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Socialist Worker

Demand a Referendum: NO MORE EU-IMF BAIL-OUTS!

JUST WHEN you thought you'd had enough, the banks are demanding another bail out.

On 31 March new 'stress tests' will reveal that the banks are suffering another collapse.

They will then seek another hand-out from the population.

One reason for the new crisis is the €110 billion withdrawn from banks over the past year by rich individuals and companies moving their money out of the country.

No talk of patriotism or 'wearing the green jersey' has deterred the wealthy from putting their own interests first.

Fine Gael may talk about everyone making sacrifices – but their business backers think that this is only rhetoric to quieten the mass of the population.

Timebomb

A new mortgage time bomb is also set to go off under the banks.

European interest rates will rise by 2 percent this year and this means steep extra payments for homeowners.

Working people have been squeezed so tight already that one in ten mortgage holders are in difficulty.

But when the interest hikes kick in, it will cause even more severe problems.

One consequence is that outstanding loans to banks will not be repaid.

All of this is a direct result of the disastrous economic policies pursued by the last Fianna Fáil and Green government.

Over €50 billion was pumped into the banks by Irish taxpayers but it was like adding water to a leaking bucket.

To fund these bail-outs PAYE workers have been stung with massive tax hikes.



Social welfare has been savagely cut.

But nothing has really changed.

We are back to square one.

Government leaks say by April the banks will look for at least another €25 billion.

Despite talk of 'burden sharing' and even 'burning the bondholders', the Fine Gael-Labour government will follow the exact same steps as their Fianna Fáil predecessors and pay out.

One reason for this scandalous state of affairs is that December's IMF-EU deal insists the Irish government continue to 're-capitalise' the banks.

Help?

Some claim that the IMF and EU are trying to help us with funding.

That without them the ATM ma-

chines would have no money to pay for social welfare or public sector wages.

But these scare stories hide the real purpose of the IMF-EU memorandum: to force Ireland's citizens to pay private banks' debts to their German, British and French counterparts.

Irish banks owe hundreds of billions to wealthy bondholders and bankers in Europe – and the IMF-EU want us to pay off those debts.

If we continue to let them away with this, the country will face ruin for decades.

The new government must be told that we have put up with enough.

Now is the time to change policy.

■ We need to end the absurd state guarantee to repay bank debts. These debts were incurred by

wealthy Irish speculators and we have no responsibility to pay for them.

■ We need a referendum on the IMF-EU bail out so that the people can democratically reject it.

■ State funds for banks must cease and the existing companies should be declared bankrupt and their debts written off.

■ Emergency legislation should be introduced to transfer deposits to a good state bank where funds up to €100,000 are guaranteed.

■ Capital controls must be put in place to prevent the draining-off of funds from Ireland.

■ A wealth levy should be imposed on the global assets of rich Irish citizens. They should be told to make a full declaration of their assets or face imprisonment.

Inside:



Libya:
Stop the
Bombing
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Japan:
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Fast Food Rip-Off



By JOHN LYONS

FAST-FOOD workers mounted an angry protest on O'Connell St on Wednesday 16 March against the Quick Service Food Alliance (QFSA).

The QFSA has mounted a High Court challenge to the catering Joint Labour Committee's (JLC) collective wage agreements.

The QFSA hopes to get rid of the JLCs and bring all wages in the industry down to the minimum wage.

The alliance includes companies such as Subway, Abrakebabra, Bagel Factory, Burger King, Eddie Rocket's, Supermac's and Hillbillies, as well as sandwich bars and Italian takeaways.

Abrakebabra is owned by Denis Desmond who has a business empire of €200 million.

Supermac's reported profits of €6.2 million in 2010 (up 18% from 2009).

Restaurant and catering workers are the lowest paid of any sector and, in Ireland, earned 16% less than the EU-15 average in 2008.

Their average weekly pay is €351: half the national average.

According to Pat Ward of SIPTU, "This is not about saving jobs. Companies like Supermac's have actually seen their profits increase, while low-wage workers are struggling to survive."

"The industry's attack on wages for the poorest workers is shameful." Restaurant worker, Oktay Gencoglu, said: "Restaurant workers are already struggling to support our families. Our hours have been cut and many of us have seen our wages cut too."

"Any more cuts would be disastrous for us."

As the Davenport strikers showed, protests and strikes can defeat the Fast-food bosses.

After Davenport Victory:

TIME TO STRIKE AGAINST LOW PAY

By LEAH SPEIGHT

A REVIEW of collective wage agreements known as Employment Regulation Orders (ERO) began on February 25.

These agreements, by Joint Labour Committees (JLC) set up by the Labour Court, are mainly for workers in hotels/catering, hairdressing, textiles and agriculture.

As a part of the EU/IMF deal, this is not a review aimed to increase wages or improve workers conditions.

It is to cut wages for low-paid workers to pay for the economic crisis caused by the super-rich.

Unions and lobby groups believe Sunday premiums and overtime rates will be targeted.

Also targeted will be pay rates for 'atypical hours'.

Atypical hours are hours worked part-time, job-sharing, temping or working any flexible pattern not classed as 'typical'.

These are mostly women.

Brian Forbes, Mandate trade union, said he was concerned about the break-up of the JLCs and their wage agreements:

"The worst employers will most likely press workers to accept lesser terms and conditions."

"Many employees are unaware of their rights and are frightened to tackle the power of employers."

"If the lowest paid are targeted and we allow any reduction for the weakest, then who's next?"

"Firemen? Nurses? Where is it going to end?"

The Davenport strikers' victory showed how low-paid workers can fight back against cuts in their wages.

Resistance to cuts means preparing to fight and strike together.

FG continue Corrib Gas giveaway



Shell-to-Sea's Pat O'Donnell with PBPA activists

By LEAH SPEIGHT

ON ELECTION day, as the people voted to demolish Fianna Fail, FF minister Pat Carey signed off on the last section of the Corrib gas pipeline.

The Corrib gas sale will go down in history as the biggest sell-off of Irish natural resources, with a value of up to €720 billion.

