

# Socialist Worker

## AS THE CRISIS DEEPENS...

# IMF says: 'Cut Child Benefit, Medical Cards & Social Welfare'



The IMF comes to town

THE IMF has urged the government to launch an all-out war on people who receive social protection payments.

They have demanded cuts in social welfare, an end to universal child benefits and the removal of the automatic entitlement to a medical card for the over 70s.

The Irish Independent and right wing radio shows have taken up the call by implying that social welfare is too high and that it operates as a 'disincentive' to returning to work.

But the reality is that:

- A single person in Ireland receives the third lowest level of social welfare in the EU 15.
- The ratio of social welfare benefits to previous take-home pay is extremely low. Luxembourg has the highest rate at 86.6% and Ireland has the lowest rate with 34.5%.
- Ireland spends a lower proportion of its economy on social protection than most other EU countries, coming 20th out of 27.

The right wing media try to hide these facts because they want to turn middle-income workers against those on social welfare.

They played the same trick by dividing public and private sector workers.

They hope that the anger and frustration of PAYE workers will be directed at scapegoats – rather than at the real cause of their misery.

The main reason why Ireland is suffering a crisis in public spending is twofold. First the austerity policies have failed and people who



want to work and pay taxes cannot find jobs.

There are, on average, fifty people unemployed for every job vacancy that appears.

So instead of revenue coming in to fund schools and hospitals, a higher proportion is spent on social welfare.

Second, the burden of paying for state services is falling overwhelmingly on PAYE workers because Ireland is a tax haven for the rich.

Even Obama's re-election campaign has named Ireland – alongside Bermuda – as a tax haven.

They pointed to how Mitt Romney had put money into a €23 billion Goldman Sachs fund located in the IFSC in Dublin to avoid US taxes.

Wealthy individuals like Romney use Ireland for their speculative ventures because there is no 'withholding tax' on dividends.

Gigantic pharmaceutical companies are also allowed to repatriate billions in royalty payments, without paying a penny in tax. Last year, \$24 billion flew out of Ireland through these types of payments.

And, of course, the Irish rich are

allowed to swan around the world, pretending to be tax fugitives.

If they claim to reside outside Ireland for more than 188 days a year, they do not have to pay tax here.

But why then do tax dodgers like Denis O' Brien need to keep four houses in Dublin 4 – if they are not supposed to be living here?

Instead of deflecting our anger onto social welfare recipients, we should target the wealthy.

But this does not mean falling for fake, left sounding arguments against universal benefits.

One of the tactics of the right wing media is to pose questions like 'But is it right that someone on over €100,000 receives child benefit'?

Their aim is to drive a wedge into the idea of universal benefits by taking an outlier case.

They fail to mention that means testing would lead to wasteful administrative costs.

The simplest answer is to tax wealthy people to the hilt.

No one should be on an income of over €100,000 and they should certainly be forced to contribute to society.

At the moment their effective tax rate is only 29 percent – according to a parliamentary reply given to the People Before Profit T.D., Richard Boyd Barrett.

If we change all that and put people back to work, there will be no public spending crisis.

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## Bord na Móna dispute set for Labour Court

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

BORD na Mona management have referred the dispute over unpaid pay increases to the Labour Court. Management is refusing to pay a 3.5% pay increase due to workers under the 'Towards 2016' transitional agreement.

Chairman of the Bord Na Mona Group of Unions, Oliver McDonagh, said; "we do not understand why the issue is now being referred to the Labour Court and believe that the proper procedure would be to go through the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) before the Court is asked to intervene." Management has started procedures in the Labour Court to try to stop strikes planned by workers in July and August from going ahead.

Earlier this month the Bord na Mona Group of

Unions notified management of two scheduled 48 hour work stoppages.

The first stoppage will begin on Wednesday, 25 July, at 12.01 a.m. and conclude at midnight on Thursday, 26 July. The second will begin on Wednesday, 22 August, at 12.01 a.m. and conclude at midnight on Thursday, 23 August 2012. Oliver McDonagh, said; "The actions will involve the placing of pickets on all Bord na Mona premises. Also from Wednesday, 25 July, our members will no longer use their personal mobile phones as a communication method for any form of Bord na Mona business."

The reaction of management shows the strikes are working. The best way to force the bosses to heel is to refuse to cancel the declared strike days unless management agrees immediately to institute the pay increases.

## Force unions to resist the 2012 Cost Cuts Deal



By EUGENE MACDONAGH

OVER the last few weeks the National Bus & Rail Union (NBRU) went into negotiations with Ianroid Eireann management and negotiated cuts to rail driver's conditions. A ballot took place on whether to accept these cuts on 29 June. The result was unfortunately 1700 for and 800 against the deal.

The NBRU and SIPTU need to break from this policy of conciliation and launch a major campaign to stop the cuts in Bus Eireann and Dublin Bus.

The company chairman's letter threatened drivers to accept these cuts in total or he'd cut basic pay. In reality the company will

come back for basic pay after drivers have given everything else: premium payment, overtime, sick pay, part time workers, and 450 plus buses gone.

There should be one clear union policy position - no negotiating on members pay or conditions.

Drivers should be demanding that the unions write to the company telling them they are not entering talks on the 2012 deal and instead ballot their members in advance of the 13 August for industrial action.

