

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

March / April 2012

Twenty-Eight Years of Irish Anarchist News

Making the Boss Pay

"When you ain't got nothing, you got nothing to lose" - Bob Dylan

Last year the word and action, "Occupy", was imprinted on our minds, from Tahrir Square in Cairo to Zucotti Park in New York. This year Occupy has come home to us in Ireland. Sure, we've had the valiant efforts of people bringing attention to the great injustice being visited on us all by camping outside the Central Bank, but the amoral character of the boss class is never better displayed than when you get made redundant.

Dermot Freeman

In "La Senza" in Liffey Valley in Dublin, after working through the busy Christmas season, workers were sacked on Monday 9th of January. The administrators, KPMG, told them to claim any money owed from a government fund, but the workers occupied the premises and insisted on being paid the overtime they were due from December. They won an agreement by the following Friday.

Meanwhile, in Cork, the 32 workers from Vita Cortex have been occupying that plant for over 50 days (at the time of writing) in an attempt to get paid their redundancy pay of 0.9 week for every year of service. This has been refused by the company, which claims an inability to pay. The owner is a boss by the name of Jack Ronan, who also happens to be a developer who is now residing/hiding in NAMA. Everyone appears to support the Vita Cortex workers in their efforts to get paid their redundancy from this developer. Messages of



support have come in from Des Bishop, Alex Ferguson, Paul McGrath and even the government, who appear to have rushed through the statutory part of their redundancy. Over 5,000 people showed up in a protest march through the streets of Cork and Christy Moore played a fundraising gig for them. "Now if only they could get the support of SIPTU", as a friend of mine joked to me.

Explaining the Joke

After generations of social partnership we have a trade union movement that is frozen out of the only relationship it knew, and it was an abusive one at that. During the period of partnership, all the deals were done at the top table as negotiators sat around and talked percentages. Going to a local trade union branch meeting became something only the truly committed did. In return for access to the top table, the unions signed many deals that gave away vari-

ous weapons in their arsenal, like the right to strike. They guaranteed industrial peace and delivered it. Now everything is different. The workers and the ordinary people of this land are being fed into a mincer and the unions appear powerless to intervene. The workers occupied the Vita Cortex plant because they know what is right, they know what justice looks like and they are prepared to fight for it and they couldn't be sure Jack O'Connor was going to try and fail to sort it out for them.

La Senza and Vita Cortex workers are showing by their actions what needs to be done. Alas this action only comes into place in the end game when workers are being laid off. The Union leadership better figure out a way that we can bring our collective strength into play whilst the boss class continue to make us pay for their mistakes.

Household Tax

A trickle of households register while the campaign against the unjust charge grows from strength to strength.



Fiscal Compact

No matter what way we vote the market dictates!



Protests Work

Cuts to DEIS Schools reversed as Ruairi Quinn feels the pressure of people power



Anti-Household Tax Campaign Gathers Momentum



Over the past two months the Campaign against the Household and Water Taxes has grown from strength to strength. Since the start of government registration in January, campaign meetings across the country have been packed out. 500 attended a meeting in Cork city, only to be surpassed by a meeting of 700 in Waterford city a week later. Likewise, across Dublin dozens of meetings have been held in parish halls and community centres, all with the clear message of “Don’t Register, Don’t Pay”. Building on this support, the campaign has now distributed nearly 750,000 leaflets explaining the tax and why we must refuse to pay it.

Sean Mallory

Support for the campaign has remained extremely strong in spite of the fact that government politicians have tried to bully people through threats and with the state distributing a leaflet to every house in the country. The extent of support for the campaign was revealed on February 21st last when the government released figures showing that less than 10% of people had registered for the tax. With over 1.5 million people refusing to pay, it is clear the tax is becoming unworkable.

The strength of the campaign so far has been its base in communities across the country and it now has hundreds of branches from Cork to Donegal. This has seen a surge of activity across the country with thousands of people organising their local campaigns. With this level of support and, more importantly, involvement, the campaign is in a great position to force the government to withdraw what is a completely unjust tax.

