

Socialist Worker



Join the strike on March 30th

Squeeze the rich, not the low paid



CPSU members take action last month

Pic: Paula Geraghty

FIANNA FAIL and the Greens are planning a vicious budget on April 7th. Their stated aim is to cut spending by a staggering €4 billion which means that their budget will be twice as bad as last October's.

They want to attack social welfare and tax the low paid. Their wider aim is to impose wage cuts across the economy.

It is almost a textbook case of what Naomi Klein called the Shock Doctrine.

Ruling elites often try to use a crisis re-organise the whole society while people are still reeling in shock.

After the huge protests at the end of 2008, the government were disorientated and were forced to retreat. But now, spurred on by a host of right wing commentators, they have re-grouped and are preparing for a new offensive. In the words of Richard Bruton, they want to use the crisis 'to re-invent Ireland.'

The only answer is to have the biggest possible national strike on March 30th.

DON'T BELIEVE THEIR LIES

Government spin doctors and the media claiming that a third of all workers don't pay any tax and that 'they should be made to pay their share'.

The reality is completely different. One fifth of the government tax take comes from VAT. This tax comes mainly from workers. It's a flat tax and so hits the poorest hardest. When you include other stealth taxes it is workers who pay the bulk of taxes.

The super-rich escape from paying any tax – as revealed on pages 4 and 5 in this paper – and still enjoy numerous tax breaks to hide their money.

When you look at the tax figures you see there are 400,000 workers earning as little as €4700 a year – that's €89 a week! Another 375,000 workers earn €15,000 a year – that's €290 a week, and 400,000 workers earn €25,000 a year. These are the people the government wants to tax more to carry the cost of the crisis.

Meanwhile bankers have not been touched – are they paying their share?

Eugene Sheehy, head of AIB, expected plaudits for reducing his salary to a mere €690,000 a year.

Irish Nationwide was one of the main banks involved in the property speculation bubble. The boss of Irish Nationwide Building Society, Michael Fingleton, was paid a bonus of €1 million just weeks after the Government introduced the €440 billion guarantee to protect the entire banking system. His salary actually rose 12 per cent this year, to €1 million from €893,000.

These are the people who should be taxed to the hilt to pay for the crisis. Some of them should be sent to jail for causing the crisis.

There is no talk of increasing capital gains tax, the tax that most of the rich pay on shares and speculation, from the current 21%. This is way below the 42% many workers pay.

There also isn't any talk of introducing a property tax to hit the rich and their second homes. The top 5% who own over 40% of the national wealth, excluding property, this will not be touched by the FF-Green government.

Instead of attacking the low paid we should go after the rich.

There are 1447 people in Ireland on an average of €2.3 million a year – that's €3.5 billion between

them. Another 28,000 are on over €1 million a year. Tax on profits is only 12.5%.

ORGANISE FOR MARCH 30th

The only way to stop these attacks on workers is to get rid of this Government. The ICTU strategy of cosying up to Cowen has only encouraged him to come back for more cuts.

The ICTU leadership has been dragging its heels in building for the national strike on March 30. They hoped the government would back down after seeing 120,000 workers on the streets of Dublin. But the Government and the bosses are re-newing their offensive.

We need the biggest possible strike on March 30th to stop the cuts and to force this government from office.

* Organise an emergency meeting in your workplace to discuss strategies for building the March 30 strike.

* Put a motion at that meeting demanding your union call for withdrawing the 'pension levy' and not just seeking to re-enter talks.

MAURA HARRINGTON: Political prisoner of Shell



Protest in support of Maura Harrington

Pic: Paula Geraghty

MAURA HARRINGTON, a retired primary school principal, and a leading campaigner in the Shell to Sea campaign in Mayo, was sentenced to 28 days imprisonment for slapping a guard, Eamon Berry, during a protest at Pollathomas pier in north Mayo on June 11th, 2007.

Maura denies the charge and pointed out the numerous assaults carried out by the Gardai to push through

a dangerous gas pipeling for Shell. None of the Gardai have ever been charged or even investigated by the Garda Ombudsman despite an abundance of video evidence.

The Irish state has stationed 200 full time Gardai in Mayo to help Shell. The cost of the State's security operation around Shell's project in Mayo has exceeded €10 million since 2003.

Naoise Harrington, hus-

band of Maura spoke to Socialist Worker, "Maura is a political prison at the behest of Shell, lets be clear who gives the orders in this state. She is a political prisoner of this corrupt Shell-FF government.

"Maura is in fine spirits, in fighting spirit and ready for any further incarceration. She wouldn't expect anything less from this Shell-FF government.

"Maura is only allowed

one visit a week for a duration of 30 minutes. She is awaiting the return of Dr Jimmy Devin, currently on St Patricks Day vacation, who will make a psychiatric evaluation of Maura on the order of his wife judge Mary Devin who sentenced her to the 28 days in jail.

"Maura expects to serve every minute of the 28 day sentence and will serve it again and more if its what it takes to stop Shell".

Galway NUI – Nazi Free Zone

By **DETTE MCLOUGHLIN**

THE CAMPAIGN to stop convicted holocaust denier David Irving speaking at NUI Galway has succeeded in getting the invitation withdrawn. Irving was due to speak on the 19th March but none of the university lecturers would give him the privilege of a debate. THE HOST Lit & Deb Society added they were postponing the event until September.



David Irving

The SWP held meetings and distributing leaflets on campus to protest against the invitation extended to Irving.

The opportunity to speak on campus would

have provided a showcase for his fascist views.

With a conviction of incitement to racial hatred for denying the Holocaust Irving must be opposed wherever he tries to deliver his campaign of hatred.

Michael D Higgins, Labour Party TD said, "Like any reasonable person, I do not deny the Holocaust and find this invitation being extended to David Irving a juvenile act."

Lynne Jackson, Chief Executive, The Holocaust



Michael D Higgins

Education Trust of Ireland, congratulated the campaigners on taking a stand. SWP supporters in Galway will need to join together again if the debate is rescheduled.

Left gain in student elections

By **MICHAEL BLACK**

QUEENS UNIVERSITY Belfast held its sabbatical elections on the 3rd and 4th of March.

The SWSS backed a progressive slate of candidates including SWSS members Daniel O'Boyle and Paul Simpson, standing on issues such as opposition to tuition fees, war, racism and price hikes in student services; and for defending a woman's

right to choose, LGBT rights, solidarity for Palestine and for building a radical, active and campaigning Students Union.

