

Socialist Worker

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For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism

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Eye witnesses appeal through *Socialist Worker*.

STOP THIS SLAUGHTER OF PALESTINIANS!



“YOU MUST protest at this—I appeal to you!”

These are the words of Irish nurse Mary Kelly who spoke from Bethlehem under siege to *Socialist Worker*.

“The Israeli army has the Church of the Nativity surrounded. They have refused to allow food, water or medical supplies to reach those inside.

“They say there are no wounded in the church, but we know there are badly wounded people in there in urgent need of medical attention.

“The Israelis refuse to allow the International Red Cross to intervene.”

The Israeli Defence Forces claim the nuns and Franciscans in the church were being held hostage by Palestinian fighters. But the Patriarch

of the church has announced that he considers those inside political refugees.

Mary Kelly, from Baltimore, West Cork, is in Palestine with the human rights group Atlantis Foundation.

“A number of us marched peacefully to the church with water, food and cigarettes. The Israeli tanks fired on us.

“Here in Bethlehem two ambulances were crushed by IDF tanks. The whole town is surrounded by tanks, streets have been trashed, building bulldozed to rubble, water pipes and tanks broken and power cut. There is a shortage of food.

“Families cannot even bury their dead.”

“Bush and Tony Blair are giving

them permission to do this!”

Before the phone line to Bethlehem went dead Mary Kelly commented, “The spirit of the people is not crushed—it won’t ever be crushed. This is their land!”

Heather Guyton, another of the international volunteers, spoke to *Socialist Worker* from the Occupied Territories. She told how internationals were inside a number of refugee camps in an effort to put a brake on the IDF’s human rights abuses.

“We know the Israelis are shelling the Balata camp and Nablis. There are horrible reports of the fighting in Jenin. Sharon has replaced the military commander with Chief of Staff Shaul Mosaz to speed up the fighting.

“Civilians have been tied to tanks

as human shields—there is video footage of this. From what we hear the slaughter in the Jenin refugee camp is unprecedented.”

On the spot observers told *Socialist Worker*, that at least 400 people were rounded up in Bethlehem alone. IDF tanks began shelling Azza camp leaving many killed or critically wounded.

British comedian Jeremy Hardy was in Bethlehem with the International Solidarity Movement and spoke to *Socialist Worker* when he returned, “The situation is desperate. IDF troops are firing into homes, shelling randomly.

“In the Church of the Nativity civilians and fighters are holed up. IDF forces have been firing shells at

the doors of the Church. The fighters will not surrender because they will be summarily executed by the Israelis.

“Most Palestinians don’t agree with the suicide attacks, but there is overwhelming support for the armed resistance.

“The Palestinians at this stage just want to live in peace. Sharon wants to crush and completely destroy the Palestinians.”

Those *Socialist Worker* spoke to in the Palestine territories were delighted and encouraged when told of recent 2,000 strong protest in Dublin.

We must now pull out all the stops to build an even bigger Anti War Demonstration in Dublin on April 27.

■ Now turn to centre pages

**JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE
NO WAR IN IRAQ
NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
3pm Saturday 27th April Parnell Sq, Dublin**

Yet more curbs on protest...

JOHN O'Donoghue is attacking our civil liberties — again.

The latest Public Order Bill includes a provision for exclusion orders making offenders stay away from certain locations where "trouble" has taken place in the past.

People can be banned from premises or locations for up to 12 months.

Breaching the order can lead to a three-month prison sentence and a fine

up to € 650.

John O'Donoghue claims the Bill, would "strengthen considerably the powers of the Garda Síochána in dealing with the problems of late-night

drunken hooliganism on urban streets."

Yet according to the Department of Justice street violence accounts of only 2.3 percent of recorded crime.

According to Liam Herrick of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, "Existing public order legislation was being used at the moment against peaceful political demonstrators

and protestors and to suppress freedom of speech.

"Giving the police such wide powers is very questionable, especially as there is no independent complaints body."

...and attacks on Travellers

THE government rushed through a piece of legislation which gives sweeping new powers to gardaí and local authori-

ties to "move on" Travellers.

They added amendments to a housing bill at the last moment which will allow gardaí to confiscate caravans

and cars and to force Travellers off lands they are occupying.

The amendments strengthen the trespass laws in ways that could limit protest as well but

they are mainly intended as discriminatory legislation against Travellers. There are only 111 units of Traveller-specific accommodation.

400 jobs were worth just £1

LEAKED memos reveal that Ireland's only steel plant, Irish Ispat, was stripped of its assets by Indian parent firm Ispat International before it closed.

The documents also show that most of a £4m-plus Government grant for direct environmental upgrades was diverted for other expenditure.

The plant—formerly

Irish Steel—was sold to Ispat in 1996 for £1. The leaked memos, minutes of a meeting which took place at Ispat's headquarters in London in June 1999, show that the company considered sacking all workers at the Cork mill with less than two years' service so that they would not be forced to pay them redundancy money.

Irish Ispat faces charges of breaching the Health and Safety Act at Cork Circuit Criminal Court next month. An Ispat worker, Tom Mulcahy, 53, died in a fire in January 2001.

The key negotiators of the Irish Steel sale were former Taoiseach, Albert Reynolds (FF), Ruairi Quinn (Lab) and Richard Bruton (FG).

AUSTRALIA

Protestors liberate refugee camp

PROTESTORS briefly liberated a refugee camp in the Australian desert last month.

"A thousand people streamed across the desert, a sea of red, orange and black banners, with music playing and flares flaming.

"The fence came down through sheer weight of numbers," Melbourne activist Damien Lawson from No One is Illegal told *Socialist Worker*. "It was a magnificent display of people power—people saying that enough is enough."

Chanting

"When we got to the fence we could see women and children screaming. The detainees were chanting and shaking the fence with us," said Kristalo Hryscos from the Refugee Action Collective in Victoria (RAC). "A 10-year-old boy jumped

into our arms. He said, "Please miss, don't send us back. We'll die. We are not illegal." Kristalo added: "As demonstrators, we could see we had the power to stand our ground. We helped the refugees fight for freedom.

"There's now a strong mood to come back to the cities and mobilise thousands more people to end mandatory detention."