Fine Gael's 'NewERA' policy, of privatising telecoms, energy and water, will continue the private exploitation of Corrib gas.

In their plans for energy, Fine Gael will go further.

They will break up and sell ESB and Bord Gais.

FG recognise that 90% of Ireland's energy needs are imported, exposing us to

price swings and supply disruptions.

But their solutions are aimed at even more privatisation.

Talk of moving to 'domestic renewable energy' to protect us from rising oil prices is farcical, unless these resources are in public ownership.

A policy of 'domestic renewable energy' should begin with reversing the privatisation of Corrib gas.

Clonakilty Mount Carmel Hospital protest



By JAMES O'TOOLE

2000 PEOPLE marched against the closure of 16 beds at Mount Carmel Community

Hospital in Clonakilty, Cork.

Protesters demanded a meeting with the HSE to discuss the bed losses.

46 beds have been taken out of the hospital since 1998.

Local people fear that beds will continue to be

removed by the HSE until the hospital is no longer viable.

The campaign vows to continue the fight until the HSE listens.

Strikewatch

By JIMMY SMYTH

School Secretaries Strike

SCHOOL SECRETARIES, members of the IMPACT trade union, have voted by 72% to take industrial action.

The secretaries earn less than €30,000 a year – some earning little more than the minimum wage.

They are not employed by the department of education and do not have public service conditions or pension rights but their posts are indirectly funded by education department grants.

In January the department instructed schools to implement a 5% pay cut.

Brendan McKay, of IMPACT, says any action will aim to 'minimise the impact' on the running of the schools involved.

The union should be calling strike action to put the maximum pressure on the new government to cancel the pay cut.

Lecturers Strike for Pensions

UCU MEMBERS at Queen's University and University of Ulster voted by 63% and 73% respectively to strike.

The action on 21 and 24 March is part of rolling action that included successful strikes by UCU members in Scotland and Wales.

The first strike day is focused on an attack on pension rights.

The second strike day, over both pay and pensions, will see over 100,000 workers on strike.

The UCU leadership is using the strike action as a lever to force the employers into talks.

Cuts in Education will be the focus of a huge TUC-sponsored demonstration in Belfast on 6 April.

Connemara Community workers strike

SIPTU MEMBERS at Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltacta Teo (MFG) in Connemara, Galway, took strike action on 16 March.

Management have unilaterally imposed pay cuts and issued redundancy notices to half the staff.

MFG is a semi-state company for community development of Gaeltacht areas.

The company has eight offices across the country.

The attacks on these workers stems from the government's austerity programme and show its nonsensical approach.

An organisation supposed to be promoting employment and supporting ravaged local communities instead makes staff redundant.

The strikers now need to push their union to spread the action to the other MFG offices across the country.

SWP forum on Economic Crisis

Saturday April 2nd: 3pm to 6pm
Cassidy's Hotel,
Cavendish Row, Upper O'Connell St

SESSION ONE: Is capitalism sustainable?
Marx's theory of economic crisis, with Brian O Boyle

SESSION TWO: The Alternative to Capitalism
Democracy and socialist planning, with Kieran Allen

www.swp.ie for more info
Text info to 0863074060 to find out more

Dublin Toasts ULA TDs

By JOHN LYONS

OVER TWO hundred people packed out the Gresham hotel on Friday 11 February to hear four of the United Left Alliance's five newly elected TDs discuss 'The Need for a Real Left Alternative'.

Whilst initially celebratory, with thanks been giving to everyone involved in the many ULA electoral campaigns and acknowledgement given to all the ULA's candidates, the evening was mainly taken up with the tasks that lay ahead.

ULA TDs stressed the importance of providing principled left-wing opposition to the Fine Gael/Labour Party government in the Dail and the need for a referendum on the EU/IMF bailout.

Speakers from the floor emphasised the potential mobilising power of the ULA in the fight to take back our unions and to initiate campaigns that will resist every cut and protect every job.

With the financial crisis continuing to worsen and the Labour Party committed to austerity, the ULA will play a pivotal role in facilitating the fight back against the madness of the markets.

On 9 March the five newly elected TDs of the United Left Alliance began their first day of the



new Dail on the streets with the people.
Richard Boyd-Barrett,

Clare Daly, Seamus Healy, Joan Collins and Joe Higgins were joined

by over two hundred supporters and well wishers as they assembled at

the Central Bank and marched to Dail Eireann to take their seats.

Dock Worker's Supporters at Court



By JOHN LYONS

A LARGE protest was held outside the criminal courts on 16 March to support Gerard Mc Donnell, one of the MTL strikers in Dublin Port in 2009.

Gerard was recently arrested and charged in relation to a 'floating picket' that was staged during the strike in Dublin harbour.

Gerard is facing three serious charges under the maritime safety act with a fine of up to €250,000 hanging over his and his family's head.

He was arrested, handcuffed and thrown in a cell.

Gerard is 63 years old and not in the best of health.

This is how the State and Gardai treat a worker who fought bravely for his and all our rights.

How dare they pursue workers with the full vigour of their law while the white collar thieves who ruined this country walk free!

Gerard's case has been adjourned until 1 April.

Student Nurses Protest Slave Wages

By JOHN LYONS

3,500 STUDENT nurse and midwives took part in country-wide protests on 11 February. A week later over 4,000 marched through the streets of Dublin to the Dept of Health. In December, in the dying days of the shambolic Fianna Fail/Green Party government the HSE had announced pay cuts for nurses.

At present, 4th year students of nursing and midwifery receive 80% of the minimum salary of full-time staff for working mandatory 36-week placements.

During work placements, student nurses take on the full duties of qualified nurses and are required to work a full roster including 12 hour days, night duty and weekend shifts.

Under the government's latest round of health cuts, by 2015 students will work full-time for nine months for free while replacing paid employees.

This is exploitation of the highest order!

INMO General Secretary Liam Doran warned: "If the pay cut is not reversed we will then move to phase three of the campaign and start balloting fourth years,



for industrial action, with full support from all other students on the

programme." Victory to the student nurses would be a blow

struck against cuts in conditions across health and other public services.

