

# Socialist Worker

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**As 35,000 workers vote on strike action:**

# NOW IT'S PAY BACK TIME FOR WORKERS

**A MOVEMENT for higher wages is underway in the local authorities and the health boards.**  
 Four thousand craft workers have already voted by a staggering 20 to 1 to win a claim for £27.69 a week.  
 Now they are being followed by another 30,000 general

workers who are tired of the low pay they have had to put up with.

**Profits**  
 For the past few years workers have watched as the employers have made bumper profits and then told the rest

of us that we were all social partners.  
 Take Ryanair for example. Here three directors shared out £27 million in dividends—and then paid some of their workers as little as £2.50 an hour.  
 Or look the health boards. They tell us that workers and

bosses are now on the same side.

**Prepare**  
 But how come general workers can leave the service after 40 years with a pension of £16 a week on top of the state payments?

Workers should prepare for a militant fight where craft and general workers stick together.  
 We should also recognise that social partnership is a con. It has always been designed to benefit the bosses.  
 Now it's payback time for the workers.

# Fighting racism on the railways



THE SOCIALIST Workers Party held a lively protest on 7 November outside Connolly Station in Dublin to oppose racism on the railways.

The gardai have been boarding trains from Belfast and harassing black passengers, as part of Justice Minister John O'Donoghue's racist campaign against immigrants.

This is also happening on buses from the North. Davy Carlin, who has lived all his life in Belfast, went on radio to tell how he was singled out by gardai on a bus because he is black. On that occasion the other passengers rallied round and forced the gardai to back down.

The Connolly Station picket was called after Irish Rail workers reported that gardai had asked them to watch out for black faces arriving from the North.

The workers wanted no truck with this racist harassment, especially since there are two black employees at Connolly Station.

The rail workers stance is a fine example of how black and white can unite against O'Donoghue's racist abuse.

# Woods joins China's free market friends

THE IRISH government is likely to drop its support for United Nations condemnation of China's human rights abuses.

The minister for the Marine, Michael Woods, claims things are changing in China and we should await the outcome of 'dialogue' between China and the European Union.

So what change is Michael Woods talking about?

Have China's rulers released pro-democracy activists jailed following the Tiananmen Square massacre? Or has it ceased to occupy Tibet?

None of the above has prompted Woods to soften his approach. Instead he hails free market reforms which have led to China becoming 'pragmatic about economic development'.

Woods is more worried about Ireland's trade deficit with China than about human rights.

He is lining up with the rulers of countries like France, Canada and Australia who see lucrative opportunities for free trade in China.

They are all peddling a myth that the free market brings democracy in its wake.

They should tell that to workers in Western backed police states like South Korea, Indonesia and Nigeria, where the multinationals have no problem making huge profits.

# Zoe profits spell deaths on sites

THE DUBLIN building trade unions were set to stop work on Zoe Development sites throughout Dublin on Monday 10 November.

The action, called off at the last moment by SIPTU officials, was in protest at unsafe conditions.

This followed the death of a building worker.

He was the third worker to die on Zoe sites in Dublin since 1991.

The company has been successfully prosecuted by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) on 12 occasions for serious breaches of the safety regulations, and two further prosecutions are pending.

Zoe Developments, the largest residential developer in the city, is estimated to have built more than half of the capital's 6,000 or so inner-city apartments and has another 1,000 on the drawing board.

Eric Fleming of SIPTU, a member of the HSA, and secretary of the building trade unions' group, says the company is the worst offender in Dublin against the construction industry's safety regulations.

safety as "a cost to be avoided as far as possible", according to Fleming.

Officially there were 266 accidents in 1995, claiming 13 lives, and 342 in 1996, claiming 14 lives.

But critics in the health and safety field and the trade unions say that figure is massively under-reported, and is probably only 10 percent of the overall total.

## Figures

"Those figures are arseways", according to Eric Fleming.

"It's not unusual for us to find people working on sites in heavy bandages, where a person may have a bad gash or cut or even a broken nose, and continue working".

Workers do not take time off and some employers do not report the accident to the HSA as they are required to do.

"An enormous amount of accidents are not reported.

"These include some very serious ones, including broken legs from people falling off ladders and even some people with backs broken".

A raft of new laws and

## LOUISE WOODWARD: Pressure defeats class injustice

Louise Woodward has walked free only because millions of people came to her defence.

Au pairs are treated as little more than slaves by the well off American couples that employ them. Louise was paid as little as £70 a week by the Eappen family.

But when a terrible tragedy happened, they tried to demonise Louise in order to get her locked up.

It is great that Louise has been given a temporary reprieve. But there are tens of thousands of Americans who are still suffering from this system of class injustice.

Today there are more Black young men in prison than attending university. Many of them are as innocent as Louise Woodward but they never enjoyed the support of the media.



regulations have been brought in but the regulations are not biting as they should.

Ireland is also one of the worst countries in Europe to fail to have workers elect representatives as health and safety officials.

Although Zoe has been brought to court in the past by the HSA, says Mr Fleming, "it just glides in and out of court with the best of legal assistance and just carries on willy nilly".

Until such time as a developer is sent to jail, sites are closed down or major fines are imposed for gross breaches of Health and Safety regulations "we are wasting our time", he adds.

# The real face of Mary McAleese

SHORTLY AFTER the presidential election result, Youth Defence put posters round Dublin to celebrate. Despite the fact that Mary McAleese hid her views during the election, her supporters seemed to know what she stands for.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s Mary McAleese has been an active and consistent campaigner for the Catholic right.

Her most dogmatic statement was in opposition to interdenominational schools.

A Catholic education "arises in the context, not out of a desire to create a sectarian education system but out of a genuine desire to extend the home vision, the vision of a Catholic way, the way of life to the school," she said.



Mary McAleese

She repeated this view last year in an interview with the Redemptorist magazine.

It was "quite dangerous", she said, to integrate Catholic and Protestant children in schools.

"It is actually quite mischievous, if not quite dan-

gerous, to insist that the children should integrate."

McAleese scripted and presented a 52-minute Veritas anti-divorce video which went on sale in May 1986.

She resigned from the Irish Council for Civil Liberties after it opposed the abortion amendment and is against abortion for rape victims, describing it as "a rather primitive act of revenge or retribution vented on a foetus".

## Criticised

Her stance on abortion was clearly spelt out in a letter to the Irish Press in October 1992, which criticised the Supreme Court decision in the X case.

"The Supreme Court decision in the case of the Attorney General versus X contradicted the express will of the Irish people.

"As well as decades of medical and legal practice by permitting the direct abortion of the unwanted

child.

"They have stated their preference for dealing with the matter by legislation, even though to do so would enshrine the X judgment in Irish law, thus making for easy access to abortion.

"We welcome the government's recognition that the threat of suicide provides no medical justification whatever for abortion."

However she has occasionally criticised the hierarchy as she did earlier this year.

"Women have observed the enormous drain of heterosexual males from the priesthood and the growing phenomenon of gay priests.

"They are quietly asking what is happening at the core of the call to priesthood that attracts homosexuals in much greater numbers than their population distribution would explain."

It seems even the hierarchy itself is becoming a bit too 'tolerant' for our Mary!

## Booming

The construction industry is booming.

Building output has grown by 18 percent to almost £6 billion last year and could reach £7 billion this year.

Hundreds of apartment block, hotel and house sites are springing up all over the country, especially in Dublin.

Employment in on-site jobs has soared from less than 71,000 in 1993 to over 93,000 last April.

But in the rush to profit from the Celtic Tiger, the building bosses regard

## Tallaght roads protest

UP TO 50 young people have been mounting a series of protests in Killinarden in Tallaght.

They are demanding the council provides a pedestrian crossing at a notorious accident black-spot in the area.

In the last couple of weeks two local people were knocked down and a 13 year local girl was killed. It was after her funeral that her friends decided to take matters into their own hands.

One of the protesters told Socialist Worker, "We put flowers on the road and set up the protest. We stopped drivers to get them to sign our petition.

"We don't want to see any more deaths or injuries from speeding cars.

"The police have done nothing to help but have harassed us saying we are causing a nuisance. The guards have hit some of us.

"We want something done to make our roads safer."

## what we think

### SPRING BOWS OUT AFTER ADI ROCHE FIASCO:

# Where is Labour going?

**THE Labour Party is back on the margins gaining just 7 percent of the vote in the last Presidential election.**

Spring and his advisors were convinced that the left-right divide in Irish politics no longer made sense and that image was the key to everything.

This is why the Adi Roche campaign was such a disaster.

While right wing candidates like Dana talked about inequality in the Celtic Tiger economy, Roche was encouraged to see herself as a Lady Di type figure who talked a lot but said nothing.

