

Socialist Worker

Protest against EU-IMF Deal on 16 July:

CANCEL THE DEBT!

LEO VARADKAR is a right-wing politician who occasionally lets the truth slip out.

Recently, he blurted that Ireland would need a second bail out from the IMF-EU.

The global speculators, who issue bonds to cover state debt, will not lend to Ireland.

Two year bonds for Irish debt now have an unsustainable interest rate of 12.5%: an even higher level than when Ireland first went to the IMF.

It is also set to get worse.

Greece is in crisis because its government wants to sell-off €50 billion in state assets to appease the IMF and the EU Commission.

But the Greek population has 'austerity fatigue' and resistance is mounting.

But EU leaders are pressing for even tougher measures and want the Greek Government to crack down on resistance.

Crisis

These events are likely to trigger a new round of crisis in the eurozone.

Once that occurs the speculators will try to squeeze even more out of Ireland.

Once a country falls into the vice grip of the IMF, they are often forced to go back to this agency repeatedly.

But each time they go back, the pressure to de-regulate their economies and cut wages and public spending gets stronger.

If people in Ireland are not to be reduced to poverty, then a radical change of direction is required.

€24 billion is still due to be paid to 'unguaranteed' bondholders but the political establishment is determined to pay up.

After that, most of the private debt will have become state debt.

This horrific situation means that, from 2014, €10 billion every year will have to be paid over to the financial blood suckers.

It means that we will have no money left for decent public services like healthcare or schools.

Some years ago, a major anti-debt movement began in developing countries whose slogan was: 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay - Cancel the Debt'.

We now need to bring that movement to Ireland.

Instead of talk of 're-structuring' or 're-profiling' debt, we should demand its cancellation.

Cancel

First, the European Central Bank - which is entirely beholden to financiers - decided at the start of this crisis that no European bank should fail.

Then they broke all EU rules on state aid to private industry and pushed money at the FF-Green government to help bail out banks.

The cost of those bail outs - when the figures for NAMA are included - make up a huge proportion of the national debt.



Fifth day of Protest at Parliament in Athens, modeled on Youth Protests in Spain

Second instead of a stimulus programme that would have put people back to work, the government embarked on ever more cuts: an 'Austerity programme' to pay for this bail-out.

15% of workers, 450,000 people, are now unemployed, pay no taxes and are dependent on social welfare.

We therefore face a choice: We can either sacrifice our society to pay an unsustainable debt to greed merchants who helped trigger the economic crash.

Or, we can tell them we are not paying because the quality of our lives are more important than their profits.

Countries like Britain borrowed massively to fund the First World War and only paid off this national debt in recent years.

We should do the same.

If bondholders want to wait a few decades in the hope of getting back some of their money that is their problem.

But once we do that, we will need to take strong measures to protect our society.

We will need to take our natural resources into public ownership.

We will need to impose capital controls to stop the rich moving money out of the country.

We will have to impose a global assets tax on the rich.

We will have to take any idle capital into public ownership in order to put people back to work.

This is certainly a radical programme - but it is the only one that will save our society from ruin.

EU-IMF in town..

- DEMAND JOBS, FAIRNESS & DEMOCRACY
- BAIL OUT PEOPLE NOT BANKERS
- SCRAP THE EU-IMF DEAL

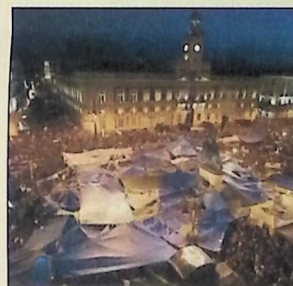
ENOUGH!

DEMONSTRATE Saturday July 16th

2pm Garden of Remembrance, Parnell Square, Dublin

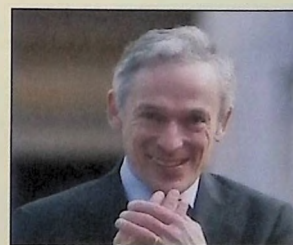
www.EnoughCampaign.org
Text JOIN to 0872886646

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Government attack on JLCs:

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Mladić war crimes trial

By PEADAR O'GRADY

MANY WATCHING the intense coverage of the trial of Serb General, Ratko Mladić, may wonder what the media circus surrounding it is about.

Mladić was one of Serbian Prime minister Milošević's top Generals during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia starting in 1991.

On the face of it Mladić is undoubtedly a vicious war criminal whose crimes are heinous: the murder of 8,000 civilians in Srebrenica, forced deportations ('ethnic cleansing') and the siege of Sarajevo.

However, Croatian General Ante Gotovina was convicted by the same court in just April this year of over 300 civilian murders and the forced deportation of 90,000 Serbs in the Krajina region of Croatia during the same war.

There was little if any coverage of that trial in the mainstream media.

Gotovina was convicted of a 'joint criminal venture' with the Croatian government and president Franjo Tudjman so there is no question he was acting alone.

The difference between these cases is of course that Croatia was an ally of the US and NATO during the war whereas Serbia was the enemy.

Mladić's trial should remind us just how little justice there is for the victims of any war.

It should not be allowed to justify the crimes of others, including the bombing of Serbia during that war.

There are still no prosecutions planned for the savagery of the flattening of Fallujah in Iraq nor indeed for the deaths of over 500,000 civilians in the Iraq War.

