

What the No to Croke Park means for radicals & why you should get stuck in

7.30 May 8th Teachers Club (36 Parnell Square)
'After Croke Park Winning the Fight Organising together'

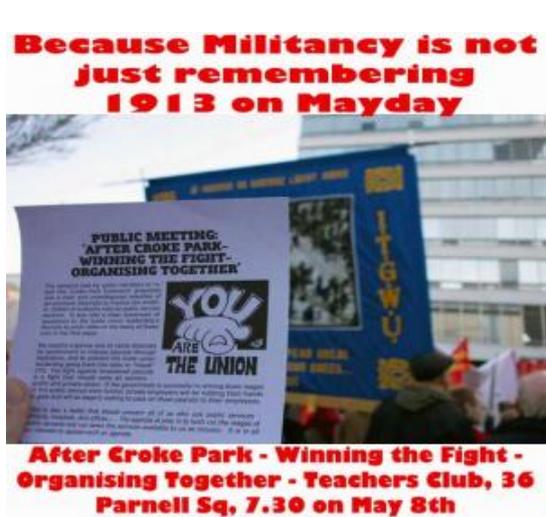


300,000 public service workers may shortly be forced to strike, something that may very well transform the potential for radical politics in Ireland. The purpose of this Open Letter is to provide information for activists who are not working in Public Services in order to explain the importance of the No vote to Croke Park. It is important in terms of the general struggle against austerity and we want to suggest some ways you can help make sure this fight is won, in particular by coming to a discussion of just that on Wednesday 8th May at 7.30 in the Teachers Club

Many activists probably see the unions as conservative and a bit useless and given almost 30 years of Social Partnership it's easy to see why. But all that may be about to change, not because of any change at the top but because hundreds of thousands of workers are either going to have to organise to defend themselves or face pay cuts, longer hours and job losses.

A strike will be a mass event that reaches into almost every house in the country - almost 300,000 people provide public services and they have partners, parents & children. For all of these people the idea that they may have to go on an indefinite strike to defeat the government is scary to say the least. But it's also a moment at which they need solidarity and that need means they will be open to radical ideas.

As long as I have been a union member in Ireland we have had top down 'Social Partnership' - top down deals negotiated with the government every three years since 1986. Very few union members have had the experience of going on strike except for the one day strike in 2009.



That strike was followed by a co-ordinated government & media attack on public service workers. As we listened to day after day of stories on Joe Duffy about how we were supposedly overpaid, lazy, too secure and it appeared that many believed those stories we became demoralised. Essentially most of us were bullied into voting for Croke Park one.

That is already happening again, they are creating arguments about whether the next cut should be directed at Public Services, Social Welfare, students or flat rate home

taxes. We need to work together to stop that being the focus of discussion when our friends or families talk about austerity. We need instead to turn the conversation to how we can be in solidarity with each others struggles.

This tactic of demobilising resistance to austerity though creating conflict between sections of workers has a huge cost on society. As people retreat to looking after their own interests at the cost of others those on the edges of society are further marginalised. We see this at its worse with the rise of the fascist party Golden Dawn in Greece but even in Ireland the years of crisis have seen the further marginalization of Irish Travellers and of Asylum Seekers. Many Asylum Seekers have now been living for years in the semi detention centres of the 'Direct Provision' system where you subsist on 19 euros a week and perhaps have to share a small room with 2 or 3 strangers. Nearly 3,000 were deported last year, without any sizeable protest - a grim cost in human suffering that is one consequence of the breakdown in social solidarity that is happening under austerity. Austerity isn't just about economics, the dog eat dog attitudes it seeks to create breed reaction and poison all social relations.

This is why we in the WSM would encourage all of you to start challenging any attempt to set one sector against another. That can be as simple as what you say in conversations between friends or though joining the debate in the comments sections of the major online publications whenever articles on austerity are published.

The strike & Civil Disobedience

The most difficult part of a public service strike is that it inevitably will hurt the mass of the population who rely on public services. Genuine emergency services should and will be part of the planning for such a strike but the truth is that to be effective it will have to at least inconvenience the mass of the population.

There should be acts of mass civil disobedience designed to maximise disruption alongside any Industrial action - our struggle needs to be short, sharp and decisive. Traditionally we might ask people to show solidarity by joining picket lines but in this fight more is needed. We think activists should discuss how to most effectively be in solidarity with public service workers when they strike. That might, for instance be by organising blockades of transport, much as the first action of the ITGWU at the start of the 1913 Lockout was to bring Dublin's trams to a halt.

Even if so far you have had no interest in the whole Croke Park process we would ask you to consider what the opportunities are here and what part you might have to play. In that context we are holding a meeting on May 8th in the Teachers Club (36 Parnell Square) at 7.30 under the title 'After Croke Park - Winning the Fight - organising together' to discuss what can and must be done. The defence of public services that was launched with the No vote to Croke Park could turn out to be the start of the end of austerity and the opening of a door to a better world if together we work to make it so.