Japan Tragedy Shows Nuclear Plants Unsafe

By SADIE ROBINSON

BECAUSE OF the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, more than 10,000 people are thought to have died and hundreds of thousands are homeless.

They have dwindling supplies of water, food and medicine—and no heat. But now Japan is facing nuclear meltdown.

Explosions at its Fukushima nuclear plant, after the earthquake and tsunami, have released

dangerous levels of radiation into the atmosphere.

Japan's government and nuclear companies spent days saying that the leaks were "under control".

Now radiation has reached Tokyo, showing up in water, air and food.

The nuclear crisis isn't limited to Fukushima.

The Onagawa nuclear power station



The Fukushima reactor

declared a state of emergency after a fire shut down its

LIBYA: Western Bombs Choke Revolution

THE US-LED attack on Libya is not about 'protecting civilians' or 'humanitarian intervention'.

It is a strategic move designed to choke the Arab revolutions.

A 'no fly zone' is a term invented by the Pentagon to hide the reality of bombardment.

Once bombardment starts, the Western powers always escalate military action.

This causes increasing civilian deaths or 'collateral damage' as they like to call it.

A fig leaf for the attack was provided by the Gulf States, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, while Saudi Arabia provided money.

There was no Western condemnation of the recent Saudi invasion and suppression of the revolution in Bahrain – and no call for sanctions or 'no-fly zones'.

For understandable reasons, the desperate people of Benghazi called for Western action as they were pounded by the superior military firepower of the Gaddafi regime.

But western governments, who now claim to help the Libyan revolutionary movement, refused to send them the Libyan funds frozen in the Western banking system or to supply them with weapons.

Just a month ago, UK leader David Cameron toured Gulf states with a team of arms manufacturers to sell fighter jets, submarines, guns, electric batons and teargas to the despots who

rule over those states.

Strategy

By gaining a foothold in Libya, the Western leaders hope to change the 'revolt from below' to a 'regime change' from above and foster a pro-Western opposition.

Their strategic aim is to ensure control of Libya's oil supplies and they will occupy and partition the country if necessary.

However, the US is severely weakened by a ballooning debt crisis and is staring at defeat in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The top echelons of the US state were split about the wisdom of embarking on the Libyan adventure.

But the revolution has come from a fierce anger against food inflation and a lack of jobs.

The political cry for democratic rights is fusing with a demand to alleviate the economic conditions of the mass of people.

It will not be easy to suppress this revolution.

Socialists

Socialists are in complete solidarity with the uprisings and want to see the downfall of all dictators.

We oppose all Western military intervention in the region.

Our first duty now is to put the Anti-War Movement back onto the streets.

That movement may start small but it will grow as the reality of the imperialist war comes home.

Read full article at: www.swp.ie



Irish Anti War Movement Statement:

"On the 8th anniversary of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the lessons of the two disastrous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have not been learned.

"A new war has been declared on the Gaddafi regime which will involve more civilians being killed and will not necessarily bring peace to Libya nor a resolution to the conflict there.

"The experience of Iraq shows that genuine democracy and freedom cannot grow from aerial bombardment and foreign occupation."





What's wrong with Privatisation?

By JIMMY SMYTH

GIVING AWAY the wealth built up in state assets, such as our pensions, natural resources and public services, has got to be stopped.

However, the selling-off of state assets ('privatisation') is set to be a centre-piece of the new government's economic strategy.

The *Programme for Government* states: "We will target up to €2 billion in sales of non-strategic state assets drawing from the recommendations of the McCarthy Review Group on State Assets".

This is the Colm McCarthy of An Bord Snip Nua whose initial list of state assets for sale includes transport and utility companies, harbour companies and Coillte (the Irish Forestry Agency) will be extended by FG and Labour to include, for example, the HSE.

According to the *Programme for Government*, this sell-off is to be used by the government to finance an 'investment strategy'.

However, the EU/IMF memorandum of understanding states: "... any additional unplanned revenues must be allocated to debt reduction".

In Greece, the EU/IMF is forcing the government to sell off €50 billion worth of public property to pay-off their debt.

So, revenues from the sale of our assets will be used, under the EU/IMF deal, to pay back the bankers, not put into jobs.

Ideology

Privatisation, selling off state assets, often for a pittance, would seem to be a nonsensical policy.

However, when socialists raise opposition to it we are accused of acting on abstract ideological reasons.

On the other hand, those proposing privatisation are 'pragmatists', practical folk looking to reduce the debt or invest in new projects.

The attempt here is to portray privatisation as non-ideological.

This, simply, is a lie.

Privatisation has deep ideological roots in the neoliberal onslaught that we have suffered over the past 30 years.

Neoliberalism seeks to extend market relations, buying and selling, over all aspects of human life.

In this context the public sector and state assets are seen as bad, and the private sector and markets are good.

Thus, from the 1980s

onwards, there have been privatisations of state assets from utilities to hospitals, schools and more across the globe.

Eircom case

In Ireland, privatisation has not been as common as in some other countries, partly because of a lack of state assets to privatise.

However, one case illustrates the failures of privatisation in Ireland: Eircom.

Supposedly an example of popular share-owning capitalism, Eircom has now gone through five different owners since it was privatised in 1999.

Each owner has extracted profits through asset-stripping the company resulting in poorer services, job losses and mounting debts.

When Eircom was first privatised nearly 600,000 people bought shares.

The directors sold off profitable parts of the business most notably Eircell.

In the process those who bought shares lost a third of their money.

Two years later in 2001 a group of venture capitalists including Tony O'Reilly bought the company.

O'Reilly and his cronies sought to sweat the remaining assets, stopped investment and in 2004 sold the business pocketing huge profits: the top four Eircom managers were paid €29 million.

In 2010 the OECD reported Ireland was 29th out of 30 countries for broadband speed.

Last month the latest owners of Eircom announced pay cuts of 10% and 1,000 redundancies. The fate of Eircom is not exceptional.