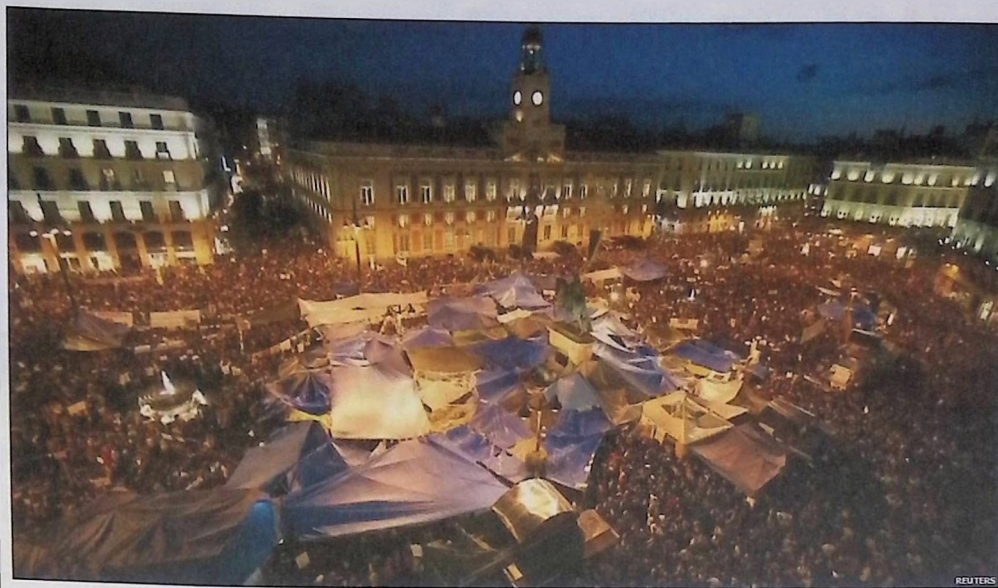
The US has refused to even join the International Criminal Court.

Bush and Blair should share a prison cell with fellow war criminal General Mladić.



George Bush: War Criminal at large in the United States

SPAIN'S REVOLUTION BEGINS



By MICHAEL WALLACE

"REAL DEMOCRACY Now!"

"No Job. No Future. No Fear!"

These slogans have inspired tens of thousands of people to gather across Spain to protest against unemployment, austerity and political corruption.

Students and workers, activists and the unemployed are protesting against politicians' bailing out of bankers, while imposing vicious pay and public service cutbacks on workers.

There are now nearly five million out of work in Spain.

Many of those taking part in the protests are the unemployed youth, with almost one in every two young people across the country without work.

And according to Amnesty

International, 9 million people live in poverty.

While cutting wages and welfare, the Spanish government has approved up to €99 billion in banker bailouts!

A bailout for Spain is impossible for the EU/IMF, as it is twice the size of the economies of Greece, Portugal and Ireland combined.

The '15 May' movement has struck a chord amongst an angry and frustrated population.

Attempts by the authorities to ban the protests were ignored by the people, but on 27 May, riot police, wielding batons and firing plastic bullets, injured nearly 100 protesters in Barcelona.

Despite this disgraceful brutality, the people retook the main square, with defiance and courage.

One Barcelona protestor, Miguel,

said: "Mass assemblies take place in the square. These deal with the practical points of what to do the next day or in the next week.

"We are building neighbourhood committees and trying to get assemblies in the workplaces.

"Just before the protests started there were articles in the media saying that people in Spain were resigned to their fate and would not fight. But people are inspired."

A popular revolution is spreading across the Arab world and now into Europe.

From Tahrir to Madrid, from Athens to Dublin, the struggle against this oppressive system has begun.

We all need to join the protests against the IMF when they visit on 16 July.

Labour sells out students as fees rise



By IAN MCDONNELL

BEFORE THE General election, on February 21st, the Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn signed a USI election pledge, on behalf of the Labour Party, promising not to re-introduce third level fees and

to protect student supports in schools.

Now in power, Labour has reneged on their promises by increasing the registration fee to €2,000.

Quinn refused to rule out the re-introduction of full tuition fees.

The increased charge will

push those from low income backgrounds further out of third level education. Labour/FG have also cut 10% from Special Needs Assistants in primary/secondary schools.

This attack on vulnerable and disabled children is inexcusable.

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation has expressed opposition to cutbacks.

Irish classes at primary level are among the most overcrowded in Europe.

Students in Ireland need to copy their Spanish comrades and get on the streets on July 16th to protest against the IMF.

Uprising continues in Yemen

By JAMES O'TOOLE

YEMEN IS a country ravaged by corruption and IMF 'Structural Adjustment Programmes'.

The US military trains the brutal Yemeni 'security forces' and funds the dictatorial regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Yet there is hope for the people of this poor state.

Mass anti-government demonstrations in Yemen have entered their fourth month and the Supreme Coordination Council of the Revolution—a coalition of

nearly 300 pro-democracy groups—announced their plans to escalate the protests further.

Day labourers in the capital, who earn about €7 a day in the construction industry, have been joining the protests.

There are around a million such workers in Yemen and they have played an integral part in the protest camps.

Dockers in the Red Sea city of Hodeida are reported to have refused to unload cargo ships.

Last week strikes halted all oil production at Nexen

Energy and Total, two major oil companies working in Yemen.

President Ali Saleh's attempt to crush democracy protests, with even the use of air strikes, has triggered an armed uprising led by the country's powerful tribes and defections from the military.

As *Socialist Worker* goes to print, fighting rages on the outskirts of the capital.

