# PEOPLE'S NEWS
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## *"A silent revolution"—Barroso*

*"What is going on is a silent revolution—a silent revolution in terms of stronger economic governance by small steps,"* the president of the EU Commission, José Manuel Barroso, said after the EU Council first gave the nod to the Commission's initial concepts for that would later evolve into the "six-pack."

*"The member-states have accepted—and I hope they understood it exactly—but they have accepted very important powers of the European institutions regarding surveillance, and a much stricter control of the public finances,"* he said.

### *What was he talking about?*

The six-pack of economic governance measures, recently passed by the EU Parliament, is a huge leap forward in the institutionalisation of austerity and neo-liberal economic policies in the EU. It establishes the Commission as the enforcer of austerity and accelerates the drive to fiscal unity and a federal EU. The package centralises power in the hands of the unelected European Commission, giving it the power to impose massive fines on member-states. Fundamentally, it establishes a mechanism for forcing national governments to implement austerity and neo-liberal policies.

There are three key aspects of the mechanism to ensure that governments keep within neo-liberal economic orthodoxy. The first is "budgetary surveillance" and the "European semester"—a timetable throughout Europe for the presentation of draft national budgets at an early stage to the European Commission and Council. These draft budgets will be considered before any discussion in national parliaments, in order to put political pressure on governments to implement Commission policy.

The second is a monitoring system that, according to the Commission, will cover "the main economic policy areas, potentially including fiscal and wage policies, labour markets, product and services markets and financial sector regulation," leading to a permanent Troika-style colonisation of national economic policy-making.

The third is a strengthening of the "Growth and Stability Pact," which limits countries' public debt to 60 per cent of GDP and annual deficits to 3 per cent of GDP. Those who breach the targets and ignore warnings and recommendations from the Commission will be faced with a fine, consisting of either an "interest-bearing deposit" or a "non-interest-bearing deposit" equivalent to 0.2 per cent of GDP, which will be converted into a fine if the situation does not improve. This fine can then be increased with repeated failure to follow the Commission's recommendations. These fines will amount to hundreds of millions of euros being taken out of the pockets of workers.

In a further dilution of "democracy" in the EU, the six-pack introduces a new form of voting. Instead of the traditional qualified majority system (which means getting 255 weighted votes out of 345, representing at least two-thirds of the countries and at least 62 per cent of the EU population), a "reverse qualified majority" system will be introduced. What this means is that the Council is presumed to agree with the sanctions unless a qualified majority vote against it: so, to overturn the sanctions you would need to get a huge majority to vote against it.

The document approved by the EU Parliament argues that the procedure for the application of the sanctions should be "construed in such a way that the application of the sanctions on those Member States would be the rule and not the exception."

■ "Enforcement measures to correct excessive macro-economic imbalances in the euro area": www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2011-0292&language=EN&ring=A7-2011-0182.

The six-pack is posed as a response to the economic crisis. It is no such thing. It is part of the march of neo-liberal orthodoxy across Europe.


Corporate Europe Observatory and the RMT Union in Britain have established how the major organisation of big business on the European level, the European Round Table of Industrialists, has been pushing for such an agenda for more than a decade.

Its chairperson proclaimed in 2000 that a "double revolution" was under way. *"On the one hand we are reducing the power of the state and of the public sector in general through privatisation and deregulation . . . On the other we are transferring many of the nation states' powers to a more modern and internationally minded structure at European level. European unification is progressing and it helps international businesses like ours."*

In 2002 the organisation was calling for, *"at the drafting stage, the implications of national budgets and of major national fiscal policy measures [to be] reviewed at the level of the Union"*—which Paul Murphy, MEP for Dublin, says is precisely what will now happen.

Unless there is massive resistance to the measures throughout the EU, this package will enter into force at the end of 2011 or at the latest by the beginning of 2012. And if the response to the speech outlining it by the representative of the European Trade Union Confederation at the recent SIPTU biennial delegate conference is anything to go by, we can expect the worst.

