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Socialist Worker

Household Charge:

DON'T REGISTER DON'T PAY!

A MASS movement of opposition to household and sceptic tank charges is sweeping the country.

Thousands of people have attended mass meetings in different towns and villages; 350 turned up to a meeting in Donegal; over 600 turned up to a meeting in Newcastle West in Limerick; 120 turned up to a meeting in New Ross.

Now scores more meetings have been organised to encourage people not to register or pay this unjust charge.

The FG-Labour government is demanding that 1.8 million households register for the charge by 31 March. But it is like the spider inviting the fly into their web.

Once you register, you must give full details about your home which will be put on a database that will make you liable for this charge for the rest of your life.

Nobody believes that the charge will remain fixed at €100 a year. The aim – according to the Commission on Taxation – is to impose a charge of €563 on the average house that is valued at between €150,000 and €300,000.

After 2014, the water tax will be added to this – giving a combined charge of around €1,000 a year.

The government is using propaganda, threats and lies to force people to pay the charge.

■ **Propaganda:** Each week, RTE, the state controlled broadcasting service, sends out reports about the numbers who are registering. It



never gives the number of non-payers. The aim is to create the impression that there is a ground swell for payment.

Yet in the first two weeks of 2012, just less than 30,000 registered.

That figure represents just about the combined membership of Fine Gael and Labour. It means that only 1.7 percent of those expected to register had done so. That makes a non-registration rate of 98.3%!

■ **Threats:** Every week government ministers get on the airwaves to warn of hefty fines and claim that these can be deducted from our wages or social welfare.

But there is currently no legislation in place to do that. Even if they brought in such a law, they would have to

take hundreds of thousands of people before the District Courts to impose a fine and then to call them back to put a commitment order on their earnings.

It would clog up the court system and produce a mass rebellion. Remember: Not a single banker has been jailed for their economic crimes – so many think it entirely unacceptable to drag ordinary people before the courts.

■ **Lies:** The government is claiming that the household charge will help fund local government services. But the funds for these services have already been cut by the same amount that the household charges are supposed to raise. So there is no extra money.

The money will instead go to the coffers of financial

vultures like Goldman Sachs who have unsecured bonds with Anglo-Irish bank. On 25 January, the government will pay out another €1.5 billion to these parasites.

The government is also trying to trivialise and dismiss opposition to the sceptic tank charge. But we should not fall for this urban-rural divide.

We do need to take measures to remediate the pollution that is affecting our water supply.

But the government should be establishing a public works scheme to produce collective solutions for the 450,000 households that have these tanks. Instead of blaming individuals and demanding that they pay up to €15,000 for a new charge, we need some real social soli-

arity.

There are tens of thousands of unemployed building workers – so let's give them work, rather than paying off bankers.

The fight against household charges will be won if we do three things:

■ **Boycott the charge: Don't Register- Don't Pay.** If upwards to a million households do not register by 17 March, St Patrick's Day, this government will be in deep trouble.

That is why Socialist Worker urges all its supporters to help organise meetings to oppose these charges in your area. If you text CHARGE to 086 3074060 we will get back to you immediately with advice and help.

■ **Organise local protests and build for a mass national demonstration.** The Campaign against Household Charges is currently considering this proposal.

We urge people to put down resolutions at their local meetings calling for these protests. We need real 'people power' and non-payment to win.

■ **Turn the workplaces into centres of solidarity against household charges.** Distribute mass leaflets against the household charge in your workplace. Pass motions to give solidarity to anyone who is hit by fines. Urge local authority workers not to co-operate with collecting the charge.

Together we can win – and deal a mortal blow to a government that is following the exact same path as the last one.

Inside

**Victorious
La Senza
workers
speak to
Socialist
Worker**



Page Two

**On the
ground
reporting
from the
Vita Cortex
Occupation**



Page Five

Quinn 'Review' not enough - Complete reversal of DEIS cuts needed

By RICHARD BOYD BARRETT
TD People Before Profit.

DESPITE a promise that savage cuts on disadvantaged children would be 'reviewed', teachers and parents from Dublin DEIS schools have announced that they are to stage a major protest outside the Department of Education and Skills, Marlborough St., Dublin 1 on Thursday 19 January from 3:30 p.m.

The protest is being organised to demonstrate the level of opposition to staffing cuts for disadvantaged schools which were announced in December's budget.

The cuts - which involve changes to the pupil-teacher ratio, the withdrawal of extra resources such as support teachers and changes to the way in which learning support and language support services are allocated - could result in all DEIS schools losing at least 1 - 2 frontline teachers, with some losing up to 8 teachers over the next three years.

"Schools which have been participating in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity In Schools) scheme have been able to deliver a marked improvement in literacy and numeracy levels, in attendance rates and in school completion rates as a result of the targeted interventions they have been able to provide in recent years," said Breda Murray, principal of Our Lady Immaculate Junior National School, Damdale

"The effect of these announced changes, if they are allowed to proceed, will be to effectively dismantle the DEIS scheme and will set things in schools which serve the most economically and socially disadvantaged communities in the country back by decades", she continued.

Protestors will be addressed by school principals, parents, a representative of the Irish National Teachers Organisation, and a number of guest celebrities who are themselves former pupils of some of the schools involved.

"Our school communities will not and cannot accept these cuts," said Pat Fanning, principal of St. Joseph's Primary School, Fairview.

"The families and pupils who attend our schools are not responsible for the financial crisis. It is unfair and unjust that their educational opportunities should suffer as a result of it. We call on Minister Quinn to reverse this decision and allow the good work that is going on in our schools to continue."

This protest which will occur as Socialist Worker goes to press highlights the determination of the most disadvantaged to fight against the injustices they are facing.

Similar protests are sure to follow and we will do everything in our power to support them.

Victory for La Senza workers



By LEAH SPEIGHT

THE courageous act of La Senza workers in occupying their workplace and their victory is sure to inspire many workers.

On Monday 9 January workers in La Senza found out their jobs had been terminated without prior warning.

All of the workers were owed overtime for December and wages for January.

In the hand-over to administrators KPMG, the workers were treated like something to be disposed of.

Shell-shocked at what was happening; staff reacted immediately and locked down the shop shutters.

One worker, Vanessa Ryan, told Socialist Worker, "We're here until the end. We gave up time over Christmas and now we're getting nothing. We just

want what we are owed."

Worker Tara Keane added, "La Senza staff are taking a moral stand not just for ourselves, but for all frontline workers in retail."

Over the busy Christmas period La Senza made profits of €6.5million in full knowledge they were heading towards liquidation.