To this end campaign is now preparing to step up activity in the run up to the government deadline 31st of March. Over the coming weeks the campaign intends holding hundreds of meetings across the country and distributing hundreds of thousands of leaflets entitled “The Household Tax: Funding your Local (or not so Local) Bondholder”. This stage of the campaign will culminate with a National Rally in Dublin on the 24th of March. If the campaign holds its position and defeats the household tax, it will be the serious blow against austerity. To achieve this, the campaign will require the involvement of people in their local campaigns. No one else can refuse to pay this unjust tax on your behalf, we all must take action. If you haven’t joined the campaign, contact it on 1890 98 98 00 or check out the campaign website at www.nohouseholdtax.org to out what is happening in your local area.

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Organise!

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Derry Anarchists

<http://derryanarchists.blogspot.com/>

Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group

PO BOX 10785, Dublin 1.
<http://ragdublin.blogspot.com/>

Indymedia Ireland

Alternative user-generated Irish news.
<http://www.indymedia.ie>

Seomra Spraoi

Dublin Social Centre
10 Belvedere Court, Dublin 1.
<http://www.seomraspraoi.org>

Just Books

Belfast Radical Bookshop
13-15 Clarence Street, Belfast.
justbooks@rocketmail.com

Shell to Sea

Campaign to move Shell’s gas pipeline offshore from Co. Mayo.
<http://www.shelltosea.com>

Hands Off the People of Iran

Anti-imperialist network for solidarity with Iranian trade unionists & the women’s rights movement.
<http://www.hopoi.org>

Choice Ireland

Abortion rights action group
choiceireland@gmail.com
<http://www.choiceireland.org>

Residents Against Racism

Opposing racism and deportations.
24 hour helpline: 087 666 2060

Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign

01-6770253 | info@ipsc.ie
<http://www.ipsc.ie>

Free Education for Everyone

Active in colleges around the county, North and South.
www.free-education.info
stopfees@gmail.com

Campaign Against the Household and Water Taxes

www.nohouseholdtax.org
(086) 738 9943

Fiscal Compact: Smoke & Mirrors

As the flames from the latest round of rioting in Greece die down, the incapacity of the mainstream media to tell the story of the current Eurozone crisis leaves us as much in the dark as before the Molotov's lit up the nightly news.

Paul Bowman

Much of last year was taken up by endless rounds of Euro chiefs crisis meetings, followed by announcements that this time they had fixed the problem. Each announcement caused a brief market rally before, a few weeks later, another crash as the traders discovered that the politicians hadn't really fixed anything at all.

That cycle came to an end in early December last year when the latest Euro-crisis meeting announced a new device, a "Fiscal Compact", that was going to fix things for good this time, honest. Since then, the recurring market crises seem to have gone into remission a bit. So what is the Fiscal Compact and how has it calmed the markets?

The first thing to understand is that the announcement of the Fiscal Compact is not what's calmed the markets. What really poured oil on the troubled waters was the decision by the European Central Bank to extend a practically unlimited supply of 3-year loans to all the private banks in the Eurozone.

Effectively the ever-shortening cycle of Euro-summits and subsequent crashes had led to a semi-hidden crisis in the inter-bank lending market amongst European banks. This was the same unwillingness of banks to lend to each other that triggered the global crash of 2007-2008, but on a European level. By the end of 2011 it had become clear that the Euro interbank market had more or less seized up. Hence the ECB's sudden drastic move.

The whole Fiscal Compact announcement, then, was mostly a smokescreen to cover this emergency move by the ECB. As to what it is, it's basically the old Stability and Growth Pact (SGP) on steroids. The SGP said that countries should not exceed 3% of Gross Domestic Product in annual budget deficit and



not exceed 60% of GDP in total accumulated debt. The Fiscal Compact wants to repeat this, but then make it even more stringent by reducing the annual deficit from 3% to 0.1%, and that each Eurozone country has to write this so-called "debt brake" into their constitutions.

A number of observations of why this is stupid, hypocritical and entirely unable to prevent a re-occurrence of the crash that has plunged us into this crisis have already been made by commentators across the political and economics spectrum. But they bear repeating.