Action

"This action is a big contribution to building the movement," said RAC steering committee member Judy McVey. "The previous weekend more than 30,000 people across Australia marched in support of refugees.

"Mass direct action and mass rallies are not counterposed—they build each other. The Woomera protest will give a big boost to the campaign in the cities."

Detainees in the camps are treated like animals, known by numbers not names, and suffer beatings, water cannon and tear gas from prison guards. Among those who fled Woomera



Protestors at the refugee camp

were women and children who had been rotting in the desert for more than a year. As Karina from

Melbourne put it: "It was important to see that the refugees are not nameless faces.

"One of the most important achievements was to give refugees hope and prove to them that what the guards

say about them not having support in Australia is an absolute lie," added Kurt from Melbourne.

Report slams Ireland as corrupt, racist and repressive

A REPORT by the Joseph Rowntree trust says corruption is a central feature of Irish politics and human rights standards are below internationally acceptable levels.

The study of justice and social issues, by an independent social policy consultant, says Ireland has become one of the richest EU countries, as well as one of the most unequal.

Politics

The report states "corruption is a central theme of Irish life and politics. Ireland is now regarded as one of the more corrupt European states."

Although tribunals have "done much to determine the nature of corruption, changes to improve the political and administrative system have been minimal."

It highlights the "widening levels of

inequality, extraordinarily low levels of investment in public services and a depressing record on environmental protection".

Other criticisms include:

■ Inadequate treatment of refugees and asylum-seekers;

■ The lack of a fully independent police complaints procedure and poor safeguards for people in detention

■ Difficulties for poor people in getting speedy access to justice and lack of use of alternatives to prison—Ireland has the second fastest-growing prison population in Europe.

■ The continued operation of emergency legislation, including the non-jury Special Criminal Court.

★ **A US firm has come up with a bizarre excuse as to why their workers voted for union recognition.**

Workers at a nursing home, the Mount Sinai-St Francis Nursing and Rehabilitation Centre, balloted to have their union recognised.

Hospital manager Barbra Bynum has claimed "voodoo" signs frightened the staff into joining the union.

These "signs" include ominous half empty water cups and necklaces with black beads on them.

★ **THE US defence department announced last month that a satellite positioning device had been found in an Afghan cave. They said the equipment was lost in Somalia in 1993.**

The discovery, they proclaimed, was concrete evidence at last that Bin Laden's Al Qaida network was behind the deaths of 18 US soldiers in the disastrous raid on Mogadishu.

The device bore the name G Gordon, one of the soldiers whose death was shown in the film *Black Hawk Down*.

Then red faced officials admitted that the high-tech global positioning device had been lost by a US soldier in the cave a few weeks ago.

It was manufactured in 1997 at the earliest. G Gordon had transferred his positioning device to another soldier, who lost it during the US's latest assault in Afghanistan.

★ **A report shows women in the defence forces in the South suffer serious sexual harassment.**

One woman soldier anonymously informed an inquiry into harassment and bullying in the Defence Forces that she was raped but was too afraid to report the incident, it emerged yesterday.

Two other women respondents and one man said that they had been victims of attempted rape.

The report found that 30 per cent of women soldiers, who make up only 4 per cent of the Defence Forces—which has a strength of around 10,700—had experienced sexual harassment.

FF in helicopter scandal

WHAT WAS the US ambassador, Richard Egan, doing talking to the Irish government about Sikorsky? The US firm was granted a contract for the € 100 million helicopter deal earlier this year, following a second tendering process by the Department of Defence, and after it had dropped its price by about 27 percent.

Price

According to the Department of Defence the US ambassador had handed over a revised bid on behalf of Sikorsky to the Minister during the course of a "courtesy call" on October 11th. They accepted the document, he said, but it had not been taken into account by the

Department because the closing date for tenders had passed.

While not wanting to accuse the government of lying, on October 24th, 2001, the ambassador wrote to the Minister "I want to thank you again for our enjoyable meeting on October 11. I look forward to continuing our positive exchanges in the future.

"During our discussion, I left you Sikorsky's latest proposal which included a revised bid approximately 27 per cent lower in price than their initial offer.

"We understand that, to date, the Department of Defence has not yet responded to this Sikorsky proposal, although it appears quite advantageous in cost terms to other bids."

what we think

Privatisation = corruption

PUBLIC PRIVATE Partnerships are the big idea for all the mainstream parties. Back door privatisation is supposed to improve public services and develop the country's infrastructure. The reality is the opposite.

PPPs are now revealed as the same old Fianna Fail corruption and the transfer of taxpayers money to big business. The Sports Campus Ireland (Bertie Bowl) scandal has revealed the reality of what PPP schemes mean.

The bizarre story of how a paper company in the Virgin Islands was awarded a contact to run Waterworld in Abbotstown leads straight to the top of Fianna Fail.

The original proposal to grant the contracts for the project where proposed by Bertie Ahern.

Paddy Teahon headed Campus Stadium Ireland, the private company in charge of the project. Teahon used to be Ahern's closest ally in the civil service before he was appointed to run Sports Campus Ireland by Ahern.

Teahon, had been heavily involved in setting up the tax avoidance scam that is the IFSC. Teahon is head of Digital Media Development in Smithfield. Teahon also joined the board of Treasury Holdings, the huge property developers. Though he resigned as head of Sports Campus Ireland he still sits on the board.

Laura Magahy's consultancy company received €127,000 a month for Sports Campus Ireland. The contract is for "executive services", team-building and "master-planning"—whatever they are.

Magahy's company also has a similar contract for a new hospital on Dublin's Eccles Street. Magahy told the Public Accounts Committee that she left Temple Bar Properties in August 2000. She used to run Temple Bar Properties under Paddy Teahon. She also held the contract for Digital Hub run by Teahon.

The accountants for all these projects were Deloitte & Touche who also prepared the accounts of Teahon's companies. Teahon, Deloitte and Touche and Magahy all share a PR firm: Wilson Hartnell

Public Relations (WHPR).

WHPR were also a beneficiary from Stadium Ireland, charging £1,655 a day for the services of former Labour Party spin doctor Fergus Finlay. Teahon provided consultancy services to Deloitte & Touche.