Within the laws of liquidation employees are considered to be creditors and wages owed are at the bottom of the list.

Meanwhile, investors are allowed to walk away with profits to invest elsewhere with no obligations to workers.

Lion Capital LLP, the private equity firm who owned La Senza has approximately €2 billion in investor commitments.

Heavy investment into a lucrative

retail sector over the past 15 years has resulted in capitalists' claims of 'too many shops on the High St'.

Within the past few weeks' two stores have closed in Liffey Valley alone with no warning to staff and no wages paid.

This is not unusual in retail. But what was different with La Senza was that the workers fought back and highlighted the injustice.

On the victory of receiving all wages and over-time owed, Tara Keane said "we're incredibly proud and we hope people can take courage from what we did so that no-one can treat workers the way we were treated."

People power and workers' solidarity were the real achievements for these retail workers.

Their victory should inspire others to fight back as soon as they hear their jobs are under threat.

The Rebel County leads the way

By VANESSA O' SULLIVAN

WORKERS at the Cork Unemployment Resource Centre have recently staged a 'work-in' in protest against the cutting of FAS funding and imminent closure.

The centre, the only resource for the unemployed in the area, has thousands of job seekers in and out of the building each week.

Willie Fitzgerald, manager of the centre, gave Socialist Worker the reasons for the workers actions,

"FAS told us we were not allowed to open. We're open. And we're right to open too.

"Like the Vita Cortex workers and the Occupy cork crowd, they are doing what they think is right and so are we.

"Away with bureaucratic speech, it all comes down to what's right and wrong here.

"It was wrong to close such a valuable service, it is right for us to keep it open.

"The council of trade unions have a huge role to play in this.

"We are not in opposition to them, we want to work with them.

"We need to work together for the people who use this

service.

"The trade union movement has a duty to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed union members across this country.

"One way of fulfilling that duty is to keep this centre open."

The workers and volunteers insist they'll keep the centre going for as long as they can.

These 'sit-in's' and 'work-in's' are a more militant and effective form of protest and they come as members of the Cork Occupy group also took over a NAMA building in



Oliver Plunkett Street.

All of this is long overdue.

This form of protest is an inspiration to everyone fighting for a more just society and it should be replicated in each and every county.

The Campaign Against Household & Water Charges gains momentum



By JOHN LYONS

LESS than ten months into office, the Fine Gael/Labour Party coalition is faced with the prospect of a national campaign of opposition to austerity, as a grassroots movement of mass civil disobedience sweeps across the country.

The Campaign Against Household & Water Taxes (CAHWT) has been gaining momentum since its first national meeting took place some five months ago.

At that meeting in September 2010 the United Left Alliance along with many other political and community activists came together to organise a campaign against the newly proposed 'household charge' being introduced for 2012 at the behest of the EU/IMF/ECB.

This new austerity measure would see every one of the near two million homeowners in the country being forced to pay €100 a year just to live in their own home.

This new tax will be charged at a flat rate, so a millionaire living in a mansion will pay the same rate as a worker living in a modest house.

This in itself would have generated serious opposition from people struggling to deal with the full force of a fifth austerity budget in four years.

But when it was admitted by government ministers that the new

household tax would increase very rapidly by hundreds of euro, the stage was set for a massive confrontation.

In the next two years every homeowner could be paying an annual household and water tax of between €1,000 and €1,300 and this is causing people the length and breadth of Ireland to mobilise.

Meetings have taken place from Donegal to Waterford and all places in between - with one clear message emerging: 'Don't Register, Don't Pay'.

This is the first time since the onset of the financial crisis of 2008 - and the ensuing onslaught of austerity - that the people in Ireland have a chance to really fight back.

Individual households have to register to pay this new austerity tax and this means they have a chance to finally say Enough is Enough.

By building a national campaign of mass non-registration and non-payment culminating with a national mobilisation of the campaign in late March we can force the government to drop this tax and reconsider the disastrous policy of austerity.

■ To find out where and when your local meeting is taking place or to put one on yourself, contact the campaign hotline on 1890 98 98 00 or check out the campaign website www.nohouseholdtax.org.

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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 Cameron 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.

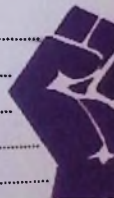
This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.
We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for independence.

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Chinese workers protest



By FACHNA BASQUILLE

THE Year of the Protester as *Time* magazine has dubbed 2011, did not end without mass demonstrations in one nation that presents an image of being too dangerous to engage in dissent.

December saw the culmination of two long running disputes between corrupt low ranking authorities of the Chinese Communist Party and the people of China.

As early as September disputes over finances and a government sponsored land grab by private property developers erupted into violence in a small rural town in Wukan.

Struggle also broke out in the town of Haimen as local officials have sanctioned another coal-fired power plant, despite the fact that Haimen's already existing plants have done much to damage both the environment and the health of locals.

The CCP has always prided itself on diffusing resistance so this development could be extremely ominous as Chinese officials simultaneously try to satisfy an insatiable greed for development land and deflate the bubble that is rapidly emerging in the domestic property market.

Shady business deals between unscrupulous party officials and voracious developers are helping to fuel this bubble. And if *Forbes* magazine is to be believed, there are now clear signs that the property bubble is beginning to burst.

The Party eventually diffused the protests in Wukan and Haimen by granting concessions. But there are obvious limits to this style of diplomacy.

China has continued to grow strongly since the 2008 crisis, but this may not last if Chinese workers begin to get organised.

At present, local struggles have failed to generalise.

But with tensions with the US increasing and an economy in danger of severely overheating, the Chinese ruling class can ill afford sustained resistance from its hundreds of millions of urban workers.

Resistance in Syria spreads



By AINE DILLON

WE can only admire the courage and bravery of the Syrian people who face death each day but continue to resist.

Since 15 March 2011 the regime has killed 6448, including 175 in the past week.

Yet tens of thousands continue to strike, demonstrate and occupy the street and have rightly condemned the Arab League for its attempt to get them off the streets with a farcical observer mission.

Last Friday the regime was shook by demonstrations across the country in support of the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

Despite the iron control of the regime the FSA has attracted 20,000

defectors from the regular army.

It is now coordinating attacks with the Syrian National Council, an umbrella opposition group including local coordinating committees but led from outside Syria. Lack of an end to the stalemate is prompting renewed speculation about military intervention, particularly as Assad plays on ethnic divisions in an attempt to hold onto power.

An all-out conflict is not in the interests of regional powers.

Russia has a historically strong relationship with Syria; Turkey does not want Syrian Kurd refugees on its borders and Saudi Arabia is terrified of an Arab Spring in Riyadh and Jeddah.

