

Autumn 2001

Fingal Voice

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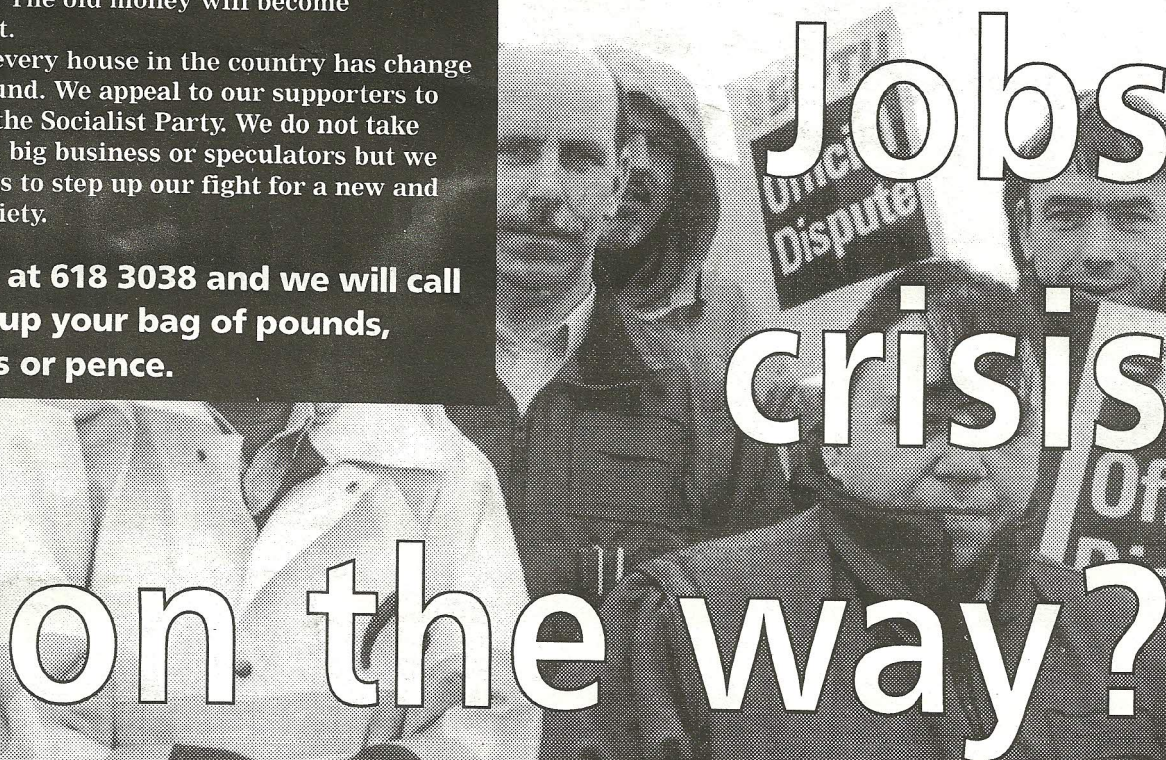
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might like to
feature in the
Fingal Voice**

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From January, we will have a completely new currency. The old money will become redundant.

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Ring us at 618 3038 and we will call to pick up your bag of pounds, shillings or pence.



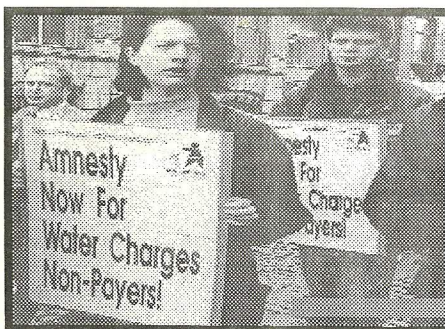
Jobs
crisis
on the way?