Lavish pay and perks packages were awarded to spin doctors, accountants and planning experts associated with the Campus and Stadium Ireland management structures.

Payments of up to €2,500 a day have been paid to key figures in the project in addition to generous retainers and expenses.

Magahy, who told the Dail Committee on Public Accounts that she was not "involved in public projects for the money", was nevertheless charging £1,050 a day for her personal time in addition to the normal fees and retainers charged by her company.

She was also in charge of dividing up the money—well over €1 million a year—between various companies involved in planning the project. Despite the fact that it was taxpayers' money, how it was spent is secret because it is "commercially sensitive".

The showpiece PPP has been shown to be nothing more than a scam for consultants and mysterious off shore firms to get their hands on taxpayers money.

The government and opposition parties all are committed to PPPs. Some schools have already been handed over to the PPP scam. Fianna Fail are pushing ahead with similar schemes and health. They want to deliver all local government services and building projects to the private sector.

Fine Gael have said they want to sack thousands of public sector workers by giving over public services to the private sector.

We need a fight against privatisation to keep the profiteers of our services. The growing anti bin tax campaign shows that opposition to privatisation can be built.

We need a political alternative to the privatisation parties. Voting Socialist at the upcoming election in the South can be a start to breaking the power of corrupt parties of crony capitalism.

■ **If you would like to help build the Socialist vote in the election campaign, telephone 01-872 2682**

Protests against church abuse



Over 150 angry protestors, mostly victims of clerical abuse, outside Mass for the Christian Brothers. The Church hierarchy is refusing to open its files to admit what it knew of abuse by priests. For more on the Church abuse scandals turn to page 4.

Thousands march in solidarity with Palestine

PROTESTS have taken place around the world in solidarity with the Palestinians. Over 2,000 people demonstrated in Dublin against Israel's war on Palestine.

The protest, organised by the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign marched from Temple Bar to the GPO. Most of the protestors then marched to the Israeli embassy in Ballsbridge, shouting "Israeli Ambassador, Out, Out, Out!"

Boycott

At the embassy, the demo gathered around a tree where two Irish women have set up a permanent protest vigil.

The campaign launched a boycott of all Israeli goods, in the same way that goods from apartheid South Africa were boycotted in the 1980s.

Protestors also called for the Irish government to break off all diplomatic relations with Israel, while they are in occupation in Palestine.

The next demonstra-

tion, on April 27th, needs to be even bigger and better.

The focus is not just on Israel, but also on its paymaster, the US government, which is preparing an attack on Iraq.

Members of the Ireland Palestinian Solidarity Campaign in Belfast held a number of protests in Belfast to show their anger at Ariel Sharon's part in the "War on terror".

Protestors managed to highlight American involvement in Palestine by briefly occupying the American consulate in Belfast.

"The anger of the people in Belfast is just reflected in what we are doing," one organiser told *Socialist Worker*, "Not one person opted out of the occupation of the consulate lobby. The only reason that people didn't get in was either because there was no room or the police stopped them."

At another protest, which organisers expected to be a small picket, 150 people marched through Belfast city centre with Palestinian and red flags.

Some 150 people held a rally in Derry in solidarity with the Palestinians and 20 people protested in Tralee.

The Belfast anti-war movement is sending a bus down to Dublin for the march on 27th of April.

To find out more phone Tom on 07900 353 816. For march information ring 087 632 9511

STOP THE DRIVE TO WAR!

Say NO to Bush's War on Iraq
Justice for Palestine

ANTI-WAR DEMONSTRATION
Assembling at
The Garden of Remembrance Dublin
SAT April 27th @ 3p.m.

Organised by the Irish Anti-War Movement
www.irishantiwar.org—with support from:
End sanctions on Iraq campaign, AFRI and
Globalise Resistance

Eamonn McCann

Why church will keep covering up

“GOVERNMENT ACTS on abuse allegations”, ran a daily newspaper headline. It will have led many to believe that the victims of paedophile priests like Sean Fortune were at last being taken seriously at government level. But, “act” was putting it a bit strong.

The story told that the Ahern government was considering appointing the former Fine Gael TD George Bermingham, now a senior barrister, to investigate what action might be appropriate. Which falls some way short of “Government acts”.

This has been par for the course for at least a decade now. A newspaper or book or television programme highlights the suffering of children at the hands of depraved clerics. There is a flurry of sympathy and concern in the rest of the media, statements from senior Catholic officials claiming that they'd never realised such things were happening and that when they did have an inkling they hadn't understood how to react, and assurances from government that the interests of the victims would now be put first.

Discovered

And then it's discovered there are all sorts of legal and constitutional difficulties preventing action being taken. And the issue is parked on the sidelines, unresolved. This sequence of events has been repeated half a dozen times over the last decade. Dublin archbishop Desmond Connell is back in the headlines over the revelation that he paid out hundreds of thousands to the victims of Fr. Ivan Payne. Except that this isn't a revelation. The fact that Connell paid one of Payne's victims, Andrew Madden, £30,000 was a front-page story in October 1995.

In the same year, the sexual abuse of children in Ferns by Sean Fortune was a major story. The newspapers were full then of the same outraged letters to the editor which we are reading now.

Each time the issue arises, somebody says that this time it won't be let slip. But already it's being said that it would be “impractical” to decide on any particular course of action this side of the general election. Action is being long-fingered again.

Despite all, the Irish ruling class, in both its political and media manifestations, has no stomach for direct confrontation with the Catholic Church. There was a mind-boggling example just 18 months ago when “Justice” Minister John O'Donoghue intervened in EU discussions to ensure that Catholic bishops could continue to discriminate in State schools against gays, unmarried parents, atheists and anybody else who didn't conform to the “ethos” of Comiskey, Connell etc.

The story was scarcely mentioned in the media and was ignored in the Dail. But it was spread across the front page of the Irish Catholic (October 26th, 2000). It told that at a meeting of the Council of Ministers in Luxembourg O'Donoghue had successfully threatened to use his veto against an Equality Directive if other ministers didn't agree to insert a get-out clause exempting Church-run schools from its provisions.

In an editorial, the Irish Catholic noted that had it not been for this intervention, “schools would have been forced to employ openly declared atheists, gay activists and others whose views and life-styles were obviously contrary to the ethos of their employer”.