Western leaders know that if

the conflict spills into Lebanon or Iraq, the prospect of a direct military confrontation with Iran could become real.

They prefer to wait it out in the hope of a more western-orientated leader, such as the SNC's Burhan Ghalioun.

An alliance with imperialism might get rid of Assad, but will not bring down his regime.

The Left in Syria is weak and the working class has not experienced the years of struggle that preceded the Egyptian revolution.

Only a turn to the working class can paralyse the regime and bring real democracy to Syria. But at the moment this prospect is far from certain.

Occupy Nigeria



By IAN MCDONNELL

AS of 9 January Nigerian trade unions have brought the country to a standstill.

The strikes developed from a series of large-scale demonstrations over the government's removal of fuel subsidies.

Reports estimate that several thousand people are occupying Gani Fawehinmi Park in the capital city of Lagos and their numbers are growing.

In Abuja hundreds of youths occupied the city's 'Eagle Square' only to be forced out by riot police.

In the northern city of Kano, police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at protesters marching on the governor's office.

Also in Kano, protesters occupied the city's main 'Silver Jubilee Square', which protesters are now calling 'Liberation Square'.

The upheaval is increased by endemic poverty in Nigeria.

Despite being Africa's largest crude oil producer many among the population of 160 million are living on less than \$2 a day.

In an economy that generates \$247 billion a year there is no need for such deprivation, something people are

beginning to realise and mobilise against.

The president, Goodluck Jonathan claimed in a recent statement that in order for Nigeria to survive it needed to further de-regulate its economy.

The government plan to save \$8 billion through cutting fuel allowances, a fraction of the \$69 billion exported in petroleum.



Policies such as the removal of subsidies on basic provisions however only benefit foreign multi-nationals and other wealthy proprietors.

Nigeria's National Labour Congress and Trade Union Congress have stated that general strikes, mass rallies and street protests will continue indefinitely.

The Nigerian situation is an excellent example of how street protests and occupations are part of a broader labour struggle.

This is essential to the success of the global occupy movement.

The ability of the people to incapacitate the economy is the greatest weapon at their disposal.

Eurozone crisis enters a dangerous new phase

By BRIAN O' BOYLE

FRIDAY 13 January may well mark a significant milestone in the on-going crisis in the Eurozone.

Having tried and failed to address the crisis at eight governmental summits, the rating agency Standard and Poor has decided to slash the credit status of nine European countries.

Of these, the most significant are France and Austria, who have lost their coveted triple A rating - and Spain, Italy and Portugal who have been further downgraded on the basis of their increasing risk.

The French downgrade is particularly important, as France is both a core member of the Eurozone and the second most important contributor to the European Financial Stability Fund (EFSF).

The EFSF is one of the central planks of the EU's crisis management strategy.

Like governments, it



can borrow on the open market and it is designed to lend up to €440 billion to countries struggling with their sovereign debts.

Currently the EFSF has a triple A rating.

But as France contributes over 20% of its funding, this rating may also come under pressure, causing serious knock-on difficulties for the European ruling classes.

Added to these economic woes are real political tensions as the French ruling class struggles to come to terms with the relative weakening of its position.

To make matters worse, 13 January also saw a standoff emerging between private bond holders and the New Greek government under Lucas Papademos.

This in many ways is actually the most serious of Friday's developments, for as Simon Nixon of the *Wall Street Journal* explains,

"Athens has weeks to agree a deal with bondholders if the debt write-down is to be finalized ahead of a €14.6 billion bond redemption on 20 March. Without a deal, Greece won't get

€130 billion of bailout funds needed to repay the bonds and will be forced into a messy default.... The euro zone has faced many "moments of truth" but the Greek bondholder dispute is a genuine watershed: The euro's fate lies in the balance and it could go either way."

Behind this seemingly intractable crisis is a monumental standoff facing the ruling classes of the core and the periphery.

Core European capital is adamant that the banks that lent money into the periphery should be exclusively bailed out by peripheral tax-payers.

To this end they have set the agenda completely around austerity, refusing to allow the ECB to buy sufficient amounts of Spanish and Italian sovereign debt to reassure the 'markets' that these countries will not 'default'.

If the ECB buys peripheral bonds, some private capitalists will be reassured.

But core capital in the Eurozone is worried that this will allow peripheral governments to put off their austerity.

If they get money from the ECB they might not need to squeeze workers so hard.

But if they don't get money from the ECB the whole thing could collapse.

This is the key problem facing the ruling class at the core of the Eurozone and it helps to explain the real reason why the EU elites have failed to find a workable solution in eight attempts.

Capital is unlit in its ambition to make workers' pay for this crisis, but between themselves there is far less harmony.

The tragedy is that millions of people's lives are hanging in the balance - and as the crisis deepens it becomes ever clearer that the only rational solution to the crisis is socialist planning by the workers themselves.

Belfast Relief Riots of 1932

2012 marks the 80th anniversary of one of the most important working class struggles in the early northern state. In the final part in our series on working class struggle in the north, Matt Collins, looks at the Belfast outdoor relief riot of 1932



THE Northern state born amidst Civil War and strife did not, on the surface, hold many prospects for a progressive political movement.

It was a state based on the ideology of unionism, the exclusion of Catholics from all facets of life and the creation of a so called 'Protestant parliament for a Protestant people'.

Within the sectarian structure of the state, jobs and relief to poor people became a powerful tool within the Unionist Party's arsenal to maintain rule.

The Unionist alliance used the paranoia of high Catholic births to sow fear and division.

They specifically created a relief system which denied Catholics jobs, forcing them onto unemployment relief (an early form of social security) which became increasingly meagre and worthless.

The end result of this was forced emigration to the South or further afield.

Outdoor relief meant strenuous labour, mending roads for very little allowance.

But the alternative was entering the workhouse in which conditions were still Dickensian.

The labour movement had been vocal on the issue of employment throughout the 1920s gaining little hearing.

However the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the depression which followed created the conditions which gave way to heightened working class anger.

The Depression devastated the Northern economy, with unemployment rising to 76,000 (28 percent). Among those hardest hit were urban industrial workers, with 45,000 unemployed in Belfast alone.

By the early 1930's some of Belfast's biggest workplaces were virtually shut down (Harland and Wolf did not launch a single ship in 1932 or 33).

This created a situation in which protestant skilled workers, were hit as hard as Catholics and relied on unemployment relief.

The riot explodes

It was in this context that members of the Revolutionary Workers Groups (forerunners of the Communist Party) formed outdoor relief committees.

Struggle exploded on 4 October when 600 workers downed tools in protest at the conditions.

