

Socialist Worker

SACK REILLY AND HIS ROTTEN CRONIES...

DEFEND THE HOME HELP WORKERS

THIS week Minister for Health, James Reilly, proved that the old 'stroke politics' of the Irish establishment are alive and well.

Having been given a list of primary care centers by Junior Minister, Roisín Shortall, he proceeded to add two new centers located in his own constituency.

This is an act of cronyism to rival the worst excesses of the Haughey era and it proves that we are no closer to the 'accountable politics' promised by the incoming government.

Fine Gael and Labour have the same contempt for ordinary voters as their Fianna Fail predecessors.

More importantly, they also have the same class policies, as the recent attacks on home help workers have demonstrated.

Earlier in the year 500,000 hours were cut from home help workers in the HSE. This was then increased to 1.1 million hours to be cut by the end of December.

This will have a devastating effect on the lives of thousands of home help workers and on the many tens of thousands of people relying on their service.

Care is the backbone of any civilized society and a campaign to defend this vital service has begun to gain momentum.

Resistance is growing

After a series of successful meetings in several communities across Dublin, the campaign held public protests this week outside the Dáil and at the HSE offices in Sligo town.

The Sligo protest was particularly impressive with almost 100% participation by the 150 home helps based in the county.

Speaking to Socialist Worker, Noelle Coyle stated that "people's livelihoods are at stake with most of the women losing between 10 and 20 hours a week until Christmas" she also stated that "people are extremely angry with a government with Labour ministers that put the needs of the banks way ahead of peoples care needs."

Carers' involved in home help have been incredibly loyal to the HSE, only to be stabbed in the back.

Home help is more than a job for us and it is definitely more than a job for the people who depend on us".

To loud applause Noelle confirmed that a second protest has been earmarked for Saturday 29 September with the local



Richard Boyd Barrett TD and protestor against Home Care cuts

PBP branch heavily involved in the mobilization.

Dail protests

This week also saw Richard Boyd Barrett (TD) tackling Enda Kenny in the Dáil as a number of home help workers watched from the public gallery.

Unsurprisingly, the Taoiseach (with support from his Labour colleagues) expressed plenty of sympathy for the stress being caused to the Home Help workers and the fear and anxiety being experienced by their clients before predictably refusing to reverse the cuts.

Angered but hardly surprised, the Home Help workers have resolved to take this fight further and are in the process of building another series of meetings in Dublin and further afield.

Pre-budget demonstration

Alongside home help the government has recently attacked all manner of people from the unemployed to students and those with severe disabilities.

Fortunately many of these attacks had to be reversed as people took to the streets and won the day.

This gives a vital lesson to all those currently fighting back against government austerity - mobilisation works if people are united and determined.

The Dublin Trades Council and the Campaign Against Household and Water taxes are planning their pre-budget demonstration on 24 November.

If we all stand together we can force the government to reverse its attacks on workers and the poor more generally.

To Join the Home Care Community Action Group Campaign or for more information, contact: John Lyons 0877729292 or Brian O'Boyle on 0876574100

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Government attacks teachers again

By DONAL MACFHEARRAIGH

IRISH schools will require an extra 3,000 teachers over the next three years as a result of the recent baby boom.

The Minister, Ruairi Quinn, has admitted that a huge surge in school enrolments will create the need for the massive number of new teaching posts.

But the same minister is currently cutting teachers in the public sector and increasing class sizes especially in primary and secondary schools along with cutting special needs assistants for children with disabilities.



It's predicted that primary school enrolments will rise by 64,000 by 2017 and reach an unprecedented figure of 579,000 pupils and that secondary school numbers will increase to 348,000, a rise of 25,000 pupils.

The government has tried to use a recent OECD report to attack teacher's wages and working conditions.

But the report fails to acknowledge that the 915 hours' annual teaching time at primary level is almost 19% higher than the OECD average and the 735 hours worked at second-level is higher than most in the OECD, where the average is 650 to 700 hours a year.

Teachers' Union of Ireland general secretary John MacGabhann said the salary figures did not take account of the pension levy, the 14% cut in new entrants' salaries from last year, or the fact that 30% of second-level teachers did not work full-time hours.

Tipperary spring water workers sacked without union negotiations

By EUGENE MCDONAGH

TIPPERARY water has sacked twelve people for joining a union. Ten drivers and two managers were forced into voluntary redundancies.

The workers, members of SIPTU, said that there was a lot of favouritism going on in the company and suggested to management that junior drivers at the bottom should be let go and the more experience drivers with service be kept on.

However management refused to listen and went ahead and forced union members out of the company.

One of the workers told Socialist Worker that "we were left high and dry after our employer sacked us, refusing any



union involvement, while the company boasts a two year pre-tax profit.

They are basically trying to force drivers onto a three day week and to implement drastic cuts to wages and working conditions".

The employer is a subcontractor for Tipperary Water

ers to go down the official route and take their cases through the normal grievance procedure of the unfair dismissal courts. This could take up to two years.

As a direct response the workers called a protest against the company for the morning of Monday 24 September. This is the best response to this thuggish management.

Over the last year we have seen workers occupy their workplaces to successfully defend their rights.

The fact that the company immediately hired agency drivers shows the work was still there for the drivers too.

SIPTU has advised the work-

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SIPTU has advised the work-

Send messages of support to industrial@swp.ie.

LUAS WORKERS SET TO TAKE STRIKE ACTION



By EUGENE MCDONAGH

TRAM drivers have informed Veolia Transdev, the operators of the Dublin light-rail system, of their intention to take action in three weeks' time.

The drivers, who are members of trade union Siptu, rejected a Labour Court recommendation over working conditions.

The 165 LUAS drivers are fighting for their

rights to more time off and shorter working hours.

If industrial action goes ahead, it will be the first public transport strike since 2009 when the Dublin Bus Drivers at Harristown Depot went on strike over vicious cuts to their buses being scrapped and longer working schedules.

