PEOPLE'S NEWS
News Digest of the People's Movement

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Panic, or just more Euro-spin?

***Following* the finalisation of the euro "rescue deal" announced by EU leaders, the People's Movement calls on the Government to demand that Ireland be treated on an equal basis to Greece, and demands that the EU open immediate negotiations with representatives of the banking sector—the Institute of International Finance—in order to achieve this objective. An immediate freeze should be placed on the pending payment of €0.9 billion to the unsecured bond-holders of Anglo-Irish bank.**

With regard to the deal itself, the IIF may be unable to deliver voluntary participation by the bond-holders to secure a 50 per cent write-down on Greek debt. This will be particularly difficult in the case of French banks, which have exceptional exposure.

The bank recapitalisation will total €106 billion, rather than the International Monetary Fund's recommended target of €300 billion.

The "leveraging" of the European Financial Stability Facility is entirely dependent on the newly created "special investment vehicle" (SPIV), a complicated financial instrument of a type that EU leaders previously lambasted for causing the crisis. The raising of the additional €860 billion is not guaranteed, and talks that have opened with China, if successful, are likely to be accompanied by significant "conditionality" in order to encourage investors.

The idea that some financial alchemy can magically multiply €300 billion is a dangerous illusion. The reality is that, for the moment, there is still "only" €300 billion with which to protect the euro from the risk of Italy and Spain defaulting. Meanwhile, how the present €440 billion worth of loan guarantees in the EFSF will be boosted to about €1 trillion without any country increasing its contribution remains a mystery.

Germany capped its exposure at €210 billion, so there is no guarantor of last resort, which investors will be seeking. Any losses will be insured for only up to 20 per cent of value, and in the context of 50 per cent "haircuts" this is hardly an attractive deal.

The plan calculates that it will reduce Greece's ratio of debt to GDP to 120 per cent by 2020. Greece's GDP is shrinking rapidly, and it is very unlikely that this target can be met, given that the country faces years of austerity.

The People's Movement can identify nothing concrete in this "deal." The EU leaders may have bought some time while the markets digest the outcome, but in a few weeks' time they will be in crisis mode again, as the shallowness of their agreement emerges.

The Irish Government should immediately begin talks with the other peripheral member-states and our near neighbours, Britain and the Scandinavian non-euro members, to plan for an orderly exit from the euro. The outcome of the recent two summit meetings should provide ample encouragement.

Bye-bye, Trichet, and good riddance!

From the end of October, Jean-Claude Trichet has retired as president of the European Central Bank. He will step into retirement having helped to wreak the sort of destruction on some European economies that hostile powers could only dream about.

Tens of millions of people throughout the euro-zone countries are unemployed or underemployed because of him. Meanwhile the world teeters on the brink of another financial crisis because of the ECB's failure, along with the IMF, to effectively address the sovereign debt crisis. Most incredible of all, Trichet probably thinks he has done a good job.

The ECB is dominated by a core economic belief that a central bank should always pursue a 2 per cent inflation target. It has pursued this even as

Ireland and other peripheral euro-zone economies have crumbled around it.

While inflation in the euro-zone economies rarely exceeded 3 per cent and averaged well under the 2 per cent target over the last decade, the low euro-zone inflation rate is not providing much help to the $14\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of the Irish work force that is unemployed, or to the 21 per cent of the Spanish work force, nor the millions more elsewhere in the euro zone who have lost their jobs as a result of the collapse of the housing bubbles that the ECB let grow unchecked.

If Trichet and his colleagues at the ECB had been awake they would have noticed that real house prices in Ireland had more than doubled between 1998 and 2006. The same was true in Spain. There was no remotely comparable increase in rents, strongly indicating that this increase was not being driven by the fundamentals of the housing market.

And in both countries the massive increase in house prices was having the predictable effect on the economy. Both countries had huge building booms and surging consumption as home-owners spent in accordance with on their bubble-generated housing wealth. In both cases this led to extraordinary balance-of-trade deficits that were clearly unsustainable for advanced economies.

How could Trichet and his colleagues have failed to notice these housing bubbles and the economic distortions they were creating? Or, insofar as they did notice them, had they a theory whereby economies can seamlessly replace the 10 percentage points of GDP worth of demand, or thereabouts, that was being generated by the housing bubbles in those countries?

