

Socialist Worker

Break from the politics of fear...

NO Household charges Austerity Pact



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TWO thirds of people think their standard of living will drop this year.

One third have already some experience of emigration – either themselves or a family member.

And only 20% think that the IMF and the ‘troika’ have Ireland’s interests’ at heart.

These are the findings of a recent Sunday Independent/Millward Brown Lansdowne opinion poll and they directly contradict the story FG and Labour are trying to spin.

The government claims that the Irish have been rewarded for being the good boys and girls of the EU and that cutbacks in state spending are reviving the Irish economy.

But now the state faces two crucial

tests – and it could fail both of them.

■ **31 March is the final date for registration for the household charge and, so far, less than 10% have registered.**

Even though this number will go up following an extensive propaganda campaign, it looks like nearly one million people will not register.

If that occurs, the household tax will be in deep trouble.

Anti household tax campaigners are also stepping up their protest activity, with major protests scheduled for Donegal on 24 March and an indoor mass rally in Dublin.

The following week thousands are expected to descend on the Fine Gael conference which is being held in Dublin.

Austerity Pact

■ **The government has also been forced into a referendum on the EU austerity pact.**

Behind the scenes, it has pushed the EU elite to give it a concession on the Anglo-Irish promissory notes to help bribe the population.

These are IOUs which the government has committed to pay and they carry an 8% interest fee.

Noonan has been asking for some time to reduce the interest but, so far, the EU leaders will not agree.

To cover their tracks, the government has taken the high moral ground, claiming ‘the Irish people will not be bribed- we will vote for austerity anyway’. But they

know that this will not be acceptable. So their latest tactic is to whip up the politics of fear. Those who don’t pay the household charge will, we are told, face fines of €2,500 and be forced to pay.

If we vote No to the austerity pact, we will be thrown out of the Euro and the EU. We will be denied access to the European Stability Fund and the ATMs will seize up.

Everywhere the message is: don’t think about what is right – just do what you are told.

Yet the government’s scare tactics are built on lies and bullying.

The reality is that it cannot drag a million people before district courts and impose maximum fines on them.

It is a LIE to say that Ireland can be thrown out of the EU or the euro zone.

There is simply no legal provision for doing this.

And it was the government who went along with the provision that ESF money was conditional on accepting the austerity pact.

The reality is that we do not need any help from the IMF or the ECB. These only act as bloodsuckers to ensure that we pay billions to ‘recapitalise’ Irish and European banks. They support us as much as a hangman supports a rope.

It is time to break from the politics of fear and take a different direction. We should say NO to household charges; No to the Austerity pact and YES to cancelling debts that were forced on us by bankers and politicians who act as their puppets.

Tesco tries to intimidate strikers

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

SOME 120 drivers went on strike for 36 hours on Thursday 23 February at Eddie Stobart Haulage company in Santry over poor employment conditions and changes to rosters.

The company is the main distributor for Tesco supermarkets in Ireland.

"Eddie Stobart needs to do something about the health and safety concerns drivers are raising," one worker said.

"What the company don't get is that their drivers have no alternative but to stop work in order to highlight their grievances.

"They are driving the length and breadth of the country and are tired from excessive working.

"The company flew in drivers from England in an attempt to break the action but didn't succeed."

On Friday 24th, Tesco Ireland, served an injunction on Sinn Fein TD, Dessie Ellis, for taking part in the picket.

At a hearing at the High Court that afternoon Mr Ellis said he had been present as an elected representative for Dublin North West constituency in which the depot is located and where a number of Eddie Stobart employees live.

He said that Tesco's injunction against him amounted to "an attack on democracy by a big company."

He described how a man wearing a balaclava was seen taking photos of the picket line in an attempt to intimidate the strikers.

As Socialist Worker goes to press the case is due back before the courts.

All socialist should support any future pickets to help face down scabs and company intimidation.

Workers in Lagan Brick vote for strike action

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

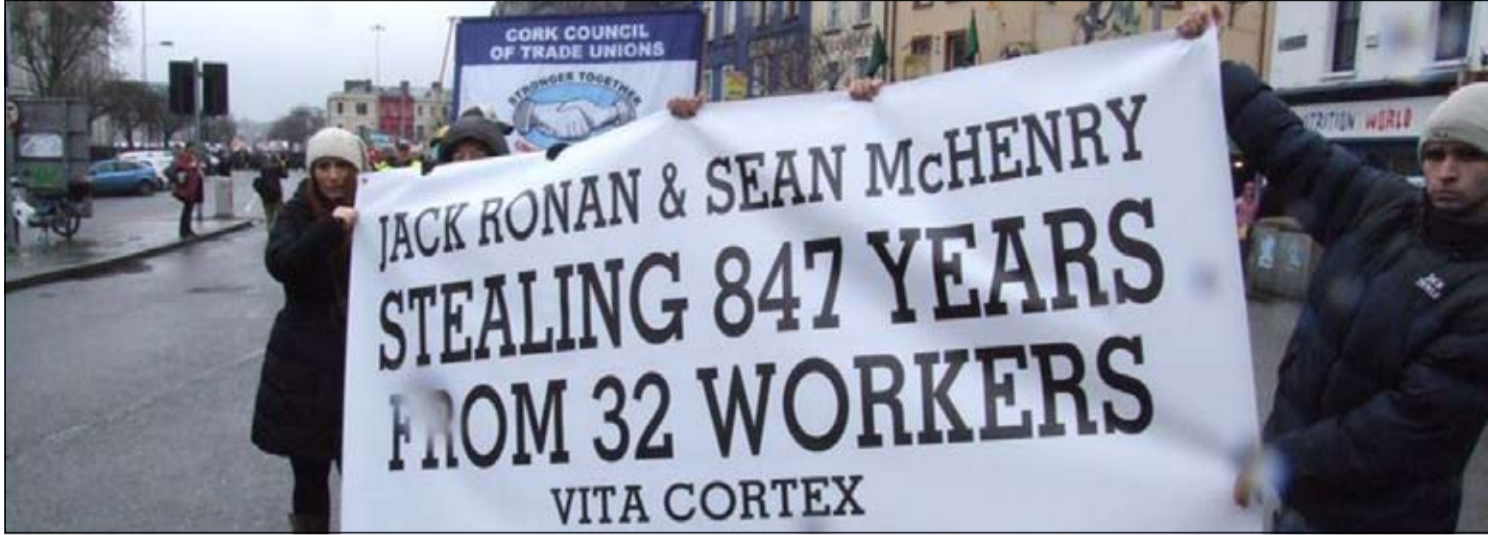
WORKERS in Lagan Brick have voted to take strike action at the company's premises in Kingscourt, Co Cavan.