The only thing inaccurate in that was the reference to “their employer”. The directive applies not to schools owned and financed by the Catholic Church but to State schools managed by Catholic bishops—schools built with public money and with teachers trained and employed by the State.

After all the revelations about the abuse of children by agents of the Catholic Church, not least in schools, the Irish Government intervened to copper-fasten the Church's control of children not just in Ireland but across the EU. And there was no storm of protest in politics or in the media.

Against that background, there is no reason for confidence that this time the State will take serious action against Catholic Church savagery towards children. The victims, and all who want serious change, will have to continue to organise independently.

BIGOTTED BALLYMENA COUNCILLORS ...

DUP ‘downright racist’

THE REAL face of the Democratic Unionist Party was once again exposed recently when three DUP councillors in Ballymena Borough Council refused a gift, symbolic of the Islamic faith, which had been presented to an SDLP councillor on behalf of the local Muslim community.

Opposed

The three councillors, James Alexander, Robin Sterling and Sam Gaston, refused to accept the gift given to the council on the grounds that they were opposed to the Islamic faith and “were suspicious of all Muslims after the attacks on New York and Washington”.

Dr Mamoun Mobayed, Muslim Chaplain at Queens University, condemned the three “disrespectful and out of date councillors” and reminded them that Muslims were also killed on September 11th.

However Ishmail, a student at Queens went straight to the point. “The refusal of DUP councillors to accept the gift is downright racist” he told *Socialist Worker*.

This is not the first time that the

unionist controlled Ballymena council has been involved in controversy.

The council infamously failed to act or even to condemn the loyalist picket outside St Mary's Catholic Church in Harryville which at one stage in the year long action prevented Catholics from attending Saturday evening services.

Attacked

The racist attitude of the DUP will do nothing except lead to even more attacks on members of the Muslim community.

Since September 11th the Islamic centre in Belfast has been attacked twice and to stereotype all Muslims as extremists the DUP gives credence to those racists who need very little encouragement to attack ethnic minorities.

Imagine the uproar from the DUP if someone said they were suspicious of all Protestants after the Greysteel and Loughinisland massacres.

It is time all politicians who encourage racism are exposed for what they are.

It is the responsibility of all of us in our schools, colleges and workplaces to dispel the myths fuelled by racism in all sections of society and by the real crazed fundamentalists in Northern Irish society, also known as the DUP.



New police—same sectarians

THE START of the month saw the graduation of the first batch of new police recruits in Northern Ireland, amid much fanfare in the media.

Outgoing police chief Sir Ronnie Flanagan, declared: “This is a chance for a new beginning and it is a chance for the public to get behind the police—the public from all traditions, all backgrounds, all cultures.”

But in the days before, the PSNI were involved in a series of brutal raids in Belfast and Derry, which looked just like the old RUC from the 70s and 80s.

Over 200 boiler-suited police officers, broke down doors and smashed their way into homes and offices in Derry and Belfast.

Broken-in

In Derry, the home of Sinn Fein MLA Mary Nelis's daughter Cathy was broken in and her partner, a local community worker, arrested.

The offices of Tar Abhaile, a republican prisoners support group and Cunamh, an organisation offering counselling to those traumatised in the Troubles, were also raided.

Files, some of them about the counselling of families of people killed on Bloody Sunday, were

taken in the raids.

Five people, including senior republican Bobby Storey, were arrested in similar raids in Belfast.

Claimed

Later in the week, two more raids took place in Derry, with former hunger-striker Raymond McCartney and his brother Andrew arrested.

The PSNI claimed the arrests were in connection with the break-in at Special Branch headquarters

at Castlereagh barracks, on St Patrick's Day.

But everything suggests that this was carried out by British military intelligence.

Even Ronnie Flanagan admitted it was an “inside job”.

British military intelligence, which has been exposed for running agents among loyalist murder gangs, have a clear motive for the break-in as does the RUC Special Branch which was equally involved in the dirty war.

Most of those arrested were released without any charge, the

only person held was charged with offences entirely unrelated to Castlereagh.

All say that, in the course of their questioning, they were not once asked about the Castlereagh break-in.

The raids were clearly about the police trying to take the spotlight away from the role of Special Branch and army intelligence, in particular in the Pat Finucane murder.

They also show how little has changed in the police in Northern Ireland.

SOCIALIST WORKER spoke to Cathy Nelis, whose house and workplace was raided—supposedly in relation to the Castlereagh break-in.

SW: What happened when they raided your house?

“They used sledgehammers to break down the front door and within ten seconds there was eight of them in our bedroom, screaming and roaring at us not to move. I was trying to pull some clothes on and keep the baby from getting too frightened. Luckily, our two-year-old was in the bed with us.”

“But our five year old daughter was in her own bedroom and I could hear her squealing and they wouldn't let us move to comfort her.

It was awful to hear the child screaming and not be able to do anything. In the end, I did what any mother would and pushed my way past them to get the wain.”

SW: How did you feel about your children being subjected to this kind of violence?

“Well, I grew up in a house that was raided frequently—as often as once every six weeks. But that was fairly normal for a republican family. There was a war on and we accepted that house raids were part of that war. The experience was normalised for us and we understood why it was happening.

“The irony is that here I am now as a mother of two children who were not even born when the IRA cessation commenced in 1994. Yet eight to ten years into the peace process my children are being subjected to this inhumane kind of treatment.

It makes me question really whether the British are interested in conflict resolution because they are acting like there is still a war on. The way they entered my home and the offices of the community group I work for, it was as if they think the war is still on, like they haven't heard of the peace process!

Election NEWS...Election NEWS...Election

If the bosses parties make you sick...

Vote for these socialists in the election

THE COMING election will be the most important election for decades because a fight is now on to give a voice to the massive discontent of working class people.

Conservative politicians will promise more spending. But while Ireland was in boom we all watched as the wealthy made a killing and we were stuck in miserly partnership deals.

And their promises now are a fraud. After the election there will be new attacks on our public services. This will come in two forms:

- Privatisation: All the main parties are pushing 'public private partnerships'. This is the latest code word for handing our public services over to the profit makers. There are already plans to hand over the care of geriatric patients to private companies!