## *New far-reaching investigatory powers for MEPs?*

The European Parliament's investigatory powers should be extended to include the right to conduct on-the-spot inspections, to summon witnesses to testify under oath, to gain access to relevant documents, and to request the advice of experts, says a proposal passed by the Constitutional Affairs Committee this week.

Drawing on lessons learnt from previous European Parliament committees of inquiry, MEPs say that the Parliament's existing limited investigatory powers should be strengthened to enable it to look into alleged contraventions or maladministration of Community law.

The report calls on the Council and the Commission to give their consent to a series of changes in the Parliament's existing right of inquiry, including new provisions on co-operation with national authorities and on sanctions.

The report says that a committee of inquiry, within the limits of its remit, should be able to conduct on-the-spot investigations and to get help when needed from national authorities.

Members also propose that the committee should have the right to ask any person to provide relevant documents, in full compliance with national rules on the seizure of objects. Any EU citizen could be summoned to testify at the request of the committee. Witnesses could be asked to speak under oath but would retain the right to refuse, as well as all the other safeguards afforded by national law in similar cases. The travel and accommodation expenses of witnesses would be reimbursed by the Parliament within existing ceilings.

EU and member-states' officials might also be asked to speak before the inquiry committee, MEPs propose, and the committee would be able to ask the advice of experts during its investigations.

The proposed regulation would oblige member-states to punish, in accordance with their national rules, those who refused without justification to provide documents or to testify and likewise those who give false testimony or bribed witnesses.

Under new rules introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, the Parliament's proposed regulation needs the consent of the Commission and the Council to enter into force. Once the procedure is completed, the regulation would be immediately and directly applicable in all EU countries.

Since 1995, when the power of inquiry was introduced, the Parliament has set up three committees of inquiry. To establish a committee of inquiry, a quarter of all MEPs would have to vote in favour.

## *Another fisheries disaster?*

Ireland has the third-largest sea area and the largest ratio of maritime area to land mass in the EU but derives only 1 per cent of its gross domestic product from the maritime economy, according to recent figures.

The country's fishing grounds, some of the richest in the EU, are a magnet for other EU fleets, because Irish waters are now "common European waters" with "common European stocks." As Simon Coveney, minister for agriculture, food, and the marine, recently reminded the Dáil, *"for what it is worth, the European Union does not regard Irish waters as Irish waters but as EU waters, which Ireland has a responsibility to monitor and control. That is the political reality of what we are dealing with."*

The result: some €500 billion worth of fish extracted from Irish waters by non-Irish fishing-boats. Under the EU's common fisheries policy, the value of the catches taken by foreign fishermen from Ireland's lost fishing waters are on a par with, if not greater than, all the money the country received from EU funds since it joined the EU in 1973. These facts should be emblazoned on banners and displayed over the entrance to every fishing port around the country!

Aspects of a new common fisheries policy would make Ireland's situation even worse, because of the planned introduction of transferable-quota concessions, opening up the possibility that it will result in big international conglomerates buying up Irish fishing rights.

The EU's commissioner for maritime affairs and fisheries, María Damanáki, has admitted that "a lot of member-states are pushing not only for transferability of concessions inside the countries, but they want an EU transferable system. This [EU-wide system] is out of the question. And I've made it absolutely clear we are not discussing this, as this would disturb relative stability, and am not going to open up a Pandora's box." This is perhaps the attitude for now; but for how long?

Quotas are now treated as a national asset, to be distributed by governments to fishing fleets in consultations between the government and the industry. It is being proposed that we move away from political control of the allocation of fishing quotas to what is termed an individual transferable fishing concession, or fishing quota. In other words, we would be moving towards privatising the long-term use of quotas, although not ownership.

Boats would be able to transfer quotas between them, for payment. This would facilitate consolidation within the industry, a reduction in the number of boats in the fleet, and trawlers with buying power being allowed to purchase quotas from those wishing to get out of the industry.

This would result not only in the consolidation of the industry in two or three ports in Ireland, to the damage and detriment of other fishing communities, but also a potential for quotas to be transferred from the Irish fleet. Damanáki has insisted that her proposal will result in quotas being transferred only within member-states. For how long?