US and UK support for the governments of Yemen and Bahrain demonstrate the absolute hypocrisy of Obama and other western leaders.

Free Palestine: Rafah gate reopens

By AINE DILLON

ON 28 May, the new Egyptian government opened the Rafah crossing, allowing Palestinians to enter Egypt without a visa.

The decision by the Egyptian Generals, under pressure from the revolutionary movement there, has brought great rejoicing, hope and considerable material relief to the suffering but resilient people of Gaza.

International economic sanctions swiftly followed Hamas' election win in 2006, along with a stifling land and sea blockade by Israel.

Later this month, an Irish ship will join the *Freedom Flotilla 2: Stay Human*; a flotilla of over ten ships which will bring much needed medical and construction materials, along with moral support to Gaza.

Eamonn Gilmore has refused to request Israel not to attack the ships.

(Go to www.irishshiptogaza.org for details of how to donate.)

Taking on the Tories

By JIMMY SMYTH

30 JUNE is set to be a day of huge strikes across Britain.

It is expected that 600,000 workers will strike together.

Last week the 270,000 members of the PCS civil service union voted to join education unions in striking.

In stark contrast to the pathetic attitude of the Irish trade union leaders, Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary said:

"We face a challenge.

"Will we be the generation that fought back, proud to fight for every job, community, worker and condition?"

"Let's get to work to defeat this government's brutal agenda".

The co-ordinated strike day is drawing a number of issues together – cuts in services, job losses and attacks on pension rights.

There are individual union branches joining the action as well.

In Doncaster, 5,000 Unison members are being balloted. Jim Broad, local branch secretary, said they are working hard to get a positive result.

He added, "It's about the principle of defending every job and every service. That's what's resonating with people".

The draconian anti-union laws in Britain mean that organising co-ordinated action is

difficult and open to legal challenges.

The laws also prohibit solidarity action between groups of workers. However, in another positive step Unite, Britain's largest union, has signed an agreement with the PCS to support the strikes on 30th June.



500,000 march against the cuts, London, March 2011. (Pic: Guy Smallman)



How workers are exploited

By JOHN MOLYNEUX

EVERYONE SAYS they are against exploitation, but the way the media puts it exploitation is something exceptional.

It's just something a few 'bad' employers do to particularly vulnerable workers.

Socialists say exploitation is not the exception but the rule in our society.

It happens every day in every workplace across the world and it's built in to capitalism.

Quite simply workers are systematically paid less than the value of the goods and services they produce and the bosses pocket the difference.

Indeed it is only because of this that employers take on workers at all - despite all the talk about 'providing jobs' for people.

The moment they stop

hours of her labour to Boss Hogg she will be paid, on average, for what it cost in labour hours (expressed in money) to produce her labour.

That means her pay must cover her food, her clothes, her education and her general upkeep, so that she can turn up for work each week.

Exploitation and Profit

But, and this is the crucial point, labour is not actually a commodity just like any other, like a fridge or a car.

It comes attached to a human being and this makes it creative.

In reality human labour creates more value than it costs to produce it.

So if worker Anne is paid €400 to work (for 40 hours at €10 an hour), she will probably produce that €400 worth of goods and services

in say 3 days (or 24 hours work), i.e. by 5pm Wednesday.

But Boss Hogg doesn't then say to Anne you can go home now.

He says I've bought your labour for a whole week, so Anne ends up working the remaining 16 hours, effectively for free and

everything she makes in that time becomes profit for Boss Hogg.

Of course they don't sound a bell when the 24 hours are done and say to workers you're working for nothing now.

Class Struggle

This division, this exploitation, remains hidden but this is the dark secret on which capitalism is based.

This is the fundamental reason why capitalism produces such massive inequality and why society is divided into two main classes: capitalists and workers, exploiters and exploited.

But the rate of exploitation is not set in stone.

The bosses always try to increase it by cutting wages, lengthening hours or increasing productivity; to work harder, longer for less.

'More for less' is the slogan of all bosses.

But workers will always try to reduce the rate of exploitation, even if they don't fully understand it, by raising wages, cutting hours, etc.

There is a 'class struggle'. Socialists are involved in this.

We are that section of the working class that not only support the struggle to reduce exploitation, but also work to get rid of it altogether.

Taking all factories and services into social ownership under workers control would mean the end of exploitation for good.



being able to make money out of workers, they start making them redundant.

Labour as a Commodity

Just how all this works is not so easy to see, because on the surface, working for an employer looks like a fair exchange of labour for wages.

It was one of the great achievements of Karl Marx to explain this.

He showed that in capitalism, our ability to work, our labour power, becomes a commodity to be bought and sold like tomatoes or shirts.

Before capitalism most people were peasants or small farmers and sold some of what they produced but didn't sell their labour.

Value of Labour Power

Commodities, Marx showed, are exchanged with each other, via money, on the basis of what they have in common, namely that they are all products of labour.

If a car costs about 10,000 euros and a table 100 euros, it is because on average it takes a hundred times as much labour to make a car as to make a table.

What happens if a worker's labour power (ability to work) is treated as a commodity then?

Just like other commodities, the value of labour power (i.e. the wages), is based on what it takes to produce that labour power.

If worker Anne sells 40

JLC Review: Bruton plans r attack on lowe

Despite a review concluding that wage cuts do not lead to an inc Government is still pushing ahead with proposals to slash wage- campaign explains why now is the time to fight the government

THE FINE Gael/Labour plan for 'reviewing' wage levels as part of the EU/IMF deal is best described as a 'Race to the bottom'.