Disgracefully SIPTU signed an agreement with Veolia signing drivers at

Luas up to a five year no strike agreement.

The workers are now moving to fight for their rights.

One driver stated that the long hours they were working were dangerous and left drivers tired behind the controls.

He went on to say all the drivers are behind the action and stated they will stay out if needs be to achieve a shorter working week.

Caterpillar Northern Ireland: 760 jobs axed, 400 more in danger

By EUGENE MCDONAGH

AROUND 760 jobs are to be axed at FG Wilson in Co. Antrim, owned by US giant Caterpillar, by the end of this year while another 400 could be at risk in two year's time.

Around 170 agency workers have already left and a separate cut of 160 agency jobs was announced in June.

The losses are spread around four sites in Larne, Belfast, Monkstown and Springvale.

FG Wilson and its parent Caterpillar have made huge profits in the last few years.

Profits should be sacrificed not workers, some of whom have given decades of service to the firm.

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 FACISM 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 workers 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.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Strike notice served at Dublin Airport

By EUGENE MCDONAGH

WORKERS at Dublin Airport have voted to strike over the €700m pension deficit.

Dublin Airport Authority has reneged on its obligations under the relevant collective agreement.

Industrial action will take the form of two staggered two-hour work stoppages on a location by location basis.

Talks between unions and the DAA are continuing.

The first stoppage was due to happen on Thursday 27 September as Socialist Worker went to press.

OBITUARY



Barbara Wilson 1927-2012

BARBARA Wilson, for four decades a member of the Socialist Workers Party here and in Britain, died recently - a few days short of her 85th birthday.

Many will remember her for her courage as well as her concern and sympathy for the underdog. This made her a fighter against injustice all her life.

As a young woman she had been arrested while participating in a banned May Day parade in London, selling the Daily Worker.

As a socialist she was not prepared to let the authorities thwart the celebration of the fight for workers' rights over past generations.

With a young family in Australia, she joined in the campaign to stop that country's military involvement in the Vietnam War.

Later still back in London she worked as a volunteer in a refuge for abused women.

Then she joined the International Socialists, for-runner of the SWP.

In 1980 she moved to Ireland and for many years worked in the background unobtrusively helping to prepare Socialist Worker and typing leaflets.

Family tragedy meant she moved back to London to help with the caring for her special needs grandson, sacrificing her own domestic comfort in Dublin.

As her health declined she spent the last couple of years of her life in Australia.

She will be fondly remembered for her generosity of spirit by the many comrades and friends who loved her.

Kevin Wingfield for the Irish SWP

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What Socialists Say



Disability protesters show the way

PROPAGANDA is always key in ruling class attacks on the population. Government's can only impose austerity if people let them and this explains why their spin doctors continually try to make us accept that there is no alternative (TINA) to the cuts agenda.

Like Thatcher in the 1980's we are encouraged to believe that protesting is futile and that we simply must put up with attacks on our living conditions.

This is why the example of the disability protest outside the Dáil last week is so important. Minister for Health, James Reilly, had originally planned to cut around €10 million from the personal assistant hours of some of weakest members of our society.

Enraged by this decision around 100 protesters (many of whom had severe disabilities) encamped at the gates of the Dáil.

Their demands were simple – reverse the cuts or we stay here and shame you indefinitely. Understanding the groundswell of public anger the government relented, with Reilly claiming that he had never meant for front line services to suffer.

This is a blatant lie, but it shows that when people get mobilised they can make a difference. This government is more than happy to cut vital care supports, but it understands how vulnerable it is in the face of public opinion.

Like the pensioners in 2009, the disability protests showed that when you mobilize effectively you can win.

Protest works and as the government gears up for another austerity budget in December, we need to get on the streets and stay there.

Imperialist hypocrisy behind attacks on Mohammed

THE publishing of anti-Muslim cartoons in French magazine Charlie Hebdo has more in common with the dissemination of anti-Jewish cartoons in 1930's Germany than it does with a defence of freedom of expression.

Charlie Hebdo argued that the pictures of Mohammed were justified on the basis of its defence of liberal values. In reality they are merely a vehicle for whipping up yet more discrimination in a country with a long tradition of imperialism.

Like the US, France has consistently sought to exert influence in the wider Middle Eastern region.

Lebanon, Syria and Yemen are all previous French colonies and France has consistently given its support to the US and British 'war on terror'.

This is the material backdrop to the ongoing attacks on Islam and it is undoubtedly the case that the riots spreading across the Middle East are rooted in western imperialism rather than the images themselves.

Anti-imperialist writers like Franz Fanon have long described the humiliation meted out to colonized populations. Iraqis are commonly referred to as Hajis or sand-niggers by American soldiers, Palestinians are constantly harassed at Israeli checkpoints and US soldiers desecrate the Koran in front of Afghans - all in an attempt to humiliate.

The publishing of these latest offensive cartoons are merely the straw that broke the camels back.

It is no coincidence that US embassies have borne the brunt of their rage as 'western freedoms' are used to justify the widespread oppression of an entire region.

Children need welfare more than 'words'



By NICHOLA HARVEY

AFTER more than 20 years talking about the need to strengthen children's rights, and 17 damning reports into appalling child abuse, the Government has finally announced the wording of the Children's Rights referendum.

It will be held on Saturday 10 November and is expected to be passed overwhelmingly.

"For decades we have had a legacy of failing our country's children," said the disingenuous Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald announcing the wording last week.

"This referendum is the clearest statement the nation can make that that legacy is being left behind." Nice words.

Look closely at the text we're being asked to vote on however, and it becomes obvious that this troika-driven Government has made sure the new bill will not cost the ruling class anything.

Despite all the fanfare, there is no commitment in this referendum to ensuring children's rights to decent housing, to an education that might include special needs, to real material supports if their parents cannot cope with the pressures of unemployment, domestic violence or mental ill-health, or, to have a life that does not descend into crisis.

