Assets that are disposed of in a bid to defraud, or prejudice the rights of a creditor are voidable". Variations of this principle are used in family, divorce, land and bankruptcy cases. To date NAMA hasn't initiated a single court case against developers transferring assets to their spouses. Most of the asset transfers shown on Prime Time, occurred in the nine month period just before the establishment of NAMA.

# The politics of Wikileaks



By JIMMY SMYTH

IN THE week before Christmas, Julian Assange, the founder of Wikileaks, was eventually released on bail from a British prison. In what is clearly an attempted smear campaign, Assange had been arrested pending deportation to Sweden. His bail has been posted by supporters including film and documentary makers Ken Loach and John Pilger. Assange's real crime is daring to shine a light on the inner workings of governments, states and big business across the globe.

### Hunted

The activities of Wikileaks has prompted Sarah Palin and other right-wingers in the US to call for Assange to be 'hunted down' and charged with 'terrorism'. Wikileaks came to prominence during 2010 by publishing classified US military material mainly concerning the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Early last year Wikileaks published the film Collateral Murder, showing an unprovoked US military attack in Iraq, where two Reuters reporters were killed and two young children (whose father had stopped to help the casualties) were injured. The accompanying dialogue is chilling with one soldier saying: "that's what happens when you bring children to a battle".

This was followed in July by a huge co-ordinated leaking of US military documents with the New York Times and Guardian newspapers and Der Spiegel news magazine.

Wikileaks has a history of leaking secret information that our rulers would prefer not to see the light of day.

In 2007 they published information showing the bribery and corruption perpetrated by former Kenyan president Arap Moi.

A year later Wikileaks exposed the corruption and cronyism central to the collapse of the Icelandic bank, Kaputhing.

In 2009 they published documents showing how oil company Trafigura had dumped toxic waste in the Ivory Coast which poisoned over 30,000 people.

Although the method of delivery is new, Wikileaks is essentially a whistle-blowing operation that relies on individuals to supply the information.

Whistle-blowing is a risky business with the whistleblower usually being persecuted for their actions.

So Wikileaks is mainly based in Sweden, a country with among

the most liberal freedom-of-speech laws.

It was also why Assange sought asylum there during the summer of 2010.

Ireland on the other hand has no general whistleblowing protection law.

Assange and Wikileaks see their activities as the first step in a war against the powerful and their weapon is the 'leak'.

They argue that by holding the powerful to account in this manner, they will think twice about their future actions.

Commentators are divided on the likely impact of Wikileaks - some see the state re-trenching and becoming more secretive.

Whereas, others believe governments will find ways of accommodating to the actions of Wikileaks.

And here lies the weakness in the Wikileaks' strategy - simple disclosure of information is not enough to change the world.

For example, the whistleblowing that accompanied the collapse of Enron and WorldCom in 2001 did not stop the banking collapses since 2008.

Assange had previously hoped that the public would collaboratively analyse and write-up the leaked data in a process similar to Wikipedia.

However, in 2007 he came to the conclusion that this was not possible and instead special resources and expertise would be needed.

Hence, the links with the newspapers.

### Smear

The work of Wikileaks is important and Julian Assange should be supported in his fight against the smear campaign.

But despite the bluster among the mainstream media, Wikileaks is not going to change the world.

For this we need to build a workers and students movement that challenges the bosses and their state, as was done in Russia in 1917.

The Bolsheviks published details of the negotiations involved in ending Russia's part in the First World War.

As Russian revolutionary leader Trotsky explained:

"Secret diplomacy is a necessary tool for a propertied minority which is compelled to deceive the majority in order to subject it to its interests."

"Imperialism, with its dark plans of conquest and its robber alliances and deals, developed the system of secret diplomacy to the highest level..."

"The workers' and peasants' government abolishes secret diplomacy and its intrigues, codes, and lies."

"We have nothing to hide."

# Another law for the poor

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# The politics of culture

By JOHN MOLYNEUX

EVERYWHERE IN contemporary society there is a division between what is known as 'high culture' and 'popular culture'.

High culture refers to things like opera, ballet, classical music, Shakespeare, Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Renaissance and modernist art, and Ancient Greek drama; popular culture to pop music, soap operas, TV game shows, romantic fiction, whodunits and Hollywood movies.

