

Socialist Worker

The majority have spoken:



WE ARE NOT PAYING

Fight the Household Tax

National Campaign
Hotline: 1890-98-98-00

Website:
www.nohouseholdtax.org



Inside

Mass Rally Against the Household Charges
Page 4

Briefing Document on the Fiscal Treaty
Page 6

THE government is on the run as most people have refused to pay the household charge.

Thousands have also turned out to big protests against the charges. Last Saturday, 3,000 people attended a huge rally in the National Stadium in Dublin. The crowds were so big that an overflow rally had to be held outside.

2,000 people marched in Letterkenny on the same day; 3,000 in Wexford and 200 in Tralee.

At the mass rally, there was unanimous support for mass protests at the national conventions on the two government parties.

The political elite have been living in a world of their own, imagining that a 'silent majority' were just waiting to hand over their €100.

But even the New York Times knew different when they ran a story claiming the revolt over household charges showed that Irish patience with austerity has come to an end.

But the Irish political establishment thought

people would submit forever.

The Environment Ministers' response has been to engage in bully boy tactics. Teams of local authority workers, he claims, will be visiting the houses of non-payers just to make sure they know about their liabilities.

Strangely enough, his government never sent teams of Revenue Commissioners to the homes of the very rich to inform them they could not be 'tax exiles' while continuing to normally live in Ireland.

The contracts of local authority workers do not specify 'debt collection' as one of their main duties. Unions like IMPACT, therefore, should be told to stand behind members who refuse to engage in this activity.

Up the now, the main union which has stood alongside the anti-household charges campaign has been UNITE. The other unions have operated as stooges of the Labour Party. As the campaign

mounted, they verbally condemned the flat rate charge – but they have been backing the idea of property charges.

The first phase of the campaign has come to an end but instead of demobilising we need to step up the action.

Confidence will grow the more the movement moves onto the streets and escalates its struggle up to the level of peaceful, mass non-violent civil disobedience.

The networks of resistance that have emerged also need to get political as the government tries to ram the Fiscal treaty down our necks. Local groups should discuss the details on this treaty and the wider campaign should call for a No vote.

Remember: the IMF, the ECB and the EU Commission insisted that these property taxes be part of the Memorandum of Understanding. Now they have given us another opportunity to hit back and we should take it.

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General strikes in Portugal, Spain and Italy



By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

SPAIN'S two main unions, the General Workers Union and the Workers Commissions, called a general strike on Thursday 29 March to protest against the government's austerity push.

Italy's largest trade union called for a general strike over labour reforms a day earlier on Wednesday 28 March, in protest against Prime Minister Mario Monti and Italy's austerity. The strike marked the biggest demonstration yet against technocrat premier Monti, a former European Commissioner.

The previous week, on Thursday 22 March, Portuguese public services and transportation came to a halt, as unions enacted a

24-hour general strike for the second time in two months against the government's austerity measures. The metros in Portugal's largest cities have closed as well as major ports.

This immediately throws up the question as to why the unions in Ireland haven't called similar strikes? Could it be because many of the trade union leaders are members of the Labour Party? The leaders of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions won't even call for a NO vote in the Fiscal Treaty referendum, even though they originally condemned the Fiscal compact!

It's time to break the link with Labour inside the unions. Get your union branch to pass a motion in support of the protest at the Labour Party conference on 14 April.

24HR STRIKE AT EDDIE STOBART



DRIVERS at Eddie Stobart, Tesco's main distribution company, held a 24 hour strike on Wednesday 21 March.

The majority of the company's drivers took part in the strike at the Ballymun distribution centre in Dublin.

The strike was to highlight the refusal of the company to deal with drivers concerns over roster and fatigue issues.

Workers turn up for work not knowing what

routes or hours they'll have to work. This makes planning family or other commitments impossible and increases risks of driving accidents.

As Socialist Worker goes to press Eddie Stobart was due to appear before the Rights Commissioner on Wednesday 28 March to answer these grievances over excessive working hours and health and safety issues relating to the Organisation of Working Time Act.

Construction workers organise to resist pay cuts

AS Socialist Worker goes to press, UNITE has called a meeting of mechanical workers in the construction sector on Thursday 29 March at 5.30 pm in the Moran's Red Cow Hotel in Dublin.

Top of the agenda is a strategy to combat the drive by building bosses and the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) to slash wages in the construction industry.

Tom Fitzgerald said, "All Mechanical Workers should attend this important meeting, to send a clear message to construction employers, we cannot and will not accept further cuts to our pay."

In a letter to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) earlier this year the CIF outlined its intention to slash workers' wages by up to 40%. Building bosses want to use the economic crisis to cut skilled workers wages down to the minimum wage. They also want to cut travel time and other allowances.

Most workers in the building industry



work unsociable hours that mean very early starts so allowances like travel time are a necessity. The building industry is also one of the most dangerous jobs, accounting for some of the highest numbers of workplace accidents. Over the years unions have built up better health and safety standards. Building bosses now want to dismantle those safeguards to make more profits.

One of the meeting organisers said, "Don't let employers force you away to

build Canada and New Zealand. Come to the General meeting on 29 March and find out how together we can fight to save the industry".

In April ICTU will launch a 10-point Construction Workers' Charter which building workers in all trade unions will be asked to sign up to.

The charter calls for:
■ The total rejection of the latest attempt by the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) to slash wages and eliminate decent working conditions in the construction industry.

■ The protection of the industry's Registered Employment Agreement.

Congress Industrial Officer, Fergus Whelan, said, "At the March meeting of the Construction Industry Committee of Congress it was decided that the only way to stop attempts by employers to implement massive pay cuts and to ensure the industry's Registered Employment Agreement is maintained is a full mobilisation of building workers, both employed and unemployed."