It didn't help that much of the rest of the euro zone also had bubbles in their housing markets (Germany was the big exception)—although they were not creating quite as large a distortion as in Spain and Ireland. Nor did it help matters that important non-euro-zone countries, such as the United States and Britain, also had bubbles in their housing market, and that the whole process was being driven by over-leveraged banks.

It is very difficult to see how a central banker in the euro zone could have looked at the economic situation in 2004, 2005 or 2006 and not have been concerned about the impending disaster that eventually overtook these countries. The warning signs were all over the place and flashing bright red everywhere while Trichet and his colleagues focused on their 2 per cent inflation target.

Remarkably, even after the collapse of the bubbles, with the euro-zone economies smouldering in the wreckage, the ECB continues to be obsessed with its 2 per cent inflation target. It never lowered its short-term rate below 1 per cent; it actually raised it to $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent last spring in order to stem inflationary risks.

It is tragic that Trichet will be allowed to go into retirement thinking that he has done a good job. It is a political indictment of us all that someone who caused so much harm can escape with such impunity.

Departing Trichet joins the chorus for treaty change

The outgoing president of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet, has joined the chorus calling for a change to the European Union treaty to allow for the outside imposition of economic policy on a member-state.

Trichet said that such a step is necessary in the wake of the euro-zone crisis to guard against any one member-state endangering the single-currency area. "It is necessary to change the treaty to prevent one member-state from straying and creating problems for all the others," he said. "To do this, one even needs to be able to impose decisions."

In the absence of a federal state, Trichet said, such external supervision is required. "We don't have a federal budget, we don't have a political federation, so we have to fully respect the constraints and the mutual supervision rules that exist in the euro zone." And remember, nobody elected Trichet!

Meanwhile the German minister for foreign affairs, Guido Westerwelle (who was elected), has said that Germany wants to persuade other members of the EU to draft changes to the bloc's founding treaties at a new 27-member intergovernmental convention that would take place in 2012.

The convention should be given a clear mandate, he insisted, and a one-year time limit within which to deliver results by mid-2013, when the euro zone's permanent €500 billion rescue fund—the European Stability Mechanism—is supposed to come into effect. "We need treaty changes to overcome the shortcomings of [EU] construction," he said. The convention should consider whether the European Court of Justice would be used to enforce budgetary discipline, and whether a "stability commissioner" for the euro should be appointed. "Probably both are necessary."

And remember the former president of the EU Commission, Jacques Delors of Nice Treaty fame? He now argues: "I find Merkel's position in favour of a new EU treaty encouraging . . . In this new treaty we should envisage the possibility of expelling a country from the euro zone by a more-than-qualified majority of 75 per cent. Had such a clause already been in place, the Finns and the Slovaks would have thought twice before delaying their decisions."

So we can expect to be thrown out if we reject treaty change? That's hardly more democratic than being asked to vote until we get it right!

But a new headache for the coalition Government emerges with the growing possibility of treaty changes that would most probably require a referendum. A decision on whether to go down the treaty-changing route will be made by next March, according to the new plan for saving the euro. But even if the member-countries do not collectively decide to set the euro's redesigned architecture in stone, it is possible that a challenge in the courts could result in a referendum anyway.

And then there's "the crisis as an opportunity"!

Angela Merkel expressed her frustration last week at the slow speed of decision-making in the EU, arguing: "Where is it actually written that a treaty change at the European level must always take a decade? The German unification and the accompanying Two-Plus-Four Treaty ["six-pack"] came about in an extremely short time. If we are committed to more Europe, then we must really conceive of the crisis as an opportunity, and be ready to undertake faster and unconventional actions."

Get ready for a referendum!

Remember Lisbon!

Irish people are likely to reject any amendment to the Lisbon Treaty that purports to fix the EU financial crisis, according to the latest Irish Times and Ipsos MRBI opinion poll.

When asked how they would vote on an amendment to the Lisbon Treaty to extend the powers of the EU to deal with the financial crisis, 47 per cent said they would vote No, while only 28 per cent said they would vote Yes.

Opposition to further treaty changes is relatively consistent between regions, classes, and age groups. In party terms, Fianna Fáil voters are most supportive of a treaty change, closely followed by Fine Gael voters. Sinn Féin voters are the most hostile, followed by Labour Party voters.