The leadership contest shows that Labour has learnt little from the experience.

Quinn and Howlin share the same politics as Spring. They have agreed not to produce manifestos because they recognise that there is little difference between them.

If anything, the election of Howlin or Quinn will make it easier for Labour to re-enter Coalition with Fianna Fail in the future.

#### Alliance

Neither of them are bound by Spring's commitment to rule out an alliance with that party and both claim to have good relations with Bertie Ahern.

There is a massive audience in Ireland for a party that campaigns clearly to tax the rich. But Labour cannot embrace that audience because they defend Ruairi Quinn's record of cutting taxes on the wealthy.

There are tens of thou-

sands who want to do something about corruption. But Labour cannot mobilise it because they helped to cover up the antics of Reynolds over passports and the tax amnesty.

There used to be a left wing in the Labour Party that understood these sentiments.

But figures like Michael D Higgins and Emmet Stagg responded to the collapse of the Soviet Union by embracing the idea that there is no alternative to the market.

#### Struggles

It is possible that when major workers struggles develop in Ireland, the Labour Party may again turn left.

This is what happened in France when Jospin turned on the socialist rhetoric to revive a party that had been discredited by the sell-outs of Mitterrand.

But even here the French Socialist party vacillates between the aspirations of its own working class supporters and the demands of French capitalism.

In every decisive confrontation—such as on the recent truck drivers dispute—it ensures that workers get a worse deal than they deserve.

This is why the key is to build a serious socialist organisation outside the Labour Party. That has to be a party that centres itself on the growing workers' struggles rather than simply the elections.

And instead of working within the market, it has to seek a revolt against the madness which produces Stock market crashes and poverty amidst plenty.



## Are we living in a post-liberal Ireland?

**AS SOON as Mary McAleese was elected, her backers began to reveal their real agenda.**

Noel Dempsey, the Fianna Fail campaign manager, claimed that liberals had shown great intolerance in recent years and that Mary McAleese was going to re-

adjust the balance in a "post-liberal Ireland".

McAleese's victory will not reverse the gains of the past few years—but it will give greater confidence to those who want to embark on this mission.

In reality, the talk of Irish liberalism being 'intolerant' and 'going too far' is outrageous.

It is still the case that 90 percent of the country's primary schools are run by religious groupings and most remote a Catholic ethos.

And if anyone wants to see real intolerance, they should look at how the Bishops managed to twist Mervyn Taylor's arm so that his Equality Act contained a provision which allowed them to sack teachers who offended that ethos.

Or look at the scandalous situation that persists over abortion.

Despite all the denunciation, the same proportion of young Irish women have abortions as their counterparts in Britain.

The only difference is that they cannot have them in their own country. And it is working class women who suffer most from this hypocrisy as they have to raise considerable sums to go abroad.

Far from living in a post-liberal Ireland, the reality is that we live in an Ireland where liberals have been frightened to push through

real changes.

After the X case, no party in Dail Eireann proposed that abortion should be provided free of charge in Ireland.

They did not even call for the implementation of the 'substantive issue' in the referendum of 1994 which allowed abortion in cases where a woman was suicidal.

None of them challenged the Bishops on their so-called right to sack teachers who did not conform.

McAleese's victory should shake the complacent idea that Ireland was moving slowly and gradually to a new society.

The old clericalist conservative forces are still there. They talk a new language about a 'tolerance' and 'pluralism'.

But they still need to be taken on. McAleese's victory and Dana's vote is a warning that if the left do not give answers to the grievances of the mass of people, the right will try to step into the breach.



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# French truck drivers victory

**FRENCH TRUCKERS** lifted their blockades last weekend after winning a victory in their fight for decent pay.

But many were also bitter at the deal, agreed by leaders of the main truckers' union, which fell short of what could have been won.

Many workers also worried that part of the deal may not be fully implemented.

The deal gives the truckers an immediate 6 percent pay rise and promises their key demand for a guaranteed minimum hourly rate of £5 an hour will be met.

This is a huge climbdown by bosses of the large trucking firms, who had walked out of talks a week earlier refusing both an immediate pay rise and a guaranteed hourly rate.

"We have got nearly what we wanted," said Philippe Rault, union rep for the CFDT union federation on the truckers' blockade at Calais.

The bosses had been forced to give way by the success of the blockades which shows that determined all out action is enormously powerful.

The strike also won overwhelming public support.

After five days some 160 blockades had hit ports, petrol supplies and industry across France.

Several major car plants had been forced to halt production.

The Socialist Party government put enormous pressure on the bosses to retreat and come to a deal.

But the government had also used its links to the trade union leaders to get them to accept far less than what could have been won.

The deal was agreed by the CFDT union federation, which is by far the biggest of the unions among truckers. It has close links to the Socialist Party.

Other unions refused to sign the deal, and many CFDT members on the blockades were also unhappy.

The guaranteed minimum of £1,000 for 200 hours work a month-£5 an hour-will only be phased in by the year 2000.

"Why not now. Why wait for the year 2000?" said an angry trucker on a blockade in Le Mans.

The deal does not apply

**After five days some 160 blockades had hit ports, petrol supplies and industry across France. Several major car plants had been forced to halt production.**

equally to all lorry drivers, and that too has angered some. But the biggest fear many truckers have is that the bosses cannot be trusted.

Last year under the then Tory government French truckers mounted a successful 12 day strike.

The bosses were forced to surrender and promised a host of concessions.

While some of these promises were honoured, many were not and bitterness over that was a key cause of this year's strike.

Doubts over whether this year's deal would be honoured were only calmed when the government stepped in to say it would guarantee implementation.

The government also promised that a new law imposing stricter regulation of the industry would be rushed through parliament.

Many workers in France still have a lot of goodwill for the government, which was elected earlier this year, and this meant its promises carried weight.

The transport minister, a Communist Party member in the Socialist led coalition government, even joined a strikers' blockade.

The government's pledges were enough to get most truckers to accept the deal.

But a minority feel they had the power to win much more, and are less trustful of the government.

"This is a political deal and the CFDT is too close to the government. A lot of drivers are unhappy," said one trucker this week.



Truck drivers blockade Calais

**CANADA:**

# Teachers' strike focuses anger

**THE ILLEGAL** strike by 126,000 teachers against education cuts in the Canadian province of Ontario reached a crucial point on Monday.

The teachers' action has become a focus for hatred of the Tory government in Canada.

Last Thursday a demonstration in support of the teachers blocked the centre of Toronto.

Thousands of people have visited the teachers' picket lines.

A Canadian socialist re-

ports, "There are hundreds of schools students visiting picket lines. There have been hundreds of local rallies and mass demonstrations.

"Parents and trade unionists walk the picket line on the way to work bringing money and cookies.

"Most of the teachers and many of their supporters voted Tory last time.

But now they are saying, 'I voted for Mike Harris (the Tory premier) but I didn't vote for this'."

The strikes follow eight

city wide one day general strikes against the Harris Tory government's attacks on jobs and welfare.

A national postal workers' strike is also brewing.

## Clamp Down

The teachers' strike is illegal but the Ontario government has failed so far failed to get the courts to clamp down.

Nevertheless teachers' union leaders want to throw in the towel.

At last Thursday's To-

**WORKERS AND** students in the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean were calling for a two day general strike this week in protest at falling living standards.

The government has so far refused to negotiate over price rises in basic foodstuffs and this has led to a rash of demonstrations and violent clashes with police in recent weeks. This week's strike marks a sharp escalation of the protests.

**DEMOCRACY** protests against the military backed regime in Algeria continued last week. The series of demonstrations against the regime's rigging of recent local elections have been the biggest such protests since the 1992 military coup.

But the government also showed last week it was ready to use repression.

Police broke up a rally by opposition MPs in the capital, Algiers, last week and attacked a student demonstration.

**OVER 200,000** workers struck and joined protest rallies in Vladivostok and other cities in the far east of Russia two weeks ago. They were demanding the payment of wages owed to them. Many workers right across Russia have not been paid for up to four months.

Miners, power workers, teachers, local council workers and others joined the pay protests in the east of the country, and also demanded the resignation of Russian president Boris Yeltsin.

**THOUSANDS** of workers joined a protest rally in the Czech capital, Prague, last weekend.

The protest was called by the Czech TUC against austerity measures, rising unemployment and attacks on social security benefits pushed by the country's rabidly free market government. The government is also pressing for a ban on strikes.



**round up**

ronto demonstration three of the five union leaders involved announced that they were "escalating the struggle" by sending their members back to work.

Striking teachers were told they should vote NDP, the equivalent of our Labour Party, in the next general election.

This sparked a grass roots revolt.

At one mass meeting the union executive were booed off the stage.

One remained behind to tell the strikers that they

could not have a mass meeting because the union did not have the funds to hire a hall large enough.