The company should be told that if they force through the cuts there will be an all-out dispute in both Bus Eireann and Dublin Bus.

# SSP workers in Dublin Airport ballot for strike

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

SIPTU bar workers employed by the multinational catering giant SSP in Dublin Airport have balloted for strike action to defend their jobs.

Many workers have decades of service for the company, who won the catering contract in Dublin Airport last February.

The tendering process was overseen by the Dublin Airport

Authority, but SSP paid lip service to Transfer of Undertaking laws before proceeding to force workers into accepting lower wages.

Six bar staff were selected for redundancy. The others were put on a four week 'trial' and told that if they were not sacked at the end of that period, they could continue in their jobs at €9.40 per hour - a pay cut in the order of 37%.

The workers appealed the implementation of the new condi-

tions, but have not received their rights as guaranteed under the law.

Rather than responding to the mood for a ballot for industrial action SIPTU has mistakenly bought into the redundancies and engaged in a process of negotiating redundancy terms.

As Socialist Worker went to press the workers have rejected this approach and insisted on a strike ballot.

## Strike at Lakewood Regional Care Centre, Bangor

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

WORKERS at the Lakewood Regional Secure Care Centre in Bangor, Northern Ireland, called a rally in support of their strike on Tuesday 24 July.

NIPSA members employed by the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust as Night Shift Supervisors have been on all out strike since 18 June 2012 over a dispute in relation to an unacceptable change to their shift rota.



In recent days the Trust has signalled that they are not prepared to negotiate further to



resolve this dispute. Geraldine Mullan, NIPSA Branch Chairperson said, "Our members are determined to ensure their terms and conditions are protected. It is great to see the support of fellow workers, trade unionists and trades councils for our members."

## Lagan Brick dispute set for Labour Court hearing

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

THE industrial dispute at the Lagan Brick manufacturing plant, Kingscourt, Co. Cavan was recently referred to a full hearing of the Labour Court on request of the workers.

The workers have been in dispute for over six months.

It began when staff were locked out of their workplace by the management of Lagan Brick in the run up to Christmas last year.

Lagan Brick is a subsidiary of Lagan Group, one of the biggest construction firms in Ireland.

In 2010, their most recent published accounts; Lagan Group profits before tax were £4.1m with a turnover



of £165m. To date, all other Labour Relations Commission processes and mediation attempts to get the

workers their rights have been blocked by the company.

The workers previously occupied Lagan Group's head

office in Belfast. It may take more militant action like this to force the company to pay the workers their money.

### NEWS IN BRIEF

#### Deaths at work increasing

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

THE Health and Safety Authority (HSA) annual report for 2011, published in June, said that for the third consecutive year there has been an increase in the number of people killed at work, even though the numbers at work are decreasing.

In 2010, there was an 84% increase in the number of days lost at work due to accidents and illnesses when compared to 2009.

This shows that the first thing companies cut in a recession is the health and safety of their workers - all to save profits.

Minister Bruton has stated that he is committed to 'combating workplace fatalities.' But the Government plans to cut the annual budget of the HSA.

This will mean fewer workplace inspections and even more accidents and deaths. Ireland already has fewer Health and Safety inspectors than dog wardens. Workers lives are more important than company profits, HSA funding should be increased not cut.

#### Carton Brothers' workers win €500,000 redundancy

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

TWENTY three workers at the Carton Brothers' hatchery in Carrickmacross, Co. Mongahan won their four year dispute with the company.

The workers forced the company to honour a redundancy deal worth over €500,000 in full. The workers, some of whom had worked for over 30 years at the company, agreed the redundancy deal in the Labour Relations Commission in 2008 as part of the company's closure of its hatchery in Carrickmacross.

Congratulations to the workers stamina. But this result only serves to highlight why we need stronger trade union rights to guarantee that workers' entitlements are delivered more speedily.

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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.

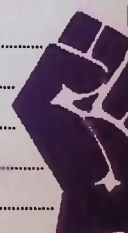
We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent

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## The billionaires soap opera

Sean Quinn was once the richest person in Ireland but he pretended to be a self-made man with simple tastes.

At the height of his fame, he told RTE radio that he just liked sitting at home and playing a few card games with friends.

But his little home was a palatial mansion in Ballyconnell complete with an indoor golf simulator, a putting green overlooking a 15 metre swimming pool, a sunken hot tub, a Jacuzzi pool, a cinema and snooker room.

Quinn borrowed €2.5 billion in order to fund his speculative activities and became the biggest casualty of the crash.

But like all the Irish rich, he has a tremendous sense of entitlement and has spent the last 18 months hatching a scheme to put €500 million of his assets beyond the reach of the state.

Behind the poor mouth rhetoric, is a ruthless businessman who thinks the Irish people owe him a living.

If Quinn lived on social welfare and committed any fraud, he would be serving a year long prison sentence now. But the media talk about the 'human drama' and turn the whole affair into a soap opera.

The only amazing thing about the Quinn saga is that his son Sean is the only one in jail. The cousin, Peter, has skipped off and, according to the Irish Times; nothing can be done to compel him to return.