As can be seen by these examples the division is international and cuts across different media, art forms and genres.

Television features both high and popular culture (if not in equal proportions); films divide into the art house movies of Bergman or Fellini and the blockbusters of Stephen Spielberg.

Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and *The Sound of Music* are both dramas with songs, but we think of the former as an opera and the latter as a musical.

The division is not hard and fast; there are no border guards or checkpoints and intermediate cases and crossovers abound.

Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* began somewhere on the fringes of high culture, but migrated into popular culture, especially with the production of the films.

Where does jazz fit in, and which jazz? Are we talking about the 'jazz' of Bing Crosby or Louis Armstrong or Miles Davis? Nevertheless the division is real.

## Class Divisions

It can be thought of in various ways: as a question of the taste of minorities versus the taste of the majority (though you can definitely have minority or niche popular culture like grunge music or heavy metal); or as a matter of quality – high culture being seen as better than, superior to, popular culture (or requiring more education or more focused attention to be appreciated).

However, at bottom it reflects and is produced by the class divisions in society, essentially the division between the capitalist class or bourgeoisie and the working class or proletariat.

It is the profound differences between the life conditions, experiences and resources of the different classes that lie at the root of the split in the culture.

Crude material factors – wealth, income, housing conditions, conditions at work etc. – play a big role here impacting directly on such things as numbers of books in the home and amount of leisure time, but they are by no means the whole story.

Upper class people are trained from childhood in their families and their schools to be confident and step forward as leaders. Working class people are conditioned from birth to follow orders and lack confidence.

It makes a huge difference as to how you feel when you step into a museum, art gallery or theatre or what they want when they open a book or turn on the TV.

Of course it is important



THE X-FACTOR - the mass culture of late Capitalism?

not to be mechanical about this. There is no rule stopping a working class person reading *Ulysses*, listening to Bach or visiting the National Gallery, and many individual working class people do just that.

Similarly there are many in the upper classes (the British Queen among them) who are cultural philistines and who prefer Coronation Street to Shakespeare any day.

Then there is the complicating factor that between the capitalist class and the working class lie a series of hierarchically structured intermediate layers, commonly referred to as the middle classes, who range culturally from intellectual 'art lover' types to avid devotees of popular culture, while there are certainly cultural productions tailored specifically for the genteel middle classes – Gilbert and Sullivan light opera, age sagas and Inspector Morse on TV etc.

Overall though it is the basic class division in our society that conditions people's taste – for what it is worth the radical French sociologist,

Pierre Bourdieu has proved this statistically – and the division in the arts and entertainment is part of a larger division which runs through the culture in its widest sense, including sport (polo, show jumping, rugby versus football, snooker and boxing), food (fine dining versus fast food), clothing (haute couture versus the high street), language (different class accents) and so on.

## A Socialist View

What attitude should socialists take to this class cultural divide? Several responses are possible. One would be simply to denounce high culture as irredeemably bourgeois and uncritically support popular culture as the culture of the working class.

There are major problems with this: a) popular culture may be consumed by the working class, but it is overwhelmingly controlled and produced by the bourgeoisie and is mostly of very low quality – the bourgeoisie has no interest in raising the cultural or intellectual level of the working class; b) it can very easily fall into or merge with right-wing anti-intellectual populism as typified by The Sun.

Another response is the relativist view, widespread in university Media and Cultural Studies departments, that it is wrong (and reactionary) to make judgements of cultural or artistic quality, and all that counts is ideological analysis.

This misses the fact that under capitalism working class people are not only economically exploited but also culturally (educationally, intellectually, emotionally etc) oppressed and they, and socialists, benefit from exposure to high quality art, even if it is bourgeois, because it expands their understanding of the world.

A more radical view rejects the dominant high culture as reactionary and counterposes to it, not mass popular culture

but either 'authentic' working class 'folk' culture or 'authentic' avant-garde revolutionary culture, which takes a politically correct line – in other words not Shakespeare, Rembrandt or Tolstoy but either The Blackleg Miner or The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists or The Clash. In my view this is a preferable

position to the previous two but suffers from narrowness. It leaves the working class cut off from many of the greatest cultural achievements of mankind.