One teacher came up to the stage and slapped a \$5 bill on the table. A procession of teachers did the same until there was over \$4,000 on the table.

"There's the money for the mass meeting," they said.

■ Fax messages of solidarity to the Ontario Teachers Federation on 001 416 966 5450.

## DUP stoke divisions over poppy

**TWO DUP politicians leafleted Derry's Coats Viyella plant to stir up sectarianism among workers over the wearing of the poppy.**

Management in Derry's Coats Viyella factory had suspended without pay at least a dozen workers who wore the poppy before the date it was allowed.

But Hay and Campbell of the DUP turned the bosses' action into a viciously sectarian campaign. They said Catholic workers were to blame because they were opposed to the poppy.

The company used the opportunity to threaten 500 workers in one of its other plants

with the sack.

Over 500 workers at Viyella's Lurgan plant, called Saracen, may lose their jobs if restructuring plans go ahead.

### Symbol

Socialists do not wear the poppy because it has become a symbol of those who *supported* the First World War.

The poppy was originally established by Field Marshall Hague, the general who caused thousands to die in the trenches.

Instead of supporting this tradition, socialists argue that the best way to commemorate the thousands who died in Ulster 38th

Regiment is to oppose the warmongers and arms sellers of today.

None of this means though that management should ever be granted the right to tell workers what to wear and what not to wear.

It was a disgrace that workers should have been suspended for wearing a poppy and the union should have done something about it.

By not acting, they left the door open to DUP hypocrites who leafleted other factories in Derry last summer to demand that workers should not be allowed wear a black ribbon to commemorate Bloody Sunday.

Instead of letting bigots divide us, workers should unite to oppose the bosses plans for cutbacks.

## Banking on low expectations

**THE NatWest bank used a survey on teenagers' pay expectations to claim that young people don't want a £4.40 minimum wage.**

The bank had the cheek to say that teenagers thought £2 and £3 an hour were the "right" rates for working in supermarkets or fast food outlets.

Teenagers, says NatWest, "judge wages not just

in terms of how much they would want to do the job, but also look at the value of jobs".

Which is pretty much nil in most fast food restaurants and supermarkets.

# Splits open in IRA and Sinn Fein

**"PEOPLE COME and go—it's all part of the human condition". This was Gerry Adams comment on recent resignations from Sinn Fein and the IRA.**

It was a futile attempt to play down the extent of the divisions.

Until now tensions inside the IRA have been contained because of the trust many members had in the leadership of Adams and McGuinness.

But the resignation of a former IRA chief of staff and several members of the Army council show that there are deep divisions inside the movement.

The divisions have increased as signs grow that the republican leadership are preparing to accept an 'internal settlement'.

This would establish a form of power-sharing and cross-border institutions within the context of the Northern state.

The Adams and McGuinness wing of Sinn Fein want to reposition their party to win support from the growing Catholic middle class.

**This history of division is not accidental. All republican movements try to represent those who want to carve out a niche in the system and those who cannot.**

This grouping has made major gains in recent years as the higher echelons of the civil service and state employment has been opened to them.

They want to assert their 'Irishness' but are content to live within the Northern state until the population balance changes.

Republican history has shown a pattern of



accommodation and splits.

### Divided

In 1921, it divided over the Treaty. In 1926, it split again when de Valera entered parlia-

ment.

In the forties the former chief of staff Sean McBride split off to form Clann na Phoblachta. In 1969, it split into the Provos and Officials.

This history of division

is not accidental.

All republican movements try to represent those who want to carve out a niche in the system and those who cannot.

They win a base among workers through

standing up to oppression and imperialism.

### Leader

But they never see workers power as the answer. This means that every republican leader from

Michael Collins to Gerry Adams vacillates between the two main alternatives of armed struggle and constitutional tactics.

Each in turn produces leaders who call for a return to the original tradition—only then to repeat the pattern themselves.

### Rhetoric

Today for example, Rory O Bradaigh of Republican Sinn Fein presents himself as the inheritor of the real republican tradition.

But in the 1970s he also attempted to conclude a peace treaty with the British government.

While he stokes up a militant rhetoric, he still makes sure to keep his links open with right wing Irish Americans.

The exhaustion with 25 years of armed struggle may be Adams best guarantee that the latest divisions do not widen.

But the latest crisis shows that the republican movement is once again heading down a dead end.

## in brief

★ Loyalists who are obeying the ceasefire are finding other tasks to keep them busy.

Some Belfast UDA/UFF members appear to have discovered the lucrative loan shark business, squeezing an average of 20 percent interest out of their debtors.

They have reportedly pushed out loans totalling around £230,000 to people in parts of north and west Belfast.

What was that about punishment beatings for anti-social activities?

★ Stress at work damages workers' mental health and causes between 30 percent and 40 percent of all sick leave, according to the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health.

And for every day lost to disputes, 30 working days are lost to stress, NIAMH says. A simple solution: let's up the strikes and fight for better pay and conditions.

Socialist Worker guarantees that management will wear the only stressed out faces around.

# RUC COVER-UP IN HAMILL MURDER

**THE CASE** against three of the men charged with murdering Portadown Catholic Robert Hamill has been dropped because witnesses have withdrawn their evidence.

Hamill, a father of three, was beaten to a pulp by around 30 loyalists while he made his way home from a dance through

Portadown town centre last April.

He died in hospital twelve days later.

An RUC patrol was waiting in its landrover nearby and never intervened even though two women reportedly ran to the vehicle to alert the officers.

Now there is a massive cover-up to protect the six loyalists charged with Hamill's murder.

Anonymous calls to a

local priest and the Hamills' solicitor indicate that a police officer may be related to some of the loyalists involved.

### Evidence

It is also thought that the witnesses who withdrew their evidence are RUC officers.

Robert Hamill's family is disgusted with the decision.

His sister Diane said:

"The authorities seem to want to brush it under the carpet and that is making it worse for us.

"We now realise that without doubt we can expect nothing from the system."

The RUC has a long record of covering up for loyalists murders.

According to Ed Maloney of *The Sunday Tribune*, a Portadown Catholic was abducted and killed by loyalists in

the 1970s "while intelligence gathering members of the security forces followed and observed but did not intervene".

In July of this year, 16-year old James Morgan was abducted near a loyalist stronghold and subjected to such a beating that he could only be identified by his dental records.

Yet the RUC had the audacity to claim it did not suspect a sectarian killing.

# What caused Stock Market collapse?

STOCKBROKERS around the world are putting a brave face on last month's Stock Market collapse in Hong Kong when £35 billion was wiped off the value of shares in a few hours. They point to the recovery in Wall Street where companies like IBM announced plans to repurchase \$3.5 billion of its own shares.

"Wall Street held its nerve and prevented a crash" is how the business press is presenting the saga.

Yet the collapse of share prices in Hong Kong showed just how crazy and fragile the market system really is.

Shares are pieces of paper which represent a proportion of the ownership of a company.

These shares are traded by investors who want to move money from one part of the economy to a part which shows greater signs of profit.

But in reality the trading of shares takes on a life of its own.

Instead of being based on what is happening in production, shares are bought and sold as if they had value in themselves.

Today, for example, the ratio of share prices to the replacement costs of a firm's assets are at their highest since 1925.

The dividend yield on many shares is lower than it has ever been for a century.

But this has not prevented a huge escalation in share prices. It is estimated, for example, that shares were 200 percent higher in Wall Street before the Hong Kong collapse than they were in 1989.

As the rate of profit that is generated in manufacturing declines, capitalism today looks for ever more elaborate and crazy ways of making money take on a life of its own.

In the last decade, for example, a new form of gambling called 'derivatives' appeared. Derivatives are pieces of paper which attempt to predict the future price of any commodity.

So you can buy derivatives predicting the price in two years time of Argentinian wheat at the International Financial Services Centre in Dublin.

## Madness

And the market for this madness is huge. In 1986, \$616 billion was spent on derivatives. By 1993, it had risen to a staggering \$7,839 billion.

When things look like they are going well, the gamblers on the world's exchanges rush in to push up the prices of shares and derivatives.

But a sudden shock or instability somewhere make the gamblers run for cover because they fear that if they do not they will lose out.

This often has the effect of creating a stampede as the greedy worry that they will be left with useless bits of paper.

This is precisely what hap-

**When things look like they are going well, the gamblers on the world's exchanges rush in to push up the prices of shares and derivatives. But a sudden shock or instability somewhere makes the gamblers run for cover because they fear that if they do not they will lose out.**

pened in Hong Kong last month. In recent times, pro-market politicians have lectured us about the wonders of the Asian Tigers.

These were supposed to be miracle economies which showed that capitalism worked.

