

Socialist Worker

Water Charges:

WE ARE NOT PAYING!

Over 700,000 households, nearly half the households in the state, have not registered with Irish Water despite numerous warnings, urgings and 'deadlines'.

This means that hundreds of thousands, probably well more than a million, will refuse to pay when the bills come in April. Among them will be:

The Artist



Robert Ballagh, Ireland's leading radical artist, who says "I'm not paying on principle. Irish Water are incompetent bullies"

The Rap Artist



Temper-Mental MissElayncous, [Elayne Harrington], the Finglas rap artist who says, "Do not bend. Get up off your knees Ireland!"

The Councillor



Cllr Brid Smith of People Before Profit who says, "We need non-payment and mass people power on the streets to beat the charges and bring down the government".

The Rugby Player



Trevor Hogan, former Ireland international, who says "It's important to stop the demonisation of the people taking a stand against the water charges. Water should be paid for through progressive general taxation, not a flat tax which hits the poor hardest."

The Trade Unionist



Jimmy Kelly, Regional Secretary of Unite the Union who says (in a personal capacity) "The five unions working with the Left and the community organisations can become the unstoppable force that forces back austerity."

The Singer



Declan O'Rourke, one of Ireland's leading singer-song writers, who says, "Without a referendum water charges are unconstitutional".

The Feminist



Ailbhe Smyth, feminist and marriage equality campaigner, who says, "Water charges must be beaten. They are the key to defeating the government"

The Grandmother Activist



Patty Shields, campaigner from Drimnagh, grandmother to a family of activists, who says "Water is a human right! And I'm not paying for it!"

The TD



Clare Daly, United Left TD and pro-choice campaigner, who says "I will not be paying as I have paid already. That the government used that money to pay the debts of bankers and bondholders is not my responsibility".

The mass arrests of anti-water charges protestors in Tallaght and the vicious prison sentences handed out to the Edenmore 5 show how desperate the government is to demonise and break this great people's revolt .

[For more see page 6]

But if people stand firm and refuse to pay the water charges will

be unworkable.

At the same time these attacks make it vital that the movement keeps on the streets.

We need the biggest possible turnout for the National Right2Water demonstration on 21 March to show that the movement remains defiant and to keep up moral for the mass boycott.

ALL OUT 21 MARCH!

Inside other pages:

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Kieran Allen on Syriza's Deal on the credit extension

See Page 5 for:



Eamonn McCann on Sinn Féin's neo-liberalism

Did You Know?

The number of families made homeless last year doubled last year. There were 331 families in emergency accommodation, including 726 children.

One family a day is now becoming homeless in Dublin with 90% of them homeless for the first time.

No rent controls or social housing are destroying families.

According to recent CSO statistics, more than 1.4 million people are living in enforced poverty in Ireland, a rate that's doubled since before the crash.

This includes one in five workers and 400,000 children. A generation of workers and youngsters forced to suffer multiple deprivation to pay off the debts of the bankers.

Due to health cuts, the number of patients on trolleys awaiting a bed in hospital has hit a record high of 601 across the country on a single day last month.

Spokesman for hospital emergency consultants, Fergal Hickey, said that up to 350 patients are dying every year as a result of risks posed by chronic overcrowding in public hospitals.

Austerity kills the old and the sick.

GuardEx: Irish Water's sinister fringe

Freddie Trevaskis Hoskin

As protests against the installation of water meters continue around the country Irish Water are finding it more and more difficult to impose their will against the will of the people. In Stonybatte and likely elsewhere they have started to resort to more drastic means and have hired private security company GuardEx.

GuardEx employees have appeared in masks and balaclavas, filming residents and protesters in an apparent attempt at intimidation.

One protester filmed these activities. In the video none of these "security guards" wear identification badges.

This is illegal and an attempt to further muddy the waters and increase the intimidation posed by masked men filming the community.

At least one resident in Stonybatte has been assaulted by people suspected to be GuardEx employees.

Paul Murphy TD brought up in the Dail that Mick Mooney was pinned up against a wall by a group of security guards, shouted at and told 'I'll get you. You don't know who you're messing with'.

Murphy also attests someone else was told "We followed you home, we know where you live, you don't know who you're dealing with".

These scare tactics are despicable and nothing more than attempt to frighten ordinary people away from legitimate protest.

So who are GuardEx? To say the least, it's difficult to find out. They seem to have taken most of their details off the internet but some information can be found by using various archive sites.

They were set up in 2011 and



are owned by Eamonn Gibney. Gibney is a former special forces member and this seems to come through in a lot of GuardEx material, there is almost a fetish for the militaristic.

They claim to have "experience of working in both a military and civilian setting"

Military style

Their guards are also equipped with body armour, military style boots and military style uniform.

Looking at the public information on facebook of GuardEx employees who were not covering their faces in Stonybatte, shows a trend of history in the military.

The fact Irish Water have hire this pseudo-military outfit certainly shows one thing: the protests are working and they are afraid that we will win.

Unsurprisingly, GuardEx are a viciously right wing company. A brief look at their official twitter feed shows a hugely anti-union

ideology, calling for privatisation of train services, condemning a number of strikes and calling for increased military spending.

Gibney in his other business "Hr Dept" reflects these sentiments in practice. He is in the business of helping bosses "negotiate" with unions and implement redundancies.

It is clear then that ideology is at play here, that this is not merely the recruiting of intimidating security forces but the politically motivated recruiting of such.

The use of neo-liberal militaristic thugs by IW is appalling but predictable.

These kinds of people will always stick together in order to maintain their stranglehold on our society; to take it back we must do the same.

These anti-union, anti-protester businessmen realise the links between struggles and try to break them; we must make those links stronger.

Community Development faces massive attack

Lorraine McMahon

Between 2008 and 2014 successive governments have cut funding for community development by 43%. Community development programmes are designed to counter poverty and social exclusion.

By their nature they are aimed at the marginalised and vulnerable. So these cuts have been an attack on the most disadvantaged people in society, including especially disadvantaged children.

Now to make matters worse the government is turning community development into a marketable commodity and selling it off to private bidders in 31 lots for between €31 and €40 million.

The government has admitted that voluntary and community organisations are essential for the fairness of society and it has

government announced "winning bidders" for SICAP (Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme).

This privatisation will effectively wipe-out the community sector in Dublin's Inner City and devastate it across the country, thus further excluding those suffering most from poverty and inequality.

Shamefully this is being done under a cloud of secrecy because Minister Alan Kelly claims the decision to put the community sector out to tender was based on legal advice from the Attorney General but the text of that legal advice is never going to be made public.

This is particularly outrageous because the relevant European Directive on procurement provides a clear legal basis NOT to privatise the community sector.

Cllr Brid Smith of People Before Profit has challenged



claimed to be committed to maintaining a vibrant community sector. Their deeds prove otherwise.

