

Socialist Worker

BOYCOTT



THE HOUSEHOLD CHARGE

NOT a single penny raised by the household charges will be used for better local public services.

The Fine Gael Minister, Phil Hogan, has cut the local environment budget by €172 million. But even if all households paid the new tax, it would still raise €160 million.

The argument about better funding for local government is mere propaganda to hide the fact that the money is being raised for bondholders.

Thousands of people have attended meetings around the country against the charges and a mass boycott campaign

is now underway.

500 people turned out in Cork; 350 in Limerick; 200 in Kilkenny; 300 in Clonmel. And it is the same story in many villages and country towns as anger against septic tank charges provides an additional reason for mobilisation. 100 people turned up in Ballinaboley in Wexford; 60 people attended in Kilrush and hundreds have attended village meetings in Donegal.

At most of these meetings, the cry has gone up for street protests as well as a mass boycott campaign. In some, there have been calls for civil disobedience.

It is vital that the tactic of mass non-payment is combined with active forms of protest.

In the next few weeks, the government will step up its offensive by issuing hundreds of thousands of leaflets to homes, threatening fines for those who do not pay.

A systematic campaign of intimidation of older people is already underway though local authority funded schemes.

So far the government tactic has failed miserably as less than 100,000 people have registered out of a total of

1.8 million households. By the end of February, less than 10 percent of people will be paying the tax.

But in order to counter the government offensive, we need to move to active protest.

As soon as leaflets or demands are issued in local areas, there should be mobilisations to bin the notices.

On 31 March, the final date for registration there should be a co-ordinated day of local protests across the country.

A date should be named for a national mobilisation to bring tens of thousands onto the streets.

Tax Breaks for Bosses – Cuts for the Poor

FINANCE Minister Michael Noonan is introducing a special tax break for high flying company executives who come here to take up jobs – even though his government talks about everyone ‘sharing the pain’.

The measure was not announced in the budget, but is being sneaked into the Finance Bill.

Most of the company directors earn over €100,000 a year but Noonan is introducing an ‘income disregard’ for some of their earnings.

This means that they will pay no tax on a proportion of their fat salary cheque. In most cases it will amount to at least one third of their earnings.

They will enjoy the benefit of using Irish hospitals, schools and roads – but Noonan is letting them off from making any real contribution to their upkeep.

It is a very different story for those at the other end of the income scale.

Pauline is a single mother who is employed on a CE scheme in Clondalkin, Dublin.

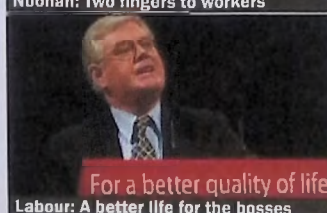
She has three children and has used a training grant to undertake a course in professional childcare.

But Ms ‘Brutal’ Bruton is removing the child allowance that is currently paid to her under the One Parent Family Payment scheme.

Single parents who work on CE schemes will be deducted €29.80 for



Noonan: Two fingers to workers



each of their children.

In the case of Pauline, that represents a loss of nearly €90 a week.

She can no longer pay for a child-minder and has to leave her 12 year old son at home to look after the younger children while she finishes off her course.

This is the reality behind two tier Ireland today.

The Labour Party spoke in the last election about softening the Thatcherite policies of Fine Gael and protecting the vulnerable.

In reality they are leading the charge to attack the poor – while nodding away to tax breaks for the rich.

Inside

Building resistance from the bottom-up



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Why we need a workers exit from the Euro



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Rebel County out in force



By VANESSA O' SULLIVAN

LAST Thursday (2 February) may well have marked an important turning point in the fight against austerity. Across Cork, people came out in droves to show their anger at Enda Kenny who was in town for a series of business meetings, banquets and parties.

At 12 noon up to a hundred protesters turned up at his first public address in Ballincollig.

As Kenny was chauffeured into the Oriel

Later that day, hundreds of activists from the campaign against household & water taxes were joined by Septic tank protesters and Vita Cortex workers.

The heroic workers from Vita cortex actually secured a meeting with Kenny as he proclaimed the government would support the staff in any way they could.

But workers themselves were less than impressed with the holier gesture.

Jim Power told



house hotel, protesters fumed at the smirk on his face.

People couldn't believe the arrogance and on the spot it was decided to confront him as he entered the Elderly day centre next door.

Speaking to Socialist Worker, Emma Challacombe, a single parent from Skibbereen summed up the mood, 'I can't get over the arrogance of Kenny. If he thought he'd slip in and out of west cork after the household tax, hospital cuts, and school cuts? It wasn't going to happen. We are here to show our disgust at what his government is doing. We can't just look the other way anymore'

This was to be the first of many encounters with the real people in Cork.

Socialist Worker "I'll believe it when I see it. We've been lied to so many times and we're still here".