In reality, they produced fantastic fortunes for a tiny number of investors who often poured their money into an escalating property boom.

But the more they put their money into this area, the more they created an 'over-supply' in the market, causing an eventual collapse not only of property prices but of the wider economies.

## Cover

This in turn sent the speculators of the world scurrying for cover.

Unfortunately, it is not just the rich who are affected by this insane casino.

When share prices collapse, companies see their paper value decline and this forces them to borrow more for future investments.

This in turn means companies demand that workers accept more closures and cutbacks to finance the borrowing.

Although the recent collapse was not as dramatic as Black Monday in 1987, some of the underlying problems in the market system are even more severe.

There are now huge amounts of money floating beyond the control of any one state.

There is a frantic search on for new ways of creating fortunes even though the real economy is only growing unevenly.

Today the big investors have steadied their nerves and even bought up shares at 'bargain' prices. But the foundations of the system are looking increasingly shaky.

# WHO IS TO FOR THIRD POVERTY

**WHEN DEFENDERS of capitalism write in praise of the market they invariably ignore the living conditions of the millions of people in so-called Third World countries.**

For the past twenty years life in Africa and Latin America has for the vast majority been getting worse.

A recent World Health Organisation report said that the biggest killer in the world today is not AIDS, TB, or Cholera but can be summed up in one word: poverty.

It estimates that more than one billion people in the world live in extreme poverty, and that poverty is concentrated in the underdeveloped nations.

In the past ten years the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have imposed what are called structural adjustment programmes on 70 or 80 Third World countries.

## Effect

The effect of these programmes is everywhere more or less the same. At the top of society they increase the wealth of a minority of people who live luxurious lives, while at the base of society they increase intense poverty, unemployment and undernourishment.

Such poverty exists because these coun-

tries owe money to Western banks. The total debt owed by the Third World to Western banks comes to over \$1,500 billion, a figure almost half that of the total income of these countries. Huge parts of Third World countries' incomes are being drained away to serve Western capital. In the 1980s alone, Latin America and Africa paid the US \$500 billion.

The grip of the banks over the Third World means that the countries already experiencing terrible poverty are not only failing to raise living standards, they are falling further behind.

In the case of the famine in Ethiopia in 1985, which moved so many people to give to charity, the grim fact was that for every one pound sent to the country, two pounds was coming out of the country to service debts in Western banks.

## Who gains from third world debt?

**THE REAL beneficiaries of the debt crisis have been the private banks who made the massive loans.**

As soon as it looked like countries would be forced to default on repayments these bankers abandoned free market rhetoric and looked to the major powers for backing.

"We foreign bankers are for the free market when we're out to make a buck and believe in the state when we are about to lose a buck." One of them told the Wall Street Journal.

The US stepped in via the IMF and imposed austerity measures which led to cuts in the already minimal social spending of Third World governments. As a result the banks made record profits in the 1980's.

In 1985, while hundreds of thousands starved in Ethiopia, Citicorp's profits hit one billion pounds for the first time.

But the Third World warmongers and dictators, who were backed by the US, also benefitted. As the writer Susan George explained "it takes a strong armed regime to bleed its people dry."

Many of these dictators added substantially to their countries burden through corruption. President Mobutu's wealth in former Zaire was equivalent to the en-

tire external debt. Marcos left the Philippines with an estimated two and a half to three billion dollars stashed away, and Baby 'Doc' Duvalier fled Haiti with \$100-\$800 million.

Some Third World agencies believe that living standards are generally too high in the West and that Western workers will have to make sacrifices for the current situation to change.

But that ignores the existence of the class divide. Western banks do not give their profits to workers. Far from it, many of these banks get their core wealth from squeezing Western workers via mortgages and loans.

## Standard

If Western workers benefited from the exploitation of Third World workers you would expect our living standard to rise as those of the Third World falls.

But in fact, though Western workers are far better off than many workers in the Third World, their living standards tend to rise and fall together.

Multinationals seeking to maximise their profits have frequently threatened to close their factories in the West and relocate in Third World countries where wages are cheaper.

## How did the crisis begin?

**The roots of the underdevelopment of the Third World go back to the age of Empire where Britain, France, Belgium, Germany, Japan and America scrambled for control of the globe's re-**

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## Can the debt crisis be ended?

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sources. By the outbreak of World War One, 84% of the planet had been colonised by the major powers.

But the difficulties of Third World countries in the last twenty years have got more immediate causes. By the end of the 1970's low profit rate in the West, combined with huge income from oil revenues, led to a situation where the banks had huge amounts of capital looking for a useful outlet.

Private banks were allowed to lend massive amounts to Third World countries. As Margaret Thatcher said—as she cut government aid to poverty stricken areas—“let these countries rely on the creativity of capital markets.”

But the catch came with the recession of 1981 and the rise in world interest rates. Suddenly the Third World countries that had borrowed money were almost strangled by their new debts.

### Developing

In 1970 the developing countries had paid \$11 billion in debt service. By 1989 that figure had increased over tenfold, to \$160 billion. Since then countries have been taking out further loans, not to build new factories or hospitals, but simply to pay the interest on their existing debts.

Even the US is concerned that at some point the debts taken on by the Third World will prove unsustainable.

Their 1989 Brady plan was formulated out of concern that countries would start to default. It was supposed to create a ‘debt plateau’ from which debts would start to fall. In fact the total Third World debt has risen six per cent since then and the IMF continues to prescribe savage austerity measures to keep the money flowing.

Some nationalist leaders in the Third World have threatened to cut off debt repayments. In 1985 Peru threatened to limit repayments to 10%



of exports. Fidel Castro called a conference in Cuba to try and spread the example.

But the US Treasury hit back immediately, warning any country that dared to unilaterally change the terms of their debts that “the foreign assets would be attacked by creditors throughout the world.”

“Its exports would be seized by creditors at each dock where they landed; its national airlines unable to operate, and its sources of desperately needed capital goods and spare parts virtually eliminated. In many countries even food imports would be curtailed.”

This threat caused national leaders to back

down. All of them, including Castro, believe in working within the framework of a capitalist world economy. They all want access to future loans.

Even if the slate were wiped clean, Third World debt would begin to accumulate again almost immediately. The only lasting solution has to be to smash the chains of debt in a fundamental way.

The past twenty years has seen the growth of Third World debt but it has also seen the creation of a modern working class, concentrated in cities of millions of people all over the Third World. A revolution by this class could renounce the debts once and for all.

## What do socialists say?

### Why aren't we all socialists?

**“I'M convinced that socialism is the most humane and rational way of organising society. But why aren't others convinced?” This is a question which every Marxist has to deal with.**

There is no doubt that at present Marxist socialism is very much a minority view, and has been for most of the last 150 years.

Marx himself gave part of the answer in his 1845 book, *The German Ideology*, even before he wrote the *Communist Manifesto*.

“The ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas, ie the class which is the dominant material force in society is ... its dominant intellectual force.”

“The class which has the material means of production at its disposal has control over the means of mental production, so that in consequence the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are, in general, subject to it”.

The industrialists, bankers and financiers—the capitalist class—control, directly or indirectly, the education system, the media and all other means of communication.

They are able to ensure all these channels feed people a non-stop diet of ideology which is either openly pro-capitalist or takes capitalism for granted, and which treats socialism and socialists as irrelevant, absurd or evil.

All this remains much the same as it was in Marx's time, except some instruments of control, like the church, have declined in importance while others, especially the mass media, have greatly expanded.

### Result

The result is most working class people accept enough of the capitalist view of the world to prevent them from becoming conscious and active socialists.

Fortunately, that is not the whole story. In addition to being shaped by ruling class propaganda, people's consciousness is also shaped by their own experience.

In the case of working class people that experience continually contradicts the messages they are fed.

For example, they say everyone is equal before the law.

Yet we see that there is one law for the rich, another for the poor.

They talk about economic recovery. But most of us know we haven't benefited from it.

The contradiction between experience and ruling class ideology is most powerful when it affects people directly as with unemployment or Budget cuts. It is less strong in areas outside most people's direct experience such as immigration policy.

So when we look at the consciousness of most working class people we find a complex mixture of pro-capitalist and pro-socialist ideas.

**What determines the balance between capitalist and socialist ideas in working class consciousness?**

Many things are involved here state of the economy and its impact on living standards, the degree of unity or disunity in the ruling class, the level of working class organisation.

But the single most important factor is the level of working class collective struggle.

Experience pushes workers in a socialist direction.

**But it is also true that much of the experience of being working class under capitalism beats people down, undermines their confidence, and convinces them there is nothing they can do.**

As a result of this lack of confidence they can want to see a change in society but look to someone else—Labour Party leaders for example—to do it for them.

Or worse they look for scapegoats to blame.