Fine Gael 'Enterprise and Jobs' minister Richard Bruton is leading the race with Gilmore and Labour following meekly behind.

The 'Duffy-Walsh' report on wage-setting began in February under the Fianna Fáil/Green government.

Following their acceptance of the EU/IMF deal, the new FG/Labour government has just continued the process.

Labour kept at least one election promise when they reversed the minimum wage cut.

However, cutting the minimum wage affected 48,000 workers, but attacking the REA/JLC agreements will seriously hurt up to 200,000 workers covered by the system.

Clearly the pressure is on to keep the EU/IMF happy.

Therefore, this 'independent' review was given the job of making way for a 'competitive', unregulated market.

Workers Thrown Crumbs

Unlike other European countries, it is not compulsory for employers in Ireland to recognise unions.

The only system available to workers affording some protection to their pay and conditions are mechanisms used through the labour courts.

They are commonly known as Employment Regulation Orders (ERO) and Registered Employment Agreements (REA) recommended by the Joint Labour Committees (JLC) of employee and employer representatives.

While this has given basic protection to workers against poverty wages it has still kept the wages of the low-paid at well below the average industrial wage.

Low wages exist in the retail, hotel, catering and contract cleaning sectors.

They predominantly affect women, most of them mothers.

While employers made huge profits during the boom, these workers were thrown only crumbs.

Now, thanks to that champion



of big business, Richard Bruton, they are on their knees begging for even less.

Greedy Employers

Kevin Duffy and Frank Walsh, the two independent reviewers were given one target: to reduce the pay and conditions of low-paid workers in the name of 'job creation'.

However, their research did not conclude that employers' requests were reasonable, or that attacking the low-paid would increase employment.

On reading the review the underlying goal is evident throughout.

An introduction in each section deals with submissions from employers.

This is followed by an analysis to see where, if possible, they

can meet employers' needs.

An example of submissions from employers to the review body was the statement that: "Many workers are prepared to accept rates of pay and conditions of employment less favorable than those prescribed by ERO's, so as to safeguard their employment."

In response to this claim, the review says employers gave 'anecdotal' evidence.

This language highlights the fact that the review never received any concrete evidence of workers willing to take pay cuts.

This set the tone throughout the review.

Unsocialable

Yet compromises were awarded, as the review is part

of the EU/IMF deal.

Many unions welcomed the review, despite some reservations.

The research of Duffy-Walsh, proves existing pay and conditions were not what was holding back 'the market'.

The review revealed JLC rates on average were just 10% above the minimum wage.

Also, the REA/JLC system had not given many employees pay-rises for the past few years.

Having dominated the system for numerous years, employers have enjoyed countless advantages.

Settlements allowed these big companies to abuse the system, with the majority of the trade-offs at the expense of their staff.

Useless Not paid

...ase in jobs the FG/Labour
...tes. Leah Speight of the Enough!
...forms?



Sunday pay is a prime example of this. When Sunday trading was introduced in 1994 to retail, it was only for the eight Sundays up to Christmas. Reluctant employees were offered treble pay to lure them into assisting employers introduce the new extended shopping hours. After a second year of successful Sunday business, retailers decided on all-year-round Sunday trading. A dispute arose and the settlement allowed staff employed prior to 1995 to hold on to treble pay. From 1995 until 2008, anyone employed in retail had Sunday pay reduced to time-and-a-half, in spite of the fact it was a very profit-

able period. A similar pattern was followed with overtime rates. These types of payments are not 'premium pay' as employers claim. They are in fact pay for working unsociable hours. **Inequality** The results of trade union bargaining over the years reduced most pay for unsociable hours. A submission from left-leaning economic think-tank, TASC, to the review gave concrete research from OECD, showing the inequality of earnings in 2008. Contrary to claims of over-inflated wages before the recession, Ireland had the highest level of earnings inequality



in the original EU 15 (OECD 2008).

Propaganda from the Dail and the media, claiming that Ireland had the second highest minimum wage, proved a myth.

Because of well-researched evidence given to the review from many submissions to combat employer claims, the review had to strain to find ways to meet the demands of the EU/IMF deal.

Theft

Unsatisfied with the review, Bruton plans to further cut pay and conditions in his report.

Despite review recommendations suggesting deregulation on economic grounds for employers, Bruton plans to further extend an 'inability-to-pay clause.'

If an employer refuses to correctly pay an employee, this must be seen for what it is: theft!

Though removing a criminal offence element was recommended in the review, the Minister's report further allows employers to evade the law.

With no record keeping, this will see workers robbed blind.

Bruton goes much further on Sunday pay with plans to abolish it, while the review concluded the Sunday premium is to be standardised (down)

are union members.

Attacking Jobs

There are 19 recommendations affecting workers in the review.

Even if Bruton's report fails, with senior union leaders in the ICTU backing the Duffy-Walsh report, employees will still see a trade-off.

With unemployment reaching 14.8%, Bruton is spinning the notion that his proposals are necessary for job creation, despite claims to the contrary by the review itself.

A study by the employment research centre in Trinity College also shows otherwise: countries with reduced protection on unsociable hours pay see little employment growth.

Mobilise

While a showdown between FG and Labour is possible over the next few weeks, ultimately the final decision must follow the EU/IMF deal; unless Labour has the guts to throw that rotten deal out too.

Labour favour a mealy-mouthed compromise on the review, while FG threaten an all-out attack on the low-paid.