As Simon Coveney said recently, the effect of the "reform" would be "to impose . . . [a] scheme of mandatory privatisation of quotas on Member States . . . [that] will lead to the family-owned fishing fleet here in Ireland being bought up by European international companies who have the capital to buy out our quotas. I have no doubt that this would lead to concentration of fishing into the hands of large fishing international companies without links to the coastal communities, and these very large fishing vessels, in some cases factory ships, would no longer land into Ireland, resulting in loss of jobs [and] closure of fish processing factories and economic activity in our coastal communities."

Another threat to Irish fishing is in connection with the so-called "Hague preferences." Damanáki said recently that she and her officials were "studying" the case for a permanent treaty guarantee of the existing access to a certain amount of quota in key stocks to Ireland and Britain, both states with substantial coastlines. This is in the face of strong, persistent, long-term lobbying by other member-states, such as Spain, to have these concessions dropped.

The latest reform from Brussels is no reform. The common fisheries policy has been a form of economic warfare that has cost Ireland dear in jobs and fisheries conservation. A whole way of life and part of a valuable heritage have been destroyed by decades of predatory control from Brussels.

Coveney in Fine Gael, along with his soulmates in the Labour Party and Fianna Fáil, should waken up to the fact that the common fisheries policy is not reformable. The only solution is to start the process of winning back control of our fisheries from Brussels and concentrating on the development of a policy to guarantee a sustainable industry, healthy marine environment and vibrant fishing communities in the future.

The People's Movement believes that the repatriation of decision-making powers to EU member-states is the only democratic foundation for proper fisheries management. This approach is based on the core principle that land and sea resources are a national asset and the heritage of the entire people of a country and should be managed and developed for the benefit of that country.

The custodianship of marine resources should rest with the state, which should then allocate rights to utilise the living resources and regulate this utilisation to ensure long-term sustainability and the maximum social and economic benefit of its people and especially its fishing communities.

## Some thoughts on the presidency

Does the fact that the president under the Constitution is required to carry out their functions "on the advice of the Government" mean that the coming presidential election can offer no possibilities for those who refuse to accept the dominant politics of EU neo-unionism, as whoever is elected must do precisely as they are told by the Government of the day?

At present the clearest expression of that politics is the (so far) very successful manoeuvring by the Government and the Fianna Fáil "opposition" to push forward with the coming treaty on the European Stability Mechanism, which the minister for finance, Michael Noonan, signed with the other euro-zone countries in July and which most voters have not heard about, because they are being kept in deliberate ignorance, although they will be expected to stump up for it inside two years when it is ratified, and which will require us to guarantee €11 billion to a permanent euro-zone bail-out fund from 2013—and limitless amounts of money thereafter if called upon.

This and future EU treaty changes to turn the euro zone into a fiscal union that are now being mooted by Berlin and Paris represent the essentials of the FG-FF-Labour neo-unionist consensus.

The most important fact is that, in addition to discharging the range of defined ceremonial and legal powers invested in the president, a president of courage and democratic probity could alert people to coming democratic dangers.

Germany's presidents are honorific ones too, just as in Ireland, and are supposed to act on the advice of the German government. But this did not stop President Roman Herzog writing an article a decade ago that pointed out that well over half the laws for Germany during the 1990s originated in Brussels, rather than in the German parliament, and to express his concern about this.

On 27 August last the current German president, Christian Wulff, criticised the expectation that Germany would bail out deficit euro-zone countries in order to save their banks, stating that "banks rescue banks, states rescue banks, states rescue states; but who rescues the rescuers?"

Nevertheless, a president is undoubtedly constitutionally constricted. For example, could the president use an address to the people, or to both houses of the Oireachtas, for the purpose of warning the people about the EU treaty changes that Merkel and Sarkozy have announced that they will be bringing forward in early November?

