

Socialist Worker

RESIST THE CUTS!

JOIN THE FIGHTBACK

JOB LOSSES in the private and public sectors are mounting in Ireland.

But Irish bosses are pushing the FF/Green government to escalate the 'Austerity Programme' – slashing even more jobs, pay, pensions and health and social services to boost profits.

With poverty and suicide rates rising it is time to say enough!

Enough cuts in jobs!
Enough cuts in pensions and pay!

Enough cuts in Health and Public Services!

It's time to make the rich pay for their own crisis.

Not Alone

Irish workers are not on their own in the fight against the employers' and government austerity plans.

The economic crisis is accelerating across Europe, but so is the fightback as workers in Greece, France, Italy and Spain take action.

A general strike in July brought Greece to a halt.

It was the sixth one-day general strike this year.

Greece's Labour (Pasok) government's 'austerity' measures to cut pensions and public spending are severely hitting workers' living standards.

The resistance to the attacks is creating a deep crisis in Greek politics.

Greek Socialist Panos Garganos explains: "There are signs of a revolt in Pasok.

"The party secretary was forced to leave a meeting with trade unionists, which he had organised, after they criticised and booed him.

"People are now demanding another general strike when parliament votes next week.

"As yet, the unions have not announced more action. They are hesitant because they fear the government may fail.

"But they are also under pressure as the left will call action if they fail to."

Greek-style resistance is spreading across Europe.

In France around two million people took to the streets in 200 towns and cities on Thursday of last week – also over attacks on pensions.

The demonstrations were about



Greek workers fighting the cuts

twice as large as the last day of action on 27 May – and the strikes were bigger too.

Christine Poupin from the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA) says, "This was a turning point.

"The mobilisation against the pension attacks has taken a step forwards.

"The scale of the government assault acted as a shock which spurred workers into action."

Workers in Italy poured onto the streets during a general strike organised by the CGIL union federation on Friday of last week.

They struck against the policies of right wing prime minister Silvio Berlusconi.

Private sector workers took four

hours of strike action, including airport staff, train, tram and bus drivers as well as about 130,000 electricity, gas and water workers. Metal workers struck all day.

In the public sector, teachers, civil servants and others walked out for the whole day.

A huge rally of 100,000 people was held in the centre of Bologna, while 50,000 marched in Milan.

In Rome metal workers chanted, "No to Fiat blackmail."

Fiat is trying to force through a deal attacking jobs and conditions – with the threat of closure if the changes don't go through.

Strike!

In Spain, Transport workers on the

Madrid metro struck for four days last week over pay cuts, shutting down all 12 lines and bringing the city to a standstill.

The 7,500 striking workers also took part in protests on 30 June against cuts being imposed by the right wing regional government.

Workers suspended the strike for the annual LGBT Pride march on Saturday.

Trade unions in Spain are planning a 24-hour general strike on 29 September against public spending cuts and reform of the labour laws which will see massive attacks on pensions, jobs, services and conditions.

Europe's hot summer of resistance looks set to continue. We should join the fightback.

READY TO WORK CAMPAIGN

NO HOLIDAYS FOR THE UNEMPLOYED!

SO... **RECLAIM THE CITY!**

SATURDAY 28TH AUG.

FARNELL SQUARE

TOP BANDS PERFORMANCES SPECIAL GUESTS!!

Wexford Alliance calls for National Day of Action

By SEAMUS O'BRIEN

THE NECESSITY to link all of the hospital campaigns has come in to sharp focus in the past month.

Louth County Hospital in Dundalk and St. Luke's in Dublin are having their services ripped apart.

This has left both these hospital campaigns feeling isolated and angry.

The Wexford Campaign is now proposing a National Day of Protest, linking all of the hospital protests – there is strength in numbers after all.

Wexford hospital itself has continued to come under attack due to 'budget constraints'.

A 25-bed ward, in the medical part of the hospital has been closed down for the summer months.

This is happening while almost every night there are patients lying in the corridors on trolleys.

The Trades Council in Wexford called a crisis meeting, inviting the local

Chamber of Commerce; Dr. Colm Quigley (responsible for HSE 'reconfiguration' or 'downgrading' of health

services in the South-east); and hospital union shop stewards.

However, this meeting

was called off 5 minutes before it was due to take place, reportedly due to fears of a protest outside.

To build on the success of the 5000-strong protest march in May against the downgrading of services at Wexford General Hospital, it was felt necessary to pull together a group of 50 or so committed activists to drive forward the next stage of the campaign.

While it can be a little awkward getting people together all at once it is hoped that this will be held in July.

The Wexford Campaign is now calling for a National Meeting with representatives from all of the hospital campaigns around the country to outline a strategy that could involve a National Protest in Dublin this Autumn.

A public meeting will also be sought with Mary Harney and the HSE Executive. Failing adequate guarantees, the Campaign will be looking to call a National Day of Strike Action on the issue of the Health Cuts.

For more information contact: Seamus O'Brien, 086 3327423.

Health Strategy of Cuts and Privatisation

By DR PEADAR O'GRADY

IRELAND HAS one of the lowest number of hospital beds in the OECD, with only Turkey and Mexico worse off.

Government policy in health is now to ignore its own 2001 Health Strategy to provide 3000 more hospital beds.

Instead a policy of public hospital closures and private hospital provision of only 1000 beds is pushed.

None of the private beds of Harney's 'collocation' plan have actually been built as the profits are in question.

The deeply flawed Hanly report on consultant staffing recommended a 'bigger is better' policy of closing smaller local hospitals.

Increases in hospital beds (3000 more), consultants (2000 more) and ambulance and primary care services would still have been required

to implement the plan.

Instead, the logic of closures has been followed without any of the beds, consultants or ambulances being provided.

All warnings about the dangers of travelling further to A&E units in already overcrowded hospitals have been ignored.

We need a democratically planned, comprehensive and universal Health Service that is free at the point of use and funded from progressive taxation.