Voters also expressed strong dissatisfaction with the manner in which European leaders are running the EU. A total of 55 per cent of voters said they were dissatisfied with EU leaders; 27 per cent said they were satisfied.

There is dissatisfaction with EU leaders among supporters of all parties. Sinn Féin voters are by far the most critical, while Fine Gael supporters are the most satisfied, followed by Fianna Fáil voters.

On the other hand, when asked if it was better to be part of the EU or not to be part of it, 67 per cent said it was better to be part of the EU, while 23 per cent said it was not, which points to an underlying volatility in voting intentions.

Latest fisheries reform a sham

When, on 30 June 1970, Ireland, Britain, Denmark and Norway launched what was ultimately to prove a successful bid to join the then European Economic Community, neither Ireland nor the other applicant countries had a fishing problem.

It came later the same day. At a hastily convened meeting of EEC agriculture ministers held just before the applicants lodged their applications, the principle of equal access to "community" fishing waters "up to the beaches" was agreed, with the intention that the necessary legal formalities would be adopted as soon as possible. Norway was the only applicant country that seemed to have any concerns about what was going on and had been seeking clarifications and to be kept informed, even before the applications were lodged. The Irish Government seems to have shared British illusions that the equal-access proposals were merely a basis for negotiations.

Probably months before, once it had been realised that the four applicants would be bringing with them the best-conserved and richest fishing waters in Europe, legal eagles within the *service juridique* of the EEC Council of Ministers had been instructed to devise a way under the Treaty of Rome for taking over the fishing grounds of the applicants as a "common resource," giving a right of "equal access" to every member-state in the EEC.

There was, of course, no mention of a "fisheries policy" in the Treaty of Rome, so it was difficult to pretend that the development of a "common fisheries policy" was an objective of the treaty. Despite this, a regulation was drafted that defined the equal-access principle, with the intention that it would become part of the *acquis* before the four applicants lodged their applications.

A further element was the fact that pressure was already mounting for a major revision of the international law of the sea, to extend national control of fisheries to 200 miles, or the "median line" between two states; and it was recognised that when this happened the waters of the four applicants would contain well over 90 per cent of the fish stocks of western Europe.

The common fisheries policy was the first example of a "federal" or supranational "European" policy. The Hague Conference of 1976 modified "equal access" with the "Hague preferences" to prevent the too-rapid depletion of fishing stock. A proportion of total allowable catches for each of the main species of fish would be allocated to each country under a system of national "quotas."

Dictating the maximum quantities of each species that could be landed ignores the basic realities of fishing. When nets are hauled in they can contain a range of species for which there is no quota. As it is a criminal offence to land these, the only alternative is to return the "illegal" catch to the sea, by which time the fish are dead. The result is the environmental disaster that is the common fisheries policy.

Now we are in the middle of an EU-wide "discussion" about the future of the CFP. The publishing of the EU Commission's proposals for the "reform" of the common fisheries policy has come and gone, causing barely a ripple on the Irish political and economic scene beyond an obligatory statement "for the record" from Simon Coveney, minister for agriculture, food and marine.

Coveney seems to seriously believe that he is waging a titanic struggle to defend Irish interests. Only occasionally does the penny seem to drop and a semblance of reality enter his thought processes. That is when he acknowledges that EU policy is "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 [the] 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, closure of fish processing factories and economic activity in our coastal communities."

The latest CFP reform from Brussels is no reform. The CFP has been a form of economic war 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 soul-mates in the Labour Party and Fianna Fáil, should waken up to the fact that the CFP is unreformable. 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.

Treaty change is coming!

Angela Merkel has again raised the issue of changes to the EU treaty to harden governance and fiscal rules, saying at the recent summit meeting that such a development should not be "taboo." She told reporters: "We want more Europe, and stronger rights to intervene. Treaty changes for that should not be taboo."

She has been consistently calling for treaty change that would shore up rules but would also result in member-states ceding a portion of their sovereignty to Brussels.

Her comments were supported by the German minister for foreign affairs, Guido Westerwelle, who said that the euro zone would be plunged into repeated crises unless such amendments were made. "It is not enough to simply . . . plug budget gaps, fight debt with new debt. It is essential that there be treaty changes," he said.

Westerwelle told ministers for Europe, including Lucinda Creighton, that the EU should have the power to exert greater control over national budgets, and he emphasised the "urgent" need for treaty change. Such changes would allow the EU to have greater supervision over national budgets and ensure that the stability pact was being complied with.