- More charges: All the main parties have at various stages voted for refuse charges. They want working people to pay on the double rather than taxing the rich.

At the same time the employers have started to sack workers and demand that we 'tighten our belts'. We need to build a strong opposition to this creeping Thatcherism.

But where will this opposition come from?

The Labour Party barely offers an alternative. Its most radical proposal is to take £5 billion from the pension fund to pay for the public services. The Labour Party does not dare on call for taxes on the rich.

The terrible record of Labour in coalition shows why support for Sinn Fein and the Greens is growing.

But these parties want to join a future coalition government. Instead of denouncing the Tweedledum-Tweedlee policies of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, they claim that either one is "more nationalist" or "cleaner" than the other.

It is vital that the largest possible number of votes go to openly socialist candidates—Not to unite with the right but to build an alternative to them.

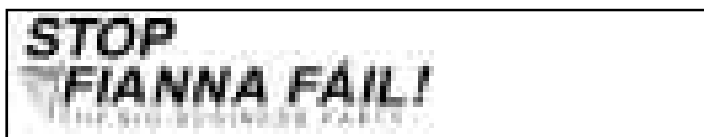

It's time for workers to organise themselves. No one should rely on politicians who make great promises at elections and then rush into Ministerial Mercedes afterwards.

The Socialist Workers Party is implacably opposed to any coalition with right wing parties.

Instead of co-operating with them to manage capitalism, we want to promote opposition to them. Get active in the campaigns of these socialists.

Get involved to back these policies:

- Tax the Rich—Fund quality local services
- Scrap service charges
- No to Privatisation
- No to War—Oppose Ireland joining an EU Rapid Reaction Force
- Nationalise the Banks—Fund job creation
- Oppose Racism—Don't let the rich scapegoat refugees
- Protect the Environment—Don't let Big Business destroy it
- Put people before profit

Privatising Public services for Profit

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SOCIALIST



Richard Boyd Barrett
(Dun Laoghaire)
087 632 9511



Bríd Smith
(Dublin South Central)
087 9090 166



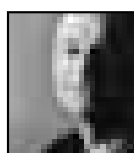
Ritchie Brown
(Dublin North)
087 203 5207



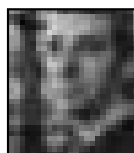
Jimmy Kelly
(Waterford)
087 787 0621



Catherine Kennedy
(Wicklow)
(01) 282 9802



Shay Ryan
(Dublin South East)
01 872 2682



Michael O'Sullivan
(Cork South Central)
086 389 4712

News from the campaign trail

● Dublin South Central

In Ballyfermot some 90 people attended a bin tax meeting to organise the next stage of the campaign and to organise building for a major protest on Mayday. Twenty eight people signed up to work in Brid Smith's election campaign.

In Drimnagh over 130 people attended a lively anti-bin tax meeting 15 people signed up to Brid's campaign. Across the two meetings a 100 people joined the anti-bins campaign.

According to Socialist Worker candidate Brid Smith, "The success of these meetings shows how despite council threats the bin charges campaign is growing from strength to strength."

Brid's campaign is organis-

ing a major public meeting on "Our Public Services are Not For Sale" with a teacher, a bus worker and the chief shop steward of James Hospital speaking on the fight against privatisation.

● Dun Laoghaire

As campaigners have hit the streets for Socialist Worker candidate Richard Boyd Barrett one major issue that has emerged is the lack of a regional hospital for the Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown area.

The nearest hospital with a full range of services is Vincent's hospital. Richard is demanding that St Columkille in Loughlinstown should be upgraded as a matter of urgency.

According to Richard, "The A&E Dept in St Michaels Hospital in Dun Laoghaire has now also been transferred to

Vincent's. We need to mobilise people the way they did in Waterford recently over Cancer facilities to get adequate hospitals in this area."

The campaign against service charges held a series of eight successful meetings across the area in response to the new bill sent out by the council.

Non-payment rates are still over 50 percent after three years of the campaign.

At the meetings people voted to use the election to increase the pressure on councillors and the political parties.

The campaign agreed to produce a leaflet to circulate before the election stating which candidates and parties voted for the charge and calling for a vote for the Richard and Lisa Maher of the bin tax steering committee. It will also produce an election

window poster saying "don't canvass here if you voted for the bin tax"

● Waterford

The Waterford branch of the Irish Anti-War Movement is to hold a public meeting in the Granville Hotel, Waterford on Thursday 11th April at 8.00 p.m. The speakers include Jimmy Kelly: Socialist Workers Party general election candidate, Waterford Crystal shop steward and ATGWU Executive Committee member. And Seamus Healey TD amongst others

● Cork

Campaigners for Jimmy Kelly joined campaigners for Cork Socialist Worker candidate Michael O'Sullivan in the fifth mass trespass of the Old Head Golf Links in Kinsale which

scored a victory once again as protesters gained access to the exclusive golf club. They are demanding to restore free access to the land to use as a public amenity.

● Dublin North Central

Across the constituency Socialist Worker candidate Ritchie Browne and supporters organised a series of meetings against the bin charges.

Ritchie is also involved in fighting the dumping of waste in Dublin Bay.

According to Ritchie "The Government has brought in bin taxes claiming that they have an environmental policy yet here they are in filling 52 acres of Dublin Bay to dump rubbish.

"This is a long standing, EU designated special protection area, and as an amenity for local people it needs to be defended."

● Dublin South East

On the campaign trail Local authority tenants in Kerlogue Road in Dublin's Ringsend have been complaining to the Corporation for months over the state of their homes.

Over sixty residents in the road complain that their homes are overdue for upgrading.

But even basic repairs have been ignored and many are affected by damp. Local activist Laura Kinsella said, "Despite continually getting on to the Corpo our needs have been completely ignored."

SWP candidate Shay Ryan said "This highlights the inadequacies of council services. The contracting out of services to private companies has led to a deplorable run down in our services.

"Another issue I am highlighting is the fact that after the floods, while their are empty maisonettes in the area, old people are being moved out to areas far away from their neighbours and families. This is a scandal."