Joe Higgins TD told the Fingal Voice:

" A crisis that was already developing in the economy has been made worse by the terrible events in the US on September 11th. Most working people quite correctly felt that the Celtic Tiger was a boom for the rich. Now it is coming to an end and working people are the first to be asked to pay the price in the big increase in job losses over the last two months. After years of massive budget surplus we have a shambles of a health service, a housing and transport crisis. A government which has wasted the opportunity to resolve these issues should not now be let off the hook".

See Joe Higgins; column on page three on terror attacks in the US .

Produced by the Socialist Party



Clare Daly's Fingal Council Column

Airport Jobs Crisis

The announcement by Aer Lingus management that up to 1700 jobs are under threat in the national airline has sent shock waves through the ranks of the thousands of airport workers. The immediate loss of 700 temporary jobs, and the cutting of the operation by 25% through the elimination of the Newark, Baltimore, and Stockholm routes and the reduction in flights to Glasgow, London, Paris and Amsterdam has been announced.

A cloud hangs over the jobs of possibly one quarter of the workforce. The cynical use of the American tragedy as a cover for this onslaught is absolutely disgusting and must be challenged. Under the direction of the Minister, management had undertaken a review of all aspects of the company over two months ago in response to the poor financial performance. This situation affected all airlines, with the downturn in the US economy, foot-and-mouth, and the rise in the price of oil. Workers were told that the outcome of the review would not affect jobs.

Yet only seven days after the Twin Towers horror, the management came out and said this would lead to job losses of 25%. How could that be determined only two days after transatlantic travel returned to normal? Obviously the American events will have an impact, particularly in the short-term, but air travel will remain the key mode of international transport. This tragedy is being cynically used to enable the company to restructure in a manner that they would not get away with in normal circumstances.

Airport workers must not be conned. Clearly the government's plans to privatise the airline have been knocked back. The recent events give them the excuse to streamline and position the company for a sale when the market improves. It is no secret that the government, and the establishment parties are determined to rob this national asset from the taxpayer and give it over to their big business friends. Privatisation inevitably leads to job losses, an erosion of working con-

ditions, and deterioration in the level of service provided. The crocodile tears of politicians about the current threat is a mockery when they all support privatisation.

In fact one of the key lessons from the American tragedy was the poor security in US airports. This existed because security was left to the individual airlines, who contracted out the work to the lowest bidder, with low wages and poor standards. This is the real consequence of privately owned services, which exist to make a profit rather than existing to provide an effective level of service.

A high quality of service, and good employment can only be ensured in public ownership. Aer Lingus has been built as a company of excellent safety record and service standards, through the dedication of the workforce. The taxpayer benefited by Aer Lingus workers paying more tax in the 1990s than all the farmers in the country.

It was only last year that profits of £60 million were returned. This is a company worth investing in. Job losses do not just affect the workers concerned, they are jobs, which were secure and pensionable, which would be lost to future generations and the community in north county Dublin in particular.

This cannot be allowed to happen. Why should working people always have to pay? The unions must now begin a serious campaign to defend all jobs, to secure state investment to offset any negative impact of the US crisis. If the unions fail to rise to the task, then the combined forces of the workforce at rank and file level will ensure that this fightback takes place.

Clare Daly is a Socialist Party
Councillor for the Swords ward
and is the Socialist Party
representative for the Dublin
North constituency.
Clare is also a shop steward at
Dublin Airport. She can be
contacted at 8408059.

Signing Blank Cheques Will Continue?

The Fingal Voice has come into possession of a leaflet circulating in Dublin Airport which seems to be a mock press release from SIPTU.

It deals with the suspension of Cllr Clare Daly and a fellow shop steward Brendan Leech who were suspended as Trustees of the Aer Lingus union branch in September.

The excuse given was that they refused to sign expenses cheques. We believe the leaflet gets closer to the real story.

We quote as follows: "Clare Daly and Brendan Leech, two outspoken anti-privatisation trustees were suspended for refusing to sign blank cheques. To make matters worse they had the cheek to enquire as to why SIPTU pay cabin crew representatives at least £3.500 each per year.