The organisations in the frontline of the struggle against poverty and social exclusion have been systematically dismantled with cuts to women's groups of 48.7%, to drugs projects of 37% and to special youth initiatives of 20%.

On the 18 February the

Minister Kelly over this whole process. She says:

"This secret destruction of a whole sector at the stroke of a pen is completely unacceptable.

"I demand that the Minister intervenes immediately to ensure the strong, innovative, dynamic and critical needs based Community Development infrastructure in Dublin's Inner City remains viable and adequately resourced"

The real story of youth unemployment

Shay L'Estrange

In a paper entitled "Ten measures the Department of Social Protection is taking to speed up progress on employment front and help jobseekers return to work" the government takes credit for tackling youth unemployment.

In this paper Joan Burton claims to have reduced the crisis in youth unemployment bringing it down to a still shockingly high 23%.

However on closer inspection everything is not as positive as it may first appear -that's if 23% unemployment can be considered positive!

Burton bases her claims on a very selective reading of the youth unemployment figures released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) for the third

quarter of 2014. However on closer inspection the CSO figures tell a different story.

Although the rate of youth unemployment has declined by 3.2%, from 26.5% in quarter 3 2013 to 23.2% in quarter 3 2014 this is seriously misleading.

The full picture can only be understood when the unemployment figures are considered in conjunction with employment figures.

Under normal circumstances one would expect to find a drop in the unemployment figures to be accompanied by a rise in employment.

However when the rate of employment for young people between the age of 15 and 24 is examined it is found that there is also a decline in employment of .3% dropping from 31.6%

in quarter 3 2013 to 30.9% in quarter 3 2014.

What is evident from this wider look at the employment figures is that the drop in

unemployment has little to do with job creation, as the government would have us believe.

Instead the CSO figures



describe how the drop in the unemployment figures is more to do with net migration and the age old Irish answer to joblessness - the boat and its modern equivalent the plane.

As the Irish government faces into this worsening youth unemployment crisis its response is limited to a youth guarantee or pathways to work that offers young unemployed people the choice of a place in education/training or an offer of work which includes internships through JobBridge.

But the money allocated by the government for training and education is nowhere near the amount required.

Nation Youth Council Ireland calculate that the cost of offering training or education would be approximately €275 million but the amount

allocated to the program is only €14 million for 2014. At this rate it would take almost twenty years for everyone to be catered for.

In addition the internships offered by JobBridge have been exposed again and again as exploitative and little more than an employer's charter. This view of internships in Ireland is supported by no less a conservative organisation than the OECD who in a 2012 stated that

"Given the profile of the participants, the scheme seems to have functioned more as an employer incentive scheme, which subsidises the cost of employment than as a genuine internship program aimed at facilitating the transition of inexperienced young workers to the labour

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WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.

A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

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

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

greater political and economic democracy.

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

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

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

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

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Join the Socialists

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GREECE: SYRIZA SHOULD CANCEL THE DEBT - NOT ITS PROMISES

Kieran Allen

The Greek government has been subjected to economic terrorism by the EU. Without the slightest pretence of respecting democracy, the European Central Bank and the German government led the way in tightening the screws on Greece.

They prepared their steps carefully. First, they insisted that Greek government bonds could not be considered a reliable reserve fund for their banks.

This made these banks totally dependent on 'emergency liquidity funding' from the ECB which could literally be switched off at any minute.

Then, despite every attempt by the Greek Finance Minister, Yanis Varoufakis, to be reasonable, the German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble told him to 'submit a three sentence letter' to commit to honouring the existing Troika programme before they could get any extension on paying back.

In other words, to submit a note for unconditional surrender.

The pressure on Greece had nothing to do with 'economic realism'.

The Greek economy has huge levels of debt and it is impossible to meet creditors' demands.

A broken economy with unemployment running at 25% simply cannot pay off interest rates of €9 billion a year AND show a 'primary surplus' of 4%.

The pressure on Greece is political. The EU elite want to break the anti-austerity movement before it reaches Spain and Ireland.

This is also why the Irish minion, Michael Noonan, quietly cheered on Schäuble as he stuck the boot into Greece.



Greek finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, after emergency meeting with European Union finance ministers in Brussels. Ministers agreed deal to extend the Greek bailout for four months.

Appeasement

The first sign of appeasement came when Syriza proposed a New Democracy right winger for the post of President.

Prokopis Pavlopoulos was a former justice minister who stood over the police murder of a 15 year student, Alexandros Grigoriadis, in 2008. One Syriza MP abstained from the vote.

Then, the Greek government reached an agreement with EU leaders to get a four month extension of credit in return

for a €7.2 billion loan.

It agreed to complete the current programme and if it wishes to take any other economic measures, it must first get the agreement of its creditors.

All of this means that the EU bureaucracy and the ECB get a veto over its economic policies.

This is a major climb down and it is made worse by the statement from the Syriza, leader, Tsipras, that 'We proved that Europe stands for mutually beneficial com-

promises – not doling out punishments'.

It would be more correct to say that our experience shows that the EU stands for economic terrorism.

All of this casts doubt on many of the commitments that Syriza made as part of its Thessalonika programme.

The increase in the minimum wage will only occur gradually and though negotiations with the employers.

The governments will no longer proceed to stop the extension of the privatisation of

the port of Piraeus – and start its reversal.

No plans have been announced to implement the promise to immediately invest €4 billion in public services

Tens of thousands of sacked public sector employees may not be re-employed.

There are currently no public plans to tax the ship owners and instead mild measures are to be introduced to allow small business pay back taxes in instalments.

The Syriza is still hoping to carry through its humanitarian programme to relieve absolute poverty. It try to use the 'flexibility' clauses in the Troika agreement to do this – but even here there is a veto.

Lessons for Ireland

There are limits to what a left government can achieve because of the nature of the capitalist state. But even within those limits the weakness of Syriza has been revealed.

From the very start it treated the EU as 'partners'.

It kept insisting that its 'partners' would help the Greek people. It never talked about a plan B, if negotiations failed.

It put continued participation in EU institutions ahead of the need to take decisive measures to stop austerity.

There are important lessons here for Ireland. If we want to stop paying off the bankers' debt, a left government would have to take unilateral action.

It can certainly talk to the EU – but only if it carries a 'big stick'. It has to be willing to unilaterally cancel the debt – and then deal with the economic terrorism that follows.

That will mean encouraging workers to take action that start the re-distribution of resources so that its economy is not dependent on credit.

Ukraine: When peace means war

Michael Wallace

Compared to the question of ISIS or Al Qaeda or Charlie Hebdo or anything to do with Muslims and the war on terror, the war in the Ukraine has not received huge media attention.

But this should not lead us to underestimate the seriousness of the situation.

Armed conflict has raged over eastern Ukraine since May 2014. Over 5,000 have been killed and more than 18,000 injured. The UN says over a million people have been displaced. Intensive shelling of residential areas has inflicted major damage, and many that remain have little access to food, water or electricity.