Vita Cortex occupation passes 100 days



SATURDAY 24 March marked 100 days since the workers occupied the former foam manufacturing plant on the Kinsale Road in Cork in pursuit of their agreed redundancy payments. The worker's

campaign got a major boost lately when Christy Moore played a packed out concert to support them.

On Friday 16 March the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) informed SIPTU

representatives involved in talks on the Vita Cortex dispute that there is, as yet, no basis for direct discussions with the company's owners.

The only response to this is to continue the sit-in and organise

more protests on the streets of Cork. The last solidarity protest drew 5000 people. Trade union activists in Cork are organising for a Cork wide stoppage in support of the Vita Cortex workers.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Cork Institute of Technology workers force management to reverse job cuts

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

CORK Institute of Technology (CIT) workers forced management to re-instate six workers by threatening to go on strike on Wednesday 2 March.

The six workers, SIPTU members, worked for Student Services Ltd – a private company which manages CIT's four canteens and restaurants, as well as its shops.

Even though the union agreed to a cut in hours for other workers to help pay for the reinstatement it shows that old style trade unionism – strikes, is the best way to put manners on management.

Management cracked after the workers said they would appeal to other union members – including caretakers and key holders – not to cross their picket line.

80% vote for strike at Bord na Mona

EIGHTY percent of workers at Bord na Mona balloted in favour of strike action over the company's failure to give them a 3.5% pay increase earlier this month.

Close to 2,000 workers, members of UNITE; SIPTU and TEEU unions took part in the ballot.

The company is trying to use the economic crisis as an excuse to refuse to give the pay increase. No date has yet been set for the strike to begin. Socialist Worker will keep readers posted.

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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 independent rank and file action.

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Editorial: What Socialists Say



Fine Gael's dodgy deal

IN the run up to last year's general election, the current minister for Transport, Leo Varadkar, made his now infamous pledge that Fine Gael would not give another 'red cent' to the bankers until senior bond holders were forced into burden sharing.

In government, his party predictably reneged on this promise, but not without attempting to spin their way out of any inconsistency.

This week Varadkar claims that he promised not to give one cent more than the €35 billion that had already been promised by Fianna Fail.

But everybody knows that his party had no intention of ever forcing senior bond holders to pick up the tab.

Like their predecessors, Fine Gael is falling over itself to implement the policies of the Troika

They have no qualms about cutting wages, slashing services or withdrawing benefits. But in return they expect a level of co-operation in 'managing the message'.

This week Fine Gael host their annual Ard Fheis in the Johnny Ronan built Dublin Convention Centre.

The timing and the symbolism meant that forking out €3.1 billion simply wasn't an option.

According to the official spin, the government have convinced the Troika to allow them to put off paying this year's promissory note by taking out a further bond that will be repaid in 2025.

In reality a nasty deal has been done at the expense of the Irish tax payer.

As the interest continues to mount, Fine Gael get to brag about putting off the payment in return for a solemn commitment to get the Fiscal Treaty passed.

The elites believe that this will be the cheapest method of buying off the public.

And once the treaty is passed it will be business as usual.

Ten years of cuts will become 20 years and the Irish state will have no way to break free from the policies of austerity.

Disband Fianna Fail – and watch Fine Gael!

'CORRUPTION in Irish life was both endemic and systemic.' The Mahon report was right in identifying the problem.

At the apex of this system was the Fianna Fail party.

At least two of its former leaders, Haughey and Ahern, received large, mysterious sums of money while in office. Its current leader, Martin, received a €5,000 'donation' from the Cork property speculator, Owen O' Callaghan.

Fianna Fail was founded in 1926 from the most militant sections of the IRA. Its rhetoric was as left wing as anything that has come from Gerry Adams. But as soon as it came to power in 1932, it set about managing capitalism.

It became the main vehicle by which business interacted with the state. You either joined the local cumman or made donations to win a government contract. In the words of Tomas Gilmartin, it made 'the Mafia look like monks'.

Today it should be told to disband.

FF's role has now been taken by Fine Gael. Before the last election, they accumulated €3 million in political donations from big business. Their chief fund raiser was the present Environment Minister, Phil Hogan.

But they refuse to reveal who their donors were.

The Mahon Tribunal made some good recommendations.

- Those convicted of bribery should be banned from public office.
- Companies which engaged in bribery should be banned from public tenders for seven years.
- All anonymous donations over €55 to an individual candidate or €175 to a party should be banned.
- No party should receive more than €5,000 in total from anonymous donations.

This is all well and good. But to end corruption properly, we will have to uproot the power of big business and destroy their links to the political classes.

Anglo Promissory Notes – The Greatest Bank Robbery in European History



By BRIAN O' BOYLE

PICTURE the scene. Four masked and armed men enter a bank vault in the dead of night and start helping themselves to the loot. By morning, staff return to find the vault cleaned out and a note which reads 'thanks for the generous dig-out'.

In this case, thousands may have been illegally 'lifted' and the police would immediately be tasked with trying to 'right' this 'wrong'.

Now consider another scene. Four suited and thoroughly 'respectable' men enter government buildings in the dead of night. In their brief cases they are armed with documents which must be signed lest the entire banking system collapse.

By morning the Irish population awakens to find that the private debts of six major banks have been guaranteed by their taxes. But there is no thank you note. The police are barely informed. And the considerable resources of the state are used to railroad through a number of bank 'bailouts'.

Promissory Notes

Since September 2008, the Irish state has committed upwards of €80 billion of taxpayers money to bailing out the gamblers and speculators. Promissory notes are fancy I.O.U.'s dreamed up by the Department of Finance in order to pay off Anglo and Irish Nationwide bondholders as their claims came due.

Ordinarily, the government could simply borrow this money on the open market by issuing bonds to private investors.