Hospital Campaigns reject the Hanly and Collocation plans and must demand that the Health Strategy be implemented as a matter of the gravest national emergency.

Unity of trade union and community campaigns against the privatisers in FF and FG will be required to achieve this.



Around 1,000 people took part in a protest against proposed cut backs in HSE services for people with disabilities in the Galway area. Assembling at Galway Cathedral where the parent of a child with disabilities that would be affected by the cutbacks addressed the crowd, the demonstration then marched to the HSE head offices in Galway.

Croke Park Deal

THE ACCEPTANCE of the Croke Park agreement is a defeat for workers because it ties the unions into a policy of collaboration with government policy for three years.

It was only pushed through because the bureaucratic machinery in SIPTU and IMPACT went into overdrive. In the health service, for example, SIPTU officials told workers on temporary contracts that they would lose their jobs unless they voted for the deal.

Now a mop-up operation is in place in the unions which voted No.

Unfortunately, the UNITE union caved into this pressure by stating that it would now accept the terms as it was too small to lead opposition.

Strenuous efforts are also being made to pull the TUI and CPSU into the deal. CPSU General Secretary, Blair Horan, for example, is pushing for a re-ballot to gain acceptance of the deal.

Despite these moves, however, there is one major weakness in the Croke Park deal which union activists should exploit to the full.

The deal demands



Blair Horan: Re-ballot

huge changes in working conditions but offers workers nothing in return.

The only stick the bosses can wave is that workers may miss their chance to get some pay cuts reversed if they do not comply.

But given a choice between a real attack on conditions and a vague promise, many might want to resist.

Over the next period, activists should:

Demand negotiation on every clause that implies a change of conditions.

Insist on bringing back each change to a mass meeting of workers and having them voted on.

Argue for non-cooperation with any change that was not agreed by workers at local level.

In the course of these battles, union officials should be clearly told that they are not paid to police workers but to serve their interests.

Cherryorchard Hospital Protest

By BRID SMITH

OVER 300 people marched in Ballyfermot on July 1st to protest against the closure of beds in Cherryorchard Hospital.

Families and carers of elderly patients are extremely worried that the closure of the 18-bed Laurel Unit in the hospital is just the beginning of a wind down of services for people with Alzheimer's syndrome and dementia and those receiving respite care.

The protest marched through the hospital grounds and into the admin building where thousands of petitions were handed in to HSE management.

Councillor Brid Smith of the People Before Profit Alliance told the crowd that "Emily O'Reilly's



claim that the HSE is shrouded in secrecy and deceit is true of this hospital.

"Management told us that they could not recruit the extra 22 nurses needed to keep all services open.

"But we know that

they are employing extra engineers and admin staff in the hospital.

"This campaign will grow from strength to strength to defend and save our local hospital and demand that the frontline staff are employed to

keep every bed in Cherry Orchard open."

Family members spoke movingly of how the closure of the ward and the displacement of their loved ones to other areas of the hospital would have a traumatic effect on the

patients.

Before the crowd dispersed protesters chanted: "They bailed out the banks – now bailed out the hospitals."

A meeting of all families involved in receiving support and care at the hospital was organised for Tuesday July 6th.

People before Profit councillor Joan Collins said: "It is up to people power to force them to show respect for the elderly."

She proposed that the campaign links in with other hospital campaigns around the country to organise a massive national protest against HSE cuts.

Campaigns from across Ireland have recently been linking together to call for action later in the summer.

Can hospital protests win?

THE BIGGEST mobilisations in the current crisis have occurred over hospital protests.

Over 15,000, for example, have marched in Clonmel; 5,000 in Ballinasloe; 2,000 in Athlone; 500 in Boyle; and 5,000 in Wexford, in impressive displays of solidarity.

Yet, tragically, a number of these campaigns have gone to defeat. In Dundalk, for example, 600 people recently staged a day of rage to mark the defeat of their campaign.

All of which raise a key issue: what can people



do if the government refuses to listen?

The pattern of hospital protests to date has been to hold one or two major demonstrations. FF politicians (whose party supports policies which lead to closures) typically turn up on these

mobilisations to 'express their concern'.

A change of tactics is now necessary.

First, the protests will not work if they are framed in purely local terms.

Hospital campaigners need to join together in national mobilisations that target the policies of cutbacks.

This means moving beyond just trying to save a local hospital on a 'non-political' basis.

FF TDs who vote for a policy of cutbacks should be told that they are not welcome.

Second, the movement needs to escalate from mass demonstrations to mass civil disobedience or local general strikes.

In Waterford, for example, the local trades council called two local half-day stoppages and Harney was forced to

retain a cancer service – albeit via a public private partnership – in the town.

Where strikes do not appear immediately possible, mass civil disobedience should be employed.

Hospital units that are about to be closed should be occupied to become a focal point of resistance.

Key motorways should be blocked by hundreds of people to show how pressure can be applied.

Above all we should reject the idea that 'protests do not work' and understand that deeper forms of protest are required to defeat a heartless government.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Rich are getting richer: It's Official

WHEN WORKERS are asked to tighten their belts they are told there is 'no money' in Ireland and that 'we are all in it together'.

However, the World Wealth Report revealed in June that the number of rich Irish people, worth over €1 million, actually increased by 10% last year; from 16,300 to 18,100 individuals!

The number owning over €30 million, the 'ultra-rich', also increased by 10%.

Even when the rich crash there's a soft landing for them.

High-living developer, Johnny Ronan, is looking to NAMA for a bail-out with his €2 billion debts while Anglo's Sean Fitzpatrick has left the state to sort out his €120 million debts by declaring himself bankrupt.

The rich are getting richer because they are robbing the rest of us.

We should tax the rich to the hilt and make them pay for their own crisis.

Recession blamed for rise in Suicides

A 25% rise in suicides in Ireland, reported by the Central Statistics Office, was blamed on the unemployment, spiralling debt and depression caused by the recession.