The president would first have to consult the Council of State, under article 13.3 of the Constitution. The constitutional obligation here is to "consult" before exercising the right to address both houses of the Oireachtas or the people. But every such address must have received the prior "approval of the Government"; and undoubtedly the last thing Enda Kenny and the Government would want is the prospect of a Lisbon 3 treaty, which would require a constitutional referendum.

While it is not the role of the People's Movement to advocate support for any particular candidate, it would be remiss not to point out that someone with aspirations to become president of a democratic republic should be prepared and able to address a few basic questions that are crucial to the future of that republic. The would-be president would need to show that they recognise these as important matters; otherwise they are a sham and a fraud.

What right have Merkel and Sarkozy to decide between themselves that a Lisbon 3 treaty is needed when successive Irish Governments, and the Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and Labour Party leaderships, have continually told Irish voters that the EU is a "partnership of equals," with Ireland's place being "at the heart of Europe," and not a German-dominated club, with France holding on to Germany's coattails?

Before the Lisbon 2 referendum in October 2009 the European Council (of EU presidents and prime ministers) made an official statement to the effect that the Lisbon Treaty would be the last significant EU treaty for a generation, and that no further EU institutional changes needed to be made. This was to encourage Irish voters to cast their votes for the treaty. How is that promise consistent with proposing a new treaty to permit fiscal integration for the euro zone less than two years later?

Fiscal integration for the euro zone is bound to mean the end of this state's $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent corporation profits tax in time and would undoubtedly open the way to direct euro-zone taxes before long.

Do we not now need a public inquiry into the disastrous decision whereby the state came to join the euro zone in the first place, in the light of the fact that we do most of our foreign trade outside it, and that the one-size-fits-all interest rate we took on when adopting the euro led us to halve our interest rates at the height of the "Celtic Tiger" boom—so blowing up Ireland's property bubble in the early 2000s?

That property bubble could not have happened if German and French banks had not lent vast sums to the Irish banks for onward lending to the Irish property market—and the same in Greece, Spain, Portugal, etc.—without any control or interference by the European Central Bank. And yet when the property market went belly-up in these countries it was the ECB that insisted that no euro-zone bank must be let fail—which in turn led Cowen and Lenihan to shift the €30 billion of bad property debts at Anglo-Irish Bank and the €15 billion at AIB onto the shoulders of Irish taxpayers for a generation.

## *What are they talking about?*

### *Surely not another referendum!*

Here is the text of a recent exchange in Seanad Éireann:

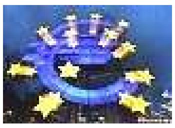
**Senator Michael D'Arcy (Fine Gael):** I refer to the proposal from President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel for a constitutional law in each of the euro-zone countries in order to extend borrowing beyond a certain amount.

**Michael Noonan TD (Fine Gael):** Senator D'Arcy asked about a constitutional brake. Anything that requires a referendum will be difficult now, especially if it has been suggested by Europe. However, we will have a Fiscal Stability Bill before Christmas, and *we may be able to include the brake in legislation rather than putting it by way of referendum into the Constitution."*

In 2009 Germany's constitution was amended to introduce the *schuldenbremse* ("debt brake"), a balanced budget provision. This will apply to both the federal government and the länder (provinces). From 2016 onwards the federal government will be forbidden to have a deficit of more than 0.35 per cent of gross domestic product.

The idea was adopted in March at a euro-zone summit meeting as part of the "competitiveness pact," to be used in each member-state as a constitutional mechanism that would prohibit governments from over-borrowing. It has been well received by Fine Gael and even the Labour Party, although whether such a constitutional amendment would be achievable in Ireland is very much open to question. And then there's the small matter of avoiding that referendum!

## *Euro-bonds, fiscal union, and all that bunkum!*



The recent ruling by the German Constitutional Court is surprisingly clear. It says that the government must not accept permanent mechanisms if they involve a permanent liability to other countries, if those liabilities are very large or incalculable, or if foreign governments, through their actions, can trigger the payment of the guarantees. This is an open invitation by the court to bring a new case against the European Stability Mechanism.