Beyond the Quinn family, there are a host of others at the top of Anglo-Irish who are still playing at their golf clubs. Anglo-Irish bank ran one of the biggest scams in Irish business history and it is costing the people of Ireland €49 billion.

Yet four years after the crisis broke, not a single director has been landed in jail.

A group of executives at Anglo-Irish refused to co-operate with investigations while the director of corporate enforcement, Paul Appleby, merely said he had no powers to force them to give evidence. Appleby will soon retire on a lump sum of €225,000 and an annual pension of €73,000.

If we had any sort of decent system, Quinn would be in jail; his mansion would be opened as a tourist attraction, maybe as a Museum of Corporate Arrogance; and the rest of the Anglo crew would join him in neighboring cells.

## SYRIA: Down with dictatorship— No Western intervention

**THE Syrian regime is under heavy pressure as the revolt spreads to the main cities of Aleppo and Damascus.**

Socialists should give their full support to the overthrow of the foul, murderous dictatorship. The Assad clan built up a corrupt power base through their links with top business people and then embarked on the same type of neoliberal reforms that Mubarak did in Egypt.

For its own reasons, the regime was part of a rejectionist front against Israel and supplied arms to the Hezbollah forces in Lebanon.

But it was never a consistently anti-imperialist regime as some of its apologists have claimed. Even though it controlled much of Lebanon, in 1982, it stood aside while fascist forces murdered up to 3,000 Palestinians at the Sabra camp in 1982.

A rhetoric of anti-imperialism is no reason to justify murderous attacks on one's own people. A left that does not support the spread of the Arab revolt to Syria - because it is frightened of the outcome - will be permanently irrelevant.

True, there are many forces, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United States that want to use the situation to their advantage. Their main supporter, the Syrian National Council, openly calls for intervention.

But the mere mention of Saudi Arabia and a fight for freedom should be enough to provoke howls of laughter. This regime is oppressing its own people and those of Bahrain.

Nor does the US or the Western powers have any role. For decades, they propped up the Arab dictators of the Middle East and intervened only to take control of the region's oil supplies.

Our hope is that the revolution grows quickly and overthrows Assad - and closes down the opportunties for imperialist intervention.

# Anti-Austerity campaigners surround the Dáil



By BRIAN O' BOYLE

AROUND 1,200 people surrounded the Dáil on Wednesday 18 July to protest against the government's ongoing austerity drive.

The event was organised by the campaign against household and water taxes (CAHWT), but included representatives from anti-austerity campaigns across the country.

Despite poor weather and short notice, the turnout was impressive and the mood was one of anger and determination.

Among the speakers were

campaigners for single parents, community employment schemes, left politicians and prominent trade unionists.

The message from all was clear - austerity is devastating Irish families and this government will be consistently opposed so long as it insists on defending the wealthy.

### The CAHWT

Part of this opposition will continue to come from the incredibly successful CAHWT.

To date, over 40,000 people have attended public meetings, 30,000 people have joined the

campaign, and tens of thousands have taken to the streets.

This has helped to galvanise the population more generally with 52% of homeowners yet to register for the household charge.

Such has been the success of the boycott campaign that the Sunday Business Post this week confirmed that the Revenue Commissioners will be asked to collect the incoming property tax.

Moreover, just as we feared, the average householder will be expected to pay somewhere in the region of €300 to €500.

This will cause untold hard-

ship. And as the government changes its line of attack the CAHWT must adapt.

If the state tries to take this money from the PAYE system, the campaign must immediately call on trade unions to resist.

Specifically, members of the campaign should put motions to their local branches calling on their respective unions to openly oppose the government.

So far the campaign has been overwhelmingly based in local communities.

Let's make sure that workplaces join the struggle over the coming period.

## O' Brien is the real tax dodger

By MICHAEL O' MARA

OVER the last number of weeks Independent News and Media (INM) have run a smear campaign against the left.

Typical of these nasty and cynical attacks was an article, by their political editor, Fionnan Sheahan, entitled 'Letter Plan to Target Household Tax Dodgers!'

What Mr Sheahan conveniently fails to mention is that his employer, billionaire Denis O' Brien, is the biggest tax dodger of them all.

O' Brien, who made his fortune after the awarding of the state's second mobile licence is one of Ireland's richest men.

The Sunday Times Rich List puts his wealth at €2.92 billion. Forbes Magazine reckons it is closer to €3.05 billion.

In the year to March



O'Brien and Kenny

2011, profits in O'Brien's telecommunications empire, Digicel, were up 27% to \$2.23 billion.

In 2010 O'Brien personally

pocketed a whopping \$693 million from the sale of his Digicel Pacific Ltd business to the Digicel Group.

Despite this lavish wealth,

O'Brien pays virtually no taxes to the Irish state.

In 2000 O' Brien sold Esat Digiphone to British Telecom for €2.4 billion, netting €300 million which helped to finance Digicel.

Just before the deal however, O' Brien changed his tax residency to the Portuguese holiday home of Quinta do Lago, saving himself €55 million in capital gains tax.

He has since moved to Malta, where as a 'resident', he effectively pays no taxes.

If O'Brien was forced to pay his fair share for even one year, it would far surpass the €160 million from the household charge.