EU sources say that, from a long-term strategic political viewpoint, this may be part of the price euro-zone states will pay for agreement by Germany to increase the size of the bail-out fund.

The summit statement included language pointing to treaty change. A section of the conclusion dealing with further integration said that, as the euro was at the core of the European project, leaders would "strengthen the economic union to make it commensurate with the monetary union."

The president of the European Council, Herman van Rompuy, will steer a group that will identify possible steps towards achieving this goal. "The focus should be on how to further strengthen economic convergence within the euro area, to improve the effectiveness of enforcement mechanisms, and to deepen fiscal integration."

Van Rompuy has been asked to complete an interim report by December, with a full report scheduled for June of next year.

EU hits the needy—not the greedy!

Six member-states of the EU have blocked the renewal of a €500 million EU food aid scheme, cutting it by three-quarters to €113 million from 1 January 2012. Without the agreement of at least one of the six countries in the "blocking minority," the programme, dating from 1987, will be terminated in two years' time.

Britain, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden—all wealthy countries—decided yet again to hit the poor and vulnerable. The Polish minister of agriculture and rural development, Marek Sawicki, succinctly noted that, "if we show solidarity with the banks, we need to show solidarity with the poorest."

At present most food charities rely on the €500 million budget for supplying free meals to 18 million of Europe's poorest people. Last year the European Federation of Food Banks received 51 per cent of its food from the scheme.

When it was introduced, the scheme allowed for food stocks to be tapped for providing free meals to the most deprived. But, as food stocks diminished over the years, most food is now being bought at market prices, with French producers being among the biggest beneficiaries of the scheme. Germany and its allies claim that these are in fact hidden subsidies, and are not willing to pay for it.

The penny drops!

Enda Kenny has been forced to admit to the Dáil that he now believes that some of the changes agreed over the past few days could require another referendum, as the electorate struggles with further austerity. "In regard to the discussions I heard on Sunday and in which I participated, 90 per cent [of the proposed measures] can be dealt with without any treaty change.

"I stress *limited* treaty change," he added, inserting a bit of spin. Just a few days before, he had told the Dáil that he did not see the need for a new referendum.

Rejecting austerity would be "irresponsible"!

Herman van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso have declared their sympathies for the widening anti-austerity movement but said that rejecting austerity would be "irresponsible." Van Rompuy told reporters: "We understand that the measures are not popular, but they are in some ways indispensable to safeguard the future." He said that austerity should be implemented "without creating new poverty" and "with fair and just distribution of efforts"—a statement that is delusional and in this case downright dishonest.

Barroso was even more forthcoming with his sympathies for the protesters, but he too said there was no other way. "I very much understand the frustration and indignation of many people in our society . . . To a large extent this is a global movement," he said, attacking the "criminal behaviour" in the financial sector, neatly shifting the blame for what is a systemic crisis.

However, the former conservative Portuguese prime minister (and one-time Maoist) said that what the demonstrators are proposing is "irresponsible."

Increased transparency

The German parliament voted on the government's negotiating mandate for the euro-zone bail-out fund only hours before Angela Merkel left to attend the EU summit meeting on the euro crisis.

Deutscher Bundestag

It is the first time the Bundestag voted on the content of a euro rescue package before the deal was actually agreed among EU leaders. The new powers follow an important ruling by the German Constitutional Court. The need for a negotiating mandate approved by the Bundestag was one of the reasons Merkel insisted on a two-part summit meeting on Sunday and Wednesday last week.

At first the vote was supposed to be held only in the 41-member budget committee, but Merkel's own Christian Democrats demanded a full debate and vote.

The improved scrutiny by members of the German parliament is a welcome democratic control over a process that has sacrificed transparency and accountability for the sake of the markets, and is a development that members of Dáil Éireann should be seeking to emulate.

And the German Constitutional Court defends the rights of the parliament

The work of a special committee designed to speed up Germany's decisions on the use of the euro-zone bail-out fund has been suspended after complaints about its legality. Due to have begun work last week, the nine-person committee was instead issued with a temporary injunction by Germany's Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe.

Following a complaint, "the second senate of the Constitutional Court has decided . . . that until a full decision is taken the Bundestag's right of participation may not be replaced by the new committee," the court said in statement. The Bundestag had decided that the committee would oversee the €211 billion of German taxpayers' money in the bail-out fund.