But by March 2010 the costs of the



original bailout had convinced investors that Ireland was no longer worth lending to.

Desperate to pay off the speculators, the Irish state turned to the ECB for help.

Instead of borrowing the money, the ECB allowed the Irish government to just issue €30.6 billion worth of bonds to Anglo Irish and Irish Nationwide. These bonds were then taken to the Irish Central Bank to be cashed in.

In reality the ECB had created €30.6 billion which would have to be repaid by the blood sweat and tears of the Irish

population.

Some mainstream commentators argue that because the money was created in this way it could just as easily be uncreated. But this completely misses the point.

In capitalism all money is 'created' out of thin air only to be backed up by the human labour of the real economy. Token pieces of paper only gain their value when they are brought into contact with economic activity.

Without human labour all money would literally be valueless and so asking to destroy this money is no different from asking to destroy any other form of (fiat) legal tender.

Tell the ECB We Won't Pay

The ECB only allowed the Irish state to create the promissory note to ensure that Irish workers continue to pay off European capital.

Because the notes can only become real value as human labour is expended, they can only be redeemed at €3.1 billion per year.

The ECB is also charging Irish workers €17 billion in interest for the €30 billion it created out of thin air.

However it is not a matter of clicking a button on a computer screen as some right-wing economists suggest.

The ECB created these notes to force the Irish workers to pay off their debts so they will only be cancelled when Irish workers fight determinedly to cancel the debts and the austerity that supports it.

See our editorial for the truth about Noonan's 'deal' on this year's payment.

Monster rally galvanises campaign

REPORT: IAN MCDONNELL
PHOTOS: PAULA GERAGHTY

OVER 3000 people packed into the national boxing stadium on Saturday 24 March in a rally against the household charge.

The rally had a celebratory atmosphere as more than 80% of the population have not registered for the charge.

Coaches from all over the country transported people to the rally. The stadium was adorned with banners declaring non-payment from Donegal to Cork.

Among the speakers were Joe Higgins, Richard Boyd Barrett, Clare Daly and Brid Smith. There was also time for inspiring contributions from the floor.

The stadium's 2000 seats were filled with hundreds more standing in the aisles. An additional 300 people who couldn't get in where addressed in turn by the main speakers who went outside to greet them.

Before the rally began more than 200 residents from Rialto and Crumlin marched to the stadium, meeting hundreds waiting at the entrance.

Last July John Fitzgerald of the ESRI said that for the government to meet its targets the household charge would have to increase to around €500 per household.

According to the ESRI the money taken out of the economy by the household charge will lead to a consumer decline of around €100 million by next year.

The government's plan is not just unjust; it makes no sense in economic terms as it will cause deflation.

The government have ruled out an extension on the payment deadline, and have threatened to take money from people's salaries & social welfare.

Clare Daly assured protestors that once the state clamped down "thousands of people would be ready to march on the courts" in support of their families & neighbours.

Daly said that the campaign was akin to a "citizen army" which represented the vast majority of ordinary people.

Richard Boyd Barrett pointed out that this was part of a wider resistance against EU-IMF austerity engulfing Europe.

The speakers made clear that the money generated through the charge would be channelled into further bank bailouts and not into public services or infrastructure.

Michael Dunne from Enfield Kildare said "the amount we pay in tax relative to other countries doesn't come back in services, we pay stamp duty, and unlike in Britain we don't receive free healthcare or fire services".

This was repeated by many in attendance. Sarah Cullen from Wexford commented that the next step should be "to take to the streets like the Greeks".



All the speakers made the point that while non-payment is central, mass mobilizations and civil disobedience are essential to breaking the govern-

ment's resolve. The household tax will be defeated through people demonstrating on the streets in their tens of thousands. There

will be major demonstrations on both the Fine Gael Ard Fheis on Saturday 31 March and the Labour Party conference on 14 April in Galway.

6,500 MARCH AGAINST HOUSEHOLD TAX

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

6,500 people took part in marches around the country against the household and septic tank charge on Saturday 24 March. 2000 marched in Letterkenny, 3,000 in Wexford, 500 in Tralee, 500 in Arklow and 500 in Dundalk.

It marked a day of anger against the household tax which also saw 3000 people attend a national rally in Dublin.

In one of the biggest rallies of the day, people travelled from all over county Donegal, and a small group came from north Leitrim.

Socialist Worker



spoke to people on the demonstration.

Gaeth Dobhair priest, Brian O'Fearraigh urged people not to pay the

household charge, septic tank charges or water taxes stating that "it was once said that 'there is only one way to succeed in anything

and that is to give it everything."

He and a number of others then symbolically tore up household charge registration forms.

Thomas Pringle TD got a massive cheer when he responded to reports that the Government had told councils to start knocking doors to collect the charge by saying: "The message will be the same, we can't pay, we won't pay, now go away."

Owen Curran, a campaigner from Falcarragh said, "We must ensure these charges are relegated to the septic tank of history".

Campaigners from

the four corners of Ireland will converge on the FG and Labour Party conferences in

the coming weeks to continue this mass movement against unfair austerity.

What We Think: UNITE THE RESISTANCE

THE Campaign Against the Household and Septic Tank taxes is a mass campaign that could break the government's austerity plans.

It has mobilised tens of thousands of people in meetings and protest throughout the country.

There have also been marches against cuts to education, small schools and to save local hospitals.

We need to unite all these struggles into one fight against all austerity.

The government want to play one group off against another; if they roll back a cut here, they say they must cut deeper there.

We must reject all the cuts, unite the resistance and say cancel all the debt that has been run up to save the bankers and the rich.

Lessons of the Poll Tax – Protest Works

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

SATURDAY 31 March is the anniversary of the 1990 Poll Tax riot in London. More than 200,000 protesters marched to Trafalgar Square, in a show of defiance that ended in a riot that forced Maggie Thatcher to resign.