Geoff Day, head of the National Office for Suicide

Prevention called the rise a 'national disaster', but that the true figures could be even higher as too many deaths were 'undetermined'.

527 people killed themselves in Ireland in 2009, up from 424 in 2008.

Tragically, the main increase was among young adults aged 25-44 years.

Paul Kelly, head of suicide support organisation, Console, said: "There has been a huge increase in the number of people who are finding the impact of the downturn of the economy quite a strain with job losses, financial worry, fear of house repossession and marital strain."

Organised workers' resistance is crucial.

Fighting for jobs and decent support services through trade union and community campaigns can help give real hope and solidarity to workers in crisis.

Three out of ten afraid they can't afford food

A NEW Eurobarometer survey revealed that almost three in 10 Irish people are afraid they will run out of money for food, ordinary bills, mortgage/rent payments and other necessities.

In Ireland, 35 per cent of respondents said they were finding it more difficult to afford healthcare and many are putting off visits to the doctor because they haven't the money.

Almost 1 in 20 is afraid of losing their home. Half of Irish people surveyed thought there was an increase in poverty in Ireland.

It is clear the other half were closing their eyes to reality.

FF bigots resign over Gay marriage

THE CIVIL partnerships bill was a step forward for Gay couples but still denies these couples the equality in marriage and their fundamental respect and rights as parents.

This was still too much for three FF senator/bigots who resigned the FF whip in protest. If only we could get them all to resign for good.

Save Northside Swimming Pool



Photo: Paula Geoghegan

Business's Get Bail Outs - Coolock Gets Cuts

By AOIFE SIMONS

IT SEEMS ironic that while Dublin City Council seem to be propping up businesses by lowering annual rates they are at the same time threatening to close much needed swimming pools in Coolock, Sean McDermot Street and Crumlin; areas which benefited the least from the economic boom.

This move clearly goes against public feeling, as the motion to have these swimming pools recognised as stand-alone pools was successfully passed with an impressive majority at the monthly Council meeting at City Hall in April 2010.

Despite this DCC is threatening closure of all three pools citing lack of funding from Central Government as justification for this blatant display of disregard for the needs of these communities.

A campaign to fight the proposed closure of the Coolock swimming pool was formally launched by 35 concerned residents on the 16th June at a public meeting held at St. Joseph's School, Macroom Road, Coolock.

On the 14th June, while the monthly Council meeting was in progress the Coolock campaign group joined forces with the Sean McDermot Street and Crumlin groups in a one hundred strong crowd outside City Hall to voice their protest at the proposed closures.

Dublin City Council has now deferred closure of the pools until November due to the pressure of the campaign.

If you are reading this and feel this has nothing to do with you, ask yourself something.

How many of you used a pool growing up? Have you thought about the

elderly in your community who use a swimming pool on a regular basis to socialise and stay fit?

What about the importance of providing a healthy alternative to children growing up in the gangland culture of today?

Are you aware that many schools in your area use the pool to teach your children to swim?

The closure of our swimming pool is no joke; it can only impact on our community in a negative way.

Support is needed to help prevent this from happening.

No matter how little time you have to give please remember - every little bit makes a difference.

To become involved in this campaign contact Martin on 087 8289243 or email savenorthsideswimming-pool@gmail.com.

Government Printer Refuses Staff Statutory Entitlement

By BRID SMITH

WORKERS AND their supporters held a lively picket at Brunswick Press in Dublin on July 7th to protest the company's denial of their basic statutory rights to redundancy pay.

This printing company has the contract from the Dept of Trade and Enterprise to print the official booklet informing

workers of their basic statutory rights!

On 3rd March, Brunswick Press, Bluebell (Ireland's Oldest Printing Firm) made 20 staff redundant.

Staff were told that the company had no funds to pay statutory entitlements (notice and holiday money).

Unions were called in and brokered a concession deal with

the company that half the money would be paid on leaving and the balance would be paid by 30th June 2010.

The company has failed to meet this agreement and claims it has no funds to pay it.

The company continues to trade, printing brochures etc. for government departments whilst failing to meet the statutory employment rights of the state.

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 Brown 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.

Connolly Shoes strikers fight on

By PAUL O'BRIEN

THE STRIKE in the Connolly Shoe shop in Dun Laoghaire is now entering its fourth month.

The Directors, Matthew Connolly and Aidan Nevin (who is also a manager in Davy Stockbrokers) sacked four workers without compensation.

They have also refused to pay back money owed, despite the Labour Relations Commission ordering them to do so.

The workers were also forced to take action because the company cut wages, conditions and hours without consultation - telling them 'sign or face dismissal'.

The company refused to recognise their trade union, Mandate, or even to enter negotiations of any sort.

The staff members have received wonderful support from the people of Dun Laoghaire who have consistently refused to pass the picket line.

At the end of June, management closed the two shops in Dun Laoghaire, hoping that this would demoralise the strikers, while planning to open again at a later date.

Management also agreed to attend a hearing at the Labour Court but refused to compromise on any issue and seem determined to break the strike in any way they can.

The strikers have also been harassed by the Garda and Litter Wardens at the request of management; despite this they are determined to stick it out to the end.

Connolly Shoes have outlets in Bray and Arklow and the workers are appealing to people not to shop there.

Because these shops have a separate corporate identity there are legal difficulties picketing these shops, but leaflets have been produced for distribution in Bray and Arklow explaining the workers' case and asking for support.

This conflict is a result of the employer's offensive, which workers all over the country are facing in an attempt by IBEC, the employers federation, to drive down wages and conditions.

The Connolly strikers are determined to win and deserve every possible support we can give.

Join the Socialists

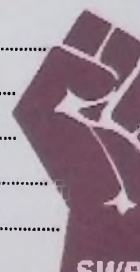
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Is the recession over?

By PEADAR O'GRADY

IT SEEMS Ireland has joined the international trend for grasping at statistical straws about 'recovery'.