That evening saw a mass rally take place in Belfast city centre with up to 60,000 people marching to the Custom house.

The days after would see a huge march to the Belfast workhouse as rioting spread across the city, shops were looted and trams

were hijacked.

Realising the threat, the state moved to crush the strike activity.

The most violent scenes occurred in Catholic ghettos where the police opened fire on rioters.

In a symbolic moment of unity one woman from the protestant Shankill pleaded with her neighbours 'they're kicking the shite out of the peelters up the Falls.

Are you going to let them down? For the first time in the history of the North workers rioted alongside one another against their common enemy - many were injured and two were killed.

The ODR strike showed the potential which exists for socialist organisation in heightened periods of struggle.

Communist organisation had been virtually absent from northern politics, yet the RWG came to the fore for a brief period.

Alas their sectarian approach hindered their chances to grow and left them isolated when the struggle slumped.

Taking their political line from Moscow, the RWG refused to organise within trade unions and thus were unable to relate to wider sections of the working class.

In effect they ensured their own isolation.

Despite this, the role of the RWG still stands as one of the most impressive moments in the history of the Irish left.

As the spectre of the 1930s haunts us today the lessons are clear.

When crises hits the system so deep that the interests of workers are counter posed to that of the employing class, regardless of ideological thinking, anger can emerge quickly around common bread and butter issues.

Today all of the conditions which have in the past given rise to workers struggle confront us.

Yet when unity emerges in the north, time and again sectarianism is used to stoke division.

Today the forces of sectarianism are weaker and working class struggle will surely take a different form.

1932 teaches us that in Ireland there is a need for a battle of ideas, of socialist politics capable of challenging sectarianism within the day to day struggles of working class people.

This is the only way can we confront capitalism and sectarianism simultaneously.

Karl Marx once remarked that history repeats itself 'first as tragedy, then as farce'.

It is the great tragedy of the Irish left that when workers struggle emerges there has been a failure to create a strong socialist current within society to fight another day - let's not see this latest period turn into farce.

Prospects for S

As the economic crisis rolls on, Kieran Allen assesses the revolutionary st

BEFORE a kettle boils, the water starts to bubble. Then suddenly it is in full flow.

It is the same with mass social movements. Before there is a mass outbreak of resistance, there are small local explosions of struggle.

The Egyptian revolution exploded onto the streets of Cairo in February 2011.

But years beforehand, there were waves of strikes as workers built independent unions and joined mass protests over Palestine. Marx used to call this the mole of history. For years it tunnels underground, but then it breaks through.

It will be the same in Ireland. For the past three years, many have asked where are the Greek style protests? What is wrong with the Irish - are they still suffering an 800 year post colonial hangover?

The first few weeks of 2012 has already shown how the myth of the quiet Irish will be broken.

Barely had the year begun, but a new mood of resistance swept over small but significant layers of workers.

At this stage, there are already three key flash points in sight.

OCCUPY - Fight For the Right to Work

The Vita Cortex workers are the first symbolic touchstone for the new mood. They started an occupation before Christmas to demand a right to 2.9 weeks redundancy pay.

It was a most moderate demand. For over thirty years, workers have thought that employers would pay them a few weeks above the statutory requirement of 2 weeks pay for every year of service.

But no more. As soon as the government reduced the subsidy to employers from 60 percent to 15 percent, many decided that a worker would never get more than the bare minimum.

Some like Vita Cortex and La Senza went a step further and said they did not have the money to pay the legal minimum.

Their workers should instead go to the state run Social Insurance Fund and wait a year for payment.

Workers in the respective cases simply wouldn't swallow this. They set to building resistance which shows the way to workers everywhere.

Vita Cortex is only the harbinger of what is to come - but it also shows that workers can reply with the most militant tactic in their armoury.

An occupation is an attack on capitalist property relations. It is more than a strike because it is not just a withdrawal of labour but a seizure of the



property of the boss. Today the tactic has gained a new poignancy from the global Occupy movement.

Vita Cortex was followed by La Senza. This is a largely unionised group of chain shops, but the workers organised themselves quickly to congregate on one shop in Liffey Valley to demand that liquidators, KPMG, pay their redundancy money. Their protest raised a fundamental question about capitalist

property relations: why is it that every other creditor of a bankrupt firm gets looked after before workers?

2012 will see a wave of occupations - because workers have already started to learn from each other. The challenge now will be to move from fighting for redundancy payments to demanding that the state provides a right to work.

In the 1920s, the right wing leader of Fianna Fail, Eamonn de Valera, denounced

his Cumman na nGael opponents for not recognising that the state had a duty to support this right. Today he would be lambasted for being 'unrealistic' and out of tune with 'The Markets'.

But the new resistance of workers could change all this.

Don't Register - Don't Pay

When over 16 TDs said that they would defy the law and

Socialists in 2012

prospects for Irish socialists in the aftermath of the global struggles of 2011.



Window Poster - Please Display Prominently

WE'RE NOT PAYING THE HOUSEHOLD TAX

Campaign Against Household & Water Taxes

www.nohouseholdtax.org

not pay the property charge, it helped to create a mass movement.

Disrespect for the law used to be largely confined to republican fighters.

But here were elected TDs encouraging mass civil disobedience and far more people began to flood into meetings. Ironically, most of the Sinn Fein TDs stood aside.

In 2011, the battle against sceptic tank charges mobilised rural Ireland and Fianna Fail

– in an opportunistic attempt to re-build their base – presented it as a country versus city issue. But now the movement against the household charges is set to have a major impact on the cities.

Hundreds of thousands of people will hold off paying the charge until at least March. A minority is already determined to stick together and resist. Larger numbers can be won to this position if they are drawn into mass meetings and take

out a membership card for the campaign.

Here is where socialists will pay a crucial role.

The SWP has one branch in Wexford with members spread across the county. Here is how one member described what happened in New Ross

'In a traditionally conservative town I thought it might be difficult to get numbers to a meeting.

The activists spent 2 days leafleting estates and outside

supermarkets, and on the night 133 people packed into the meeting room, someone said there was another 30 or so outside in the hallway listening. The common cause, the fight against the unfair Household Tax, had not only brought people out, but it brought the people together.

The huge amount of solidarity that built within the room was something I have long waited to see. Yes, people were angry, but not content just to vent their anger. They wanted action, and they did not look for anyone to lead them. They were shouting out ideas about further meetings and protests.'

The key thing in this campaign will be moving from mass non-payment to mass collective action on the streets. That should start with well prepared local and national demonstrations that will give people confidence. But it will need to move to outright defiance to break this government.

