

## ICTU Unions accept Croke Park no strike agreement



INTO members give the Croke Park agreement the red card

Back in June the Public Services Committee of ICTU formally ratified the Croke Park agreement on public service pay and reform. It was carried by a margin of almost two to one when the committee met to consider the deal. The result was 1,899 votes in favour and 986 against, out of a total 2,885 votes. The members of nine unions who rejected the agreement were outvoted on the committee by the ten unions who accepted the deal.

This rotten piece of social partnership commits the leadership of the ICTU to work with the Irish government to "facilitate economic recovery through agreed strategies" and, suicidal in a time of incessant attacks on the working-class to "ensuring that their respective members do not engage in strikes, lockouts or other forms of industrial action".

Votes in favour, particularly in the two big Irish Unions SIPTU and Impact, followed campaigns by the leaderships of these unions that expressed, for Impact "trust in the Government's intentions" and assured members that attacks on working conditions such as compulsory redeployments, would be implemented "in a reasonable manner". SIPTU's Jack O'Connor led the enthusiastic support for the Croke Park agreement on the basis of arguing "it isn't as bad as all that". O'Connor has two faces. One makes hard-line speeches against the southern government's economic policies while with the other he urges support for those same policies. For his part in pushing through these attacks Jack O'Connor was named "Person of the Month" by Business and Finance magazine!

In short Trade Union bureaucrats repeated the arguments of the bosses and the politicians that this was the best deal on offer and that there is no alternative.

The bosses in those unions with memberships who voted against the agreement are of course capitulating to the decision. The Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) has accepted the vote and while the TUI and IFUT have said they will not be bound by a majority vote no Trades Unions have given any indication that they will opposing its implementation.



Business and Finance magazine man of the year helped push it through

## Dail gates blocked by cement truck



As TDs returned from their long summer recess on 29<sup>th</sup> September they found the front gates of the Dail blocked by a cement truck. The words "Toxic Bank Anglo" were painted in red letters along the barrel of the truck, which was driven up to the guarded gates of the Dail at 7.15am that morning.

After pulling up the 41 year old male driver of the truck cut the hydraulic brake tubes and electric cables, making it difficult for An Garda Siochana to remove it. He was arrested and taken to Pearse Street

Garda Station while the Garda took 2 hours to get the truck shifted.

Despite the banks name and logo being painted on the truck Fine Gael TD Fergus O'Dowd's claimed that the action had not been motivated by anger at the Irish governments handling of the economy. The fact that TDs have returned after a lengthy recess at the expense of workers in the south while ICTU had organised a rally from Anglo Irish Bank to the Dail to protest the cuts being implemented by those TDs are apparently mere coincidence!

## Parades Commission back as Public Assemblies Bill shelved

At the end of September Peter Robinson announced that the controversial Public Assemblies Bill for Northern Ireland had been shelved following the Orange Order's rejection of the legislation. The Parades Commission is to stay in place for another year and the Stormont Ministers will discuss implementing the Bill again at the end of that period.

While Mr Robinson said he was "disappointed by the outcome as considerable effort was made at Hillsborough to solve the issues around parades and protests" the Bill had met with opposition from a wider range of people than just the Orange Order. A campaign conducted against the Bill seemed to evaporate as the removal of some elements this attack on the right to organise and protest were announced. The draft legislation was drawn up by the DUP and Sinn Fein. If

the Bill had become law in its original form all gatherings involving 50 or more people, taking place in any "public space" would be required to give 37 days prior notice. In its original form it would have affected the rights of every single person to organise themselves collectively as workers, trade unionists, community campaigners and political activists. It was feared that the legislation was designed to effectively illegalise opposition to cuts and job losses being proposed by the Assembly.

While the proposed amendments apparently removed open-air and other similar public meetings from the legislation there remain concerns in relation to its impact on the right to free assembly. Organise! picketed both Sinn Fein and DUP offices in opposition to the Bill during the consultation process.