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Lets get together

Workers Solidarity Movement

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THE ATTACKS on jobs, wages & working conditions at TEAM and Irish Steel are only the beginning. The government wants to slim down a lot of public sector jobs, with a view to privatising the most profitable sections. They also want to defeat traditionally strong groups of workers. Such a defeat will demoralise a lot of people, and thus lower expectations of secure jobs and good wages.

Likely targets are An Post, Telecom and the ESB. Each group faces the same enemy, it makes sense to fight together. The leaders of most unions have no intention of going beyond aggressive speeches, empty threats and token action. In many cases this is as much to con the members as it is to frighten the bosses. The union leaders are, after all, in a “social partnership” with the employers and government through the Programme for Competitiveness & Work.

What we do not need is the ICTU bringing together a collection of General Secretaries to arrange yet another ‘orderly retreat’ (i.e. surrender). What we do need is an understanding that if we fight individually we will be beaten individually, but if we support each other we can unleash great power. A public sector wide strike could stop almost everything. No buses, no post, no phones,

no electricity... the government would have to give in, and very quickly.

To pull this off would require a lot of explaining, convincing, organising. The first step is to bring together active trade unionists, who are prepared to argue for strike action, from the commercial semi-state sector. Such a body could organise a real fightback by trade unionists, and keep it independent of bureaucrats like Phil Flynn and Peter Cassells. Despite the hostility it will provoke from some union head offices, representative bodies like Trades Councils are well placed to take the initiative to launch a rank & file public sector alliance.