Euro referendum in the Czech Republic?

The ruling Civic Democratic Party (ODS) in the Czech Republic is pushing for a referendum on the country's future accession to the euro zone, claiming that the rules have changed since 2003, when Czechs said Yes to the EU and the euro.

The recent agreement on another bail-out for Greece and on boosting the euro-zone's bail-out fund is fuelling calls for a referendum. The Czech Republic, along with all other eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, is obliged to adopt the euro once budget deficit and other economic conditions are met.

None has so far demanded a referendum, as nine of newest member-states, including the Czech Republic, already had a plebiscite on joining the EU. But now, speaking at his party congress, the prime minister, Petr Nečas, has demanded a referendum on whether the country should join the euro zone.

"The conditions under which Czech citizens decided in a referendum in 2003 on the country's accession to the EU and on its commitment to adopting the single currency, the euro, have changed. That is why the ODS will demand that a possible accession to the single currency and entry into the European stabilisation mechanism be decided on by Czech citizens," the party resolution says.

Nečas also floated the idea in case Germany gets its way on another treaty change, bringing about more economic integration and tougher sanctions for deficit sinners. "In the event that there is a change to fundamental rights that would result in powers being transferred from national organs to European organs," he said, "this government is bound to ratify this step with a referendum."

The call for a referendum was criticised by Piotr Kaczyński of the Centre for European Policy Studies. "It's completely wrong. It's purely populist to call for a referendum when losing popularity," he said. With the mood against the EU and the euro on the rise among Czechs, Kaczyński says that such a referendum would certainly result in a No. "Czechs observe Slovakia closely, where they may see the benefits of euro membership, but the costs are much bigger," he said, in reference to the government collapse earlier this month over the euro zone's bail-out fund.

China in the driving seat?

As Klaus Ringling, the EU negotiator, arrived in Beijing, reports suggested that China could invest up to €100 billion in the leveraged EFSF, although any support would probably come with strong conditions, which could include guarantees against losses and political concessions to China.

Asking a non-euro-zone state to help the euro would give the other state the power to decide the fate of the currency. Any help would come at some political cost.

China's sovereign wealth fund, the China Investment Corporation, has more than €300 billion in assets to invest, and the euro zone is in desperate need of fresh capital.

A number of options are available. China could invest in infrastructure projects, assist in the bank re-capitalisation programme, or buy up even more government bonds.

The *Sunday Times* reported that in return for such investments China was secretly seeking additional commitments on budget cuts and structural reforms (including welfare and pensions) among member-states of the currency bloc. The paper cited a source close to the recent G20 talks in Paris as saying: “China wants to be sure that Europe knows the size of the hole, and that it won’t get any bigger before they agree to fill it in.”

In addition, it has long been speculated that in return for bailing out the euro zone China could obtain significant political concessions, such as the lifting of the EU’s arms embargo, and be given full market-economy status. China already holds some €650 billion in euro-zone bonds, and €6 to €8 billion of this is Greek debt.

What remains of “social Europe” being torn up

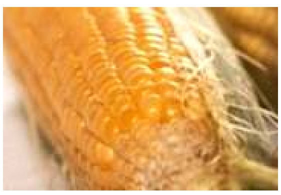
Herman van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso got a frosty reception at the annual summit meeting between the major European employers’ associations, representatives of the continent’s workers, and the presidents of the EU Council and Commission.

The new president of the European Trades Union Confederation, Bernadette Segol, warned that the EU’s present doctrine “could get out of hand, bringing recession and depression.” She said the financial sector had “made profits since the last crisis, but instead of investing this . . . they have spent it on shareholders and bonuses. This must stop. It is unacceptable.

“We see attacks on collective bargaining. The troika has demanded that Greece suppress national collective agreements. We see demands put at negotiations at the lowest level possible, initiatives in Hungary to suppress union rights. This is not the way to construct a social dialogue.

“Austerity is often used as an excuse to liberalise everything and to undo negotiating structures,” she said. “The basic structures of social relations are under attack.”

Bob and Dave



Europe’s largest and most influential bio-tech industry group, Europa Bio, whose members include Monsanto, Bayer, and other GM companies, is recruiting high-profile “ambassadors” to lobby European governments on GM policy, according to leaked documents.