Although the slate did not take any positions, they polled on average 600-700 votes each, significant improving our profile and vote on last year. QUB SWSS also used the elections to publicise a Campus Anti-war Network teach-in at the University on the 26th of March.

However, the greatest success was at University of Ulster Jordanstown where, on the 5th of March, SWSS activist Gerry Carroll was re-elected as President of Jordanstown Student Union.

He improved his vote on last year and won by a landslide, gaining 381 votes, almost double that of the other 2 candidates put together, with an anti-choice careerist getting 180 votes and a right-wing

'unionist candidate', standing on policies as vile as support for Israel, received a pathetic 80 votes.

Gerry has pledged to continue building an active and campaigning Union at Jordanstown, to run a boycott Israel campaign on campus and to try and make Jordanstown Union a beacon of resistance for students fighting against any attempts to make them pay for the economic crisis.

No privatisation of the Royal Mail



Royal Mail workers on strike in England last year

By **GERRY CARROLL**

PETER MANDELSON and the government are trying to push through part privatization of the public owned Royal Mail. If they succeed in this step then the door will be left open for full scale privatization of a vital public service.

The Hooper report claims that the pensions deficit of Royal Mail is too big, fewer people write letters nowadays and that the Royal Mail needs to be made generally more efficient (code for cutbacks) - the conclusion drawn from the report is that Royal Mail must be privatized. Letter sending has reduced in the past few years although parcel posting has increased largely, and makes up 75% of Royal Mail's posting profits. The Hooper report is riddled with false claims and its solution is to drive through privatization and attack workers in order to 'save' Royal Mail.

Any privatization of the postal service will mean job losses, attack on conditions and an all round worse postal service. Buzzwords like efficiency and modernization in reality

can be translated as attacks on workers. Polls show that 80% of the public are opposed to privatization, there have also been protests outside government offices against plans to privatize, yet the government still insists on moving ahead with its plans.

Whilst squandering hundreds of billions of taxpayers pounds to bailout the bankers we are told when it comes to Royal Mail that the money isn't there. Royal Mail is a service that is vital to the public, privatization will completely destroy this, as the focus turns towards profit making and cutbacks. We must defend Royal Mail from privatization and ensure that not a half, not a third but none of Royal Mail is privatized and handed over to the private sector. This can only be done when postal workers take action. We have seen the fantastic example of working class power in the South where workers have occupied factories took to the streets and resisted cuts. Such action will be needed in the North if we are to defend Royal Mail from privatization and destruction.

Wrightbus workers face job cuts

By **GORDON HEWITT**

THOSE WHO say that Northern Ireland is going to be "cushioned" from the impact of the recession may want to think again.

Wrightbus in Ballymena, one of Northern Ireland's premier manufacturing companies, is to shed almost a quarter of its 1000 strong workforce because of the cancellation of two contracts.

Wrightbus is the largest independent bus manufacturer in Britain and has contracts world-wide. One of the recent cancellations was from Dubai.

The job-shedding will have a major impact on Ballymena as the job losses reverberate through the local economy, and despite words of shock and concern no-one from the Assembly has suggested that money will be found to maintain the workforce.

The union is negotiating over a 90 day period to see if jobs can be maintained but it may be the case that as in Waterford Crystal that these jobs will have to be fought for.

Nationalise SR Technics to save 1200 jobs

1135 WORKERS in SR Technics, the aircraft maintenance firm based in Dublin Airport, face losing their jobs on the 31st March.

Hundreds of SR Technics workers marched to the Swiss embassy and then to the EU Commission offices the following week to demand action to save their jobs. Many workers feel if the Swiss government can act to defend jobs in Zurich then the Irish government should do the same.

John Devlin, a spokesperson for the workers said, "SR Technics is one of the world's wealthiest companies, a subsidiary of Mubadala Developments, a United Arab Emirates state owned company based in Abu Dhabi. Mubadala is one of the world's richest companies. It has assets of 10 Billion and has just invested 75 million in building a new hanger in Abu Dhabi that can hold 7 aircraft".

"Given how rich this company is we should be getting one of the best redundancy deals on offer. Instead we're getting one of the most despicable offers in the history of the state - the company is only offering one week above statutory redundancy. There's also a big hole in the pension fund. The company has to be made to make up the shortfall. Workers are going into an economic wilderness and there is nothing moral, honest or fair in how the company is treating us".



SR Technics workers rally to fight for their jobs

Pic: Paula Geraghty

"The SR Technics plant in Dublin is still making profit and there is enough work to keep the jobs going. The Scandinavian Airline Services and the Chilean state airline have enough work to keep operations in Dublin going".

SR Technics, previously FLS Aerospace and before

it was privatised a branch of Aer Lingus proper, shows what a disaster privatisation has been. SR Technics just stripped all the contracts that had been built up by Aer Lingus and didn't invest in the facility in Dublin. One of the main managers left Dublin with all the contracts and moved to Switzerland.

Jobs have been sacrificed for the super-profits of companies.

David Gleeson, a worker in SR Technics said, "The Irish government had a 25% stake in Aer Lingus but allowed the maintenance contracts for Aer Lingus planes to be sent abroad".

Workers are calling on the

government to intervene to save the jobs and the industry. It took a generation to build up the skill base needed to service the aircraft.

"If the government invests and re-nationalises the plant it will save jobs and money. It will cost the state more to pay workers social welfare than to save the jobs".

"Irish people are mad to accept what's going on in this country, we have government ministers telling us to tighten our belts while swanning around in helicopters".

Workers need to look to the example of Waterford Crystal workers and occupy the hangers to force this government to act.

Teachers vote to join March 30 national stoppage

By NIAL SMYTH

THE 60,000 members of the three teacher unions, the ASTI, INTO and TUI have voted to take industrial action, up to and including strike action over the pension levy and the attempt of the government to make workers pay for a crisis not of their making.

In the INTO, 79% of the overall membership voted in favour of strike action. In Cork the vote was over 80% and in some areas of Dublin the vote was over 90%.

In the past week, the INTO executive met and have backed the call for a united day of action on March 30th called for by ICTU in conjunction with other unions.

With another budget on the horizon in early April, it is essential that this action takes place, as a first step in a campaign to overturn the levy and to send a clear signal to government of teachers anger.