Firstly, until the crisis, Ireland was running a budget surplus, so locally this measure would not have helped avoid the crisis then, nor will it in the future. Secondly, the first country in the EU to go over the SGP's 3% deficit limit was Germany, so they have a blatant neck to blame the crisis on poor fiscal management by other countries, such as Portugal, Italy, Greece, Spain and Ireland. Thirdly, all but the most delusional economists agree that while avoiding government deficits in a period of growth is a good idea, trying to cut the government deficits that arise naturally during a crash, due to loss of income tax and increased unemployment costs, is the quickest way of turning a recession into a 1930s style depression.

For that last reason, most balanced budget statutes implemented around the world provide for exceptions to the "no deficit" rule during recession. However the Fiscal Compact does not do this. It pays lip service to the issue by stating that it is the "structural" deficit that is targeted, rather than the actual current deficit. But how to calculate the differ-

ence between the two has never been established by any agreed formula. In practice the current deficit is always treated as if was the same as the structural deficit by right-wing politicians demanding cuts. Hence the decision whether a country's current deficit is structural or merely "cyclical" comes down to politics. Given past Euro experience that means whether the country in question is Germany or France, or rather a "peripheral" country instead.

So what happens next? The immediate question facing us is whether this Fiscal Compact needs to be put to a referendum in Ireland. Clearly the Compact is utterly incapable of preventing future crises and could potentially make them worse, depending on the power dynamics around whether it is used by the Franco-German core to force disastrously destructive policies on smaller Eurozone countries. So for a country like Ireland to vote for the Compact is akin to turkeys voting for Christmas.

The lack of any positive side to the Compact is why the stick of withdrawing bailout funds is now being threatened. But the truth of the matter is that the existing bailout is for the benefit of the bondholders, not the population. In that light, the central struggle for people to defend their livelihoods and the future of their children is to throw off the yoke of alien debt that the bank bailout has placed on us. In that struggle, the referendum is a sideshow, because what matters is forcing a default on this illegitimate debt and the way to do that is through mass non-payment of the new taxes and tithes the troika and the Irish capitalist class is trying to hang around our necks, starting with the Household tax.

We are not here today to plead for crumbs from the tables of the rich

The liberation of the former Bank of Ireland building in Belfast city centre by “Occupy” provides a glimpse of what is possible if we organise and fight together using the power of direct action and solidarity. It is about sending out a political message to our local green and orange Tories that enough is enough and it is up to us as working class people to take action and organise a fight-back because no politician will do it for us.

John Creaghe

As a statement read out by the occupiers makes clear, the liberation of this building is not just a protest but demonstrates clear intent to begin the process of helping to build a mass campaign against house evictions and savage cuts to jobs and services being imposed from London and their local lackeys at Stormont:

‘We are not here today to plead for crumbs from the tables of the rich. We are here today to demand and to create a world where the interest of the many comes before the interests of the few.... We are ordinary people who can no longer stand by while our futures are stolen from us, while house repossession sky-rocket, while the chance of ever finding a job dissipates, while higher education becomes the preserve of the rich. We are people who still have hope... But when we hope, we do not do it blindly. We know that a new society can only be created if we do it ourselves, if we take back



what belongs to all of us. Take buildings like this one and put it into the hands of the public. By creating new social centres, by stopping house evictions, by taking over the assets of the speculators and making them into assets of the people, assets of the whole community.’

Over a month on, the iconic and historic building has moved from being at the disposal of greedy property developers to providing a colourful space to organise meetings and educate, with a library, and provide temporary shelter for homeless people. In the long term, we aim to open it up to the wider public and establish a vibrant social centre at the heart of Belfast.

Fourteen years on from the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, which has served to copper fasten and manage sectarianism, little has changed on the ground in our communities. Unemployment levels have now increased to pre-ceasefire

levels and parts of the North have some of the highest levels of poverty and social deprivation in the UK. The alternative to the Stormont charade is to build a militant movement which will not only resist the cut backs but go on the offensive. The WSM is committed to this task across Ireland, both North and South.

Written by WSM member who has been active Occupy Belfast and the liberation of the building.

For more info on the occupation including a video and interview with a WSM member check out this link: <http://www.channel4.com/news/an-occupy-protest-with-a-difference>

Alternatively keep up to date with the Occupy Belfast from its facebook page and twitter.

Thinking About Anarchism: *Transgender*

“It is a tragedy, I feel, that people of a different sexual type are caught in a world which is so crassly indifferent to the various gradations and variations of gender and their great significance in life.”