French Presidential Election 21 April

One in ten will vote for a revolutionary

ONE IN ten people in one of the world's key industrial countries say they will vote in two weeks time for a socialist who calls for "revolution" to sweep away a "bankrupt capitalist system".

That poll finding is sending shockwaves through the French political establishment as the country gears up for the 21 April presidential election. PAUL MCGARR reports from France.



Struggle has produced this mood for change

THE SUPPORT for Arlette Laguiller is a reflection of deep anger with France's governing parties. It is also one expression of a more general discontent with capitalist society.

The entire political land-

scape in France underwent a seismic shift in the wake of the great public sector workers' strikes in December 1995.

Millions of workers struck and demonstrated against attacks on welfare by the conservative government. The strikes beat back the attacks and gutted the government.

In 1997 the Socialist Party,

equivalent to the Labour Party, and its Communist and Green allies, won a landslide election victory.

The government has been pushed by struggles and protests since to deliver some of its promises, such as a law limiting most people's working hours to 35 a week.

Bowed

But Jospin, backed by the Communist Party, has also bowed to pressure from big business to push through attacks on working people.

His government has privatised more public services than the two previous right-wing governments put together. And it has pushed through some of the welfare attacks that workers struck against in 1995.

Even reforms like the 35-hour law have come with the price of allowing many bosses to impose "flexible" working.

No wonder that three in four people said in a recent poll that they could see little difference between the policies offered by the two main presidential candidates.

Meanwhile there is a continuing level of workers' struggles.

One recent wave of strikes and protests involving mainly young workers in fast food outlets and major stores is significant in indicating the mood at the base of society.

McDonald's workers in Paris led the way with a strike which won major concessions from the multinational firm.

Now young workers in Go Sport and in the Fnac book and music stores have protested "Everything belongs to us!" was the chant on one recent demonstration on Paris's Champs Elysees by young workers from Fnac, Go Sport, McDonald's, Virgin, Disney and Quick.

Startling

Similar meetings are taking place almost every night as Arlette, a retired former bank worker, criss-crosses the country. Over 1,000 people came to hear her in Strasbourg, 900 in Reims, 900 in Limoges, and almost 700 in Nancy.

In smaller towns the size of the meetings is even more startling. In the small town of Saint Lo 500 people turned out there to hear Arlette. Over 400 people came to hear her in Montlucon, another small town.

France's presidential election takes place over two rounds, with a run-off between the two leading contenders following the 21 April first round. That run-off is likely to be between current French president, the Tory Jacques Chirac, and France's Socialist Party prime minister, Lionel Jospin. Chirac and Jospin are on around 20 percent each, with Arlette Laguiller vying for third place, according to a series of polls.

She is well ahead of the Green candidate, though the Greens are part of the country's Socialist Party-led coalition government and hold several ministerial posts. The polls also suggest Arlette could get double the vote of Communist Party leader and presidential candidate Robert Hue.

The Communist Party is also part of the government, and has long been the key left wing and working class force in France, dominating the most powerful trade union federation. If the polls are right then the election will show just how many people are prepared to support a strongly left wing alternative to the traditional parties.

Voting not enough

THE LEFT are not the only force in French society capable of benefiting from disaffection with the government and society. Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the Nazi National Front party, has been rising in the presidential election polls to around 10 percent.

In the 1980s and early 1990s Le Pen and his party grew to be a serious threat.

They were beaten back by a wave of anti-Nazi protests in the mid-1990s, and by the shift to the left in society on the back of workers' struggles.

Disillusionment with five years of the Socialist and Communist parties in office has created the space for Le Pen to try and make a

comeback.

The biggest current in society is still flowing to the left. The challenge for socialists in France is to build on that in the months ahead.

The support for Arlette Laguiller shows the potential, but to realise that potential will mean more than winning votes.

Activity

It means involving in activity as many as possible of those who will vote for Arlette. And it means relating struggles on jobs, wages and privatisation to wider social movements and protests—against racism, corporate globalisation, capitalism, and against war.

Unfortunately no organisation on the left in France is doing this consistently.

The greatest failing in recent months is to have failed to seriously build an anti-war movement.

Poverty among plenty

"THERE IS plenty of money around. Look how the rich have got richer year after year," argued Arlette Laguiller in Amiens last Thursday.

At the same time "wages are held down, insecurity spreads, and six million people in this county are living in poverty, some unemployed, some working for poverty pay".

She attacked the government for creating "a two-tier health service—one for the rich and one for the people".

"The French government," she argued, "like all the governments of Europe, is pursuing a policy of liquidating public services through privatisation".

Arlette's speech focused almost entirely on such immediate bread and butter issues, before ending with a call for a transformation of society.

"The capitalist organisation of the economy is bankrupt. It is incapable of solving the basic problems facing humanity, to feed and clothe everyone, to allow everyone access to health-care, education and culture.

Changed

"It must be changed, and the only force capable of doing that is the working class," she told the audience. Afterwards people quickly filed out of the marquee into the night. Many had heard enough to convince them to vote for Arlette.

Laurent, a student, had come to a political meeting for the first time in his life: "It is true what she says, especially about

insecurity, and the kind of job and pay people have to put up with.

"Many of my friends will not vote at all. They think all politicians are the same. But I think I'll vote for Arlette."

Michelle is unemployed, and also liked what she had heard "Arlette understands the problems of ordinary people, not like all those politicians who just lie and are corrupt."

Jean-Michel works in a local supermarket: "All the others just go along with the bosses. They don't stand for working people any more."

"Arlette gets attacked for saying the same things she has when she has stood in previous elections. But I think it's good she has not changed. She says what she believes in and sticks to it. You can't say that about the Socialist Party or the Communist Party any more, can you?"

in my view

50 year imperialist shaken not stirred

THIS YEAR sees the fiftieth birthday of James Bond, the ageing superspy who should probably have been killed off or been charged under the Official Secrets Act several decades ago.

The main problem with Bond is that he was a creation of the Cold War and so he, much like the plotters of American foreign policy, has spent the last ten years looking around for a new villain to take on.

It was all so much simpler when all that Sean Connery had to deal with were double-crossing nuclear scientists selling secrets to the Russians. Nowadays the screenwriters who keep Ian Fleming's spook alive have to come up with ever more dastardly villains with increasingly implausible plots for world domination. Strangely, as the plots have grown more complex, they have also grown thinner.