O'Brien and his cronies are the real tax dodgers and INM would do well to remember this when they start their smear campaigns against struggling families.

As the IMF demands further cuts to the Health Budget, Socialist Worker takes

# Cuts are taking their

By BRIAN O' BOYLE

THIS week saw the real possibility that many parts of our public health service will soon run out of money.

With an official over-run of around €280 million to the end of May, minister for

Health, James Reilly, is not even bothering to promise that frontline services can be fully protected.

According to outgoing chief executive, Cathal Magee, the HSE budget is around €1 billion less than it was last

year.

Almost 10,000 people have already exited the public healthcare system and the HSE has now officially banned recruitment because it simply cannot afford replacement staff.

Widespread hospital bed closures are also being implemented, adding to existing pressure on resources and staff moral.

Slashing beds and refusing to fill vital posts will inevitably lead to increasing waiting

lists over the life-term of this government.

This breaks explicit promises from the Programme for Government, and the situation in mental health care has become particularly distressing.

## Reilly looks to make a 'healthy profit' on private nursing homes

By NICHOLA HARVEY

A slowly simmering battle is underway on one of the most important issues facing every worker in the State.

As the population continues to age the Government is attacking that most fundamental tenet of social decency – caring for the vulnerable in our society – by turning care of the elderly into a for-profit business.

While the number of people over the age of 65 increases exponentially, Minister for Health, James Reilly, is closing public nursing-home beds at rate of 75 a month, while helping his friends and supporters open private, for-profit beds at a rate of almost 60 a month.

The key differences between public and private long-stay nursing care? Care for care's sake versus care for profit.

The increasing need for long-term care has been evident for years.

The Economic and Social Research Institute three years ago said the population of people over 65 would increase from 467,926 in 2006 to 792,067 by 2021.

The population over 65 with severe disabilities would increase from 94,400 to 147,677 in the same period, while the demand for long-term care places would go up from 22,500 to 35,800.

And the demand may even further increase as acute hospital beds are closed across the State.

### Government spin

Instead of investing in long-term care for the elderly – which could be something any one of us will one day need – nearly 300 beds in public nursing homes have closed since the start of the year.

The HSE wants to close 898 beds by the end of 2012. Meanwhile the number of private beds has increased from 14,500 in 2002 to 21,000 today, the vast majority with the help of lavish tax-breaks.

Reilly and the mandarins in the Health Service Executive say public care is too expensive. They say the public facilities are out-of-date and need refurbishment and do not meet acceptable standards. They talk publicly about achieving "value for money".

The strategy is clearly part of the ongoing agenda of this Government and their EU-IMF masters – to drive



down wages, drive down services and turn everything possible into a commodity.

### Cost

Let's look at cost. According to the Comptroller and Auditor General the average cost of a week's stay in a private nursing home in 2010 was €865 while a public bed was €1,245 a week.

In Dublin the difference is greater – €1,200 in private care and €2,000

There is also the fact that public homes must take high-dependency cases, while the private ones won't.

Take into account the fact the private operators are making profits out of those lower fees and it is clear something is missing in the private care – decency. Decent working conditions, decent wages, decent care.

### Quality

Let's look at facilities and quality. Two recent battles tell a lot. In Galway the

keep it open and glowing reports of its standard of care by the Health Information and Quality Authority (Hiqa).

Local independent councillor, Catherine Connolly, who campaigned to keep it open, told Socialist Worker it was a "classic example of this Government's policy to close down public beds".

The 38 residents have been moved to a private home in Oughterard, which, according to Connolly, has been criticised by Hiqa for having insufficient staff. "And so the HSE West now has two HSE nursing managers in running the place. It's bizarre."

In Abbeyleix, Co Laois, the HSE announced plans in November to close the 33-bed community nursing home. A local campaign was mobilised immediately.

Hiqa made an unannounced visit in January and inspectors were satisfied all residents' nursing and healthcare needs were being met.

### People power

A determined 3,000 people, including some of the elderly residents braved bitter weather in April to rally against the planned closure. In a letter read to the crowd, resident Brigid O'Neill (92) said she did not want to leave the friends she had made in her four

years at Abbeyleix Community Nursing Home. She called on bully-boy Reilly to "leave us in peace".

Catherine Kelly (94) said she and other residents were "just going to keep this hospital open".

"This is our home and we're not leaving our home. I don't want to leave it. I'm very, very happy. We're looked after the best. We're all friends. We're all one big family."

Local GP, Dr John Madden said the home was a "role model for community care, with the medical conditions of many residents too complex to be dealt with in the private service".

The HSE was unconvinced. It remained determined to close the "role model for community care".

It was when three of the residents threatened legal action that it backed down on its privatisation agenda and agreed to engage in consultations on the future of the home.

Whether it is merely a sop remains to be seen. The likelihood is that it is and the battle must go on. The closing date for submissions was last Friday 19 July.

This is a key moment in the battle for quality, publicly provided care. Public care is provided by unionised, highly-trained workers, paid decent wages and who are in a position to resist the constant pressure to drive down costs – and so the quality of care.

Reilly speaks of the need to "negotiate better value" in the private sector.

Even the greed-driven private operators say if costs are driven down much further care is inevitably going to be affected. Private nursing homes have fewer nursing staff and a higher proportion of low-wage carers, all non-unionised.