In 1987 Thatcher went about implementing a 'community charge', a type of taxation involving every citizen.

The community charge was quickly renamed the Poll Tax after the infamous medieval tax which sparked the Peasants' Revolt in 1381.

The Tories tried to spin the same lies as FG and said the new tax was to pay for community services.

But in fact it shifted the tax burden from rich to poor, as it was based on the number of people living in a house rather than its estimated price.

However, mass non-payment of the hated poll tax, with some 18 million refusing to pay, forced a complete turnabout.

The giant poll tax protest that ended in a riot was the final nail in Thatcher's coffin. It shows the power of mass protests.

The Irish Government is attempting to ape Thatcher's Britain, let's give them the full lesson and build a similar radical movement of civil disobedience and protests against the hated household and septic tank charge.

We can kick them out just like Thatcher was.

'Austerity Walk' to FG Conference

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

EIGHT members from Donegal Action Against Austerity are walking from Malin Head to Dublin to protest at the FG Ard-Fheis on Saturday 31 March.

Joe Murphy, one of the walkers spoke to Socialist Worker.

"We're doing this to highlight that on 31 March the government plans to hand over 3.1 billion to bondholders while on the same day they plan to make criminals of hundreds of thousands of Irish people who refuse to pay the household tax.

The bankers are the real criminals, not ordinary decent Irish people."

John McLoughlin, another walker, said, "Most people don't know who these bondholders are.

"We have put in parliamentary questions asking if any FG members are bondholders.

"We have information that suggests that as many as 10 of them are bondholders, including leading government ministers".

Joe continued, "This walk has been the most fantastic experience of my life, the support we have received has been overwhelming.

"Complete strangers pull up in their cars to offer us cups of tea and sandwiches.

"Others come and walk with us for a few miles along the route".

"We are calling on all those who can to join us for the final leg of the march.

"Buses are coming from Connamara, Galway, Waterford, Limerick and Cork. Meet at 12 noon at the Spire on O'Connell St to march to the FG conference".

"We need a new movement against austerity in the country. Everyone has to come together".

Providence's Oil Grab



By KIERAN ALLEN

PROVIDENCE resources have announced the discovery of a major oil find off the Cork coast, in Baryroe, that is the equivalent to a flow of 4,000 barrels a day.

Tony O'Reilly is a major shareholder in the company and so it came as little surprise that his newspapers presented it as a great advance for Ireland. The reality is that O'Reilly operates as a front man for oil multi-nationals who are to set to grab Ireland's natural resources.

O'Reilly only owns 20 percent of Providence and the other major shareholders are hedge funds such as JP Morgan Asset Management and Blackrock.

Typically, large oil companies get local concerns to undertake exploratory work. But as soon as a discovery is made, they move in and reward the local capitalists for their efforts.

Providence's last big discovery was on the Dunquinn Prospect in the Porcupine Basin. The licence to explore cost a mere €11,000 plus an annual rental income of €27 per square kilometre. Less than two years after winning the licence, O'Reilly did a deal with Exxon-Mobil, ENI and Repsol. Under the terms of the agreement, these companies will develop the area and O'Reilly will be paid off with a handsome sum.

The same trick will occur in Baryroe because as - one stockbroker report acknowledged - Providence only has cash to last until late 2013.

Ireland currently has the easiest fiscal terms for oil and gas multi-nationals in the world. The 'state take' from oil and



gas amounts to less than a mere 30 percent of the profits. In comparison, states like Venezuela, Iran, Yemen or Nigeria all take more than 75 percent.

In a nearby area, the state take from oil companies in the North Sea amounts to 78 percent in Norway and 62 percent in Britain. Providence, for example, is



also involved in Singleton in Britain, but it will pay that government twice what it will pay in Ireland.

The reason why the Irish government take is so small is that no royalties are charged on the oil or gas.

The tax on profits is set at 25 percent but companies can write off 100 percent

of their exploration costs.

The former Green Minister, Eamon Ryan, introduced a further Petroleum Resource Rent Tax but it is graduated according to the size of the find and it is doubtful if Providence or its partners will pay much under this scheme.

Nor will the oil discovery in Ballyroe add to Ireland's energy security because there are no requirements to supply it to the home market.

Providence is also involved in exploration in other parts of Ireland and its most controversial target area is Dalkey Island in Dublin Bay.

Here the company is drilling within 8 kilometres of the shore line and there are already clear indications that it will make a find of some sort. The drilling is in waters that are just 25 metres deep and there are also indications that there may also be gas finds in the area.

Its partner in these ventures is a Malaysian company, Petronas, that is 100 percent state owned.

Petronas, however, is involved in refining oil in South Africa and has caused considerable environmental damage.

Large protest meetings have been called against Providence's planned drilling in Dublin Bay. More than 400 people turned up in Dun Laoghaire and Greystones to voice their concerns.

The local People Before Profit TD, Richard Boyd Barrett, said that if an accident occurred on this site, it would pollute the whole of Dublin Bay very quickly.

Instead of handing over our natural resources, they should be taken into public ownership and proper environmental standards should be applied.

Robbing the poor to pay the rich

By GORETTI HORGAN

AS the conservatives latest Budget announced generous tax cuts for the rich, thousands of families in Northern Ireland face losing on average £75 a week from April, due to changes in the way the Working Tax Credit (WTC) is being calculated.

And that's just the latest part of the assault on working class living standards that we have seen under the guise of 'welfare reform'.

To date, anyone receiving Housing Benefit - whether in-work or out-of-work - has either had their benefit cut or had a letter telling them that it will be 're-assessed' on the anniversary of their claim.