For, as Leon Trotsky pointed out during the Russian Revolution, the working class as an exploited and oppressed

class lacks the opportunity under capitalism (or immediately after its overthrow) to develop an all-round autonomous working class culture.

## Classless Culture

The classical Marxist position, defended by Lenin and Trotsky, was that the best of bourgeois, and all past, culture should not be rejected by the working class but, as far as possible under capitalism, be assimilated by it, and taken over and preserved under socialism. As Trotsky put it in *Class and Art* Shakespeare will still speak to us when, 'Capital will have become merely an historical document, together with the program of our party. But at present we do not yet intend to put Shakespeare, Byron, Pushkin in the archives, and we will continue to recommend them to the workers!'

The healing of the split in culture, the achievement of a diverse but unified classless culture, would however be possible only in a classless socialist society.

To this standpoint which I share I would make two additions. Changed conditions in the last century have made it possible for some elements in popular culture, coming up from below, to achieve the quality, intensity and complexity associated with the best of high culture.

This happens mainly in music, the art form closest to the people, but sometimes in other forms as well. My personal nominations would include Billie Holiday, John Coltrane, Shane McGowan, Charlie Chaplin and Tracey Emin.

Also every major people's movement develops, as it were, its cultural wing and accompaniment.

The Irish national struggle is an obvious example with WB Yeats, Jack Yeats, J.M. Synge, O'Casey etc. But think also of the black movement in the US with Paul Robeson, Miles Davis, Archie Shepp, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Nina Simone and many others, or the Russian Revolution with Mayakovsky, Tatlin, Malevitch, Rodchenko, Eisenstein, Vertov and so on. This has a necessary and positive role to play in helping to bring social change and needs to be encouraged by socialists, not to replace or displace with traditional art or 'high culture' but in addition to it.



MOZART - the high point of culture?

THE FUTURE  
SOCIALIST  
SOCIETY

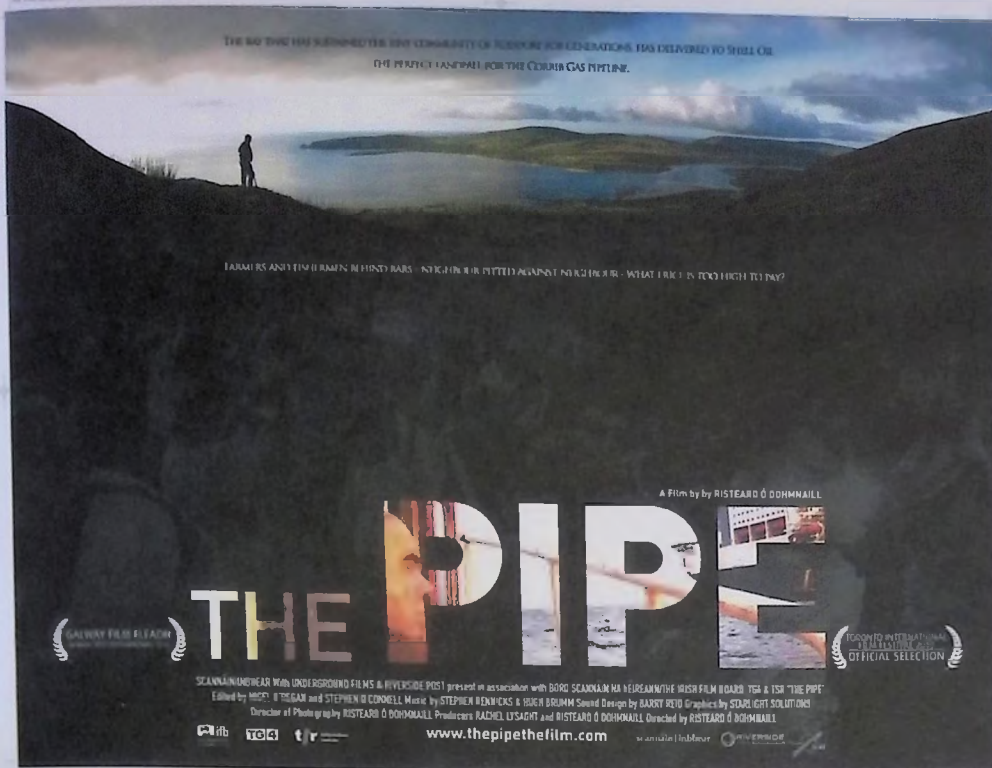


John Molyneux

Future Socialist Society

by John Molyneux, €2

Available from Bookmarks  
www.bookmarks.uk.com



# Power to the people

By JOHN LYONS

RISTEARD O'DOHNNAILL'S compelling and beautifully shot film, *The Pipe*, documents a community struggling against the forces of the state and the power of one of the world's largest multinational companies.