"In a ballot conducted on Thursday (1st March) the workers voted almost unanimously to take strike action in response to the company's decision to ignore standard industrial dispute resolution procedures.

One worker said, "Our goal is to secure agreed ex-gratia redundancy payments and agreed terms for any future recommencement of operations at the Kingscourt plant."

Seven days notice of strike action was served on Lagan Brick on Friday, 2nd March.

Vita Cortex workers increase resistance



By BRIAN O' BOYLE

THE occupation at Vita Cortex is now into its 13th week.

Workers decided to take control of the factory on 16 December in response to a blatant backstabbing by the company's management.

In the run up to the proposed closure of the plant, the workers had been offered 2.9 weeks redundancy for every year worked in return for full co-operation in winding up operations.

This effectively meant stockpiling materials for customers and helping to dismantle the plants expensive machinery.

All of this was being done in good faith until the owners decided that the

severance pay (€370,000 between 32 workers) was more than they were willing to put up.

Under the old legislation this would only have meant giving 0.9 of a week to loyal workers some of whom had worked at the plant for 30 years.

Instead the management attempted to plead poverty and force the staff to take the statutory minimum.

Upon hearing this workers were understandably furious and after a brief meeting they decided to take matters into their own hands.

Occupation was the chosen tactic and as Jim Power told Socialist Worker, the more militant the workers have become the more they feel like they are achieving their aims

"We acted unanimously to take

control of the factory as the only way to make sure that we were not thrown onto the scrap heap.

"Management wanted us to go quietly. But we realised that our co-operation had been crucial in their strategy, and that if we withdrew it we would have more chance of winning what we wanted.

"Since then we have had support from workers and trade unions locally, a host of celebrities and workers as far away as Australia.

"If our boss can get away with treating us like rubbish then any boss can so we feel like our struggle is important for workers everywhere.

"For the first 60 days the management basically ignored us so we raised the stakes by starting to picket the

homes of key shareholders, the managing director and the owners.

"Within two weeks they weren't ignoring us anymore and they made an offer of half of what we are looking for.

"This was flatly turned down by the union and the workers. We feel that we are only asking for a pittance and we are damn sure that we won't settle for half a pittance."

Despite being in occupation for over 80 days the workers remain upbeat and determined.

They have taken great comfort from the numerous sources of solidarity and as Socialist Worker goes to print they are planning another mass meeting to discuss tactics and move the struggle forward.

1,000 student teachers march for equal pay

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

ONE thousand student teachers from St Pats, TCD, UCD, Marino College, Prebble and Mater Dei marched to the Dail on Wednesday 22 February demanding equal pay for equal work.

Newly qualified teachers this year will lose allowances for extra post-graduate



qualifications they obtain.

It means a difference in salary of €10,000

between a teacher starting this year and someone who started two years ago.

Andrew a student teacher told Socialist Worker, "It's not even just about the pay, but also recognizing that teaching is a valuable and highly skilled job in society and teachers should get a decent wage".

Joe Keating, the

president of the students union in Mater Dei said, "If we stay out and continue to protest we can force the government to do a U-turn just like they did over DEIS schools".

"We need to link all the education cuts campaigns together, small schools, DEIS, teacher's pay to fight this government and defend our education system".

Belfast Telegraph workers in dispute

By JIM LARMOUR.

WORKERS at the Belfast Telegraph have reacted in anger at the news from management that production of the paper is to be switched from the Belfast plant to Newry 40 miles away with the planned loss of 24 day shift production jobs.

The Belfast Telegraph is an icon in Belfast printed at 102 Royal Avenue since its inception 144 years ago.

Despite taking a direct hit from a Nazi shell in WW2 and an IRA car bomb in 'the troubles' the paper has never missed a day's production in Belfast.

The Belfast Tele is a profitable company estimated to have made a profit of around £10 million in 2010, and the move to Newry is based solely on cheaper labour costs to increase profits for the shareholders of Independent News and Media.

The Newry plant was opened in 2007 backed by a £3.5 million government grant under the auspices of bringing employment and securing jobs.

In what has echoes of Wapping in England the Newry workforce work longer hours on a lesser rate than their Belfast colleagues with no overtime provision, sick pay or pension scheme.

The workforce in Belfast however are not prepared to take this outrageous act lying down.

Already a Unite the Union campaign has begun drawing support from employees in Newry with backing from the ICTU and the Belfast Trades Council as well as individual MLA's and the general public gaining a marvelous response.

The workforce will be prepared to up the ante if any compulsory redundancies are pressed ahead with.

A worker from Belfast said "There is no way we are prepared to just roll over and accept this despite the management calling it a done deal. It makes absolutely no sense to print a paper 40 miles away then ship it back to Belfast again to sell, it will see the end of the paper.

"We will fight tooth and nail to defend every last job and the Independent News and Media would be foolish to underestimate the weight of public opinion that is firmly on our side".

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WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

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

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

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

greater political and economic democracy.

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

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

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION
We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

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

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH
We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Cameron government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.
Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

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

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

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

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

Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to
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What Socialists Say



Cancel the bankers' debt – No to the Austerity Pact

IF passed, the EU austerity pact will impose a permanent straightjacket of cutbacks.

Measures to stimulate the economy to avoid recession will be effectively outlawed.

The idea comes from the writings of Frederick Hayek, the founder of neoliberal economics, who argued that 'economic governance' should be sealed off from popular pressure.

The pact states that 'the structural deficit' of government should not rise above 0.5%.

But what is 'a structural deficit'? It is a measure devised by conventional economists, which predicts how much a government should spend when account is taken of the business cycle.

Yet these 'experts' never predicted the biggest slump of all—the Crash of 2008—and most of them disagree on how exactly to measure this structural deficit.