Child Poverty

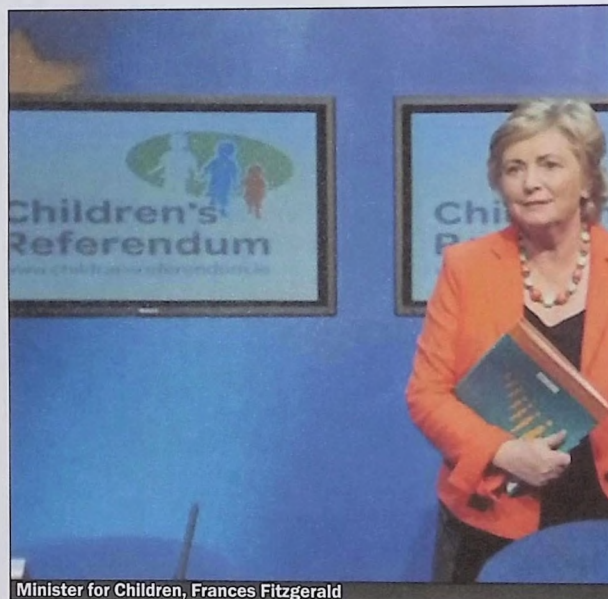
According to Barnados, 8.2% of Irish children are currently living in persistent poverty with another 20% at risk of following them.

The government SILC report has also noted that 1 in 5 Irish children now goes to school hungry, but none of this will be tackled by the new bill Article 42A.1:1 in the Constitution will read: "The State recognises and affirms the natural and imprescriptible rights of all children and shall, as far as practicable, by its laws protect and vindicate those rights."

Five further Articles deal with the rights of children in circumstances where their natural parents fail to care for them and they must be taken into care or adopted.

So, the State will recognise children have rights. But the rights are not defined and they will be protected only "as far as practicable" – a classic case of double speak that gives every government department the ability to cop-out.

And cop-out they will. Fitzgerald and the rest of her spineless



Minister for Children, Frances Fitzgerald

Government colleagues shed crocodile tears for the past abuses of children, all the while piling misery on hundreds of thousands of children and their families through cuts, funding shortfalls and cancelled services.

Over the last two decades hundreds of children have died in State 'care' and the lives of others have spun into chaos caused by the neglect of their communities and the inability of their families to cope.

Government 'support'

Take just the past year as an example of the governments 'support' for children.

In the cold months of January and February, parents, teachers and children were forced to take to the streets and demonstrate when Labour Minister for Education, Ruirai Quinn, announced he was cutting over 200 teaching posts from the poorest schools in the State.

The plan to cut 235 posts was reversed, but the merciless Minister said the U-turn meant there would be cuts elsewhere in the Education budget.

Again in January, mothers with autistic children had to take legal proceedings against the Department of Social Protection as it indiscriminately stopped carer and domiciliary care allowance payments.

Catherine Cox of the Carers



John Lonergan

Association described an "upsurge" in carers losing their allowance "from all over the country".

In March, Quinn's party colleague, Minister for Social Protection, Joan Burton, announced her plans to restrict welfare supports to lone parents once their youngest child reaches seven, forcing them

out of their caring role into low-paid jobs.

Where she expects these parents' children to be cared for she did not say, although in May her cuts to Community Employment schemes created a staffing crisis in community childcare facilities – which operate in disadvantaged areas – and forced some to close.

In the same month, the callous Minister for Children herself refused to intervene to save crèches in vocational colleges across the State.

Her spokeswoman said the crèches were being run too expensively. About half the 20 crèches in VECs closed in June, with all three Dublin VEC crèches closing.

VECs offer further education to early school-leavers as well as literacy classes and post-Leaving Cert courses.

In April cuts were announced to Special Needs Assistants in schools, a move that will particularly hit kids with autism.

Across the State social workers speak of being overwhelmed with cases and the public service recruitment bans see thousands of at-risk children without a social worker.

By its actions its clear this Government has no intention of safeguarding children. The poorer the child the less support it will get.

Resources are key

No less an establishment man than John Lonergan, former governor of Mountjoy Prison was quick to react to the wording stating that "The real test for us all as a society is, are the necessary resources going to be put in place?"

"That is going to be a real test as it cuts across every facet of society – housing, education, health."

"If we were to prioritise children in the way we prioritise the banks, and if we meant it when we said we wanted to protect children, well we must make the resources available. It's as simple as that.

"If we don't then the referendum will have failed," he said.

In reality the referendum will pass, and nothing will change.

Rights are all well and good but without the resources to back them up children will be left with little more than the right to starve.

If we are serious about the rights of our children, we must be serious about a new politics, a new society based on human need not corporate greed.

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

IMF report reveals major battle lines

By KIERAN ALLEN

ON 10 September, the IMF issued its latest report on Ireland which was drawn up by a team of 14 specialists and approved by Ajai Chopra. The document provides a blueprint on how Ireland will be 're-structured' to suit the wealthy.

The IMF is a Washington based agency that tries to take control of countries when they are forced to borrow from it. It issues a series of 'staff reports' which are designed to frame the policy options of the local elites.

The latest is the seventh report for Ireland and it is written in the usual guise of a neutral technical document.

Political 'double speak'

There is nothing, however, neutral about the IMF. The former chief economist of its sister organisation, the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, has described both organisations as the world's foremost institutions for promoting right wing economics.

The staffs, according to Stiglitz, are composed of 'third rate students from first rate universities', - which is a nice way of saying dumb, rich kids. And both operate a policy of strict censorship so that all stick to 'the line'. 'I was told that I could stay with the Bank but if I did I would have to circumscribe my thoughts. So I choose to resign', Stiglitz revealed.

The IMF's report begins with some praise for model pupils who have done everything they were told. 'After an exceptionally deep banking crisis... the Irish authorities' steadfast efforts have restored stability'.

This was achieved by pumping vast amounts of money into the banking system but the IMF acknowledges that it is 'the second costliest in the advanced economies since at least the Great Depression'. The other element of success was that unit labour cost for employers have fallen by 20% since 2008.