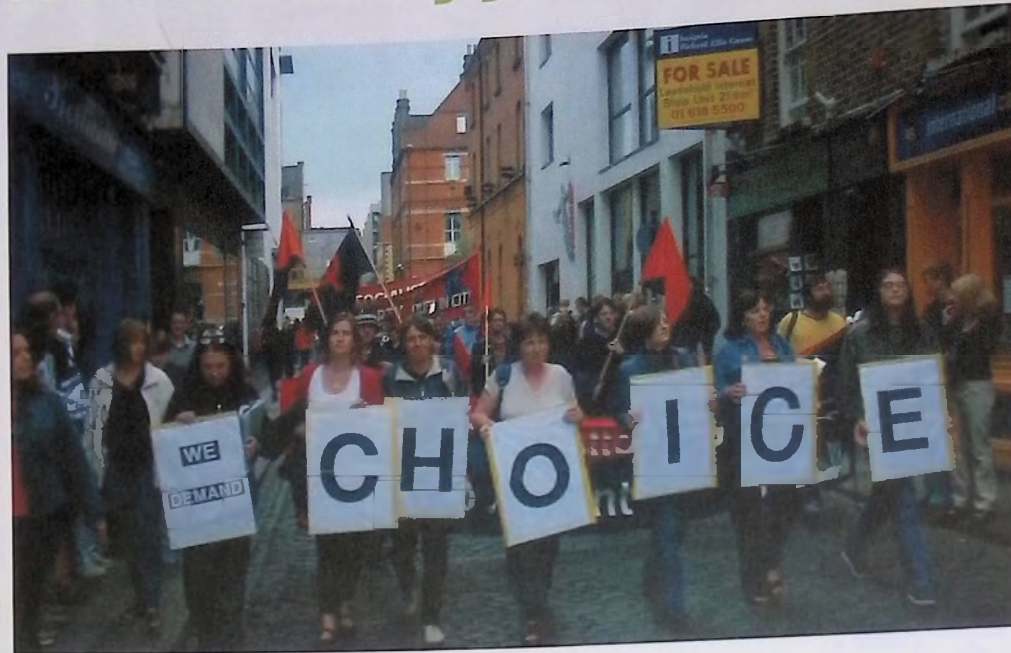
When asked why they thought it was important to keep up the sit-in he replied "We can't leave now. We're not gonna let Jack Ronan break our spirits. Not alone are we fighting for ourselves but for everyone".

The workers were joined at the factory on 3 Feb (Friday) by workers from Yves Rocher, who did a sponsored walk from Dublin Hill to Vita Cortex.

It is clear that workers and campaigns are linking up and this is necessary if we are to see genuine change.

The Vita Cortex workers bring their fight to Cork City centre on 11 February at 2pm from Connolly Hall.

X-Case: Twenty years is too long



By SINEAD KENNEDY

FEBRUARY 2012 marks the twentieth anniversary of the X-case. It also represents twenty years of political cowardice and intentional inaction on abortion.

On 6 February 1992 the parents of a 14 year old rape victim attempted to take her to Britain for an abortion because their daughter said she would rather end her own life than continue the pregnancy to term.

The response of the State and the Attorney General, Harry Whelehan was to gain a temporary High Court injunction which forced the family to return to Ireland hours after they had left.

Justice Declan Costello went on to grant a permanent High Court injunction.

The story was carried in the Irish Times some days later resulting in public outcry.

People took to the streets in their droves to express their shock and anger at the treatment of X, as she became known.

The girl's parents lodged an appeal with the Supreme Court. In the days before the hearing, ten thousand people took to the street demanding that X should have the right to an abortion.

On 6 March, the Supreme Court, under pressure from the mass protests, acknowledged her right to life and ruled that a woman has a right to abortion in Ireland if her life is at risk, including at risk by suicide.

Following a referendum in November 1992, which vindicated a woman's right to life-saving abortion, the government

vowed to legislate.

Instead nothing happened as successive governments, including a Labour coalition, failed to act.

Two decades later, after numerous expert committees, two referenda, and several court cases all we've got is another expert committee. It is time to act now.

The United Left Alliance TDs and a number of independent's will put forward legislation this month to allow women to access life-saving abortions. It is vital that the move by this group of TDs is supported, both inside and outside the Dail.

While this legislation will not help the thousands of women who are still forced to travel abroad for abortions, it is a vital step in the fight for free, safe and legal abortion in Ireland.

Resistance to the austerity tax spreads throughout the country

By JOHN LYONS

HE tried to spin it as best as he could, but there was no way Phil Hogan, Minister for the Environment, could get away from the fact that after a full month only 66,000 out of 1,800,000 homeowners had registered to pay the new austerity tax - that's less than 5%!

The people have had enough. After four years and five austerity budgets, anger around the country is reaching boiling point. Thousands have attended public meetings in cities and towns, including 500



Another packed meeting of the CAHWT

in Cork, 350 in Limerick, 300 in west Donegal, 400 in Enniscorthy, 350 in Clonmel, 250 in Kilkenny and thousands at localised meetings in Dublin.

This tax can and will be beaten. More nationwide meetings are scheduled in places like Leitrim, Kildare, Mayo, Monaghan, Sligo and Roscommon. On top of this 250,000 newsletters are

currently being distributed door-to-door and a major series of meetings will also take place across Dublin this month.

Non-payment and non-registration alongside a strategy to mobilise the thousands of people refusing to pay this tax into a national demonstration near the end of March will make history of the rotten household tax. From there we should push on and beat austerity once and for all.

Check out the website <http://nohouseholdtax.org> or ring the campaign hotline 1890 98 98 00 find out where your nearest meeting is taking place.

Largest UCD protest in a decade

By IAN MC DONNELL

THE largest protest in decades took place in UCD recently.

On 5 January over 300 students marched through the campus & delivered a petition of over 3000 signatures to the SU president.

The protest was part of a campaign against the closure of the SU printing centre & the corresponding

redundancies.

UCD's student union receives €700,000 in capitation every year to cover its costs.

However due to debts incurred through financial irresponsibility, the SU executive decided to cut back by shutting down a vital service.

UCD's SU spent €60,000 on social events last year and €10,500 on class rep training

weekends. And these perks are set to continue even as people lose their jobs.

The campaign against cuts to student union services has gained considerable momentum, with staff from various departments issuing public support for the protection of services.

Only through students and staff standing together can progress be made in the colleges.

WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.

The "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Cameron government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction' We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for Independent rank and file action.

Single Parents Fight-Back

By LEAH SPEIGHT

ONE of the most despicable aspects of the recent budget was the cruel attacks on single parents.

As well as cuts in rent allowance, cuts in back to school allowance, a reduction in the back to education allowance, cuts in children's allowance for families with more than 3 kids and cuts in fuel allowance, single parents also face the withdrawal of a double payment for OPFA recipients on CE schemes, a reduction in child-care subvention rates and a reduction in the qualifying age from 14 to 7.

All of this will mean families are pushed into real poverty as children who happen to live with one of their parents are made to go without.