In June the Central Statistics Office (CSO) issued a report that Ireland was 'technically' out of recession.

Finance minister Brian Lenihan welcomed the figures as grounds for 'optimism' for the future. However, anyone who thought that this might mean an improvement in their lives would have been shocked to hear that unemployment was still expected to continue to rise (to 450,000 or 13.4% in June)! Household and government spending and business investment were also falling.

For workers whose experience of recession is less jobs and less money what could this 'technical' announcement of a 'jobless recovery' mean?

The announcement was based on figures which showed total economic output (GDP) growing at 2.7% in the first three months of 2010 after over two years of crashing recession.

However, the ESRI and most economists say that, because of the reliance on Multinational Corporations who export their profits, the more reliable figure is GNP which excludes the earnings of foreign-owned firms.

GNP fell in these same three months by 0.5%. This is the second time in 6 months that a 'technical' end to the recession was noted by the CSO.

However, last December, CSO chief, Bill Keating, refused to call a momentary GDP rise the 'end of the recession' as that would be "a matter of semantics". What is different now then?

What is different is the attempt by politicians and banks to argue that 'austerity' measures (cuts in jobs, wages and public services) are working and that fears of a 'double-dip' recession are unfounded.

A double-dip recession is a recession that deepens again after a short period of minor growth.

Stimulus or cuts

Many economists explain the recent minor growth in world GDP in terms of massive inputs of cash by governments in the US, China and the EU.

Unfortunately for workers

these were short-lived and have gone overwhelmingly into bailing out banks.

Fianna Fail even pumped €14 billion into their cronies' Anglo-Irish Bank, despite the 'grave reservations' of the European Central Bank that the bank was not even viable. They plan to pump in another €8 billion if they can get away with it.

Instead of gratitude, the banks that precipitated the crisis in 2007 have then used their bailouts to speculate against the government debt used to bail them out!

Having given most of the stimulus money to banks, governments have given in again to these same bankers by cutting jobs and services in 'Austerity programmes'.

Workers losing jobs, pay, pensions and services are unable to spend and the economy goes into a spiral of shrinking 'effective' demand causing a long-term slump; a double-dip recession.

Amazingly, this austerity policy is what US president Herbert Hoover carried out after the Wall St crash of 1929, leading to the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Workers' Resistance

It is increasingly clear that calls to stop the madness of austerity programmes are falling on deaf ears.

In June the G20 meeting of the richest countries' governments agreed massive cuts in wages, jobs and services.

Despite the logic of spending more to save the capitalist world economy the class interests of US, Chinese and German ruling classes to protect their profits is winning out; even though it may drive capitalism into an even longer slump.

Conservatives like the British Tories but also Labour Governments in Greece and Spain are all attacking workers' livelihoods in austerity budgets.

In many countries, however, there are signs of growing resistance to cuts (see page 3) and demands for jobs, decent conditions and services.

In Greece, France and Italy for example, massive nationwide protests and strikes show there are risks for our rulers' strategy of attacks on workers.

Only the collective power of workers' resistance can trump this market blackmail.

Labour's rise Right or Left

By KIERAN ALLEN

A RECENT Irish Times poll shocked the political establishment by revealing that the Labour Party was the largest party in the state.

Subsequently, Labour's poll ratings dropped but it has still overtaken Fianna Fail.

Of more significance than Labour's performance was the decline of the combined FF/FG vote: an historic low of 45% (last Euro election it was 51%).

The historic driver of this change is the accelerating decline of FF. Despite presiding over the longest boom in Irish history, Bertie Ahern did not manage to win a larger share of the vote than his predecessors.

After the economic crash, the decline has turned into a rout. FF's pretence at being a party of the plain people of Ireland has been dramatically exposed. It is deeply symbolic that their former General Secretary, Pat Farrell, now represents the Irish Bankers Federation.

The last year, however, has also demonstrated the inability of Fine Gael to take FF's voting base. Fine Gael has no major policy difference with Fianna Fail and their unique selling point has simply been that they are the only party that could take FF's place.

The 'nervous breakdown' caused in FG by Labour's rise, therefore, helps to underline the fault lines of Irish right-wing politics. Both FF and FG play a game of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. When people start to see through this, FG fractures on rural-urban lines in a desperate bid to find a leader who can regain their position.

What lies behind Labour's rise?

According to the government's own official economist, Alan Ahearn, Ireland will experience the largest decline in living standards of any industrial country since WW2.

Tragically, the trade union leaders have steadfastly refused to organise any substantial opposition to these attacks. Instead they have spread a doctrine of defeatism in their own ranks in order to secure their continuing role as 'social partners' with the current FF-Green government. This strategy has caused huge problems and divisions inside the unions, with deeper consequences for the future.

However, anger generated by the cuts is seeking an outlet and, if it cannot be expressed industrially, it will find a political expression.

Labour has gained from this anger



because it has positioned itself as the voice of protest. The Labour leader, Eamonn Gilmore, has been particularly effective in spelling out the effects of the FF-Green's attacks on working people. He has also broken from the conventional etiquette of parliamentary politics by denouncing Cowen as an 'economic traitor'.

Yet one qualification needs to be entered on Labour's role as the voice of protest – although it gives expression to the anger, it has done little to organise the opposition.

The Labour Party has, unfortunately, refused to participate in any of the major protests against NAMA or the bank bail-outs. Instead it organised

...e to power: ...t Turn?



its own small token protest at 1pm at the Dail in a move clearly designed as a photo opportunity rather than a serious mobilisation.

More seriously, most of the senior trade union officials who promoted a policy of surrender to the government are Labour Party members. During the battle over the pension levy they

followed the explicit, public advice of Eamonn Gilmore and called off industrial action against the pension levy.

Labour, therefore, gives a voice to protest – but it discourages serious mobilisation, lest the aspirations of the population for real change become too high. It would prefer to enter government on the back of limited expectations from its supporters.