Either way, workers will suffer and employers will gain.

However, the Enough Campaign is planning a series of meetings for low-paid workers who want to fight back.

Now more than ever people must mobilise to stop this madness.

(For details of meetings in your area go to www.swp.ie for more details)



Workers and the Left battle austerity in Greece

By KIERAN ALLEN

IN MANY ways the Greek Left has a stronger and more vibrant tradition than Ireland.

Athens has much left wing graffiti; there are stalls for Afghan asylum seekers and regular, large protests in front of the Greek parliament.

This explains why the country has experienced eleven general strikes in the past 12 months.

The Russian revolutionary, Trotsky, once argued that there is no automatic workers' reaction that follows an economic crash – it depends on the combativity and political level of workers before they enter the crash.

This is the difference between the Greek and Irish responses.

Continual Resistance

There are three main groupings in the Greek Left.

Firstly, there's the Greek Communist Party – the KKE – deeply Stalinist and highly sectarian.

When major unions call a mobilisation, the KKE usually calls its own separate event.

There is the Coalition of the Left of Movements and Ecology – or Synaspismos – which arose originally from a Communist Party split but was subsequently joined by many other groupings.

This organisation has declined because it vacillates between the left and the right.

During the riots in Athens last December they did not appear to know which side they were on – the youth or riot police.

This is what can happen if radical left formations do not develop clearer revolutionary positions.

Then there is the Anti-Capitalist Left, formed as an alliance between the Greek SWP (SEK) and another split from the Communist Party.

This formation has begun to make major headway because it focuses on escalating general strikes to all out confrontations, and because it calls clearly for cancelling the debt.

The combined impact of the left, plus the combativity of Greek workers, has led to continual resistance.

This has not been strong enough to defeat the PASOK government – the equivalent to Labour.

They are determined to implement changes ordered by the IMF.

Cancel the Debt

Nevertheless, that resistance has slowed down the programme of austerity while the Greek ruling class is being pilloried in the international financial press for not going faster.

Under the latest proposals from the EU Commission, external assessors who can

override the Greek government should carry out a new round of privatisations.

The global speculators have also given up on Greece, forcing the country to go back to the EU-IMF for another bail-out deal.

This means piling more austerity on top of what has already gone before – pushing many people to breaking point.

In this type of crisis, revolutionary slogans and determination are crucial.

The Anti-Capitalist left started as a small minority arguing for a total cancellation of the debt. But they have systematically promoted that slogan amongst workers as the only real way to avoid austerity.

Others have taken a softer option, looking for 'a debt audit' to establish what is legitimate and what is illegitimate debt.

But this puts the focus back on parliament, rather than a movement from workplaces and the streets.

EU Blackmail

Naturally, any demand to cancel the debt comes up against threats from the EU Commission and the European Central bank.

In peripheral countries such as Ireland, Greece or Spain, the ruling elites are aware that many workers associate eurozone membership with a higher standard of living.

The EU Commission therefore uses blackmail to tell workers that they will be thrown out of the euro if they do not surrender.

The Anti-Capitalist left stresses how the euro has helped intensify the recession.

The euro is only a currency, and the crucial question is the ability of workers to impose their will on society.

Fighting Fascism

Over the coming months, Greece is set for new explosions and, as in any crisis, there will be a fight between the real left and the far right.

Immediately after the last general strike, fascists in 'Golden Dawn' launched a pogrom on an immigrant area in Athens, murdering two migrant workers.

SEK, in particular, has mobilised strongly against the fascists.

They have been able to draw on a long tradition of hatred that goes back to the overthrow of the Greek junta.

But even though anti-fascism is strong, racism as a distinct ideology exercises a pull.

Greece is further down the road than Ireland, but it provides clear evidence that a strong, disciplined revolutionary party is needed alongside movements that encourage the unity of the broader left.

EU-IMF in town..

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- BAIL OUT PEOPLE NOT BANKERS
- SCRAP THE EU-IMF DEAL

Enough!

DEMONSTRATE Saturday July 16th

2pm Garden of Remembrance, Parnell Square, Dublin

www.EnoughCampaign.org

Text JOIN to 0872886646

Can Irish workers fight back?

By JIMMY SMITH

THE LAST year has been full of inspiring events for socialists.

The magnificent (and on-going) revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt trumpeted 'revolution' as an idea for the 21st century.

In spring this year, across the Arab world there have been uprisings and rebellions in Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain.

But the 'Arab Spring' is not an isolated event; in Europe there have been a series of general strikes in Greece, Spain and Portugal.

There has been a huge struggle in Wisconsin in the US over union recognition, a massive campaign in France over pension reforms that saw 3.5 million workers, students and young people involved.

Closer to home, last autumn witnessed the return of student revolts in Britain.

500,000 were on the streets in London protesting against public sector cuts in March.

Then, in the middle of May young workers in Spain took up the baton from the Egyptian revolution and occupied squares across the country (see report on page 3).

Common sense?

Naturally we can take inspiration from these events across the globe.

But they do also raise the awkward question of why we have not witnessed Irish workers fighting-back at anything approaching the same level?

The Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci advanced an argument that there are 'common sense' ideas (those that lead workers to be passive) and 'good sense' ideas (those that lead workers to fight back).

The main common-sense argument put forward is that Irish workers are not like workers in other countries; we are passive by nature and don't like making a fuss.

Of course even a basic knowledge of Irish history shows that isn't the case.