Check out www.teachersunited.wordpress.com <http://scrappthelevy.wordpress.com> <http://www.petitiononline.com/nolevy/petition.html>

Dublin Bus cuts service and attacks workers rights

By OWEN MCCORMACK

DUBLIN BUS want to use the fear of job losses and the recession to rush in changes that will have long-term consequences for drivers and the public.

The company plans to cut 120 buses and is supposed to save 31 million, but it will end up costing the public when private operators cherry pick the best routes and other routes are cut completely. All the job cuts will come from drivers, none from management.

It is the first step to giving the company

a completely flexible workforce. It will create a fractured workforce, with new drivers on permanent lates and weekends, for fewer holidays and less pay.

Elimination of overtime with cause severe hardship for many younger drivers who traditionally rely on overtime to boost basic wages.

The plan will also mean the creation of permanent late shift working every weekend from Fri to Mon with less holidays and less pay. Drivers will lose half their shift pay - 55 euros a week.

Disgracefully union

leaders have not even argued against the cuts in service and the loss of 120 buses.

At a time when hundreds of millions will be spent on motorways and the metro, busworkers are asked to make huge sacrifices for 31 million euro.

At a time when banks are bailed out for billions and bankers can borrow hundreds of millions we are told we are lucky to have a job.

If drivers accept this plan the company will come back for more using the excuse of the 'crisis' in government finances next year if not sooner.

Workers call to nationalise Waterford Crystal

LAST WEEK workers at Waterford Crystal issued a statement calling for the government to take the plant into public ownership to safeguard jobs and manufacturing skills in Waterford.

It was unanimously agreed at a public meeting organized by People before Profit Alliance on the 12th March that the only viable long term solution to the protection and preservation of the workforce at Waterford Crystal and their families, the wider community and indeed the region is to take Waterford Crystal under Public

control.

The short-term approach of the new holders of the brand (KPS Capital Partners) is typical of the business model of private equity firms, who seek to cut costs through reduction in employee's wages and benefits, in order to sell on the business in the shortest possible time at a substantial profit to themselves.

Their first actions were to avoid any responsibility to the workforce by asking the receiver, Deloitte, to run the plant for the next six months.

There is no guarantee the jobs will continue beyond

this period. KPS plan to sell the Waterford Crystal brand once the workers have been disposed off.

The KPS proposals for a limited number of jobs will leave the majority of this highly skilled workforce on the dole, having been cheated of their compensation agreements, and pension entitlement, contributed over a life time in some cases, with all its consequent impact on the local economy.

Social welfare payments and other social supports for the sacked Crystal workforce, and knock-on job losses in the region will cost

the exchequer in excess of 10 million euro per year.

Workers have little confidence in talk of another local consortium linked to a major FF supporter taking over the factory. Public ownership is the only practical way to safeguard the jobs.

Workers are calling on the elected TDs, to put the Workers their Families, Community, the Region, indeed the people of Ireland above the interests of narrow short term profit driven private interests, and demand that Waterford Crystal be kept in Waterford in Public Ownership.

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.

Bush's "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 Blair 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

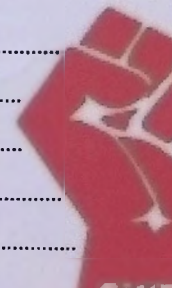
Fill in the form and send to
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COMMENT

Obama's Afghanistan strategy digging in deeper



Bogged down in a war they cannot win

By ALISTAIR FRASER

US PRESIDENT Barack Obama came into power promising change. Many on the left were hopeful – but sceptical.

And rightly so. Because, as his Afghanistan strategy turns out, Obama's real promise has been to increase troop numbers in Afghanistan and prolong the US presence in Iraq.

In Afghanistan, US forces have stoked the resistance. In the Pashtun speaking south and east, they kicked in doors and arrested, beat up, and shot 'suspected insurgents'. But when Afghans decide to fight back against these US death squads, the US troops order airstrikes.

Between 2006 and mid-2008, US/Nato aerial attacks killed 1,488 Afghan civilians; they dropped 1,458 tonnes of bombs.

These so-called 'precision bombs' were not developed to spare civilian lives. Their purpose has been to protect US pilots and US taxpayers' dollars. So in response to the death toll, whole communities have joined the resistance.

Amid the fighting, Afghanistan's President, Hamid Karzai, has called for an early election in April 2009.

He had hoped to receive a mandate for another term. But US officials claim his government is corrupt and have called for the election to be postponed. Even Kim Howells, Britain's former foreign office minister responsible for Afghanistan, says the occupation of Afghanistan is corrupt "from top to bottom".

Now Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission has announced the poll won't occur until August. By then, Obama wants to have increased the US troop presence from 38,000 to 55,000 – this just promises more bloodshed, not peace.

A major problem for Obama's Afghanistan strategy is that former President Bush spread the war to neighbouring Pakistan. This deepens the link between Pakistan's troubled past and US foreign policy in the region.

The US State Department has poisoned the region with its dollars, guns, and military know-how. The US sold Pakistan weapons totalling \$3.5bn in 2006 and gave the former Pakistani regime another \$1 billion in assistance since 2001.

Current Pakistani President, Asif Ali Zardari, who was elected last year, is also backed by the US. He faced a mass demonstration on 11 February about US raids in the Swat valley. This area has been hit hard by the US and Pakistan military.

The protest demanded an end to Pakistan's military offensive on the region. Zardari promised to stop US raids in the border region. The government then signed a truce with the so-called 'Pakistani Taliban' in the 'tribal regions' which border Afghanistan. But the raids continue and so resentment and resistance to these injustices grows.

People on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border are mostly Pashtun. As the US tries to fiddle with its imperial strategy, even reaching out to Iran to help defeat the Taliban, it has talked up the idea of re-drawing regional borders to create a compliant Pashtun state straddling Afghanistan and Pakistan.

More troops in Afghanistan and more US raids in Pakistan are disastrous outcomes for everyone in the region. So much for 'change we can believe in'.

All the trouble in Pakistan is just another reminder that Obama's mistaken belief in more war promises the region a gloomy future. Obama isn't learning from earlier mistakes. And he's making the wrong sort of promises.

Socialists in the US and abroad have opposed the US 'war of terror' which reaches all across the globe.

Obama needs to start listening to these calls for an end to violence, an end to the US presence in the region, and ultimately an end to the US imperial project. For our part, we need to keep insisting that the war should stop: US (and their allies') troops out of Afghanistan.