This is a shameful attack, but single parents across Ireland are now fighting back.

With the help of social media a group of parents have formed Single Parents Acting for the Rights of the Kids (SPARK).

This group plans to hold a protest on 18 February from 2pm at Garden of Remembrance.

Speaking to Socialist Worker Andrea Galgey explained why she will be marching,

"I joined SPARK because of the CE Scheme changes, and what they mean to me. Basically not allowing lone parents' to work.

"All the changes that have been aimed at lone parents in this budget have made me feel that we're an easy target to victimise.



But SPARK has shown me that we will not be victimised any-more."

One-parent households are four times more likely to live in consistent poverty, and 65% of Ireland's poorest children live with single parents.

Despite these facts single parents (particularly single mothers) face consistent stereotyping and stigmatization.

The supposed gravy-train portrayed by some politicians and media is the opposite of the reality for many lone parents.

SPARK will make a stand against this discrimination and fight to ensure a decent future for all of the nation's children.

For further information email info.sparkcampaign@gmail.com or check Sparkcampaign.com, or follow us on twitter or Facebook

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Syrian regime hits back as revolution spreads



By SIÂN RUDDICK

THE revolution in Syria is moving closer to the centre of power in the country—and the regime is responding with brutality.

Ordinary people, supported by the Free Syrian Army (FSA), took the working class suburbs of the capital Damascus out of president Bashar al-Assad's control last week.

These districts, just three miles from the centre of the city, are the closest the movement has come to the heart of the regime.

But the government lashed out on Sunday, with the neighbourhoods coming under heavy attack.

Assad sent in 2,000 soldiers in buses and armoured per-

sonnel carriers, along with at least 50 tanks and armoured vehicles.

Milestone

Activists reported bodies lying in the streets. Unarmed protesters were shot as they resisted. In some areas they held government forces off but later had to beat a tactical retreat.

Over 50 martyrs' funerals took place over the weekend. Many turned into protests as thousands filled the streets and defied the repression.

The movement has developed roots in the working class district of Marjeh in Aleppo, Syria's commercial capital. This is an important milestone—one that worries Assad.

He is desperate to cling onto power and is wary of the resistance spreading to more areas of Syria, particularly the economically powerful ones.

But he also wants to crush all signs of dissent—which carries the risk of increasing resistance and raising further international concerns about the violence.

Arab League observers have also now left the country due to a 'critical deterioration of the situation'.

The Syrian uprising is far from being a military battle of a few on each side. The opposition has mobilised millions against the regime.

The Local Coordination Committees (LCCs), which organise the revolution on

the ground, have played an important role, particularly in Syria's strike movement.

On the other hand the Syrian National Council, which is close to the West and supports some kind of intervention, is becoming increasingly isolated.

Now the Free Syrian Army, composed of defectors from the government army and others, is also becoming a more significant player.

It is a central element in defending neighbourhoods from the government's attacks. In some places it works alongside the LCCs.

Some say the resistance is part of a 'plot' by the West, or that a victory for the movement will help Western imperialism.

These are dangerous arguments.

Strangled

The Syrian regime is no friend of the left or of resistance.

The regime strangled the Iraqi resistance after 2003, and has clamped down on other movements.

Western leaders and those resisting Assad do not have the same interests.

The UN Security Council is due to hold a vote on Tuesday of this week. France and other countries are desperate to start implementing sanctions and other measures against Assad's regime.

But 'help' from the West—or its allies—won't do anything to liberate ordinary Syrians.

Egyptian football violence: revenge of the regime



By AINE DILLON

PROTESTS continue across Egypt following the killings of 74 Al-Ahly fans at the Al-Masry and Al-Ahly game in Port Said on 1 February.

Supporters of both teams have laid the blame on Field Marshal Tantawi of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), claiming the violence was staged so the regime could get even with Ahlawy Ultras – radical Al-Ahly fans who are leaders in Egypt's revolution.

No more than football fans anywhere, Egypt's Ultras are not a coherent political force. They arose about six years ago primarily as a response to the commercialisation of the game.

Al-Ahly, a Cairo side with anti-colonial roots, had the first Ultras. Its most strident supporters – the Ahlawy Ultras – came together with fans from other clubs to form Ultras Tahrir Square which has chanted anti-regime slogans and brought a high degree of organisation to the barricades in Tahrir Square.

There have been clashes between Al-Ahly and Al-Masry fans before, but never inside the stadium and never without police intervention.

This time there was a curious absence of security and the lack of metal detectors at the stadium entrances allowed alleged al-Masry supporters to get

into the ground with knives and other weapons.

They invaded the pitch after the final whistle to clash with Al-Ahly players and fans. Normally gates are opened gradually to prevent such an invasion. It

was significant that the Governor and the Head of Security of Port Said both decided to stay away from the game.

It is no coincidence that the violence took place exactly one year since the Ultras of Tahrir Square and others defeated Mubarak's thugs in the Battle of the Camel.

This was a decisive turning point in the ousting of Mubarak and speaking to Socialist Worker the 'Revolutionary Socialists' remained defiant stating that, "Crimes committed against the revolutionary forces will not stop the revolution and will not intimidate the revolutionaries.

The leaders behind the "Battle of the Camel" who are protected by the military council will not succeed.

They will fail miserably just as they failed the first time, and like the Mubarak regime, they and the military regime will end up in the abyss.

The state of emergency that did not protect Mubarak from the revolution will not protect Field Marshal Tantawi either."

Despite continued efforts to break the revolution by separating Muslims from Copts, Brotherhood from leftists, and now radical youth from liberals, the Egyptian revolution remains steadfast in its demand for bread, freedom and human dignity.

Greece: a new wave of fightback

by PANOS GARGANAS in Athens

WORKERS in Greece's Attica region, which includes Athens, are fighting austerity.

Their strike last week was in solidarity with people losing their jobs and facing unpaid and cut wages.