All the way back to the United Irishmen rebellion in 1798 through the land and vote struggles in the 19th century to the Dublin Lockout in 1913, Irish peasants and workers have fought.

In 1919 workers in Limerick inspired by the successes of the Russian Revolution kicked out the British authorities and ran the city as a soviet (workers' council) controlling food prices and printing their own money.

Even in recent years Irish workers have fought on occasion.

In November 2009 250,000 public sector workers took part in a one day strike.

In November 2010 at least 25,000 students protested over the threat of fees being re-introduced.

Three weeks later, 100,000 joined a demonstration against the EU/IMF, organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU).

These examples are sometimes countered by a rather depressing response: 'Protests are a waste of time...they didn't stop any of the cuts or tax rises, did they!'

Fortunately we don't have to go too far back in history to find an example of when protests did win.

In October 2008 there was the magnificent revolt by pensioners over the withdrawal of medical cards, which forced the government into a u-turn.

We should also be aware that ideas that we are passive by nature often arise in a period when there is a decrease in workers taking action.

However the previous examples show there is always a willingness among some sections of Irish workers and students to protest and strike.

Not too bad?

There is one more common sense argument that is trotted out to explain why Ireland is not like Egypt or Tunisia



Police baton charge workers during the Lockout in Dublin, 1913



Students' demonstration last year



Pensioners protest in October 2008

– things just aren't bad enough here yet.

The argument runs something like this:

'In Arab countries you are dealing with dictators who have been in power for decades, who have a track-record of ruthlessly smashing any opposition. It's not that bad here.'

Firstly, if there was a direct relationship between extreme hardship and workers rebelling then we would expect to see sub-Saharan Africa in a state of constant revolt.

When you suffer such grinding poverty that it is a life and death struggle just to survive, your life is dominated not by thoughts of rebellion but of survival.

Even in developed economies a downturn in the economy can lead to passivity.

Booms or slumps don't have a directly predictable relationship to fightbacks.

For example after the Wall Street Crash in 1929, US workers did not fight-back immediately.

The early years of the thirties saw low levels of struggle.

It was not until there was a small recovery in the economy around 1933-34 that workers took militant action such as the Teamster Rebellion in Minneapolis.

Equally, the last period of big international struggles in 1968 took place after more than two decades of a growing world economy.

So if all the common sense arguments

don't stack-up how can we explain the relative passivity among Irish workers?

Here we need to start with the period immediately prior to the crash – The Celtic Tiger.

The issue isn't that we have all become affluent – this actually isn't true with the gap widening between rich and poor.

Ask those living in social housing on the Dolphin House or Balgaddy estates amongst the mould, damp and sewerage.

Partnership?

The issue here is the Social Partnership that the unions entered into with the government.

While the economy was booming the bosses could afford to throw a few crumbs to the unions; in return the unions kept the level of struggle low.

The impact of the social partnership strategy has gone far beyond simply keeping industrial peace.

At the top of the union movement the bureaucrats have become bloated in a mirror image to the bankers and property developers.

The Irish Times in 2009 found IMPACT and INTO leaders were paid over €170,000 p.a.

Many other union officials receive salaries in excess of €100,000.

Another example of how the trade unions have become bloated is the operation of the slush fund of tax-payers money by two SIPTU officials.

But social partnership had an impact on the base of the trade union movement as well.

The collective memory and traditions of how to organise strikes and solidarity action, has withered.

Partnership has also meant that fewer Irish workers have been able to get experience of how to organise a fight.

However, when workers do take action they can learn quickly in the course of a struggle.

A wave of strikes spread across Greece in late 2003 that included teachers, hospital, transport and construction workers.

In Egypt, 27,000 textile workers won a dispute in 2007 that included occupying factories.

Workers in these countries and others have had a very recent tradition of struggle to build on.

As workers win at least some victories they can grow in confidence as we have seen in the revolutions of the Arab Spring.

The Egyptian revolution also took confidence from the Tunisian successes.

This in turn influenced the struggles in other Arab countries and further afield in Wisconsin, Britain and now Spain.

Hope to Win

There are other factors that influence when workers fight-back.

Not only must there be confidence that the battles can be won, but there must be hope that an alternative is possible.

This hope is one area that the Irish ruling class has been particularly successful at curtailing.

Just think of those four words – *There Is No Alternative* – constantly pumped out by all mainstream politicians and commentators.

One of Gramsci's great insights was to show that this battle between common and good sense didn't just take place between different individuals but also occurred within the heads of each worker.

There is the pull to passivity and the push to fighting-back, battling inside each worker's mind.

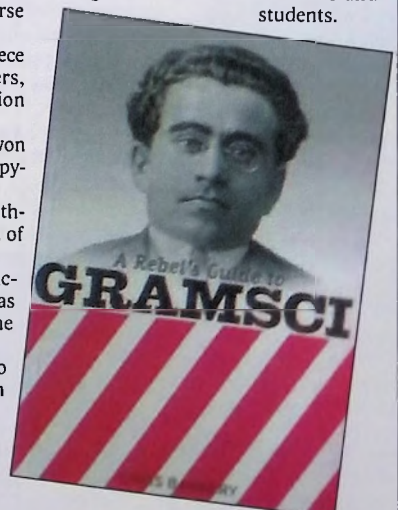
The role then of socialists is to encourage the side that wants to fight-back.

We need to build the confidence of workers that if we fight, we can win.

We need to raise the hope that an alternative is achievable.