No to the Austerity Treaty

The third flashpoint will be the EU attempt to push through a new treaty that forces governments to immediately shut down services if they go over their budgets by 0.5%.

The establishment pretend that this is just good house-keeping. But whoever heard of a household that never borrowed a penny for a mortgage, a car, or a hire purchase agreement.

The whole thing is designed to guarantee payments for bondholders and bankers – while the population put up with less public services.

During the last referendum, the government promised people jobs if they voted Yes. Today they can only promise another decade of cutbacks.

The government will do everything to try to prevent a referendum but they may not be able to. Should there be a vote, it will be a chance to show mass opposition to the Europe of the Billionaires and Bankers,

The main right wing opponent of the Lisbon Treaty, Declan Ganley, has already done a U-turn and embraced a United States of Europe. It will be down to socialists in the United Left Alliance to forge the main opposition to this treaty.

2012 will be a very different year to 2011, when the predominant mood was to deal with Fianna Fail through a 'riot at the ballot box'.

Now the struggle is starting to move to the streets, the communities and the workplaces.

It is time to join the fight – with enthusiasm.

The Struggle at Vita Cortex



By VANESSA O' SULLIVAN and MICHAEL O' SULLIVAN

2011 went out with a bang in Cork, as over 30 workers in Vita Cortex decided to occupy their factory in the city. The workers have been occupying since 16 December, remaining in situ over the Christmas holidays.

Their dispute, which centres on a decent redundancy for all staff, has captured the attention of the whole country. Workers everywhere could place themselves in the same position.

The redundancy offer merely added insult to injury. Not only were the staff losing their jobs, they were offered a meagre

Waterford Glass also sent messages of support.

New occupations and 'work-in' protests have been inspired by the Vita Cortex struggle. Jim Power, one of the longest serving members of staff said that workers were thrilled at the show of support as they have become aware that 'their fight is part of the overall struggle against the cuts and government austerity'. The question is what will happen now.

The workers have courageously sustained an occupation, had days of action at the plant and the Dail, but what is going to actually make this company and the government sit up and take



€1,500 per worker in redundancy payments. This is disgraceful given that some of the employees have over 40 years service to the company. The workers, who are members of SIPTU, have 847 years of service between them and are determined to continue with the lock-in for as long as it takes.

The factory owner J.R. Ronan, who owns 16 other companies, gave workers notice a number of weeks ago.

Since then workers allege that he has deceived them with regard to paying redundancy, even going as far as to falsify correspondence from NAMA, who he has blamed for not releasing money for the redundancy payments.

Instead the occupying workers state that Ronan has been moving operations to another Vita Cortex plant in Athlone.

They were ordered to dismantle specialised machinery so that it could be brought to another plant. One of the staff told Socialist Worker that "They had people coming in the Saturday after we were to leave to start dismantling all of our machines. Some of them take 4 days to disassemble. The company didn't care. The only thing that stopped them is that we were here".

Solidarity

There is a huge amount of support from the people of Cork and from across the country. Over 500 came to the plant on 2 January to show solidarity.

They have received local support from Fire Brigade workers to Musgrave's, Occupy Cork camp to Trade unionists and activists. Former workers at

notice?

The attitude of the government has constantly shifted in this dispute. Minister Richard Bruton has not even bothered to visit the workers in the Cork plant.

The government recently cut their redundancy package from 60% to 15%. The Labour Relations Commission 'exploratory talks' while important are at this stage a token gesture from the management.

The best chance to sort this dispute is to take the fight to Cork City Hall. Labour and Fine Gael dominate the City Council and pressure should be put on government councillors and TDs for the government to help the workers.

If they can consistently find money to bail out banks, they can start helping the very people who voted them in.

The other Vita Cortex factories should also be targeted. If the company is determined to keep trading, the staff of the Belfast and Athlone plants should down tools in support of their colleagues in Cork.

SIPTU has a duty to the Cork staff to encourage this to happen.

Finally more links should be made between workers from La Senza, Lagan Bricks and other disputes to have large, collective days of action.

The trade union movement maintain the slogan 'An injury to one is an injury to all'. With multiple strikes and occupations happening, these workers should be fighting together.

A victory for one, in this case, will be a victory for others.

This is the slogan that needs to be championed in 2012.

RACISM AT THE HEART OF THE STATE

In light of the historic convictions for the murder of Stephen Lawrence this month, Chris Boyd of the Anti-Racism Network, exposes the roots of racism in class society.



Stephen Lawrence

In recent months there have been three high profile incidents of racism in the UK. The conviction of two men at the start of the year for the 1993 murder of a young black man, Stephen Lawrence, has brought the issue of racism front and centre in the media again.

Stephen Lawrence was 18 when he was stabbed to death by a gang of racist youths who called themselves 'the Krays'. The gang were connected with other racist attacks in the Eltham area of London, along with other white supremacist groups including the BNP.

Unfortunately the Lawrence case is not some echo of the worst times of the past. The murder by police of an unarmed black man, Mark Duggan, during a stop and search in Tottenham sparked off riots across the UK only last summer. Moreover, an Indian student was shot dead in Manchester over Christmas with the police only deciding to investigate it as a racist crime after pressure from the local community.

Even on the football pitch the racist taunts of Liverpool FC's Luis Suarez to Manchester United's Patrice Evra during a match was followed by Liverpool fans racially abusing Tom Adeyemi a black player for Oldham when the two sides met in an FA cup match.

Ireland is not immune

In Ireland we've had recent racist attacks on two taxi drivers from Nigeria - one who later died in hospital. There has also been a series of racist murders in Dublin in recent years: Pawel Kalite and Marius Szewajkos in Crumlin in 2008, the murder of the Nigerian teenager Toyosi Shittabe in Tyrellstown.

In each of these instances the media and police obscured, or worse, denied the racist element of the attacks and murders.

Indeed, the Gardai do not even collect statistics on overtly racist attacks. But as racist tensions rise in the context of attacks on public spending - it is vitally important to ask where racism comes from?

The economic roots of racism

It is commonly assumed that racism is something innate in human nature. The implication is that humans have always feared or hated people from other countries because they are different. If this was true then racism would be as old as society itself. But the truth is that racism is a relatively modern phenomenon that arose with class society.

Specifically, the roots of racism lie in the slave trade which developed in the 1500's. Prior to this slavery obviously existed. But in ancient Greece and Ancient Rome one's class position depended on whether one was defined as civilized (part of the citizenship) or barbarian. Slavery had nothing to do with skin colour or origin. Indeed the emperor Septimius Severus was black.

The need to racialise slavery ultimately came when white servants and blacks slaves began to organize and rebel against



their masters. Laws were then passed to make it illegal to inter-marry and socialise between white and black.