So we will be inserting a piece of mumbo jumbo into the constitution, which only the high priests of the EU Commission can interpret.

The pact also states that if a country's overall stock of debt amounts to more than 60% of its economy, it must cut state spending by 5% a year—regardless of the social consequences.

Ireland's debt level is about to reach 120% of GDP—so there will be a lot of cutting to do. So this means that we face cutbacks for more than a decade.

Even if Irish hospitals were on the brink of collapse because of understaffing, their spending would still be cut.

Governments will also have to submit their budget plans to an unelected EU Commission and will be pressured into harmonising its proposals with their wider guidelines.

One example has already occurred: the EU Commission co-ordinated measures in different countries to raise the pension age this year. Their current target is 'labour activation' policies which threaten social welfare.

Should a country not comply, it can be brought to the European Court of Justice and fined. In the case of Ireland, the fine would amount to €155 million.

These draconian measures are based on a false and distorted analysis of why the global economy crashed in 2008.

In an extraordinary sleight of hand, the global elite parrot the line that the problem was over-spending by governments and states.

The Irish case demonstrates its total falsity because the Irish debt to GDP ratio stood at 25% in 2007—which was way below the 60% rule.

Even the EU Commission and the IMF stated that its 'structural deficit' was in order at the time.

The EU's own figures show that public spending throughout the continent jumped by 20% after the crash. So the 'deficit' is a symptom and not the cause.

The elite, however, have no problem with lying. During the Lisbon Treaty, they promised jobs if people voted Yes—but none arrived.

Even before the current referendum has begun, they are claiming that it is a vote about whether 'we are in or out of the EU'. Yet there is no mechanism to expel countries either from the EU or even the Eurozone. Britain and the Czech Republic have already rejected this treaty and continue to remain members of the EU.

The political establishments of Europe want to provide each other with political cover for the attacks they are mounting on their own people. They want to say that 'it hurts us more than it hurts you—but we are bound by EU rules and we just have to do it'.

The fiscal compact has been described as 'the longest and most boring suicide note in history'

It is a recipe for permanent austerity that can only lead to the long-term decline of Europe.

It is bad enough when one government – such as Ireland's – tries to take the austerity route in the hope that it can export its goods and services to countries which are still growing.

But when a whole continent follows a similar path, the market for goods and services will literally freeze up.

HOUSEHOLD AND SEPTIC CHARGES:

Bring the anger to FG conference



By JOHN LYONS and DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

THE Campaign Against Household and Water Taxes has announced that Saturday 31st March will be the date of its first national protest.

Thousands are expected to gather at the Garden of Remembrance at 1pm to march on Fine Gael's Ard Fheis, taking place in Treasury Holdings' National Convention Centre in Dublin's docklands.

The conference venue is costing taxpayers €750 million a year as the builders—treasury Holdings are in NAMA. It has also just been discovered that Treasury Holding directors Johnny Ronan and Richard Barrett moved €20 million abroad through their company to avoid it being taken by NAMA.

The same weekend will see the passing of the household tax registration deadline with potentially one million people boycotting the new austerity tax.

It is also the weekend the Fine Gael & Labour will hand over €3.1 billion as the annual installment of bailing out Anglo-Irish Bank takes place.

That is €3.1 billion the government won't be able to spend in the next budget, meaning more tax increases and attacks on our living standards as health, education, welfare and pay rates are targeted for yet more cuts.

After four years and five austerity budgets the people have had enough—whilst we've suffered again and again successive Irish governments have paid out billions of euro of our money to speculating bondholders—but no more.

Local campaign groups across the country have marched on and occupied their local city and county council buildings, or have picketed their TDs' clinics.

There is a new spirit of resistance, thousands will mobilise from every corner of the country to converge on Fine Gael to send them the defiant message that "The people Can't Pay, the people Won't Pay".

We need to move the hundreds of thousands of people who are boycotting the registration process into active participation in the campaign.

Vital to the building of the campaign in every area,

and advocated in the pages of *Socialist Worker* from the very beginning, has been the element of protest. Protests give a campaign a visibility and presence in an area; they garner support and generate solidarity in a locality and ultimately provide the people taking to the streets to fight back with a sense of their own power.

This could be seen throughout Ireland on Saturday 25th February as the Campaign Against Household & Water Taxes held a "Day of Action".

Thousands took to the streets, hundreds of protests took place across the entire country.

Seamus O'Brien, campaign organiser in Wexford said, "The Enniscorthy protest gathered over 1,000 people on the streets today. It was a roaring success! We marched through the town and up to Paul Kehoe's office (FG Government Chief Whip). We were told he wasn't there but in fact he was hiding inside!"

"The protest coincided with other protests in Wexford town. A protest was held on the town bridge. A similar protest was held in Gorey. As fate would have it government

Minister Brendan Howlin was lurching in the Riverbank while we were gathering for the action, when he emerged he was booed and his car was briefly surrounded before he drove away. People are very angry and are feeling very betrayed!"

"Earlier that same week on Tuesday 21st February New Ross campaigners against the household tax occupied the Town Hall. People are sick to the teeth of austerity".

Patrick O'Sullivan said, "We are marching for our families, for the future of our children. You must get out and march and let this government know how you feel. I have never marched against a government in my life until last Saturday. "I will march again and again until this issue is resolved. If I knew that this Government were going to bring in these taxes I would not have voted for them."

350 marched on the office of Fine Gael Junior Minister John Perry in Sligo, 800 in Cork, 400 in Limerick, 300 in Galway, 200 in Wicklow, over 400 in Carlow, 250 in Newbridge and over 200 at FG Minister Phil Hogan's office in Kilkenny on the same day.

Nearly 1000 people also protested at various local protests across Dublin.

The day of protests resulted in several hundred people joining the campaign and was the main item on RTE news.

As a result, the campaign's website (<http://nohousehold-tax.org/>) crashed due to the volume of interest generated as did the national hotline (1890 98 98 00)!

The protests have elevated the campaign and provided it with a national presence. The campaign has called for another 'day of protest action' for the weekend of St Patrick's Day. Campaign groups across the country will hold information stalls and protests around the Patrick's Day parades.