It is the logical conclusion of privatisation — vast profits for a small minority, over-inflated salaries for top bosses, worsening and more expensive services for customer, and job losses and pay-cuts for employees.

The socialist alternative

Our alternative is twofold — first we must campaign to keep assets in state control.

Socialists argue for democratic control of public assets by workers and communities not by unelected, over-paid senior managers.

Here the campaigns to stop the sell-offs of Coillte and Dun Laoghaire harbour are important and can win.

A major campaign of protests and strikes will be necessary to halt Fine Gael and Labour's privatisation drive, especially in the health service.

Revolution across North Africa Tunisia an huge step

Western Military Intervention

By THA'IRA MAQDISI

IT HAS been three months since the start of the Tunisian revolt.

During this time, there have been unprecedented uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Bahrain.

Major protest activity has also taken place in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Morocco, Algeria, Syria, Mauritania, Iraq and Palestine.

What Arab countries have in common is decades of autocratic rule by a small elite which hoarded wealth and imposed legal restrictions on any form of dissent or criticism.

This is most visible in the lack of freedom of expression, weak or non-existent trade unions, and the control of the mass media by the state.

All these regimes were supported, armed and financed by the large Western powers.

This architecture of oppression was established at the beginning of the 20th century when the region was carved up by the West.

Dictatorial regimes were installed to ensure the compliance of local peoples with oil companies and other Western strategic interests.

It is worthwhile summarising what has happened over the last 90 days.

Tunisia and Egypt

In Tunisia and Egypt, many of the demands of the revolutionaries have been met.

In Egypt, a temporary caretaker government has been formed led by Essam Sharaf, a widely respected ex-minister who years ago broke ranks with the Mubarak regime over corruption and cover-ups.

Now the pro-democracy protestors are calling for general elections and major economic reforms.

Dozens of former ministers, corrupt businessmen, and high ranking security officers have been arrested and indicted on corruption, human rights abuses and torture.

Billions of dollars have been frozen until account holders can be investigated for political and financial corruption.

The revolutionaries have made significant advances in dismantling the state security apparatus responsible for turning Egypt into a brutal police state.

Many constitutional and political reforms have been enacted, including plans for new parliamentary elections and the drafting of a new constitution.

Civil and political rights such as freedom of the press, assembly, and formation of parties, unions



and civic organisations have been implemented.

But the pro-democracy movements are not basking idly in their success.

They protest and meet on a daily basis to ensure that the remnants of the former regime do not find a way to co-opt the ongoing revolutionary process.

Libya and Bahrain

The Libyan revolution against the forty-one year rule of Muammar Gaddafi began as a massive peaceful protest on 17 February but quickly turned into an armed struggle because of the violent response of the regime.

Many former supporters of Gaddafi defected once he started bombing and killing civilians.

Libya is now in a state of revolutionary civil war and the imminent military intervention by the US and the EU will entrench that war further.

The intervention's stated humanitarian purpose is in no way credible considering the West's support of the Saudi and Bahraini governments against the revolutionaries in those countries. In Bahrain peaceful protests by tens of thousands were met with live ammunition.

As casualties mounted, the de-

mands of the protesters escalated from just calling for a constitutional monarchy to demanding total regime change (from a monarchy to a republic).

Saudi Arabia attempted to bribe the protestors with \$10 billion in economic aid, but the protestors insisted that they were not going anywhere until their

political rights were gained. The message is clear: Bahrainis want political freedom through which their economic and social needs can be justly met.

In March two thousand soldiers from Saudi Arabia, U.A.E, and Kuwait crossed the border to join the Bahraini security forces in containing the revolt.

VICTORY TO THE REVOLUTION NO TO WESTERN MILITARY INTERVENTION

By RICHARD BOYD BARRETT, TD
(Chair of the Irish Anti-war Movement)

THE UN decision to implement a 'no fly-zone' over Libya is heralded as necessary to stop the slaughter of civilians by the country's dictatorial ruler, Muammar Gaddafi. Understandably, many desperate Libyans are welcoming the decision, believing it will save lives.

However, it is a mistake to believe such intervention will ultimately benefit the ordinary people of Libya or the revolutions across North Africa and the Middle East.

Up until just a few weeks ago the West provided arms and support to Libya.

The West happily ignored Gaddafi's denial of rights for ordinary Libyans and his brutal

repression of democracy and secure oil deals with the US.

In Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, powers initially sat back and watched the revolutions.

The US and Europe are unsuccessful democratic monarchies. A greater share of the oil wealth impoverished Arab peoples the profits of western oil companies.

Military intervention in Libya to regain a foothold and reinvolve western involvement in the entire network of Western dictatorships.

Popular revolutions in the Middle East are being crushed. The brutal Saudi dictatorship over 2,000 troops to Bahrain.

Africa and the Middle East

Egypt are

forward

n will hold revolution back



Saudi troops enter Bahrain to put down revolution



Bahraini protestors under fire

Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Jordan

Even in the most oil rich country in the region, Saudi Arabia, per capita income has drastically fallen from \$28,000 in the 1980s to \$17,700 according to the World Bank. Protests there have also been put down violently.

Reform in Arabia puts poverty levels at 30% (World Bank cites 'no data').

In Yemen, there have been huge demonstrations against the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh.

All opposition parties, major tribes, civil society organizations, unions, universities, and major religious figures have joined the

protests.

Dozens of ruling party members in the parliament, military officers, and other officials have resigned in protest at the brutality of the security forces.

So far Saleh's regime has not fallen because the security and army units are still largely under the control of the regime.

Despite hundreds of casualties, the protesters are determined to continue.

Jordan's demonstrations have reached tens of thousands and continue to take place every Friday.

King Abdullah II is attempting talks with major opposition leaders and tribes to appease them. The pro-democracy movement continues on the streets to demand Jordan become a constitutional monarchy.

Arab revolutions

The Arab revolutions are fundamentally revolutions of underprivileged and poor people rising-up to demand a decent standard of living.

Regime change, elections and freedom of expression are seen as prerequisites to achieving economic well being.