Information

A recent Bond had to overcome a megalomaniac newspaper and television magnate—not Rupert Murdoch, honest—who was intent on taking over the world (what else) by controlling the flow of information.

Sounds interesting enough, but all that Pierce Brosnan can do to stop him is the same bundle of tricks and explosions that Connery, Lazenby, Moore and Dalton have performed in every previous film—blow up a building using a fake Rolex, slide down a tunnel and punch a bad guy in the face.

Oh and get the girl of course. How is it that in every episode, the wife of the villain is always a former lover of Bond's?! It's cinema from the Carry-on school of thought—if the jokes worked once, change the scenery and costumes and use the same script again.

There's something sinister about James Bond and it's not just the rather dodgy ideas about women. The man whom we're all supposed to get excited about is a British version of Henry Kissinger. He travels around the world with impunity, overthrowing governments and blowing up small islands at will, in order to keep the world safe. Safe for who exactly?

It was precisely these Cold Warriors who brought us the atomic bomb and the prospect of Mutually Assured Destruction, the amassing of large quantities of missiles that will never be fired in order to prevent "the other side" from firing the missiles they've amassed in order to prevent...

Strikebreaking

In other words, there's very little intelligence in the "intelligence community". MI5, MI6, the CIA have many talents.

They are keen on at smashing left wing organisations, strikebreaking, arranging the overthrowing of democratically elected governments and so on, but when it comes to the one thing they're supposed to do—gathering information to protect the population against attack, their "intelligence" is strangely lacking. The CIA and FBI, supposedly the best spy networks in the world, knew absolutely nothing about four Al Qaeda cells plotting the single biggest attack on the United States.

British intelligence is so watertight that the information it holds on republicans in the North routinely ends up in the hands of loyalist murderers, yet ask them who killed Pat Finnuccane or Rosemary Nelson and they scratch their heads like children asked to solve a difficult calculus problem.

No doubt the next Bond will have to seek out a Bin Laden type character in a remote cave in Afghanistan, which will be a real pain as it's so hard to get a dry Martini in Kabul. However, if Bond really wants to save the world, perhaps he could get Q to come up with some sort of repellent spray to keep George Bush away from the nuclear button or any sort of position of power for the next four years.

This would not only prevent the outbreak of world war, but I have it on microfilm that Laura Bush used to go out with Sheik Osama before she became a Republican!

by PAUL McCARTHY

book

Give Bush Moore stick

MICHAEL MOORE is an author who has managed to write books—and make films—with serious political content, that are popular with the mass audience.

He first came to notice with *Roger & Me*, a film about how General Motors destroyed his home town of Flint, Michigan, by closing down factories and laying off thousands of workers.

Slashing

His first book, *Downsize This!* was a broadside against corporate America in the 1990s. American firms were claiming record-breaking profits at the same time that they were slashing jobs and relocating to Third World countries, all with the blessing of the Clinton administration.

Moore's latest release, *Stupid White Men*, picks up where *Downsize This!* left off.

A new president in the White House, more exploitation for American workers.

The first chapter describes how Bush lied, cheated and bought his way into the White House. Other targets include the Democratic Party—for letting him away with it and racism in America.

Moore breaks from what "liberal" America has to say on race and racism. Instead he argues the reason the "race problem" has not been solved is that America never overcame the legacy of slavery.

Resisted

Not only have black people not been compensated for what was done to their ancestors, but the white ruling class has resisted every attempt to redress the balance—from positive discrimination to reform of the welfare and legal systems, both of which affect black people disproportionately.

One startling fact highlighted in *Stupid White Men* is that the average black person earns 61 per cent of the average white income—the same ratio as in 1880.

What makes Michael Moore's books worth reading, as well as the humour, is the fact that they are written for and about workers in America.

In *Stupid White Men*,



Michael Moore

one industry he focuses on is aviation. Moore starts a chapter with a conversation he had with an American Airlines pilot in Detroit Airport.

The pilot told him he only earned \$16,800 a year, an increase from just \$13,000 in the first year, out of which pilots have to pay their employer \$4,000 for their training.

The pilot told him a

story of a colleague who was so poorly paid that he qualified for food stamps—reserved for Americans living below the official, extremely low, poverty line.

The chapter concludes, "never get on a plane where the person flying you is paid less than the kid at McDonalds!"

Moore finished *Stupid White Men* before September 11th and the

publication was halted.

His publisher told him that it would have to be edited to reflect "the new climate".

Moore stood his ground and the original text was published.

The book is currently No.1 on the *New York Times* Bestseller list.

On his tour around the US, Moore has to put on additional dates to cater for the massive audience

who turn out to hear him speak.

This is a sure sign that the anti-capitalist movement in America has not gone away, despite Bush's attempts to whip up patriotism and silence protest.

As the Enron scandal continues to roll and war in Iraq looms, the American public might just give a slap in the face to the Toxic Texan.

Media

Making sure news gets out

THIS MONTH saw the launch of Indymedia Ireland. It is a part of a worldwide alternative to the corporate media.

The first Indymedia centre started in Seattle in 1999 during the demonstrations against the World Trade Organisation.

Indymedia offers grassroots, non-corporate coverage. The website www.indymedia.ie enables anyone with a basic computer and modem to post immediately onto the website's "newswire".

Text, images, video and audio can all be published in a matter of seconds. It means people around the globe can see breaking news in unfiltered coverage.

With the corporate media's ability to distort what is happening this is an important step forward.



Seattle 1999

Other people can add their comments to an article and start a debate.

Now obviously not everyone has access to the Internet, not everything published on the Internet is true, accurate or fair.

Not every piece of news or opinion is vital and interesting, not every comment makes sense.

But Indymedia has proved, particularly in the big anti-capitalist demonstrations, to be a useful

source to explain what is really going on in the street.

Already video footage taken by Irish Indymedia activists has led to the dropping of Public Order charges in one case after the Gardai where shown to be lying.

So if you have important news of a strike, campaign, demonstration or meeting, log on and post it up. Don't hate the media, be the media.

where we stand

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 here.