It is collective action, above all in the workplace, that is the best antidote to this. It boosts workers' confidence, and gives them a sense of their own strength.

It transforms the essence of socialism—solidarity and workers' power—from something you read about in books into living reality.

Thus when we look at the history of socialist consciousness we find that it is not fixed, nor does it grow in a straight line.

In “normal” times capitalist ideas will dominate. But when the mass of workers are thrown into active conflict with the system there arises the potential for a mass socialist consciousness.

Whether this potential is realised and consolidated depends on whether there is a political leadership, a revolutionary party, inside the working class that is capable of focusing the aspirations of working people on a revolutionary change in society.

by JOHN MOLYNEUX

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crisis led?

# Eighty years since the Russian Revolution

In 1917 the Russian Revolution inspired millions of working class people around the world. But a decade later it was crushed as Stalin assumed power. Today right wing historians claim that Stalin was the natural heir to Lenin.

Yet this cannot explain why Stalin wiped out every leading Bolshevik who was active at the time of Lenin.

Nor can it account for the way Stalin had to reverse the main policies of the revolution.

Lenin championed the right of self-determination but Stalin inaugurated terrible oppression of non-Russian nationalities.

Lenin supported women's right to control their own bodies. But Stalin brought in a policy of promoting 'Medals for Motherhood' to encourage women to have large families.

When the Russian Revolution happened in 1917, it did not fit with the assumptions most Marxists had about how socialism would be achieved.

Marx himself had assumed that a workers' revolution would first break out in a developed industrial economy like Britain, France or America.

The large working class of these countries would provide a political force to change society and the huge industrial economy would provide the material resources to build socialism.

Russia did not fit this description. Workers made up only three and a half million out of a total population of 160 million. They could not rule without the support of the rural poor.

Yet the peasants only supported a workers' government as long as it guaranteed them the land against the landlords, and did not demand too much from the countryside.

The alliance between workers and peasants was soon threatened by the very backwardness of Russia and the economic dislocation of the war.

**The Bolsheviks understood these problems but also believed that Russia was the weakest link in the system of imperialist states. Lenin made it very clear that in order to survive the revolution would have to spread to other, more industrialised countries.**

He declared in January 1918: "The final victory of socialism in a single country is of course impossible. Our contingent of workers and peasants which is upholding soviet power is one of the contingents of the great world army."

Two months later he was even clearer: "It is the absolute truth that without a German revolution we are doomed."

The expectation of the revolution spreading across Europe and beyond was realistic. The years 1918-19 saw the destruction of the monarchy in Germany and Austria.

Soviet governments, although short lived, sprang up in Bavaria and Hungary. In Italy a movement of factory occupations threatened the power of the capitalists.

However, the small revolutionary parties in these countries failed to influence events decisively and the Labour Parties were able to stabilise the situation.

This allowed the Western powers to mount a "crusade" against the young workers' government in Rus-



INVADING armies brought famine and destruction to the young workers' state

## HOW THE REVOLUTION WAS LOST

sia by sending in 14 foreign armies to smash the revolution.

The White armies used the most brutal methods in an attempt to reintroduce landlordism.

**Utilising every resource to fight the civil war, Trotsky organised a Red Army of workers and peasants to defend the revolution.**

In these desperate circumstances the regime repressed those groups who campaigned against the revolution.

**The soviets declined as many of the most militant workers left to fight at the front. Dispersed in a largely peasant army over a large area, they could exercise little real control over the government bodies in the cities.**

By the end of 1920 the Red Army had won the civil war but at a huge cost. Millions had perished in the fighting and in the famine that followed.

The cities were depopulated as

many workers had gone to fight at the front or returned to the countryside in search of food.

The economy collapsed. Industrial production was less than a fifth of the pre-war figure. The working class was decimated, being just 43 percent of its former size.

**In order to survive, workers in the cities were forced to resort to direct barter with peasants for food—even exchanging parts of their machines.**

The militant working class of 1917 had been decimated and replaced by peasants without collective traditions.

The Bolshevik Party, which had come to power as the most conscious section of a mass working class uprising, was left holding power although the class itself hardly existed by 1920.

**With the working class dispersed, the soviets, embodying the direct workers' democracy, had become an empty shell. The party had to fill the gap and take the reins of administration into its own hands.**

Lenin was quite candid: "It must be recognised that the party's proletarian policy is determined at present not by its rank and file, but by the immense and undivided authority of the tiny sections that might be called the party's 'old guard'."

The Bolsheviks, now known as the Communist Party, were motivated by a commitment to socialism forged over years of risks and sacrifices.

**But they were forced more and more to utilise the ex-Tsarist bureaucracy in administering the country. Moreover, a large number of careerists joined the party when it became clear they were winning the civil war.**

To make matters worse, the peasants became more hostile to the regime. During the civil war, when there was a threat of landlords returning, they had supported the Bolsheviks.

But when the landlords were defeated the peasants' resentment at the demands of the towns for grain

reached boiling point.

**The regime replied with concessions to the peasants. The New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1921 introduced market mechanisms into the supply of food. It bought time but at the cost of increased unemployment in the cities and the rise of a layer of profiteering "NEPmen".**

Despite the departures that circumstances had forced on the regime, it was still committed to socialism.

The rule that no party member could earn more than the wages of a skilled worker, introduced in 1917, was still enforced.

And considerable support was offered to socialists abroad in the hope of spreading the revolution.

But the army of managers and bureaucrats on which the regime had to rely had no such commitment.

They wanted to forget the revolution and get down to administering the country like any other.

They found their political expression in Stalin. He had played only a minor role in 1917. But his skill at manoeuvring and intrigue had brought him to the top, particularly after the death of Lenin.

In 1925 Stalin announced a break with the internationalism of the revolution with his doctrine of "socialism in one country".

This was a smokescreen to hide his policy of building up the power of the Russian state.

Lenin's last political act was to argue for the removal of Stalin as party secretary because of his bureaucratic methods. Yet Stalin managed to survive.

**Throughout the Civil War the party had maintained a culture of vigorous debate and disagreement. Lenin had been in a minority on a number of occasions. It was expected that honest revolutionaries would disagree from time to time and would argue out their differences openly.**

But after Stalin took power only orthodoxy was permitted. Those—like Trotsky—who disagreed were subjected to personal abuse, rigged meetings and police action.

In 1928, having crushed all opposition within the party, Stalin launched the first five year plan. This was an ambitious project to consolidate the power of Russia's new ruling class by rapid industrialisation.

The workers and peasants were to pay for this through enormous oppression and exploitation.

The land was taken from the peasants through forced "collectivisation". In industry average wages fell by up to 50 percent from 1929-36 and differentials sharply increased.

The trade unions lost all independence and strikes were outlawed.

The rule restricting party members' earnings was relaxed.

A huge terror was unleashed on the population. Those in penal camps in 1928 numbered 30,000. In 1930 there were 662,000 and a few years later more than five million.

Stalin and the layer of bureaucrats he represented had accomplished what the foreign and White armies had failed to do.

by KEVIN WINGFIELD



## roads

# Why do cars rule our lives?

GETTING around Dublin city on a weekday is not a task for the fainthearted.

Unless you're a government minister with a Mercedes and a Garda escort your options are few and not very inviting.

You can wait bravely for a bus that might never come and hope against hope that if it does come it won't be full up.

If you have a car you can while away the hours looking at the back of another car.

If you really want to take your life in your hands you can cycle.

All these options lead to massive frustration which is felt by tens of thousands of citizens on a daily basis.

But the problem has also more serious consequences. In 1995, 437 people were killed on the roads and thousands were injured.

The rate of asthma among children who live in cities is rising at an alarming rate as exhaust fumes pollute the air they breathe.

Some 40 percent of urban land is given over to parking.

**Cars produce 21 percent of the world's carbon dioxide, 90 percent of carbon monoxide, 53 percent of nitro oxide, and 46 percent of hydrocarbons.**

Meanwhile car ownership is on the increase and pollution is set to double.

Many people are furious at the fact that our lives have become dominated by the car.

## Camp

Twenty or so people have even created a makeshift camp in Glen of the Downs in County Wicklow to try and stop a road widening scheme that will destroy two thousand trees, many over four hundred years old.

Inspired by Swampy and other Eco warriors they want to stop the EU funded scheme which will destroy beautiful countryside and disrupt rare wildlife.

The Eco protesters are right to be angry about the building of this road.

Widening roads does nothing to make transport more efficient.

But it's important to remember that the biggest sufferers of car mania are not trees but people.

It's equally important to look at the real causes of our chaotic transport system.

The controversy at Glen of the Downs tells us a lot about those causes.

The motoring industry is one of the most powerful industries in the

**The motoring industry is one of the most powerful industries in the world and, through the market, it controls transport policy.**

world and, through the market, it controls transport policy.