They were told that it is none of their business what happens to union members' contributions.

The leaflet claims that a jubilant Des Geraghty said "This is a great day for dictatorship. We have nobbled two upstarts who were asking awkward questions.

New Hatchet Man

The appointment of new Aer Lingus Chairman, Tom Mulcahy, following the death of Bernie Cahill was a clear signal of the governments' intentions towards the airline. Hailing from AIB Mr.

Mulcahy fronted for the bank at the hearings into their massive defrauding of the tax system.

His reward -to be given the national airline, was a kick in the teeth for the taxpayer. As Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins pointed out the banks were the first institutions to introduce yellow pack wages, the employment of workers on lower wages and worse conditions, doing the same work as their colleagues.

Was this the type of ethos that was wanted in publically owned companies, he asked? Given what has happened since, the answer is yes, that is exactly what the establishment politicians want.



Terror in the US

// Last week's attack in the United States was indiscriminate terror on a mass scale. It is right and necessary that the Irish people should show solidarity and support with the tens of thousands of innocent people who have been the victims, through death, injury or bereavement, of an unspeakable atrocity.

In our unconditional condemnation of this atrocity, the Socialist Party distinguishes itself from the quality of the denunciation of others, which we find unconvincing.

The Governments, as opposed to the peoples, of Britain and the United States are responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent children in Iraq, whom they have starved of medicine and nutrition for ten years. That, also, is terrorism.

As are the deaths in Iraq of innocent civilians virtually every month, blasted by bombs dropped by planes sent by Britain and the United States. There were no cameras there to record this terror or see this carnage. The crushing and daily humiliation of the Palestinian people is also terrorism- terrorism by the Israeli state.

There was no international day of mourning when Israel invaded the Lebanon in 1982 and 17,500 people, overwhelming innocent civilians, lost their lives or when 1,800 men, women and children were butchered in by pro Israel militia forces.

The US supports not just Israel as an oppressor of Arab rights, it also supports the corrupt dictatorship which rule throughout the middle east.

The atrocity in the United States is not supported by the vast bulk of Muslim or Arab peoples. However, the groups responsible could not exploit religious fanaticism to such devastating effect without having a deep reservoir of national oppression and human misery from which to draw.

What a bitter irony for the suffering American people that those very groups accused of the terrorist atrocity had been previously encouraged, financed, trained and armed by the American



C.I.A. When journalist Robert Fisk was recently asked did he think the US knew where Bin Laden's camps were in Afghanistan, he replied, the should do, they built them.

A revenge military attack by the United States or NATO that would kill and maim thousands more innocent people in whatever country, whether or not it has the imprimatur of the U.N., would not only be immoral in itself but would spawn another generation of suicide bombers and terror.

The Irish Government should be using its position in the U.N. Security Council to stop any military action that would cause the death and destruction of innocent people. Instead Bertie Ahearne has announced that Irish airports will be available to the US for carrying out these attacks.

In opposing the hypocrisy of US global oppression and exploitation the Socialist Party gives no support anywhere to terrorist acts and has never done so. For thirty years we consistently opposed the

Voices in the Dail

" And with the US and British ambassadors in the visitors' gallery, Socialist TD Joe Higgins then raised more hackles, if not heckles, when he argued that the civilians of Iraq and Palestine were also victims of terrorism".

Irish Times report of the Special Dail debate on September 19th.