Rank and file workers addressed strike rallies. Their speeches were broadcast by workers occupying the Alter TV station.

Workers at Intracom, a large telecommunications and defence company, also began a rolling strike last



Tuesday which is continuing. And steel workers continue to strike.

There are increasing numbers of workers with confidence to take action.

It is politically significant. The Greek government is in negotiations with banks over organising a "haircut" (partial write-off) on its bonds.

They say this will cut Greek debt.

But it's designed to save the banks, again.

There is now a push from below for a general strike to begin this week.

The trade union leaders are holding back because they are negotiating with bosses over collective bargaining rights.

But the way it is developing we'll have more strikes and a united response to the attacks.

Panos Garganas is editor of Workers Solidarity, Socialist Worker's sister paper in Greece

Oakland solidarity

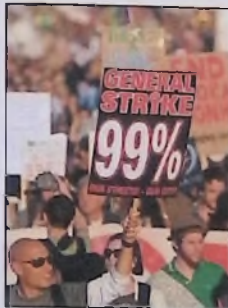
THOUSANDS marched in 27 cities around the US last Sunday in solidarity with Occupy Oakland in California.

On Saturday Oakland protesters attempted to occupy a building that had been vacant for six years.

They planned to use it as an organising hub and a community centre providing free education, housing and healthcare services to the 99 percent.

But they were met by hundreds of armed police, who used teargas, rubber bullets and baton rounds to evict them.

Police arrested over 400 people. Within 24 hours solidarity marches were building in New York and other cities where Occupy protests have taken place.



The day of action for Oakland follows protests last week outside banks in San Francisco's financial district. Over 1,000 people took part in them.

The Occupy camps may no longer be in place. But the movement has given new life to the struggles against student debt and home foreclosures.



Primark workers set to strike



By SEAN MITCHELL

WORKERS in Primark are set to strike in a dispute over pay.

Staff at the company have been asked to endure a pay freeze for a second consecutive year and anger at these proposals has reached boiling point on the shop floor.

Despite the economic recession, Primark continues to be highly profitable.

AB Foods which owns Primark recently described profits for the store as 'exceptional'.

Indeed, in the last two years the fashion retailer has made over £644 million.

The reality of working for Primark is, however, very different.

The popularity of the store means that workers are often rushed off their feet and staff are expected to do extremely taxing work for £6.84 per hour.

The fact that Primark is making huge profits whilst refusing to offer a pay rise is a slight on the dedication and hard work of their staff.

Talk of 'difficult trading conditions' is simply a smoke screen - the company is hugely profitable and workers deserve their share.

Matt Collins, a shop steward from Primark in Belfast summed up the mood when he told Socialist Worker that "the younger staff feel completely exploited, the older staff feel completely betrayed and there is a real sense of militancy on the shop floor at the minute."

We want our fair share and we are willing to strike to get it".

The Union of Shop and Distributive Allied Workers (USDAW), who represent roughly 85% of the Primark workforce in Northern Ireland, have exhausted all avenues of negotiation, after talks at the Labour Relations agency broke down.

Primark refused to even consider a pay rise, and left with no other options; USDAW initiated a consultative action ballot in which 95% were found to be in favour of balloting for industrial action.

The union then launched an industrial ballot which was returned with 93% in

favour of strike action.

The procedure of conducting a consultative ballot before an industrial ballot is unusual in Labour relations, but no one can claim that Primark workers are not fully behind this action.

In the last week staff in 8 Primark stores across Northern Ireland have developed plans to implement the strike.

Faced with the rising cost of living and high inflation workers have been left with no other options.

Workers Solidarity

The strike at Primark is not just significant for the workers themselves; this is a strike for every worker and Trade Unionist in the North.

For the last number of months the political establishment alongside sections of the media have launched a sustained attempt to divide public and private workers over their employment conditions while driving through brutal austerity measures.

The strike is an opportunity to bridge this divide.

It is vital that public sector unions rally behind Primark staff and offer solidarity and support to show that no group of workers should be forced to pay for this recession.

The Primark strike can also act as a catalyst to inspire and encourage other workers in the private sector to take action.

The store is not alone in making huge profits whilst giving nothing to workers.

Staff across the retail sector should follow this example and begin to fight for a fair and decent living wage.

The Socialist Workers Party welcomes the result of the strike ballot and calls on USDAW to set a date for the action as soon as possible.

Workers in every store should prepare now to make this a strike that no one can ignore and workers across the Trade Unions should begin to raise the issue of solidarity.

Fair pay for the Primark workers!

Primark workers have made the right choice; if your boss refuses to listen - make them listen through strike action.

Building resistance

As the resistance against household, water and septic tank charges has really struck a nerve throughout Irish society so perhaps you could start by explaining why you both got involved in the first place?

Seamus O'Brien about their experiences in building successful

The Campaign against Household and Water charges has really struck a nerve throughout Irish society so perhaps you could start by explaining why you both got involved in the first place?

Seamus - The reason I got involved in the campaign was really straight forward.

This charge aims to tax millionaires the same as ordinary working families and so I immediately saw it as a completely unfair tax on working people, the unemployed and pensioners, none of whom created the current economic crisis.

I am not opposed to a tax on investment property, but I am totally against a tax on someone's home.

Liam - I would totally agree. But I would add that this was also the first real opportunity to fight austerity with direct action.

Since the recession started we have had to endure cuts to wages, welfare payments etc.

Now they've handed us a weapon to hit them back with. Ordinary people have to make a decision to pay this change and that means they can decide to resist.

When they asked us to register and pay the household charge I saw this as our chance to tell the government that we won't pay for the greed of the bankers and big business.

Liam's point about people having power over their own decisions is crucial, so maybe you could explain exactly how you helped to harness this self-activity into two successful campaigns?

Liam - The day after the austerity budget I met with a part-time care worker who as a father of five was concerned about how the budget would affect his income.