For the Ukrainian people it is a nightmare. And tragically that nightmare looks set to continue. It also has huge implications for relations between Europe and Russia, West and East.

In mid-February a ceasefire was negotiated between Hollande and Merkel for France and Germany and Putin for Russia. It was the latest of many ceasefires and within a few days that ceasefire had broken down like all the ceasefires before it and Government forces were being driven out of the key town of Debaltsevo.

What makes this conflict so difficult to resolve is that it is a proxy war between two great powers – the US and its NATO allies versus Russia – each unable



to decisively defeat the other. Moreover, while neither side can clinch victory they can carry on fighting with the price being paid, not by Americans or Russians but by the people of the Ukraine.

At its heart what we have is a struggle between rival imperialist powers each trying to keep the Ukraine in its own sphere of influence. But each side has created forces on the ground who

cannot easily be controlled but who cannot simply be disowned. For these proxy forces any ceasefire negotiated at the top becomes a reason to try to seize as much territory as possible before the ceasefire sets in, i.e. to violate the ceasefire. Peace means war.

For socialists our first task in this situation is to expose and oppose the imperialist machinations of 'our own' side

which, despite Ireland's supposed neutrality, is clearly the US and NATO.

The US and its European allies present themselves as defenders of the Ukraine whose integrity is threatened by foreign, i.e. Russian, intervention. In reality they have intervened and continue to intervene massively in the Ukraine so as to create a cordon of pro-western regimes

round Russia's borders. And they don't care how many Ukrainian or other lives they sacrifice in the process. Unfortunately Putin is equally ruthless and self-interested.

The second task of socialists is to argue for peace and international working class unity,

now matter how distant the prospect may seem at present. Lasting peace in the country will only be secured when the ordinary people of the Ukraine turn against their respective oligarchs and their imperialist backers and unite in a common struggle for a better life and society.

#socialism 1.01

John Molyneux

What's the problem?

“The problem in Ireland is that the politicians are out of touch with the people. They just don't care!”

“The problem in Ireland is that the politicians are all just in it for themselves. They're all crooks and thieves.”

“The problem in Ireland is that the country is being run by a bunch of traitors.”

These and similar sentiments can be heard in almost any gathering of working class people in Ireland today. This is an expression of people's rage at the way they have been made to pay for the mistakes and crimes of the bankers and the 1%.

It combines with a deep sense of betrayal by the politicians, especially the Labour politicians, who promised change then just delivered more of the same.

It is a huge step forward from the naïve and widespread belief that you could rely on your local TD to sort things out for you.

At the same time it doesn't really get to the heart of the problem. There are two ways in which this popular way of looking at things doesn't go far enough.

First of all it suggests that the problem is peculiarly an Irish one as if things were very different in other countries.

In fact austerity is an international response by the establishment to a global economic crisis. The poor are being sacrificed for the bankers and rich of all countries. Just look

at Greece or Spain or the USA or Britain.

The second weakness is that it focuses too exclusively on politicians. Most politicians are certainly part of the problem, but they are not the root of it.

If politicians are bought or sell out who is it who buys them or gets them to betray? Obviously those like Denis O'Brien or Dermot Desmond for whom a TD's salary is small change. If Ryan Tubridy and Joe Duffy toe the establishment line, who pulls their strings?

Cabinet ministers, politicians, police commissioners and news paper editors all wield a certain amount of power. But in the final analysis you can't eat politics, newspapers or garda truncheons.

In the final analysis it's those who control the production and wealth of society who really rule it. And the heart of the problem in Ireland and every other country at the moment is that production is owned and controlled by a very small minority and is organised for the profit of that minority, not the needs of the majority of the people.

Capitalism

It is because of this economic system, the system of capitalism, that inequality keeps rising across the world to the point where 358 billionaires own as much wealth as half the world's population.

It is because of the

tyranny of profit that banks get bailed out while we get sold out and that bondholders are not burned and PAYE workers have their wages cut.

The people who own and control wealth are not just a series of individuals, they form a distinct social class – the capitalist class. Economically the capitalists compete with one another but they compete to make profits and so they have common interest in protecting a system that enables them to extract profits from our labour.

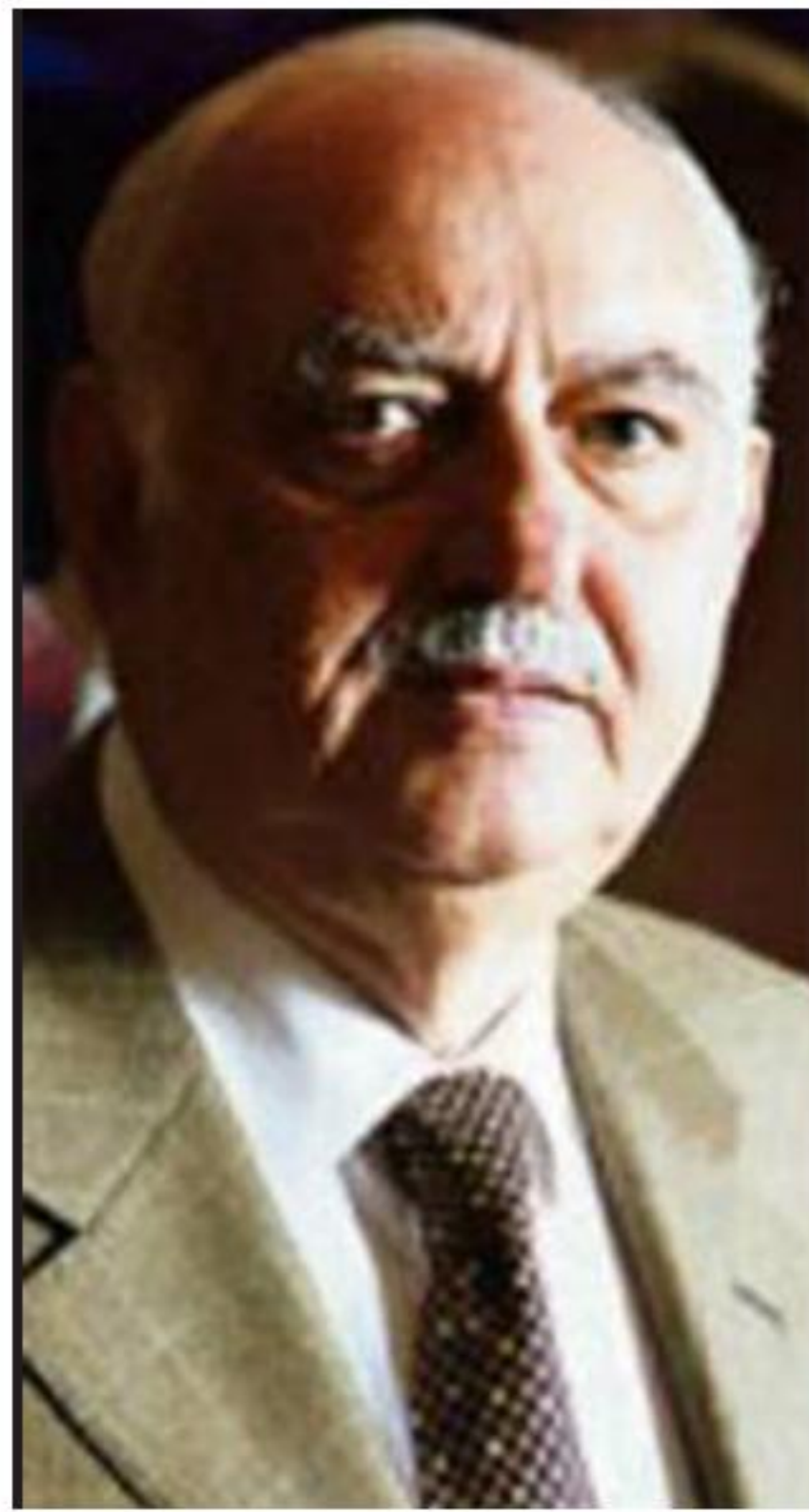
They are well of this and, in Ireland and every other country they have created institutions which maintain their power: their political parties, armed forces, police, courts, prisons and so on.

