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Turn the anger into action

As the government look for privatisation, pay cuts
and job losses at Aer Lingus...

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FROM ANGER TO ACTION

There is no point in looking to the union officials to provide the lead. The Aer Lingus unions are already negotiating with management on where exactly the cuts should be.

The workers themselves must provide the lead, acting on their own initiative to save their own jobs. This is not as impossible as may first seem. The workers already closed down Dublin Airport for two hours on Saturday 17th July while having a union meeting. There is clearly deep anger and resentment within the company and in North County Dublin which will feel the redundancies most.

The anger and resentment must be converted in to action as soon as possible. A good start would be to get SIPTU to organise a major national demonstration in support of the Aer Lingus workers. With a large show of support the Aer Lingus workers may gain the confidence to take matters further. To gain more confidence and experience a campaign of protests and stoppages could begin with the eventual aim of an all-out strike. In this way the government can be defeated.

Whether Labour is in power or not the State will put the interests of the ruling class first. The Aer Lingus workers have the power, if they choose to use it, to move towards redressing the balance of inequality.

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The Cahill Plan is a devastating attack on workers' conditions in Aer Lingus and its subsidiaries. Unlike Digital, where £4 million was promised to try and save 800 jobs, the government are offering Aer Lingus £175 million in return for 1,500 redundancies.

Those who keep their jobs will get no pay rise for the next two years, losing out immediately on a 5.25% rise due under the PESP. In Aer Lingus £34 million will be cut from payroll costs. Overtime will be virtually abolished. Shift pay will be dramatically cut.

TEAM Aer Lingus are facing £14 million in cutbacks. The Shannon stopover is going to be phased out costing thousands of jobs in the West of Ireland.

DARE TO FIGHT — DARE TO WIN

Attacks like these can be fought against. Already TEAM Aer Lingus have had an impressive victory. When 300 TEAM workers were temporarily laid off, workers fought back by blocking the highway, holding pickets and public meetings. In the end all 300 workers were reinstated.

What this shows is that direct action does work. But more than protests and road blocks will be needed to reverse the Cahill Plan. What will be needed is industrial action effective enough to make the State think twice about imposing their cuts.

All out strike action, closing down Dublin, Shannon and Cork airports would do just that. The loss of business and tourism would cost the state and employers millions of pounds in a short space of time. If the strike lasted long enough it would be cheaper for the State to get rid of the Cahill Plan completely rather than go on losing a fortune.

Strike action, if it was supported by enough Aer Lingus workers and went on long enough would succeed, the problem is how to get there.