This occurred through both wage cuts and, crucially, through 'productivity gains from labour shedding'.

In other words, despite the rhetoric that wage cuts would give employers an incentive to create jobs, they cut both wages and jobs.

However, as it is addressing the elites, the IMF is also more candid about the 'downside risks'.

Essentially, the predictions of all conventional economists about economic growth after the Wall Street crash of 2008 have been disproved. As a result, austerity may not lead to a lower debt to GDP ratio but may even heighten risk.

The high level of household debt and mass unemployment, especially among the young, has crushed domestic demand.

So the 'export your way out of the recession' strategy could be in trouble.

Despite these warnings, the IMF's advice is to press on with the same course of action.

Using a strange jargon that is popular in management circles, they acknowledge that most of the 'low hanging fruit' has been cut -



in other words, ones that did not provoke much resistance.

Now, the Irish state must prepare for full frontal battles.

A menu of cuts

The IMF's agenda is then presented in stark terms and can be summarised as follows

1. Tackle unemployment by cutting the minimum wage. This will also reduce the wages paid under Employment Regulation Orders as these are usually set at 10 percent above this figure. These measures would affect a quarter of the Irish workforce.

2. Intensify 'labour activation' policies to force people to take low paid jobs. The IMF complains that there are not enough staff appointed to monitor the unemployed. It wants more 'sanctions' taken against social welfare claimants - have more thrown off the dole to frighten others.

They also want social welfare to vary 'with the duration of the unemployment spell' - i.e. that Job Seekers Allowance be cut.

If full scale cuts in social welfare are politically difficult, the government should cut 'auxiliary' benefits such as housing supplement support.

3. Squeeze more taxes from the mass of people - even if that means some tokenistic gestures against some higher income groups who are not directly involved in profit making.

The main mechanism is the property tax, even though the IMF are forced to acknowledge that Ireland 'has high taxes in property' because of stamp duties.

The IMF also suggests removing the PAYE tax credit for those who earn between €17,508 and €32,400 and increasing PRSI payments from the low paid. They want a system of 'mileage based tolls for busy roads' and increases on the three lower tier rates for VAT, which are currently set at 13.5%; 9% and 0.0%.

4. Full fees for students and attack social rights. The IMF wants students to pay full college fees and for these to vary with courses.

They want to remove the medical card from the over seventies and other social rights, such as free

travel.

5. Renew the attack on public sector pay and pensions. The mainstream media has already started the propaganda campaign to help the IMF agenda. They are demanding more 'pay rate adjustments' and attacks on pensions of public servants.

6. Privatisise state assets. The IMF is pushing for the wholesale sell off of state assets, particularly water. The establishment of Irish Water is the first step on the road but the IMF are still coy about their ultimate objective.

An important division of labour exists between the IMF and local political elites. Like old imperial masters, the IMF takes the broad view and establishes the line of march. The local elites are then charged with politically managing the agenda.

They get some scope for varying individual items because they are supposed to know the political sensitivities of their own populations better. But they will do so within the terms of the overall strategy dictated by the guru's of neoliberalism.

Why you should deduct Labour's portion of your union subs

By EUGENE MCDONAGH

SINCE The Labour Party joined forces with Fine Gael they have earned their right to stand alongside the Irish Thatcherites in slashing and burning working class conditions.

Only this week we heard Minister Pat Rabbitte stating he wanted to attack the Croke Park agreement and open it up for discussion again.

Labour is now every bit as bad as Fine Gael in pushing through cuts at Government and council level.

Over the last four years we have had massive cuts in our hospitals, social welfare, transport, pensions, levies on wages, energy bills, universal social charges, cuts in our schools, special needs assistants, home helps

and are supporting a party who has long lost any respect for the working classes in Ireland.

You would hardly think that Minister Pat Rabbitte was once a union Rep when you hear him preaching austerity and forcing it onto workers Labour claims to represent.

Moreover, the very fact that the link is so close makes it harder for organised workers to mount serious resistance to austerity.

Over the longer term socialists should aim to break this link, but in the immediate term workers can opt out of the political donation made to Labour.

All workers in SIPTU should withdraw their financial support for the Labour party paid through their union subs.

You can get the form from SIPTU or by



Labour Party Chairman Colm Keaveney: once a full time official for SIPTU

and savage attacks on workers conditions.

None of this changed when Labour came into office. Indeed if anything the attacks got worse with the last budget in particular putting the boot into working class communities.

Despite all of this many of the SIPTU hierarchy remain in the Labour party and SIPTU still gives around €90,000 a year to support their political colleagues.

These funds are stopped out of your union subscriptions

emailing industrial@swp.ie.

All trade unionists should then keep an eye on their union subs to make sure that the decrease takes place within a couple of weeks

If The Labour Party is forcing austerity on the working classes let the workers force a little austerity back on the Labour Party.

Sign the deduction form right away and hand it to your Reps.

Labour is no friend of the workers, why should workers support the Labour party.



What Socialists Say

ULSTER COVENANT MARCH: Re-igniting sectarian tensions

By SEAN MITCHELL

ON 29 September thousands of loyalists will march on the anniversary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant.

Unionist politicians, particularly the DUP, are using the march as an opportunity to stoke fear and sectarian enmity across the North.

Tensions around the march have been growing for months. Much of the contention originated in a series of flagrant sectarian provocations by a Shankill Road-based flute band, the Young Conway Volunteers.

After a city centre march on the 12th of July, the band halted outside St Patrick's [Catholic] church to play the sectarian 'Famine Song', physically assaulting bystanders who objected.

In the wake of this, the Parades Commission issued a ruling that placed restrictions on a subsequent march past the church, including a prohibition on the YCV from marching, and restricting 32 other bands to playing a single drum beat while passing St. Patrick's.

Opportunism

It was a situation opportunistically seized on by unionist politicians.