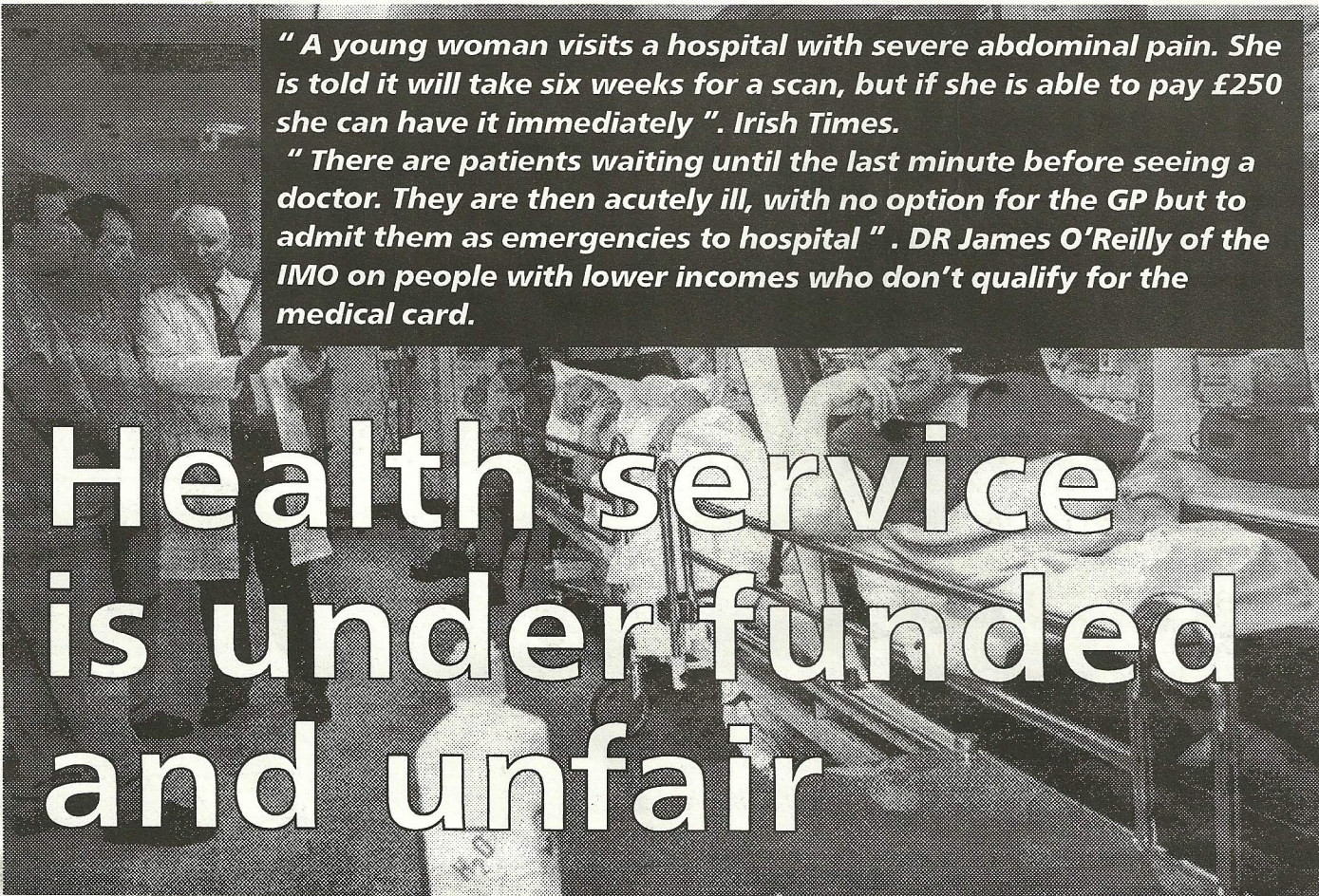
campaign of the provisional IRA and other para military forces in this country.

We have done so because these campaigns are futile. The people involved in these campaigns are saying to working people, you don't have to do anything, you don't have to organise, you don't have to struggle, leave it to us.

The creation of a world where economic exploitation, national and ethnic oppression, and poverty and its causes are ended will create the conditions where peace, prosperity, freedom and democracy will end the nightmare of terrorism of all kinds.

