

Socialist Worker

LABOUR IN GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN A DISASTER...

STOP THE ATTACKS ON OUR PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS

FINE Gael and their friends in the corporate media are attacking public sector workers again.

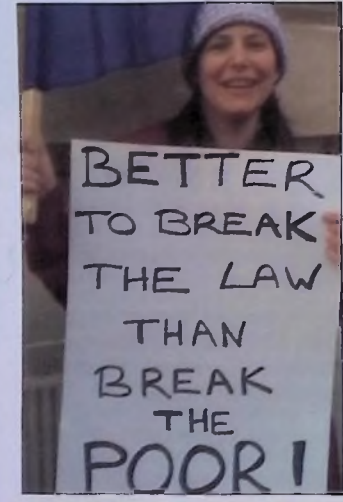
Each week, the Irish Independent or the private radio stations owned by the Communicorp Ltd dredge up stories about allowances paid to teachers, nurses and fire-fighters. These have a shock-horror tone and convey the impression that these workers are robbing the public of vital services. Any Fine Gael TD who wants to garner publicity has only to issue a statement attacking these allowances to make headlines.

But this propaganda war is based on lies.

■ 68 percent of public sector workers earn less than €50,000 a year. This figure for earnings include allowances as well as basic pay.

■ Only 2 percent of public sector workers earn over €100,000.

■ Ireland is not spending huge amounts on its public services. In fact we rank 9th in EU countries and would have to spend an additional €5.5 billion to reach the average.



None of these facts are made known by a media that is controlled by Denis O' Brien.

This is because Independent newspapers and Communicorp want to protect the privileges of the rich by deflecting anger onto public servants.

O' Brien is the 24th richest person in the world with assets worth €4 billion dollars. His Communicorp group controls 42 media outlets in Europe, including Today FM and Newstalk in Ireland.

Yet he claims to be a tax exile – so that he can cut back on the contributions he makes to the Irish exchequer.

No wonder that his newspapers continually try to target public sector allowances. They will run a shock-horror headline about an underwear

allowance in the defence forces while ignoring the bigger scandal of a man with four houses in Dublin 4 claiming to be a tax fugitive from his native country.

On the very week that Fine Gael TDs increased their attacks on public employees, Finance Minister Noonan announced that he would not impose a tiny tax on financial speculation – which even the EU Commission had proposed.

That tax would have raised €500 million – money that could have been used for schools, hospitals and social welfare.

It is these speculators who are depriving us of services – not the staff who actually provide them.

The campaign against public sector

workers has only gained momentum because the union leaders, who are supposed to defend their members, have gone asleep.

The leaders of the ICTU have told workers to accept a 17 percent pay cut – and to do nothing about even bigger cuts being imposed on younger staff who join the public services.

Their message has been to 'keep the head down' so that the Croke Park deal stays in place.

Only a small number of union leaders are willing to tell the real truth: Croke Park has been a disaster for public sector workers.

■ It has allowed the state to get rid of 30,000 jobs at precisely the time when private capitalists have stopped investing in the economy.

■ It has put additional strain on remaining workers as contracts and long standing conditions are torn up. ■ None of the promised 'savings' have gone to those earning under €35,000 a year – as was originally promised when the deal was signed – but the money has gone straight to the bondholders and the European Central Bank to pay off bank debts.

The Croke Part deal has produced a weak, defensive union movement that has only encouraged the Celtic Tories in Fine Gael to demand even more.

We need a return to real trade unionism and that will mean getting rid of union leaders who put their loyalty to the Labour Party ahead of the interests of their members.

We can make a start by joining the global resistance to austerity that is growing in countries as different as Greece, Spain and Portugal.

24 November has been named as the date for mass resistance in Ireland. Start now to mobilise – it is time we drove the bully boys back and asserted worker's rights.

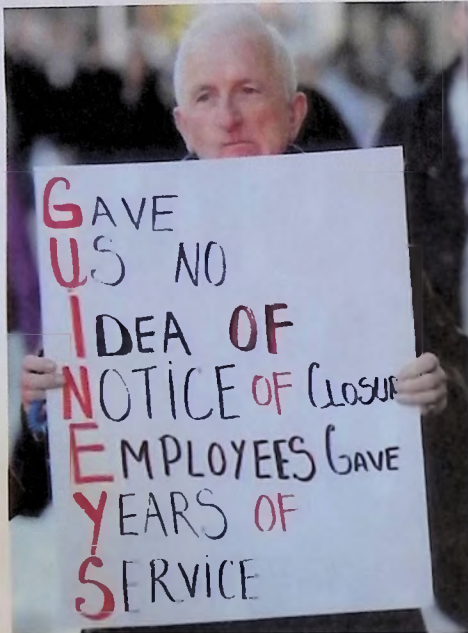
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Clery's workers out in cold after Guineys closures



WORKERS from the Clery's outlets placed pickets on the company's department store on O'Connell Street after liquidator's closed branches at Guiney's Talbot Street, Blanchardstown, Sandyford/Leopardstown & Naas. Workers turned up at the Naas retail outlet to find liquidators putting locks on the premises. Workers in Blanchardstown were paid two weeks statutory redundancy; SIPTU & Mandate stated all other workers in the rest of the outlets received nothing. Both unions stated that the pensions for workers would more than likely be wound up. According to one worker there are many people who have given long service to the company with one woman having 28 years' service. Another worker told

Socialist Worker that employees "took cutbacks in the last three years and promoted the stores to their customers and friends". Despite this they are being thrown on the scrapheap. SIPTU's Graham Macken pointed out it was not industrial action at Clery's but a workers protest. He went on to state that neither union agrees with the compulsory or statutory redundancies that have taken place in the Blanchardstown store as this was not negotiated by either of the trade unions involved. Macken also stated that there were 29 workers losing their jobs that were currently being paid out of a social fund. SIPTU & Mandate are entering talks with the current company Gordan's to see if they can find any resolution to the current impasse.