Nursing Homes Ireland – which represents 357 private operators in charge of 436 homes – talks proudly of how its members deliver care at 42 per cent less than the public homes.

It makes perfect sense for them to drive this agenda as they set their targets on the increasing numbers of elderly, vulnerable people, and their exhausted, anxious families, seeing them as nothing more than a never-ending flow of profit.

We must fight the commodification of our most vulnerable citizens. As further public homes come under the greed-driven gaze of the private sector we must rally to keep them in our hands. It cannot be left to residents to fight for their homes alone.



in public. The cost is greater because that is what it actually costs to provide decent care.

only public nursing home, St Francis in Newcastle, was closed by the HSE in May despite huge local protests to

## Focus on Health

a look at the 'for profit' revolution underway in the Health Services Executive.

# toll on vital services

### Mental health

Mental health problems are widely accepted to increase during periods of economic crisis.

In the two years to 2009 Irish suicide rates jumped by

over 16%, with around 1/3 of these cases being linked to the loss of employment in the previous 12 months.

Budget 2012 supposedly provided €35 million to hire 414 staff to help improve this chronically underfunded area

of provision.

But eight months later none of these posts have been filled.

This is the human cost of the government's austerity drive and unfortunately there is little good news on the horizon.

Despite a series of relentless

attacks, the Troika is demanding a further €680 million of health cuts between 2012 and 2014.

This makes a mockery of the government's commitment to provide a more equitable service for Irish patients.

The rich can already skip queues and demand the best attention from specialist teams.

The poor are meanwhile facing some of the longest waiting times in the whole of the EU.

## Home Help services face threat of privatisation



by TINA MACVEIGH

IN the midst of the scandal surrounding Minister Reilly's investment in private nursing homes, yet another attack on the vulnerable is being meted out by the Government.

It has emerged that HSE funding for the provision of community based Home Help and Care services are to be tendered out.

Voluntary Boards, who are currently funded to provide the services, will now have to compete with private companies.

As most Voluntary Boards face funding cuts, it is likely that private companies will be in a position to undercut them.

But these companies don't care about the quality of the service provided, they care about profit.

Instead of the current practice

where an hour is usually spent with the person being cared for, Home Helps will be expected to attend up to four people in one hour.

In fact, as Voluntary Boards prepare to compete with private companies, some have already implemented these changes to care time.

As the government paves the way for mass privatisation, the quality and quantity of vital care services to the sick, disabled and the elderly in our communities, is under threat.

Under the terms of the EU Fiscal Treaty, any public services that have a potential revenue stream are now subject to EU Competition laws.

This basically allows for mass privatisation of public services, not just care and home help, but transport, water and waste

collection, among others.

While SIPTU are mounting a campaign against the privatisation of the Home Help and Care Sector, it is vital that communities come out in support of the workers, the people they care for and their families.

### Getting Organised

In a series of People Before Profit meetings held in Inchicore, Ballyfermot, Rialto and Donnycarney, hundreds of workers have come together to get organised.

Community based support groups have been set up, local activities organised and motions drafted to bring to union meetings.

These motions call for equalisation of conditions in the sector, the provision of free

training to workers and a call on SIPTU to mount a national campaign.

It is scandalous that this vital community based service is coming under the hammer of privatisation. While the government protects Minister Reilly and his investments in private nursing homes, they are happy to launch another attack on the vulnerable – people will be forced out of their homes into hospitals and nursing homes.

As the provision of public hospitals and care services are slashed, the only option for people will be to rely on the private sector. Only those who can afford the services will get them.

If you are a Home Help or Care Worker and want to find out more about the campaign call John Lyons (North City) 087 772 9292 Brid Smith (Ballyfermot Inchicore) 087 909 0166 or Tina MacVeigh (Rialto Liberties) 086 871 5293.

## Five key government health promises that have failed to materialise

■ **Promise** - Access to primary care without fees will be extended in the first year of government to 56,000 claimants of free drugs under the long term illness scheme

□ **Outcome** - Four months into its second year of office and all of these patients are still waiting

■ **Promise** - A new contract to provide incentives for GP's to care more intensively for patients with chronic illness

□ **Outcome** - Talks with GP's have not even started.

■ **Promise** - Under a new contract, hospital consultants pay and conditions to be reduced

□ **Outcome** - **Unsurprisingly as a former lobbyist for consultants, Reilly has made a complete u-turn on this promise. Cuts for consultants are no longer on the cards.**

■ **Promise** - Claimants under the long term illness scheme will get free GP care

□ **Outcome** - To date nothing has happened on this issue.

■ **Promise** - Breastcheck will be extended to all women aged 65-69

□ **Outcome** - To date this process has not started

Source: Sunday Business Post

# Europe's new radical left



By JOHN MOLYNEUX

One of the most important political developments of recent months has been the rapid emergence of the radical left as a significant force in several European countries.

Leading the field, of course, has been Syriza, the Coalition of the Radical Left, in Greece. Syriza's rise has been meteoric.

In the elections of October 2009 Syriza gained 4.6% of the vote and returned 13 MPs (which shortly fell to 9 due to a split). In the election of 6 May this year its vote rose to 16.8%, finishing second to the right wing New Democracy and winning 52 seats.