The campaign will also hold a major national rally on 24th March in the national boxing stadium in Dublin. Delegations are coming from all campaign groups across the country.

The prospect of thousands of people marching toward Fine Gael's Ard Fheis through the streets of Dublin on 31st March is a powerful one, a scenario that will frighten the government and further embolden the people for the struggles ahead.

The revolt of rural Ireland

As the anger of rural workers grows, Socialist Worker has gone around the country to capture the mood of thousands of people who refuse to accept savage attacks on their way of life.

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

FOR three years people have asked: Why don't Irish people protest? Well that question is now gone.

A revolt is sweeping through rural Ireland. Tens of thousands of people have attended anti-septic tank and household charges meetings. Tens of thousands more have marched to defend their local hospital, their local school or against the new taxes and charges.

Over 2,000 people took part in the Save Our Small Schools Campaign protest march in Sligo on Thursday 23 February. The same number turned up in Castlebar on Saturday 25 February, the same day that thousands protested against the household and septic tank charges – some 1000 in Enniscorthy in Co Wexford alone.

On Wednesday 29 February over 1000 people from across Ireland marched in Dublin against austerity. Thirty six buses came from mainly rural communities, some as far away as north Donegal and Kerry. Socialist Worker spoke to some of those on the march.

PJ from east Galway explained, "People who would normally be of a moderate voice are here and they're here to say enough is enough – no more".

Rose added, "People in rural Ireland were delighted when we got a rural Taoiseach, we thought he would understand. But he doesn't understand. The only way we will get change is by taking the power back".

Septic tank and household tax

Hugo explained why people are so angry, "Rural Ireland is in revolt because of the septic tank charge and the household tax. People are really, really against it. It's just going to get worse".

The government scheme could mean people have to spend up to €15,000 on a new septic tank.

Rose Boyle spoke at the march, "We've waited 40 years for a sewage scheme to be built in Belmullet, 40 years! Well I'm telling Enda Kenny he can wait 40 years for his septic tank charge!

Schools

The Government's Budget decision to slash teacher allocations to small schools is another dagger through the heart of rural Ireland.

There are 1208 small rural schools in Ireland. The Government's value-for-money review of small primary schools is currently being drawn up and is examining the operation of 600 schools with 50 or fewer pupils.

The INTO estimates that up to 250 schools in rural areas will lose at least one teacher over the next three years, starting respectively last September.

This could mean the closure of many schools.

Schools are integral to the viability of communities, especially in the context of increased emigration, increased unemployment, the loss of post offices and a raft of other community hubs.

It will lead to rural depopulation and rural dereliction. We won't just have ghost estates, we will have ghost villages.

A campaign has also been launched to stop cuts to primary school buses in rural areas. It's another example of the attacks on the social infrastructure of rural Ireland.

Tom Byrne, Principal of Partry NS, said,



"Schoolchildren and rural communities are more important than the bondholders of Europe, the €70 million EU presidency bill or the €28 million legal bill for NAMA".

Deirdre Kelly, principal of Cloonacool NS, pointed out that the threat was not just to rural schools. "We are representing all schools, DEIS schools, small schools, middle-sized schools and large schools. We are here to give a strong message to the Minister that the cuts will not be accepted."

Poverty

Ann was on the march in Dublin, "I'm here today because I'm really angry at the govern-

ment. I've no money left, I've no job".

Angela explained, "In rural Ireland there have been huge job losses. There's been a huge increase in the number of suicides because of the pressure people are under.

"They made money lending to us, now they're making money off us again. If this keeps going it'll just be the super-rich and the poor who are left in the country".

Paddy said, "We need to let them know that we're serious about this and we're not going to take it anymore. People can't even cut the bog anymore.

"They're cutting schemes meantime all the bankers are swanning around on big money again; none of them are in jail. I think it's a disgrace".

Emigration

Una highlighted the plight of rural Ireland, "There's no young people left in the country, I've five of my own children gone to London in the last two years.

"I'm against all this austerity stuff – where is the money going – to bondholders, we don't owe them at all, there's no justification for it".

Dermot a county councillor from Galway added, "We see our family members having to emigrate to Canada or Australia, we're the people who never benefited through all the Celtic Tiger years and now we're being lumped with the mess.

"There is a better way to deal with this – tax the rich".

Cordelia from Donegal said, "We want equality for rural Ireland. This government doesn't understand the financial difficulties that rural people face.

"The only solution they are giving us is emigration. We all need to stand together against this government and fight for a better life for all".

A new movement

Denis was on the march, "I think this is the start of a new movement in the country, a movement to put this government out."

Betty added, "This is a people led, pro-action movement, we're not just looking to politicians to do it for us. We're not prepared to put Joe Soap into the poor house while we're paying banker's billions".

Paidi from Connamara helped organise the march,

"This is only a small part of rural Ireland. We will come again. I hope I'll be one of the first ones to go to Mountjoy Jail, where some of the great heroes of Ireland went and died fighting injustice. It's not so long ago that Pearse and Connolly were there. This country has been sold out by past governments as well as this one. We will not pay for the sins of crooked bankers and crooked politicians. We will come out again and again, whether once, twice or a hundred times".

John Duffy from Donegal added, "All these charges are about privatisation, that's where we're heading and I'm totally opposed to it. This movement is gaining momentum all the time. This is just the start".

Dermot said, "We were here a few weeks ago with 500 people we're back today with thousands".

Rose from Belmullet said, "I'm from the Taoiseach's own county. Today is the culmination of months of campaigning, organising and empowering people. Now is the time for rural Ireland to forget about civil war politics. We've been dogged by civil war politics but that's gone now, the old politics is gone. People are leaving that behind and are looking for new politics".

"The power will come from people linking up together".

Rural and urban unite

Thomas said, "We're here protesting about the septic tanks, the charges and the cuts to the schools – it's all connected together. "Everyone has to stand together but the country isn't in as bad a state as the government is letting on. We need the cities and the country to stand together".

Una agreed, "Protesting is the only option that we have left, we need to stand together.

"It's not fair to be saying it's rural against urban Ireland, we're all just the plain people of Ireland, austerity affects us all. We kicked FF out and we got the same again with FG. We don't have proper government".

Hugh, a SIPTU member, was on the march, "Austerity isn't working, more cuts is not the answer.