This can only be achieved by the conscious struggle of millions, armed I believe, with the scientific ideas of socialism.

Joe Higgins is a Socialist Party TD for Dublin West and a Socialist Party Councillor for the Mulhuddart ward. He can be contacted at 6183038.



"A young woman visits a hospital with severe abdominal pain. She is told it will take six weeks for a scan, but if she is able to pay £250 she can have it immediately". Irish Times.

"There are patients waiting until the last minute before seeing a doctor. They are then acutely ill, with no option for the GP but to admit them as emergencies to hospital". DR James O'Reilly of the IMO on people with lower incomes who don't qualify for the medical card.

Health service is underfunded and unfair

THE CRISIS that now affects all levels of health care provision cannot be underestimated. There are 30,000 on public waiting lists for a hospital treatment. Those who have been waiting less than three months are not included in the official figures. The average waiting time is nine to twelve months.

Over 50% of people now have private insurance, not because they want it, but see it as the only way to get specialist or hospital care.

There is also a crisis at the GP primary care level. Because of the ridiculously low income level set by the means test, £150 a week for a couple for example, there has been a decline in the numbers of people entitled to a card. Only three in every ten people are now eligible.

Second class treatment

Even if you qualify for a card you are likely to get second-class treatment. According to the IMO, in poorer areas where there is a concentration of medical card patients, the ratio of GPs to the population is one third of what it is in more prosperous areas.

There are two reasons for this collapse in what was by European standards a very low level of service in the first place. Firstly there is the chronic under funding of the service. There has been an increase in funding in recent years, but this has not

been enough to even overcome the effects of the cuts in the 1980s. Health Minister Michael Martin says there is a 2,000 hospital bed shortage today. 3,000 beds were cut in the 80s.

Under funding

The Department of Health says that funding needs to be increased from £5 billion a year to £7 billion. But if we were to match the level of spending per head in Germany it would have to go £10 billion a year.

The second reason is the domination of private health care throughout the system. The GP system is completely private, with the totally inadequate medical card scheme stuck onto it.

Dental care is private, with only workers paying Full PRSI entitled to basic treatment. Even children are not entitled to free dental care, unless they go to the tiny number of dental clinics. Dental treatment in the South costs three times the level in the North.

Consultants and their private patients dominate the public hospitals, with all the equipment and staff they use paid for by the taxpayer.

At the top of the heap are the multi-national drugs and medical supply companies making obscene profits through massive over charging.

The row in the government is not about confronting either of these issues. Charley McCreevey has not

suddenly developed a social conscience and is now fighting a battle to stop the discrimination against public patients in our hospitals. He just doesn't want to fork out the extra £2 billion a year, which Health Minister Martin wants to patch up the service.

McCreevey's suggestion to take private patients out of the public hospitals, and to pay the hospitals for the loss in income, is aimed at getting the private sector to build the new hospitals needed. This would mean an extension of private health care, with private hospitals for private patients.

This would be a disaster for the public hospitals would remain underfunded and unable to compete for staff.

What is needed is a root and branch revolution in health care. Primary GP and Dental services should be freely available to all who need it in a well-funded and extensive state run clinic system.

The public hospital system should receive the necessary funding to provide prompt and the best treatment available to all who need it. There should be no private patients in the system.

The role of the multi-national drug and medical supply companies should be challenged. A state owned national pharmaceutical company could provide the bulk of at least basic needs at a fraction of the cost now incurred.

Economy headed for crisis



Remember this?

How quickly the story from the government spin doctors and their lackey economists has changed. The message used to be: "the economic boom is here to stay" – "we need 200,000 foreign workers" – "Ireland's economy is special" – "we will be insulated from the worst aspects of a US downturn".

The most serious sign of the slow-down in the economy in the South has been the mounting job losses particularly in the high tech sector. 4,500 jobs have been lost in IDA-backed high tech firms since the beginning of the year.