Minister Varadkar threatens CIÉ funding



MINISTER for Transport Leo Varadkar has said that the subvention of up to €36m for CIÉ "is still available this year". However, he insisted that he cannot "hand over taxpayers' money" unless CIÉ tables a package with measures including "new credit facilities, disposal of some assets and an agreement with bus unions NBRU & SIPTU to changes in terms and conditions". He added that there has been very little progress on these matters since the summer. In July, the Cabinet au-

thorised the Department of Transport to allocate an extra €36m to CIÉ immediately to protect public transport services. CIÉ's constituent companies Irish Rail, Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus have all been hit by falling passenger numbers and rising fuel costs. Both NBRU & SIPTU trade unions are in talks at present with Dublin Bus management with a view to cutting drivers pay & conditions. With the latest threat from the minister to withdraw subvention from the

CIÉ group the unions should pull out of all talks. The company has asset stripped the transport services in the CIÉ group, with the bus sector having 1250 buses in 2009 reduced to 778 buses in 2012. Bus Éireann's transport sector has been ransacked with many of the routes being scrapped with the railways no better. It is time the drivers took the fight to the company and tell the union leadership of both trade unions to ballot for industrial action.

IMPACT hails redeployment breakthrough move on SNAs

THE Labour Court in the Republic has recommended that special needs assistants who become redundant should be placed on a panel for redeployment to alternative posts as they arise. It is understood the education department is considering the 25 June recommendation, described by IMPACT official Philip Mullen as a "breakthrough". If implemented, it means improved job security and career prospects for SNAs and follows a six-year campaign by the union. The court recommended that the SNA panel should be arranged on the basis of seniority, with redeployed SNAs carrying forward their prior service. Until now, SNAs have not had the same job security as other public servants. Under existing arrangements they are simply made redundant when a school no longer needs them. Several hundred SNAs face redundancy every year as the summer term ends, with many facing uncertainty over their position over the summer break.

Mr Mullen said: "What it means is that expensive training given to SNAs is kept in the system. When a job is created and there is a need for an SNA in a school, then there will be somebody available who is no longer needed in another school, they will then be put in the [new] position. This will make a huge difference. It is good for the children and good for employees."

Have you a story for Socialist Worker?

You can contact us by email at info@swp.ie

OZO worker dies in bin lorry

A waste collection worker has died following an incident in Dublin on 3 October. The worker became trapped in the back of an OZO waste disposal truck in the Grand Canal Dock area. Specialist equipment was used to free the man who was subsequently taken to St James' Hospital where he later died. Since the privatisation of our publicly owned bin services workers across the country have come

under severe pressure on their bin collections run. It is very noticeable that when workers are finished emptying the bins they stand on the rear of open lorries and are driven to their next collection point to speed up collections. Other drivers, driving the lorry's often proceed to jump out of their cabs before emptying bins on their own with no helpers. Questions need to be asked about whether this worker was at the back

of the lorry on his own; was he standing on the back of the lorry being driven to his next lift, was it too dark at the back of the lorry, what were his hours of work that day? SWP would like to offer our condolences to his family, relatives, friends and work colleagues. There are many questions to be asked by the Garda and the Health and Safety Authority at the way this industry has been regulated since its privatisation.

Job-Bridge scheme exploitation

THE Job-Bridge scheme has been used by some companies to cynically exploit unemployed people. There has been a web site set up called ScamBridge.org for unemployed people who take up one of these schemes to share their experiences and to tell others of their employer's naked

exploitation towards them. The Job-Bridge scheme was set-up by the Government in summer 2011 and provides work experience placements for a six or nine-month period. Interns receive €50 extra per week on top of their social welfare entitlements as part of the programme. This scheme is nothing more than

exploitation as the government facilitates the public and private sectors in driving down wages and enforcing austerity. Employers see this as a cheap form of labour and many have no interest in the employee. SWP would like to hear from workers who have taken up these posts and let us know if you have been exploited in any way.

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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.

Join the Socialists

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SWP



Capitalism and the Irish State

SOCIALISTS consistently argue that there are severe constraints placed on governments by the logic of the capitalist economy.

Whether governments are of the centre left or the centre right they are forced to create the conditions for capital to accumulate.

But even within these constraints there is still some room for manoeuvre as the Icelandic example radically reveals.

Iceland remains very much a part of the international capitalist system, but three years ago the Icelandic population took to the streets to demand that their government serve the interests of society rather than the bankers.

Almost 94% of Icelanders voted to reject a bank bailout much like the one imposed on the Irish through a small cabal of bankers, politicians and government officials.

Since then politicians have gone on trial for economic treason, bondholders have been burnt and the economy by and large has begun to recover.

More importantly, the suffering that was imposed due to the banking collapse has been borne primarily by those who caused the crisis and profited massively from the economic boom.

According to figures released by Swedish academic Thora Kristin Thorsdottir, the poorest 10% of Icelanders suffered a 9% fall in their incomes over the last three years, the next 10% lost 17%, whilst those at the very top lost 38%.

WELFARE BECOMING A THING OF THE PAST

THE Welfare Reform Bill before the Northern Ireland Assembly will drag more families into poverty and mean those dependent on benefits will increasingly struggle to survive. Despite Sinn Fein's claims to protect the vulnerable it will be low income families with children that take the hardest hit.

Already, changes to Housing Benefit mean families in the private rented sector and owner-occupiers are struggling. Changes still working their way through the system will mean owner-occupiers, out of work for more than two years, will soon get no help at all with their mortgage, while families in the private rented sector – more than half of whom are lone parents – will see their Housing Benefit cut considerably.

One of the cuts being discussed is the "bedroom tax" which sees older people in the social housing sector, whose children have left home, as "under-occupiers" because they have spare rooms in their houses; their Housing Benefit will be cut by a quarter.

The response of the parties in the Assembly has been all bluster but little sign of serious opposition. Sinn Fein argued that the Bill should be deferred while more negotiations are held with Westminster. But Social Security is a devolved

This still has disproportionate effects on the poorest in society, but at least there is a sense of those with the biggest shoulders doing most of the heavy lifting.

Contrast this with the situation in Ireland. After the most expensive bailout in capitalist history, the Irish state has spent the last four years consistently attacking the most vulnerable in society.

Successive governments have framed their policies as economic necessities but the cold hard facts are that the universal social charge, changes in tax bands and massive cuts in social welfare have been conscious policy choices pursued by the Irish elites.

Meanwhile there is no third rate of income tax, no taxes on accumulated wealth and one of the lowest levels of corporation tax in the developed world.

The results of these policy choices have predictably been devastating.

In Ireland the bottom 10% of the population has lost 26% of its disposable income.

The next 10% have lost 14% whilst those in the top 10% have seen their incomes increase by around 8%.

Irish capitalism has nakedly forced the costs of the crisis onto the backs of working people and the only solution to this economic terrorism is to take to the streets like our Icelandic brothers and sisters.

issue, so Westminster's permission is not needed.