What would a Labour-Fine Gael coalition look like?

Labour's declared aim is to enter a coalition with Fine Gael, but where Labour is the largest party, and holds the position of Taoiseach. Should it fail to achieve this goal, it will join coalition as a minority party.

However the real issue is whether Labour should trap itself in a right-wing coalition with Fine Gael and continue the pattern of civil war politics – or whether it should look left.

Fine Gael is a right-wing party that has currently embraced a form of 'compassionate conservatism' to expand its support.

But behind the 'compassion' lies a hard right-wing agenda that is evident in a host of ways:

Fine Gael is committed to the privatisation of ESB international, Bord Gais, ESB Powergen and Supply,

It wants to outsource much of the work conducted by semi-state companies to private companies who pay less and provide worse conditions.

It defends the annual subsidy of €85 million to private schools

It supports water charges.

It opposes any major new taxes on the wealthy.

Its councillors have been implicated in corrupt planning decisions

Coalition with Fine Gael can only lead to a continuing policy of forcing working people to shoulder the burden of solving the crisis.

Lessons from Greece

The experience of other countries shows that Labour can win support from working people when they give voice to their anger but, tragically, they can also betray those supporters.

In October 2008, the Greek Labour Party – known as PASOK – won an election with 44 percent of the vote as the population turned against an old, corrupt right-wing party, New Democracy.

PASOK's support grew because they made a rhetorical turn to the left.

They promised a €3 billion stimulus package combined with above-inflation wage and pension increases, higher

taxes for the wealthy, a review of the privatisation of flag carrier, Olympic Airlines and the sale of the government's stake in the OTE telecom company.

Yet within a few months of taking office the PASOK government did an about turn and gave in to the very speculators it had previously denounced:

Instead of a stimulus package, it made even deeper cuts of €30 billion.

Instead of pay increases, it introduced pay cuts by attacking the customary 13th and 14th month bonus that many Greek workers received.

Instead of taxes on the rich, it increased VAT from 21% to 23%.

Instead of reversing privatisation, it increased it.

In the current situation, there is no reason to doubt that the Irish Labour Party would do any different.

The next Irish government will face huge pressures from global speculators and the native rich who are currently refusing to invest in the economy. These forces are using the recession as a 'shock doctrine' to fundamentally change the lives of working people.

Unless a political party is willing to stand up to them it will become their agent in attacking workers.

Why we need a strong radical left

In this situation, it is vital that a strong, radical left is represented in the Dail to both keep the pressure up on Labour and to offer a real alternative if they betray their supporters.

Such a radical left must engage with Labour supporters and not assume that Labour is simply another right-wing party.

While the Labour leaders are totally wedded to the establishment and will act no differently than their PASOK counterparts in Greece, workers who move from Fianna Fail to Labour are clearly looking leftwards.

The radical left should push for unity in action, with Labour Party branches and supporters, against the cuts.

We should press for action to match Gilmore's rhetoric against the cuts.

And we should press for Labour supporters to transfer to left candidates in forthcoming elections rather than to Fine Gael.

But while welcoming Labour's rise in the polls, it is also vital that the People Before Profit Alliance is expanded and deepened.

A minority of workers already distrust Labour and the radical left must offer a real alternative to any politics that amount to merely managing capitalism.

Obama's 'good war' goes bad in Afghan killing-fields

By SARA O'ROURKE

JUNE HAS been the deadliest month for US and British troops in Afghanistan since the invasion began nine years ago.

Over 300 British soldiers have died, more than in the Falklands war. The longest war in US history, (the war Obama described during his election campaign as 'the good war') is in crisis.

Through media coverage we hear about the military situation but never about the reality of life for the people living under a brutal NATO occupation. Poverty is the real burden of the people of Afghanistan. The economy has been devastated, infrastructure has been destroyed. In Kabul, a city of 5 million people, there is no sewage system. The average life expectancy for an adult is 43. 1 in 5 children die before the age of 5 and every 30 seconds a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth.

Civilians Massacred by German Air Force

Last September the Germans ordered an air-strike, bombing an oil tank complex which killed 140 civilians including 26 children.

Christine Buchholz, a Die Linke MP in Germany visited the area and met with the families of those killed. She said that, contrary to NATO reports that the depot was being used by the Taliban, it was people from local villages who came there to get oil for their basic daily use.

All this means that it is the resistance and the Taliban that have support; not the occupying forces. The army of the United States, the world's super-power, is being defeated because people are resisting. In the South and the East of Afghanistan, the Taliban resistance controls most of the villages and the war is spreading to the North and into Pakistan. The British have been forced out of areas they previously controlled and when the Tory delegation flew there after the elections they were unable to land because of the fighting. A sign of how out of control the situation really is.

Imperialists Divided

The Imperialists are divided about the way forward and the stakes are high.

They are being forced out, both by the resistance and by public opinion in their own countries. The global economic crisis is deepening the divisions in the ruling class. Huge austerity

measures are being imposed in countries such as Greece but they can still find money for war.

The sacking of gung-ho US General McChrystal is another indication of this. McChrystal's aggressive tactics and 'surge' in troop numbers were failing to produce the quick results wanted: local support for the occupation and defeats for the resistance.

One of his comments was 'when you go to protect a people, the people have to want you to protect them'.

Iraq veteran, General Petraeus, replacing McChrystal, is trying to prevent the withdrawal of troops being seen as a defeat for the US. He may try to repeat his Iraq trick of covering up a retreat by bribing the resistance and withdrawing troops to central urban fortresses. Canada and the Netherlands may withdraw their troops sooner than planned; another sign of divisions in NATO.

Karzai the puppet tries to cut his strings

Another problem is that Karzai, once the puppet of the US, appears to be splitting from the US.

He was re-elected in 2007 and began to have a more popular base because he condemned US bombings and publicly distanced himself from the US by visiting many of the civilian casualties and grieving families.