And other institutions – the media, the education system and often the churches – to justify this state of affairs and tell it is the natural order of things.

This is why Seanie Fitzpatrick, Bertie Aherne, and Michael 'Fingers' Fingleton walk free while shop lifters or burglars go to jail, and why bankers are treated with kid gloves while water tax protestors are hauled into garda stations at 7am and dispatched to Mountjoy.

That is the real problem in Ireland and in the world and that's why to deal with it we need more than some decent politicians, though that helps, but a mass revolution to take economic and political power out of the hands of the capitalists.

Can we tax Ireland's Gr



Ireland's richest - Pollonji Mistry, Hilary Weston and Denis O'Brien

The amount of wealth owned by Ireland's super rich is so vast that it's very difficult for ordinary people struggling to make ends meet to get their heads round the figures. If you are just getting by on 20,000 a year someone earning 150,000 looks pretty rich but they are in the ha'penny place compared to the really wealthy.

Let's take three examples. Top of the list is Pollonji Mistry, an Indian businessman based in Mumbai who has Irish citizenship through his wife.

Mistry's fortune comes in at €9.36 billion.

Next comes Hilary Weston, of the Weston family who own Brown Thomas and much else besides, with €8.97 billion. Followed by Denis O'Brien, of Irish Water fame, with €4.643 billion.

Frugal

Say you were a bus driver on about €33,000 a year or a school teacher on maybe €45,000 it would take you it would take the bus driver 140,000 years and the teacher 103,000 years to earn that much and that's on the assumption they lived on air and paid no taxes.

Last year Denis O'Brien increased his fortune by €580 million. If our school teacher was exceptionally frugal and saved €5000 a year, they would save O'Brien's 2014 increase in 180,000 years.

In short the super rich are unimaginably wealthy compared to the overwhelming majority of people in society.

Getting Richer

Not only are they super rich already they are getting even richer. In the years of austerity when the majority of people were being hammered with wage cuts, job losses and extra charges, the fortunes of the rich went through the roof.

In the last year alone Pollonji Mistry added €1.67 billion to his already vast pile.

In the same period Hilary Weston's fortune rose by €100 million, Michael O'Leary's by €95 million and Dermot Desmond's by €50 million.

There were exceptions to this – eg Tony O'Reilly and Michael Smurfit have both lost a lot of money – but a big increase in wealth was the general pattern.

These exceptions are important because the fact that it is possible even for the super-rich to lose a great deal of their wealth explains why, no matter how much they have they are still greedy for more.

They are all in competition with one another and with rival companies coming up from below.

In order not to lose out they all have to forge ahead and strive to make as much profit as possible. It's not really about billionaires wanting ever more houses and cars for themselves – they can already afford all the luxuries that

money can buy. It is that huge profits equal economic and political power and enable them to see off their rivals in the rat race that is capitalist competition. This is why the rich always have and always will be against paying more taxes.

But, unless we tax them, these immensely wealthy people will simply go on getting richer and richer at our expense and economic inequality, the gap between rich and poor, will increase to ever more obscene proportions.

The Case in Favour

The moral, social and political case in favour of taxing the rich is overwhelming. It goes completely against any sense of natural justice that, when children are going hungry to school, when young people are being driven to emigrate, when poverty and deprivation are widespread and even those on middle incomes are finding it hard to cope, the super rich – who don't need it – are accumulating more and more wealth.

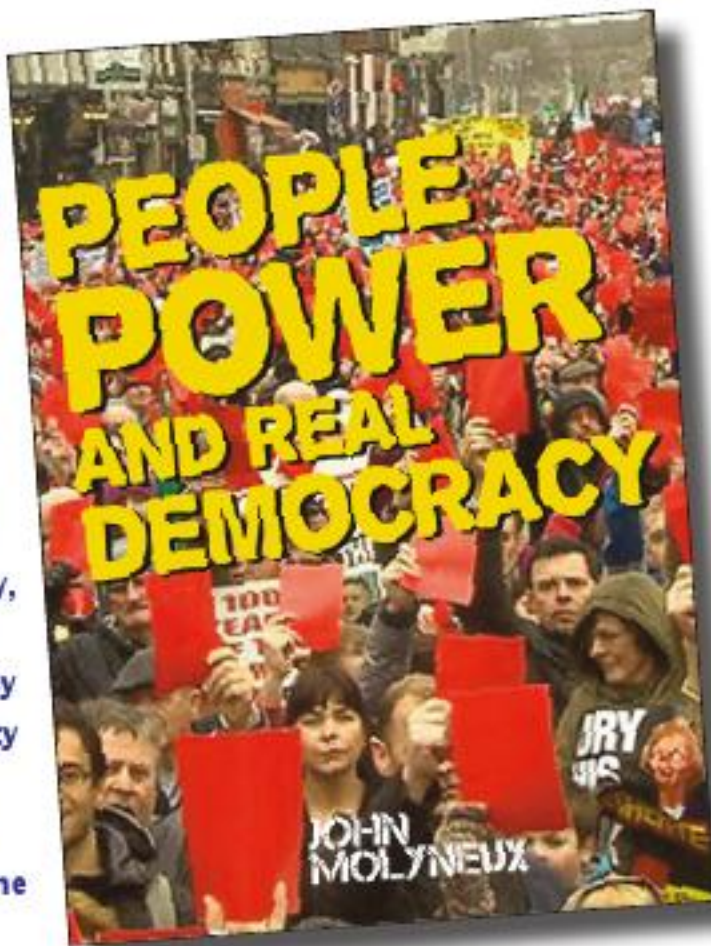
The injustice is compounded by the fact that it was the reckless and insatiable greed of the rich – of the bankers, developers, currency speculators and the like – that produced the economic crisis in the first place.