"Until everyone in the country is standing together and screaming and shouting this government won't listen. We need more leadership from ICTU and the big unions. The unions need to be more pro-active".

Change the system

PJ from Limerick said, "This is a dictatorship, this shower is worse than the shower before them, they're only looking after the bankers and big developers who destroyed the country.

"Enda Kenny says we'll pay all our debts. What planet is he living on? They're not our debts; they're the debts of bankers and speculators".

Tony from Tipperary added, "We don't see any of the bankers and politicians being threatened with jail – that's why we're out here today".

Betty from Donegal said, "I'm in Donegal Action for Cancer Care but we are also part of a wider coalition, Donegal Alliance Against Austerity, that looks at the wider agenda including septic tank and household charges. We will take no more, enough is enough – we are going to change the system".

"People power is the way forward; let's teach them a lesson in Dail Éireann".

■ Rural de-population: percentage of population in small towns and countryside was 46% in 1996, 39% in 2006
■ Growth of urban areas: In 1996 1.9 million people lived in cities by 2006 it was 2.4 million people
■ Only one third

of farms will be economically viable by 2015, 75% will be part time basis only
■ By 2025 the EU estimates that Ireland will have only 10,000 commercial farmers mainly in dairy
■ Only 6% of farmers

have an annual income over €40,000. 48% have income below €6,000 and have to supplement with paid employment
■ 79% of farmers rely on their spouse/children, on off-farm income or social welfare/EU payment to survive

There will be a Unite the Resistance Demonstration at the Labour Party Conference Saturday 14 April, 2pm Eyre Square Galway

Phil Hogan and Dublin City Council try to save incinerator

By KIERAN ALLEN

FINE Gael and Dublin City Council are engaged in manoeuvres to get an incinerator built in Ringsend. This is what lies behind the latest moves to give Coventa extra time to start work on building it.

The project has long been delayed and was on the brink of collapse, but moves have been put in place to rescue a deal between Dublin's city manager and the US multinational company.

In 2004, the elected members of Dublin City Council voted against the incinerator but were overruled by the draconian Waste Management Act which allows a city manager to over-turn democracy.

A deal was eventually struck with Coventa to build an incinerator with the capacity to burn over 600,000 tons, even though the company has a record of safety

abuses in the US.

The council guaranteed to supply 320,000 tons of waste to Coventa each year. At €80 per tonne the company would get €25.6 million per annum for these first 320,000 tonnes. This revenue was more than enough to make a profit for Coventa.

After John Gormley became Minister for the Environment, he sought to undermine this contract. Rather than acting decisively and banning the project on health grounds, he imposed a levy of €120 a tonne for waste going into landfill and incineration.

Meanwhile, local councils in Dublin embarked on a policy of privatising waste collection. They thought they could both privatise waste collection and still order companies into a 'put or pay' system whereby they had to deliver to Coventa's incinerator.

But to their surprise, the waste

companies won a High Court case to render this provision illegal.

At this point Coventa turned to Phil Hogan, who was then the shadow spokesperson for the Fine Gael opposition. Co-incidentally, he was also the chief fund raiser for the party.

Hogan tried to effectively impeach Gormley by making a complaint to the Standard in Public Office body, claiming that he was out of order because he was a TD for the area.

This bizarre charge was thrown out.

Coventa then hired an estate agent, Arthur French, who had raised funds for Fine Gael, as its advisor. By pure co-incidence, he was also a golf partner of Phil Hogan.

Once Hogan came into office, he began to take measures to assist Coventa.

He first withdrew the levy that Gormley had imposed on waste

going to incinerators.

At the same time, the Dublin City Council manager gave Coventa an extension on its contract to enable it to raise funds for the project.

In the coming weeks, Hogan is preparing to change the tendering practice that governs waste companies.

Observers will be watching to see if another carrot is offered to Coventa.

Brid Smith, a People Before Profit Councillor for Dublin, told Socialist Worker:

'The whole think stinks. I was elected to represent the people of Dublin but the city manager refuses to disclose the exact terms of the contract with Coventa. The people of Dublin could be paying this US company for years if we do not supply them with 320,000 tons of waste – and he will not even tell us how much the bill will be.'



Ms Brutal's attack on Social Welfare

By KIERAN ALLEN

"WHEN I came to the hatch at the dole office this week, I was asked 'Are you aware that you can be prosecuted for giving false information'.

"I had to sign my answer on the computer screen. They are trying to intimidate us because we are poor.

"Can you imagine, the Revenue Commissioners standing outside private schools and asking 'tax exiles' the same question" said James.

Joan Burton has mounted a propaganda offensive against social welfare recipients, claiming there is massive fraud and that her Department saved €600 million last year.

But the figure comes from new 'control measures' for dealing with overpayment – not fraud. The Comptroller and Auditor General has shown that fraud has actually declined as a cause of overpayment and that it accounts for 1% of the social welfare budget.

The propaganda was only cover for Burton's new Pathways to Work programme.

Every unemployed person in the country is to be given a date when they should be 'off the live register.'

If anyone fails to make this 'prediction of exit' or PEX date, they will be called to

a 'challenging interview' to explain why.

Those who refuse to 'co-operate' will have their dole cut by €44, or suspended. The scheme will also involve regular 'AA'-style 'motivation meetings' including 'peer support' and 'encouragement.'

The scheme has been dubbed 'Operation Transformation' by officials in Burton's own department in honour of a TV weight loss programme, as it is their belief that 'dependants become flabby and unfit when it comes to finding work.'

Yet a European Commission report has stated that the number of job vacancies in Ireland between April and June 2011 was about 6,000, while the number of jobseekers stood at 300,000. This works out at a rate of 50 jobseekers for every vacancy!

Burton's existing schemes include JobBridge and TUS. JobBridge is a 'work placement' programme launched with the aim of 'enabling unemployed participants (with 3rd level qualifications!) to gain vital work experience' as UNPAID 'interns.'

The 'intern' is given this opportunity to work FOR FREE for 6-9 months for a private sector host company. To pay the costs of going to work for 40 hours a week, the



intern receives €50 on top of their welfare payment from the government, while the host company pays....NOTHING!