The initial trigger for the Tunisian revolution was the self-

immolation of an unemployed young man struggling to feed his family.

In all the Arab countries the yearning for change preceded the events in Egypt and Tunisia by many years.

Egypt and Tunisia provided great inspiration which galvanised previously reluctant elements in those societies.

Despite hating the regimes, many had been reluctant to mobilise because of constant threats by their rulers that any change would lead to a break-up of tribal, religious or regional bonds.

The monumental gains of the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions dispelled those fears.

The peoples of the Middle East and North Africa, who share a common language and culture, feel a new sense of pride that had evaded them for decades.

There is a great sense of dignity that comes with spearheading a process of radical change despite the very real risk of death every time you take to the streets.

This new confidence is spreading at a dizzying speed and has the entire world captivated.

The basic human instinct to demand economic and social justice is one that all suffering peoples in the world can identify with.

Banks, Oil Prices and Ireland's Rich

By EAMONN McCANN

IT MAY be bad news for you and me that oil prices are set to spiral upwards again as a result of the Libya crisis.

But some of the rich are roaring for the rise to continue.

Take Adrian Healy of Tullow.

He's just made close on €150m (£129m), having got in early on exploration of new oil finds in Central and West Africa, where savage wars rage over resources.

Then there's Oisín Fanning, also Dublin-based, who a year ago was reportedly on his uppers and threatened with eviction.

He's bounced back. Revolution in the Middle East has seen his shares in San Leon Energy rocket.

He's €234m (£201m) richer than 12 months ago.

The Sunday Independent's Nick Webb estimated that the 300 richest people in the Republic are now worth €57bn (£49bn) between them.

Commodity price rises are a major factor in the bonanza that's led to an increase of €6.7bn (£5.7bn) on last year's list.

There are now 11 billionaires from the cash-strapped south of Ireland.

Some have to live abroad to escape the grasping hands of the greedy State, occasionally sending messages home that more nurses must be sacked to help make the country competitive again.

By living abroad, we mean that they stay overnight within the jurisdiction for no more than a cumulative six months a year.

All of them have earned the trust of the immigration services, given that, as it turns out, there are no procedures for checking them in and out as they flit around the skies and touch down here and there in private jets.

As you do. JP McManus's nags may be worth a punt at this week's Cheltenham Festival.

The Limerick man is on a good run and must have high hopes of returning to his Monaco pad, or possibly, depending on how many days he has spent on the old sod recently, to his 250-acre property in Emly in Limerick.

And speaking of good wins, let's turn to the latest twists in the fortunes of Sir Frederick Goodwin, better known as 'Fred the Shred', who sashayed away from the Royal Bank of Scotland in October 2008 with £10m in

the hip-pocket and a pension of £700,000 a year. Within a month, RBS had reported a loss of £24.1bn, the biggest financial failure in British history.

In the immediate aftermath, British Treasury Minister Lord Myners warned RBS, now 83% owned by the state, that there must be "no reward for failure".

So a chastened company was made to change its ways?

No. The Shred's successor Stephen Hasler has been handed £10m for his efforts last year.

A further billion has been set aside for bonuses for managers.

A kick in the teeth for PAYE-workers?

Apparently it's precisely the fact that the taxpayers own the company which justifies the bonuses.

"Taxpayers have a stake in RBS and we want it to succeed," London-based top-of-the-range headhunter John Purcell, explains.

"It might be socially disturbing, but... I think we've just got to suck it up."

"That's the way it is."

Apparently, there are 'bucketloads' of firms where bankers could earn more if they chose.

All this – and there's more, much more – comes just months after the guardians of the public purse warned in stern tones that big bonuses in banking must be a thing of the past.

"It is wholly untenable to have millions of people making sacrifices in their living standards only to see the banks getting away scot-free" (Nick Clegg, 17 November last).

"We will not allow money to flow unimpeded out of those banks into huge bonuses, if that means money is not flowing out in credit to the small businesses who did nothing to cause this crash and suffered most in it" (George Osborne, October 4).

What a huge wave of laughter must have engulfed the super-rich.

North, South, East and West, capitalism reckons that the notion of fairness is away with the fairies.

Can anyone think of a reason the rest of us should suck this up; why we shouldn't draw the conclusion that the plain citizens of the UK or the Republic who compliantly accept the austerity cuts are fools to themselves and their families?



OLUTIONS-ARY INTERVENTION

exists, so they could an regime. ya, the western wing little ns. rstand that ents will demand th going to the t the expense of panies. Libya will be used w legitimacy for egion as a whole. e are threatening n backed

revolution there with no action or even critical comment by the US or EU.

The so-called 'no-fly zone' will involve the bombing of Libya, civilian casualties and the opportunity for Gaddafi to pose as an anti-imperialist.

Intervention could lead to Libya being partitioned, allowing the resumption of relations with both Gaddafi and a new government in the eastern part, so long as both parts honour oil contracts.

In Ireland, we should support the Arab people fighting to overthrow dictators by demanding an immediate end to Western military and political support for the corrupt elites that have for decades stolen the regions oil wealth and denied rights and self-determination to its people.

ship has sent to put down the

Labour and Coalition

By JAMES O'TOOLE

FOR REVOLUTIONARY socialists change comes from mass workers action, from people taking things into their own hands.

The Labour Party claim they have a more 'realistic' approach, which presently involves getting into government with the Tories of Fine Gael.

Yet, even on Labour's own terms, every coalition situation in the past has led to a growth in support for the larger party and the demoralisation of Labour activists and its working-class supporters.

Let's take a look at Labour's path to change.

The Sunday Press once described the situation for the smaller party in coalition well when they stated how support for Labour had: "vanished, leaving Fine Gael fattened by a blood transfusion fatal to the donor".

The general pattern has been: first increasing support for Labour leading to declarations of intent to fight elections alone and then complete collapse after capitulating to and failing to challenge the right-wing Fine Gael agenda while in government.