Plus there is now a large body of social research, summarised in the justly famous book *The Spirit Level*, by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, which proves

OUT NOW!

People Power and Real Democracy

This new Socialist Worker pamphlet by John Molyneux argues that the people power seen in the great revolt over water charges contains within the seeds of a different way of running society, one that is based on real democracy and accountability not professional politicians rising on the backs of the people.



Available, price €2, from SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8 or Ring 01-872 2682

Greedy Rich?



Eamonn McCann says

Sinn Fein embrace neo-liberalism



Gerry Adams can bluster and bluff all he likes, but the fact is that Sinn Fein has signed up to the same sort of austerity programme in the North as they are screaming blue murder about in the South.

The party claims to have stood firm against welfare "reform" during the negotiations which led to the Stormont House Agreement just before Xmas, and to have secured extra money from the Treasury to offset the "Tory cuts." This is untrue.

Sinn Fein didn't squeeze a single penny from the British government to soften the impact of benefit changes.

They weren't bought off. They rolled over for free.

All of the money which they say will protect those who lose out is to be taken from the budgets of other Stormont departments - health, education, justice, the arts etc.

There is no extra Treasury money involved. The same deal could have been done between SF and the DUP at any time over the past two years. The DUP was up for it.

All that grandstanding and drama about deadlines and the possible collapse of the Assembly is now seen to have been play-acting intended to bluff the electorate - particularly their "own" electorate.

What's more - there is no guarantee that the money shifted to welfare will cover what benefits recipients will have lost.

There are only guesstimates and stabs in the dark as to what the real figures will be.

And the elaborate machinery being constructed to administer the "top-ups" is untried, untested and so complex as to put off all but the most determined applicants.

Maybe that's the intention. The Agreement also means the loss of 20,000 public sector jobs.

SF Ministers repeatedly denied the figure - until February 18th when the Unionist paper the Newsletter published the document on which it was based.

Now the line has changed. These will be voluntary, not compulsory redundancies, says the party - forgetting that their original pledge was to fight public sector job losses, full stop.

The bottom line is that 20,000 jobs will be gone from the North, courtesy of the SF/DUP deal.

The Agreement also clears the

way for privatisation of any public asset which isn't screwed down.

Translink, which runs the buses and the trains, NI Water and the Housing Executive are candidates for selling-off as part of the overall "financial package".

Any doubt about the neo-liberal character of the deal is dispelled in paragraph five of the text:

"The Executive will adopt...a comprehensive programme of Public Sector Reform and Restructuring which will encompass a wide range of strategies...such as a reduction in the size of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the wider public sector...An independent strategic review of public sector reform conducted by OECD will report by the end of 2015."

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development comprises 34 States—all of the EU, plus the US, Australia, Japan, Mexico, South Korea etc.

The Agreement envisages it sending in a team every year to check how well the Executive is implementing the "reforms"—a similar function to that of the Troika in the South.

The most relevant OECD unit is the Working Party on State Ownership and Privatisation Practices, which "facilitates policy dialogue and information exchange between OECD Member countries and key partners on improving corporate governance of state-owned enterprises and implementing privatisation policies."

By enthusiastically endorsing the Agreement, SF and the DUP are rolling out the red carpet for the OECD's arrival.

The Agreement cannot be seen simply as a cobbled-together document to carry the Stormont institutions through to the next crisis.

It suggests an ideological convergence between the two main parties of longer-term significance.

There's no way of reading the passages dealing with the economy other than as embrace of neo-liberalism.

It may be that the SF rank and file are being eased into acceptance of what was until recently regarded as heresy in the same way as the IRA rank and file was successfully shepherded towards acceptance of the constitutional status-quo.

that inequality is bad for society as a whole.

By comparing statistics from many different countries such as Sweden, Japan, Britain and the US Wilkinson and Pickett show that inequality, by marginalizing people, causes shorter, unhealthier and unhappier lives; it increases the rate of teenage pregnancy, violence, suicide, obesity, crime, imprisonment and addiction and other social ills.

But can it be done?

Anyone in Irish political life who suggests taxing the rich is immediately met with a chorus of derision.

If they are on Vincent Browne, for example, they will be talked over and even shouted down by the representatives of the 'mainstream' parties and the so-called economic experts.

Vincent Browne, himself, who says he would like to see more equality, will be the first to say it is 'nonsense' to talk about taxing the super-rich.

There are two main arguments here. The first is that taxing the super rich won't raise much money because there are not enough of them.

As Colm McCarthy put it in The Independent (owned by Denis O'Brien):

"There will be little objection to taxing these fortunate citizens, but it is throwing sand in the eyes of the public to pretend that they are sufficiently numerous to

relieve the rest of us from facing grown-up decisions". [Note: grown up decisions means cutting services].

But this is clearly false. Of course there are only a few super rich but they are so wealthy that seriously taxing them will raise large amounts.

The 300 richest people in Ireland have between them at least €70 billion. So a 5% wealth tax on them alone would raise €3.5 billion, 10% would raise €7 billion.

There are in fact 90,000 millionaires in Ireland and the numbers are growing. Taxing them 5% each would, even if they only had €1million each, raise 90,000 x €50,000 which is €4.5 billion. So it would be perfectly possible to raise more than €10 billion with a modest wealth tax before even starting to talk about taxing the corporations or levying a financial services tax. That would be more than enough to write off the water charges and the property tax.

The other argument, often put by Vincent Browne, is that we can't tax the rich because they would just take their money out of the country. But to accept this argument is to allow ourselves to be bluffed and blackmailed.

It is a bluff because it exaggerates the ability of the rich to move their money. In reality Hilary Weston cannot move Brown Thomas out of Dublin, Denis O'Brien can't shift The Independent to

the US or Mexico and Michael O'Leary's Ryanair has to operate out of Ireland.

And even though they would hate paying even a penny more tax it would still be worth their while to stay in Ireland because they are doing so well here. It's not as if there were lots of other places where they could operate as profitably and pay less tax. If there were they'd be there already.

Blackmail

It is blackmail because what the rich are really saying is let us rip you off and exploit you or we'll wreck your economy and your society. If we go down the road of giving in to this we end up on our knees begging or bribing them to stay. Which, come to think of it, is what Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have been doing for years now.

What we should do is reject their blackmail and call their bluff. We should impose capital and exchange controls to stop them taking money out of the country.

This has often been done by other governments in the past. And if they still try to get out paying their share or threaten to disinvest we should take over their companies and nationalise them.

So the answer to the question, 'Can we tax Ireland's greedy rich?' is

'Yes we can! Yes we must!'