We got out the calculator and discovered that the cumulative effects of the cuts were well over €3000.

None of this could be stopped immediately, but the household charges could be, so we decided we had to do something.

Initially we wrote a simple leaflet with some of the main facts and a venue for a public meeting.

We then delivered them in the town and the surrounding area. Finally we publicised it on the local media and began to build up a network of contacts outside of Ardara (Donegal).

When we turned up to the meeting we were amazed to have almost 200 people there.

The septic tank issue is a real live wire and people were extremely angry that they had paid their taxes and gotten planning permission only to be told that they might have to pay anything up to €15,000.

From there we formed a committee and started to spread the campaign across the county.

The meetings have gone from strength to strength with local groups setting up all over Donegal and holding public meetings almost on a nightly basis with attendances ranging from 130 in small villages to 400 in larger towns.

Seamus - In Co. Wexford there are over 63,000 home owners liable for this charge. It is a huge area to cover, so initial meetings were held in the big urban centres of Gorey, Wexford, New Ross and Enniscorthy, pulling in hundreds of people, many signing up to the campaign at these meetings, and the



majority wanting to be involved in leafleting for meetings, stalls, and posterage.

From these meetings and the subsequent rural meetings, where the septic tank charge is also the big issue, there has not only grown a huge level of solidarity, but also a huge sense of belonging to the campaign, people have continued to say they felt they

had been without a voice, and through the campaign they now feel that they have that voice.

Gaining in confidence, people are contacting me daily, to get more actively involved and this in fairness, has made the job of covering such a vast area somewhat easier. I've met some very good activists on this


from the bottom-up

As the struggle intensifies, Socialist Worker spoke to Liam Whyte and Seamus Twomey about grassroots campaigns in Donegal and Wexford respectively.



WE CAN'T PAY! WE WON'T PAY!

FIGHT THE SEPTIC TANK, WATER & HOUSEHOLD TAXES!





protests been important in building people's confidence?

Liam – Absolutely. One of the things I always stressed was that if you don't want to pay the charges but you remain isolated in your own home you may get intimidated.

But if you see lots of your neighbours and friends opposing these taxes together it gives people confidence. This is why it is so important to have local activities, meetings protests etc to bring people together and give them a sense of their own power.

Seamus – Yeah I totally agree. As I've said already, this campaign is really an expression of people's pent-up frustrations and it is vitally important to build not only local resistance, but networks of resistance that can coordinate to build a national day of protest that can really galvanise the campaign and push it on to victory.

The level of activity in both places seems incredibly impressive so we might finish by asking you both what you hope your respective campaigns can achieve in the coming days and months?

Liam – Although people are coming to protest against the particular charges they face, a general anger at the government's austerity is also evident at the meetings I've attended.

People are showing a real appetite for a militant campaign and for me the goals are to force the government to drop all unjust stealth taxes, to send a strong message that such measures will be met with fierce resistance in the future and to give the Irish people confidence to empower themselves against the attacks that they have endured for the last four years.

Seamus – Like Donegal, the campaign in Wexford has the obvious objective of defeating this tax.

But I get the sneaking feeling that there has been a real moment of clarity for people during this campaign. More and more of them now see that this is not about €100, or even about a €1000 - they see this as a battle against the politics of austerity and against the politics that bails out bankers. The connection has been made.

At every meeting there has been a call for public protest and we are now planning a series of actions over the coming weeks.

But as I've said the need for a national demonstration is also something that has been called for.

This really is a campaign for and of the people here in Wexford. I think if there is not a national demo called, then individual group campaigns will organize it themselves, outside the more conservative elements of the campaign.

As a socialist, I think it is important that we build links with other campaigns, perhaps to the Enough campaign, and to any campaign that will emerge to fight against IMF austerity.

The campaign goes on, the anger is not fading, and the people of Wexford are not paying.

■ **For more information on your local campaign call the hotline on 1890 989800, or see www.nohouseholdtax.org. You can also find information on Facebook by searching for Campaign Against Household and Water Taxes.**

campaign, and have managed to pull a group together of those most committed to the work as a steering committee, representing their own areas.

The local media have been shocked by the persistence of the campaign and the numbers at the meetings. I was given the opportunity to debate with Junior Minister

Liam Twomey on the local radio, and we had the front page of the local papers.

Both of you seem to be suggesting that people's own anger has been the most important catalyst to building successful grassroots networks; has the role of local

Remaking history - understanding the revolutionary wave of 2011

On the first anniversary of the Egyptian Revolution, Alex Callinicos, looks at how to understand the revolutionary wave—and the potential for it to go much further

THE Arab revolutions have shown an astonishing tenacity. They have overthrown some dictators and shaken others. Above all, they continue.

The struggle to democratise Egyptian society goes on. And revolutionaries in Syria have shown astonishing courage and determination.

But how do we get a measure of the revolutions' significance? It's tempting to draw historical comparisons.

For example with the revolutions of 1848, that shook the old regime throughout Europe.

But this isn't necessarily the most comforting comparison, because the old regime managed to hang on and crush the revolutions.

Some 20 years later, one leader of the extreme left in the 1848 German Revolution, Frederick Engels, reflected on how the memory of the dynamic of revolution and counter revolution gets lost in a period of reaction.

So that when revolutions return, they are viewed through a distorting lens created during the years of counter revolution.

Myths

Today the Arab revolutions and the global economic crisis have punctured the neoliberal era of unrestrained capitalism, when revolutions were supposedly consigned to the past.

And so attempts to read the revolutions are shaped by the myths of this period of reaction.

One of these myths is comparatively easy to demolish. This is the idea that the Arab Spring is the latest in a succession of 'colour revolutions', spreading Western-style liberal capitalism.

The obvious difficulty is that the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt took out rulers very closely aligned with Western imperialism.

Moreover their governments were praised to the sky by the World Bank for implementing neoliberal economic policies.