Usually this was followed once more by a period of regret on behalf of Labour, a period of doubt and soul-searching leading to increasingly left-wing rhetoric and talk of anti-coalitionism.

1st Inter-Party Government



Back in 1947 the *Irish Times* wrote of a society drifting towards 'anarchy'.

That year had witnessed strikes by ESB workers, road workers, strikes on the buses and in the life assurance company Irish Life.

In 1948, mass opposition to Fianna Fail led to five parties, including Labour, National Labour, Clann na Poblachta and Fine Gael, forming the '1st Inter-Party Government'.

Each party was allocated ministers according to their parliamentary strength.

Fine Gael's first act in power was to veto the presence of Jim Larkin in the government. William Norton and TJ Murphy got Social Welfare and Local Government respectively for Labour.

Norton was also made Tánaiste (deputy Prime Minister).

On the 4th of November 1949 the Minister for Health Noel Browne tried to introduce a revised Health Bill which included the provision of free health care to mothers and children. By June 1950 a draft 'Mother and child scheme' was sent around the Cabinet and to the Irish Medical Association.

The bishops wrote to the Taoiseach, Fine Gael's John A. Costello, expressing their vehement opposition to the proposals.

When he told the Cabinet that "this must be the end of the mother and child scheme", as he read out a letter from the church hierarchy, Norton's



disgraceful response was that Labour would: "not go flouting the authority of the Bishops".

Roddy Connolly threatened to quit Labour if Browne left office but he never acted on this. After Browne and others withdrew their support for the government they had to call it a day.

Labour spent the next few years combating severe apathy within its

The 2nd Inter-Party Government had Jim Larkin asking: "Has Labour a policy?"

With a rising cost of living, the leadership told members not to expect: "too much too soon". The economy stagnated, unemployment rose rapidly and the unions became increasingly dissatisfied.

Labour's coalition partners, Fine Gael, were intent on forging links with the CIA in their battle against international communism.

As Costello put it communism was a: "creed to which we are implacably opposed".

When the government fell, Labour was reduced to just one seat in Dublin.

1970s

By 1970, Labour were determined to break the promise of non-coalitionism made to the more radical elements of their rank-and-file members during the 1960s.

At a special meeting in Cork anti-coalitionists staged a walkout crying 'treachery' after the leadership won by 396 votes to 204.

The accusations of rigging that came from some on the left seemed justified after one pro-coalitionist declared: "that was a nice speech you made there, boy, but that was a nice two busloads of delegates I brought up from Kerry too".

The approach was made to Liam



1970s Labour Party Conference

to discuss the twelve point plan for government the leadership took absolutely no chances that their return to power would be stopped by any kind of principled opposition.

The entire Dun Laoghaire branch, for example, was informed at the door that their branch had been 'suspended'.

Instead of challenging capitalism in crisis, Labour once more oversaw the complete disillusionment of its supporters as unemployment rose to 106,000 by 1977.

The government failed to introduce even limited contraception in a vote in 1974.

When a much publicised Wealth Tax was introduced it had anything of substance removed by Fine Gael.

As a result of overseeing the devastation of jobs and workers' conditions,



Coalition with DL and FG in the 90s

Labour completely collapsed.

Their vote declined from 13.7% to 9.9% in 1981.

In Dublin they went from 28.3% of the vote in 1968 down to just 10.5% in late 1982.

Branches lost countless

members.

In 1977 Fianna Fail returned with their highest vote since 1938 with 50.6% of the vote.

A Party for the People?

In 1979 Labour once again denounced coalition but by 1981 they were in office under the leadership of Michael O'Leary, again with Fine Gael as the majority party.

This government fell after the attempted introduction of a savage budget which included an embargo on public sector recruitment and a regressive increase in VAT from 10% to 15%.

It was an attempt to put VAT on children's clothing which gave Fianna Fail's Charles Haughey, of all people, the opportunity to denounce the government's adherence to 'monetarism'.

Labour found itself in this situation only a year after a mass movement against the unfairness of the tax system on PAYE workers.

In 1980 700,000 people marched throughout the country, 400,000 of them in Dublin.

Labour had failed to engage in any substantial way to promote this movement.

The union leaders opposed taking action, but pressure from the rank and file was strong enough to force their hand.

The Labour Party's disdain for this movement was shown when its deputy leader, Barry Desmond, stated that he: "will never support as long as I am in public life the idea, concept or practice of a political one day strike."

"I believe in the ballot box".

But all Labour's strategy brought workers was Dick Spring in office giving tax breaks to the oil companies and using the Gardai against ESB strikers in Cork.

So this is what they meant by 'realism'?

A Real Left Alternative

The pattern of rising worker's struggles leading to dissatisfaction with Fianna Fail, growing support for Labour, and then a coalition government that attacks workers with Fine Gael emerging stronger and Labour weaker was the direct outgrowth of Labour's view that parliament is the only source of power.

When you have no faith in workers self-activity then staying in power seems worth the 'compromise'.

Next time around the United Left, which includes the SWP, will make sure that disillusionment with Labour leads to a rising militancy and stronger left and not a rebirth of Fianna Fail.



United Left Alliance of which the SWP is a part

Cosgrave of Fine Gael on 13 June 1972.

By 1973, Labour were where they wanted to be: back in government.

Labour got five cabinet posts with its leader, Brendan Corish, installed in the role of Tánaiste.

The Irish economy at this time was seen to be "falling over a cliff".

Sinn Féin: Batting for the Rich

By SEAN MCVEIGH

IT APPEARS the Tory led coalition government in London is set to bring in measures to reduce corporation tax for big business in the North.

The move to lower corporation tax was led by an alliance that involved Sinn Féin, the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors.

In 2007, newspaper billionaire Tony O'Reilly organised a petition signed by 50 company directors demanding a cut in corporation tax.

Also calling for a tax cut for millionaires were Michael O'Leary, the boss of Ryanair, Sir Niall FitzGerald, the former Unilever chairman and Sir Christopher Bland, the chairman of British Telecom.