Moreover, tenants in the Private Rented Sector are already having to find an average of £20 a week (from the £67 a week if they are on Jobseekers) to top up their rent because Housing Benefit does not cover it all.

Cameron defends cutting five pence off the 50p tax rate for people earning more than £150,000 a year by saying that we've all had cuts in our personal tax rates. This is true to a point. But those workers who receive the Working Tax Credit are not earning enough to actually benefit.

In the North wages are so low that a far higher proportion of workers get the WTC than even the poorest parts of Scotland, England or Wales. So, many families will not see a penny from the cuts to personal taxation rates, but will lose a lot from cuts to WTC and other benefits.

For those dependent on benefits, the outlook is even bleaker. As prices for food and fuel continue to rise,

GEORGE OSBORNE ISN'T WORKING



the right-wing Institute for Fiscal Studies has said that the poorest 10% of the population face a drop of 7% in the money coming in from benefits - and that's on top of cuts that have already been made to benefits.

When the Tories say they want to make the rich pay more they cut their taxes.

When they say they want to help the poor they cut their benefits.

This sick logic could only make sense to a bunch of millionaires who actively benefit by the cut in the 50p tax rate whilst never having to come next to near the pain of resource poverty.

They want to make us pay

THE Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin remarked that "capitalists can buy themselves out of any crisis, so long as they make the workers' pay".

Today we are in the midst of an economic crisis of unprecedented depth. No one in the ruling class has a serious strategy for fixing the system.

But we know the bosses will go to any length to save their profits. And they are happy to make working class people pay an enormous price for this.

We have seen what this means in Greece and elsewhere in Europe.

In Ireland and Britain, Kenny and Cameron are only too willing to impose that scale of austerity on their respective populations.

Fortunately, the sense of class bitterness is growing across the two islands.

Everywhere people see the rich living the high life while the poorest struggle.

Right wing governments are beginning to face increased opposition on many fronts. They can be beaten.

British workers' pay whilst Cameron grabs a flashy refurb

DAVID Cameron and George Osborne like to tell us that Britain is short of cash.

This is the excuse they wheel out to justify slashing our jobs and services.

But it's rubbish. Not only are the Tories busying themselves giving tax breaks to the rich, they've even found time to splash the cash doing up their own homes.

Cameron has spent some £1.8 million on 'renovations' and 'refurbishment' of Downing Street.

The money probably went on his home at Number 11 and on George Osborne's flat at Number 10.

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

The Austerity Treaty - How to make a bad situation worse

By SINEAD KENNEDY

BANK bailouts, savage attacks on health, education and welfare budgets, cuts to the public sector, wage cuts and extra taxes have devastated the lives of working class people in Ireland.

These austerity policies have also made the economic crisis much worse.

Every week the government press office releases some new 'feel-good' story ranging from 'we've turned a corner' or 'we're back on track' to Michael Noonan's bizarre statement that the Irish economy is about 'to take off like a rocket'.

The reality, however, is very different.

Not only has this government failed to stabilise the economy, figures released last week confirm that the situation is getting worse with the Irish economy, once again, falling back into recession.

Now the Fine Gael/Labour government are trying to make the situation even worse with the signing of the 'Fiscal Treaty'.

Austerity Treaty

The 'Fiscal Treaty' is best described as an 'Austerity Treaty'. If passed, it will mean ever more savage attacks, as governments are forced to introduce swinging cuts and increases on the taxes being paid by ordinary people.

This will not 'balance the books', as the government is fond of saying.

Rather it will worsen the situation as ordinary families have less to spend and more and more people are thrown onto the dole.

We only have to look to Greece to see how austerity has impoverished people to such an extent that parents are putting their children into care because they can no longer afford to feed them.

The Treaty is designed to stop governments spending more than they take in tax.

This may well seem to be common sense.

But in the middle of a severe economic crisis, like the current one, this approach is economic suicide.

If the private sector goes on strike, the government has to be able to step into the breach.

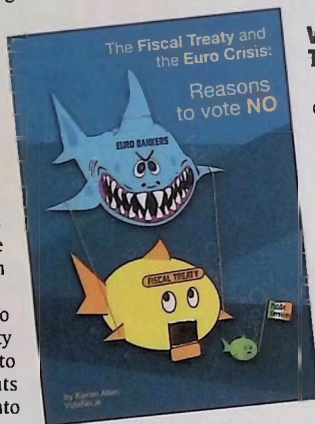
Going against the economic cycle has been part of standard macroeconomics since the 1930's but now the mandarins of Europe want to make this illegal.

The elites argue that the crisis was caused by irresponsible government spending.

But the fiscal crisis only emerged after the banking crisis.

In other words the fiscal crisis was an effect of a crisis that was caused by the private sector.

Government spending increased to try to solve the crisis and the main reason for government deficits is that income tax has collapsed due to mass unemployment.



The SWP will publish a more comprehensive document on the fiscal treaty in the coming weeks. The pamphlet, written by Kieran Allen is entitled, *Fiscal Treaty and Euro Crisis - Reasons to Vote No*.

What does the Treaty do?

Article 3 of the Treaty requires all member states to meet a harsh new 'structural deficit' target of 0.5% by 2015.

For Ireland to achieve this figure it would mean an additional €5.7 billion worth of annual cuts and taxes on top of the €7 billion the government are already committed to under the EU/IMF bailout deal.

Article 4 of the Treaty demands that all member states reduce their debt to GDP ratio to 60%.

Ireland's debt to GDP ratio is expected to be 120% by 2015.

If the economy fails to escape recession, something practically guaranteed by the savage cut-backs insisted on by Article 3 of the Treaty, this will impose a further €4.5 billion on top of the €9 billion in interest payments already earmarked for that year.

These numbers are simply unsustainable and Ireland will soon go the way of Greece.