The TUS 'work placement' scheme is aimed at the jobless 'without 3rd level qualifications.' The candidate

will work in 'community organisations' part-time, for a €20 top-up on their dole payments. Over 10,000 community employment jobs are being cut and Labour's answer is to replace them with unpaid, slave labour from the TUS scheme.

Failure to take up JobBridge or TUS 'job opportunities' can lead to a reduction or loss of social welfare benefits.

The average hourly rate for a JobBridge intern is just €6.90, well below the national minimum wage, and three

and a half times less than the average industrial wage of €21.80. Some of the companies availing of the JobBridge scheme, which includes: Tesco, Topaz (Shell), Hewlett Packard, and Aer Lingus made combined gross profits of €8 billion last year.

Originally the host company was to have contributed €150 per intern to the new scheme - €100 per intern and €50 to the government. Instead there is full state-subsidising of private enterprise to the tune of €20 million.

Jack O'Connor: Resistance is Greek to me

AT a specially convened meeting of SIPTU organisers Jack O'Connor, SIPTU President, outlined his analysis of the crisis in Greece.

He didn't lay the blame at the vultures in speculating banks, or the tax-dodging Greek elite; instead he laid the blame at the resistance of workers and those who lead them.

Speaking of the PASOK (Labour) government he said, "The Greek Communists have brought down a good socialist minister and a good socialist government."

This is the same government that sacked tens of thousands of public sector workers and slashed people's living standards while letting the rich move

their money out of Greece.

So the crisis in Greece is the fault of those leading resistance - not due to the crisis of capitalism itself.

Warning about any militant response to the cuts and of the influence of socialist ideas here, O'Connor continued, "Due to irresponsible trade unionism they have made the situation worse.

"The problem is that the radicals believe in what they are doing. We have to be careful not to let them do the same here."

A number of other trade union leaders have also expressed similar opinions. Most of the trade union bureaucracy are card carrying members of the Labour Party.

They try to give Labour

cover inside the unions.

From the budget until now the Labour Party has been the target of lots of protests.

The trade union bureaucracy is fighting hard to stop campaigns linking up together and targeting Labour, saying "It would be a lot worse if Labour wasn't in government."

Try telling that to lone

parents or those on social welfare who are being attacked by Joan Burton while the rich get off scot free.

All trade unionists should join the protest at the Labour Party conference this April 14th. Assemble at 2pm in Eyre Sq. to march to NUIG, the conference venue.

—Donal Mac Fhearraigh

Greek resistance from below

As the European elites line up to further punish the Greek people, Socialist Worker continues its analysis of the front line of the European class struggle by bringing heroic tales of resistance from workers and activists on the ground.

By NIKOS LOUDOS
(Greek SWP)

THE so-called 'Second Memorandum' passed through the Greek parliament in the middle of February. The Greek government, the political parties that support it, along with the IMF, the European Central Bank and the European Union decided to slash the minimum wage by 22%, to bring unemployment benefits down to around €350, and to cut around €200 on each pension.

At the same time, they decided to completely abolish the department of public housing and the department of workers' benefits (tourism, culture etc.) These are just a few of the 50 pages of similar measures. The MPs who voted (199 of the 300 in total) had around 2-3 days to look at the measures, discuss, and vote, under the constant blackmail that if they wouldn't vote yes, Greece would go bankrupt.

But, after 2 years of austerity under this kind of blackmail, the people don't buy it anymore. Everybody knows that the so-called Greek financial support will go straight to the bankers, through an escrow account.

The political parties are in disarray after the vote. Opinion polls show that PASOK (Greek Labour Party elected in 2009 with 44%) will get less than 10% in the upcoming election.

The Conservatives that have now joined the coalition government under a 'technocratic banker' saw one in every four MP's voting against the measures and expelled from the party. PASOK has also lost around 30 of its originally 160 elected MP's.

The European Union has even played with the idea of postponing the elections - scheduled for late April - in order to afford the political parties more time to implement austerity.

But, they also know that more anti-democratic measures risk the prospect of a generalised explosion.

Resistance Grows

In the week before the last vote, the unions called 3 days of general strikes.

On Sunday 12 February in the massive demonstrations outside the parliament - and in several other cities - hundreds of thousands of people stood firm despite hordes of riot police trying to disperse them with tear-gas, clubs, arrests and provocations.

The government may have been able to push the measures through the parliament, but they know that several workplaces are becoming bastions of resistance to the implementation of the measures.

Athanasia Barakiti who works for the Department of Public Housing explained why she has been occupying the main building of their Department in the centre of Athens:

"From the middle of the 20th century, working people had gained some rights to housing, culture, entertainment. All these gains are now vanishing. "The government wants to grab the €10 billion that is the property of our department, as well as the €400 million that are on its bank accounts.

"We are the first employees of



'Our demands are the demands of the whole of society against the cuts in our wages, against the layoffs and the Troika's memorandum. Our struggle is a common struggle with all health workers and all workers in general.'
Antonis Sakellaris



the hardcore of the civil service that are being laid off. I think we have been too peaceful. We gave them time to experiment on us, and now they want to take everything. We need a coordination of resistance for all the people. Just this. Each one of us has to fight in their workplace. Not to bring reality back to what it was 5 or 10 years ago, but in order to change radically this reality."

Stavroula Psychogiopoulou who works for the Ministry of Culture explains the grassroots resistance that is emerging in his workplace

"We had a massive general assembly, in which the main discussion was how to go on with strikes. All my colleagues said that we need to pressure our Union Confederation to take the lead and call for more action. We were able to have such a massive assembly because we had already organised assemblies in specific workplaces in the Ministry.

"In my own department, we have also created a coordinating committee, and there are similar attempts at other departments. In the general assembly we decided a strike and to occupy the ministry for one day. But, we also set a weekly

protest every Thursday, blocking main streets in downtown Athens. We demand from the Civil Servants Union Confederation to call for an indefinite general strike, and until then to call escalating strikes".

Socialising healthcare

The cuts in healthcare have been particularly savage and employees from Kilkis Hospital have responded by effectively taking over the running of their hospital in the interests of patients and workers.