So in Glen of the Downs the health and interests of local people come second to the mad rush to build roads.

The scheme has been controversial from the beginning.

## Protested

It was only after local residents protested that any of the planners bothered to think about how people would cross the busy dual carriageway.

A pedestrian overpass will now be built.

The solution to Dublin's traffic problem is very simple, despite what the politicians and 'experts' say.

It's clear the city needs decent cycle lanes.

It's clear a massive investment in public transport is needed, with many more bus routes, more buses and busways that cars cannot use.

Even without a tram system such as the proposed LUAS, these simple solutions would transform the city.

**With a fast, efficient and reliable public transport service many people would gladly leave their cars at home.**

The only thing that stands in the way is the power the motor industry holds over transport policy.

It wants people to keep on buying cars so governments will keep catering to that market.

Capitalism is supposed to be about choice yet with no decent public transport system many people have no other option but to drive.

They often have no other way of getting to work, getting the kids to school or even getting to the supermarket.

Many people would much rather have an extra half hour in bed, and read a paper on a comfortable bus or tram on the way to work.

But such choices are not possible under the market-driven system.

—SIMON BASKETTER

## books

# Revolution revisited

by SIMON BASKETTER

There are thousands of books about the Russian revolution, most are less than useless. Probably a month does not go by when a 'new' book appears which rehashes old arguments about the revolution, such as 'the revolution was a coup', 'Lenin was a dictator', or 'the Russian people didn't want or need a revolution'.

However in amongst the right wing rubbish there are some informative and inspiring books on October 1917. A brilliant defence of the importance of the revolution is John Rees *In defence of October*. Rees brings the revolution to life, and argues against the right wing and occasionally left wing critics of October.

The best book by far to get a feel for the revolution is John Reed's classic *Ten days that shook the world*. Reed captures the immense liberation that the revolution brought and also provides an enthralling journey through the events of October. Victor Serge's *Year One of the Russian Revolution* does the same though in a more detailed way.

Just republished by Pluto with an introduction by Tony Cliff, Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, is an astounding book.

It captures all the



events of revolution, bringing the struggle of workers to life while explaining the political causes with clarity and style.

This combined with the fact that Trotsky was one of the central figures of the revolution make it

an indispensable book for socialists.

Two other books worth looking at are Arthur Ransome's *Six weeks in Red Russia* and Morgan Phillips Price's *Dispatches from the Revolution: Russia 1916-18*.

Both men were British journalists who went to Russia to report on events. Neither arrived in the country as Socialists, yet both were inspired by what they saw to write compelling accounts of Russia at the time.

## book

# Retreating from the truth about Unionism

**WHO ARE "The People": Unionism, Protestantism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland** challenges the argument that the Protestant people are a unified, political social and cultural whole but then retreats from the implications of this.

The title of this collection of essays is adapted from the slogan "We are the People: Prods rule OK", a common graffiti in Northern Ireland.

Colin Coulter's essay *The Culture of Contentment*, for example, shows that the material benefits of direct rule have largely benefited the Unionist middle class, with Northern Irish society becoming

by SINEAD KENNEDY

increasingly polarised along class lines.

He laments the absence of Protestant profession-

als from public life because they have more 'temperate' voices.

## Interest

But if the Unionist middle class have the most to lose in any settlement they must also have an interest in the maintenance of sectarian divisions.

Arthur Aughey's *The Character of Unionism*, is a more right wing piece.

He argues that "the British genius" lies in "the capacity to fashion

institutions which reconcile order with personal liberty".

This is Aughey's argument for the maintenance of the Union.

It has to deny the blatant fact that the Northern State is founded upon state violence and sectarianism

Who are 'the People'? attempts an analysis of Northern Irish Protestantism.

But many of the writers are pessimistic about

the working class and still accept some postmodern notions.

## Defenders

This means they cannot challenge the sectarian State effectively.

And worse, some of the writers simply end up as defenders of Unionism.

Who Are "The People": Unionism, Protestantism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland. Ed: Peter Sherlow and Mark McGovern

## book

### The victims of caste

ARUNDHATI Roy's *the God of Small Things* is definitely not to be missed.

Set in South India, the novel tells of devastating consequences of caste division on the lives of one family.

Arundhati Roy herself came from a mixed marriage and was the victim of caste prejudice when she was growing up.

In India the book has caused controversy and Roy has even been officially charged with corrupting public morals.

The book's story is mainly told through the eyes of two seven year old twins, a boy and a girl, Estha and Rahel.

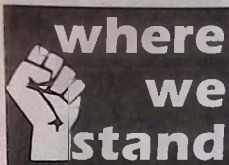
The children learn harsh lessons about the world around them as their lives are turned upside down by the discovery of the relationship between the twin's mother and a "untouchable", Velutha.

The novel shifts in time and you are told the bones of the story at the beginning. But the way it unravels is still as gripping as a thriller.

Although it is about "small things" of everyday life, the bigger picture is always present as "this was an era imprinting itself on those who lived it."

The tragedy at the heart of the novel is clearly shown to be the result of a society ridden with caste and class divisions.

—KIERAN ALLEN



Workers create all the wealth in capitalist society. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

**FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM**  
The present system cannot be reformed out of existence. Parliament cannot be used to end the system.

The courts army and police are there to defend the interests of the capitalist class not to run society in a neutral fashion. To destroy capitalism, workers need to smash the state and create a workers' state based on workers' councils.

**FOR REAL SOCIALISM, EAST AND WEST:**  
The SWP welcomed the break-up of the USSR and the end of the East European dictatorships. These states were not socialist but were run by a state-capitalist class. We are against the domination of the globe by imperialist powers and we oppose their wars. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

**FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION**  
We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We stand for: free contraception and free, legalised abortion and the right to divorce; the complete separation of church and state, an end to church control over schools and hospitals; an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians; an end to racism and anti-traveller bigotry.

We argue for working class unity in the fight against oppression.

**FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH:**  
Northern Ireland is a sectarian state, propped up by the British Army. Catholic workers are systematically discriminated against by the state. The division between Catholic and Protestant workers weakens the whole working class.

Workers' unity can only be won and maintained in a fight to smash both the Northern and Southern states.

We stand for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Violence will only end when workers unite in the fight for a workers' republic.

**FOR A FIGHTING TRADE UNION MOVEMENT:**  
Trade unions exist to defend workers' interests. But the union leaders' role is to negotiate with capitalism—not to end it.

We support the leaders when they fight but oppose them when they betray workers. We stand for independent rank and file action.

**FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY:**  
To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party. This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. The SWP aims to build such a party in Ireland.

# How do we unionise the multi-nationals?

**GROWING American investment in Ireland is being linked to an increase in non-unionised workplaces.**

Two recent studies have pointed to the scale of the changes.

Patrick Gunnigle, the head of the department of personnel and employment relations at the University of Limerick carried out a survey of 32 new companies and found that only two recognised unions.

The previous year a similar study by Fintan Hourihan of 50 companies found that only 12 firms recognised unions.

Both these studies tend to exaggerate the trend towards non-union employment. Despite the predictions that unions would decline, the numbers of union members has actually begun to rise again.

Today 49% of the Irish labour force is unionised. Where unions have shown a willingness to fight, there have been even more dramatic gains.

According to some commentators part time shop workers on short term contracts were impossible to organise.

## Recruit

But when MANDATE embarked on a policy of standing up to Dunnes they were able to recruit a thousand more workers into the union.

However there is still a big problem in multi-national factories.

The biggest source of foreign investment are US companies in the electronics and computer industry.

In America these have been at the heart of the anti-union drive.

The trend was set in the fifties when the giant of computers was IBM. The company had a virtual monopoly of 'mainframe' computers and was able to give a job for life guarantee.

**Intel has had to force its workers onto seven day shifts and has even been faced with a strike by non-union staff**

In return it demanded absolute loyalty to the company and adopted a total anti-union approach.

A new breed of computer firms emerged after the micro-chip was discovered in the seventies. When they first came to Ireland, they were regarded as 'good firms' which paid above the wages found in local areas.

This allowed them to win popular support from their staffs for their anti-union policies.

