

'Not simply a crisis but an absolute disaster'

THE ECONOMY in the Irish Republic is teetering on the edge of bankruptcy and the government may be forced to go, cap in hand, to the European Union to obtain a bailout.

The Irish Independent reported that finance minister Brian Lenihan asked if money from the EU's emergency fund could go directly to Ireland's failed banks rather than the government in order to avoid political embarrassment and to save face.

Irish Socialist Party MEP Joe Higgins remarked at the recent Socialism 2010 event in London that the economic situation in the Irish Republic "is not simply a crisis but an absolute disaster".

The country is braced for a third austerity budget on 7 December as the government attempts once again to prop up the failed banking system as the expense of workers' living standards.

"We will not pay this bill. The Irish working class didn't create this crisis, we won't pay a cent to the dictatorship of finance capital," said Joe.

At the end of October the Irish

banks were carrying €130 billion of debt and foreign investors are pulling their money out. Last week the Bank of Ireland reported that it had lost €10 billion in corporate deposits.

The Irish economy is in a deep recession which, according to the Financial Times, is "so severe that more than one-third of all men under 24 are unemployed". Overall unemployment officially stands at 13% of the working population and the economy has contracted by 14% since the onset of the crisis.

The financial meltdown in capitalism is not restricted to Ireland. A number of other countries in the Eurozone too are facing bankruptcy, including Portugal and Spain; while Greece, whose Pasok government accepted a massive EU bailout after pushing through a severe austerity budget earlier this year, remains in 'critical care'.

The economic crisis is giving rise to a new political crisis in Ireland. The governing coalition of Fianna Fáil and the Greens are expected to be annihilated at the next general election, the date of which could be announced very soon.



No to the dictatorship of finance capital.

photo SP Ireland

However, the Labour Party also accepts the dictates of capitalism. "We need a workers' alternative," said Joe. The Socialist Party will con-

test a number of seats in the next election as part of a wider united left alliance.

(see article below)

Ireland: United Left Alliance to challenge at next general election

THE NEWLY established United Left Alliance (ULA), which will be publicly launched on 26 November, involves the Socialist Party, the People Before Profit Alliance, the South Tipperary Workers and Unemployed Action Group and the Independent Socialist group of Declan Bree in Sligo.

Kevin McLoughlin,
Socialist Party Ireland

The ULA is a joint slate or alliance of candidates that will put forward a real left alternative in the general election and challenge the austerity and capitalist consensus amongst all the parties in the Dáil [Irish parliament] - Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Greens but also clearly including Labour and Sinn Féin.

The ULA flows from a process of discussions initiated some time ago by the Socialist Party. The ULA could possibly stand up to 20 candidates in the general election.

In pushing for the establishment for a slate/alliance, the Socialist Party argued that it was very important to try to get a fraction of genuinely left TDs [MPs] elected, given the devastating economic crisis of capitalism.

The ULA was primarily established on the basis of agreement on a political programme, agreement on specific candidates that were credible, as well as how other potential candidates could be agreed. There was an agreement on a democratic and consensual approach to decision making and establishing structures of the ULA.

In the initial discussions which only involved the Socialist Party and the PBPA (which is led by the Socialist Workers Party), there were disagreements, particularly with the SWP, on the issue of whether an alliance should explicitly advocate socialist policies and socialism as the solution to the crisis.

The Socialist Party did not agree with the SWP's view that socialist policies would put people off from voting for candidates or from getting involved in a left alliance.

We demonstrated that Joe Higgins (Socialist Party MEP) got more than 50,000 votes in the last European parliament elections while being one of the most identifiable socialists in the country with radical and socialist policies. Socialism was advocated in his leaflets that went into

every home in Dublin.

If a new left movement isn't rooted in a socialist outlook that wants to break definitively with capitalism, it too will ultimately fail, regardless of whether it has TDs or councillors.

Even though there wasn't agreement on the need for an explicitly socialist programme, the Socialist Party felt we should continue to try to establish an alliance as that would be a step forward for working class people.

We fully support the programme that the ULA has agreed but the Socialist Party, while advocating the ULA programme, will exercise its right to also put forward socialist programme in our own election material.

Full article see
www.socialistworld.net

Support the Laura Ashley strikers

IN SEPTEMBER bosses at the Laura Ashley clothing outlet in Dublin, Ireland abruptly told their 22-strong, predominantly female workforce that the shop would be closing. This was despite pre-tax profits of £10.5 million in the first half of the year.

Michael O'Brien,
Socialist Party Ireland

The bosses had sold the leasehold on the property to Disney for a lucrative price. The workers were initially given the impression that they would be successfully redeployed within the chain of stores.

Disregarding the loyal service of its staff, many having worked there for over ten years, the employers then, disgracefully, offered the statutory minimum of two weeks pay for each year of service, of which the company can claim 60% back from the Department of Enterprise Trade and Innovation.

The company adopted a crude anti-union stance and refused to en-



Picketing Laura Ashley's office in London.

photo Socialist Party

gage in negotiations with Mandate [the trade union involved] regarding either saving jobs or the improved redundancy conditions. The work-

ers had no choice but to take strike action since 22 October.

Spirits were high among the workers on the first day of the picket with

many people offering support. A branch of the Civil and Public Services Union officially communicated their support to the workers. Members of the Socialist Party in Ireland have visited the pickets every day, discussed tactics with the striking workers and organised fund-raising to support them.

Joe Higgins, Socialist Party MEP for Dublin, visited the picket line to show his support and said: "We support the workers 100% and call on the working people everywhere to support the picket in Grafton Street and for Mandate to mount a campaign to save the jobs."

Unfortunately support and advice has not come from the union leadership who have instead tried to block escalation of the campaign.

Socialists in the Committee for a Workers' International have shown solidarity with protests at Laura Ashley outlets in Antwerp, Brussels and Edinburgh and at the headquarters in London.

Please sign the petition at:
www.mandate.ie

the committee for a workers' international

THE COMMITTEE for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The CWI is organised in 40 countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email cwi@worldsoc.co.uk

www.socialistworld.net

The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world. Recent articles include:



Greece: Ruling PASOK government suffers big fall in support in Greek elections

Despite huge working class anger at cuts, the Left parties fail to make real poll gains

Interview with Andreas Payiatsos, Xekinima (CWI Greece), Athens



Warsaw: Anti-fascist blockade stopped fascists for five hours

Over 1,500 anti-fascists took part in an illegal blockade to prevent Polish fascists from marching in Warsaw on 11 November.

Paul Newbery, CWI Poland



Sri Lanka: New step towards a united opposition

Tamil people's struggle for freedom and justice

Reported by Tamil Solidarity