Emma Goldman (prominent Lithuanian-American anarchist) 1916

Trans (or transgender) is a term for people whose gender identity and gender expression are different from the sex assigned to them at birth. Trans people have a history of receiving bigoted responses from some sections of the left, of the lesbian and gay community and some strands of feminism. One attack on transgender people has been based on the idea that trans people, by “changing gender”, reinforce existing rigid gender roles. Moving across borders of perceived gender does not reinforce existing gender-roles, any more than migration across borders of nation states reinforces the system of nation states. Many trans people are actively involved in fighting current, sexist gender stereotypes.

Anarchists believe that we will not achieve an equal society by ignoring issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia or by pretending that they will automatically be resolved by revolution. We do not tell minorities to wait until after the

revolution for their demands to be met. We see class as the central and fundamental form of oppression, but we do not see it as the only form of unacceptable hierarchy and we do not see it as possible to separate class issues from those of gender, sexuality, race or sex. Trans liberation is a class issue. Wealthy trans people can, for example, afford private surgery, use private transport and choose where they live, thus avoiding potentially dangerous situations. We see means and ends as intrinsically linked, and so a revolutionary movement that does not actively oppose transphobia will merely end up replicating the same oppressions that exist under capitalism.

Anarchism is a form of socialism, which believes in individual freedom as well as collective organising. The right of each person to make decisions about what happens to their body and to express their gender in ways that are right for them as an individual are a fundamental part of that freedom. We support the right of oppressed groups of people to organise themselves autonomously for their own liberation and we believe that such groups have the right to ask for and receive solidarity from the rest of the working class. Transphobia, like homophobia, sexism and racism, serve the interests of the ruling class, by dividing us against each other.

Recently, trans people have made huge



progress in fighting for their liberation, and almost all major lesbian and gay organisations have become lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organisations. Trans people’s inclusion in those organisations has not been an easy battle though, despite the fact that transgender people (notably Sylvia Rivera) have been prominent in fighting for queer liberation, including in the Stonewall riots. One reason LGB organisations were reluctant to accept trans people was that they saw them as an obstacle to gaining respectability and becoming assimilated into mainstream capitalist society. Trans people are sometimes more visibly queer than lesbian and gay men, and in modern gay male culture, especially, there is an emphasis on gaining acceptance from straight people by being as traditionally masculine as possible.

Transgender people still face serious discrimination in jobs and housing. Trans people’s actual (chosen) gender is not recognised legally in Ireland, while 17 European countries demand forcible sterilisation of transgender people before granting legal recognition. Those trans people who do choose gender-realignment surgery are unable to access it in Ireland and have to travel to the UK. However not all trans people choose to undergo surgery and this does not make their gender identification any less legitimate. It is important to avoid reducing gender to a question of what genitals a person has. Persecution of minorities tends to increase in economic downturns and 539 trans people were murdered in Europe between 2008 and 2010. Transphobia must be fought wherever and in whatever form it appears. As anarchists, who do not practice electoralism, we are able to take a principled stand on unpopular issues, without worrying about it losing votes, and, as a result, we have a particular responsibility to take those stands.



International Anarchist website with news & discussion from all five continents.

Anarchism & the WSM

Since the beginning of the New Year, much of our time has been spent involved in local and national organising for the Campaign Against Household and Water Charges (CAHWT), including involvement countrywide in a national day of protest held on February 25th. A successful national meeting was held in Dublin in January to discuss plans for the campaign, both in terms of internal structure and bringing the campaign message to communities all over the 26 counties.

In Dublin, apart from a host of local meetings, we also attended a CAHWT protest at City Hall on February 6th, to coincide with a motion being put to Dublin City Council in opposition to the household tax (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/household-tax-protest-city-hall-dublin>). In other street-based activity we attended a protest against the Irish states decision to sign up to the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), a major step in the attempted restriction of sharing of information on the Internet (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/dublin-demonstrates-acta-sopa-downloading>). We also supported a picket of Leinster House held by the Vita Cortex workers who have been occupying their workplace since before Christmas in an

attempt to secure their redundancy entitlements (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/vita-cortex-workers-rally-d%C3%A1il>).