WATER CHARGES: The State attacks the movement

It was planned. It was coordinated. It started in mid February.

On the 14 February the gardai arrested 20 anti-water charges campaigners including AntiAusterity TD, Paul Murphy and a 16 year old boy, over the protest against Joan Burton three months ago.

The protestors were hauled into police stations in dawn raids and interrogated for many hours. There was grotesque talk of charging them with 'wilful imprisonment'. Other arrests followed.

Then on 19 February came the jailing of 5 campaigners from Edenmore for the 'crime' of defying an injunction to block the installation of water meters. The sentences were draconian. Bernie Hughes, Derek Byrne and Michael Batty were all sentenced to 28 days in prison while Paul Moore and Damien O'Neill were given 56 days each.

Double standards

The double standards involved are breathtaking. In a country where no banker has gone to jail and corrupt politicians continue to draw their fat pensions and where GuardEX security thugs and gardai can push and throw local people defending their shores around with impunity, ordinary working class people are harassed and imprisoned. No doubt it gladdens Denis O'Brien's heart.

The media have been on hand to play their part. First they raised an absurd hue and cry about the protest in Jobstown. Some people sit down and block a Minister's car – shock, horror, outrage!!

Just imagine what these people would have said about the Easter Rising – not now but at the time.

Actually we don't have to imagine because we know – they denounced it from the roof tops. It was the same with Jim Larkin and the 1913 Lockout, and with every struggle of working people before or since.

Then they went on to try to demonise Paul Murphy in attack after attack. They went ballistic over a few unfortunate insults to Michael D as if that was far worse than impoverishing hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable of our citizens.

A Concerted Offensive

Then the Irish Herald produced a front page with the headline "Jailed Billed" which linked the jailing of the Edenmore 5 and, on the basis of leaks from Dublin City Council, Cllrs Tina



MacVeigh and John Lyons, both People Before Profit Councillors, accused of – wait for it – printing leaflets for the water charges campaign!

Will the crimes of these activists never cease. They sit down, stand up and print

leaflets. By comparison ISIS and the Black-and-Tans are pussy cats.

These things don't happen by accident. Our rulers strategise and their toadying friends in the media, like Ryan Tubridy and others don't need to be ordered. They

see a band wagon rolling and jump on it, without a second thought.

And the reason for it is obvious. Irish Water and the whole water charges policy has been a disaster and a fiasco for the government. It has been the lightning rod

for all the pent-up anger and bitterness of the people over years of corruption in high places and cuts and austerity for the masses.

It has produced hundreds of thousands on the streets, hundreds of thousands refusing to pay and opinion polls in which all the mainstream parties put together can't get 50%.

The government and the 1% whose interests they represent and their friends in the state apparatus were desperate to regain the initiative and break the movement.

They couldn't have launched their offensive immediately after the great demos in the autumn, so they waited for their chance. A chance given to them by the lull in the movement after the Xmas and New Year break.

Now they hope that the combination of repression and media demonisation will intimidate and demoralize the movement, and frighten people into not coming onto the streets.

What this shows is that ordinary people are up against a ruling class that works together, and that a key role in that process is played by the state machine – especially the Gardai and the Courts.

The police and the judges, like the media, always claim to be politically neutral. In reality they are servants and allies of the super rich and the capitalists and stand ever ready to engage in 'political policing' whenever the system requires it.

How to answer the attack

It is vital that this offensive is not allowed to succeed. There have already been a number of excellent actions in response to the repression with pickets and rallies at the court, at Mountjoy Jail, at garda stations in Tallaght and many places round the country, a protest at the Fine Gael Conference in Mayo, and a big march of over 5000 from the Central Bank to Mountjoy on Saturday 21 Feb.

No doubt there will be many similar protests in the weeks ahead, including at the Labour Party Conference in Killarney on the 28 February as this paper comes out.

What will be the best and most effective answer, however, will be a really mass turnout for the National Demonstration on 21 March.

That will be something neither the media nor the politicians will be able to completely ignore. It will greatly encourage mass non-payment and show the people remain defiant.

Aer Lingus: Stop the sale of state assets

Brenda O'Rourke

'Aer Lingus does not need IAG, IAG needs Aer Lingus.' These were the words of Evan Cullen, president of the Irish Airline Pilots Association describing the potential takeover of by International Consolidation Airlines Group IAG.

On January 24 IAG which is the parent of British Airways and Spanish airlines Iberia and Vueling made its third bid for Aer Lingus.

IAG has made two previous bids on 14 December and on January 9. The first – a 1bn takeover bid with a proposed €2.30 per share – was rejected by Aer Lingus as 'preliminary, highly conditional and non-binding'.

The most recent bid which is offering €5.55 per share and values the company at roughly 1.35bn has been encouraged by Willie Walsh, CEO of IAG and former CEO of Aer Lingus has so far been more successful.

The deal, which a variety of interest groups have flagged as being detrimental to the Irish economy, has been supported by the board of Aer Lingus and a number of Fine Gael TDs.

However, it is possible that the Government will not take the risk of alienating a large number of voters so close to an election.

Evan Cullen (IALPA), has said that the proposed takeover is "not good for our members or their families ... or aviation



Willie Walsh, notorious union bashing boss of IAG, quintupled his pay last year with salary and bonuses of almost £5 million at a time when pilots and crew in Iberia were taking swingeing pay cuts.

in Ireland".

What the sale means for Aer Lingus:

Aer Lingus, in which the state had an 85% sharehold before 2006 when the com-

pany was floated in the Dublin/ London stock exchange, is now 29% owned by Ryanair and the state has 25%.

This 25% means that any potential sale of the carrier has to be approved in the Dáil.

The sale would mean that the state relinquishes any stake in Aer Lingus and any say in air access, connectivity and the fate of the 1,200 or so Aer Lingus staff

This most recent deal makes promises or 'legally binding commitments' on three

aspects of the business – namely, that its Heathrow slots cannot be sold, that they would operate on Irish routes for the next five years and that the firm's headquarters and incorporation would remain in Ireland.

Its name would also remain unchanged.

These promises come amid concerns that the sale would mean job losses for Aer Lingus workers, and a potential threat to routes from regional airports like Cork or Shannon.

Any job losses in Swords, the Dublin Airport base and other areas of the country would have a massive impact.

It has been estimated previously that each airport job supports three others in the local community.

Implications of the sale

The full implications of the possible sale of Aer Lingus are hard to estimate as it is difficult to predict what will happen after 5 years when IAG are free to take the company in any direction they wish.

However, it is safe to assume that the company will act in the interests of their shareholders and pursue profit, and not the interests of Irish workers.

Like other neo-liberal driven sell-offs of state assets this whole policy should be opposed.