Indeed, it was precisely the effect of neoliberalism in polarising and impoverishing Egyptian and Tunisian society and enriching a tiny elite that drove the uprisings.

We can see this same dynamic at work in Syria, where economic 'reforms' have benefited a handful of business cronies.

But there are other myths. For example, that opposition to capitalism today is driven by the 'multitude' that seeks to outflank rather than confront the citadels of economic and political power – coupled with a naive enthusiasm for social media.

So Paul Mason in his new book (*Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere*) writes, "Once information networks become social, the implications are massive: truth can now travel faster than lies, and all propaganda becomes instantly flammable."

Social media

Social media have undoubtedly played an important role in allowing activists to communicate and organise. But, after Mubarak shut

down the internet and the mobile networks, much older technologies—landline phones and TV (above all Al Jazeera)—stepped in during the decisive struggles that brought him down.

Now the Egyptian Revolution has developed into a fight against the regime that survived Mubarak's fall – the ruling Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF).

The revolutionary shabab (youth) may communicate by Twitter, but they understand that state power has to be overthrown, not by-passed.

We also have to confront another strongly entrenched myth of the neoliberal era—Islamophobia.

Many people believe that the main beneficiaries of the overthrow of Ben Ali and Mubarak have been the Islamists.

Underlying this kind of pessimism are two errors. The first is treating the Islamists as a reactionary monolith.

The Muslim Brotherhood is a complex political formation with a long history. It benefited from being the most consistent opposition to Mubarak during decades when secular forces—nationalists and Communists—were weak and discredited.

The Muslim Brotherhood developed welfare programmes for the poor. Therefore its ranks encompass very diverse and contradictory forces—from socially conservative businessmen to youth activists involved with the struggle on the streets.

In government, it will come under enormous pressure that will pull it in different directions. One of the most important pressures will come from the economic crisis.

As the Egyptian Revolutionary Socialists recently stated, "Foreign exchange reserves are fast draining away (down from \$36 billion to \$15 billion during the first year of the revolution). Inflation is rising in the absence of any mechanism to control rising prices. Unemployment is continually rising."

The second mistake is to take a snapshot of the revolutionary process and present it as the finishing point. In Egypt, revolutionary consciousness changes according to varying rhythms.

Enemy

A large minority of revolutionary youth now see the SCAF as the main enemy that must be smashed. Much wider layers of workers and peasants are willing to give the Brotherhood a chance to reform Egyptian society, but are also sympathetic to the revolutionaries.

Which direction these layers move will determine the outcome of the Egyptian Revolution.

So far we have seen new unions and very militant strikes. But it is essential that workers find their own organised political voice.

Despite the myths projected on the Arab revolutions, their future remains open. In the maelstrom of these struggles, all our history can be remade.

Why we need a workers exit from the Euro



As Ireland takes another step towards an austerity union, socialist economist, Brian O'Boyle, lays out an alternative strategy for workers which involves the repudiation of all bankers debts and a massive redistribution of Ireland's wealth.

IRELAND took another step toward economic ruin this week with the signing of a 'fiscal pact' that aims to lock in austerity forever.

Despite the fact that EU unemployment is at its highest point since the founding of the euro (10.4%), there has been absolutely no movement on creating jobs or reviving investment.

Instead the EU elite are determined to reclaim all of the capital they lost during the last four years.

According to the European Council the new "treaty aims to strengthen fiscal discipline through the introduction of more automatic sanctions and stricter surveillance, and in particular through the "balanced budget rule".¹

Every member of the new club must allow their national budgets to be vetted by unelected technocrats from the European Commission.

This new arrangement must also be written into national law.

And if elected governments are found to be overspending by more than 0.5% of GNP, they can be fined up to 0.1% of GDP (€160 million).

From Keynes to Cut-backs

Traditionally governments' tried to tackle recessions by increasing spending and/or cutting taxes.

Known as Keynesian counter-cyclical policy, the idea was to pump money into the economy when it was slowing down and to take it out when it was booming.

This was not always effective. But it did replace lost private sector spending with valuable spending on infrastructure and public services.

The new fiscal compact aims to do the very opposite. Instead of pumping heat into the engine, the EU will make it practically illegal for governments' to stimulate their flagging economies.

Recessions reduce taxation by throwing people out of work and governments will now be forced to deal with this falling taxation by cutting back on valuable

spending.

Schools, hospitals and welfare programmes will all be in the firing-line.

And if democratically elected government don't like it – they will be forced to obey by the mandarins in Brussels.

Reasserting Class Power

Ever since 1942 when Hayek wrote up their founding document, neoliberals have consistently tried to move economic decisions away from democratic spaces.

But even key establishment figures are now deeply worried by the latest EU move.

Writing in the Financial Times on 1 February, Martin Wolf claimed that "attempts to vindicate the catastrophic austerity of Heinrich Brüning, German Chancellor in 1930-32 is horrifying"

Wolf is only too aware that austerity policies prolonged the last Great Depression in the 1930s. He also knows that the Eurozone is now heading back into recession.

Why then are the elites of Europe so hell-bent on pursuing policies that will not result in economic recovery?

The short answer is that austerity is the assertion of unified class power in an otherwise divided policy environment.

After eight tortuous summits, political paralysis inside the Eurozone has meant that the only thing the elites can agree on is making workers' pay for the crisis.

Why we need to exit the Euro

At the start of the crisis, the sole aim of the European Central Bank was to save big banks by granting them unlimited liquidity,

This reflected the wider approach of the EU elite. Their policies are designed to support capital accumulation and since 2000, every Eurozone country has seen real wages lag behind productivity.

However because German capitalism was incredibly ruthless and imposed 'wage suppression' on its own workers, the attacks on workers conditions generally has not been enough to secure competitiveness in the periphery.

This has meant a second transfer from the periphery of Europe into the core.

When it works 'well' the Eurozone is bad for workers but when it breaks down workers in the periphery are particularly vulnerable.