Our members also took part in Unlock-NAMA’s day of action and talks in a temporarily occupied NAMA building in Dublin’s Great Strand Street on January 28th, which was unfortunately cut short by the Gardai (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/unlock-nama-great-strand-street-occupation>). Finally, we were present at a large protest of teachers, parents and schoolchildren at the Department of Education, part of an ongoing, and ultimately successful, campaign against cuts in supports for disadvantaged primary schools DEIS protests (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/deis-schools-massive-protest>).

In the South, WSM members have also been busy in the CAHWT, with a number of successful protests being held (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/household-tax-campaign-gathers-momentum-cork>) along with numerous meetings in various communities. We also attended two protests held by Vita Cortex Workers (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/cork-hundreds-turn-out-support-vita-cortex-workers>), as well as hosting three cinema nights in our Solidarity Books store. Merely the threat of protest was enough to see the cancellation of the



proposed visit of BNP leader, Nick Griffin, to UCC but we were active members of the campaign that achieved this outcome.

Up North, we held a successful public meeting in Belfast on “Fighting the Cuts & The Anarchist Alternative” in late January, while also being involved in Occupy Belfast’s occupation of a disused Bank of Ireland premises in the city centre (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/occupy-belfast-defiant-message-crumb-tables-rich>). Over in Derry, we were present on the annual Bloody

Sunday commemoration (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/report-40th-anniversary-bloody-sunday-march>). Meanwhile, our Galway branch remains active in the CAHWT campaign in the West and Free Education for Everyone (FEE).

While we are active in various parts of the country, we always welcome new supporters and members to help with our work, check out <http://www.wsm.ie/c/wsm-supporter> for further details. For further information on the above and other breaking news see www.wsm.ie.

What is the Workers Solidarity Movement?

The Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM) is an anarchist organisation in Ireland. We have branches and members throughout the country and are involved in many different groups and struggles.

We are a different sort of political group. We don't want you to vote for us. We don't want to be the new rulers. This is not because we are against democracy. We are totally in favour of it. But by democracy we do not mean letting professional politicians in the Dáil run our lives. We mean people coming together to make their own decisions.

We want people to self-organise themselves, in a grassroots and democratic fashion. We don't see ourselves as leading struggles and campaigns, or groups like trade unions, by simply taking over bureaucratic positions, but encourage self-organisation and militancy within them.

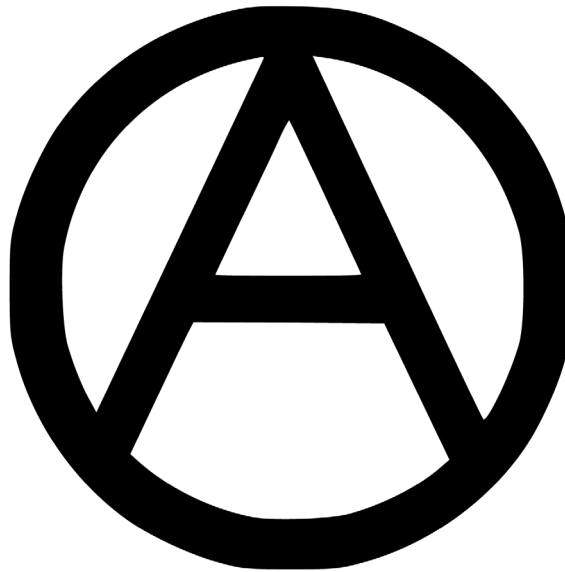
As well as this, we see our role in society is to spread anarchist ideas and methods of organising, and to help anarchism become the predominant political movement in Ireland.

We believe in socialism, individual freedom, and direct democracy. We want to see an Ireland made up of a federation of community and workplace councils, connected and co-ordinated by mandated, recallable delegates.

We want to see democracy in the workplace, and democracy in the community, where the people who make the decisions should be the one's affected by them. We are anti-authoritarians.

We are against the current capitalist system in Ireland, which concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a minority of people, the 1%. When we say socialism or communism, we don't mean the totalitarian nightmares of Stalin's Russia or North Korea. We want directly democratic socialism, where the means of production are owned in common by the people who work in them and by the community. We want a society based on the maxim "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs". We want a society that isn't divided up into classes, of bosses and shareholders and workers, of landlords and tenants. This is anarchism.