They never ha

By RORY CONNOLLY

DENIS O'BRIEN, the horse pill salesman turned mobile phone mogul, has just been declared by Forbes Magazine to be Ireland's wealthiest citizen, and the 533rd richest person on the planet. But before you choke with patriotic pride, remember that Denis O'Brien has managed to avoid paying vast amounts of tax in Ireland by declaring himself a tax exile. And of course, Denis isn't alone in that regard.

At a time when the government is preparing to hike taxes on the lowest paid and slash spending in areas of greatest social need, they have no intention whatever of *really* going after the super-rich who manage to reduce - frequently to zero - the amount they contribute to the public purse.

At the last count Ireland had almost 6,000 "tax exiles" - Irish citizens who have taken advantage of a law that allows them avoid paying billions of Irish tax by declaring their residence - "for tax purposes" - to be outside the state.

Among this band of tax avoiding patriots are many household names, such as **Michael Smurfit**, the world's king of cardboard, and Ireland's honorary consul to Monaco - where he has one of his many mansions.

Michael also has a little pad at the K Club measuring 36,000 square feet - equivalent to 40 medium sized two-bedroom flats.

And he is currently selling his C45m yacht, not because he needs the cash but because he needs a bigger one. Nice to know our lost taxes are going to such a needy cause.

JP McManus, the professional gambler and money changer who wins plaudits from the Irish establishment for his many charitable donations, is another of our infamous tax exiles, and is reckoned to be worth €400m. Another "exile" is his gambling huddy, **John Magnier** who recently spent €3m on his daughter's wedding, complete with revolving marquee.

In fact, Magnier's entire business empire - horse breeding - is tax exempt thanks to a law introduced by his father-in-law, **Charles Haughey**. One randy horse can earn Magnier €40m a year, without a cent going to the exchequer.

Bono, the self-professed champion of the poor who thinks he can solve world hunger by hobnobbing with world potentates, has moved much of U2's wealth to Holland to minimise his Irish tax bill.

And **Sir Anthony O'Reilly**, who has never hesitated to use his powerful media empire to influence the outcome of Irish general elections, avoids paying his fair share of taxes thanks to his tax exile status. Instead, he makes donations to universities on the condition that they name very big buildings after him.

And let's not forget Charlie Haughey's other pal - professional tax exile and billionaire **Dermot Desmond**. Desmond's dedication to tax avoidance as a way of business led him to invent Dublin's International Financial Services Centre, which, with full government sanction, allows businessmen from *other* countries to avoid paying their own domestic taxes in return for throwing a few crumbs at the Irish exchequer.

Since every Irish government for the past 20 years has enthusiastically endorsed the IFSC's status as a haven for other countries' tax dodgers, it is hardly surprising that they have never even tried to devise policies that would compel "our own" tax exiles to cough up.

Eight years ago, when **Denis O'Brien** made a profit of €250m on the sale of his Irish mobile phone network, he immediately moved his place of residence "for tax purposes" to Portugal, where there is no capital gains tax. So as well as enjoying the sun and the golf, lucky Denis also saved himself - and deprived the Irish exchequer - of around €50m on one deal alone.

Of course, huge questions remain about just how O'Brien got his mobile phone licence from the Irish government in the first place. Both he and former Minister for Communications, **Michael Lowry**, deny that the large sums of O'Brien's money that found their way into Lowry's bank account had anything to do with it.

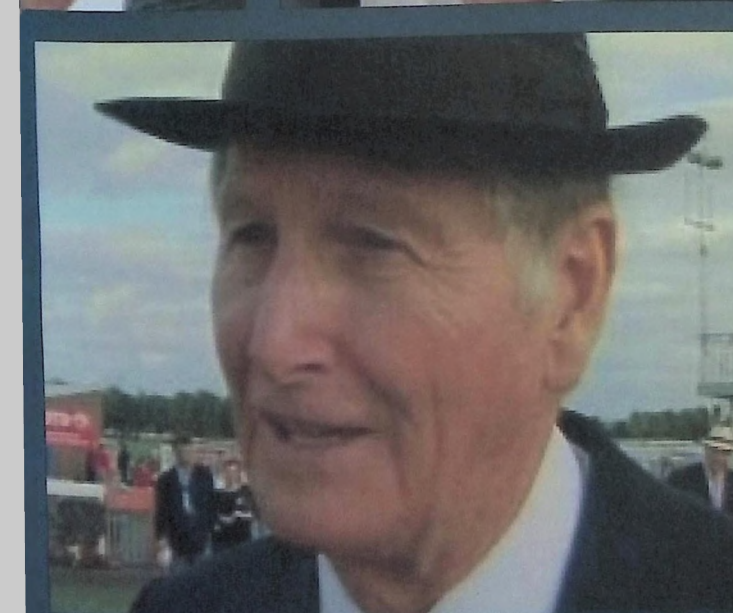
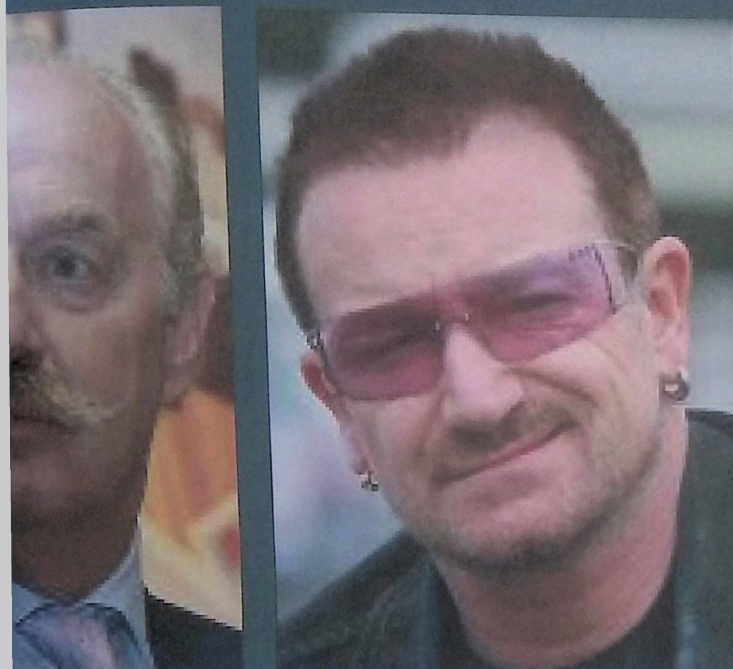
With government spin doctors and IBEC professionals, we show that the super-rich and its PAYE workers



Why pay tax? Top row: Denis O'Brien; Dermot Desmond; Bono, middle row: JP McManus

ad it so good

aiming most taxes are paid by high flying
and their hangers-on actually avoid most tax -
who pay the bills.