What happens if we say NO?

Both Fine Gael and Labour understand how deeply unpopular their austerity is.

They are terrified at the increasing level of resistance in the country and they are adopting the 'Armageddon strategy' to sell the Treaty.

In other words, they hope to frighten and, if that fails, blackmail people into voting yes.

They are trying to scare people by claiming that Ireland will anger the European Central Bank (ECB)

and be kicked out of Europe. This is simply not true.

We may indeed anger the ECB. But in reality all it will mean is that Ireland has not signed up to the Austerity club. Britain, for example has refused to sign and Sweden already has an opt-out on many of the Treaty rules.

Blackmail

The only argument the government have in their favour is the so-called 'Blackmail' clause, which means that if Ireland does not ratify the Treaty it will not have access to a second bailout from the European Stability Mechanism (ESM).

The government actively collaborated with Merkel and Sarkozy in insisting that this clause was included in the Treaty.

It has the power to demand that the clause is dropped but it wants to blackmail the Irish population.

Anyone would think that a second bailout is some form of gift from the EU.

But let us not forget that bailouts are far from charity.

They work to impose the costs of the crisis on ordinary people, and in any case, the only reason that Ireland will need a second bailout is because the government is wasting billions paying off bondholders and protecting the super-rich.

The cost of the second bailout to Greek society has destroyed the lives of millions of people.

Far better to cancel the debt and redistribute the country's assets.

Democracy

More than anything, the Fiscal Treaty is an attack on democracy.

The little remaining say that we have over our economy will be handed over to unelected bu-

reaucrats in Europe. Key decisions about our economy and our public services would be put into the hands of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice.

It will mean that any future government will have its hands tied and be forced to pursue the current austerity policies regardless of how many people oppose them.

There is an Alternative

Mainstream politicians and the media constantly insist that there is no alternative to the current strategy of bailouts and austerity. That is why they tell us we must vote for this Treaty.

The ruling class tell us that billions must be allowed to flow freely in the Eurozone when it is allocated to bondholders, but that governments are not allowed to invest in public services and protect the interests of ordinary people.

That is why we need an alternative, one that puts the interests of people before profit.

As we argued earlier the current deficit is a result of the economy seizing up.

The only way to deal with the crisis is to put people back to work through a public works programme and to tackle the investment strike of the super-rich.

To do this a number of measures are required:

■ We need to stop paying off all debts incurred from private bank losses and indefinitely defer the rest.

■ We need to impose capital controls to prevent the rich moving money out of the country.

■ We need a wealth tax on the global assets of all who reside here. Wealthy individuals must be treated

in exactly the same way as social welfare recipients.

■ They should be legally obliged to make a full declaration of their assets so that they can be properly taxed.

■ We need a financial transactions tax both to make the movement of money more transparent and to prevent speculation.

■ We need one good state bank to manage the flow of credit in the interests of human centred and environmentally sustainable development.

■ We need to raise the corporation profits tax and abolish the Universal Social Charge so that the spending power of working people increases.

■ We need to take Ireland's natural resources into public ownership and use them to promote industrial development.

■ We need to use this money to create a public works programme to put people back to work by building schools and hospitals and developing public transport and communications

These socialist policies would challenge the very basis of the EU's structures which have been designed to serve capital.

They will not be granted through quiet diplomacy or government-to-government negotiation.

They will require an escalation of the protest movement onto a new political level that involves the strength of organised workers.

This will take much work and energy but a start can be made with a loud NO to the Fiscal Compact Treaty.

The SWP will publish a more comprehensive document on the fiscal treaty in the coming weeks. The pamphlet, written by Kieran Allen is entitled, *Fiscal Treaty and Euro*

Greece needs workers' control more than a left wing government



By PANOS GARGANAS

GREECE is heading for parliamentary elections in about a month's time.

The attempts by the Troika (IMF-EU-ECB) to impose government by 'technocrats' have backfired.

On 12 February, the center of Athens saw the most massive and militant demonstration against the government since the 1970's.

The political parties that formed the 'technocratic' coalition government under banker Lucas Papademos, a former deputy president of the ECB, are in disarray.

Back in 2009, the combined share of the vote for the Blairite PASOK and the conservative New Democracy party was over 77%.

Since joining the Papademos government they have shrunk to less than half of that, according to opinion polls.

Both parties have suffered splits, with a nationalist wing of the Greek Tories opposing the agreement with the IMF and the EU, and a social democratic wing breaking away from PASOK.

So the political field looks very fragmented going into the election and Papademos will have a tough fight as he attempts to reconstitute his coalition.

The forces of the Left are also divided. But for the first time ever the percentage of people that prefer a coalition of the Left is neck and neck with the percentage that prefers a PASOK-New Democracy coalition.

Eurozone ministers meetings have been reported to be studying opinion polls in Greece! One thing is for certain: millions will rejoice

in Greece (and across Europe) if the Left gives a bloody nose to the local stalwarts of the Troika.

But it is one thing to celebrate a likely defeat of the political forces of the bankers and quite another to have illusions that a government with left wing ministers will be able to push through measures and policies that will reverse the trend and make the bosses rather than workers' pay for the crisis.

For this to start happening we need a radical anti-capitalist programme that includes a cancellation of the debt, nationalization of the banks, repeal of anti-working class legislation (e.g. liberalization of the labour market), reversal of the cuts in wages, pensions and social services.

Any attempt to implement such policies will meet with fierce resistance not just by the Greek ship-owners and bankers, but also by the European Union and its institutions.

Even our previous neoliberal government of George Papandreou was viciously blackmailed every time it tried to negotiate with Merkel and Sarkozy.

Papandreou was bundled out of office when he suggested that he might hold a referendum on the EU orchestrated 'bailout' of Greece.

