

Headline English

2010, week 49 *Learn English through reading on current world affairs*

1 **Why cuts do not make sense**

2 original at:

3 [http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/nov/24/students-and-markets-
undermine-case-for-cuts](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/nov/24/students-and-markets-
4 undermine-case-for-cuts)

5 The latest shock wave of the global crisis has served to ram home the
6 reality that this remains first of all a crisis of the banks and the private
7 sector – not, as some governments would have it, of profligate
8 governments and public debt. Public debt only ballooned to fill the gap left
9 by market failure.

10 Ireland, after all, plunged into the crisis as a low-spending, low-tax
11 neoliberal poster boy. It has followed the demands of the fiscal
12 consolidation fantasists to the letter – only to dig itself deeper into
13 recession, deficit and uncontrollable debt. The latest EU-dictated austerity
14 programme is now being imposed to save its banks and big businesses –
15 as well as the European banks that lent to Ireland.

16 At stake everywhere is who will pay the costs of the crisis. So far the
17 answer has been unequivocal: it will not be those who caused the crisis,
18 but the wider populations who had nothing whatever to do with it.

19 Yesterday's combination of a 12% cut in Ireland's minimum wage, while
20 its rock bottom corporation tax rate was protected like a holy relic,
21 couldn't have made the point clearer.

Questions

- 1) What is the message rammed home by the recent Irish problems?
- 2) Explain the meaning of 'neoliberal poster boy' (line 11).
- 3) How did Ireland react to its fiscal difficulties (look for the answer in lines 11 to 14) and what have so far been the results of the measures adopted by the Irish government (note 'follow to the letter' in line 12 roughly means *to pay exact attention to all the details of an agreement*)?
- 4) What is the aim of the latest austerity programme according to the text?
- 5) Who has so far been paying for the crisis according to the article?
- 6) Explain 'couldn't have made the point clearer' (line 21).
- 7) Throughout the text, there are a couple of phrases or words conveying roughly the same meaning as *make something clear*. Find them!
- 8) Do you agree with the article? Or do you think cuts are necessary to keep the Irish economy alive? What do you think is going to happen next?

Vocabulary

ram home (line 5) – make clear by special emphasis and try to convince somebody of something; "drive home a point or an argument"

plunge (line 10) – to bring suddenly or forcibly into some condition, situation, etc.

rock bottom (line 20) – the lowest possible level, extremely low

at stake (line 16) – being decided, being determined, if something that you value very much is at stake, you will lose it if a plan or action is not successful

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

Přejeme Vám mnoho studijních úspěchů.

Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