Michael Lowry; Sir Anthony O'Reilly, and bottom: John Maignier and Michael Smurfit

Selling off his Irish mobile phone licence for such an enormous profit was O'Brien's first business coup, and it launched him overnight into the world of the super-rich. And because he would pay no Irish tax on this - or any future gains - he was able to go on accumulating wealth at a rapid rate. In 2007 he pocketed \$800m from one deal alone. He's worth \$2.2 billion, and could add another €260m from the sale of a company where he just sacked 450 workers. And not a cent of Irish tax will be paid on that either.

The fact that the wealth of just one Irish individual could be equivalent to what the government said it had to cut from public spending this year to prevent the entire country from going bankrupt, indicates the gross inequalities that have been created - and allowed to persist - here.

And the political system goes out of its way to protect these leaches. Anyone daring name an Irish tax exile in the Dail will be condemned for "casting aspersions" on someone who can't reply, proving that those of us who pay our taxes have no right to know the names of the parasites who don't.

Astonishingly too, the Revenue Commissioners refuse to say how much tax is lost to the public purse by allowing these wealthy Irish citizens avoid paying their share, but experts say the figure could be as much as €3 billion a year - twice as much as the public sector pension levy aims to raise by disproportionately taxing those least able to pay.

And just because they are tax exiles doesn't mean these wealthy individuals have had to abandon the ould sod.

So long as they sun themselves and play golf off-shore for a minimum of 183 days of the year, they can come and go as they please the rest of the time, safe in the knowledge that the Revenue Commissioners can't lay a finger on them.

No-one has ever been prosecuted for faking non-residency to evade tax, and no-one was ever compelled to pay their taxes because they had stayed in Ireland for longer than 183 days in any one year, although with Ireland's open borders, and wealthy people's access to private yachts, jets and helicopters, many do.

Most of Ireland's tax exiles don't bother moving their families abroad - one small indication of how fictional the notion of 'exile' actually is.

Their families can make full use of all our expensive tax-funded infrastructure like roads, railways, and airports, as well as our cash-strapped health and education services. Yet they contribute little towards the cost.

For decades the government has made life exceedingly easy for these parasites. Before 2005 the Revenue Commissioners didn't even know how many of them there were.

When records were first compiled that year, Revenue discovered that 3,050 individuals were avoiding tax by declaring they resided elsewhere, and 19 of them had personal fortunes in excess of €50m - so-called "high net worth" individuals. Some were worth hundreds of millions, and some were billionaires.

By 2007 the number of tax exiles had soared to 5,803 - a 90% increase in just two years. Of these almost 450 were "high net worth" - an increase of well over two thousand per cent since 2005.

That means that at the very least the richest 450 tax exiles control €22.5 billion of wealth between them, and that's more than the government's target for spending cuts and tax increases for the next five years - cuts that will inflict incalculable pain on the poorest in society - if the government and its wealthy pals are allowed to get away with it.

In reality, the true wealth of the richest 10% of tax exiles is probably closer to €60bn.

Remember those figures next time someone asks where did all the money go?

And as of mid March 2009, when he managed to oust Tony O'Reilly as boss of the Independent newspaper empire, Denis O'Brien, through his nominees to the Independent board, will now have even greater influence on shaping public opinion in a country where he pays no tax.

Will he be advocating an end to tax exiles and demanding that the rich pay more? Will he f**k.

Aid for Gaza: but on one condition

By SIMON ASSAF



Life amidst the destruction

THE WEST is dangling the prospect of reconstruction aid to Palestinians in Gaza - but only on the condition that they accept a two state solution.

International donors, who met at a conference in Egypt, have pledged billions of dollars in funds to rebuild the territory that was shattered by a three week Israeli offensive.

But the pledges come with the condition that Palestinians should recognise a "two state solution" - that is accept that refugees would never be able to return to their homes and that illegal Israeli settlements would remain untouched.

But the proposed new Israeli government, an alliance of extreme right wing parties, has made it clear that it will not recognise any independent Palestinian state.

Despite this the US wants to use the aid to boost the unpopular and corrupt Palestinian Authority (PA).

Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state, is offering some £600 million. The US has earmarked \$400 million for the PA, which is run by Mahmoud Abbas.

Only £200 million will go to rebuild homes, schools, hospitals and factories that were destroyed by Israel.

The Hamas movement, which won the Palestinian elections in 2005 and is the legitimate government, has not been invited to the conference.

Some Arab governments, including the Gulf states which have pledged some £1 billion, want to bypass Abbas. They said they would distribute the aid through their own office in Gaza.

But despite the pledges, Israel is unwilling to open

key border crossings through which building materials will flow. Egypt, which controls the strategic Rafah crossing to Gaza, has also blocked the aid.

Hamas has warned that Israel has no intention of honouring the truce that has brought a pause in the fighting.

The resistance movement consistently pointed to the continuing illegal settlement as proof of Israel's intentions to expand further into Palestinian lands.

The Peace Now organisation has backed up their warnings, recently revealing that Israel is planning to build some 73,000 new homes in the occupied West Bank.

This makes a mockery of US, European and United Nations promises of an independent Palestinian state.

This plans have further undermined the Palestinian Authority, and the Fatah faction that dominates it, which staked its future on a two state deal.

Support for this movement, which rose to prominence in the 1960s and 1970s as the main resistance organisation, is melting away.

Fatah fears that its last strongholds in Palestinian camps in Lebanon are about to fall under the control of Hamas.

One Fatah commander told Time magazine recently that, "Fatah isn't helping people. Hamas is taking advantage of this. They are entering deep, deep into the population."

"We already lost Jordan and Syria. All of them sympathise with Hamas. If we lose Lebanon, then Fatah and all of what it represents will be over."

CAN SOCIALIST PLANNING WORK?

Kieran Allen concludes his three part series on capitalism in crisis by looking at what a socialist society would look like.

THE GLOBAL economic depression has raised questions about the viability of capitalism. But does a socialist planned economy offer a practical alternative?