This means we have no choice but to argue for a workers exit - for as Costas Lapavistas rightly suggests,

"the argument for exit by the periphery is about a radical break with the class interests and national hierarchies that are currently dominating Europe."

"EMU is not some kind of Alliance for Solidarity, Peace and International Understanding."

"The monetary union is a mechanism designed to defend primarily the interests of big banks and big business in Europe."

"It does that whilst also promoting the interests of core countries like Germany and France at the expense of peripheral countries like Portugal, Greece and Spain."

"In standard Marxist language EMU is an imperialist device...it seems to me the left and especially the radical left should not be in the game of protecting monetary union since the European working class has no stake in it"

This is all true but we need to distinguish between a progressive exit on workers terms and the position of extreme right wingers who imagine they can return to a pure capitalist market as against the 'corporatist' arrangements of today.

This is the position articulated by people like David McWilliams and Constantin Gurdgiev.

Our aim should be the protection of income and working class conditions and we can do this through;

- A workers default
- The immediate establishment of capital controls
- The establishment of one good state bank free of all private debt
- A massive redistribution of the country's income and wealth through progressive taxation
- A massive programme of public investment
- The reclaiming of our natural resources.

Savings

If this series of policies were put in place, workers' savings can be protected by a state guarantee of up to 100,000.

Without the burden of private debts a good state bank would be more than able to support this policy, especially as it takes over the deposits of the private banks and the performing loans of the six banks given the original guarantee.

Wages

Wages would also be protected as the reestablishment of economic sovereignty would allow the state to guarantee that real wages (the amount of things that wages can purchase) do not fall in the event of a devaluation of the punt (if the punt falls by 40% you would receive 40% more paper money).

Debts

Without these policies the rich will try to use any exit to keep workers debts in euros and their wages in (devalued) punts.

But if we can escape on workers terms a massive redistribution of wealth and income is possible. This will make workers lives better not worse through exiting the euro.

Employment

Finally, employment and economic activity generally would be greatly increased as hundreds of thousands of workers are brought back into employment through infrastructural investment, up skilling and the more productive use of our social and natural resources.

No strategy will be painless and many workers may well feel like remaining in the euro is the lesser of two evils. This is a mistake.

The Eurozone is austerity and workers lives will not get better in a framework designed to support the ruling class.

An exit on our terms is infinitely better than an exit on theirs.

If we go, workers must seize banks and impose capital controls, in order to save themselves from massive hardship. In the end, resisting austerity is the only sure way to improve the lives of ordinary people.

THE SAME OLD STORY

ACCORDING to the IMF there have been no less than 124 financial crises since 1970 – and on every occasion the play book has remained essentially the same.

As the crisis breaks, the State immediately steps in to stabilise the banking system.

Once the immediate threat has been lifted, private losses are quickly shifted onto the public purse.

This basically means that the State must establish the principle that all of the capital will be repaid.

The next phase begins when the State actually begins to pay off the bankers.

This inevitably puts strain on government finances. And as they start to borrow, the very banks that caused the crisis begin to argue that government spending is far too high and must be cut back.

Capital markets then gradually price governments

out of private borrowing.

This leaves governments' with very few options and the final stage begins when the IMF (and in our case the ECB and the EU) are called in to give 'assistance'.

This assistance obviously doesn't come cheap as the aim is to always to make ordinary people pay.

Hospitals, schools, wages and a raft of social programmes are then slashed as the IMF imposes what is commonly known as 'structural adjustment'.

This basically redirects government policy towards the interests of the international banks and over the next 30-50 years, all 'loans' are repaid (with interest) through the hard work and suffering of ordinary tax payers.

Whole populations are plunged into despair as valuable resources are hijacked and funnelled out of the county.

¹ <http://www.european-council.europa.eu/home-page/highlights/the-fiscal-compact-ready-to-be-signed-%282%29?lang=en>

BOOK:

Dublin's not so rare owl times



A City In Wartime: Dublin 1914-1918 by Padraig Yeates
Gill & Macmillan
€24.99

DUBLIN on the eve of World War One was a city divided by class, religion and politics.

Yeates's book looks at Dublin from the bitter aftermath of the 1913 lockout to Sinn Féin's election victory in 1918, which swept away the redundant Irish Party.

The Easter Rising is central to the book, but its real areas of interest are its portrayal of Dublin prior to the Rising and the economic and social condition of the city.

Yeates also explores why such large numbers of working-class Dubliners joined the British army.

By the end of the war, 25,644 Dubliners had enlisted in the British army; and over 5000 died in the trenches between 1914 and

1918.

Yeates's achievement is to include a rich variety of different narratives and themes; there is much attention devoted to Dublin Corporation meetings and the problems of prostitution and drunkenness as well as a self-appointed Dublin Watch Committee, which was active in censoring what it regarded as morally unsuitable material.

The book traces the un-

easy relationship between the middle-class Irish Volunteers leadership, who offered to assist the police in 'maintaining order' if home rule resulted in civic unrest, and the radical Citizen Army founded by Larkin and Connolly.

Yeates draws attention to the way military recruitment dried up after the Rising, and on the uneasy relationship between Labour and Sinn Féin.

Labour was weakened by the defections of Citizen Army veterans, such as Constance Markievicz and Dr.

Kathleen Lynn, to Sinn Féin, despite their reservations about Sinn Féin's social policy.

Yeates also highlights how the Catholic Church abandoned the Irish Party for Sinn Féin and how this ecclesiastical positioning ensured the conservative nature of the new state.



FILM:

W.E.'s tale of Nazi royals takes tedium to uncharted heights

MADONNA'S new film is cinematically dull and politically dreadful, writes Anindya Bhattacharyya

A ghost story spiced with a romance spiced with a biopic. About a pair of Nazi royals. Directed, written and produced by Madonna. What could possibly go wrong?

Predictably, almost everything. Not least the baffling decision to intercut the historical narrative of Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson with a pointless tale of a modern-day posh New Yorker, also called Wallis. We follow her tedious search for love, advised along the way by the ghost of Mrs Simpson.