And finally we need to organise.

This is where the protest to cancel the debt called by *Enough!* on 16th July becomes the focus for socialists to organise around and win the good sense arguments with Irish workers and students.



A Rebel's Guide to Gramsci, by Chris Bambery is available from: www.bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

NI corporate tax cuts hit children's education

By SEÁN McVEIGH

AT THE end of May two Stormont junior ministers, Sinn Féin's Martina Anderson and the DUP's Jonathan Bell, issued a joint press release on the Executive's 'commitment' to tackling child poverty in the North.

The DUP minister said: "We want to break down those barriers that keep people trapped in poverty and deprivation."

The SF minister said: "Poverty blights lives, damages health, removes choice and contributes to a wide range of social ills."

"We are committed to improving children's life chances."

Fine words, but they should not be confused with the policies that are actually being pursued by the Executive.

The statement fits with a well-established pattern set by the Executive of trying to hide their neo-liberal policies behind progressive sounding rhetoric.

Severe

One week after the junior ministers issued their statement, the North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) issued its own statement.

£3 million in cuts imposed by the Executive for the coming year were: "neither realistic nor viable".

"Many schools will be in severe financial difficulty."

The Board also said the budget imposed by the Executive would mean big cuts in school building repairs, school meals, school transport, curriculum support and special education.

In addition, workers will face compulsory redundancy.

A Board spokesman said: "We would need to make a further 90 people redundant, on top of the 29 voluntary redundancies last



Students, trade unionists and members of the public protesting against education cuts in Belfast on 6th April, 2011.

year... this is not realistic."

The Department of Education, which has been run by Sinn Féin ministers since the start of devolution, has outlined its plans for the next four years.

Northern Ireland schools are

facing a £26.5 million cut this financial year; next year that rises to £85 million; in year three to £114 million and then a cut of £180 million in the fourth year.

These plans will involve cutting hundreds of jobs, the closure of

dozens of schools and the removal of educational opportunities from thousands of children.

This is happening at the same time as the Stormont parties are pressing ahead with plans to reduce corporation tax for the rich.

So when SF and the DUP say they are committed to tackling poverty and improving children's life chances they are doing what capitalist politicians have always done – they are lying through their teeth.

LETTERS:

CANCEL THE DEBT

SOCIALIST WORKER says 'Cancel the Debt!'

The media present this as a question of one economic policy versus another to be decided by economic 'experts'.

It is really a class issue: Who pays? Us or them?

I would make this comparison: You work for a construction company and the boss comes and says to you, 'During the boom I borrowed lots of money from banks and loan sharks who now expect to be paid, so I'm going to take it out of your wages and your pension, and by the way I'm sending the bailiffs round your house to seize some of your furniture and your children's toys.'

Meanwhile I'm going to carry on building a 15 bedroom mansion in the country and go on holiday in my new yacht.

What do you do? I would suggest not going to David McWilliams or Morgan Kelly for advice, but saying 'We won't pay!' Then go to your fellow workers and union to organise a strike and to your neighbours to organise resistance to the bailiffs. Then, maybe, occupy the company head office and tell the boss to sell his mansion and his yacht. Enough is enough!

JOHN MOLYNEUX
Drumagh

Standing up to Amnesty International Ireland

AFTER ALMOST 10 years working for Amnesty International Ireland, I was made redundant on the 27th February 2009.

I was the longest serving member of senior staff in the organisation.

Amnesty International Ireland refused an investigation of my case by the Rights Commissioners in the Summer of 2009.

In May 2011 I was awarded €10k as compensation for unfair dismissal from the Employment Appeals Tribunal.

At the tribunal Amnesty International Ireland was represented by six witnesses, a lawyer and a spectator; against myself and my trade union rep.

However, Amnesty on May 27th 2011, emailed me to advise: "We are currently obtaining legal advice on foot of the Employment Appeal Tribunal's decision... including the possibility of an appeal to the Circuit Court."

As an Amnesty member and donor I am asking how the board and management of Amnesty International Ireland are using the charitable funds at their disposal.

My case could have been resolved much sooner and cheaper.

I will stand up for my rights against Amnesty, but in the meantime I will move my support to another charity.

LINO OLIVIERI
Boosterstown
Please send your letters (150 words max) to editor@swp.ie

REVOLUTIONARY CLASSICS

Resisting the Nazis in WW2 Germany

Socialist Worker reviewer Sinead Kennedy revisits a classic literary text.

HANS FALLADA'S *Alone in Berlin* was written in 1946 in post-war East Germany.

In the novel, set in Nazi Germany, everything is observed and represented 'from below' creating a sharp, ironic and devastating observation of what it was like to be an ordinary person living in Berlin under the Nazis.

Fallada based the novel's central characters, Otto and Anna Quangel, on the true case of Elise and Otto Hampel, a working-class couple from Berlin.

The Hampels began a campaign against the Nazis following Elise's brother's death fighting in the War.

For more than two years the Hampels wrote and secretly distributed postcards across Berlin, urging the German people to realise that there would never be peace under Hitler and the Nazis.

They were eventually arrested, tried by a 'People's Court' and executed.

One of the reasons the novel is so powerful is the familiar questions it provokes: if an action appears to have no effect, in that it is ignored or unnoticed by those to whom it was directed, then can it be considered to have had an effect? And, if so, how is this

effect felt and where is it manifested?

Throughout the novel Otto and Anna ponder their own isolation and wonder at the reach of their resistance.