Job losses are now coming on a daily basis. Yesterday, September 21st, it was 700 part time jobs to go at Aer Lingus, with maybe another 1,000 full time jobs to follow in the next weeks. Today it was 300 jobs and closure at the Shinko high tech electronics plant in Tallaght. Representatives of 1,600 workers in Waterford Glass are being called in for bad news next week.

Other evidence of the economic slowdown is now accumulating on an almost daily basis. Manufacturing output, as measured by the NCB Purchasing Managers' Index, contracted in August, for the first time in three and a half years.

Bubble burst ?

The stock market bubble has burst, with the ISEQ exchange in Dublin down now 20% this year.

The government's tax revenues are likely to be down £1 billion compared to their forecast at the beginning of the year. Having announced last year that 200,000 foreign workers would be

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"IF THERE was US-style data it would become apparent activity at the moment is flat and will fall in the last three months of the year.

If that is true and it continues into the first three months of 2002, then it would amount to the technical definition of a recession". Jim O'Leary chief economist at Davy Stockbrokers.

.....
required to address the shortage of skilled labour in various sectors, the government now indicates that there is a "skills glut" and the foreign workers won't be needed after all.

On top of that the commercial property market is clearly softening. Over three million square feet of office and industrial space are being built in Dublin this year. But it is now unclear if it will all be filled. The result could be serious difficulties in the construction industry by the end of the year with major job losses.

Young workers in Ireland today do not remember the economic conditions of the 80s when unemployment was running at nearly 20% and one tenth of the population emigrated.

They feel far more confident about their ability to have a future in their own country. This has been one of the

positive aspects of the boom. When they find that capitalism can offer no stable, decent future because it is a boom and bust system, but even more than that a system in long-term stagnation and decline on a world scale, there will be massive social unrest.

Who will pay?

The recession will have serious consequences for the majority of working class people. Tens of thousands of people have been forced to overstretch themselves by taking out huge mortgages. Some have to hold down two jobs just to make ends meet – what will they do if they lose their job?

The government has promised tax cuts in the next budget, big increases in child benefit over the next three years, and hundreds of millions extra for the beleaguered health service. Will they be able to deliver during a recession? Or will they, as they have always done before, launch a new attack on public spending in order to make us pay for a crisis of their making?

For too long, the union leaders in this country have been grovelling at the feet of the establishment parties and big business. Begging from the partnership table for more money and better public services for workers.

But instead of using the industry muscle of the working class during the boom to force big business and the government to give real wage increases and serious extra funds for education and health, they have let the opportunity slip by.

M50 Madness!

The National Roads Authority proposals for the M50 must be stopped. They would have a devastating effect on the Greater Blanchardstown area in general with some communities being particularly affected.

The proposal to demolish four cottages in Diswellstown to make way for a new toll plaza is particularly galling. It seems that whatever National Toll Roads wants, it gets. Other communities such as Mulberry Residents Association are also very concerned about these plans, as they will, if imple-

mented, greatly increase noise and pollution.

Joe Higgins T.D. is committed to supporting residents in fighting these proposals. He said: "It is the toll booths that should be demolished, not peoples' homes. The NRA proposals are supposed to get traffic moving more freely, but the toll plaza is the single biggest obstacle to that, as well as representing an extra tax on workers who have to use their cars due to lack of proper public transport"

Castleknock and Blanchardstown Village Chaos Threatened

The NRA proposals would mean that all traffic trying to access the Navan Road from the Castleknock, Roselawn area could not turn at the Bell Tavern, but would have to go through Blanchardstown Main Street. This would be an absolute nightmare and would also push even more traffic

through Castleknock.

It is critical that local communities get organized to fight these proposals.

An Environmental Impact Study will be carried out in 2002 and there will be ample opportunity to make the views of the ordinary residents of Greater Blanchardstown strongly felt.