The Stormont parties always plead that they have no control but the truth is they are not even doing the little they could.

There are lots of amendments that would cost nothing – changing the assessment for the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) that will replace Disability Living Allowance, to reflect higher levels of mental ill-health in the North is one. Exempting very severely disabled people from the assessment is another.

It's not Westminster that is stopping these amendments going through the Assembly – it's the DUP. SF could force these changes through by introducing "petitions of concern" for voting on them. This would mean that the amendment will only pass if supported by a weighted majority (60%) of members voting, including at least 40% of nationalists and unionists.

Working class people in the North are hoping that Sinn Fein in government in the North shows even a little of the radicalism that it proclaims in the South when it comes to welfare cuts.

We'd like to think that they won't be disappointed but all the evidence suggests otherwise.



By KIERAN ALLEN

A shadowy organisation made up of top finance houses is dictating government policy on taxation.

Recent documents uncovered by the Freedom of Information Act has named the Irish Financial Services Centre Clearing House Group as a key agency in the writing of state policy.

This body is composed of representatives from the leading financial services firms such as JP Morgan, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Ernest & Young, Barclays Bank, Deloitte, HSBC, William Fry, State Street, Bank of Ireland, AIB, Porsche FMS and others.

Their activities came to light when the government rejected an EU proposal to impose a small tax on financial speculation.

The proposal was for a 0.1% tax levy on share and bond transactions and an even smaller 0.01 percent tax on derivatives.

This tiny tax could have raised significant money for the hard pressed Irish exchequer. The EU estimated that €500 million a year could be garnered from this tax – the equivalent of what the government intends to raise with the property tax next year.

Ireland is a major hub for financial speculation where trillions of euros are moved back and forth across its borders.

It has become the new Bermuda of Europe, operating as a tax haven for casino capitalists who gamble on all sorts of 'financial instruments'.

So a tax on financial speculation would have raised billions in a short period of time.

But the IFSC Clearing House Group told the government to reject the tax – and they obeyed.

The body meets every month in the Department of the Taoiseach, the key government department that controls the rest of the cabinet. No representative of a trade union or a community associa-

tion is allowed into their meetings lest they raise embarrassing arguments about why billionaires should pay up.

The meetings are held in secret and no minutes are provided to the public.



Corporate wing of the State

A recent Irish Times article described the IFSC Clearing House Group as a 'lobby group'.

But this is a misnomer. It is an agency that is embedded in the key Department of the Taoiseach and so effectively writes policy. It is not a lobby group – but rather the corporate wing of the Irish state.

It decided to focus on the argument about jobs to mask its blatant protection of greed.

Yet there was no cost benefit analysis to calculate the trade-off between increased revenue and potential jobs losses.

No figures or research – just a bare faced, piece of propaganda to protect the speculators.

But the argument is spurious.

First, the number of jobs in the IFSC compared to the financial assets involved is quite small. The IFSC also operates

many front companies where few people are employed. 39 of the 46 treasury management firms out of the over 400 located at the IFSC that TCD academic Jim Stewart surveyed in 2008 reported no fixed assets and had a median employment of zero.

Therefore, the gains from a tax on the huge flow of financial transactions would outweigh any job losses caused by corporations that moved.

Second, the EU Commission has noted that the financial sector has been more profitable than other sectors of the economy for more than two decades.

Research indicated that they had a 40 percent earnings premium compared to the wider economy.

This arose primarily because of the huge salaries and bonuses paid

to company directors.

In other words, this sector is one that can easily afford to pay the tax.

Third, Noonan's argument implies Ireland's future lies in attracting foreign investment and nothing must be done to frighten it off.

But the plain fact is that there is as much foreign capital flying out of Ireland in the past few years as is coming in.

Richard Murphy of Tax Research UK has noted that in "five quarters in 2009/10 Ireland had inward investment of \$31.1 billion. Outward investment in that period was \$31.0 billion. In other words, Ireland is not the location in which foreign direct investment is taking place".

Despite all efforts to appease multi-national capital, the dark secret is that it is no longer working.



People Before Profit holds successful conference

ONE hundred activists from the People Before Profit Alliance met at a recent national conference to develop strategy.

The national meeting was a follow up from a series of re-launch meetings that have been occurring around the country which have been well attended (see box)

Richard Boyd Barrett TD kicked off the discussion with an overview on the fight against austerity.

'When the economy collapsed, people were traumatised. They thought that they could take some pain but that life would eventually return to normal. Now even the IMF are acknowledging that their economic policies are showing no sign of success.

'Their answer is to deepen the attack on the workers – but we have to prepare for really big battles.

'Our main target must be

to mobilise for 24 November. This is the day of action being set by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions and the Campaign against Household Charges. We should argue to unite the struggles – so we want everyone who has been hit by cutbacks mobilising for that day.

Gerry Carroll followed this up with a discussion on the fight against austerity in the North

'Under the new Welfare Reform Bill, young people will be deprived of housing benefit. The DUP say it is necessary while Sinn Fein say they are opposed to it. But they will not issue a 'petition of concern' that could stop it passing.

'People before Profit will be one of the main organisations opposing it. That is because we really fight austerity on both sides of the border.

The meeting then heard reports of where People Before Profit activists were gaining a

reception for their arguments.

Francis O'Reilly reported on how they had organised meetings in support of the home helps in East Wall in Dublin where scores of people are turning up.

Conor Mc Kinney from Sligo described how they had helped to stage protests against the cuts in home help hours and now SIPTU are being forced to move on the issue.

'SIPTU talks but they are controlled by the Labour Party – they were doing very little until we started mobilising'.

The meeting broke up into a number of policy groups and plans were drawn up for new statements on health, an alternative economic agenda and housing.

A special seminar on fracking and energy policy was also proposed and a new interim steering committee was elected, with delegates from different parts of the country.



Launching in Cork

CORK South Central branch of the People before Profit Alliance held a successful launch meeting on 25 May.

Richard Boyd Barrett TD, the People Before Profit TD for Dun Laoghaire, and Liz Madden, a community activist from Toghher addressed a packed meeting in the Ballyphehane Community centre.

Those attending included representatives from the local Anti-household Tax campaign, Home help workers, unemployed, pensioners and students, and it was also covered by the local Radio and Newspapers.