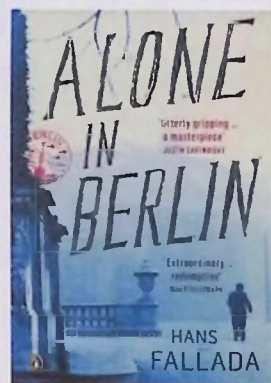
Have their postcards

been picked up and read, or have they all been destroyed or handed in to the police immediately?

Yet, despite these fears and doubts, they are compelled to act: "It's we who must

do it!"

Like all human beings they are consumed by doubt but this uncertainty they can admit without collapse and it never becomes a reason not to act.



BOOK

Marx and the alternative to capitalism

Marx and the alternative to capitalism, Author: Kieran Allen

Reviewed by Vanessa O'Sullivan

IN HIS last book, *Ireland's Economic Crash*, Kieran Allen set out to explain the Irish political system, how it works and how the crash developed.

In his latest book, he has gone back to Marx to explain the entire system in all its complexities.

Much to his credit, Allen has written an accessible account for anyone and everyone.

He starts off with a brilliant, short biography



Book launch 8pm, Friday 17 June, Cassidy's Hotel, Dublin.

of Karl Marx before going in-depth to the ideas of Marx and the relevance of Marxism today.

He commences his analysis by targeting one of Marx's central ideas: the Labour Theory of Value. Marx's insight here is that labour is the source of all wealth created.

This is followed by a fantastic explanation of the concept of alienation.

Throughout the book, Allen starts with where the ideas come from before applying the theory to the forces within capitalism today.

Later chapters deal with the idea that socialism is a utopian

idea that can never be achieved in the 'real world'.

Allen highlights the Russian Revolution and how workers can begin to organise an alternative society, while at the same time challenging the idea that all revolutions end in tyranny.

Although heavy on theory at times, it is far from being just another theoretical book about Marx.

Allen is able to merge past and present, theory and practice with a clarity that leads not only to a good read but a must have for any person that is trying to understand (and get rid of) capitalism today.

Socialist Worker

After the election – Fight the Cuts

SUPPORT THE STRIKE on 30 June

IN THE absence of opposition at Stormont, the posturing and playacting will continue.

But there is real potential for opposition where it matters – in workplaces and communities.

Four unions – the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, the National Union of Teachers, Public and Commercial Services Union and the University and College Union – have planned joint strike action in defence of pensions on 30 June across the North.

The North's biggest public sector union, NIPSA, voted at its conference in June to ballot for strikes in the autumn against job cuts.

NIPSA general secretary Brian Campfield said: "A united co-ordinated campaign by the trade unions can help galvanise the opposition to the Con-Dem and NI Assembly austerity agenda.

"It can strengthen the fight against cuts, it can increase the confidence of workers that they have the power in their own hands to make a difference, to force this government to reverse its plans to roll back the advances by the workers over decades of struggle.

"We owe it not only to ourselves but to the generation of young people who will face a life on the dole queue or emigration."

The Executive is now set to



Student Protest in Belfast in December

introduce the cut-backs which had been held off until after the election.

Unison reckons that more than

7,000 full- and part-time health service jobs will be lost.

The INTO estimates that 4,000 jobs will go in educa-

tion, including teachers and class-room assistants.

The Health ministry is held by the DUP, Education by

Sinn Fein. Both parties had pledged to "defend front-line services".

But now they are sharpening

their knives for carving even deeper into public spending.

The main NHS union, Unison, and the Fire Brigade Union are also planning action in the autumn.

Meanwhile, a Department of Health decision to cancel a promised cancer radiotherapy unit in Derry was overturned in April by a mass campaign on the streets.

The fact that the election was pending was a factor.

But the lesson stands – pressure from below, not manoeuvring at Stormont, is what gets results.

The People Before Profit Alliance did best of the Left parties in the election.

The PBPA wants to move on to work with other groups and campaigns to form a broad party of the Left able to offer coordination and political leadership to workers and communities in struggle.

Defence of public sector jobs and services is the key priority for the future.

The willingness of workers to fight may not register clearly in elections based mainly on communal identity.

But it's there, and can change not only the current political arithmetic but Northern politics generally.

If this is to happen, the Left must seize the moment.

Election Challenge for the Left

THE MAY 5th Assembly election in the North saw the DUP and Sinn Fein returned as the dominant Unionist and Nationalist parties.

The DUP took 38 seats (up two), SF 29 (up one).

The Ulster Unionists and the SDLP both lost ground.

Only three of the 108 members of the new Assembly come from parties outside the Executive.

Of the three, only Green MLA Steven Agnew could be regarded as progressive.

Literally within hours of polls closing, spokespersons for both parties used exactly

the same phrases when asked how they would handle the spending crisis: they "would not shrink" from the "tough decisions".

Sinn Fein's excuse is that British Treasury cuts in the block grant leave them no choice – the same lame excuse offered by Labour in

Coalition in the South, citing IMF demands.

Neither the Treasury nor the IMF can order parties not to fight.

The tough decision would actually be to say 'No' to the Treasury and rouse their supporters to fight the cuts.

Instead, they take the easy option of dumping thousands of workers on the dole.

The DUP makes no bones about being right-wing and wanting the public sector "cut down to size".

SF, on the other hand, still insists it is on the Left.

At the same time, Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness boast about how well they work together on economic issues.

The situation would be farcical if it wasn't for the seriousness of the damage being inflicted on working class families.