So, for two years, the Americans have been trying to get rid of him. The US had planned an attack on Kandahar this summer, home of Karzai (and the Taliban!) but has postponed it and it may not go ahead at all.

Mass bombing from the air would destroy Karzai's power but nearly 800,000 people also live there and such an attack could provoke riots across Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Building movements to bring the troops home is essential in places like Britain, Germany and the US.

But the fight against imperialism is not a separate fight to the fight against bank bail-outs and cuts. Greece is running military hospitals for the US in Afghanistan; the US gives billions to allies such as Israel, Egypt and Pakistan while spending trillions on wars.

Linking all these struggles is part of what we must do to get rid of capitalism, the system that breeds war and poverty.

Saville Report: Bloody Sunday victims' innocence finally admitted

Cover-up of British Army Chiefs and Politicians continues

By EAMONN MCCANN

"WE HOPE it will lead to greater harmony among all the parties," declared Louis Susman, US ambassador to Britain, commenting on the Saville report.

A State Department spokesman revealed that Barack Obama, in a telephone conversation with David Cameron had: "noted the historic nature of the prime minister's statement last week on the inquiry into the tragic events of Bloody Sunday, commending its contribution to Northern Ireland's reconciliation efforts".

An unnamed 'leading Nationalist' opined that: "The time is now right for the Queen to visit the Republic of Ireland".

The 5,000-page report, found that none of the dead or wounded had been offering any threat to soldiers or anyone else. The paratroopers, concluded the tribunal, had acted reprehensibly and without justification.

Introducing the report in the House of Commons, Cameron accepted the findings, declared that 'the Paras' (the Parachute Regiment) had disgraced the British Army and apologised to the families of the victims. The result was unalloyed joy on the part of the families, but also the beginning of a sustained effort to absolve the British Army as a whole and the entire British ruling class of any blame.

That cover-up would not have been possible if they hadn't been able to quote the report saying that a bunch of kill-crazy squaddies and a single battalion commander had been responsible for the massacre: nobody else involved. A dozen men had done it all!

Well-worn pattern

Saville's report had followed the well-worn pattern of convicting the lower orders while exculpating the higher command; and dismissing entirely the possibility of political leaders having been complicit in the events.

Cameron might have found it more difficult to disown those involved, had Saville included in his list of culprits, say, Major General Robert Ford, Commander of Land Forces, Northern Ireland (at the time), or Captain Michael Jackson, second-in-command to Wilford on the day.

Ford, second in seniority in the North in 1972, commissioned the Bloody Sunday battle-plan and ordered the Paras to Derry to carry it out. In the weeks before Bloody Sunday he had made plain his frustration at the failure of Derry-based regiments to bring the Bogside 'no-go area' to heel. In a document dated January 7th 1972, Ford declared himself "disturbed" by the attitude of army and police chiefs in Derry, and added: "I am coming to the conclusion that the minimum force necessary to achieve a restoration of law and order is to shoot selected ringleaders amongst the DYH (Derry Young Hooligans)".

Ford took the decision to deploy the Paras despite opposition from officers based in Derry. Then, although he had no operational role or other military reason for being there, he travelled to Derry and took up position at the edge of the Bogside, shouting: "Go on the Paras!", as they ran past him through a barbed-wire barricade towards the Rossville Street killing-ground.

The possibility that Ford's decisions in advance, and comportment on the day, played a part in the way matters developed is brusquely dismissed: Ford "neither knew nor had reason to know at any stage that his decision would, or was likely to result in, soldiers firing unjustifiably on that day", Saville declares, in chapter four of

his report's first volume.

In the same chapter, Saville acquits British political and military leaders of blame: "It was also submitted that in dealing with the security situation in Northern Ireland generally, the authorities (the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Governments and the Army) tolerated if not encouraged the use of unjustified lethal force; and that this was the cause or a contributory cause of what happened on Bloody Sunday." But incidents over the previous year might have suggested toleration, at the least, of unjustified force.

The First Paras were involved in killing 11 unarmed civilians over three days in Ballymurphy in west Belfast in August 1971; less than six months earlier. Newspapers of the period were carrying regular complaints of unjustified, and sometimes lethal, violence by soldiers against civilians. The Parachute Regiment figured prominently in these claims. Toleration of unjustified force might have been inferred from the fact that no inquiry had been held into the Ballymurphy massacre nor any Para disciplined nor statement issued expressing regret.

Yet Saville reported that: "We found no evidence of such toleration or encouragement".

Shot-list

Many will be puzzled, too, by Saville's acceptance of the explanation eventually offered by Captain Jackson of his role in compiling the 'shot-list' which formed the basis of the initial cover-up of the killings.

Jackson rose high in the ranks after Bloody Sunday. He was NATO commander in the Balkans and subsequently Chief of the General Staff; Britain's number-one soldier.

Jackson had been present in the Bogside during the Bloody Sunday shooting. Remarkably, he didn't see anyone shooting or being shot. He had provided the Tribunal with a statement detailing his movements, before taking the witness-stand in London, in April 2003. Nowhere in this statement, or in his April evidence, did he refer to compiling the shot-list or other documents giving a version of what had happened. His role emerged the following month, during evidence from Major Ted Loden, who described how, late in the afternoon of Bloody Sunday, he had taken statements from the shooters and plotted map references showing the trajectory of their shots.

However, when a number of documents including the original of the shot-list were then produced, the list turned out to be not in Loden's handwriting, but in the handwriting of the now Chief-of-Staff of the British Army. How could this have come about, Loden was asked. "Well, I cannot answer that question," came the reply.

None of the shots described in the list conformed to any of the shots which evidence indicated had actually been fired. Some trajectories took bullets through buildings to hit their targets. All the targets were identified as gunmen, nail-bombers or petrol-bombers.

The other documents in the Chief-of-Staff's hand were personal accounts of the

day's events by Wilford, the three Para company commanders present, and the battalion Intelligence Officer.