The Tories have already made it clear they will reduce UK corporation tax from the current rate of 28% to 24% over the next four years as part of a series of gifts to their rich friends, but businesses in Northern Ireland will pay even less tax.

Many corporations are not even paying current legally required taxes.

During the peace process there was much talk that the end of 'The Troubles' would be followed by a 'peace dividend', but it is now clear this will only apply to the rich.

While the tax cut is good news for the wealthy it is very bad news for public sector workers, the NHS and



education as it will mean more big cuts to the public sector budget.

EU rules stipulate that reductions in regional rates of corporation tax must be accompanied by equivalent

reductions in central government funding.

Sinn Féin and the DUP are completely aware of these rules but still persist.

Tax expert Richard Murphy of Tax Research UK said the cut to corporation tax in the North would not guarantee a single new job but would result in a loss of £300 million

in central government funding.

"That would create a double whammy for Northern Ireland because there's no evidence that reduced tax rates would result in a penny more tax being paid," he said.

"The resulting impact on lost revenue for Northern Ireland could be catastrophic for its public services.

"If you are going to spend £300 million attracting businesses into Northern Ireland this has to be the worst way possible.

A low corporate tax regime has gone along with gigantic debts and mass unemployment in the southern economy and there is no reason why Northern Ireland should prove different.

The SF proposal to reduce corporation tax to 12.5%, the same rate as in the Republic, on top of the £4 billion in cuts that they have already agreed to, would devastate the public sector.

The Assembly election in May should be seen as a referendum on public sector cuts.

Sinn Féin leaders should not be allowed to masquerade as defenders of the public services.

The reality is they fought for tax cuts for the rich which will lead to massive public sector cutbacks.

People Before Profit candidates will be standing in several constituencies in the North and they will be saying loudly:

Tax the rich, they caused the economic crisis, make them pay!

COMEDY REVIEW:

Mark Thomas: 'A book about birds and flowers...'



Live at The Academy, Dublin, 10 March 2011

Review by Jimmy Smyth

POLITICAL COMEDY on television has been in the doldrums over the past decade and is dominated by anodyne observational and quiz-show forms.

On the live front though there is a generation of stand-up comics who are continuing to combine comedy and politics among whom Mark Thomas continues to be a leading light.

Over the last ten years he has developed a profile for investigative journalism with programmes on the murky world of arms dealing, the failed Ilisu dam project in Turkey and the activities of Coca Cola.

Thomas' new show takes us on an 'extreme ramble' along the so-called 'peace wall' between Israel and the West Bank.

He opens the show by relaying the final piece of advice his Israeli fixer gave him when challenged by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF): "For god's sake don't tell them what you're doing - tell them you are writing a book about birds and flowers".

Thomas' aim is to explore what impact the wall has had on the identity of Israelis and Palestinians.

Along the way we hear stories of Palestinians who have to leave for work at 2am to join a checkpoint queue four hours before it opens.

In a house in East Jerusalem that the border runs through, the IDF arrested everybody in the living

room one Saturday for illegally entering Israel.

Thomas brings energy and enthusiasm to the performance which at times is more like a theatrical monologue.

However, by the end of the show you are left with a sense of equivalence between the situation for Israelis and Palestinians.

This is accentuated by only minimal historical context-setting, despite Thomas' obvious sympathy to the Palestinian cause.

That said it was a pleasure to spend an evening at a comedy show where you were by turns informed, shocked and entertained.

Mark Thomas' new book *Extreme Rambling: Walking Israel's Separation Barrier* is published on 14 April 2011.

FILM REVIEW

The dark side of America's soul.

The Fighter

Review by Liam O'Grady

DIRECTOR DAVID O. Russell and actor Mark Wahlberg team up again as they did on *Three Kings* (1999) to deliver *The Fighter*, a fast-paced, gritty true story about one-time boxer Dicky (Christian Bale) and his up-and-coming boxer brother Micky (Wahlberg).

Wahlberg's Micky 'Irish' Ward is a plucky, talented, welterweight boxer who must carry a terrible burden: his brother-cum-trainer Dicky Eklund.

Dicky was himself a boxing force to be reckoned with ten years before, when he knocked down Sugar Ray Leonard in the ring.

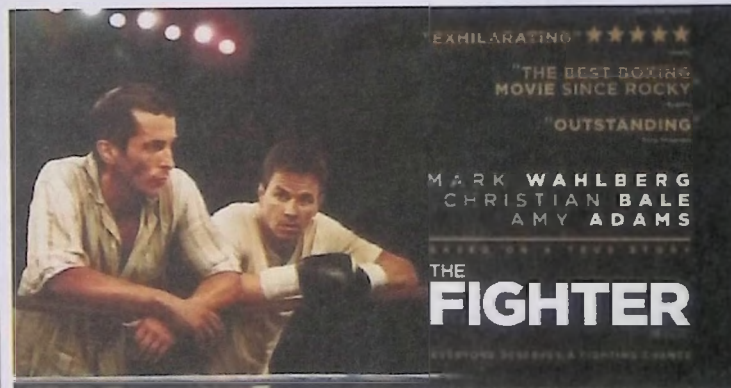
Now he's addicted to crack cocaine.

Dicky and his doting but ferociously aggressive mother, brilliantly played by Melissa Leo, are ruining Micky's career, with money as the main motivator.

His girlfriend Charlene (Amy Adams) tries bravely to woo him away from them so that a big Las Vegas-based promoter can stream him into some high profile fights.

It all seems fairly predictable up to that point, but Micky's devotion to his wayward brother is a key factor.

Like other recent movies such as *Winter's Bone* and *Frozen River*, *The Fighter* shows the drug-ravaged American poor as small-town or rural, and



overwhelmingly white.

At the beginning of the film, as the camera follows Dicky and Micky parading down the street, preening themselves in the neighbourhood, being followed by a camera crew recording what

FILM REVIEW:

Battle: Los Angeles

Directed by Jonathan Liebesman.
Starring Aaron Eckhart & Michelle Rodriguez.

THE FILM is centred around a platoon of US marines, sent into LA to rescue civilians in the midst of an all-out Alien invasion.