Europa Bio claims to have “had interest” from our own “Sir” Bob Geldof and the former Irish EU commissioner and all but forgotten attorney-general David Byrne. The lobbyists have offered to write, research and place articles in their names, arrange interviews and speaking engagements with international media, and secure for them what could be lucrative speaking slots at major conferences.

In addition, Europa Bio says it will introduce them to the highest-level European bureaucrats and MEPs in order for them to make the case for GM within EU institutions.

Geldof said: “I have no recollection of having any knowledge of Europa Bio and have no recollection of ever being asked to be an ambassador. GM, subject to all the known and usual caveats, does have a place, for instance, in the fight against starvation. The trick is to ensure that this technological advance is not simply a business opportunity but a human one to the benefit of the world’s rapidly increasing population.”

The British Green Party MP Caroline Lucas said: “This brazen attempt by Europa Bio to recruit covert ‘ambassadors’ to ‘change the debate’ on GM is yet further proof that the powerful GM lobby will stop at nothing to push its hugely unpopular and unnecessary products onto European citizens. We need far stronger regulation on corporate lobbyists across the EU.”

That man Trichet again!

An interview with Brian Lenihan’s former adviser, Alan Ahearne

“Yeah, a letter came in on the Friday from Trichet. The ECB was getting very hostile about the amount of money it was having to lend to Ireland’s banks. The ECB demanded [that] something be done about it, and it mentioned Ireland going into the bailout. They were keen to get Ireland into the programme . . .

Lenihan rang Trichet that day, and they agreed [that] officials would meet the following day in Brussels. When they met, the ECB put huge pressure on Ireland to go into the programme. Honohan called him [Lenihan] before he went on [“Morning Ireland”] to let him know he was going on. He would have come under huge pressure at ECB level to make the bail-out happen, and he called from Brussels or Frankfurt, as he was under great pressure. He was worried about financial stability . . .”

[Re "burning" bond-holders] *"It would have been good, it would have been fair and a proper outcome, if the senior bond-holders in Anglo and Nationwide were burnt . . . It would have been fairer and a more just outcome if there had been discounts, but the ECB was steadfast against it . . .*

"EU federal union is the ultimate goal, the end-game of all this. Part of the goal of setting up the single currency was establishing a fiscal union. That thinking was right. For a properly functioning single currency you need fiscal unity. In general, EU integration has been good for Ireland. Our future is with Europe. Fiscal union is the end game." (From the *Sunday Independent,* 9 October 2011.)

Quotable quotes

"The policy [*of guaranteeing price stability*] *should not be watered down in order to attain other objectives which are a matter for governments."*—Wim Duisenberg (then president of the European Central Bank), 1 November 1996.

"The euro will leave the D-mark forgotten."—Helmut Kohl (former chancellor of Germany), April 1998.

"There is no central bank in the world that is as independent from politics as the European Central Bank."—Wim Duisenberg, 15 June 1998.

"I know that in Europe different states are at different stages in the economic cycle. Financial policies have to bear the brunt, which is solely a matter of the governments."—Wim Duisenberg, 15 June 1998.

"The euro is based on the same kind of stability as the D-mark."—Romano Prodi (former president of the EU Commission), September 2001.

"Germany has always benefited from ECB independence . . . Protecting people from inflation—that's what really matters. And that's why ECB independence is a crucial aspect we will not accept putting into question again."—Angela Merkel, 11 July 2007.

"I will defend the European Central Bank's independence under any circumstances and with all my strength."—Jean-Claude Trichet (president of the European Central Bank), 11 July 2007.

"A key question for the ECB, as for other central banks, concerns the timing of the withdrawal of the medicine to avoid the threat of addiction or dependence. We have made it clear that we will unwind enhanced credit support in a timely and orderly fashion."—Jean-Claude Trichet, December 2009.

Footnote

Herman van Rompuy and José Manuel Barroso have unequivocally welcomed the death of the former Libyan leader Colonel Gaddafi. The two men, in a joint statement published amid news of the killing, said: "The reported death of Muammar Gaddafi marks the end of an era of despotism and repression from which the Libyan people have suffered for too long," and they called for a process of national "reconciliation."

People's Movement budget protest

A date for your diary

Tuesday 6 December, 1 p.m.

At Dáil Éireann, Kildare Street, and the EU Parliament offices, Molesworth Street.