Recalled to the stand in October 2003, Jackson agreed that he must have written the documents. He had recovered a "vague memory" of them, he said, after the shot-list and the accounts of his colleagues had been discovered by the Inquiry. Earlier, it had entirely slipped his mind that he had produced, by his own hand, within hours of the massacre, a detailed version of Bloody Sunday in which no British soldier did anything wrong and the victims had been to blame for their own injuries or deaths.

In their statements to the Inquiry, none of the soldiers whose shots were included on the list recalled being interviewed by either Loden or Jackson about their firing. None of the officers whose personal accounts had been written out by Jackson had any memory of the circumstances in which this had happened or of it happening at all.

Under questioning, Jackson was badly hampered by poor memory. On more than 20 occasions, he used phrases along the lines, "I cannot remember," "I do not recall," or "I have only a very vague memory."

Saville's report resolves one contradiction by accepting both Loden's original claim that he had written out the shot-list and Jackson's subsequent explanation that he must have copied Loden's script verbatim. However, Jackson could offer no explanation why he might have done this or recall who had asked or ordered him to do so. Loden's own, original, shot-list has never been found.



Cover-up

Saville rejects suggestions from the families' lawyers that: "the list played some part in a cover-up to conceal the emerging truth that some innocent civilians had been shot and killed by soldiers of 1 Para, although it is not explained exactly how this conspiracy is said to have worked."

Saville denies there was a conspiracy to cover up the killings but then goes on to say that: "The list did play a role in the Army's explanations of what occurred on the day."

He cites an interview on BBC Radio, at one am on the day after Bloody Sunday, in which the army's head of information policy in the North, Maurice Tugwell, used the list as his basis for explaining the "shooting engagements".

Elsewhere, he finds that: "Information from the list was used by Lord Balniel, the Minister of State for Defence, in the House of Commons on 1st February 1972, when he defended the actions of the soldiers."

It doesn't seem to have occurred to Saville that this was the conspiracy in action.

Had Saville seen it differently, had he damned Jackson for orchestrating the cover-up of mass murder, Cameron could not have projected the guilty men of Bloody Sunday as 'rogue' elements whose reprehensible behaviour reflected not at all on the British army as a whole.

The Bloody Sunday report let the Brits off the hook big-time and has facilitated the coming together of the Green Tories of Irish Nationalism and the True Blues of monarchist Britain. When Betty the Brit waddles her way along O'Connell Street next year, she'll have Saville, among others, to thank.



Workers and the Irish Revolution

BOOK REVIEW:

Revolution in Ireland - Popular Militancy: 1917-1923 (Cork University Press)
Author: Conor Kostick

Reviewed by Liam Cummins

IN THE preface to this book Conor Kostick describes his excitement at finding in a series of letters, dated 1920, relating to a strike in Bagnalstown, Co Carlow, a postscript: "We proclaimed the establishment of a Provisional Soviet Government..."

This statement is the core of the book's argument: there was another actor in the traditional story of the independence struggle – the Irish working class.

The influence of the 1917 Russian Revolution on the European-wide explosion of struggle, in the years immediately following, is generally accepted. But that this influence extended to rural Catholic Ireland is a revelation.

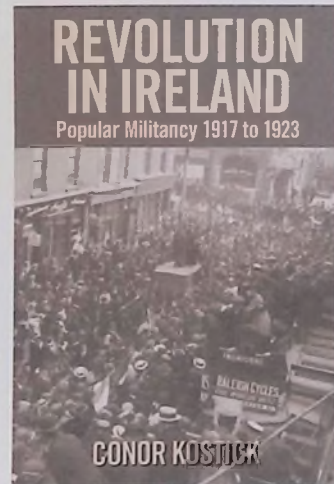
In the period, over a hundred 'soviets' were declared, from that at Limerick City to the Knocklong creamery with its slogan "We make butter, not profits".

By GORETTI HORGAN

REPUBLICAN PRISONERS are being held in dreadful conditions in Maghaberry prison.

They are locked in their cells 23, sometimes 24 hours a day. This means they have to eat their meals, sleep and use the toilet in the same tiny space.

The conditions are reminiscent of those fought against by the Blanketmen and Hunger strikers



Land seizures in the west and strikes by rural labourers in the east brought the class struggle to the heart of rural Ireland. Transport workers refused to move troops or supplies.

A two-day general strike led to the release of over a hundred prisoners who had been on hunger strike.

Trade Unions

The growth in trade union membership was phenomenal.

The number of affiliates to the Irish Trades Union Congress grew from 111,000 in 1914, to 250,000 in 1920, to a peak of 300,000 in 1921.

The numbers joining the ITGWU were even more dramatic. From 1916 with 5,000 members, it grew to 50,000 by 1918 and on to 100,000 in 1920; the swiftest increase in membership being in agriculture at nearly 40,000 members.

Even relatively privileged groups of workers were caught up in the spirit of the times.

Bank officials had begun to organise the Irish Bank Officials' Association.

They had 2,372 members by February 1919. Sir John S. Russell, of the National Bank, responded that they would "not tolerate interference... nor will they be dictated to by a parcel of boys."

But under the threat of strike the

directors retreated and recognized the association.

Working-class struggle

A struggle highlighted in the book is the Belfast general strike of 1919. Its ultimate defeat played an important role in the consolidation of partition and the pogroms of 1920.

Kostick concludes, "that the working-class movement in the period 1916-23 played an absolutely essential part in the national struggle."

Without the willingness of hundreds of thousands of workers to boycott, strike, demonstrate and protest, the military activity of the three thousand or so IRA members who had managed to obtain guns would have proved insufficient to make the cabinet choose the path of negotiation rather than repression.

"The Irish working class of this era were actors, not just witnesses, in the struggle."

This book reclaims the important role of workers' struggle in the fight against British imperialism and is recommended reading for socialists and activists.

thirty years ago.

Strip-searches

Also reminiscent of prison conditions decades ago, the prisoners face humiliating strip-searches every time they have visitors; even some visitors are being strip-searched.