The film jumps back and forth confusingly between Historical Wallis and Modern Wallis. The dialogue is ridiculous. The acting is dreadful. And the politics are atrocious.

The Nazi sympathies of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor are at best glossed over and at worst defended. We are told they are Nazis—but only by Modern Wallis's cartoonishly villainous husband.

What the reviews don't prepare you for is how boring the film is. Most scenes consist of rich idiots mixing martinis or fawning over jewellery.

One of the very few socially useful functions performed by the rich is to act as an outlet for our fantasies of glamour. This lot don't even manage that.

The most exciting moment in the film is at a Sotheby's auction where Modern Wallis spends \$10,000 on Nazi Wallis's gloves. Which she later gives back to Ghost

Wallis. No, don't ask.

It's sold as the romance of the century—the king renouncing his kingdom for love—yet it's all so utterly prim and passionless.

Cringeworthy

But every now and then the tedium is punctuated by a scene so cringeworthy it leaves you gasping.

At one point Prince Edward visits a poverty-stricken Welsh mining village that resembles a Hovis advert. The proles doff their caps and politely bemoan their lot. Edward declares that 'something must be done'.

This, apparently, was the real reason he was drummed

doubt the trains are pretty punctual there too.

There are other such moments, such as when Modern Wallis meets Mohammed al-Fayed for a chinwag about the beastly treatment of foreigners who get mixed up with the royals.

But the prize has to go to the party scene where the Duke and Duchess and chums get off their faces on speed. And dance with their funky black supermodel friends. To the Sex Pistols.

No, really. The moment the opening chords of Pretty Vacant drift in through the loudspeakers, your mind cries "no, Madge, don't do it". But she does it. And you're left speechless.

Alas these flashes of inadvertent surrealism hardly make up for the awfulness of the rest of the film.

There has been a bit of a pop cultural turn towards poshos of late. Downton Abbey. The King's Speech. Even Doctor Who has replaced its multiracial council estate with an English village and a Tory time lord. But W.E. makes the rest of the sorry pack look like Brideshead Revisited.

Curiously it left me feeling a bit nostalgic for the culture wars of the 1980s. Roxy Music's Avalon might have been reactionary tripe but at least it served up something that could be called aspirational—an impossible aristocratic grandeur, perhaps.

But who on earth would want to aspire to W.E.? This film is how bourgeois culture ends—not with a bang but a whimper. Time to burn it down.



out of office. Wallis chips in that Germany has got unemployment all sorted. No

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AS RECESSION DESTROYS ORDINARY FAMILIES,

BANKERS' BONUSES CONTINUE TO INCREASE

STRIKE, OCCUPY, RESIST MAKE THE 1% PAY

NOT satisfied with years of champagne swigging and tax payer bailouts, the bonuses of top bankers are set to increase exponentially this year. Bankers at bailed out RBS bank will be handed £500 million in bonuses,

We are expected to be satisfied because 'Fred the Shred' is striped of a knighthood and top banker Stephen Hester has 'declined' his £1million bonus while clutching onto his £1.2 million salary.

Knights of the realm are a throwback to the middle ages.

Sir Fred may have lost his treasured title, but Sir Alan Sugar and countless other ruling class lackeys' still expect ordinary people to bow down to them.

This is an obscene form of imperialist privilege and for the British establishment the whole honours system is a useful way of keeping people 'in their places'.

All of this disgusting nonsense should be banished outright. But for the bankers who are guilty of crimes against humanity, the only title they deserve is criminals.

Fred the Shred (who got his title by slashing jobs) famously attacked staff for putting the wrong biscuits out at a meeting and yet his utter destruction of millions of people's lives is seen to go unpunished.

Like many others he should be imprisoned not put on an almighty pedestal and worshipped with god like status.

During any period this kind of behaviour should not be tolerated.

But it's even worse at a time when RBS associate bank Ulster Bank is axing 350 jobs in the North.

On top of this the Welfare Reform Bill going through parliament will mean 1 in 5 people losing their DLA and the slashing of housing benefit.

While constantly howling about benefit fraud (which amounts to 0.4% of DLA claimants)

The government never promotes investigations into banker fraud and theft.

We need to stamp out the culture of lavish bonuses and banker salaries; their lifestyle is a drain on public resources and an affront to ordinary people.

All this is happening alongside an increasing level of unemployment. We have the Stormont certified public sector job cuts - estimated at 40,000 plus



a rapid increase in private sector job losses.

The conservative government promised an avalanche of private sector jobs to replace those slashed from public services, but the reality is proving to be just the opposite.

To give just one example, The Belfast Telegraph has just announced plans to sack printing staff as part of its shifting of production to Newry where workers have no trade union rights and earn a

fraction of Belfast workers.

This is what happens when we follow the laws of the profit makers.

We also have possible job losses for workers in Barrett's, Priceless shoes and other unannounced redundancies.

The bosses have their redundancies notices. Our weapon has to be resistance.

The fantastic occupations by workers in La Senza showed what to do when cold-blooded bosses attack - resist and

occupy. Before they fought, workers were being kicked out the door with unpaid wages, because they fought they received wages and redundancy. We can fight and win.

The Occupy movement has shown how people can fight the ruthless agenda of the 1%. We need more occupations, but also more strikes.

November 30 was a fantastic display of resistance by millions of working class people.

Inside

Revolution 2012



With meetings on- Occupy, Palestine, Egypt, Revolution, Womens Lib, Ireland,

Page Seven



Primark workers vote for strike action

Page Four

If we are going to beat the cuts and fight the 1% the only way we can do it is on the streets.

NIC-ICTU have said that 30 November was just the start of strikes against the cuts.

People in the North are anxiously awaiting the next round of strikes to stick the nail in the coffin of the Stormont austerity.

We need the next date set, so we can strike back and beat their cuts.