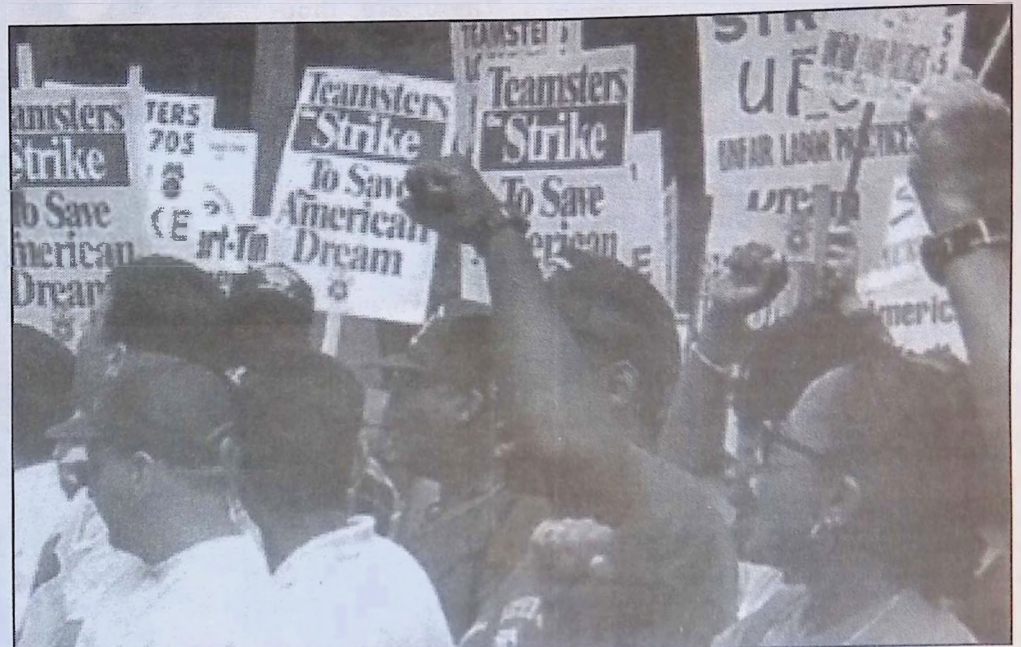
But this has now changed.

Today competition in the computer industry is intense.

Intel has had to force its workers onto seven day shifts and has even been faced with a strike by non-union staff.

Nor do the wages look spectacularly good to most workers. According to the *Sunday Business Post*, for example, Intel is paying about 5% below the industry average.

All of this means that if the unions had a serious recruitment strategy they could begin to make real inroads into these firms today.



Solidarity on the picket line was the key to the UPS victory

## Partnership or militancy

THE UNIONS see successful partnerships with companies 'as a bulwark against the alarming growth of non-union approaches', according to Patrick Gunnigle.

He goes on to argue that "If the union movement can point to high performing companies which adopt management-union partnership approaches, then these can be held up as exemplars both to new companies and development agencies."

The problem is that this has been the strategy that the union leaders have adopted.

In the past the predecessor of SIPTU, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, got into factories under "sweetheart deals" which guaranteed not to interfere with management's 'right to manage'.

In some cases in Shannon in Co. Clare, the union was in the factory before the workers!

McGunnigle's approach and that of some union leaders is to try to repeat this approach by presenting the union as acceptable to management.

The reason why it has reached a deadend is because many companies have learnt that they can use the rhetoric of social partnership and still keep the unions out by adopting a human resources approach.

This is why a different approach is needed.

Unionising the multi-nationals means, firstly, showing the unions in existing multi-nationals can extract real gains.

In the sixties the massive strike to win union recognition at the El plant in Shannon terrified the multi-nationals and forced them to allow union recognition across the country.

Today the unions need to hire union agents to organise recruitment. This has happened in the TUC in Britain and in the Australian unions.

SIPTU and the major unions should be setting up caravans outside plants like Intel and Microsoft to put in regular leaflets and allow workers to take their problems to

them. It is a scandal, for example, that no major union attempted to intervene in Intel when non-union workers threatened action over the introduction of seven day shift working.

It also means organising recruitment drives on a regional or national basis.

When the ITT company in Cork victimised a few activists, the Cork Trades Council organised a big demonstration of several hundred workers to support union recognition.

The ICTU should be doing the same by telling the employers that if the vague promises about union recognition in Partnership 2,000 are not granted, they will be faced with general stoppages to enforce it.

In all of this, however, the unions will have to break from the partnership approach.

Telling workers that they are on the same team as their employers has never created a fertile ground for organising.

## News from the SWP

**Socialist Worker has got off to a flying start in the colleges with several new student groups being formed.**

In Queen's the Socialist Worker Student Society was prominent in mobilising for the anti-fees demonstration on November 5th. After the event, five students joined the society.

In NCAD socialist activists have mobilised support for a strike of National Gallery workers.

Throughout the colleges the key now is getting *Socialist Worker* sold.

Every fortnight *Socialist Worker* gives a different view of the world to the conventional press which is controlled by the multi-millionaire Tony O'Reilly.

His papers promote right wing views and stir up racism to shift people's anger away from the rich.

*Socialist Worker*

carries report of struggles and challenges the everyday 'commonsense' of the right wing media.

It links the energies of those who want to change the world with the traditions of the socialist movement in the past.

This is why every SWP member takes at least three papers to sell to their workmates or college friends.

## SWP branch meetings

**BELFAST**  
Meets every Thurs contact 8722682 for details

**CORK**  
Meets every Weds at 8pm in Dennehy's Pub, Cornmarket St.

**DERRY**  
Meets every Tues in Badgers Bar at 8pm

**DUN LAOGHAIRE**  
Meets every Tues at 8pm in Christian Institute.

**ENNISKILLEN**  
Meets every fortnight Contact national address for details

**GALWAY**  
Meets every Thursday at 7.30pm in Currans Hotel, Eyre Square

**MAYNOOTH**  
Meets every Wednesday Arts Block Maynooth college

**WATERFORD**  
Meets every Thursday at 8pm in ATGWU Hall, Keyser St.

**DUBLIN NORTH-WEST**  
Meets every Tuesday at 8:30pm in The Snug, Dorset St.

**DUBLIN ARTANE/COOLOCK**  
Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm Contact 8722682 for details

**DUBLIN DRIMNAGH**  
Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in the Black Forge (formerly the Bentley), Drimnagh Rd

**DUBLIN NORTH CENTRAL**  
Meets every Wed at 8:30pm in Conways, Parnell St.

**DUBLIN RATHMINES**  
Meets every Wed at 8.30pm in O'Connell's Pub, Richmond St.

**DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL**  
Meets every Thur at 8pm in the Trinity Inn, Pearse St.

**DUBLIN TALLAGHT/CLONDALKIN**  
Meets Monday at 8pm in the Steering Wheel, Clondalkin

There are *Socialist Worker* members in: COLERAINE; LURGAN; CAVAN; DONEGAL; NAAS; KILKENNY; DUNDALK; ATHLONE; DROGHEDA. If you would like to get in touch, contact our national office at (01) 872 2682, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

## JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

If you want to join the Socialist Workers Party, fill in this form and send it to: PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, Tel: (01) 872 2682

Name .....

Address.....

Phone.....

**news & reports— politics; the unions**  
 send in your reports: telephone (01) 872 2682, fax: (01) 872 3838

## Public Sector workers

# Craft workers vote for strike action

**FOUR thousand craft workers in local authorities and the health service have voted by 20 to one to take strike action in support of a claim for an extra £27.69p a week.**

The action, which is set to start on Monday November 24th, could break Partnership 2000.

Under a 1979 analogue agreement, the pay of craftworkers is supposed to be related to pay rates in 18 private and state companies. The average rate of these companies was supposed to form the craft rate.

In the past, management have refused to pay the workers their full entitlement leading to a widening pay gap between theirs and comparable jobs.

The craftworkers' claim amounts to an increase over and above the main pay provisions of Partnership 2000.

### Limit

It's at least four times the two per cent limit provided for in the local bargaining clause of the national agreement.

One craft worker told *Socialist Worker*: "There are huge profits for business people and enormous salaries for top managers but working class people are at the end of the line.

The money is there and we should insist we're paid what we're due!"

Around 30,000 other workers, mostly general operatives and non-nursing grades—members of SIPTU—have direct pay links with the 4,000 craftworkers involved and were themselves balloting on industrial action.

One SIPTU member in the health service told *Socialist Worker*, "Since 1994 we are entitled to 80 per cent of whatever the analogue provides for craftworkers.

"This would mean over £20 of an increase—the biggest increase we have received.

"The government has

offered a measly 13 per cent.

"The union leaders should insist on the full claim paid upfront, not phased in or watered down!"

### Support

SIPTU leader Des Geraghty has said the

union will fully support the craftworkers' claim.

SIPTU will be insisting on its members' right to 80 per cent of the increase conceded to craftworkers.

These workers are to ballot before the end of the month for action.

"The government better realise we're seri-

ous", he warned.

"We hope he lives up to his words", said one SIPTU activist.

"But this time instead of forming strike committees it will be up to the NEC to call the action and to call it off."

Unions leaders have said they are available for talks to avert a dis-

pute, but have warned that they will not co-operate in providing emergency services if the strike goes ahead.