Prisoners are being strip-searched even when going for court appearances by video.

In this situation, they do not see anyone from outside the prison, so these strip-searches serve no purpose other than humiliation.

Campaign

What is happening to these prisoners has been ignored by the media and by human rights organisations.

This is largely because they are

'dissident' republicans and any campaigning on their behalf is led by the dissident groups.

But this mistreatment of prisoners must be rejected by everyone, no matter how much they oppose the politics and actions of the dissidents.

That means that there is an urgent need to broaden out the campaign for decent conditions in Maghaberry.

Socialists will be working to ensure this happens.

BOOK REVIEW:

Reclaiming the F Word

Reclaiming the F Word: The New Feminist Movement

Authors: Catherine Redfern and Kristin Aune

Reviewed by: Sinead Kennedy

THE PAST twelve months have seen the publication of a number of books on women and the politics of women's liberation, from Natasha Walter's *Living Dolls* and Nina Power's *One Dimensional Women* to *The Equality Illusion* by Kat Banyard.

This is both a symptom and a recognition of the resurgence of interest in the politics of feminism and women's oppression.

Together, they represent a determined response to the rise of the 'New Sexism' and the so-called 'post-feminist' politics of the past decade.

What marks these publications out as important is that, unlike the scores of academic titles on aspects of feminist theory, these books are all aimed at a wider popular market.

One of the most popular of these recent publications is *Reclaiming the F Word* by Catherine Redfern (who founded the popular F-Word website) and Kristin Aune. It is aimed at young women "who were not born during the heyday of the 1960s and 1970s feminism", and offers a comprehensive overview of the "new feminist movement".

Redfern and Aune are careful to point out that while they identify this feminist movement as 'new', it is not some 'hip, fashionable', 'sex in the city type feminism'.

They label it 'new' because the women they are discussing are new to feminism.

Much of the material for the book came from interviews with young women activists and a survey of over a thousand women who have been involved in some way with feminist politics over the last ten years.

The book is also an activist guide to feminism and includes a practical list of suggestions for activity, from lists of books to ideas for groups to join or set up.

However, while *Reclaiming the F Word* attempts to give an account of the state of feminism today, it fails to pursue a specific analysis.

By Redfern and Aune's account, any action or statement can be feminist.

So even contradictory perspectives are accommodated; feminists who want to see a world without prostitution are represented, as are those who see it as just another job that merely needs to be better organised.

There is no analysis of the origins of women's oppression, and, while class is mentioned, it is understood as yet another variant of discrimination and simply a greater burden to be borne by some women.

As socialists we argue that in order to effectively fight sexism and oppression in our society we need to understand the nature and roots of women's oppression, and from that, develop an effective strategy to fight it.

RAGE AGAINST TORY CUTS!

By GORETTI HORGAN

WHILE THE NI Stormont Executive sets up yet another 'working party' to decide how it is going to deal with the massive Tory budget cut in the block grant from Westminster, the cuts have already begun on the ground.

The Accident and Emergency departments at Whiteabbey and Mid-Ulster Hospitals have already been closed. Wards have been closed in most hospitals.

These ward closures are denied by Trust administrators since, they would say: "wards have been amalgamated, not closed". But the effect is the same: there are fewer beds for patients.

The cuts in frontline services in the Health sector are matched by cuts in Education: after massive cuts to the Extended Schools budget come swingeing cuts to the Youth Service, classroom assistants and school nurses.

The Schools' Building Programme has been slashed, meaning thousands of pupils being taught in decaying buildings and temporary classrooms.

Universities are also in the firing line. Students will be charged more to study, with fewer lecturers to provide them with a decent education.

Thousands of Public Sector Jobs to Go

The Tories' plans to slash government departments' budgets by up to 40 percent



French workers take militant action: we should do the same

represent a massive cut to public services, which millions of people rely on.

It also means more unemployment with over a million public-sector jobs being lost across the UK.

To add insult to injury, the government has set about attacking the rights of those it intends to sack.

They want to slash the Civil Service Compensation Scheme, claiming that civil service workers receive

an average of £60,000 redundancy.

But this covers up the fact that the figures include a small number of top civil servants who receive high pay-outs and who aren't even in the scheme the government is attacking!

A part-time woman worker in the Revenue & Customs department who had worked for the civil service for 25 years would get just £14,000 if she was

made redundant.

Workers on the lowest grade who have given an average seven years' service to the department will get just £8,000.

Housing Benefit will be cut by 10% after a year on Jobseekers, and the Budget's small print includes changes to the way mortgage interest relief is paid for those with mortgages, which will lead to thousands more losing their homes.

We Should Not Pay for Their Crisis

The only reason these massive cuts are threatened is because tens of billions of our money was given to bail out the banks.

Even now, if the £120 billion in evaded and uncollected taxes was collected, we wouldn't 'need' any of these cuts.

The mainstream parties in Stormont pretend they oppose

the cuts.

They even have the cheek to turn up at protests.

They cannot look both ways at once.

They must be told: either stop voting for cuts or else stop pretending you oppose them!

If the SDLP is against cuts in the community and voluntary sector; if the UUP is really against cuts in the Health Service; if Sinn Fein is genuinely against cuts in schools budgets or in the Youth Services, let them tell their Minister NOT to implement them.

Industrial Action

It is clear that the only thing that can stop the cuts is industrial action co-ordinated across the unions.

In Britain, trade union leaders are starting to see that and are calling for joint action, but we need a groundswell of pressure from rank-and-file members to ensure that there is a huge fightback.

The trade union fightback has to be linked-in to the fightback on the ground in communities where the cuts are being resisted already.

The success of this strategy has been seen already this summer: when the Education and Library Boards cut summer schemes for disabled children, then parents, communities and trade unionists fought back together. And they won – the cut was reversed.

Again and again, it's been shown: when we fight, we can win.

When we don't fight, we can only lose.