The meeting agreed to do the following:

- Have a local meeting to organise opposition to cuts in Home Help and Community services on 9 Oct in Ballyphehane Community Centre.
- Support and build for the local anti-household Tax fundraiser on 29 Oct
- Build for The Dublin Council of Trade Unions pre budget demonstration 24 November in Dublin
- Send people from Cork to attend an open National People Before Profit gathering on 14 October.

A new direction in left politics

THE People Before Profit Alliance is part of the United Left Alliance but it offers a different model of how to organise in the present situation.

It does not start with the purity of its programme but urges activists to focus on campaigning that can draw in new forces to the left.

It takes a radical anti-capitalist stance but it also seeks to open itself out to new people who are starting to fight over specific issues.

It is a grassroots organisation where no one section can exercise a veto. Votes are taken and members are encouraged to accept that it is an alliance where they may not necessarily agree on every single statement but still remain committed to working together.

This way of organising is the key to breaking an internalised mindset where set piece disagreements between different blocks are regularly rehearsed.

The People Before Profit model provides a different way of doing politics which can help to re-capture the early dynamism that the United Left Alliance displayed.



Care homes to be privatised

By GORETTI HORGAN

THE North's Health Minister, Edwin Poots, has announced the closure of half of all state-run residential care homes for the elderly

This will mean 1,600 public sector jobs being lost in the next five years.

These jobs, which pay a pound or two more than the minimum wage and have a pension and decent conditions, will be replaced by minimum wage, no-pension, no union jobs in the private sector.

Poots insists the closures are not about cost but are part of the Transforming Your Care (TYC) agenda aimed at changing how care is delivered, with more emphasis on enabling older people to remain at home in their later years.

This sounds good, as most people do want to end their days in their own homes.

But that means there needs to be decent home care available, a condition that is sadly lacking in Northern Ireland.

According to a survey published in

July by the UK Homecare Association (UKHCA) the 23, 500 older people in the north currently entitled to publicly-funded homecare are significantly less-well looked after than their counterparts in Britain.

The survey found that 73% of homecare visits in England are of 30 minutes, or less.

Scotland and Wales do better, at 42%; this compares with a "staggering" 87% in NI.

There is evidence of visits of 15 minutes, or less, in all UK jurisdictions, with the north again topping the table (28%).

Over the past two decades, as privatization has raged through public services, more and more older people are placed in homes run by for-profit organizations.

This has resulted in scandals where companies like Southern Cross asset-stripped its nursing homes.

Once again, the North's Executive is implementing neoliberal dogma without regard to the human consequences.

It must be stopped.

Home Help workers get active

By TINA MC VEIGH

THE Home Help/Home Care Action Group's campaign to defend Home Help services and jobs has gained a significant amount of momentum in the past several weeks, as meetings in communities across the country have continued apace. In the last week the campaign held meetings in Wexford, Cork and several areas of Dublin City as well as two successful protests in Co. Sligo.

Now Home Help activists are busy building for the protest on Wednesday 17 October as SW goes to press.

The decision to hold a protest at the Dail was made in late September, when 60 Home Help workers crowded into the Dail gallery to listen to People Before Profit TD Richard Boyd Barrett, challenge Enda Kenny on the issue of the Home Help cuts.

Kenny was challenged on the

barbaric nature of the cuts proposed while consultants in the HSE continue to earn obscene salaries and multinational pharmaceutical companies continue to profit from the HSE's overuse of branded drugs.

Capping the salary of consultants at a generous €100,000 would save half a billion a year.

Acting

The cuts Reilly is proposing to the Home Help services totals €10 million.

What is clear is that neither Reilly nor the FG/Labour government has any interest in acting in the best interests of public health.

Kenny was shamed and visibly thrown by the presence of the workers in the Dail and life got no better for him in Sligo on Monday when 100 home help supports greeted him at the steps of dole offices with a barrage of taunts and abuse.

Speaking to SW Noelle Coyle said

that she was here to tell the Taoiseach about the 31 hours a week she has lost as a carer.

The government keep bailing out their friends in the banks but the people are left to pick up the pieces.

The protestors also vowed to continue their series of protests in Sligo on Saturday 27 October.

In the run up to the budget and with huge public support, the Home Help campaign will continue to pile on the pressure to have their demands met.

Workers want standard contracts. The privatisation of the sector has to be stopped.

The cutbacks have to be reversed and workers must be given security of earnings.

All of this so that the most vulnerable in our society and the many people who care for them, can be supported and protected.

See www.swp.ie for more details.

'Old boys' clamour to defend their educational privileges

By NICHOLA HARVEY

THERE has been much talk this week about private schools and whether we, the working class, should continue to fund them.

There has been unsurprisingly little talk about the paltry levels of tax some of the wealthiest parents in the land are paying, or about how some of the poorest schools are being devastated by cuts.

The shock and consternation began when Labour Party Minister of State Alan Kelly suggested on RTE's *The Week in Politics* that the State subsidy of €96 million a year to private schools couldn't continue.

There were even more palpitations among the ruling class when the Minister for Education, Ruairi Quinn – a former pupil of Blackrock College, Dublin – said the next day that no decision had yet been made but the "Cabinet must examine all options".

Cue the many pained defences of the "value" private schools give.

Eoghan Murphy the slick, spoil boy wonder of Fine Gael was among the first out to say that while the schools got almost €100 million a year "there is a saving to the State to the tune of €93 million" because he said it was €3,500 a year cheaper to have a child taught in a private school than in a public one.

His solution was to effectively cut teachers' pay instead.

He said the children of the super-rich should continue to be subsidised by hard pressed workers, while the €63 million due in increments to teachers next year should be stopped.

Minister for Transport, Leo Varadkar – former pupil of King's Hospital school in Palmerstown, Co Dublin – said scrapping the subsidy would save nothing in the end.

Private Privilege

Junior finance minister, Brian Hayes – who boarded at Garbally College in Ballinasloe, Co Galway – said people

By KIERAN MCNULTY

MENTAL Health is the most underfunded sector of the Irish health service despite the fact that people with mental health conditions are often the most vulnerable in society.

Specifically, they are unique in two ways. First, they have mental and emotional problems rather than physical conditions.

Second, when their condition reaches crisis point it can result in death by suicide.