In the run up to the second march (by the "Royal Black Institution") an Open Letter was issued, signed by the entire ranks of the unionist political establishment—including DUP First Minister Peter Robinson—condemning the "monstrous" restrictions imposed on the YCV, calling for the disbanding of the Parades Commission, and 'predicting' trouble if Orange marches were restricted in any way.

It contained no mention, let alone criticism, of the open sectarianism that had been on display on the 12th.

On 25 August, with the support of the DUP and unionism generally, the YCV and the whole of the Royal Blacks procession defied the Parades Commission ruling.

Band supporters including both prominent unionist politicians and well-known loyalists participated, lining the route



as the bands passed the church. In the aftermath there was serious rioting a few hundred yards from the church, at Carlisle Circus, and worry abounds that a major confrontation could develop on 29 September, when tens of thousands of loyalists will march the same route in a commemoration of the Ulster Covenant.

In the aftermath of the riots there have been calls for negotiations over the Covenant march. Catholic residents have said they are prepared to allow the march past St Patrick's church, if the Orange Order would be willing to meet them, an offer so far refused by the Order.



Peter Robinson

Meanwhile, unionists have continued to stoke tensions by consistently arguing that Protestants are under attack.

In positioning themselves as defenders

of 'Protestant culture', the DUP hope to claw back some of the support they have lost in Protestant working-class areas and deflect from their role in the Assembly's austerity campaign.

Economic despair

Unionists hope to use the Covenant march to tap into the groundswell of discontent in working class areas. Journalists' accounts from within the ranks of the Shankill Road-based rioters in September suggest that beneath the communal defence of the 'right to march', it is the increasing economic desperation in working-class

Protestant areas that is fuelling much of the tension.

In the absence of any substantial force in these communities willing to point the finger at those at the top of society, the door is left open for the DUP and loyalist paramilitaries to place the blame on Catholics; "It came to a head because the taigs were getting away with everything, getting everything they want, and we just can't hack it any more," one local resident told David McKittrick, adding that it was easier for Catholics to get jobs. "Aye, definitely.... They get the work on building sites and all."

The game being played by Unionists is a dangerous one.

In a period of protracted economic crisis like the one we are in at present, the combination of communally-organised sectarian provocation and an aggressive neoliberal assault on public services mean that the danger of sectarian polarization, and of renewed and wide-scale violence, is a real one.

Among its consequences would be the extinguishing of any hopes for a united response to the Assembly's program of cuts and austerity.

That's why Socialists absolutely oppose the Ulster Covenant march.

It has nothing to do with commemoration or history and will only further entrench sectarian division and strengthen the hand of Unionist politicians.

It is a conscious attempt to rebuild a fractured Unionist movement by reigniting sectarian tensions and reasserting old norms of Unionist 'ascendancy' over Catholics.

For this reason, Socialists support the right of residents, including those in Carrick Hill, to protest against the demonstration.

But we also argue that Protestant working class people have nothing to gain from aligning with or supporting a march led by parties like the DUP.

We all need to resist attempts by politicians at the top to divide people at the bottom, or we will all lose out.

Campaign Against Household Charge turns up the heat as government announces property tax

by TINA MAC VEIGH

THE Fine Gael/Labour government have announced plans to introduce a property tax while continuing with bully boy threats in the hope that people will be intimidated into paying the household charge.

These threats include cuts to local authority funding and attempts to withhold social welfare payments and third level grants.

This is hardly surprising given the fact that more than 600,000 households across Ireland have maintained their boycott, striking the first serious blow against the imposition of austerity.

Such is the strength of the Campaign that communities quickly rallied and mobilised in opposition.

Under intense media spotlight, protesters gathered outside local authority offices in Clare demanding that students' rights to education not be used as leverage for household tax compliance.

Outside Joan Burton's office, angry protesters demanded that social welfare recipients should not be attacked. On both counts the government were forced to withdraw demonstrating yet again the power of people and protest.

Property taxes

From 2013, people will be charged over



€500 a year just to live in their own home.

Trying to pitch themselves as the 'good guys' against IMF proposals, Noonan proposes a teaser charge of 'just' 0.25% on house values.

However, if the IMF get their way, the

charge could rise to as much as €1,000, reaching almost €1,300 in Dublin!

The establishment parties claim that this 'progressive' property tax will increase the tax base and generate a stable revenue stream. The reality in Ireland is that

people do not simply 'choose' to own their own home.

High rents and a lack of rent controls coupled with a policy bias against renting social housing means the whole structure of Irish society pushes people into home

ownership.

As a result, the whole structure of the property tax is yet another tax on the majority of ordinary workers, 76% of whom own their own homes.

The only winners in this scenario are the wealthy and corporations who have set up in Ireland.

While the government continue to protect the rich by refusing to impose wealth taxes, Ireland also operates as a tax haven where companies get away with tax rates of just 2 or 3 percent on enormous profits.

Protest works

The mass boycott of the household charge has the government running scared.

They have now stated that the property tax will be taken directly out of social welfare and PAYE workers' wages.

If this happens, we need to raise the issue in our workplaces and with the unions – the only response can be industrial action coupled with mass mobilisations, continued boycott and civil disobedience.

Faced with the sixth austerity budget in five years this December, one that aims to raise €1.25 billion in new taxes and "save" €2.25 billion in cuts, the Irish working class will once again experience a serious assault on their living standards and we must organise to resist every attack.

Time to turn off the Red Light Campaign

The 'Turn Off the Red Light' campaign aims to end prostitution in Ireland by criminalising the purchase of sex. Socialists are committed to the emancipation of women everywhere, but as Goretti Horgan explains, protecting women caught in the sex industry will need substantial input from the women themselves.

MANY women's rights' campaigners have openly backed the Turn Off the Red Light (TORL) Campaign.

Among them are the Immigrant Council of Ireland and the Irish Country Women's association. However one group who are conspicuous by their absence are the women who work in the industry themselves.

Many working prostitutes fear that criminalising men will merely make their working lives more precarious, as prostitution is forced further under ground and women become potential accomplices to crimes that could see them forced to testify in court.