Emergency Investment in Public Transport in Dublin 15

The NRA plans for the M50 show just what a mess the transport situation is in generally in Dublin. The more lanes that are opened up on motorways, the more cars that pile in.

Clearly, if buses and light rail trains were whizzing past, then most people would only be too happy to leave their private cars at home in order to escape the nightmarish traffic jams we daily endure. That is the only solution to the Dublin 15 traffic crisis.

The Socialist Party proposes that

instead of Taoiseach Bertie Ahern's pet project of a massive unnecessary stadium at Abbotstown, the funding be poured instead into creating a model public transportation system for Greater Blanchardstown, which is now designed to have a population of 120,000 people.

With adequate funding, the upgrading of the Maynooth line, a new metro line, and imaginative bus routes could restore humanity to the lives of our frustrated commuters.

Castaheany/ Hazelbury, Public Open Space

Residents from the relatively new estates of Castaheany, Hazelbury and Hansfield have been negotiating with the Parks Department of Fingal County Council about the design of the public open space between their estates.

Joe Higgins T.D. helped the residents to kick-start this process when the developer began to move mountains of earth into the space earlier this year with no consultation whatsoever.

The question is to find agreement in a proposal that will satisfy the need for active recreation in the area while being fair and just to residents whose houses look onto the proposed park and those who live nearby.

With the Residents Committees, Joe Higgins will insist that proper boundaries be installed to the satisfaction of local householders as well as other important issues.

Blanchardstown Heath/Corduff Traffic Lights

Residents of Blanchardstown Heath and Corduff are impatiently awaiting traffic lights at the junction of Blackcourt Road, Blanchardstown Road North and Blanchardstown Heath Estate. These are long overdue.

Joe Higgins T.D. has been pressing Fingal County Council to put the lights in place. He has now been informed that ten new traffic lights are planned for the Blanchardstown Area and the set for Blanchardstown Heath should be in place by this Christmas.

New Slip Lane at Whitestown

Traffic can often be backed up from the roundabout at Blanchardstown Town Centre to Blakestown Community Centre and even further. Joe Higgins T.D. has been pressing Fingal County Council to build a slip lane that would allow traffic going toward the Navan Road to move separately from the traffic going into the town centre.

This has now been agreed and engineers are preparing the plans to redesign the junction. This work will be done in conjunction with the construction of the new houses between Whitestown and Blanchardstown Road South.

Ladyswell Traffic Calming

The Mulhuddart Residents and Tenants Group, set up earlier this year, has been doing good work trying to get improvements in the area.

Fingal County Council has now agreed that pedestrian traffic lights will be put in within a few months on Church Road between Dromheath and Parslickstown. These are badly needed.

Discussions are also going on with regard to the upgrading of ramps in the area and this needs to be pushed ahead.

New Houses: Hope at the End of a Long Tunnel.

The suffering of families who are on the Fingal County Council housing list is immense. Many people are forced to live in very overcrowded conditions with all the pressures involved.

Fingal County Council has a number of projects in the pipeline, which will help the situation.

However, much more investment in housing is needed to meet all the demands.

Councillor Joe Higgins asked the Fingal County Manager for a list of Council projects and the timescale by which they would become available. This is a summary of the position:

Area	Project	Ready
Clonsilla Road	6 Council houses	early 2002
Whitestown	23 Council houses	December 2002
	54 shared ownership	
Dromheath	9 Council houses	early 2003
Parslickstown	64 Council houses	early 2003
Buzzardstown/Mulhuddart	106 Council Houses.	from early 2002
	420 shared ownership	
Corduff Park	24 Council houses	Out to tender
Fortlawn/ Sheepmoor	70 Council houses.	Out to tender
	2 shared	
Church Avenue/ Blanchardstown	16 houses for older people	At design stage

Vacant Council Houses

Local residents, especially those who are waiting for Council houses, often enquire about houses in Council estates that are vacant and boarded up.