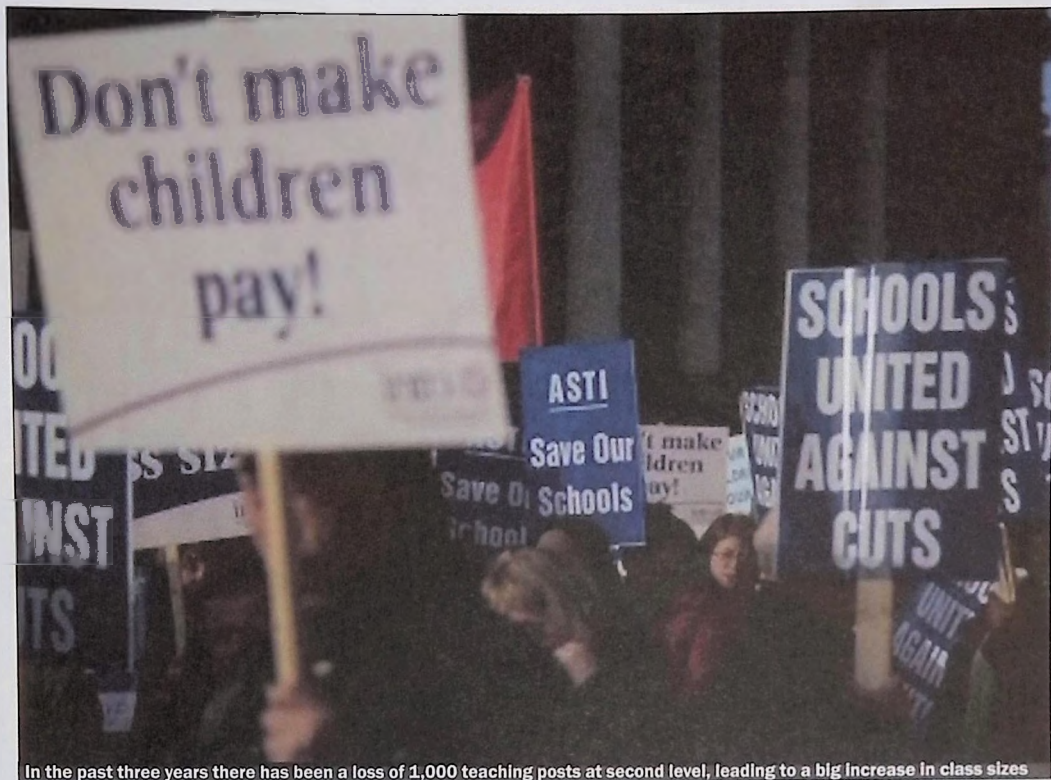
Suicide rates in Ireland, particularly among young men have reached alarming proportions. Despite being significantly higher than road deaths they receive much less attention.

This situation has become even worse with the recession, while at the same time mental health services are being continually starved of vital resources.

In 2009, the reported number of suicides in the state was 527, a dramatic increase of almost 25 per cent on the previous year.

Since then the annual suicide rate has remained relatively constant.

However, there has been a disproportionate number of incidents of suicide amongst asylum seekers with 49 taking their own



In the past three years there has been a loss of 1,000 teaching posts at second level, leading to a big increase in class sizes



Eoghan Murphy

who argued against the subsidy just hadn't "their facts straight", while Fianna Fail's Barry Cowen – old boy of the Cistercian College, Roscrea, Co Tipperary – defended the subsidy say-

ing it would cost more in the long run to scrap it.

It is also interesting to look at who didn't comment.

Minister for Agriculture, Simon Coveney, who went to Clongowes College in Co Kildare; Minister for Jobs, Richard Bruton, formerly of Belvedere College, Dublin and Clongowes, and Minister for Justice, Alan Shatter, old boy of the High School, Rathgar in Dublin, now charging €5,150 a year, all kept quiet in the wake of the revelation.

Public austerity

If one looks at what's happening in the



Leo Varadkar

State schooling sector it doesn't take long to realise how obscene it is to even consider continuing pumping hundreds of millions into rich kids' school days. Earlier this year our privately-ed-

ucated Minister announced he was taking 428 teachers out of the poorest deis (Delivery Equality of Opportunity In Schools) schools in the country.

After thousands of teachers, parents and children took to the streets, week after week in the winter months, he climbed down and agreed to retain 235 of the teaching posts in the urban deis schools.

It still meant deis schools faced bigger class sizes and in typical school-bully fashion he announced he would be cutting capitation support to all schools, meaning they have had to struggle more than ever this year to pay for such basics as heating and light. It is doubtful any private school has had to choose between light and heat this year.

There have still been cuts to island schools and cuts to the rural deis schools went ahead.

In the past three years there has been a loss of 1,000 teaching posts at second level, leading to a big increase in class sizes for State exam classes and reduction in subject choices; a 100 per cent elimination of all Traveller resource teachers; a loss of special needs assistants in classes as well as English-support teachers for immigrant children and cuts in teacher-training colleges.

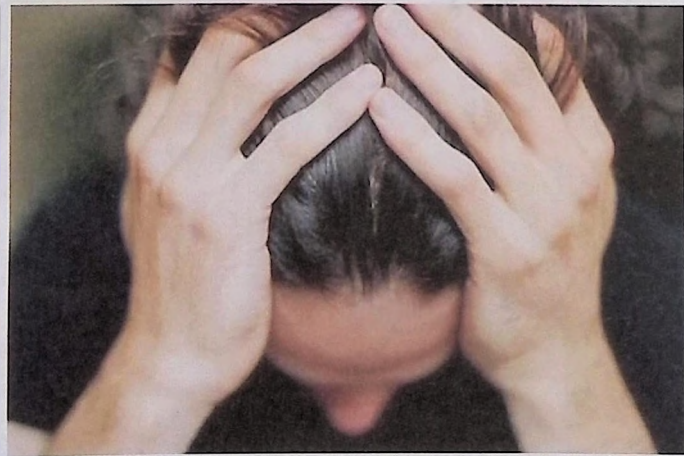
Contrast the lives of the children and young people in the 56 fee-paying schools with the 200,000 children in consistent poverty.

That means they may not have two pairs of strong shoes, or a warm coat, or may be able to buy only second-hand clothes, or may be unable to eat a decent dinner with any regularity.

There is no credible argument in favour of private schools. If the parents who fund them can afford them they can afford to pay higher taxes. Private schools should be closed or opened to all.

All children should, as a basic human right, be educated, supported and encouraged to flourish, in a decent, fair and socialist society – at no charge to their parents, no matter who they are.

A silent crisis in mental health services



lives while living in direct-provision centres in the decade to 2010.