The North Atlantic Slave trade was a different story. From the start the ruling class relied on the work of exclusively black human beings and this necessitates divisions between the superior masters and their inferior slaves.

Even as the American, French and British revolutions professed that 'all men are created equal', slave owners such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were declaring blacks to be merely 3/5ths of a human being.

Material interests helped to determine the ideas that people had, and by the 19th century the theory of Social Darwinism gave a scientific veneer to justify slavery.

Racism and capitalism

The revolutions of Europe and America were rebellions of the early capitalist class over-throwing existing ruling aristocracies. As the bourgeoisie took power and capitalism evolved - a new state structure (parliaments, courts, armies, police and media) also emerged as a representative of the new ruling class.

Capitalists needed political power to defend their property and the new ideas of citizenship and nationality helped to bind the working masses to their economic masters.

This suggests that racism isn't just a hangover of slavery. As one form of slavery was abolished another form took over - the 'wage-slave'.

Capitalism depends on the exploitation of human labour and Karl Marx described how the particular property relations allowed capitalist's to accumulate all of the surplus work of the working classes.

Workers are paid just enough to keep

them working.

Capital is then free to claim everything else and as this is the source of profits, then part of your work is taken for free - the very definition of slavery.

Marx also describes how capitalists have to compete with each other; how they constantly have to reduce the ratio of labour to machinery (creating unemployment), and how capitalism is a system of crisis.

In these circumstances, the capitalist state seeks to divide workers and keep them squabbling for the scraps. They also stoke nationalist feelings so workers identify with their own nation's capitalists' instead of their fellow workers.

State Propaganda

This is why the media constantly distributes racist and nationalist ideas such as blaming minorities and/or immigrants for unemployment, for so-called 'benefit tourism' and for the lack of resources like school places and hospital beds.

As the State takes resources for private banks it is beneficial to scapegoat vulnerable minorities and this official racism ultimately sends signals out that foreign

people are fair game for abuse.

Immigrants and minorities are also stereotyped as criminals. Travellers supposedly wreck pubs, Polish people take money out of the country, Arabs are terrorists, Nigerians taxi drivers' harass women passengers etc.

Darren Scully claiming black Africans are rude and aggressive. Or Alan Shatter claiming Pakistanis and Lithuanians are all involved in 'sham marriages' only adds fuel to the fire.

Racism at the borders

Perhaps the most important form of State racism is perpetuated at the country's borders. People from different parts of the world are categorised depending completely on where they happen to be from.

Those people from outside the EU may be turned away immediately if the police or border agencies believe they should be 'refused the right to land'

All manner of categories are then given to those lucky enough to get past the security checkpoints, such as economic migrant, refugee, asylum seeker etc.

From here it is into an over populated holding centre while some judge decides whether or not it is legal for you to enter the country.

These judges are paid by the case and the authorities know which of them is most likely to turn down applications for asylum.

All told around six people out of every hundred are given shelter. But even then they are rarely allowed to have the dignity of finding a job.

If you are deemed 'illegal' then you are extremely vulnerable. Police raid churches, weddings and other events to find 'illegal's and deport them. They board buses at the border and use racial profiling to stop, identify and catch

people whose only crime is to hail from an unfavoured country.

National competition

Capitalism has always been an international system divided along State capitalist lines. Some parts of this complex system are far more developed than others and the ruling ideas in these more advanced regions encourage workers to see themselves as under siege.

Right wing rags like the Daily Mail never tire of telling readers that Britain (and Ireland) is full. And the lack of control and material deprivation that workers often feel sometimes leads them to accept the validity of these regressive ideas.

Racism is just one more way of keeping people divided. But because workers also need to work collectively, there are important counter-weights to the racist propaganda of the national media.

By standing together workers from every county can help to undermine the capitalist system and its rotten propaganda.

Unlike capitalism, socialism would have to be based on a truly international movement of the working classes and starting to build this movement helps to expose the real divide in our current system.

The divide between rulers and ruled - the 1% and the 99% - is the only division that truly matters.

Struggle unites

Since the beginning of industrial capitalism, workers have always united and fought against their oppression.

The earliest example is the Chartist movement in England in which one of the leaders William Cuffey was black.

The most recent example is the Arab Spring as Christians and Muslims stood in solidarity during Friday prayers and fought-off Mubarak's thugs and policemen together.

The mass movements and strikes in Greece and Spain saw huge immigrant contingents. The Wisconsin occupation of the capital and the Occupy movement in America saw veteran soldiers of the Iraq war stand in solidarity with Egyptians, declaring their enemy as the 1%.

In the only example where workers overthrew the capitalist rulers and created their own State, Russian immigrants and minorities such as the Jews were given full rights and the leader of the Red Army was Jewish, Leon Trotsky.

End racism - end capitalism

If the roots of racism are in class society, then to fight racism effectively we need to be involved in anti-racist campaigns such as the Anti Racist Network and the anti-capitalist struggle against exploitation.

All socialists must stand shoulder to shoulder with oppressed and marginalised people where they may be.

But to end racism, oppression and exploitation for once and for all we will have to smash the capitalist State.



MOVIE:

Letting Thatcher off the hook



The Iron Lady

Reviewed by
Laura Duggan

MARGARET Thatcher is one of most recognisable British Prime Ministers as well as being one of the most controversial.

Unemployment rose to 3.3 million during her term of office, as she attacked British workers in the interests of British capital.

Privatisation was embraced as a way to smash the trade unions.



The IRA were branded terrorists, and Thatcher showed her imperial sympathies by declaring war with Argentina - over the Falklands - resulting in 907 deaths.

Thatcher was a truly despicable character and although Meryl Streep delivers a fantastic performance, the woman we see is far removed from the political reality.

Thatcher once defined herself as an iron willed politician, but she is introduced to the audience as

an elderly woman sliding into dementia.

The entire film is a collection of jumbled up; out of sequence shots from various points of a career she wishes to simultaneously re-live and forget.

The viewer is never treated to a proper analysis of Thatcher's politics.

There appears to be attempts to explain her ideology with scenes from her childhood in the family corner shop and speeches about self reliance, good old fashioned hard work

and small business as the backbone of the nation.

But all this just feels like another way of absolving her from her responsibility.

The consequences of her decisions for the working class are never detailed.

Rather we get vague references through fleeting riot footage alongside shots of a scared and somewhat confused Thatcher travelling through a crowd of protesters.

The seminal battle with the miners is barely mentioned and throughout Thatcher's decisions are presented as necessary 'for the good of the nation'.