But what if the EU decided to create a fiscal union after all? The Constitutional Court already decided in its ruling on the Lisbon Treaty that this is not possible either. A fiscal union would require a referendum in which the German electorate would decide to abolish the sovereign German state and transfer sovereignty from Berlin to Brussels. Suffice it to say that this is not very likely to happen.

So no matter how you organise a future fiscal space in the euro zone, it will either be meaningless or will infringe the German constitution.

## *Merkel proposes another reason for a referendum: treaty change*

The chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, has called for changes to the EU treaties to reinforce the euro. After meeting the twenty-seven members of the European Commission she said that Germany was determined to push for enshrining tougher economic rules in Europe's basic legal text—which would definitely require a referendum in Ireland.

Such an initiative would give Germany and France greater powers to impose their economic will on peripheral countries, leaving little room for manoeuvre when national budgets are being framed.

"We've said that if one day it becomes necessary to change treaties to have more reliability in our working together, in particular in the euro area, then treaty amendments should not be a taboo," Merkel told reporters. "We have to adapt our legal situation to the factual situation."

Her sentiments were echoed by José Manuel Barroso. "If we reach the conviction that the country isn't doing all that it should as a member of the euro area, I don't think we should rule out the possibility of treaty change." He added that treaty change would "probably" be necessary. "We may need treaty change for more integration, if the current mechanisms are proved to be not enough," he said.

## *Commission proposes suspending cohesion and structural funds for high-deficit countries*


The European Commission has proposed that, from 2014 onwards, payments of structural funds would be suspended for countries that repeatedly breach the debt and deficit rules of the EU's Stability and Growth Pact—in effect, making a bad situation even worse.

The EU commissioner for regional policy, Johannes Hahn, said that "the recently passed six-pack [of EU economic governance legislation] raises the possibility of fining euro-zone countries if they don't stick to deficit rules. So we discussed the theoretical possibility of using money as a final way to bring them back to the right way." He added that suspension would be a measure of last resort, to be taken only after "a long series of steps." The next generation of EU cohesion funds would be similarly affected after 2013.

## The reality of austerity

### A "deepening humanitarian crisis"

Irish people are accustomed to being asked to donate money for tackling medical humanitarian crises in Africa and other parts of the developing world. But it is unheard of for aid groups such as Médecins sans Frontières to have to take over the role of providing basic medical services from the state in a western country. But in the era of EU-IMF austerity, that is what is happening in Greece, as the unemployed begin to turn up at temporary clinics that had been intended to come to the aid of migrants and refugees.

According to Apostolos Veizis, head of programmes for Médecins sans Frontières in Greece, "wherever we work we are working not only to respond to emergencies but also to potential unwillingness on the part of authorities to provide access to health care."

As the crisis has deteriorated and the EU has demanded stringent austerity that is bleeding public health care of vital resources, ordinary Greek citizens have begun turning up at refugee clinics that were never intended for them.

"With the growth of the economic crisis we are seeing symptoms of a wider problem," Veizis says. "Now pensioners, the unemployed, the homeless, HIV and TB patients are also going without health care. We are seeing the budgets of some health service areas, such as social support and the treatment of certain diseases, being hit by cuts of up to 80 per cent."

As a result of the government's inability to pay the debts it owes to pharmaceutical corporations, the drugs giants are refusing to supply medicines to certain hospitals. The Swiss firm Roche said in September that it would no longer deliver drugs to indebted hospitals.

But it goes beyond pills and ointments. The government is slashing the number of hospitals from 133 to 83, cutting the number of clinical units from 2,000 to 1,700, and limiting to 30,000 the number of functional beds, or 80 per cent of estimated needs.

Pensioners are insured, but they also have to make a contribution from their side to the purchase of medicines—as much as 20 or 25 per cent of the cost. But if their earnings have dropped from €700 a month to €500 a month, their capacity to pay for their medicines is gone.

Visitors to their clinics are now asking not only for medical assistance and medicines but for food as well. "Among some children and the elderly, signs of mild malnutrition have begun to appear. As a result, the organisation in the coming weeks is to step outside its brief and launch a campaign for food donations.