Mental illness epidemic

According to Amnesty International "one in four people are affected by mental health problems and, as we speak, people lack adequate supports and services.

This means almost every family in Ireland is affected by successive governments' apathy in this area".

In January 2006 the Government accepted the recommendations contained in an independent report

that it had commissioned, Vision for Change (VFC), as the basis for its future mental health policy. Since the report's publication almost nothing has been done to realise its implementation.

There are two key related factors here.

First the HSE has reduced its health expenditure by €2.5 billion or a cut of around 17%. Second the proportions spent on Irish mental health care are vastly out of sync with European norms.

In the EU 15 around 12% of the

health budget is devoted to the area of mental health. In Ireland this figure is a mere 4.5%.

Meanwhile the human rights of mental health patients remain a serious concern. Children are still admitted into adult psychiatric wards with all the dangers that this implies.

Electroshock therapy or ECT, banned in many countries, is still being administered in Ireland. The same can also be said for the use of over-sedation and physical restraining.

Increasingly mental health patients are being issued with medication, to the delight of pharmaceutical corporations, because the government refuses to adequately fund an alternative recovery model of mental health.

As suggested in VFC, this model would include increasing staff numbers especially in the areas of psychology, counselling and occupational therapy.

Greater funding would be provided for far increased mental health service user input and for initiatives such as autonomous service user led drop in centres.

Under pressure, the government with Kathleen Lynch as Minister for Disability and Mental Health did allocate €35 million for community

mental health services in Budget 2012.

However, Orla Barry of Mental Health Reform has argued that none of this is new money.

It represents a transfer of funds from hospital based services to community based services and in fact the mental health budget will suffer a cut of one per cent for 2012.

As none of this €35 million has yet been spent and as none of the promised 370 additional posts has been filled, Barry argues that we could actually be looking at an effective cut of almost six per cent in mental health funding by the end of 2012.

At the beginning of September, the current government's Minister for Health, James Reilly, proposed the transfer (scrapping?) of the additional €35 million promised to community mental health services to offset the deficit in the HSE.

This was met by a demonstration outside government buildings by those demanding that the Government continue to stand by this commitment.

This is precisely the type of direct action by service users, their advocates and families, linked to all those opposing cuts and charges that will force the government to reverse its neo-liberal agenda.

IMF confirms the global crisis is getting worse

By BRIAN O'BOYLE

IN its latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) the IMF has confirmed that the global slump is getting worse.

According to IMF managing director, Christine Lagarde, the global recovery has 'effectively stalled' as growth and employment have fallen to their lowest levels since early 2009.

A combination of crisis in the Eurozone and renewed concerns about US debt are particularly concerning, as growth forecasts have been cut for the second time in six months.

Greece (-6%) Portugal (-3%) Italy (-2.3%) and Spain (-1.5%) are all expected to shrink this year, whilst the Eurozone as a whole will be in recession for at least the next 18 months.

On top of this, tax hikes and public sector cuts are expected to choke off any recovery in the US early next year.

With Europe and America mired in recession it is unsurprising that the world's emerging economies are also starting to feel the pinch.

India and Brazil have had their growth forecasts slashed, whilst the expectations for China have also been downgraded.

No recovery in sight

Five years of concerted government intervention and \$20 trillion have simply been unable to rejuvenate the global economy.

Indeed, despite the best efforts of central bankers everywhere the current crisis has been the longest single period of depression in capitalist history.

Let us not forget that the Great Depression had initially begun to subside by 1933 or that the crisis of the 1970's was centred on three years at the start of the decade (1971-73).

This time the crisis shows absolutely no signs of abating and policy makers everywhere are beginning to despair.

Speaking at the launch of the WEO, Olivier Blanchard, IMF chief economist, blamed 'head winds stemming from Europe and a greater loss of confidence than had earlier been predicted'.

The confidence fairy

The idea that somehow confidence is the real problem is attractive to the ruling



class as it deflects attention away from punishing austerity and sets an agenda of further cuts to revive the 'animal spirits' of investors.

US Treasury Secretary, Tim Geithner, was particularly candid in the wake of the IMF report, arguing that although the reforms in Europe "negatively impact pension benefits, wages, and the power of working people.

In the longer term, investors hope conditions emerge that are favourable for profitable investment as labor costs are lowered and people's expectations are lowered as well".

This shows the real agenda of the ruling classes.

But there is also a problem with Geithner's assertion that capitalists just need a little bit more help from society.

The last four years have, after all, been characterised by every advantage being given to the bosses and the bankers.

Working class austerity has been mirrored by vast hand-outs for the rich, as banks have been bailed out and conditions have been dismantled.

Despite this the economy is deteriorating and orthodox economists are increasingly worried that there might be something more ominous at play.

Besides 'confidence' the IMF report highlights fears that "the current slowdown may have a more lasting component than merely another bout of turbulence on what was always expected to be a slow and humpy recovery".

Similarly, Olivier Blanchard cautions that "beyond the Eurozone and the US fiscal cliff there seems to be other

factors working against the expansion of global capital".

A crisis of profitability

This is no doubt true. But what none of these so-called 'experts' can admit is that the real causes of the crisis can never be solved by confidence or austerity.

A falling return on profitable investment is at the heart of the current crisis and nothing will stabilise capitalism short of the widespread destruction of capital values.

Without a sufficient rate of return, capitalism loses all of its momentum as investment stalls and workers are thrown onto the scrap heap.

This is the kernel of truth in Geithner's assertions about 'favourable conditions', but there is a longstanding problem that mainstream apologists simply refuse to contemplate.

As capitalism ages it gets increasingly more difficult to create the conditions for successful investment.

Yesterday's exploitation (dead labour/capital) increasingly gets in the way of tomorrow's investment and the only way to solve this problem is to engage in the destruction of previous accumulation.

This problem goes right to the heart of the capitalist system and while governments can help to reduce costs and attack workers' wages they cannot set out to destroy private capital – at least without engaging in warfare.

A crisis with a working class solution

This shows the absolute barbarity of the system, particularly when governments are hell bent on saving capitalism on the backs of ordinary people.

The incessant drive to accumulate capital is completely irrational from the point of view of human development and no amount of tweaking will turn the system into something civilised.

The latest crisis merely confirms this and as the economy continues to deteriorate it is increasingly obvious that a choice between people and profit is confronting us.