We need to disentangle some confusion about this because some still associate a planned economy with the former 'communist' regimes in Eastern Europe. But they had as much resemblance to Marx's vision as the Spanish Inquisition had with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Typically, a handful of people in the Politburo of the Communist Party made decisions on where investment was to be allocated. Their overall aim was to reduce consumption - the share of an economy distributed to workers - and to transfer resources to heavy industry. During the Cold War, investment in the iron and steel industry was intimately connected to the arms industry. Planning was therefore driven by the logic of military competition - rather than the needs of the mass of people.

Output targets for each sector of the economy were, accordingly, decided through bureaucratic commands. But this led to its own internal form of chaos.

When the Politburo in Moscow ordered so many tons of raw pig iron to be produced, the local bureaucrats in Minsk or Odessa conformed by either producing inferior quality goods or by manipulating the figures. Without genuine transparency or accountability, the economy relied on fictitious data that made genuine planning impossible.

Planning also occurs in private capitalism today. Contrary to the impression created by its ideologues, capitalism does not work according to pure market mechanisms.

In the late twentieth century, a massive centralisation occurred as merger and acquisition activity grew five fold in the 1990s. As a result, every major industry is now dominated by an oligopoly - a small number of competing firms who often reach 'understandings' on pricing structures with each other.

A growing proportion of the world's economy, therefore, takes place *inside* gigantic multi-national firms rather than on a 'free market'.

Inside these firms another form of bureaucratic planning occurs, led by a Board of Directors. The US car industry is a good example. GM, Chrysler and Ford compete in a market but they also co-operate to seek greater state subsidies and do not respond to signals from the market.

A tiny number of managers plan for the long term by designing, pre-marketing, and pre-testing new models that only arrive in production years later. Conflicts develop within the bureaucracy of each firm and fictitious prices are sometimes established to gain benefits from transfer pricing - setting artificial prices to make it appear that more production takes place in tax shelters.

But as the present crisis shows, all this planning by the car bosses can be undone when 'market forces' cause chaos.



If Tesco can plan the supply of vast numbers of different commodities to appear on its shelves 'Just in Time', why cannot information technology be used to make the key investment decisions?



The issue, therefore, is not planning versus the 'free market' but rather whether planning serves the interests of the majority or a tiny corporate or party elite.

SOCIALIST PLANNING

There are three main pre-requisites for genuine socialist planning.

First, planning requires that the major corporations are in public ownership. Planning cannot work, if elected representatives draw up a plan but do not have the means to implement it. The requirement for public ownership need not apply to every small business.

A socialist society has no interest in nationalisation of restaurants, bicycle jobs, or design agencies. It might establish a legal framework to guarantee workers' rights or limit their exploitation. But socialist planning only requires that the major levers of the economy are in the hand of the representatives of the people.

In Ireland, we would need to take control of the banks, the major construction companies, the major manufacturing plants currently run by multi-nationals, the food industry and the major supermarket chains.

Second, planning requires that all economic information is available to the public. Despite hypocritical talk of transparency, capitalist society is shrouded in secrecy, as Irish banking demonstrates.

We do not know how much bad debt the Irish banks have; we do not know who controls their

large blocks of shares; and even though Anglo-Irish bank is nationalised, we are not told about the assets of the developers who have taken out huge loans from 'our' bank.

If people are to collectively decide how to allocate resources, commercial secrecy must be abolished. There will be no need for such secrecy in an economy built around co-operation rather than competition. The absurd notion that individuals can hold 'intellectual property' over knowledge will also have to be abolished. How can we develop the productive forces of society if individual scientists 'own' the fruits of scientific research and can charge a fee for giving others access to the data?

Third, socialist planning requires a form of economic democracy that goes well beyond the limited political democracy of capitalism. It requires co-ordinating institutions where delegates discuss and deliberate on where the major funds for investment are to be allocated and what type and what quantity of goods are to be produced.

To accurately reflect the needs of society, delegates will have to be mandated from gatherings of their constituents and will have to report back regularly. To safeguard against bureaucracy and elitism, there should be a facility to re-call them if they do not carry out their mandate.

Once these requirements are in place, it becomes easier to see how socialist planning might work. It involves both centralised and de-centralised decision-making.

At a central level, a socialist society needs to dem-

ocratically decide the length of the working week and what areas of the economy should be de-commodified.

Instead of pricing mechanisms, there should be decisions on what are essential free services which can be paid from general revenue. Obvious candidates include education, health, and public transport. Less obvious areas that require debate are sectors such as car insurance or the digital media.

Pricing mechanisms allocate scarce resources but they do so in an unequal and inefficient manner because they require additional administrative structures to collect money. De-commodification allows for positive synergies. Universal free health care, for example, would be built around preventative healthcare. Instead of taking your car for annual service and neglecting your body, you might be encouraged to have regular health checks in order to minimise use of more costly hospital resources.

Delegates to a central council will also have to decide on where the main areas of investment will be allocated, what proportions each sector of the economy will receive, and what are the expected targets for output.

Right wing economists suggest that this type of planning is too complicated. But if a large supermarket chain such as Tesco can plan the supply of vast numbers of different commodities to appear on its shelves through a 'Just in Time' system, why cannot information technology be used to make the key investment decisions?

It is perfectly possible to draw up alternative allocation models

and to outline the economic consequences of each. These models can then be voted on by delegates of the people.

In a market regime, resources are allocated chaotically *after* people have already signalled their wants through purchasing decisions. The current crisis shows, however, that this leads to over-accumulation in some areas, such as housing, as profit becomes the sole motive for responding.

Socialist planning means democratically making judgements about what people will require *in advance*. Contrary to myth, consumption patterns are extremely stable - as Tesco understands - and, as long as there is a built-in flexibility for innovation, this is perfectly possible.

Such planning does away with the huge levels of waste through advertising and 'branding'.

Once indicative targets are set at a central level, democratic planning needs a further level of de-centralised decision making.

If there is agreement on the allocation of investment for the clothing industry, for example, it is then up to industrial councils of consumers and workers to discuss design, fabric quality, quantities and the relevant trade offs with working time and working conditions.

Even if decisions are made on products and output targets, genuine democracy must also include scope for the workers - both white collar and blue collar - to decide how exactly they implement these decisions in their work process.

This is because the essence of socialist planning is workers - not bureaucratic control.

Are the troubles set to return?

By EAMONN McCANN

THE KILLING of two soldiers and a policeman was utterly futile. It can lead nowhere but into a blind alley. What did the RIRA and CIRA hope to achieve?

