

People Before Profit Alliance Press Release – April 1st

PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT TO CAMPAIGN AGAINST UNEMPLOYMENT IN DUN LAOGHAIRE

Richard Boyd Barrett and Hugh Lewis of the People Before Profit Alliance (PBPA) recently held a public meeting in Dun Laoghaire to set up a Community and Unemployment Action Group in the area.

PBPA have been leafleting estates and the lengthening doles queues in Dun Laoghaire are calling on all those affected by or angry about spiralling unemployment to attend the meeting and get involved in establishing a group to campaign for action on the jobs crisis.

PBPA also believe that the savage cutbacks in social welfare in the recent budget, such as the scrapping of the Christmas bonus and cuts in rent allowance, make the setting up of organisations to protect the unemployed a priority.

PBPA believe that the Council should establish *direct labour units* to give jobs to the unemployed doing important work in the community, such as, repairing boarded up council houses, upgrading schools and hospitals and providing local amenities and community services.

Richard Boyd Barrett said:

“The unemployment crisis is spiralling out of control. We are being dragged back to the 1980’s or to something worse. Mass unemployment in the 1980’s led to huge suffering for hundreds of thousands of people and caused massive social problems. The heroin epidemic can be traced back directly to areas where there was high unemployment in the 1980’s. Many families and communities in this area were devastated as a result. We must not allow that to happen again. We need to get organised immediately to demand real action to put people back to work.

The number of people signing on has almost doubled in just one year. At the current rate the numbers signing on will have reached over half a million by the end of the year. Here in Dun Laoghaire, there are 5,187 people now signing on with an extra 688 joining the dole queue in just the last month. Every day the queues at the social welfare office in Dun Laoghaire are spilling out onto the street and around the corner. It is also totally unfair that willing workers who bear no responsibility for the current economic crisis are being thrown on the dole queue, while the bankers, developers and politicians who did create this mess are left unscathed.

We must be clear: This slaughter of jobs and cutbacks in services is not necessary and will make the situation worse. The more people left to rot on the dole, the more money it will cost the state and the less money is being spent in the economy. On the other hand, if we employ people doing useful work in the community, it will benefit society and boost the economy.

In this area, as in every area, there are schools, hospitals and public amenities, like Dun Laoghaire Baths, that need to be upgraded and improved. There is a crying need for social housing and for boarded up council houses to be repaired and given out to those that need them. There are all sorts of community services needed for the young, the old and the disabled. With developers having stopped building, there is land and empty buildings available, which could be used for these things and to develop other community projects such as allotments and community co-operatives. There is a huge need to expand education to re-train and up-skill unemployed workers and young people, so that we can develop new industries.”

Hugh Lewis added:

“It is an obscene waste of the talents and skills of people to have hundreds of thousands of them rot on the dole when there are so many jobs in the community that need to be done. Thousands of socially useful jobs could be paid for, if we banned the hiring of consultants, stopped the expensive and inefficient outsourcing of council work and eliminated completely the huge handouts to private landlords.

The government won’t take the action needed because they are protecting the elites whose greed created this mess in the first place. We need people power and protests to force a change in policy and get people back to work. So I hope people angry at the current unemployment crisis will get active with us to do something about it.”

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