### Anger

The overwhelming vote in favour of action shows the anger and mood to fight amongst the workers.

They should make sure their leaders accept nothing less than their full claim.

For the biggest impact and the greatest solidarity, there should be no delay in calling out the SIPTU general workers.

They should be on strike at the same time as the craft workers.

## Health Service

### St Loman's Hospital

**ST LOMANS nurses have postponed their strike over staffing levels in their hospital following concessions from management.**

According to the Psychiatric Nurses Association (PNA), the hospital is operating at 10 to 15 nurses below the required staffing levels.

As a result of shortages in the last three years 16 nurses were seriously injured in assaults at work.

Shortfalls for sickness are not replaced.

Patient care programmes or extra care for some patients (for example 24 hour care for disturbed patients) put more pressure on the wards and some programmes are not carried out.

The Nurses' action began in October when they refused to carry out non-nursing duties.

Escalating their strike was the only way to make the Board take notice.

The nurses were due to start a continuous strike from Wednesday 5th November.

This was deferred for the unions to consider a proposal from the Labour Relations Commission.

This dispute is not a new one.

The Hospital Board reneged on an agreement reached in 1985, and has also failed to honour guarantees about staffing in 1995.

**The solution is simple, more full and part time staff should be taken on and PNA must take action to ensure that this is carried out.**

Any proposal from management must be viewed with suspicion.

The Eastern Health Board has proposed improving the staffing situation and setting up a framework for resolving future problems in staffing.

This is unlikely to solve the nurse's concerns.

In the past, the board filled the shortfall in staffing levels by using nursing agencies.

However, agency nurses are mostly trained as general rather than psychiatric nurses and they come onto the ward with no experience of patients' individual needs.

Some concessions have been granted to the nurses

which shows that they were right to take action.

But although they have managed force concessions on staffing, the board cannot be trusted to keep their promises.

There is no guarantee that the Board will honour this agreement without being forced to.

The solution is simple, more full and part time staff should be taken on and PNA must take action to ensure that this is done.

This is the best way to ensure the safety of patients and workers in Lomans.

### St Vincent's Hospital

**STAFF IN St. Vincents psychiatric Hospital in Fairview are taking action over security in the hospital.**

They called a four hour stoppage on Tuesday 11th over management's refusal to meet their demands for improved security in the hospital.

Security in the hospital has been a complaint for quite some time.

The employees there had been warning that there was a danger to patients and themselves for years.

Last August their fears were borne out when a patient was sexually as-

saulted.

The unions in St Vincents, SIPTU and the Psychiatric Nurses Association unanimously voted for action over the issue, demanding facilities such as panic buttons.

They deferred their action when management and the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) promised a "full review" of the situation, with the installation of the Panic System.

Gerry Bellew, the Branch Secretary of the PNA in St Vincents voiced his anger.

"We were promised a full review and action on our concerns, and we accepted the guarantee in

good faith.

Management have acted with no honour.

The mood in the hospital is one of anger, dismay, we feel let down."

Last September the workers in St Vincents thought they had an ideal opportunity to raise their case.

Brian Cowen, Fianna Fail minister for Health was coming to visit the hospital.

The Unions drafted a joint letter about their problems, to give to Cowen, hoping that something would be done.

Surely with such a booming economy some funds could be made available?

Cowen had obviously been warned by management and at the last minute his visit was cancelled, for "government business".

He has since been faxed a copy of the letter, and as *Socialist Worker* goes to press, hasn't replied.

Relying on politicians for a solution hasn't worked, and the action should be escalated if management keep their promises.

The workers action is about safety for patients, and clearly management at St Vincents could learn a lesson or two.

### St Brendan's Hospital

**THERE ARE ongoing rumours about the future of St Brendan's Hospital Grangegorman. It has been known for years that the Eastern Health Board wants to shut St Brendans down and sell the property to the Dublin Institute of Technology.**

Evidence of their plans was seen when hospital management decided to close down wards following complaints and a walkout by staff, rather than refurbish

them.

Seamus Murphy of the Psychiatric Nurses Association spoke of the effects of this in the hospital.

"How can we work in a situation like this. Nurses don't know where they'll be working next year, never mind the stress that it puts on the patients.

The Branch committee in St Brendan's are refusing to be threatened and will take action to defend working conditions in the hospital".

**LAST month Michael Smurfit made a multi-million settlement to his wife Norma. It reminded workers who had been mistreated by him of some obligations he also left unpaid.**

Workers at Waterford Stanley are still angered by events which occurred at their factory fifteen

years ago.

In 1982, the factory was owned by TMG and Michael Smurfit was the chair of the board of management.

The directors claimed that the factory was losing money and a £6.5 million rescue package was put together to save three factories in the group—

Tonge and Taggart, Hammond Lane and the Waterford Stanley.

But the Waterford workers did not see a penny of the rescue plan. Instead 240 were thrown on the streets with no severance pay beyond the statutory minimum.

The workers got no holiday payments

and even money from their social club disappeared.

They responded by launching a major campaign to highlight the activities of Ireland's best known millionaire.

"We picketed an exhibition he opened. We even turned up one night to picket a party he organised at his

home. I remember Mike Murphy, the RTE presenter, passed us.

"We met Dick Spring and other politicians—but nothing came of the whole thing.

"I reckon this millionaire still owes money to people who worked for that company for over thirty years.."

**Waterford Stanley:**

**SMURFIT SHOULD PAY UP**

# Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 50p

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—PAGE 8

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## SOCIAL SECURITY WALKOUTS PLANNED

# 'We can't let Labour destroy our services'

**SOCIAL Security Agency workers in Northern Ireland held a half-day strike on 31 October.**

The Blair government is pushing ahead with Tory plans to privatise the Social Security and Benefit Agencies.

Liz May, NIPSA President, told the mass meeting in Belfast, "We all hoped that a change of government would mean an end to privatisation. "Now it looks like we're going to have to fight Labour as well.

"Social security workers held this community together for years during the troubles and this is the thanks we get.

"We simply cannot allow Labour to destroy our services".

Three private consortia will be touring SSA during the next 12 months, 'shadowing' workers, to assess areas for privatisation.

NIPSA shop stewards who led the push for the strike are proposing immediate walkouts when the private companies arrive.

But NIPSA leaders have been dampening down plans for further strike action. The only proposals for further action at the mass meeting in Belfast were for lobbying local councils and MPs for support.

"We want to get walkouts, but the officials have told us that they would be illegal, so it looks like we'll have to go for them on an office by office basis," a NIPSA shop steward from Belfast told *Socialist Worker*.

## On the march against fees

The militant demonstration of 1,500 in Belfast on November 5th showed the anger that many students feel over the introduction of tuition fees.

Before the march had even assembled around 100 students blocked the road outside Queen's University. Dozens more joined them and were greeted by cheers and whistles.

The march that followed turned into a fantastic, noisy demo with short sit-down protests along the way. People insisted on marching right across the width of the road for much of the way, despite the NUS marshals' efforts to herd them into a single lane.

At the final rally outside Belfast City Hall, NUS and USI speakers said they would fight tuition fees all the way. Sadly, their strategy relies mainly on lobbying MPs and a vague 'week of action' in December.

Throughout Britain the National Union of Students, which is now controlled by Blair's supporters, wants to contain the fightback.

It only wants people to target MPs who might vote for fees at the next general election—that could be in 2002!



But we cannot wait that long. Student poverty is already so bad that food parcels were given to students at Glasgow Central College of Commerce after they were seen begging for food at the city's soup kitchens.

No wonder Around 50 angry students left the rally and tried to oc-

cupy the nearby Ulster Bank premises. Ulster Bank president George Quigley was on the committee that recommended the introduction of tuition fees.

In order to win, we have to turn up the militant pressure. The Stop the Fees Campaign has called a national demo in London on 26

November.

Student unions at every college should be mandated to endorse the demo and organise publicity and transport.

Blair can ignore regional demos and local days of action. But he won't be able to ignore 50,000 students occupying Trafalgar Square.

## SOCIALIST POLITICS NEEDED

**THERE IS** a new mood in Northern Ireland as people are uniting in common struggle against some policies of the Blair government.

But socialist politics are also needed to overcome the 'ghettoisation' that has been created by the Northern state.

Every other party puts the interests of its community to the fore.

In Queen's university for example, John Taylor of the Unionist Party and Brid Rogers of the SDLP have argued that the most important issues facing students is the issues of the language signs.

They want Catholic and Protestant students to line up behind them in a fight over tokens.

But the main division in Northern Ireland today is over class.

Socialists oppose the sectarianism of the Northern state but the way to defeat it is to unite workers and students into a fight for a socialist Ireland.