The film follows several members of the small community of Rossport, County Mayo over the course of a year, 2008, as they deal with the fallout of the discovery of gas off the north-west coast of Ireland.

The Corrib gas field, discovered in 1996, is valued at over €10 billion and is owned by a consortium of companies led by Royal Dutch Shell.

The *Pipe*, however, does not delve into the background of how it came to pass that the Irish state gave away a hugely profitable proportion of its natural resources to a giant multinational nor does it have anything to say anything about the behaviour of large multinationals (including Shell) toward local communities around the world.

Instead, what the viewer gets from O'Dohmnaill's approach is a very moving account of a local community in Mayo struggling to maintain their livelihoods, their land and their lives in the face of overwhelming odds.

Betrayed by their own government, which clearly prioritises the



interests of capital over its own citizens, and bullied and intimidated by Shell, the residents nonetheless resist - their overriding concern is one of safety:

Shell want to bring the gas ashore and to pump the unrefined gas 9km inland through an inhabited area to a refinery where it would be cleaned and depressurized for sale and export.

This, according several of the residents featured in the film, presents a clear danger to all who live within miles of the proposed route of the gas pipe and they are not prepared to accept it.

As the film ends, the residents

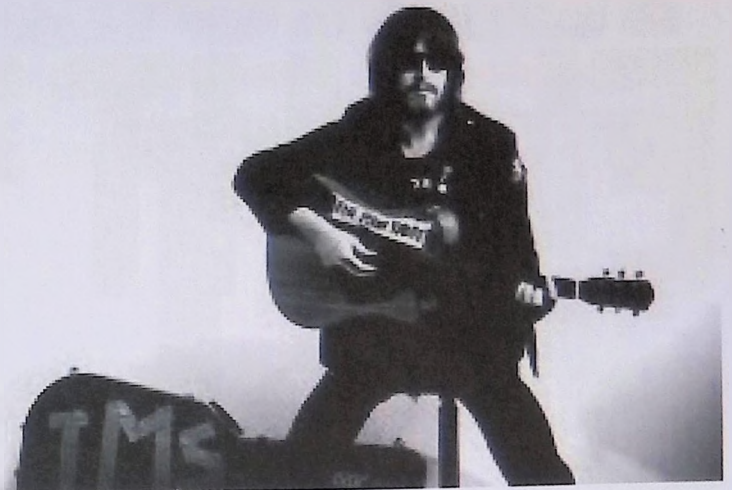
concerns are confirmed as An Bord Pleanála finds against Shell's plans for the onshore pipe, refusing to grant planning permission on grounds of safety.

As Shell's lawyers plan their next move and the protest against the Corrib gas project enters its tenth year, the viewer is left at the end of the film with the feeling that no matter what, the residents of Rossport featured in the film, abandoned by their government and faced with the might of a large multinational, will keep on fighting. An inspiring film, highly recommended.

For more information check out <http://www.thepipethefilm.com>

## INTERVIEW

# The Mighty Stef



by JAMES O'TOOLE

THE MIGHTY STEF track 'We Want Blood' is an anthem for the protest movement. We spoke to The Mighty Stef about the track, his new album and growing up in the working class.

**SWP:** First of all thanks for doing this interview for *Socialist Worker*. In the video of your track 'we want blood' you used a lot of footage of the recent protests. What can you tell us about the song and the background to the writing?

**TMS:** Basically this is a song that I started a year ago when I first started hearing the depressing reports about how financially screwed our country is and how the people responsible for the mess were precisely the people that were not going to be held accountable. As usual it is normal working class people, and normal working class people only, that get the pleasure of taking the brunt of the hardship. The song is built around one key line 'is my daddy gonna have to work till the day that he dies, just like he said that he would?' The thoughts of my parents having to struggle for their whole entire lives as a result of the irresponsible actions of these tyrants is the single most sickening thing for me. I'm not a hugely political person, I'm not a hugely materialistic person either. I don't need much out of life.