From the moment it appeared as a credible contender for power Syriza took a further leap forward in the polls, surging to 31.5% on 1 June, an astonishing 6 points ahead of New Democracy.

They fell back a bit from this in the actual June elections, under the pressure of intense media scaremongering, and were narrowly defeated but still gained a massive 26.9% and 71 seats. This was the best result for the radical left anywhere in Europe for a generation or more.

Syriza's success followed on the heels of Jean Luc Melenchon's performance in the French presidential election in April.

Melenchon, leader of the Front de Gauche, polled 11.1% (4 million votes) and came fourth (behind Hollande, Sarkozy, and the fascist Le Pen), which was less than hoped for, but by all accounts he ran an outstanding campaign.

Melenchon denounced the bosses, the system and Le Pen in fiery language and mobilized huge rallies: 100,000 at the Bastille, 70,000 in Toulouse and 100,000 in Marseille.

But if Syriza and Front de Gauche are the headline news the picture is not confined to Greece and France.

In the Netherlands an opinion poll early in the year showed the left wing Socialist Party (well to the left of Labour) as the most popular party in the country and potentially more than doubling its seats. While in Denmark at the end of June the Red Green

Alliance reached new heights in opinion polls with 12-14% - at the same time as the Social Democrats reached a historic low of 16-17%.

And even in Britain, where the non-proportional electoral system makes it far more difficult for new parties to get a foothold, George Galloway of Respect, standing on a radical left anti-war, anti-austerity platform, won a stunning victory in the Bradford West by-election, polling 55.9% and beating Labour by more than 10,000, with the Tories out of sight.

Moreover, in making these advances these new left forces are joining the United Left Alliance in Ireland, who made their breakthrough in early 2011, and the longer established, Die Linke or Left Party in Germany, though they have slipped back a little recently.

There is no mystery about the cause of this development.

As a result of the global economic crisis and the austerity policies pursued by our rulers there is a huge international wave of anger, resistance, and revolt and election results, at least partially, reflect this.

There is also a political polarization taking place with the pro-austerity 'centre' losing ground: the predominant trend is leftwards but significant and menacing gains are also being made on the racist and fascist right - Le Pen and the Front National in France, Golden Dawn in Greece, the Jobbik Party in Hungary and so on.

## The Politics of the Radical Left

Each of the parties of the radical left has its own particular history but there tend to be some common features. They are mostly coalitions of pre-existing left groups and parties.

The largest component in many of them are former Communist Parties but they are moderate, so-called 'Euro communist' CPs who long ago cut their ties to Russia.

Thus the dominant element in Syriza is the former eurocommunist Synaspismos led by Alex Tsipras. Another element tends to be left splits from the old Social Democrats, such as Melenchon and

the Left Party in France and Oscar Lafontaine in Germany.

The absence of a left split from the Labour Party (apart from Galloway as an individual) is the key reason there is no such radical left force in Britain.

However the main feature of all the new left parties or coalitions is that their politics are left reformist. Both words are important here.

The 'left' marks them as significantly different from the right or 'moderate' reformists of the mainstream Labour and social democratic parties - PASOK in Greece, the French Socialist Party, British and Irish Labour etc.

Whereas these parties have given up any idea of seriously challenging capitalism and accepted neo-liberalism (the rule of the free market), aspiring - at most to protect working people from some of the worst effects of the crisis, and in practice not even delivering this, the radical left presents itself as offering a real alternative to capitalism and its cuts.

Reformist signifies that they aim to achieve this alternative by step by step legislative reforms using the existing political system ie by winning a majority in parliament and taking control of the existing state apparatus (police, army, civil service etc).

It is important to understand that this left reformist stance corresponds to the mood of millions of working people across Europe.

They are bitterly disillusioned with the existing system which is offering them only an endless diet of crisis, cutbacks and corruption. They yearn for policies that would genuinely put people before profit.

At the same time the majority of them do not yet feel strong enough, even in Greece, to take over the running of production and society themselves - which is what revolution as opposed to reform would involve.

## Where we stand

Socialist Worker warmly welcomes the rise of the radical left because it is an expression of the deep radicalization that is taking place among the mass of ordinary people internationally - and we must remember

this process is not at all confined to Europe.

However we are revolutionaries not reformists.

This is not because we prefer revolution to reform - on the contrary we welcome and support every reform that benefits working people - but because we do not believe that capitalism can be transformed by means of reform.

This argument has two main elements to it.

First, we do not believe the present crisis of the system, which is a very deep crisis, can be solved by reforms.

Consequently any reforms won - increased wages, reversal of cuts, improvements in benefits, fairer taxes - will continue to be threatened by a capitalist system that operates, and can only operate, on the basis of the pursuit of profit.

A parliamentary majority does not give control over the real centres of wealth and power in the banks and boardrooms of the corporations.

Second, the existing institutions of the state - including parliament - are centres of privilege tied by a thousand threads to the rich and powerful and by their nature do not serve the interests of working people.

They have to be swept away and replaced by much more democratic institutions created and controlled from below.

This is what a revolution means and why revolution is necessary.

At present only a minority, although a growing minority, accept this revolutionary argument even though they desperately want change.