Hired prize fighters from Geithner to the Labour party are already busy trying to convince us that we 'all' need to keep suffering in the interests of the profiteers.

Meanwhile those of us with any sanity need to get on with organising ordinary people.



Greeks say no to Merkel visit

by JULIE SHERRY

ATHENS went into lockdown on Tuesday of last week as Germany's chancellor Angela Merkel turned up to discuss austerity with the Greek government.

Police stood by to prevent people they suspected to be "troublemakers" from protesting. But they could not hold workers back as 300,000 turned out to rally.

All workers across greater Athens struck for three hours from noon. Many more walked out earlier, determined to get to Syntagma Square despite the police crackdown.

It was Merkel's first attempt to visit Greece since the Eurozone exploded nearly three years ago. It came just two weeks after a general strike.

People were outraged by her brazen attempt to feign "solidarity" with people in Greece, while continuing to



call for brutal cuts. Thousands joined a "warm up" protest at parliament on Monday night.

The following day saw 7,000 police on duty. They shut down Metro stations to try and stop workers taking to the streets. No protests were allowed, apart from

two official "rally points".

Panos Garganas is editor of the Workers' Solidarity newspaper. He told Socialist Worker, "They are trying to scare people, but the mood is that this is a day for a big demonstration."

The two rally points were a

mile apart, Panos explained, but nevertheless "the demonstration is filling the streets between them".

A fresh austerity package for Greece is set to be unveiled at a European Union summit next week. Union leaders are set to

discuss calling a general strike on that day.

The fascist Golden Dawn party is trying to capitalise on people's misery in this desperate situation. It represents a growing threat to immigrants and the left.

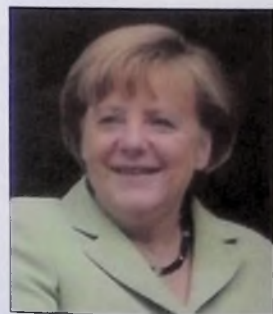
But workers are putting up real resistance. The last general strike was marked by widespread demands for rapid escalation of strikes to drive the government into submission. Workers across the unions are saying there must be more strikes.

We need a revolution

Vangelis, a local government worker, spoke to Socialist Worker during the Greek general strike. Along with his workmates he hadn't been paid in months.

"For 20 years I had been working in the private sector and I didn't know what a strike is," he said. "If you struck you would lose your job".

"Now everyone understands that if you don't fight, there is no future. We have to be militant



and take the struggle as far as we can."

Apostolis is a sailor. He added, "The bosses are terrorising us. They make our work more and more intense. The working conditions are miserable.

"A 24-hour strike is not enough. We have to go on an indefinite strike. We need to make a revolution. We cannot wait anymore. We need strike committees in every workplace, actively organising the struggle."

Ioanna, a telecoms worker, echoed this. She told Socialist Worker, "Only through struggle can we overthrow these measures—there is no other way."

The Syrian revolution poses a severe test for Turkey's rulers

Alex Callinicos examines Erdogan's response to growing tensions on Turkey's border with Syria



THE first real sign that the civil war in Syria could spill over into a wider conflict came last week.

A series of mortar and artillery exchanges took place across the border between Syria and Turkey.

The Turkish parliament has authorised military action against Syria. Turkey's prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned that the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad would be making "a fatal mistake" if it sought to test Turkey's resolve.

Turkey under Erdogan has been asserting itself as a regional power. Rebuffed by the European Union, where racist opposition is blocking its application for membership, Erdogan has turned eastwards.

His hand has been strengthened by a

booming economy. His ruling AK Party rests on a new thriving industrial capitalism centred on Anatolia, and has been boosted by a massive influx of speculative capital.

Israeli brutality and arrogance have effectively killed off its military pact with Turkey. Taking advantage of the power vacuum created by the Arab revolutions, Erdogan has projected himself as a champion of the Palestinians.

Mohamed Mursi, Egypt's new Muslim Brotherhood president, says he will adopt the "Turkish model". By this he means a neoliberal Islamist government that poses no threat to the West.

But the Syrian revolution poses Erdogan a severe test. After trying unsuccessfully to persuade Assad to negotiate

with the opposition, he eventually heeded Western calls for his removal.

Buffer

When Syria shot down a Turkish jet in June, Ankara called on Nato and the United Nations to establish a buffer zone on the border between the two countries.

The swelling number of Syrian refugees (over 100,000 already in Turkey) could stay there, and Turkish villages would be protected from spillovers from the war.

Turkey is also widely reported to be acting as a base of operations for those outside powers—the US, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar in particular—that are arming some sections of the rebels.

But while Erdogan wants foreign in-

tervention in Syria, he is unhappy about the cautious policy being pursued by the US. Bulent Aliriza at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington says:

"President Obama prefers to go down the path of a long drawn out struggle, like Afghanistan in the 1980s. But that's not good enough for Turkey.

"It does not want to be like Pakistan, which became the forward base for the Afghan rebels. If that were to happen it could confront all the pressures that Pakistan faced and from which it has never recovered."

There are three other complications. First, despite moves towards negotiations between the Turkish government and the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK), fighting

in Turkish-ruled Kurdistan has escalated recently. The Assad regime appears to be encouraging PKK guerrillas to attack Turkey from Syria.

Struggle

Second, Erdogan has been fighting a bitter domestic struggle against the high command of the armed forces.

Last month the ex-commanders of the army, navy and air force, along with 327 other defendants, were given long jail sentences for plotting a coup. So this isn't a good moment to be going to war, which could also reverse the inflow of capital into Turkey.

Third, Erdogan's policy of intervention in Syria is opposed by about two thirds of the Turkish public. Many of the inhabitants of south eastern Turkey, bordering on Syria, belong to the same sect of Shia Islam as Assad and his supporters. So Syria has become a dangerous trap for Erdogan.

His wariness is matched by that of the US. There has been much talk of the West and its allies arming the Syria rebels.

But the Financial Times reports: "Western governments fear heavy weapons might fall into the wrong hands as the armed opposition becomes more radicalised—rebel spokesmen say that the US has warned Gulf states against sending anti-aircraft missiles."

The roots of the revolution and the civil war in Syria remain inside the country—in the clash between the Assad regime and the popular revolt.

Outside powers would like to bend this struggle to meet their own interests, but the dangers of intervention make their policies hesitant and confused.

Spanish resistance intensifies

SPANISH labour unions have threatened a national strike unless the country's right-wing government cancels announced austerity cuts, in the wake of a second day of national mass protests.

