

RECLAIMING OUR TRADE UNIONS



**11am Saturday
1st October
Teachers Club
Parnell Square
Dublin**

A CONFERENCE aimed at establishing a rank and file network to reclaim our unions to fight back against cuts, attacks on workers' rights and austerity has been called for October 1st.

Since the onset of the economic crisis workers have experienced attack after attack. Wages have been cut in the public and private sector, conditions have been eroded and worst of all hundreds of thousands have been thrown on the dole, with little prospect of a real job.

The government and employers are using the crises to take away protection for the low-paid and most vulnerable workers. Now we are being told that the government wants to delay the introduction of protections for agency workers. Even worse it wants to put in place lower levels of protection than exist in other countries. This will allow for the continued use of agency workers to undermine the conditions of all workers.

While their wages and conditions are cut the services on which workers rely

are being slashed. It's quite clear that workers, the unemployed and the poor are being asked to pay for a crises they did not create. Those who have the wealth in society have got off scot free. Billions of tax payers' money has been ploughed into banks while our health and education services are cut to shreds.

Given all this, many trade unionists are disgusted that the leadership of our movement has failed to lead a sustained campaign of opposition. The trade union leadership have colluded in the agenda of cuts and austerity. The Croke Park deal was effectively rammed through many unions. Those unions who opposed it were forced to accept it. Cuts for those covered by Joint Labour Committees have been accepted.

The myth has been perpetuated that Irish workers will not resist. Unlike the Greeks we understand the need for cuts and accept that the medicine dished out by the IMF, the EU and the government is good for us. Yet every time workers have been called out, in

February 2009 and December 2010, tens of thousands responded. In November 2009 we saw the biggest public sector stoppage in Irish history. The real issue is that the leadership is out of touch and are using their control of our movement to generate passivity. They have been aided on this by their participation in social partnership for over thirty years. Rather than build a movement committed to defending workers rights they colluded with the government and employers in pacifying the trade union movement. These people are opposed to the radical traditions of struggle and resistance on which our movement was built.

Its time for real change in our movement. Time to build a network of activists committed to real change and for a fight against cuts and austerity. Activist groups can work to reform our unions by challenging the current leadership, making the arguments for a new approach, running candidates for leadership positions and providing solidarity for those engaged in struggle.

For more information contact:

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This conference will discuss how to build a network committed to:

- Defending our pay and conditions
- Fighting for jobs and against privatisation
- Defending our services and making the rich pay for the crisis
- Ensuring democracy operates at all levels of our movement
- Strong workplace organisations which seriously recruit new union members
- Ensuring trade unions leaders are fully accountable to their members with election of all officials on a workers' wage

All those who want to take part in the debate about reform of our movement are welcome.

The conference has been organised to ensure there is participation by those who attend. There will be an opportunity for those working in different sectors or unions to have workshops to discuss getting activist networks established on the ground.

Conference Programme:

First Session: 11am - 1pm

'Starting the Trade Union Fight Back: What Kind of Unions Do We Need?'

Speakers: Kieran Allen (President Education Branch, SIPTU),
Tommy Fitzgerald (UNITE Organiser)

Chair: Eddie Conlon (Executive member, TUI)

1pm - 2pm Lunch

Second Session: 2pm - 4pm

'Building an activists' network in the unions'

Speakers: Helen Metcalf (IMPACT),
Speaker from British National Shop Stewards Network
Chair: Maura Lane (SIPTU)

Discussion in small groups (unions, sectors, issues) followed by report to Plenary Session

4pm - 4.30pm Break

Third Session: 4.30pm - 5.30pm

'Organising a network for change in the unions'

Speaker and Chair: Terry Kelleher (Executive member CPSU)

Proposals in relation to the structure and activity of the network will be taken. It is also envisaged that a steering committee will be elected.

Conference ends: 5.30pm

All speakers are speaking in a personal capacity