Therefore revolutionary socialists have to support the radical left against the old social democrats and the right and struggle alongside their supporters in campaigns and united fronts - in Ireland this means building People before Profit as part of the United Left Alliance - so as to put the reformist perspective to the test in practice.

At the same time we need to continue the patient work of building a revolutionary party and movement because that is what will be needed in the end.

# Syrian revolution at the crossroads

By SIMON ASSAF

THE Syrian revolution has reached a new crossroads.

Recent regime massacres have combined with a series of defections that could open the door to greater influence by the West.

Some 200 people are said to have been killed in an offensive on the village of Tremseh, west of Hama, on Thursday of last week.

The details of that day remain unclear.

But credible reports point to the regime's use of overwhelming force followed by a murderous sweep of the village by the pro-regime Shabiha militia.

The village lies in a region that straddles a growing fracture line between Sunni majority areas and those of the Alawi minority.

The massacre is seen as another attempt by the regime to drown the revolution in sectarian bloodletting.

The LCCs, the network of local committees directing the revolution, condemned the massacre and warned against sectarianism.

In a statement it said, "Syrians today are called on to take heed of, and be alert to, what the criminal regime is doing to their revolution, community and their future state."

Although there is a danger of sectarianism and of growing foreign interference, as yet neither has been successful in derailing the revolt.

Syria's revolution is still a force to be reckoned with.

Despite the increasing militarisation of the revolt, popular



protests are still taking place—in the face of unrelenting violence from the regime.

However, so far the mass protests have been unable to make a decisive shift in the struggle to bring down Assad.

In this context the Red Cross has declared a civil war.

This could lead to increased pressure from the United Nations to impose a settlement in which the opposition would be expected to sit down with representatives

of Assad's dictatorship.

## Defections

Predictably, the West has also pounced on the defections of Brigadier General Manaf Tlass - until recently the head of the elite Republican Guard - and Nawaf Fares.

Fares was the Syrian ambassador to Iraq.

Tlass, who is from the Sunni dynasty with deep roots in the regime, is now being touted as the

prime candidate to run a regime of former loyalists.

A section of the Syrian opposition went to Russia to sell Tlass as a safe pair of hands that could offer guarantees to it.

The West see him as a man they can do business with.

The defections have exposed fractures inside the regime, and were welcomed by the revolution.

Yet there is deep unease over any role former regime loyalists will have in the future.

The Syrian revolution has two enemies. Assad wants to crush it to remain in power.

The Western powers want to hijack it to ensure a friendly government replaces him.

The current stalemate cannot last indefinitely.

The longer the revolution is held back, the greater the chance that the dreams of freedom that inspired it will not be realised. But there is still much to fight for.

## Strike by workers who opened door to Egypt's revolution

by ANNE ALEXANDER

SOME 23,000 workers at the giant Misr Spinning plant in Mahalla al-Kubra, Egypt, went on strike on Sunday 15 July.

Over 3,000 workers set up camp in the factory grounds.

They elected committees to oversee organisation, security, negotiations and provisions.

The Misr plant was the birthplace of the strike wave in 2006 which opened the gates of the revolution.

Now the workers are demanding the sacking of Fouad Abd-al-Alim—the head of the public sector Holding Company for Weaving and Garment Production.

He used to run the Mahalla company, and workers say he was inefficient and corrupt.

They also want an increased share of profits.

But this is not just a strike against a corrupt boss and for better bonuses.

Workers are fighting to save their company.

The Misr mill has been on short-time working for months. Workers are demanding that the government invests in the factory, rather than running it down.

The Mahalla workers are not alone in challenging newly-elected president Morsi.

Strikes have multiplied in the last two weeks.

In Suez alone, workers at 12 companies were on strike this Monday. Misr strike leader Faysal Loqasha said, "Workers will make a new revolution".

## The struggle in Sudan threatens Bashir dictatorship

THE anger behind the Sudanese protests is deep rooted, writes Osama Zumam

PEOPLE in Sudan have been protesting for weeks against Omar al-Bashir's repressive dictatorship.

So far the biggest protests took place on the anniversary of the coup which brought the National Islamic Front to power on 30 June 1989.

The wave of protests had begun two weeks earlier in opposition to austerity measures the government had just introduced. But to really understand the current struggle we need to look at the history of the regime.

Behind its Islamic ideology is neoliberalism. Unions and political parties have no space to organise.

The party has become the state and the state the party.

The current uprising comes out of years of repression, injustice and a war that led to the south splitting off last year to form a separate country, South Sudan.

Oil has transformed how outside powers view the country—particularly the US and China. When the south separated it took most of the oil producing areas.



The border is still disputed and fighting continues in the oil-producing Blue Nile state. The civil war has also continued in the Nuba mountains and Darfur, creating more misery and refugees.

Almost all the government's income before the split came from oil.

This means that the world economic crisis has hit Sudan very harshly.

People have resisted throughout the past 23 years, but both the government and international forces have created divisions among the opposition.

Today's struggle is

more problematic for the government. It can be a real threat if students, workers and the unemployed work together.

The youth are leading the revolution. The spark for the current uprising was at the University of Khartoum. Youth groups are organising through social media.