This will likely make it harder for sex workers to work in a safe environment and there is no evidence that criminalising men who buy sex will actually help women leave prostitution.

Indeed the opposite is the case as the Swedish example proves. Sweden criminalised men purchasing sex

in 1999, but since then prostitutes say their lives have been made more difficult.

In 2004, a working group set up by the Norwegian government to look at the Swedish experience reported on its effect stating, "...an increased fear of attack. ... For the street prostitutes prices have fallen and fear has increased. ... The women's experience is that they feel that the criminalisation process has affected them negatively... It has become more difficult to carry out 'quality assurance' on clients."

Both the Royal College of Nurses (RNC) and Women Against Rape in Britain have recognised that merely legislating

will not be enough to stop prosti-

stitution. Rather than seek to criminalise further, the RCN voted to completely decriminalise prostitution by more than nine to one.

Women Against Rape also makes a clear distinction between "rape and consenting sex (whether in a relationship, casual or paid for)" and opposes the criminalisation of clients.

New Zealand actually decriminalised all aspects of prostitution in 2003.

Evidence from government reports suggests that, at least until the recession hit, there was no increase in prostitution, but the women involved felt much safer and could call the police if they felt in danger.

The protection of vulnerable women should be our highest priority and this means helping to give women forced into prostitution better life chances and economic resources.

Decriminalising illegal migrants would be one positive step on the road to eradicating prostitution, as would a state guarantee that all sex workers could avail of the same rights as Irish citizens upon presenting at a garda station.

At base prostitution is a social and economic issue, not a criminal one.

We need to learn the lessons of history to understand that the only way we can end prostitution is if women are given other choices – education and training leading to decent jobs with decent pay and a chance to get out of debt.

Since that is not happening at the moment, we must look for solutions that involve the women whose lives will be most affected.

For more in depth analysis – see link to article on www.swp.ie



Pro-Choice campaigners step up pressure

By MADELINE JOHANSON

SINCE the x-case in 1992 the question of abortion has been ignored by every consecutive Irish government.

Despite the fact that people have repeatedly expressed their support for legislation on the legal provision of abortion when the mother's life is at risk - including the risk of suicide - the issue has been ignored by politicians.

In December 2010 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Irish Government must provide legislation.

Almost 2 years have passed and the current Labour/Fine Gael has made yet another attempt to stall the issue by setting up an 'expert group' to look

into legislation and make proposals.

This group was supposed to report back in July, which was then postponed to September. At the time of writing there has been no sign of a report. It is clear that the politicians are worried about their rural Catholic vote, this being particularly true of Fine Gael but also of the Labour Party.

Arthur Spring, Labour TD in Kerry, helped organise a meeting between TD's and pro-life group *One Day More*.

Many TD's have called for a free vote, i.e. not being bound by the party whip,

when the legislation is put to the Dáil.

The hypocrisy of TD's, who are willing to follow the party whip and vote for cuts to the most vulnerable people in the budget while arguing that abortion is an individual 'moral

issue', is absolutely sickening.

Socialists believe that women should have the right to choose what they do to their own bodies. The control of reproductive rights is an integral part of the fight for women's

liberation, against sexism and conservatism under the guise of so-called 'family values'.

To win the right to choose women (and men) must organise and take to the streets.

In 1992 it was the massive protests that made the High Court reverse its decision to allow X the right to an abortion.

The past few months have seen a new movement of young people, mostly women, getting organised in Pro-Choice campaigns and groups.

As a response to Youth Defence's offensive billboard campaign during the summer, hundreds of people turned up to a protest called on Facebook.

There are new groups being established across the country in cities and colleges.

We must take to the streets, show our strength in numbers and put pressure on the politicians to provide for abortion in Ireland.

■ **Join the March For Choice on 29 September meeting at 2pm at the Spire, O'Connell Street.**



Galway stands alongside Asylum community of Lisbrook House

By DETTE MC LOUGHLIN

DESPITE inclement weather around 200 people, including local campaigners and asylum seekers, assembled in Eyre Square on Saturday 15 September to protest against the government's decision to close Lisbrook House direct provision centre for asylum seekers.

The decision to close Lisbrook came as an enormous shock to the

270+ residents housed there.

With only a few days notice they were to pack-up their belongings and be dispersed to a number of facilities around the country without regard to medical conditions, education, commitments in the community, or personal relationships.

The adults and children feel settled in Galway and have integrated into the community, some having

lived here for over 7 years whilst waiting for their cases to be processed.

Upon hearing the news, people in Galway stood alongside residents of Lisbrook to protest against their forced relocation.

The Minister for Justice has since agreed to review the matter, and no one has had to be removed from the centre.

However, the final outcome is not yet known. A lively demonstration

was led by small children holding letters spelling the word "RESPECT", the march being applauded by members of the public.

There then followed a rally which was a mixture of celebration at the Minister's decision to review; a show of solidarity and a voicing of anger at an asylum process that treats people in an inhumane, unacceptable fashion.

Letters of support were received and

representations made to Minister Shatter by a number of trade unionists, local school principals, and politicians from Galway and beyond.

Joe Moore of Anti-Deportation Ireland also addressed those assembled:

"Although the reason for today's rally is to protest the closing of Lisbrook, we also call for the closure of the direct provision system - a system that operates more

like an open prison, where residents are denied the right to work, denied the right to cook their own food, and are given just €19.10 per week.