The WSM itself is a democratic organisation run along these lines.



We have two categories of membership: members and supporters. Members are those who commit themselves to a certain level of activity within the organisation, pay dues and attend most branch meetings. Supporters are those who broadly agree with our politics, and would like to help out with certain things, but do not necessarily have to time to be fully active. Supporters pay dues, attend some meetings when they can and help on projects and activities that they are interested in.

Within the broader anarchist movement, we are part of the platformist current. We favour specific anarchist groups with a reasonable level of coherency in ideas and tactics, to work amongst the organisations of our class such as trade unions and community groups. We are anti-imperialists, but advocate an anarchist strategy rather than a nationalist one. We are against racism, against sexism, against homophobia, against transphobia and against fascism.

If you like what you have just read, get in touch!

solidaritybooks



43 Douglas St., Cork

Solidarity Books is a radical bookshop in Cork open for the past 2 years. It has a wide selection of books on anarchism, socialism and Irish history. It also holds regular radical film nights and is a meeting space for progressive groups in the city. It is run by WSM.



Irish Anarchist Review

The Workers Solidarity Movement is very pleased to announce the fourth issue of *The Irish Anarchist Review*. This magazine is dedicated to understanding the contemporary political, economic and social situation that confronts us, and finding ways to advance alternatives.

Contact us with your postal address if you would like to receive a copy or download a PDF from <http://www.wsm.ie/c/irish-anarchist-review-4>

www.anarchistblackcat.org



A friendly and respectful online discussion board for anarchists of all stripes and those just interested in seeing what anarchists think.

“Protests Work” says Minister

Following his announcement that many of his proposed cuts to teacher numbers in schools serving areas of social disadvantage (“DEIS schools”) are to be reversed, Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn, has admitted that protests work and that he made the decision because of the huge protests faced by himself and his colleagues on the government backbenches. “[I]n relation to the area where all the pressure was coming from and all the protests was [sic] coming from I reflected on the impact on those schools.... and I reversed that decision,” he said.

Gregor Kerr

By targeting cutbacks on socially disadvantaged communities the government had gambled on the fact that they would not organise and would not resist. Almost immediately, however, they began to realise that it was a gamble that wasn't going to pay off. Within hours of the announcement in December's budget, Labour party TDs, in particular, began to come under serious pressure from teachers and parents who valued the extra supports that children in their schools were getting and were determined that they were not going to be taken away from them. People were not waiting for union leaders or anyone else to fight this campaign on their behalf. They realised that local organising was the key to success and that every contribution, large or small, helped towards building the momentum.

By mid-January the government were really feeling the heat and as the date for a proposed protest approached Minister Quinn went on radio to state that he had 'made a mistake' and that he was going to order a 'review' of the cuts. If the intention was to derail or demobilise the protest, it didn't work and on 19th January almost 6,000 people, representing DEIS school communities from across Dublin, protested outside the Department of Education in Marlborough Street. The protest re-iterated that a 'review' was not enough and that we wanted a total reversal of all the cuts.

At a subsequent campaign meeting, the date of 23rd February was agreed as the date for a follow-up protest and, through contacts with DEIS schools around the country, this was agreed to be a national



day of protest with protests planned for Waterford, Cork, Sligo and other places, as well as outside Dáil Éireann. In the end the Minister announced a total reversal of the cuts to so-called 'legacy' posts in DEIS schools.

What was most interesting from Mr. Quinn's statement was that while 'legacy' posts in primary schools were to be retained, he was going ahead with the cuts to similar posts at second-level, providing even more proof that it was the power of protest that had brought about this change of heart. Primary school communities had organised themselves to resist the cuts, those at second-level, for whatever reason, hadn't.

There is no doubt that what was announced was a significant victory for all those who campaigned and protested on this issue. This campaign was organised by ordinary union members at local branch and district level. We didn't wait around for 'head office' or 'the leadership' to do something for us. We didn't waste too much time giving out about the lack of fight from the top of the union (although we did do a bit of that). It is important that we remember that. And the next time somebody says to you that protests are a waste of time, remind them of this victory and remind them of Ruairi Quinn's words!