Last week some 60,000 demonstrators flooded the center of Madrid, during the biggest of more than 50 union-backed protests across the country.

Their banners read "Their plunder, my crisis" and "No more unemployment, no more cuts."

Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy recently announced that the government would be undertaking an extra €13 billion of cuts in 2013.

In total, it plans to trim €150 billion from its budget over the next three years.

In response to the latest austerity measures, union leaders have mooted a potential general strike in November.

"It's up to the government whether there's a general strike or not. If they were going to hold a referendum things would be completely different," said Ignacio Fernandez Toxo, head of Comisiones Obreras, the country's biggest union.

A survey published on Sunday showed that 77 percent of Spaniards support the protests.

More are expected as the country gears up for a series of regional elections in Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque country.

The crisis has exposed rising tensions between the belt-tightening central government and highly-



Members and supporters of the CCOO Workers Union and the General Union of Workers (UGT) take part in a protest organized by Unions against the Spanish government's austerity policies at the Atocha Square in the centre of Madrid. (AFP Photo / Dani Pozo)

autonomous regions which have been slow to abandon their spending promises.

Many have threatened to break away altogether.

The economic situation remains dire.

One in four remains unemployed, a higher proportion than in Greece and the worst figure in the industrialized world.

GDP is expected to shrink by 1.5

percent at the end of the year and to remain negative in 2013.

The country needs to cut its deficit to secure more financial assistance from the EU. So far, they have failed to reach the set targets. Last year, the deficit was 9.4 percent instead of the promised 6.0, and this year the budget will be at least 7.3 in the red, instead of the planned 6.3.

But while the abstract targets appear out of reach, the social impact

of cuts is palpable.

"They are taking away the health system. They are taking away our basic rights and that's not fair. They are reclaiming almost all social benefits. It's shameful that we are losing everything," demonstrator Carmen Lopez told Euroneur.

This article was taken from a non-profit organization (ANO) see <http://rt.com/news/spain-protest-budget-cuts-851> for more details.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Millions of workers join Indonesia's general strike

by MEISTRA BUDIASA
in Jakarta

MORE than two million workers joined a one-day strike across Indonesia on Wednesday 10 October. They demanded an end to low wages and the policy of outsourcing to contract labour.

About 200,000 workers marched in the industrial city of Bekasi, waving flags and chanting "Workers unite! We can't be defeated!"

The strike is the greatest action by the labour movement since president Suharto crushed resistance in anti-communist purges during the 1960s.

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's government has opened up the country further to neoliberalism.

Some 16 million workers are currently outsourced and denied benefits. Strikers want all workers to be directly employed with a minimum wage and health insurance.

One worker told *Socialist Worker* it is hard to organise strikes and protests, but she has no choice as the cost of living is so expensive.

The democracy movement that overthrew the dictator Suharto in 1998 has been co-opted into the administration.

But the action shows the mass labour movement can create a revolutionary alternative.

Socialist Worker

SEXUAL LIBERATION FOR ALL...

Defend women's right to choose

THE opening of the Marie Stopes International (MSI) Sexual Health Centre must be welcomed by all who care about women's rights. North and South, it has been clear for decades that a woman whose well-being is seriously at risk because of pregnancy cannot be sure of getting an abortion, if that's what she wants.

In the North, women with underlying health conditions potentially complicated by pregnancy may be offered an NHS abortion in some hospitals – but not in all, or even most.

Instead, many are forced to travel to England for a private abortion. Often, they will be given their medical notes to take with them.

So, it is sheer hypocrisy for Northern Ireland's politicians to say there is no need for the MSI centre.

Their hypocrisy is even greater when both Sinn Fein and DUP say that the MSI clinic must "operate under the guidelines and the legal framework set out by the Department of Health".

Those guidelines were first issued in 2007 and rejected by all the parties on the Assembly Health Committee, then chaired by Iris Robinson as "too liberal".

Since then, they have been amended twice, most recently in July 2010, but Health Minister Edwin Poots has steadfastly refused to issue revised Guidelines!

Poots, like his probable successor as Health Minister, Jim Wells, and several other DUP MLAs, is a member of the Caleb Foundation – an evangelical lobbying group set up in 1998 whose members reportedly describe themselves as "the Caleban".

Not surprisingly, the Caleban are not only against abortion but are also "opposed in principle to the very concept of civil partnerships for homosexual



Standing up for women's rights Photo credit: Tyler McNally

couples".

Last year, its chair argued in *The Newsletter* that the "centrality and relevance of Biblical principles in society must be fully recognised in the Programme for Government" and urged "all evangelical Christian MLAs, and especially those who serve as Ministers on the Executive, to do all within their power to ensure that this is the case. We also encourage them to take their stand against policies which are at variance with the Word of God".

Unfortunately, rather than standing up to these attempts to keep Northern Ireland in the 18th century, Sinn Fein's response to the MSI opening

echoed the DUP's – Martin Mc Guinness told the BBC about the clinic, "We've had a very consistent position down the years. Sinn Fein is not in favour of abortion and we resisted any attempt to bring the British 1967 Abortion Act to the North."

The opening of the Marie Stopes Centre means that, for the first time, abortion services will be legally offered on the island of Ireland.

It means that women across the island whose physical or mental health is at risk will have access to legal abortion, rather than having to raise additional funds for travel and accommodation to Britain.

There will, no doubt, be protests by anti-abortionists but it is worth noting that the MSI centre was not in the radio/TV headlines just the day after the news of its opening broke and it was on the inside pages of even the most Catholic of the newspapers.

In the early 1990s, the Brook Advisory Service set up in Belfast, offering sexual health services for young people aged 16-24.

There was a huge outcry from anti-abortionists, led by Ian Paisley Snr. They organized mass protests, vowing not to go away until Brook closed.

But pro-choice forces, led by socialists, organised and took

to the streets, making the pro-choice arguments and holding counter-rallies and support rallies.

As the public showed they supported Brook, the numbers of the anti-choice brigade dwindled. Today, there are no protests outside Brook. We will need to do the same to defend the MSI Centre.

However, the MSI clinic is not a solution to the problems faced by the vast majority of women here who need abortions.

Better off women will continue to access abortions in England, while working class women will get illegal (though very safe) abortion pills over the Internet.

Inside:

Page 3: Welfare becoming a thing of the past

Page 4: Poots ramps up privatisation