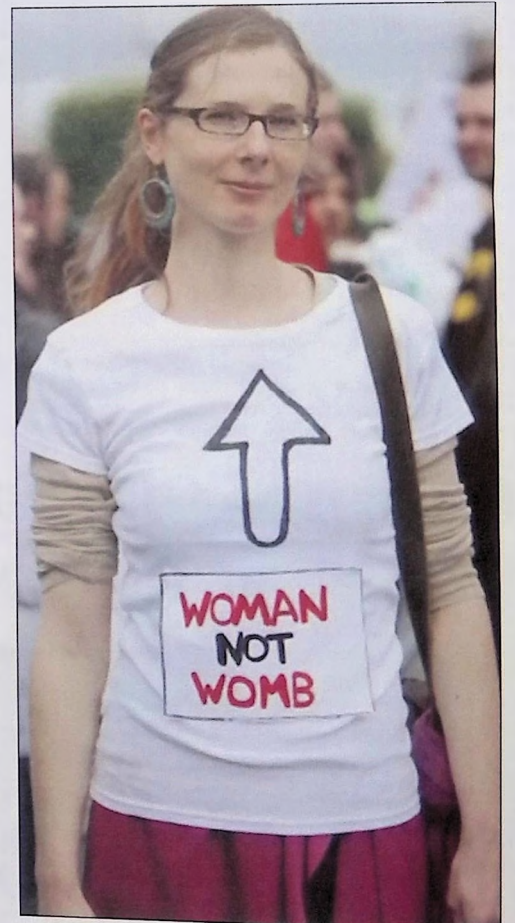
"Asylum seekers demand rights, the same as everybody else living in the state."

Joe went on to give a chilling report of the asylum and deportation process in Ireland.

Dette McLoughlin SWP summed up: "It's ironic that on a day when

Galway City Council celebrated 300 years of Eyre Square being a public space with a multi-cultural music gig, that the Minister for Justice wants to exclude certain people from Galway, "THE CITY OF THE TRIBES".

The campaign will continue building support to keep Lisbrook House open giving the current residents a security of place in a community that they are now an integral part of.



Greece set for General Strike

By JULIE SHERRY

GREEK unions have called a general strike for Wednesday 26 September, as the fightback against austerity across Europe intensifies. Some workers are threatening to escalate this to a three-day stoppage.

Across the continent, enraged working class people are returning to the streets. Mass demonstrations have taken place in Greece, Spain and Portugal over the last two weeks.

More are planned for Italy on Friday 28 September, Germany on Saturday 30 September and in France the following Sunday.

The Greek general strike follows a nationwide strike of school, hospital and local government workers. Panos Garganas, editor of the Workers Solidarity newspaper in Greece, says Greece's union leadership is under enormous pressure to step up the action.

He said, "First, there is the pressure from the Troika—the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission.

"They agreed a bailout for Greece known as the 'memorandum'. They want to impose more austerity.

"The government was elected after promising they would make the memorandum less harsh. Now they are negotiating to make more cuts.

"Second, there is pressure from workers. People are not just angry—they're on the move."

The Troika and government agreed that what used to be the main savings bank—the Hellenic Postbank (TT)—must be sold off. Striking workers responded by occupying the bank's headquarters last week.

Transport unions were set to strike on Thursday 27 September to defend workers' conditions and oppose fare rises. On the same day, thousands of metal workers plan a 24-hour national strike.



In Greece's largest shipyard, workers have not been paid for months. But they are also striking to defend their pension fund—the same pension fund as hotel workers, who will join the strike.

And finance workers were set to strike on Friday of this week. Panos explained, "The government claims things across Europe are improving.

"But even if cuts in Greece are delayed they will still be forced through. The government claims aren't cutting any ice. Our general strike will not be the end of the story."

Massive march hits Madrid

THERE were huge protests in Spain and Portugal on Saturday of last week.

In Spain protesters converged in Madrid to oppose government cuts. A coalition of trade unions and other organisations called the action.

Sam Robson marched with the "critical block". He told *Socialist Worker*, "Our slogan was, 'We don't owe it so we won't pay it'. There was a really combative

atmosphere."

The march was fed by fury at an increase in VAT earlier this month. Spain's Indignados movement is calling for protests to surround the parliament building on Tuesday of next week.

And around 40 cities in Portugal were hit by the biggest protests for decades, after the government announced a national insurance hike.

SOUTH AFRICA:

Striking miners returns to work with a 22% pay increase

By KEN OLENDE

STRIKING miners at the Marikana platinum mine in South Africa say they will return to work on Thursday 27 September after accepting a new offer from British-owned mining company Lonmin.

Workers will end a bitter six week dispute with a 22% pay increase. Lonmin has agreed to pay rock drill operators 11,078 rand (£830) a month.

Other workers at the mine will receive an increase of between 11% and 22%.

Miners will also get a one-off payment of 2,000 rand (£150).

This is less than the 12,500 rand across the board that the miners were demanding, but is still a considerable victory.

Zolisa Bodlani, one of the five leaders elected by the striking miners said, "If no people were killed, I'd say this was a great achievement."

Police massacred 34 striking miners on 16 August and injured another 78. The fight for justice for these workers will continue after the strike ends.

Thousands of miners gathered with their families on Tuesday of last week at a football stadium to sing victory songs.

Some chants praised their new union AMCU, the new union that led the strike, while denounced the old,



compromised NUM union.

One ran, "AMCU is coming. We told them and they are coming."

Another banner read, "Death certificate—first name: NUM, cause of death: corruption."

Demand

Other miners are still striking for higher pay. Workers at Amplats, South Africa's biggest platinum producer, marched near Rustenberg on Wednesday 20 September to demand that their wage claim is met.

"Police asked them to disperse and when they

wouldn't, police used tear gas, stun grenades and rubber bullets to disperse the crowd," said a police spokesperson. "We've said from the start that we would not tolerate illegal gatherings."

The victory at Lonmin is liable to increase pressure for industrial action organised outside the control of the NUM. That union is the biggest in South Africa's Cosatu union federation, which is closely allied to the ANC government.

"We want management to meet us as well now," an AMCU organiser at Impala Platinum, the second biggest

platinum producer, told the Reuters news agency.

This week Cosatu met for its annual congress just outside Johannesburg. The existing leadership was re-elected unopposed, despite the wave of radicalism sweeping through South Africa's working class.

Bosses complain that labour costs are uncompetitive. JP Morgan warned, "The outcome of the negotiation at Marikana will likely set a new benchmark for mining more generally and wage costs are set to rise substantially."