Councillor Joe Higgins asked the County Manager about this situation and received the following information on September 6th, 2001: "There are currently 24 dwellings vacant in the Blanchardstown area, which can be summarized as follows: six houses are not available for letting for legal reasons.

One house is ready for occupation. Eight houses are with contractors, three of which will be completed by the end of September and the remainder by the end of October. It is hoped that the remaining nine houses will be available for re-letting by December 2001.

To date, 25 vacant houses have been refurbished this year so far and 30 were completed in 2000. There are currently two contractors carrying out refurbishment work in the Blanchardstown area and a third has just been appointed.

When houses are vacated, the Council boards them up. These houses often cannot be handed over to contractors until the Council has secured legal possession of same through either abandonment or surrender procedures.

It should also be noted that several offers of a particular dwelling might have to be made before acceptance in certain estates in the Dublin 15 area. The time between a house being vacated and re-let is dependent upon various factors, i.e. the legal position, the extent of the refurbishment required, the number of houses being dealt with by a contractor at any one time, the availability of contractors to carry out such works and the number of offers of housing refused by applicants on the Housing List.

Joe Higgins wants to see the time within which houses are re-let speeded up. He believes that if Local Authorities had their own construction sections rather than being dependent on private contractors all the time, much more could be done.

A plan for Dublin 15

Joe Higgins TD and members of the Socialist Party went door to door in Blanchardstown Heath, Cherry field and Carpenterstown in September. We received a very warm response.

We also had meetings with the Mountview Boys and Girls Football Club, Seamus McDonagh of the Blanchardstown Drugs Task Force, and the Mulhuddart Residents and Tenants Association.

We are trying to get a better picture of what are the key issues affecting people in Dublin 15. There are a lot of state agencies working on various projects in the area, but there is a real question as to what affect they are actually having on the ground.

For example in Blanchardstown Heath the main issues that people raised with us were the opening of the road through the estate. Some residents were particularly annoyed about this as they felt they had been duped by the developer into believing there would be no through traffic.

Residents whose houses back onto the building site want a proper wall built to separate their gardens from the site, people on this stretch are already suffering from rats and dust due to the building work.

The other main problem is the lack of traffic lights on the way out of the estate. At peak times it is virtually impossible to get out onto the main road.

These type of problems exist in nearly every estate. There are problems with the level and nature of policing and a huge lack of facilities, especially for young people. The Socialist Party, aside from taking up specific issues in particular estates, will be developing an overall plan for dealing with the many problems of Dublin 15, including transport.

Please contact us at 618 3038 if you would like to meet us.

JOIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY



Who stands by working people?

The Socialist Party played the leading role in defeating the Water Tax. We are playing a similar role now in stopping the Bin Tax in Dublin city.

Our representatives in Fingal, Joe Higgins TD and Cllr Clare Daly are widely recognised as outstanding and hard working representatives of working people.

Who is not corrupted by big business?

The Socialist Party neither receives or accepts donations from business, either in Ireland or from the US.

Our public representatives live on an average worker's wage, donating the balance to build the movement for socialist change.

Joe Higgins TD and Cllr Clare Daly said today that they "call on ordinary working people and youth in Dublin West and in North Dublin to join them in their fight for justice and equal rights for all, and a decent future for our young people." Call us at 6772592 to join the Socialist party.

Socialist Youth - the fastest growing youth organisation in Ireland, North and South

From Seattle to Rio De Janeiro, from Genoa to Indonesia young people are revolting a capitalist global economy which oppresses the majority and enriches a tiny minority. The anti-capitalist movement is an expression of the anger which exists against the system. In the Republic of Ireland, it is clear that the political establishment only serve the interests of big business. The entire system is rotten with corruption.

In Northern Ireland, the politics of sectarianism can only offer poverty and sectarian conflict. Young people need an alternative. Find out how Socialist Youth is building for that alternative.



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Return to **Socialist Youth**, PO Box 3434, Dublin 8, 087 6684616