"There is a deepening humanitarian crisis in Greece, but nobody wants to see this."

## So that's a reason for voting for Lisbon!

**Extract from the address by Jack O'Connor, general president of SIPTU, to the recent SIPTU biennial delegate conference,**

"Trade unionism is [the] key to the socialist transformation of society. However, it is also essential to the survival of capitalism. Of course, collective bargaining rights are not just an economic imperative. They are critical to healthy democracy, providing the key vehicle for working people to participate in the evolution of the workplace and society.

"We withheld support for the first Lisbon Treaty referendum because the Government of the day refused to commit to legislation for this entitlement, although it was enshrined as a fundamental right in the treaty itself. We supported the proposition the second time around only because the Leader of the Labour Party committed to write it into the law of this Country when returned to Government if the treaty was endorsed. He didn't forget, and thus for the first time in the history of our State, the Programme for Government clearly commits to legislating on this issue to ensure compliance with recent judgements of the European Court of Human Rights."

## Unrest spreads to military in Greece

### Ministry of Defence stormed

The Greek military is now entering the political sphere on EU and IMF-imposed austerity, with a group of retired army officers storming the Ministry of Defence during a protest of some two thousand officers, breaking doors and dismantling equipment. Meanwhile the armed forces' union issued a warning to the government that the military's confidence in the "intentions of the state" regarding their pensions has been "shaken."

The officers removed doors and the dismantled security equipment that scans for the presence of weapons; but after the chief of staff spoke to the crowd and asked them to leave, the officers abandoned their action.

The invasion of the Ministry of Defence follows protests by sections of the police, who demonstrated outside the European Commission offices and German and French embassies in Athens. The police, upset at having their pay cut, along with other civil servants, as part of austerity imposed by international lenders, flew a massive banner denouncing the EU and IMF.

These incidents follow an ominous warning from the minister for defence, who declared that "the road of internal conflict is open," and rumours of an order for a state of alert having been issued to the army.

## *Van Rompuy lauds EU as "force for good" in first UN speech*

The president of the EU Council, Herman van Rompuy, in a groundbreaking speech in New York described the EU as a "force for good" in the world and said it is managing the euro crisis in a spirit of "solidarity."

Addressing the UN General Assembly for the first time as the EU's seniormost official, rather than as a leader of an EU presidency country, van Rompuy said: "This institutional innovation gives our union more continuity and consistency vis-à-vis other world leaders."

In July the EU won the right to address the United Nations as if it was a country, in recognition of the greater powers given to EU institutions by the Lisbon Treaty.

Meanwhile, in an interview with *Die Zeit,* the German minister of finance, Wolfgang Schäuble, argued in favour of having a directly elected EU president, saying, "After the first electoral campaign, Europe will have made a step forward. It will have changed."

## *Lofty ambitions!*

You might think that all available resources are going into saving the EU countries that stand on the verge of financial collapse; but the EU aims to get to the Moon by 2018!

The "director for human space flight" of the


European Space Agency, Simonetta di Pippo, says: "The Moon is the next natural goal on our common path to destinations further afield. Europe is actively and successfully present in these global projects which contribute to affirm our role as a modern, dynamic and innovation-driven continent."

The European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company is now conducting a "Lunar lander phase B1 study," whose "final result . . . will be a fully defined mission concept and a detailed design of the landing vehicle and Moon rover." The rover is charged with exploring the surface, while stationary instruments will record experimental data for an expected six to eight months. (Just in case the Americans and Russians missed something.)

What about an actual EU man on the Moon? When asked about it, the director of human space flight at the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company, Thomas Reiter, answered optimistically that "a return to the Moon is an obvious target."

Is this a worthwhile project that EU or Irish taxpayers want to support? But then we have to recall the provisions relating to space in the Lisbon Treaty—and we accepted that!

So who's on for the Mars express?

## *EU presidency turns its back on "fracking"*

Poland, long seen as promoting a common European approach to shale gas, has now published a surprising study describing possible EU regulation on the industry as "unfeasible."

