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Interview With CPSU Pickets, Cork

Workers Solidarity Movement

24 November 2009

During the 24th November general strike Paul spoke to two of the 15 CPSU members picketing a workplace in Cork about the strike. There were about 15 people on the picket despite the rain. More had been there earlier. The picket line was organised on a shift basis. I spoke to two CPSU members.

Q: Why are you here today?

A: The Government is coming after low paid workers again, despite having already imposed a 7 1/2 % pay cut on us, on top of the pension levy. I am already on Family Income Supplement to bring my wage up to a minimum standard of living – so that tells you. I am angry. The government is bailing out bankers, but we are struggling with all sorts of loans. We are struggling to feed and clothe ourselves and our children.

Q: What has the support been like?

A: It is good. The level of support from ordinary people is there despite the hostility in the media. Hostility from the likes of Pat Kenny, Eddie Hobbs, Neil Prendeville and Matt Cooper – with their big plush salaries. I am paid just €458 a week. The rich politicians

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are making a big deal out of taking cuts of 10 or 15%. But 15% of 300,000, still left them with 255,000. As well as €63 a day just in expenses!

Q: Anything else to say?

A: The information coming to light recently on Morning Ireland from the Central Statistics Office showed that private sector pay cuts had been exaggerated. They are trying to intimidate us.

Q: And what's your situation? Why are you here?

A: My wages are also topped up by Family Income Supplement of €110 a week to bring me up to a minimum standard of living. So that's the situation. I also had one child attending pre-school 4 afternoons a week until recently. But I've had to cut that back to 1 afternoon due to recent cuts. Bear in mind that early child-care benefit has gone and has been replaced with a system which means applying to your pre-school for funding. But the pre-school attended by my child isn't taking part in the new scheme. Actually all the pre-schools which are taking part in it are full. So that is how you get caught.