Last month, a 300-pound bomb was found in a vehicle in Co. Down, presumably intended for car-bombing some town or installation. What objective did those responsible think this would achieve? Did Omagh or Enniskillen advance the political cause of those involved?

The fundamental problem with "armed struggle" is that it is necessarily carried out behind the backs of the people in whose name it is waged. The same approach is evident in groups setting themselves up as judge, jury and executioner in response to social problems in deprived areas.

"Armed struggle" is as undemocratic as the murderous manoeuvres of MI5 and other "security" agencies which have acted as a law unto themselves and organised the murder of civilians and political activists over the past 30 years. The fact that the PSNI and MI5 are now inextricably linked---an arrangement which, incidentally, is not enthusiastically welcomed by everyone in the PSNI---casts a shadow on all those pleas from Gordon Brown, Jonathan Powell and their ilk for everybody with knowledge of "dissident" activities to inform the authorities.

Brown was preparing to dispatch the soldiers who lost their lives at Antrim to kill or be killed in the doomed, imperialist adventure in Afghanistan.

But the winner of the prize for top hypocrite is Jonathan Powell, who has been pontificating at length all over the media about the criminality of the killers of Cengiz Azimkar, Mark Quinsey and Stephen Carroll. "There is no justification whatsoever for the use of physical violence," he intoned.

If the Real IRA could only afford to hire Mr. Powell as a propagandist, they'd produce justification in double-quick time. They'd just make it up.

Powell was a prominent member of the Blair clique which concocted the lies used to lure the British people into support for the war on Iraq in which as many as a million people, the overwhelming majority of them innocent civilians, were to perish.

Eight months before the Iraq invasion, on July 23rd, 2002, a meeting at Downing Street decided to misrepresent an intelligence summary in order to supply justification for the bloodbath which they were in the process of organising. "One crucial alteration," reported the Sunday Times, "was to cut the observation that Saddam Hussein was more likely to use chemical and biological weapons defensively than offensively---a change was made after Jonathan Powell, Tony Blair's chief of staff, said the passage could pose 'a problem' that could be seized on by anti-war critics."

Telling the truth would boost the argument against going to war, so let's lie.

Two years ago, Powell continued to justify the invasion and occupation of Iraq on the basis that, "Al-Qaeda would use Iraq as a base to bid for world domination if we quit"---quite forgetting to mention that there was no al-Qaeda in Iraq until the bloody occupation which he had dishonestly helped procure.

This guy now presumes to lecture the rest of us on the evils of violence for political ends and the need for all decent citizens to help bring the organisers of such violence to book.

We should reject the notion promoted by Powell etc. that we are all faced with a stark choice---back the police or back the "dissidents". Many of us don't back either.

We need a way forward that strengthens the unity of working people and offers hope for a solution.

The trade union protests on Wednesday pointed the way forward. They brought people together to oppose the killings at a time when the need for working-class unity was never clearer. We are faced with relentless pressure on jobs, wages and public services from employers' groups and the government of Gordon Brown---with the Stormont Executive rubber-stamping the cuts demanded by the Treasury. This is economic violence directed against all working people.

The killings further divide the working class and are a disruption and diversion from the urgent task of organising united resistance to the attacks.

It is plain wrong and utterly futile to re-launch armed struggle. Any such campaign is likely to end in disaster for those who carry it out as well as for their victims. We need politics that encourage a fight-back against job losses, wage cuts, closure of services, racism, war, curtailment on civil liberties etc. We need unity in struggle and a clean break with communal ideas. Armed struggle will do nothing to achieve these ends.

'Left Republicanism' or Socialism from below?

By SEÁN MITCHELL

EIOIN O Broin's "Sinn Fein and the Politics of left Republicanism" is an important work, if only as an indicator of the political trajectory of the author, seen by some to represent a possible left wing alternative inside Sinn Fein to Adams.

This book, suggests the author, is not a work of history but rather "a critical engagement with the past, present and future of Sinn Fein and left republicanism". His aim is to draw out from various Republican movements of the past, a distinct left current, which he views Sinn Fein as part of, and to argue that its future lies "in the globally resurgent radical democratic left".

Unlike other republican writers he rejects the "unbroken thread" theory of Irish history. He rejects the view that republicans have been fighting the same fight for the same reasons, from the United Irishmen right through to their modern incarnation in Sinn Fein.

His section dealing with James Connolly and republicanism in the 20th Century is most revealing. Republicans like Gerry Adams often quote Connolly to give themselves a left cover, O'Broin doesn't do this. Instead he clearly rejects some of the main tenets of Connolly's socialist politics - that the working class are the main agency for change, and the need for a revolutionary party. He suggests that Connolly's weakness was that by having principled Marxist politics he was going nowhere.

His analysis of the failures of left republicanism, from the divisions in the Republican Congress, to the economism of Official Sinn Fein is useful but he fails to locate their demise as a product of Moscow dictat rather than Irish "structural problems".

A major weakness of a book is the lack of material and criticism of modern day Sinn Fein. O'Broin simply claims that Sinn Fein are left wing and rejects the notion that they have abandoned anti imperialism and anti capitalism. He approvingly cites various Sinn Fein policy documents down the years to prove that whilst its economic outlook is not as comprehensive as he would like, it is a left wing party.

However as Karl Marx once suggested, it is the reality of a political party one should look at, rather than "their conception of themselves". Sinn Fein has lots of fluffy vaguely left policy documents, but the reality of their political trajectory has been towards neo-liberalism.

In Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein makes much about their commitment to reducing the size of the state's public sector, and their commitment to lowering corporation tax. In the South, Sinn Fein dropped their past policy of higher tax on the rich and voted for the southern bank bail out. These are not unfortunate blips, but rather examples of Sinn Fein's commitment to propping up the capitalist system.

In the last chapter, O'Broin outlines eight theses on the future of Sinn Fein, a left republican manifesto if you will.

In his theses on strategy O'Broin essentially argues that change will come about by Sinn Fein getting into government, both North and South. This might possibly be alongside Fianna Fail, but he'd prefer a more left collation of Sinn Fein, Labour and the Greens. His strategy is therefore to get into government to invoke change, the working class should simply trust



Eoin O'Broin

Pic: Paula Gerahy

them. The masked men bringing change on behalf of everybody else are simply replaced by the suited men.