Whilst the film doesn't portray Thatcher as a sympathetic character; it does paint her as a hero who 'made the tough decisions to restore the country'.

Moreover, she is afforded plenty of time for her own justifications.

The one time the facade really slips is in relation to the poll tax as Thatcher greets the idea that she cannot tax rich and poor equally with an assertion that this is only right and proper.

She is sick of 'scroungers' living in Britain and it is only right that if you want to live here you must pay for the privilege'.

This truly exposes Thatcher as the reactionary she was and the parallels to the present situation in Ireland around the household charge are hard to miss.

Overall this is a disappointing movie as one of the great villains of the 20th century is let off the hook for her horrible crimes against the working class everywhere.

BOOK:

A classic battle cry against capitalism

The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, Robert Tressell, Penguin Books

Reviewed by
Paul O'Brien

ROBERT Tressell was the pen name of Robert Noonan.

He was born in Dublin in 1870, but moved to South Africa and fought in the Irish Brigade against the British in the Boer War.

In 1900 he came to Hastings in England.

The town became the model for Mugsborough in the novel.

Tressell worked as a painter and decorator and

What's also wonderful about the book is the naked class hatred in it.

Tressell mocks the bosses through their names: Mr Didlum, Mr Slumrent and Mrs Starvem.

The novel is famous for 'The Great Money Trick' which uses slices of bread to show how capitalism works.

Owen cuts slices of bread. They represent raw materials.

The workers are paid to change these into goods, which they do, cutting each slice into three blocks.

Owen pays them each one block of bread: a third of the value of the goods they made.

At the end the week the capitalist has two blocks, a



joined the left wing Social Democratic Federation.

He wrote The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists in 1910, just as the mass strikes of the Great Unrest were starting.

The workers are 'philanthropists' because they give the value of their work away to their employers.

Robert Tressell showed the exploitation of the working class brilliantly.

In 1900, the average life expectancy of a manual worker was just 40 years of age.

worker has one.

But then the worker has to buy the 'necessities of life' for which Owen charges one block.

So the workers end up with nothing.

The book has been criticised for its failure to portray working class resistance.

But, it wouldn't have survived for this length of time if it didn't relate to workers today.

It's an absolute classic and a battle cry against capitalism.

TELEVISION:

50 years of the Rightwing Television Establishment

By WILL SHANNON

THE 50th anniversary of Radio Telefis Eireann (RTÉ) is, without much surprise, being marked with a fanfare of back-patting.

The state broadcaster started off its year of self-congratulation, with a deeply patronising documentary, which saw Pat Short introduce a host of purely sympathetic interviews from 'the ordinary people of Ireland'.

This has been followed by a series of interviews by Bill O'Herlihy with leading broadcasters within the station.

One may presume that each episode will present these senior presenters as radical trend-setters within a station that sets broadcasting trends internationally.

In reality, anyone who has had the displeasure of watching any of RTÉ's 'cutting dramas' is familiar with the stations continual appropriation of the worst parts of the American television industry - without half the entertainment



value.

The recurring theme throughout the '50 year's coverage' is the story of an Ireland that was a unified, catholic, parochial rock until it was modernised with the help of RTÉ.

The Irish people have apparently travelled a long road, with RTÉ benevolently educating them one step at a time, whilst catering to a specific set of tastes and entertainment values.

In reality, RTÉ's real problem has not been the people

of Ireland, but its monolithic, conservative structures in which artistic and intellectual room for manoeuvre has always been nigh on impossible.

Due to its formative relationship with the Irish state, RTÉ's role has often seemed more akin to the old-USSR's Pravda than that of an independent public informant.

Its bland, narrow view of broadcasting can be contrasted to the less heavily censored Irish language broadcaster, TG4 which has had a short but

radical history.

The station is well known for high quality anti-establishment documentaries, including a journey through South America's revolutionary history with the ULA's Joe Higgins and Soivéidi na hÉireann, which documents the popular and workers' uprising throughout the war of independence.

These are programmes of real quality and together with documentaries like Mna na IRA, they show the possibilities for good public service broadcasting.

Unfortunately this was never the most important role for RTE and even after 50 years Ireland's media is still the preserve of privilege and the establishment.

This is why socialists need their own spaces of expression and for an excellent socialist analysis of the media see: Will the revolution be televised? A Marxist analysis of the media by John Molyneux - available from Bookmarks bookshop at: www.bookmarksbookshop.co.uk

LETTER:

Galway against the household and septic tank charge

Dear Editor,
Perhaps we are already seeing signs of the global revolt on Ireland's shores.

With the 30 November strikes and demonstrations up north, marches against austerity measures down south, Occupy Movement camps in cities across the country, and the workers occupation of Vita Cortex continuing in Cork.

During the last few months, hundreds of people across the country have attended meetings against the household charges (property, water and septic tank charges) and joined the boycott campaign.

Protests have been held outside council budget meetings, and council chambers have been invaded by householders' angry that they are facing more financial attacks as their outgoings go through the roof.

Cobh town council unani-

mously passed a motion against the household tax describing it as unfair and unaffordable.

Following the lead of the United Left Alliance elected representatives, a significant number of TDs and councillors have also called on people to defy these 'repressive taxes'.

So, it is amazing that Galway City councillors appear to be unaware of the national and local controversy over the household tax and septic tank charges.

Despite people demonstrating outside the City Council budget meeting in December, the councillors did not even deem the subject worthy of comment, never mind opposition, and agreed the flat rate €100 per annum household charge as part of the city budget without a by-your-leave.

After 3 years of austerity,

this is the first opportunity for people to say that we've had Enough of this disgraceful behaviour! We are against having to pay for the debts of bankers and bondholders and we must take a stand.

If we allow these charges to be implemented then the amounts will increase rapidly, followed by the imposition of water rates estimated at about €400, which could result in total costs of €1000 p.a. per household.