It is easy to imagine what these forces would have in store for a government of the Left.

The burden of interest payments on the Greek budget is huge. It amounts to about one third of the total budget.

Stopping these payments to the bankers would save enough money to reverse all the cuts and start a programme of public investment that would give jobs back to the people

made redundant in the present crisis.

We should not expect that the bankers would respect the popular mandate of a government that would move in this direction. The ruling class has never done it in the past.

We remember what happened to Allende in Chile back in 1973. And if a government of the Left starts compromising in order to avoid the threat of a coup, there is no end to that slide.

Who remembers the final days of the Popular Front government in France after 1936?

There is only one way out of this.

The implementation of a left wing programme will have to be imposed from below, through collective action by the workers themselves.

That is why we in the Greek SWP and our allies in ANTARSYA, the coalition of the anti-capitalist left, are arguing for workers control as an integral part of a left solution to the crisis.

This is no empty slogan.

Already workers in Greece fighting to save their jobs have had to exercise control over their workplace.

Media workers in Eleftherotyria have had to produce the paper under their control.

Hospital workers fighting closures have vowed to keep hospitals running themselves. Such steps show the way forward.

So in the coming election we argue that a surge for the Left must include strengthening the anti-capitalist left.

A strong showing for ANTARSYA will mean taking out insurance for the struggles ahead.

Afghan community protests US atrocity

By JOHN MOLYNEUX

THE Afghan community in Dublin mounted an angry protest against the latest US atrocity in Afghanistan, the murder of 16 civilians including 9 children asleep in their beds.

About 50 to 60 Afghans joined an Irish Anti-War Movement demonstration at the Spire on Friday 16 March from 5.30- 6.30 pm and their chants rang out across O'Connell St. 'Shame on USA!' 'Stop the Killing! Stop the War!'

At the protest Sayed Ahmad Saeed, spokesperson for the Afghan community in Ireland, insisted that the official American version of the atrocity, that it had been committed by one deranged soldier, was a lie. He said,

'The accounts of eyewitnesses and relatives of the victims, all agree that the massacre was committed by a troop of about twenty US soldiers.

'In any case it would have been impossible for one soldier to walk three kilometres from



Afghan protest in Dublin

Picture: Fatim Al Tamimi

his base, kill people in their beds and then go on to kill in other villages without being resisted or overcome by the villagers themselves, who have arms to defend themselves.'

This kind of massacre is

typical of the behaviour of imperialist occupying forces from the days of the black and tans in Ireland, to Bloody Sunday in Derry and Abu Ghraib in Iraq.

The Irish Anti-War Movement calls for the immediate

withdrawal of all NATO forces from Afghanistan and for the withdrawal of the token Irish Force involved.

Socialist Worker also asks, 'What has Eamon Gilmore to say about this terrible slaughter?'

Zimbabwe socialists convicted for watching a video of Arab Spring

THE conviction of six socialists in Zimbabwe on trumped-up charges highlights the brutality of Robert Mugabe's regime, writes KEN OLENDE

A magistrate in Zimbabwe convicted six socialists of 'inciting public violence' on Monday.

The six had watched a video of news footage from the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia.

Some 160 supporters in the public gallery showed their outrage. Riot police were positioned outside to control hundreds more

Tuesday including in London, New York, Johannesburg and Melbourne.

Munyaradzi told the court the charges were "outright silly", and that this was "a case of political harassment by the state".

The prosecution's star witness was a spy in the meeting. He said under oath that he was Jonathan Shoko, a police officer attached to the Criminal Investigation Unit.

The defence exposed him as Rodwell Chitiyo from the secret police, the dreaded



Protest against the verdict in Johannesburg

demonstrating there.

The verdict shocked protesters as the state's case had looked as if it was collapsing due to lack of evidence.

One of the defendants, Munyaradzi Gwisai, said after the verdict, "The judiciary is being used by the regime to persecute and intimidate the opposition and civic society, to keep them confined by court cases that drag on, even if there is no case against them."

Munyaradzi is general coordinator of the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), the Socialist Workers Party's sister organisation in Zimbabwe.

His five co-defendants are leading ISO activists Tafadzwa Choto and Tatenda Mombeyarara, trade unionist Edison Chakuma, debt rights activist Hopewell Gumbo and student leader Welcome Zimuto.

The six plan to appeal—and activists around the world are stepping up the campaign for justice. Protests took place on

Central Intelligence Organisation.

The defence said that the case should be dismissed as there was no evidence to answer. But the magistrate went ahead.

And the prosecution went on to submit an inflammatory statement, which said, "The uprising had gone beyond the planning stage. "The date had been set."

In the run-up to the verdict Zimbabwe's head of police, Augustine Chihuri repeated the allegations, adding, "The warped and polluted agenda is to try and overthrow the government."

In the end the six avoided prison. But they each have to pay US\$500 or they still face a 10-month prison sentence.

The comrades are desperately in need of financial assistance to pay the fines and their legal and other costs.

Send money to ISO Zimbabwe, Solidarity, Unity Bank, Birmingham, account number 20136938, sort code 086001, IBAN: GB11 CPBK 0800 5150 0732 10. Send solidarity messages to solidarity@freethemnow.com

Socialist Worker

Tories at it again....

Robbing the poor the pay the Rich

MILLIONAIRE chancellor George Osborne and his mega rich friends have introduced another budget of cutbacks for the 99% while ensuring that the rich get richer.

The budget has targeted some of the most vulnerable in society with its programme of austerity.

Benefits are to be slashed by a further £10 billion, low paid workers who rely on tax credits will receive less, and millions of pensioners will struggle with new tax laws forcing them to pay more.

As bad as this seems, it gets worse when you analyse what the budget means for the wealthiest in our society.

Take corporation tax for example.