At the heart of what O'Broin argues is pessimism about working people changing their own lives. Everything he writes smacks of the old republican elitism, change will come through clever strategy, change will come from above.

This is not something new in the republican tradition. Kieran Allen succinctly summed up this trend:

"Nationalist movements in the 20th century have often sought to win a working class base by a left wing or populist language. But the working class is invariably seen as a battering ram to open the doors for a new nationalist elite. The suffering and heroism of the poor are celebrated by nationalist ideologues but there is a cold scepticism about the ability of that same class to liberate itself"

What O'Broin completely ignores in his assessment of modern day Sinn Fein is the class antagonisms that affect the party itself.

Sinn Fein does of course have a base in some working class areas particularly in the North. But it has also cultivated a relationship with the more affluent of our society, Sinn Fein regularly holds high priced fundraisers in top Irish hotels for its more bourgeois supporters and it has always had a relationship with Irish American capital.

O'Broin argues that he is for 'Democratic Socialism'. It is here that another problem emerges. What type of change, what type of society is he fighting for? He rejects "Leninist dogmas" and "outdated Keynesian welfareism" but what is his alternative? Unfortunately he doesn't offer one, what "left republicanism" actually represents isn't entirely clear.

Despite the gloss it is clear that 'left republicanism' is a spent force for radical change in Ireland, those looking to see real change should look to the thousands of working people who have been on the streets of Dublin recently, change comes from below, not from above.

Eoin O'Broin, *Sinn Fein and the Politics of Left Republicanism*, Pluto Press, 2009.

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No return to killing WORKERS UNITY TO RESIST CAPITALISM

By **COLM BRYCE** in Derry
and **SEAN MITCHELL** in Belfast

THE KILLINGS by the Real IRA and Continuity IRA in early March are both futile and counter-productive. They are designed to try and re-ignite the 'armed struggle', which the mainstream IRA abandoned long ago.

The CIRA and RIRA are essentially going down the same road as the Provisional IRA in the past. The strategy of armed struggle failed to deliver a United Ireland after thirty years, the only difference this time is that the dissidents are even smaller. The dissidents believe that their actions will inspire others to walk down a similar road but the fact is that the majority of people do not want a return to violence.

All the killings have done is increase the pressure on mainstream republicans to line up behind the state and the police.

The statement by Martin McGuinness that the dissident republicans were "traitors to the island of Ireland" is simply the logical conclusion for an organisation that has accommodated to the State.

It was closely watched by the leading figures in Unionism as evidence that Sinn Fein have finally made their peace with the establishment. Long gone is the suggestion by Sinn Fein that by supporting the police they could become the subversive force changing it from the inside.

Already there has been talk of increased police numbers, more surveillance and an increase in the use of British Army security services. Even before the killings, PSNI chief Hugh Orde announced that British Army Special Forces from the Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR) were being deployed in the North.

The SRR are a murderous section of the British establishment. The SRR recently ran death squads in Iraq targeting supporters of the resistance to the US-British occupation of that country. It was also involved in the operation which led to the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes on the London tube in July 2005.

They have also played a hor-

rendous role in Northern Ireland. When they were formed, the SRR incorporated an organisation called the Force Research Unit (FRU). Throughout the troubles FRU were responsible for gathering information on innocent Catholics and feeding it to loyalist paramilitaries. They were responsible for the handling of FRU agent, Brian Nelson, whose information led to the deaths

of at least 30 people. These included many people who had no connection to the IRA, including the Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane.

We must condemn the RIRA and CIRA killings but that should not mean that we line up with the state, or people like Gordon Brown who has a nerve to talk of 'peace' when he bears the responsibility for the deaths of hundreds of thousands

of civilians in Iraq and who was preparing to send the two British soldiers killed in Antrim to kill or be killed in Afghanistan.

It is not a question of either supporting the dissidents or the State. The SWP opposes the actions of the dissidents but also reject the idea that the solution in the North lies with people like Gordon Brown, the SRR or the PSNI.



No support for return to violence

What is the alternative?

THE RALLIES called at short notice by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) to protest at the killings were an important marker about the public mood of opposition.

Significant numbers of union members, including large delegations of postal workers, firefighters, council workers, health and civil service workers attended in Belfast, Derry and Newry. All of these trade unionists have taken action in the past to stop sectarian killings, especially the postal workers after the murder by the UDA of postal worker Daniel McColgan in 2002.

Union action like this has been crucial to securing an end to paramilitary campaigns, such as after the Greysteel massacre and the Shankill bombing.

They illustrate the potential to bring working people together on a different basis, in our common interest.

Only the trade union movement is in a position to even pose that alternative.

But too often the trade union leaders are deliberately vague about that alternative, or have confined themselves to calling on the politicians to sort things out at Stormont.

Indeed, the alternative demanded by the rallies on 11

March was sufficiently vague that the PSNI issued statements afterwards thanking those who attended for showing their support for the police.

What is needed is a radical socialist alternative that draws together the different strands of working class opposition in the North and aims at challenging capitalism.

The politicians at Stormont have no interest in doing that. In fact, until the recession hit, they had been the most enthusiastic promoters of free market capitalism, hoping to replicate the miracle economy of the South.

That meant cutting the public sector, privatisation of public resources through the Private Finance Initiative and jointly calling for a massive reduction in corporation tax as the way to attract multinational investment.

That strategy is now in tatters. The privatisation of public buildings had to be dropped earlier this year because no private companies had the money to invest. There has been hardly any new investment, despite numerous trips to North America by Stormont ministers and expensive conferences in Belfast to woo them. But they persevere with it regardless, because they

have no alternative. Martin McGuinness and Peter Robinson were in the US for St Patrick's Day again this year, yet again talking about attracting inward investment.

The working class movement in the North needs to learn quickly the lessons of the Celtic Tiger and the massive transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich that it involved. Despite all the wealth that was created, the public services are in a mess.

We urgently need to bring the spirit of the strikes and workplace occupations against job losses that have been happening in the South to the North. We need to encourage and support resistance to every factory closure, every cut in the public sector, every hospital closure and every case of privatisation that will be the price workers are expected to pay for the crisis of capitalism.

Only such a strategy, and the united struggle of working people for it, offers the possibility of a new direction for society here. It is the only thing that offers hope to the people in the poorest Protestant and Catholic areas that have seen little change from the last 15 years and who are only encouraged to see the other community as the cause of their problems.