But seeing people close to me struggling is the source of great upset. Getting footage for the video was like shooting fish in a barrel, it was compiled by a good friend of mine called Lindsey Byrne.

**SWP:** There was an article in *NME* magazine recently saying that the student protests were the most rock n' roll thing about right now but that they needed a soundtrack and the mainstream music scene wasn't providing it. Do you think there's a place for rebellious music again?

**TMS:** I truly hope so. I feel like the music industry during the years of so-called economic prosperity here and in the UK especially has churned out some of the most meaningless nonsense since the very early days of popular song when the likes Max Bygraves was singing about his pink toothbrush. Rock n' Roll itself was revolutionary, and throughout the years there have been some great lyricists that tried to paint the picture of the plight of humans using their influence and their music as a tool. It would be nice to see a wave of artists emerge to the forefront with something to say, especially at a time when much needs to be said and much needs to be done. Whether or not I would fall into

this category is another question. I never set out to be contrary or rebellious...but when a person sings about how he or she feels or what they see...and if they are honest - it's hard not to be angry and contrary. If the stuff I sing about in any of my songs connects with anyone then I'm always happy.

**SWP:** Can you tell us a little bit about where you're from and does your background influence the type of music you write and the subjects you choose?

**TMS:** My family lived in Kevin Street when I was born and we moved out to Crumlin a few years later. I spent my childhood between the two places, so basically I'm from the southside of the city quite near town. I had a typical upbringing two hard working parents, two younger brothers. I discovered my true love of music when my dad played football for St. Francis FC and I would listen to him and his team mates have sing-songs on the bus coming back from away games down the country. I first heard Beatles and Bob Dylan and Dubliners songs then. I heard some pretty full-on Republican and Anti-Brit songs too as a young lad. My parents liked to have parties in the house too and they loved music and to sing...so basically I started trying to play guitar when I was 13 and took it from there. I'd say I wrote the first song I actually thought was good when I was in my mid-20s. My upbringing and my family certainly influence the way I write. I can't put my finer on how but it's certainly there.

**SWP:** Finally thanks a million for taking the time out to answer our questions. Do you have any message to the protesters, workers, students and activists who read our paper and check out our website?

**TMS:** I think those who are taking the step from sitting back and thinking about how bad our situation is to actually getting up of their arses and taking to the streets should be proud of themselves. Hopefully I will be telling my grandkids in many years of how we stood up to them and took our country back. One can only hope. But I think those who are out protesting are making an outstanding contribution to Irish society right now and they should not let anybody undermine that.

*The Mighty Stef - TMS & The Baptists is available from all good record stores and from [www.themightystef.com](http://www.themightystef.com)*

*The track 'We Want Blood' can be obtained for free from the 'Shop Now' section of the mighty stef facebook page*

## BOOK REVIEW

# The failure of PPPs

Reviewed by JIMMY SMYTH

STARTING IN New Zealand in the 1980s Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) have now taken on a global significance.

Global bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) encourage PPPs as a means of raising additional financing for infrastructure investment and diversifying business models. In Ireland between 2001-08, there have been nineteen signed PPP deals totalling €3.2 bn.

In fact Ireland has the fifth highest value of PPPs in Europe, including roads, schools and social housing.

Politicians justify PPPs on the basis that the public sector lacks the expertise and skills in delivering such big projects, that only the private sector can provide.

Or that private finance is needed as there was no public money available. Dexter Whitfield approaches PPPs from a different angle and in the process uncovers the processes working to

privatise public infrastructure.

The great strength of Whitfield's work is the detailed analysis of how a market has been created in delivering and maintaining public assets.

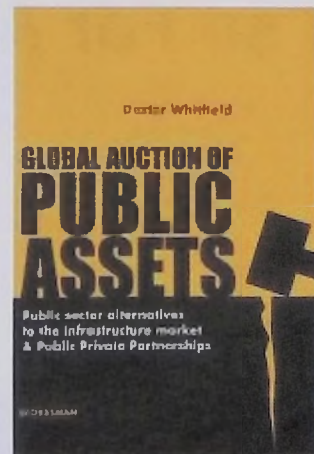
Similar processes that led to the banking collapse are also used in PPPs. Tax-breaks, financialisation and off-balance sheet vehicles abound.