"I am happy now," rock driller Simphiwe Booi told Reuters, "Now we can eat."

Bangladesh textile workers scare bosses with strike wave

A new wave of militant strikes by garment workers in Bangladesh is spreading fear in the government and among multinational clothing firms.

Several factories in the Ashulia district of the capital, Dhaka, are closed after workers demanded pay rises and the right to free independent trade unions. This follows a summer of action that spread to garment workers across the Export Processing Zones, and is now galvanising others.

Strikers are met with a typically brutal state response—the Rapid Action Battalion paramilitary police force, which is notorious for torturing, and on occasion killing, leading militants.

But repression isn't working, says Mushtuq Husain of Dhaka's Centre for Social Praxis. "Workers organise themselves clandestinely. So when they burst into protest, it seems like a bolt from blue."

Mushtuq says that as soon as one dispute appears settled another explodes, leading bosses to close all the factories in a district rather than have the strike spread.

The falling value of wages, which are often just £20 a month, compared to rising prices is the spark for many strikes.

Meagre

"When the minimum wage was raised a little in 2010, it was far below the living expenses of a 2-member family. Now that meagre wage cannot meet the minimum living cost of even a single member family," says Mushtuq.

"The striking garment workers are regularly being joined by

workers in other sectors, including pharmaceuticals, transport, tea, and fuel tankers."

Multinational clothing giants are so scared of the action that they are pleading with the government to again raise the minimum wage.

The boss of Swedish clothing giant H&M visited Bangladesh earlier this month. After visiting a plant and meeting prime minister Sheikh Hasina, he said, "We demand that the Bangladeshi government increase minimum wages and consider yearly wage reviews for the workers."

Mushtuq is sceptical of global bosses' claim to be on the side of the workers. "Western buyers, particularly the US ones, try to control the workers movement by funding a few NGOs (Non Governmental Organisations). They want to stop leftists from organising the workers."

Mushtuq says that they hope that allowing official trade unions into the factories will mean an end to the wildcat strikes. But with the spread of the garment workers' militancy into other sectors, it seems that attempts to head off the growing wave of action may have come far too late.

Figure it out

- 5 percent of Bangladesh's population are unemployed
- 40 percent of people are underemployed, meaning the job does not sufficiently cover the workers' needs
- 31 percent of people live below the poverty line
- 57 percent of people over the age of 15 are literate

Socialist Worker

STRENGTH IN UNITY...

FIGHT SECTARIANISM FIGHT THE CUTS

OVER the past few weeks sectarianism has once again been thrown onto the political agenda with the parading outside St. Patrick's church, the riots in North Belfast and the Ulster Covenant centenary march.

County Grand Chaplain of the Orange Order Mervyn Gibson has declared that "No one will have a veto over the Ulster Covenant parade", in response to residents from Carrick Hill who had issues with the march passing the church again, after the anti-Catholic 'Famine Song' was played outside the venue when loyalists provocatively marched outside the church previously.

The Orange Order talks about being a cultural or historical organisation.

But anyone who sees the 'wood from the trees' will see them for what they are, a sectarian organisation that wants to return to the old days of discrimination and triumphalism.

Be it the playing of sectarian songs, or the racist speeches on the 12th – the order is a deeply political organisation that brings trouble with them everywhere they go.

Unionist bigots

Next up we have the bigots masquerading as politicians - Nelson McCausland and Peter Robinson who lend their support to the civil disobedience of the Loyal Orders. Unionist Politicians and Orange leaders have always stated that all Protestants, regardless of whether they are unemployed from the Shankill or an elected politician with several homes milking expenses should stick together.

Robinson, McCausland and the Orange Order are stoking sectarianism and are trying to get across the idea that Loyalists have "legitimate" concerns because of the occasional refusal by the Parades commission to allow the Order to march wherever they want.

This has been put alongside the nonsensical idea that Catholics are somehow doing better out of the Good Friday Agreement than everyone else.



Left: Workers uniting to fight for their rights; Right: Bigots sowing divisions and weakening workers' strength

Not only are such statements factually incorrect, they are deeply sectarian and potentially make it harder for those really left behind-working class Catholics and Protestants to fight together.

Sectarianism is a rotten idea that divides people with common interests, but it doesn't just spring from nowhere.

It is deeply rooted at the heart of our society and is bolstered by the actions of politicians in Stormont.

After all, sectarianism supports the political class by making unity harder and thus reducing resistance to the agenda of cuts.

Just as Stormont has failed to tackle sectarianism it has failed

to stop the terminal jobs decline.

Job losses

FG Wilson's statement that over 700 jobs are to go in the next few months as the company moves to China is a devastating blow for workers in the North.

Once again it shows who wins and loses in the recession.

It has been revealed the firms responsible for laying off the most workers in the North-FG Wilson and Seagate in Limavady have also received the highest handouts from the taxpayer.

The lesson of FG Wilson shows that no matter how many millions are given to a multi-national corporation or what promises are

made, they are motivated by one thing –maximising profits and will go where they can achieve this.

Over the last few years the company received £46 million of taxpayer's money from Invest NI. Instead of kneeling before the bosses and looking like a bunch of helpless stooges on TV, the Executive should claw back the millions we gave FG Wilson and save the workers jobs.

In light of the FG Wilson debacle Stormont should really drop its obscene calls for corporation tax to be cut down to a paltry 12.5% in the North.

Instead the focus should be on keeping jobs rather than cutting taxes for the rich.

Trade Unions have called a demo in Belfast on 20 October for everyone from FG Wilson workers, public sector workers and everyone else affected by the cuts to take to the streets and voice their opposition.

This is an important date for us not only to give hell to the politicians cutting our services and destroying our lives but also to unite Catholics and Protestants and fight the cuts together.

Cuts cannot be beaten separately in Catholic or Protestant communities but can only be defeated when we stand and fight together.

This is our only method against the austerity drive which will send us back to the Victorian era.

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