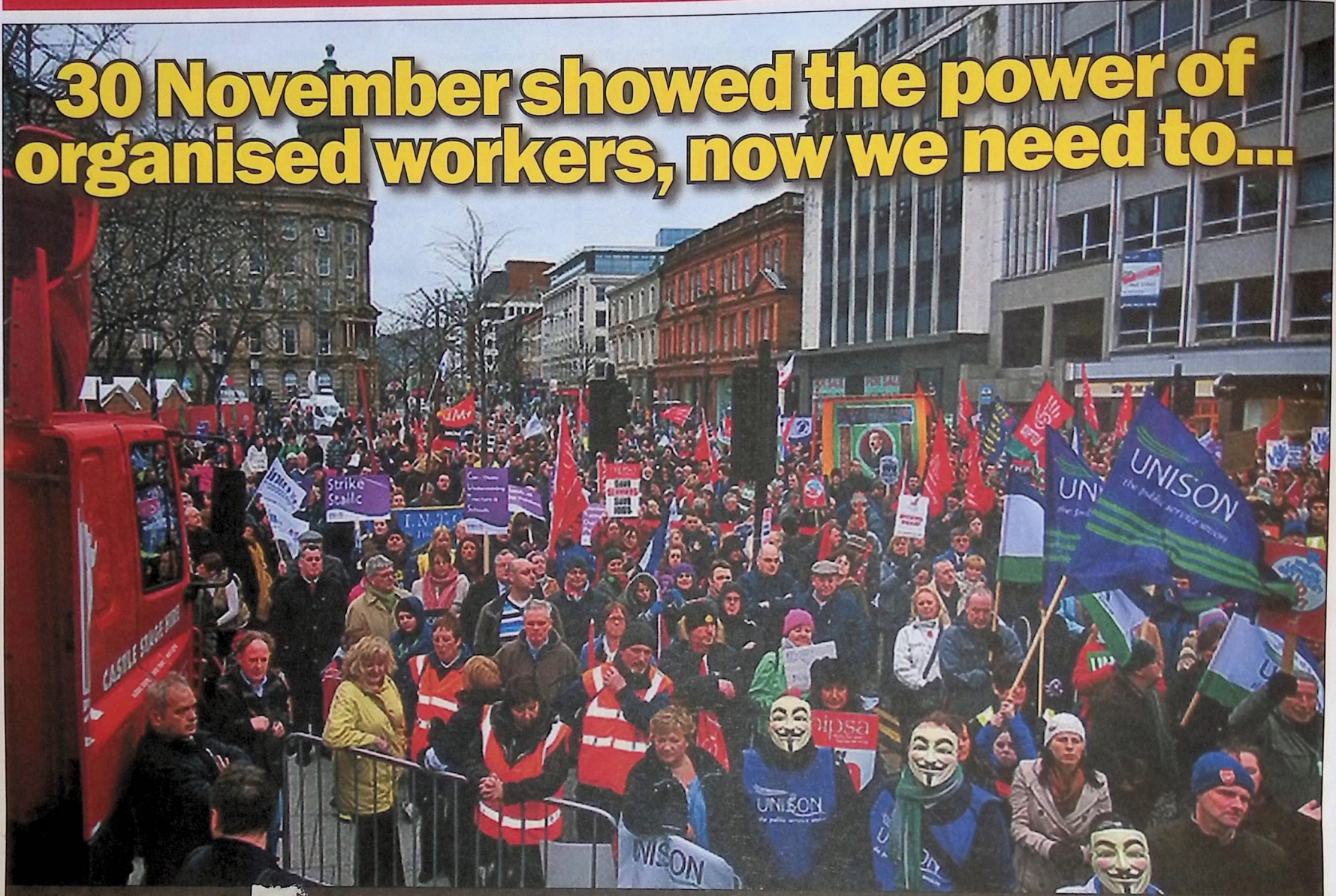
We need to organise in our own communities to build opposition to these charges fast: hold meetings, assemblies, demonstrations, distribute literature... Together we can take action and defeat injustice. **Don't Register: Don't pay.**

Breege Burke
Dette Mc Loughlin
James Duggan
Margaret Heneghan,
Galway

We want to hear from you - send your letters to:
editor@swp.ie or PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

Socialist Worker

30 November showed the power of organised workers, now we need to...



NAME THE NEXT DATE FOR STRIKES TO BEAT THE CUTS

NOVEMBER 30 was a fantastic display of anger and industrial muscle by workers who are fed up being told by politicians and the rich that public sector pay and pensions have to be cut.

The whole of Britain and the North came to a standstill as millions of health, education, government and civil service workers struck against the cruel policies of Westminster and Stormont.

Much has been made of the 'Head of Agreement' offered by the CON-DEM government and agreed by some Trade Union leaders before Christmas.

Essentially it still results in public sector workers contributing more into their pension, working longer and getting less when they retire. Even Danny Alexander, chief secretary to the Treasury, told parliament the deal will cut 'tens of billions of pounds in decades to come from pensions'.

However there are still Unions representing over a million workers who have declined the offer from Westminster, including the PCS, NUT, NASUWT, UCU, Unite (health and local government) NIPSA and UCAC.

From 1 April the government is going to increase contributions from workers into the pension fund. We therefore need a roadmap of more strike action from Unions who have already rejected the deal – they should take the initiative and name the next round of industrial action. Even if Union leaders accept the



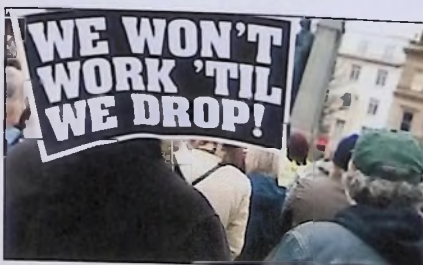
CON-DEM deal, many rank and file workers will refuse to cross the picket lines of their colleagues.

The Government plans to make us work three years longer meaning that workers have to literally work until they drop. If the Tories follow through on their plan to raise the state retirement age to 68 only one third of people would reach retirement age in good health, according to a recent report. The rest would retire with a life-limiting mental or physical disability, or die before they got that far. The report was researched by a team of academics at University College London.

Already NIPSA have come out to oppose the Con-Dem offer. We need all the Unions in the North to come out and declare their opposition to this insulting deal.

Calling off strikes will be a slap in the face of every worker who struck on 30 Nov and everyone who wants to fight in the battle launched by the Tories and their partners in Stormont.

In the run up to 30 November, and from platforms on the day, Trade Union leaders in the North said this was just the start of strikes against austerity. There is an onus on NIC-ICTU to uphold this promise and name the date for more strike action. We need as many Unions as possible on strike until these attacks are completely rolled back. This shouldn't be just Public Sector Unions; Mark Serwotka of the PCS had it absolutely right when he suggested that we also need private sector workers out if we are going to win this battle.



As important as they are, we are not just engaged in a fight against pension attacks on public sector cuts, we are involved in a war against ongoing austerity.

The rich have set their sights on making workers pay for years to come, and if we are to win we need more and bigger strikes like 30 November.

Working people are the only force that can defeat Westminster and Stormont plans to make us pay. It is absolutely crazy that we should have cuts to schools and hospitals in the 21st century.

Lets stand together to make sure that our social services and our livelihoods are properly protected.

**Inside Page Four:
The Belfast Relief Riots of 1932**