

Capitalism, Cuts and Taxes: No Going Back!

Ya Cannae Fix It Hiy



As cuts, job losses and austerity continue to bite more than one recent article in right-wing cat litter liners like the Daily Mail have attempted to make the spurious argument that the 'real divide' in society today is not between 'have' and 'have not', but between the villainous Public Sector and the monolithic, long suffering figure of the taxpayer.

The taxpayer who has to stand helplessly by as the vampiric, non wealth-generating Public Sector sucks away his lifeblood, to fund abhorrent things like vaguely decent pensions for nurses and other parasites. Articles like this, aside from pandering to the prejudices of a large section of those papers readership demographic, are part of a broader strategy to create a false division between workers in the public and private sectors. A race to the bottom, a zero-sum game where poorly paid private sector workers cheerlead attacks on the living standards of public sector workers (who have, in some cases, marginally better pay and conditions) rather than focus their ire on the institutions that are launching vicious unconcealed attacks on ALL workers.

Of course other false divisions have to be sown...the native worker vs the foreign scrounger coming here looking for handouts, the employed vs the unemployed layabout living off, you guessed it, the taxpayer again. Speaking as a public sector worker and a taxpayer I'm ashamed to be robbing over £70 a week from myself in tax and National Insurance. How do I sleep at night?

Of course, analysis of the cuts and the economic situation that anarchists dispute is not coming only from rabidly right-wing ideologues. There are notions coming from across the left spectrum that we challenge.

Members of UK Uncut have carried out several courageous actions in recent months, including an occupation of Fortnum and Mason in London on March 26th, at considerable risk and costs to themselves. While such direct actions are a welcome break with the pointless strategy of polite marches that can be easily ignored, or the dead-end of electoralism, it is worth mentioning our criticisms of the theory behind them. UK Uncut targets companies which deliberately avoid paying taxes in the UK. If this tax was collected, they argue, the 'holes' left in public funding by the economic downturn could be plugged and the cuts would not be necessary. Although a campaign like this highlights the fact that capitalism doesn't even play by its own rules, it implies that if it just would, if we could force it to do so, everything would be fine.

We do not believe we can force capitalism to 'fix' itself. The working class must impose our interests on capitalism, against capitalisms interests, whether the state says it is affordable or not.

With an assembly election looming in Northern Ireland, various leftist parties and front groups are campaigning with an 'anti-cuts' manifesto. Mostly along the lines of getting themselves elected because they can definitely 'make the rich pay' to fix the economy. People Before Profits badly photocopied 1-sided leaflet promises to make the rich pay for 'economic growth' and 'job creation'. This is still the language of capitalism, albeit couched in leftist terminology. Job Creation? Do we need another party to pimp NI as a cheap labour pool? Isn't that why Peter and Martin go to the USA on St. Patricks Day?

Of course, you might ask why anarchists don't pop up in these debates and tell people what we would do to stop the cuts, where we would get the money instead. First of all, we don't think we have all the answers, but the idea that some leftist can get themselves elected and then just ask the rich to hand over the necessary amount of money (which is pocket change to them anyway, leaving them still-rich and still-powerful) is laughable.

Quite simply, anarchists are not interested in entering a debate where the accepted terms of reference are that there is X amount of money available and the only debate that remains to be had is how to divide it up. The working class can only ever lose where these are the accepted limits of debate, since it will never be divided up in our favour.

This leads us back to the poor old taxpayer whose hard-earned cash is being spent on a gastric band operation for a scrounging single parent asylum seeker on a million pounds a year benefits! We are not inclined to believe we would be better off if such 'wastes' didn't happen. "You paid less tax this month sir, on account of us cancelling a fat mans surgery and sending a few Romanians back". I don't expect to be getting this note in my payslip anytime soon.

Of course we support workers who are struggling for higher wages, struggling against job losses, struggling against austerity. We always have and always will. But this is not to be confused with us having an interest in trying to 'fix' the economy; it doesn't work in our favour even when it is working 'properly'.

We don't care about the 'national interest' because we know this only really means the interests of the rich. We are not concerned with writing up a different balance sheet that we think is fairer and asking capital and the state to consider it.

The only response to the cuts is for workers to impose our interests, regardless of how much money we are told there is or isn't. This can only be done through the action of the workers directly, not through reliance on politics or Trade Unions.



Thousands attended the ICTU-NIC rally on the 6th April in protest at the killing of Constable Ronan Kerr.

Pauline Buchanan called on the assembled to remember Constable Kerr, his family and friends at this time and to re-affirm our opposition to violence and the right of every worker to go about their job without the threat of violence.

The Vice-chair of the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU, Pamela Dooley, remembered that the Trade Unions had come out in opposition to those who would drag Northern Ireland back two years ago. She stated that "we will not permit the clock to be turned back" and that the dissident republicans who killed Constable Ronan Kerr were the "enemies of peace".

Kerr was described as a fine public servant committed to the "principles at the core of the trade union movement". Dooley committed the trade union movement and people in their communities to building a future where no-one will ever again see violence as part of that future.

Those present observed a minutes silence and dispersed after a piper played a lament.

While those who murdered Constable Kerr want nothing less than a return to conflict in Northern Ireland we must take issue with NIC-ICTUs assessment of the sharing of values between the PSNI and the Trade Union movement.

We all oppose those who are seeking to heighten sectarian division and drag us back to counting the cost in dead, bereaved, injured, incarcerated and maimed working class people - men, women and children.

We remember however the commitment of the PSNI to equality, openness and democracy evidenced in the policing of student protests against fees a few months back. Young people were blockaded and repeatedly charged by riot cops from the PSNI for staging a sit-down protest in the road.

This is one simple example of the role of the police, any police, to protect the interests of the rich and put down any opposition. They are there to police and restrain our ability to protest and if we step outside the acceptable (i.e. most futile) forms of opposition they will use intimidation and violence.

On second thoughts though, perhaps at one level Pamela was right. The Trade Unions also seek to police and restrain working class protest, ensuring we comply to the most futile methods while they try and prove how well they can beg for the politicians. Just a pity politicians aren't throwing out much in the way of scraps for performing poodles these days.

Returning to the point of the rally though, no-one should be killing or dying in any petty nationalist struggle or for any attempt at re-igniting one.



Housing Benefit Cuts: Homelessness or Resistance?

Next to London Northern Ireland will be hardest hit by the attacks on benefits currently being implemented by the government.

Recently many of us on Housing Benefit received letters from the NIHE outlining cuts to our benefits. Local Housing Allowance will be lowered in April resulting in an average loss of £7.50 in benefit. Will rents go down when this happens? Not likely and even if they did it makes no odds - this is worked out on a sliding scale so your benefit will always be lower than what you need to cover the rent!

If you live in a larger house your benefit will be even further reduced - by up to £90 per week!

Deductions will be made for having a non-dependant adult living with you as well. That'll knock up to £14.50 off your benefit a week. Got anything left to pay the rent with?

Well there's always the street or park bench... or getting organised and fighting back against these attacks.