Just before its presidency, the Polish government had lobbied for shale gas to become a "common European project." But it would apparently now prefer Brussels to abandon plans to develop the industry.

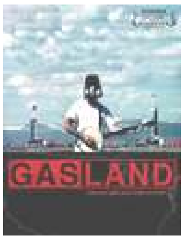
A new paper published by the Polish Institute of International Affairs is called *Path to Prosperity or Road to Ruin? Shale Gas under Political Scrutiny.* It argues against a European approach to shale gas regulation, distancing itself from the earlier Polish position.

Since last June, when environmental concerns led France to ban hydraulic fracturing—the technology by which shale gas is extracted—there has been no common European approach to the industry.

The study admits that Poland could be counted on as a European country where one could speak excitedly about shale gas. Optimistic expectations regarding Polish shale gas reserves contributed to the euphoria. For the last couple of years more than a hundred concessions have been granted for shale gas exploration. The list of beneficiary companies includes such energy giants as Chevron, Marathon Oil, Exxon Mobil, Conoco Phillips, and ENI. However, shale gas has remained controversial in Europe, with national debates polarised between eager acceptance and total rejection. Shale gas caught the attention of EU institutions only last year, triggering two different responses. One is that member-states should introduce legal and regulatory adjustments to address the risk of shale gas exploration; the other approach was in favour of EU-wide legislation.

The writers of the report take stock of the public debate in various European countries, including France, where the Parliament has banned hydraulic fracturing. "Because of the complexity and breadth of this debate, it seems unfeasible to consider introducing a comprehensive legal or regulatory framework within the EU," they conclude.

■ Video from RTE Radio 1 "Drivetime" programme on fracking for gas in the Lough Allen basin: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEIAkA9pjZM.




■ Web site of No Fracking Ireland: http://nofracking ireland.wordpress.com/reports/.

■ *Gasland*: the film trailer: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZe1AeH0Qz8; www.youtube.com/watch?v=phCibwj396I&feature=related.

## *Irish wing of EU-IMF austerity-mongers publishes first report*

The recently established Fiscal Advisory Council has published its first report. Its proposal to cut a further €4 billion from the domestic economy over the next four years, in addition to the €11.8 billion already agreed by the Government, suggests that they are not living in the real word.

There is no social or economic rationale for adopting such a policy. The council says it would bring the state's budget deficit down to 1 per cent by 2015; however, what the report does not say is what the cost to ordinary people would be if such a course was pursued.

The human cost of an extra €4 billion in cuts over four years translates into increased unemployment and emigration, which would continue to rise. Vital front-line services would continue to be dismantled, deepening the crisis in our health and education systems.

**Comhairle Fhioscach Chomhairleach na hÉireann**
**Irish Fiscal Advisory Council**

So who are these people on big salaries who are so willing to slash and burn the little people? The Irish Fiscal Advisory Council was established following the agreement with the EU and IMF and is already formed on a non-statutory basis. The "independent" council will be underpinned by legislation to be brought forward by the Government before the end of 2011 in the proposed Fiscal Responsibility Bill. It will be charged with assessing the appropriateness and soundness of the Government's fiscal stance and macro-economic projections as well as an assessment of the extent of compliance with the Government's fiscal rules.

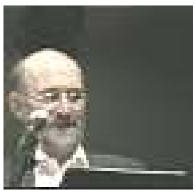
The minister said he was confident that the move would be viewed positively by the markets as further clear evidence that Ireland remained on track to meet its obligations under the EU-IMF programme.

## *Prospects for recovering Ireland's sovereignty*

### *Weekend conference held in Dublin*

Two of the contributions to the conference can be found here:

**Alex Gordon, general president, RMT Union (Britain), concludes that "social Europe" was a con.**
■ www.youtube.com/watch?v= 0j3ViBGIlvM.



**Should Ireland stay in the euro? Frank Keoghan, secretary, People's Movement, outlines his ideas on default and "radical exit" from the euro.**
■ www.youtube.com/watch?v=nB_Si2Y47Ao.