In an ironic departure from our usual reality, the US armed forces play the role of defenders, resisting an attempted colonisation.

The extraterrestrial invaders are motivated by

Dicky thinks is a positive documentary about his 'comeback'.

In fact, it is something quite different.

This film-within-a-film is about the destructive nature of drug addiction in 1990's America.

The hard-rocking soundtrack forms a backdrop to the boxing-oriented lives of this working-class neighbourhood.

A cold but sympathetic eye cast on the dark side of America's soul.

earth's abundant supply of water, which they use as fuel.

The goal of the invaders is to exterminate the entire human race, which plunges the globe into World War III with a highly technically advanced civilisation.

In terms of dialogue, the film leaves much to the imagination.

The main emphasis is on the action.

The special effects alone are worth going to have a look at, although the acting is (as with many action films) lacking to say the least.

Cheesy one-liners and



explosions are the order of the day.

It's not a showcase of dramatic ingenuity, but it's exciting enough to watch for the graphics.

Wasted opportunity for some biting satire on American Imperialism.

Socialist Worker

People Before Profit Alliance Fight Elections on 5 May

Defend Every Job Fight every Cut!



Derry students protest Education cuts

THE PEOPLE Before Profit Alliance is standing for five Assembly seats and up to a dozen council seats in the elections in the North on 5 May.

This will be the first serious Left-wing challenge to the dominance of Orange-Green politics in a generation.

The Northern Ireland Labour Party in the 1960s provided the last effort on a similar scale. People Before Profit is offering a far sharper and more radical programme than the NILP ever contemplated.

The People Before Profit Alliance (PBPA) wants to break with the pessimistic old Left tradition in the North of fighting elections to 'fly the flag'. "We are in this to win", says Eamonn McCann, Assembly candidate for Foyle.

The current situation amounts to the best opportunity for a breakthrough since the onset of the Troubles.

While the DUP and Sinn Fein are riding high as the deal-makers and enjoying new prestige, working class communities are being left behind.

There is widespread disillusionment which has not yet registered at the polls.

The effects of the draconian cut-backs being imposed from Stormont can only deepen discontent.

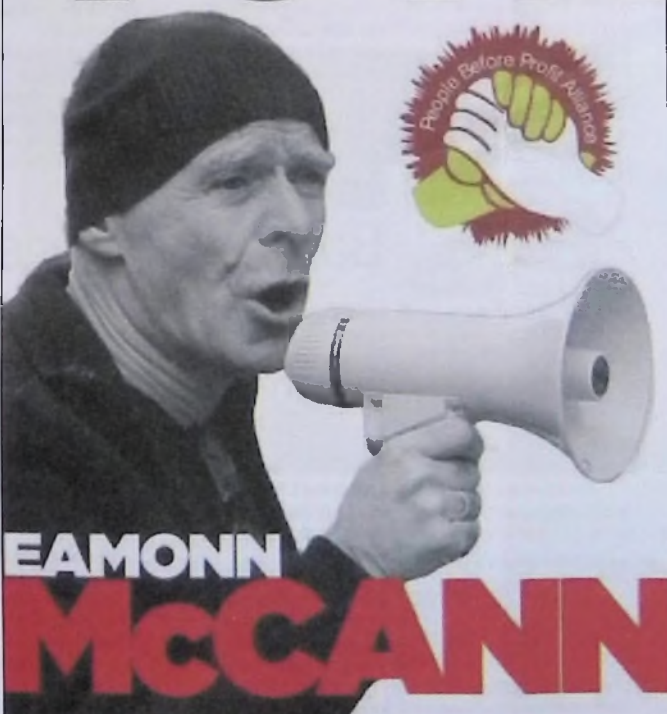
This is the vote the PBPA wants to mobilise.

This Alliance has spelt it out that seats won will be used mainly to amplify the voices of discontent and help organise resistance.

'Defend every job, Fight every cut'

People Before Profit

VOTE



EAMONN
McCANN

is a key slogan.

Candidates

The Alliance's prospective Assembly candidates include, Eamonn McCann in Foyle, Brian Faloon in South Belfast, Gerry Carroll in West Belfast, Dymna McGlade in North Belfast, and Harry Hutchinson in Mid-Ulster. At least one other may be added.

"We hope to emulate the success of the Alliance in the Southern election", says Eamonn McCann.

"The challenges facing ordinary people are very similar across the island and have the same source: the crisis

brought on by an economy and banking system based on greed.

"The unity of interests of working-class people has never been clearer.

"Likewise the inadequacy of parties based on the interests of one community vis-a-vis the other; parties that are therefore incapable of mobilising across the divide.

"We are desperately short of resources of all kinds, given the size of the task we want to take on.

"We need all the help we can get. "We go into the fray in an optimistic frame of mind, and believe we can change the politics of the North."

PBP Manifesto

In its draft manifesto, the Alliance concentrates on policies with a potential to bring the working class together on an active basis.

PBPA promises to:

- play a full part at Stormont but with emphasis on mobilising at grass-roots level;
- offer a clear alternative to the cut-backs and carve-up politics of the Executive parties;
- expose the culture which allows giant companies to dodge taxes and create the deficit which Westminster and Stormont want to bridge by cutting spending;
- fight benefit 'reforms' which drive workers into no-hope jobs at rock-bottom wages or face a collapse in income;
- vigorously oppose moves towards 'social partnership' which ties unions and community organisations to the State;
- campaign for repeal of Thatcher's anti-union laws, now devolved to Stormont;
- demand that all utilities are brought fully back into the public sector and run in a democratic, accountable way;
- campaign to reduce MLA salaries to the average NI wage;
- fight militarism and paramilitarism: no more waste on foreign wars, mass mobilisation rather than looking to armed groups to deliver progress;
- oppose all repressive measures such as last year's DUP/Sinn Fein Assemblies Bill;
- campaign for equality for immigrant workers, Travellers and all in the LGBT community and for liberation and equality for women in all aspects of life;
- support votes at 16.

This outline sums up the spirit of our approach.