Whitfield's argument is not just limited to questions of finance; he argues that public assets are essential for an equitable and sustainable society. And therefore are too important to be left to the vagaries of the market.

This point is aptly illustrated in the chapter that looks at failed PPP projects including five social housing projects in Dublin.

Significantly whereas this collapse was due to the developer pulling out; in other cases PPPs have been abandoned due to popular protests and in the case of water projects in Bolivia a huge uprising.

These examples show that PPPs are not inevitable and can be beaten.



Whitfield's book is an important contribution to our understanding of these processes.

*Global Auction of Public Assets: Public sector alternatives to the infrastructure market & Public Private Partnerships* by Dexter Whitfield (2010).



# Socialist Worker

## FIGHT THE TORY DUP/SF CUTS

By SEAN MCVEIGH

THE SCALE of public sector cuts facing workers in the North means it is imperative that trade unions and activists go into the New Year with a renewed determination to build a campaign capable of halting the attacks coming from Stormont and Westminster.

The failure of public bodies to cope with the harsh winter conditions over the Christmas period exposes the lie that the North has a "bloated" public sector. The truth is the public sector has been starved of cash for years and now the situation is set to become far worse.

The Westminster budget introduced in June and the Stormont budget in December means that public sector workers, people on benefits, students, the sick, the disabled and the poor are faced with an avalanche of attacks.

December's budget – which is bringing in cuts of £4 billion – was branded the "iceberg budget" by the Belfast Telegraph because, "Only the tip of the Stormont Executive's blueprint has so far been exposed – with most of the substance still below the surface."



STUDENTS START the fightback against the cuts

### Some Cuts Announced so Far Are:

A PAY freeze for the 12,000 civil servants under Stormont control who earn over £21,000. The cuts mean that 350 Civil Service posts are to go before the end of March.

This comes on top of 640 jobs that have already been cut from the Civil Service over the last nine months.

The Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (NIPSA) said the job losses were "just the tip of the iceberg", with much worse to come.

The Fire Brigades Union has said budget cuts of 25 per cent to the Fire Service could force two of Northern Ireland's fire

stations to close and the loss of 150 jobs. The Fire Service has said the cuts will mean it may have to "downgrade" emergency cover at six fire stations.

The health service has been already been hit by £700 million in "efficiency savings" over the last three years.

The Stormont budget agreed in December means the NHS in the North has been left with a cash shortfall of £150 million for 2011-2012.

Unison has said the cuts mean "Cutting local services; it means possibly closing local hospitals. It means that the needy, poor and the sick will suffer."

Libraries NI have published plans to close ten rural libraries. This comes on top of the 20 libraries which have already been closed over the last five years, including ten libraries in Belfast last year.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure is to lose over 9 per cent of its budget – £14.5 million – over the next four years. The museums service has said cuts of this level will hit jobs, opening hours and exhibitions.

The Arts Council will see its budget cut by £4.2m, equal to 30 per cent of its funding.

The Department of Education is to lose £67 million and

the Department of Regional Development is to have its budget cut by £63 million.

Plans to cut Disability Living Allowance (DLA) benefit will disproportionately affect Northern Ireland which has higher rates of disability and ill health due to poverty than other parts of the UK. The DLA changes will affect 180,000 people in the North.

Cuts to the Sure Start Maternity Grant, which will limit the payment of a £500 grant to first time mothers, will also disproportionately affect Northern Ireland which has a higher number of households with children than Britain.

### Fight Back

THE TRADES Union Congress (TUC) in Britain has called a national demonstration in London on Saturday 26 March to oppose the cuts.

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) in the North should call a mass protest in Belfast to coincide with the London demonstration and campaign in workplaces and communities for the biggest possible turnout.

The Assembly election campaign will be in full swing by then and the cuts should be made the issue of the election by trade unions, community groups and anti-cuts candidates.

Workers and students in the North have already shown they are up for a fight. A real campaign on the streets in the run-up to 26 March and through to the election in May offers a real chance to stop the Tory and Stormont cuts agenda.