

Editorial

Throughout the eighteen months of the IMRs existence the joint question of the recession and austerity i.e. the determination of the ruling class internationally to make our class internationally pay for the crisis, has been the overarching political issue. Of necessity, therefore, it has been the question to which IMR has repeatedly returned.

This issue is no exception and we are very pleased to publish Michael Taft's expert study of the class impact of the recession in Ireland. This demonstrates graphically how the capitalist class has been able to use the recession to systematically enlarge capital's share of the national income at the expense of labour and makes proposals for demands around which the forces of organised labour can fight back.

In the editorial of IMR5 I argued that the main focus for resistance to austerity in the immediate future was likely to be the campaign against the property tax and so far in 2013 that has proved broadly true. However, the level of militancy, though high, has been concentrated among a minority; not an insignificant minority but not by itself sufficient to break the tax or defeat the government.

Nevertheless despite relentless threats, intimidation and bullying from both government and media a whole layer of resisters have held out past the deadline of May 28/29 and refused to register - at the time of writing it is not yet clear exactly how many these are - so the battle is by no means over. And new flash points may develop when Revenue tries to take money directly from people's wages, benefits or bank accounts or when the property tax doubles next year or water charges are brought in.

At the same time 2013 has seen a num-

ber of other fronts of resistance open up so the notion, held by some on the left, that the property tax campaign was the only game in town must be abandoned.

First, there is the ongoing struggle for a woman's right to choose. This should not be seen as a completely isolated or separate issue. Abortion is, and has always been, a class issue and a climate of austerity makes the need for free, safe and legal abortion even more urgent. Moreover in times when they feel threatened on economic grounds sections of the ruling class can turn to issues such as this mobilize conservative opinion behind them.

When the story of Savita Halappanavar's tragic death broke it sparked national (and international) uproar which included a massive 20,000 strong demonstration to the Dail. But the Catholic right hit back and, with the aid of huge funds and backing from the Church, staged a similar sized 'pro-life' rally. The government, legally obliged to legislate, has come up with as a nasty a bill as possible in the circumstances which contrives to threaten women with 14 year jail sentences. So the need for a continuing vigorous campaign is obvious.

The right of women to control their fertility is an essential pre-condition of women's liberation as a whole and the current movement on this issue is part of an important revival of feminism in recent years. This is a development which raises a number of issues - some old, some new - for Marxists and which we intend to address with a substantial article in IMR7.

The second front has been the battle in the trade unions over Croke Park 2 (and now the so-called Haddington Road Agreement). Clearly the vast majority of Ireland's trade union leaders and officials

believed they could sell the rotten Croke Park 2 deal (with its vicious wage cuts and longer working hours) to a cowed membership as they had sold so many deals in the past. So it must have come as quite a shock to these bureaucrats when the rank-and-file rebelled and they were faced with a large scale rejection. However, the fact that for the majority of them, especially in SIPTU which is the largest union and holds the key to the situation, loyalty to Labour (and therefore to the Fine Gael-Labour government) outweighs loyalty to their members, has meant that instead of organising resistance they have simply come back with a second rotten deal.

Taking advantage of this collaboration the government has moved on to the offensive by ramming through the Daíl, while union balloting is taking place, legislation imposing pay cuts on those workers who don't accept the agreement, thus interfering in their democratic decision making and ratcheting up the level of intimidation. As we go to press this issue too hangs in the balance, but it has been evident in a number of ways, including the vigorous May Day march organised by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions (with a significant input from young workers) that the left is reviving in the unions. The episode as a whole has therefore confirmed the perspective on trade unions outlined in the article on Marxism and Trade Unionism in IMR1, that it is essential to distinguish between union leaders and union members and that the trade unions, despite the repeated vacillation and treachery of the bureaucrats, retain a crucial role in the class struggle and remain a vital field of work for socialists. An assessment of the current state of Irish trade unionism is another question we intend to address in our next issue.

The third front to emerge is the defence of Ireland's natural resources, and particularly its forests. Earlier this year the Dun Laoghaire People Before Profit team, in

conjunction with other campaigners were successful in blocking Tony O'Reilly and Providence Resources plans for an oil-rig in Dublin Bay. Richard Boyd Barrett and PbP followed this up by launching, along with the Woodland League and other environmental groups, a campaign to prevent government plans to sell off the harvesting rights to Ireland's forests. This resulted in a magnificent 4000 people turning up to a protest Walk in the Woods in Avondale, to be followed by numerous local 'walks in the woods' on 9 June. Moreover this particular battle appears to be on the verge of victory.

Another issue with the potential to generate large scale resistance is the mortgage crisis. If this turns, as it well may, into a wave of evictions the political impact inside the working class will be very big. The possibility of mobilising solidarity from neighbours, communities, trade unionists and existing campaign networks will be huge. Socialist activists have to be ready to move if the issue breaks.

Flagging up these different but related struggles clearly raises the question of how all this grass roots resistance can be brought together in a strong left wing political response to austerity and the government - in other words, how we can 'join the dots'. In 'Whatever happened to the United Left Alliance?' Kieran Allen analyses the failure of the ULA to achieve this but argues that we should not give up on the project. John Molyneux's 'Understanding Left Reformism' also has a bearing on this question.

Building a movement needs both struggle and ideas, both practice and theory. The existence of *Irish Marxist Review* is based on this premise and in this context we are pleased that a number of our contributors will be speaking in the **Marxist Politics Today** weekend of political education and discussion, hosted by the SWP, on 6-7 July.

Here are the details. All readers of IMR are invited to attend.

**Marxist Politics Today - a weekend of political discussion
6-7 July, An Oige Hostel, 61 Mountjoy St. Dublin**

Saturday	12:00 - 1:15	After the crash of 2008: Why is capitalism still in the recovery ward ? - Joseph Choonara
	2:00 - 3:15	Feminism, Marxism and the new sexism - Sinéad Kennedy
	3:30 - 4:45	From Syriza to Ireland: is left reformism back? - Kieran Allen
	5:00 - 6:15	Who are the working class today? - Joseph Choonara
Sunday	11:00 - 12:15	What do we mean by revolution? - James O'Toole
	12:30 - 1:45	Leninism today: do we need it? - John Molyneux
	2:30 - 3:45	The politics of Republicanism: Sinn Féin and the dissidents - Colm Bryce
	4:00 - 5:30	China versus America: the new world of empire and resistance - Mary Smith

Admission €5. For more information ring 018722682

STOP PRESS : Literally, as we go to press the Turkish revolt has broken out. Three days into the rebellion it is far too early for any overall assessment. However certain things are clear:

1. It is massive. Paul Mason reporting from Istanbul has said it is bigger than anything yet seen in Greece and approaching the scale of mobilization in the Egyptian Revolution.
2. It is not just about a park. Defending parks is good (and there is a long history of it in our movement) but revolt on this scale is about much more. In the first place the police repression but it clearly also expresses wide and deep anger at the way the society is run
3. The exact character of the revolt is not yet defined. There is widespread middle class involvement (by no means a bad thing in itself), plus the 'secular', but very right wing nationalists and military wait in the wings, ready perhaps to take advantage of the situation. Hopefully the Turkish working class will enter the fray. This will strengthen, deepen and transform the movement.
4. The extraordinary speed and scale of the revolt shows the immense potential for mass rebellion lurking just below the surface of society in so many places in this world of deep economic, social, political and environmental crisis.