It is just another example of sacrificing the interest of the Irish people to multinational corporations.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY:**Iona try to move goal posts**

Faced with the fact that the large majority of Irish people are quite happy for same-sex couples to be allowed to marry and therefore intend to vote YES in the coming referendum the Iona Institute and the Catholic right are making a huge effort to shift the goalposts.

Their strategy is to argue that marriage equality somehow threatens the rights and welfare of children.

This is complete nonsense: allowing same-sex couples to marry will not infringe the rights or welfare of a single child. It is, however, clever propaganda.

Where deep prejudices are involved it is always possible to construct 'rational' sounding arguments to justify those prejudices, until those arguments are critically examined.

In this case the Iona Institute claim that marriage is 'a unique institution' which is 'made for children'. This is not true.

First it is simply meaningless to claim that marriage is a 'unique institution'.

Historically there have been many different forms of marriage – arranged marriages, polygyny (one man, many wives), polyandry (one woman, many wives) and so on. There have also been many different forms of family.

Nor was marriage 'made for children'. Human beings had children for hundreds of thousands of



years before marriage developed at all. In so far as marriage was 'made' at all it was not for children but to safeguard the inheritance of property.

The Iona Institute claim that children have a 'right' to a loving mother and father. This is a misuse of the word right.

Unfortunately being loved cannot be made a legal right. In reality it is unavoidable that many children will be brought up by only one parent and in some cases that is better for child than being locked into a situation where the parents are warring or one is violent or abusive.

In any case legalising same-

sex marriage doesn't deny any children the love of their parents, male or female. It is, literally, zero effect in this regard.

So why is this nonsense clever propaganda? Because without saying so openly, it plays on the old reactionary prejudice that gay people are a 'threat' to children. And it appeals, again without saying so openly, to the deeply conservative idea that the old traditional ways were best.

Why doesn't it say this openly? Because everyone knows that the old traditional ways brought us the Magdalene laundries, the Christian Brothers, paedophile priests and physical and sexual

abuse of children on a horrendous scale.

Actually the Iona Institute and the Catholic Right are not concerned for children's rights or welfare at all.

They do not campaign against austerity, or cuts to lone parents or child benefits or community programmes for disadvantaged young people. Nor did they help to expose child abuse in the church - instead they covered it up.

But they do campaign against ALL progressive change which aims to liberate women or end discrimination against oppressed groups.

These are people who oppose all abortion rights, including where there are fatal foetal abnormalities or where the woman has been raped; all effective contraception; divorce, and civil partnerships.

If they could they would take us back to the days of pregnant unmarried women being denounced from the pulpit and forced to emigrate or put their children up for adoption.

They can't do that so they fight a rearguard action against any attempt to extend equality.

The Iona Institute have lots of money and are well trained; they present themselves as reasonable concerned citizens – in reality they are right wing fanatical religious bigots.

BUILDING FOR #MARCH 21, UN ANTI-RACISM DAY RALLY IN DUBLIN

Memet Uludag

A national rally and march will be held in Dublin on 21 March, at 12pm to mark the International UN Anti-Racism day and to stand in solidarity with other rallies around the world, especially in Greece, and with the victims of racism in Europe.

The organising committee '#M21 Ireland', composed of various anti-racist campaign groups, trade union delegates, NGOs and political parties is working to build for a big rally.

This is particularly important in the context of the rise of right wing racist and fascist parties and movements in many parts of Europe and the danger that they could try to gain a foothold in Ireland.

The 21 March is also the day of the national Right2Water march at 2pm and the organisers have worked together to plan the rallies in order to avoid any clashes and to work in

solidarity.

On the day, there will be a Right2Water speaker at the #M21 Rally and an #M21 speaker addressing the Right2Water march from the main platform.

The coming weeks will be busy for #M21 activists with thousands of leaflets to be distributed and with city centre stalls and various other activities to build the campaign.

All anti-racists, anti-fascist groups and individuals are invited to attend the rally with their banners and placards and unite under the slogans of "NO TO RACISM, NO TO FASCISM!"; "NO TO ISLAMOPHOBIA"; "NO TO ANTI-SEMITISM"; "NO TO SCAPEGOATING OF MIGRANTS AND MINORITIES"; "YES TO DIVERSITY!"

The details of the rally can be found on the #M21 Facebook page www.facebook.com/M21Ireland

FILM REVIEW**Selma: Powerful story of fight against racism in US**

Reviewed by Hazel Norton

Selma is a powerful film which depicts one of the most important and inspiring episodes in the history of the struggle against racism.

Directed by Ava DuVernay it centres on Martin Luther King Jr's role in the historic 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery in Alabama, a key moment in the Civil Rights Movement's campaign for voting rights for black in the America's Southern States.

The film brings out the drama of this epic struggle from its opening scene. This shows Dr King (David Oyelowo) accepting his Noble Peace Prize in December 1964, juxtaposed with the bombing of the 16th St. Baptist Church in Alabama in September 1963 by the Ku Klux Klan, which murdered four young African-American girls.

This contrast between peaceful protest and racist barbarism, which is a central feature of the Civil Rights struggle is a theme throughout the film.

The Selma to Montgomery marches – there were three in all – really brings this out. The African Americans of Alabama were demanding nothing more than the right to vote and the right to register to vote.

Following the murder of a civil rights activist by a state trooper the campaign decided to hold a



long march from Selma to the Alabama state capital, 50 miles away. This resulted in a ferocious attack on the demonstration by the racist police which became known as Bloody Sunday.

After two more marches 25000 people eventually walked into Montgomery under the protection of the National Guard and a few months later Lyndon Johnson was forced to pass the landmark Voting Rights Act.

Alabama State troopers attack civil-rights demonstrators outside Selma, Alabama, on Bloody Sunday, March 7, 1965

Irish readers and viewers

of this film will not fail to be struck by the parallel with the Civil Rights struggle in Northern Ireland which was, in fact, directly influenced by the movement in America.

While this film justly celebrates Martin Luther King and his immense legacy it does not shy away from some of the more difficult aspects of the struggle – tactical and strategic issues of the kind which arise in any mass campaign – and problems in King's personal life.

It shows the frosty relationship between King and President Johnson which has not pleased

those who seek to whitewash the role of the Democrat establishment and it deals with ongoing conflicts between King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the more radical Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

It also shows how the FBI spied on King's private life and passed 'evidence' of his affairs to his wife Coretta in a nasty attempt to undermine him.

This film is both interesting and inspiring, I strongly recommend it to all readers of Socialist Worker.

Racist Chelsea fans identified

Josh Parsons with Nigel Farage

THE dominant media image of the street racist and of the football 'hooligan' is that of a working class thug.

At first glance the vile incident in which Chelsea fans pushed a black man off a Paris Métro train chanting 'We are racist, and that's the way we like it,' might seem to confirm this.

It is therefore interesting that two of the racist Chelsea fans have now been identified.