Leta Zotaki, president of the Doctors' Union, spoke recently at a meeting organised by the SWP in Salonica:

"In Kilkis Hospital where I work, as well as in all hospitals round the country, we face severe shortages and attacks. In the General Assembly of the hospital's employees, we decided to abstain indefinitely from all regular work.

"We will serve only emergencies, and from these patients we will not collect the obligatory €5 fee. We have to spread the occupations everywhere, to bring down the government and save the public wealth".

This was mirrored by a general statement from the rank and file, which read

"We say that the government is not legitimate anymore. We will not let them shut down the hospital or lay us off. The hospital belongs to the people and to its workers. The general assembly will be the highest body for taking any decision having to do with the employees and with the hospital's function. Representatives will be assigned by the assembly and will speak in its name."

Antonis Sakellaris, who works for the Ministry of Health, spoke of how employees recently staged

an occupation of the main building in order to stop the minister from entering his office:

"In the last general assembly we had a unanimous decision by the Union of Employees for a three-day occupation of the Ministry followed by a new assembly to decide how to go on. In the previous assemblies, the rank-and-file were pushing for more action, but we had the bureaucrats of the union against us. We are fighting for many issues. Our demands are the demands of the whole of society against the cuts in our wages, against the layoffs and the Troika's memorandum. Our struggle is a common struggle with all health workers and all workers in general."

A Workers Media

Alongside heroic resistance by health care workers, workers in media outlets have been at the forefront of resistance. Staff in Eleftherotypia have been striking since late December and have already produced two issues of "Eleftherotypia of the Workers".

Moisis Litsis, a journalist at Eleftherotypia told *Socialist Worker* that

"The indefinite strike has big stakes. We first had to convince all our colleagues to support it, to make them understand that there is no other way for us to save our rights. In Eleftherotypia, we were as reluctant as all other workers to strike for many months, even if we had a specific problem of delayed wages.

"Today, we have understood very well how wrong it was to wait and lose time. If we had started the strike earlier we would be in an even better position. Now we have to pressure the unions to help with the strike, not to step back. There are 3 rea-

sons for our strike. The first is to speak to the public. We know how to create a newspaper and we want to offer it to our readers even if the boss doesn't want this. Second, we want to support our strike action through the revenues. Third, we don't want our creativity to rust. These issues can be a test-drive for something more permanent, for a newspaper that will be produced totally by us, the workers."

Magda Klavdiano (Eleftherotypia) says: "We're gonna face ugly propaganda from the media bosses. It's absolutely logical. But this is our only weapon: strike, strike, strike."

Georgia Mylonaki from Eleftherotypia adds: "The prospect of an indefinite strike is very crucial. The bosses are on an all-out offensive. Our answer has to be on the same scale.

The employees of the TV station ALTER also began broadcasting 'resistance news' until the boss brought down the antennas. Vasilis Tzimtsos, from the station says: "We have been abstaining from work since 10 November.

"The boss had promised that he would pay our delayed wages but he lied. The government provides even more opportunities to the bosses to keep their companies going with unpaid workers.

"The union leaderships were not on our side from the beginning. By taking control of the TV station we were able to force the Journalists Federation to rise up and stand by us."

All of this shows that despite the savage attacks the Greek people are standing firm.

Progressive people all over Europe are the brothers and sisters of the Greek resistance and they will help it onwards until victory.

International News

by JUDITH ORR

THE Palestinian resistance organisation Hamas publically renounced the Syrian regime on Friday of last week. Its public break with its one time ally president Bashar al Assad sent an important message.

Any illusions that the Syrian regime represents a force against imperialism should surely now be shattered.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh spoke to thousands in the al-Azhar mosque in Cairo. He declared, "I salute all the nations of the Arab Spring and I salute the heroic people of Syria who are striving for freedom, democracy, and reform."

Yet the history of the regime being perceived as a friend of the Palestinians and of Lebanon's Hezbollah movement has disorientated some on the left and in the anti-war movement.

So although open defence of the Assad regime is rare, arguments have come up about the nature of the Syrian regime and of the struggle against it.

When Tunisian leader Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak fell, things were simpler. No one had illusions in these brutal allies of the West who used a massive security apparatus to control their populations.

But when the regimes being challenged from below had at times opposed the West and had more contradictory alliances, the arguments became more complicated.

Backing

The Western powers are now fully engaged in backing sections of the Syrian opposition as some call for international help to stop the horrific bombardment of the city of Homs.

For some this gives credence to the view that the Syrian revolt is a tool of imperialism or even a counter-revolution.

It is certainly sickening to see Hillary Clinton sitting alongside a crown prince of Saudi Arabia at a 'Friends of Syria' summit in Tunis to discuss supporting the revolt.

This is the same Saudi Arabia that, with US backing, has helped crush the democracy protests in Bahrain.

The US wants to regain a foothold in the region.

But this does not mean that the Syrian revolution can just be reduced to being the imperialists' puppet.

Tens of thousands have taken to the streets over the past 11 months and many thousands have lost their lives.

That some now call for help from sworn enemies in the West is a reflection of their desperate situation—not a desire for foreign domination.

Of course the opposition is not a single political organisation. Some parts, particularly the Syrian National Council, are keen to do deals with Western powers.

But those targeted in Homs and other areas of opposition are fighting a life and death struggle for freedom from dictatorship.

The first demonstrators had hopes of peaceful change. Initial slogans called for reforms, not the downfall of the regime. But these hopes were thwarted and the regime dug in.

Instead of reforms the protestors suffered violent repression. The move-



Syrian uprising strengthens anti-imperialism

ment grew more militant and the calls for the downfall of the regime became dominant.

This struggle was inspired by the revolts in Tunisia and Egypt. It has to be seen as part of the great wave of struggle that continues to transform the region.

Regimes that dominated for decades have fallen. Ben Ali fled, Mubarak is in prison and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi is dead. Yemen's dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh, presumably concerned at the fate that might await him, has left the country, supposedly for medical treatment.

The impact on the world political map of imperialist alliances is still unfolding.

The West's intervention in Libya, and now Syria, shows that Western rulers are worried about their ability to shape future events in the region.

These bombers of Iraq and Afghanistan are not motivated by any concern for those dying under a rain of artillery in Homs or anywhere else.