Under the Budget it will be slashed from 25% to 22%.

The 50p top rate of tax for those who earn over 150,000 year will be slashed down by down to 45p in the pound.

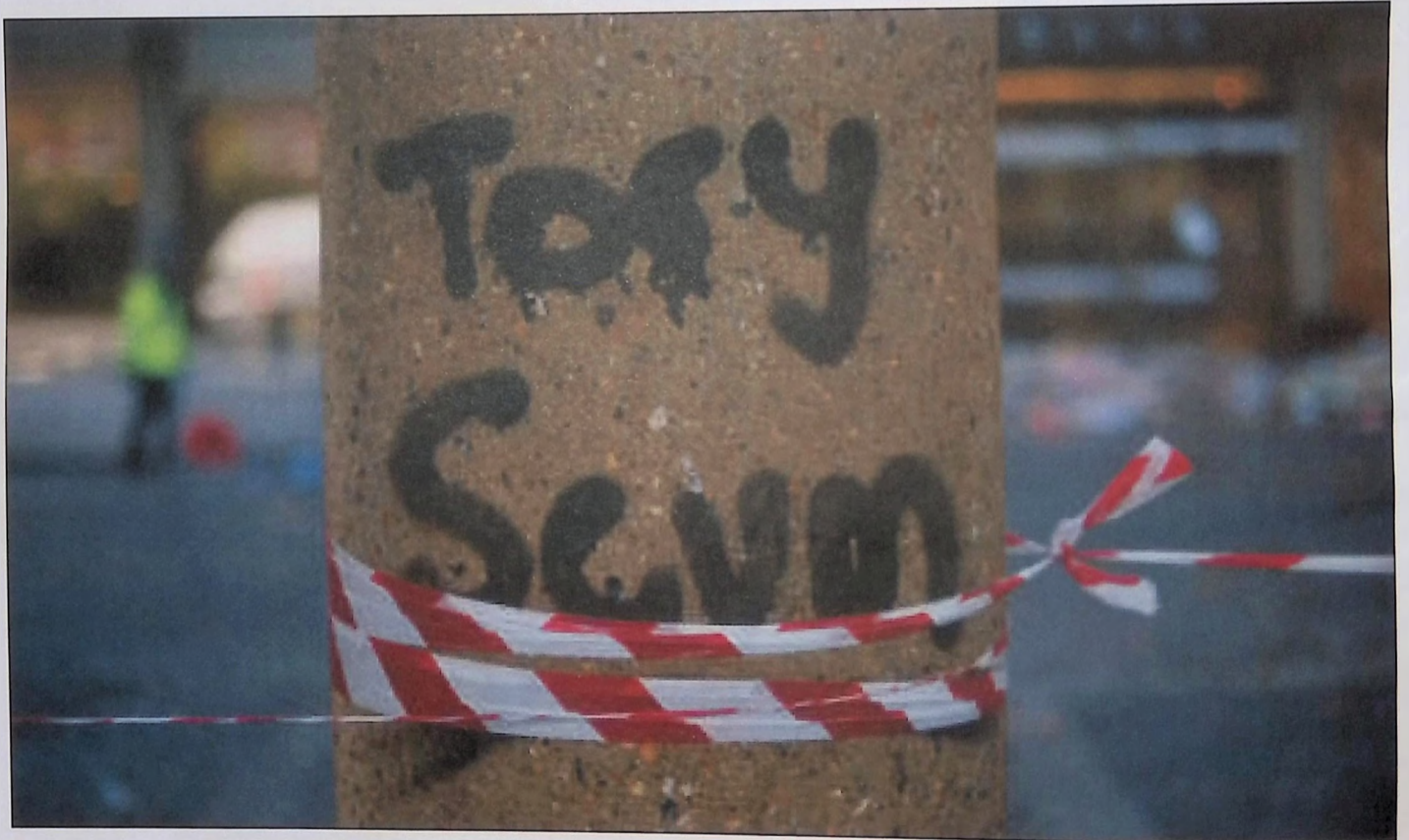
Effectively this will result in millionaires receiving a £17,500 hand-out on top of their already growing cash piles.

Osborne has claimed the budget is 'fair'.

But it's the same old Tories cutting taxes for the rich whilst hammering working people and those reliant on benefits.

Already as a result of Con-Dem austerity packages, over 600 public sector jobs have been lost every single day for the past 2 years in addition to unemployment rocketing and millions pushed further into poverty.

We have seen the real impact of the cuts with the scandals emerging out of the Royal Victoria hospital where an 83 year old patient was left to lie on a trolley for 36 hours before being treated, followed by an awful tragedy where a man was left to die



unnoticed lying on a trolley in the Accident and Emergency department. As the Belfast Trust Medical Director said "People do occasionally die. But nobody dies alone in an emergency department".

We were assured by Edwin Poots and other politicians that the closure of the City hospital would 'improve' patient care. In fact because of the closure of the City hospital there has been a huge increase in pa-



tient numbers –having an impact on an already stretched workforce.

More tragedies like the one witnessed in the Royal will be likely, especially with the announcement of a further 500 nursing jobs to go this year in hospitals across the North.

The policies of Edwin Poots and his supporters in every single party of the Executive will mean more people will die on trolley beds in our hospitals.

What makes this picture more sickening is

the announcement by a Stormont appointed panel that MLA's salary would increase by £5,000 a year.

This is a disgusting reminder of what side Stormont is really on—they are making us pay whilst increasing their own pay packets!

Despite strike action being called off for 28 March, we urgently need the unions to set a date for the next round of strikes.

Whether it's the hospital cuts or benefit slashing, people are angry and want to fight.

We need further strike action by Unions in the North to defend our public services and the lives of everyday people from decimation.

See inside page five: for more in depth analysis of the Tory budget.