One is Josh Parsons, ex-public school boy and finance worker employed by the City Business and Commercial Finance Club. He is also a UKIP supporter and fan of Nigel Farage.

The other, the Sunday World has revealed, is 50-year-old Richard Barklie ex-member of the RUC. In an extraordinary twist which

speaks volumes about current official hypocrisy on racism the Sunday World also reveals that Barklie "is the director of a worldwide human rights organisation, lecturing on racial tolerance

But at the weekend Barklie rubs shoulders with hooligans and racists from the notorious Chelsea Headhunter crew."

Of course there are individual racists in the working class but history and experience shows that the main sources of racism in society are in the ruling class and among their middle class supporters and their own state police.

By contrast it is in the working class and particularly in working class and labour movement organizations that there exists the best potential for anti-racist solidarity.

Socialist Worker

RESISTANCE NEEDED TO STOP STORMONT AUSTERITY

March 13: All out to stop job cuts

Shaun Harkin

The Sinn Féin/DUP led Stormont Executive has agreed on a 2015 budget that includes 20,000 public sector job cuts throughout the North.

Often criticised for being unable to get their 'act together' Stormont parties united across sectarian division to sign a toxic agreement dismantling vital public services, opening public assets for privatisation and preparing for a reduction of the corporate tax rate.

Additionally, Westminster inspired Welfare Reform will go ahead.

DUP Finance Minister Simon Hamilton has said "Tighter, difficult times are going to be the new norm" and promised at least three more years of cuts.

Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness claims the austerity budget is "the best deal possible" and the "lesser of two evils". He described critics of the agreement as "dissidents" living in "fantasy land" and intent on wrecking the peace process.

Sinn Féin are now saying there is no alternative to austerity despite having campaigned against "Tory cuts".

Without doubt, the agreement will increase inequality and lead to the destruction of public services people depend on such as the NHS, education, the arts and public transport.

Outrage

The so-called "shared future" strategy based on delivering prosperity for all is quickly becoming a "shared reality" of poverty, higher unemployment and despair.

Outrage at the savage job losses and the broader impact of the agreement is widespread among all communities across the entire region.

Significantly, the Northern Committee of Congress of ICTU declared its opposition to the budget deal with full-page notices in all the main newspapers and has called for all out public sector strike action on March 13th.

Responding to this Trades Councilshave held well-attended public meetings in towns and cities across the North to organize for the March 13th action.

ICTU Assistant General Secretary, Peter Bunting said:

"The dam has burst after years of pressure from Westminster. There is now nothing else to cut without doing permanent damage to our social fabric.



"Broad agreement" has been reached in talks between the five parties in the Stormont power-sharing administration.

At the urging of the ICTU's affiliated trade unions and their 215,000 members, the leadership of the trade union movement is determined to make an effective and collective response to stop these cuts."

Bunting also demanded "that local politicians refuse to impose these draconian measures on the people of Northern Ireland, including welfare reform."

At a Derry Trades Union Council meeting Eamonn McCann encouraged activists to seize the opportunity saying "we need to preach the gospel of discontent."

"We need to give expression to discontent. There are signs of something that's happening."

"There's more and more a sense that working class people are ready to organise and fight together."

Time for Action

Public meetings have also been held jointly by the Ulster Teachers Union, the Irish National Teachers Organisation and the Northern Ireland Public Service Association and UNISON is holding over fifty "Time for Action!" public meetings. All are making the case for action.

All unions supporting the March 13th action are balloting their members for strike action and it's vital to get a massive YES vote.

A successful strike in March with large marches and rallies in every town and city will send a strong message to Stormont. The planned cuts are not inevitable and neither is a disastrous neoliberal path for the North.

The more effective our resistance the more possible we can force Stormont to reverse its plans.

Stormont is depending on cynical scapegoating, divisions between Catholic and Protestant workers and passivity to push through policies that will impoverish all working class communities and make the North a poverty-wage economy.

But a one-day strike no matter how well supported will not, by itself, be enough to turn the austerity tide.

Stormont must also know there is a real threat of prolonged strike action.

If March 13th is effective it can encourage workers to see the need for spreading industrial action.

Resistance and solidarity can stop Stormont's embrace of austerity but also needed is a radical left alternative to break the North's sectarian Green and Orange straightjacket.

We need a political alternative that stands for the interests of working class Catholics, Protestants and all others who are being abandoned by the Stormont Agreement.

Devastating assault on welfare

welfare reform has admitted that, even with some changes to the assessment process to take the needs of people in the North into account, PIP will cut the benefit of about one third and of DLA claimants and cut a further quarter completely.

The sanctions regime which in Britain has led to so many at best to food banks, at worst to suicide, has also been introduced to the North.

Much has been made of the fact that the sanction period is to be half that in Britain for the third "failure" by a claimant to make an appointment, to get there on time, to take a placement or job or do whatever the Job Centre tells them.

To someone sitting in the Assembly, maybe having a maximum of 18 months, not 3 years, without benefits seems like a concession. But for someone who has mental ill-health and is likely to fall foul of these sanctions, three months, or even three weeks living on fresh air is likely to leave them dead or in prison.

What we have got from Stormont in relation to welfare reform is smoke, mirrors and downright lies. For example, in the media, we are told that the Bedroom Tax is not being brought into the North. But the Assembly record is clear: the hated Bedroom Tax has been introduced.

Then there is the scam around the "top up" payments which are supposed to make sure that no one is less well off.

This is trumpeted as a "multi-million pound package" worth £565 million over the next six years.

In other words, there is at best £95 million a year to offset what experts say will be some £230 million worth of benefits cuts – that's at least about 40% of benefits that will be lost.

Worse, we can't even be sure that the money will be there over six years. In the first week of February, a briefing was given by Departmental officials about welfare reform to the Assembly Committee overseeing it.

Officials said that the only moneys that had been set aside were for 2015-16. This raises real concerns that the "top ups" will not be there after the next Assembly elections in 2016.

Many of the public sector workers who will be taking strike action on March 13th as part of the ICTU Day of Action will be protesting as much about these attacks on benefits as about job losses in the public sector.

Goretti Horgan

Since Christmas, people in the North had waited anxiously to see what changes there would be to the Welfare Reform Bill. When it came back to the Assembly, it was exactly the same Bill that Sinn Féin had quite rightly stopped going through two years ago.

This time, the DUP and Sinn Féin were united, making sure that the only amendments to the Bill would be those agreed by the Minister.

So, the DUP/SF coalition has now brought to the North some of the worst things to happen to working class people in Britain.

These include the bedroom tax, the benefit cap, an end to the special Employment and Support Allowance for severely disabled young people, cuts to child disability premium under Universal Credit and a sanction regime pretty much the same as in Britain.

The Bill includes scrapping Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and replacing it with the Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

There is no question that disabled people, especially those who get DLA for reasons of mental illness will lose income because of PIP. The Department for Social Development which oversees