But the only way they can succeed in intervening is to portray it as a humanitarian mission. This is how they won the political argument to enable them to intervene in Libya.

Mission

Socialist Worker argued then that, far from this being a humanitarian mission, the West wanted to hijack a genuine revolt in Libya that could lead to a regime resistant to the West's demands.

Now they want to do the same in Syria.

Libya was never essential to their strategy. But it was the best opportunity to get back in the game.

The West's most important allies are the Saudis, and they are collaborating to use the genuine fear of a massacre in Syria to hijack another popular revolt.

This is why Socialist Worker argues that the opposition to imperialist intervention must always be linked to the slogan

'victory to the Arab revolutions'.

The revolutions are the real anti-imperialist force across the region. Millions of ordinary people have shown their courage and determination to grasp the first real opportunity to shape their own futures for decades.

These struggles from below offer the potential to open a new era where people in the region can live free from both the domination of Western powers and home grown dictators.

THE cornered Syrian regime is lashing out viciously against pressure at home and from abroad to step down.

The resistance in the country shows no signs of breaking, despite relentless bombing of Homs, the city at the



centre of the revolt.

Neighbourhoods that have joined the resistance in Hama and Damascus have also suffered heavy raids and bombing.

The persistence of Bashar al-Assad's regime has triggered a split within the Western-friendly Syrian National Council.

Some 20 of its 270 members have left.

They say the group's failure to back armed resistance in the country is a mistake.

Meanwhile Western powers are planning to impose more sanctions against Syria.

Letters to the Editor

Rights denied to women

The United Left Alliance (ULA) has brought forward the Medical Treatment Bill 2012 (Termination of Pregnancy in Case of Risk to Life of Pregnant Woman) in line with the constitution and so is not open to challenge.

The bill has been moved in order to provide a legislative basis for the legal termination of a pregnancy in the very limited circumstances where such treatment is deemed necessary to prevent a woman's death, including the threat of suicide.

This was the outcome of the Supreme Court judgement in Attorney General versus 'X' in 1992.

The most basic level of reproductive rights is still being denied to women in Ireland.

Twenty years on, despite women having the right to an abortion in Ireland in limited circumstances, the State has failed to give legislative effect to the Supreme Court ruling.

It's time for change - the majority of people fighting against legislation have not had the experiences of the women who need it.

Over 60 organisations and individuals - including doctors,

TDs, trade unions and human rights bodies, have called for immediate legislation in line with the 'X' case. Out of 47 European countries, 44 are in line with International best practice and provide for abortion to protect women's health.

Legislation to make abortion legal where there is a 'real and substantial risk to the life' of the pregnant woman will be voted on 9 April. If passed, it will represent an historic step forward.

Liam O'Grady,
PRO, United Left Alliance,
Galway.
087 2594047

Asylum seekers denied refuge

Your article in the last edition of Socialist Worker fully exposes the horror of the Direct Provision system for asylum seekers.

Currently there are over 6,000 people, seeking asylum here, housed in 44 centres scattered around the country, in conditions similar to those in Hatch Hall.

Holding people in such conditions and denying them basic human rights cannot be explained without reference to the state's deportation policy. Ireland has the worst record

in the EU of granting refugee status to asylum seekers. Less than 2% of applicants are successful, even after appealing the initial rejection. Almost all of those refused are eventually given deportation orders.

The Direct Provision system is an integral part of the deportation process for two reasons.

1. Direct Provision results in the majority of asylum seekers being housed in centres controlled by private security companies. This makes the job of the Garda National Immigration Bureau easier when they carry out pre-dawn raids in advance of mass

deportations.

2. By not allowing asylum seekers to live in normal accommodation, it makes it more difficult to build links with the local community. This results in little opposition to threatened deportations. Asylum seekers are isolated with virtually no solidarity from the local communities.

The Direct Provision system will continue as long as the state keeps deporting people. Only a mass campaign against deportation will put an end to the conditions exposed by your article

Joe Moore,
Cork Anti Racism Network.

Socialist Worker

WE WON'T WORK FOR FREE

STORMONT: SCRAP THE WORKFARE PROGRAMMES!

ACTIVISTS across Britain have exposed the brutal exploitation at the heart of the Con-Dem coalitions “workfare” programmes.

Companies such as Tesco’s, McDonalds and TK Maxx have alongside the government been involved in a programme of excessive abuse.

At its heart the scheme forces unemployed people to work for free—usually stacking shelves for huge profitable multinational corporations.

Due to protests and huge public anger, Tesco’s—one of the main culprits, were forced to pull out of the work programme, with others following.

Millions are furious that companies making record profits can force the unemployed to work for free.

The Government tries to paint these workfare schemes as “voluntary” but the truth is benefit claimants can have their jobseekers scrapped if they don’t take the job.

Bankers and politicians don’t work for free, so why should they expect us?

It’s a disgusting agenda which tries to attack victims of the recession whilst letting the people who caused it off scot free.

It’s not just the Tories and Lib Dems who



are engaged in pushing the Workfare scheme so are the politicians in Stormont.

Parties in the NI Assembly enthusiastically support the Workfare scheme in the North.

“Steps to Work” was introduced by the Stormont Assembly in September 2008 and

forces the unemployed or “economically inactive” to work and give their labour for 12 weeks to a company or face losing their welfare entitlements.

The average person finishes a Steps to Work programme with only their dole in their hand but owed over £2,000 for the work

completed.

Just as the Tories are pushing people to work for big companies for nothing, so are the parties in Stormont.

The whole agenda of the SF & DUP is to bend over backwards for private companies—thinking they have a miraculous cure for the economic crisis.

For anyone in doubt about who Stormont serves, just at look how they championed the development of the Bushmills golf course next to the scenic Giant’s Causeway.

All parties were behind a huge golf development on this landmark natural beauty spot.

When the rich want a golf course—Stormont will be there to push their interests.

However when public sector workers are facing job cuts or unemployed workers are being exploited by huge corporations—Stormont politicians say their hands are tied.

Since Stormont introduced steps to work, it’s its who can abolish it.

We have to link the demand of real jobs for real wages with the public sector strike on March 28th and the private sector fights in Primark and Belfast Telegraph.

This is the best to fight the attacks from Stormont and the bosses.