The brave activists fighting back are impatient and lack experience. Sometimes they try to copy tactics from the Egyptian Revolution.

But without knowing how the Egyptians related to different sections of society they risk isolating themselves from workers and ordinary people.

## PROTESTS AGAINST AUSTERITY CUTS ERUPT ACROSS SPAIN

by HELIOS ALONSO IN Madrid

Massive demonstrations against austerity rocked cities across Spain on Thursday night.

There were around 300,000 people in Barcelona. Firefighters blocked roads to keep riot police away from the demonstration.

The streets of Sevilla and Valencia were packed out too.

In the capital Madrid, unions claimed 800,000 people and even newspapers acknowledged hundreds of thousands.

It was a bigger demonstration than the one that accompanied the general strike in March.

At Atocha station, half a mile from the starting point, all the trains were full of people on their way to the demonstration.

On the metro I saw one of the guards talking to a friend.

"We have to get there, it's going to be awesome," he said.

The demonstrations were called by Spain's biggest union federations.

They are protesting against a cuts programme that amounts to a Spanish version of the "shock therapy" inflicted on



Thursday's demonstration in Madrid (Pic: Helios Alonso)

developing countries.

Spain's right wing prime minister Mariano Rajoy announced the cuts just as the spirit of the ongoing miners' strike was spreading to other workers across Spain.

It has particularly struck a chord with public sector workers, who have marched on congress every day of the past week against Rajoy's cuts to their wages.

The demos have been joined by firefighters who have been fighting cuts and attacks on their conditions for two years now.

In Madrid they were among those leading a breakaway march

through police lines to the congress building.

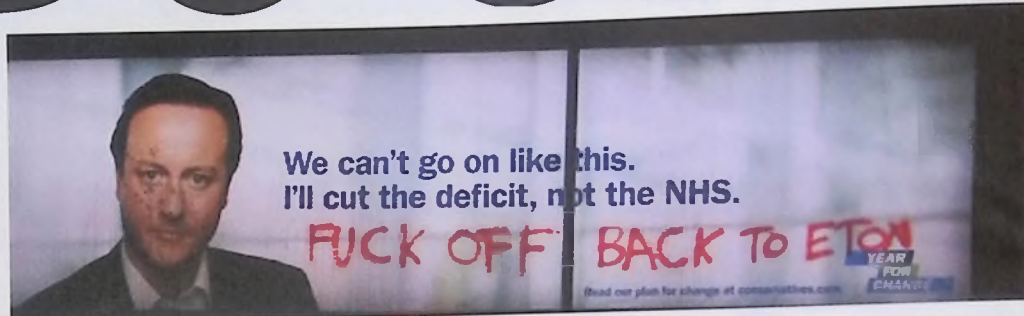
University student Isa told me she had had enough of the government once she realised her tuition fees were about to triple—and she is far from the worst hit.

Songs and slogans celebrated the power of workers' struggle and the need to fight back. One popular chant was "Mariano—you won't last the summer."

As the anger and determination of the miners, the firefighters and the Indignados movement continues to spread, Spain has all the ingredients for a very hot summer.

# Socialist Worker

# HANDS OFF OUR BENEFITS!



## Scrap the Welfare Reform Bill!

MILLIONAIRE rich boy David Cameron has announced more deep cuts in a move that will see under-25s having their housing benefit stolen from them.

Under 35's have already lost up to £30 a week from their housing benefits.

Now this latest assault will make it impossible for young people to live in their homes with high rent prices meaning that the most vulnerable may be forced to live on the streets

Cameron also stated that if you are poor and have children you could lose your benefits for being "irresponsible".

This gets to the heart of Cameron's agenda – attacking the most vulnerable that rely on benefits whilst letting the super wealthy continue to avoid paying their taxes.

Cameron complained about Jimmy Carr not paying his fair share, but the real tax dodgers are the likes of Lord Ashcroft, a top Tory donor, who gets away with not paying £100 million in taxes. Profits of the greedy bosses should be cut not housing benefits.

The Tories want to paint a vulgar picture of "scroungers" who are unemployed receiving housing benefits. The reality is that many people on housing benefit are workers who are low paid and cannot afford the sky rocket rent prices charged by landlords. Just over 55% of new housing benefits claimants this year were workers, that figure looks set to reach one million by next year.

### Stormont Lackeys

The Tories have created these cuts but the politicians in Stormont are implementing them.

Despite trying to appear on the side of the poor and



working people, politicians in Stormont are doing their utmost to delay voting on the Welfare Reform Bill which will see the same attacks launched by the Tories in Britain hit families in the North.

Two scheduled dates for the bill to be discussed on 'the hill' have already been postponed as the politicians strive to keep their plans under wraps.

The DUP and SF want to show they are big time players on the political stage and that they can pass this piece of legislation.

However there is a bolt of resistance waiting for them if they do. In communities and workplaces there will be an explosion of anger and fury if the executive parties push through these cuts.

We need to send a message to the politicians in Stormont that we won't stand for these attacks.

If the Assembly really wants to be on the side of working people then they should scrap the welfare reform bill. Anger on the street is the only thing that will force them to do this.

**Inside Page Two – Strike at Lakewood Regional Care Centre Bangor**