N.I. POSTAL WORKERS

Action needed to fight 40,000 job axe plan

EVERY DAY that passes increases the urgency of a fight-back against job cuts and privatisation in the Post Office in Britain.

Two weeks ago, 15,000 job losses were announced. Around 150 jobs are to go in Northern Ireland, as Parcel Force offices in Portadown, Derry and Belfast are closed. This is only the beginning of a massive series of job cuts to prepare for privatisation.

Determined

Last week the Post Office confirmed there would be many more, pushing towards the bosses' target of 40,000. Post Office chairman Allan Leighton is determined to make workers pay the price of making the business profitable again.

Yet the CWU postal workers' union leaders seem paralysed by the scale of the attacks. Union activists are still waiting for a detailed briefing from union headquarters in response.

A report in last Friday's *Guardian* said that CWU union leaders were putting the finishing touches to deal that would allow the massive job losses—as long as they were 'voluntary'—and prevent any strike action over the summer.

Reported

The deal is reported to be based on a redundancy package of up to four weeks pay for each year of service, but only two weeks pay for those who have worked for less than five years. This is a pittance.

But union leaders are linking the redundancy deal to the settlement of the recent pay dispute, in which two thirds of postal workers voted for strike action.

The strike was called off and union members are now

due to be balloted again on both deals, with the bosses and the CWU leaders aiming to prevent any industrial action.

Jane Loftus, a CWU member on Merseyside, says, "It is not good enough to let jobs go through 'voluntary' means. There are Parcelforce depot closures and mail depot closures which should be fought.

"Everyone is asking how it is possible to run the service with 40,000 fewer workers. It can't be done unless they expect loads of work to go through privatisation and the workers who remain are pushed even harder than they are now."

Managers still fear action. The *Sunday Business* newspaper reported last weekend, "Central to Allan Leighton's thinking is the need to avoid industrial action by postal workers.

The Post Office chairman is acutely aware of how damaging a summer postal strike

would be to his plans to turn the company around."

One good sign in the last week has been some union branches beginning to gear up for campaigns to stop depot closures in their local area.

In the absence of a national, official lead areas will have to push for action locally. They should prepare to fight unofficially and to pull other areas out themselves.

And the left in the CWU has to begin pressing hard for an alternative strategy for the union.

The basic demands should be:

- Cut hours, not jobs. Implement CWU conference policy of fighting for a 35-hour week.
- Stop all privatisation-no to job losses or closures.
- Strike for a decent pay rise, and against job losses and privatisation.
- Call a national demonstration alongside other public sector unions.



Exhausted postal worker goes home after a shift

Socialist Worker Appeal
Help us raise €20,000!

€ 20,000

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- 1st Prize € 200.00: Sean Donegan, Mitchelstown, Co Cork
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- 3rd Prize € 100.00: J Samra, Leixlip, Co Kildare
- 4th Prize € 50.00: Fergal Griffin, Malahide, Co Dublin

I want to support the *Socialist Worker Appeal* and help keep *Socialist worker* at the centre of the struggle for a better world. Please find enclosed the following donation:

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SWP activist meetings—all welcome

- **ATHLONE:** Contact 01- 872 2682 for details
- **BRAY:** Meets every Thursday at the Mayfair Hotel at 8.00pm
- **BELFAST CENTRAL:** Meets Tuesdays at 8pm in White's Tavern
- **BELFAST SOUTH:** Meets 7pm Tuesdays in Peter Froggatt Centre, Queen's
- **BELFAST WEST:** ring for details
- **BELFAST QUEENS UNIVERSITY:** Wednesdays 4pm, Peter Froggatt Centre
- **CLONAKILTY:** Phone (01) 8722682 for details
- **CORK:** Meets Mondays at 8pm in Telecom Eireann Club,

- MacCurtain St
- **DERRY:** Thursdays at 8pm in Foyle Friend Centre, 32 Great James St.
- **DROGHEDA:** Meets Wednesdays 8:00pm Contact Kevin at for details
- **DUNDALK:** Meets Wednesdays 8pm phone 01- 8722682 for details
- **DUN LAOGHAIRE:** Meets every Thursday at 8pm in the Christian Institute
- **DUBLIN ARTANE / FAIRVIEW:** Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in Artane / Beaumont Recreational Centre (opp. Artane Castle)

- **DUBLIN BALLYFERMOT:** Meets Tues 8:30pm in Ruby Finigans Pub
- **DUBLIN CABRA:** Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Aughrim St Parish Hall, 13 Prussia St
- **DUBLIN CENTRAL:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Conways Pub, Parnell St
- **DUBLIN DUNDRUM:** Meets Tuesdays contact for details
- **DUBLIN FINGLAS/BALLYMUN:** Phone Kevin on for details
- **DUBLIN RATHMINES:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm downstairs J O'Connells (Pub) Sth. Richmond Street Dublin 2.

- **DUBLIN RIALTO:** Meets every Wednesday at 8:30pm St. Andrews Community Centre, SCR
- **DUBLIN SOUTH CITY:** Meets at 8.30pm every Tuesday upstairs Bowes (pub) Fleet Street Dublin 2
- **DUBLIN TALLAGHT:** Meets every Tuesday at 8pm in Jobstown Community Centre
- **DUBLIN DCU:** Meets 2 pm Thursdays in CGO2
- **DUBLIN TCD:** Meets Wednesdays at 1pm contact for details
- **DUBLIN UCD:** meets Wednesdays 1pm contact for details

- **ENNISKILLEN:** Phone 01- 872 2682 for details
- **GALWAY:** Meets every Wednesday in Currans Hotel, Eyre Square (beside Cuba) 8.30pm
- **LIMERICK:** Phone 01-872 2682 for details
- **LEIXLIP/MAYNOOTH:** contact for details
- **SLIGO:** Phone for details
- **TRALEE:** Phone for details
- **WATERFORD:** Meets every Thursday at 8pm in the ATGWU Hall, Keizer St.

Waterford SWP May Day Social
Wed May 1st
Tap Room pub
Ballybricken
Waterford
Music by Raindogs
9 till late
Tickets €2 on sale in local workplaces, on the door or from any *Socialist Worker* paper seller

Teachers

ASTI to fight on as left gains

SECONDARY teachers continue to show determination to win in their pay battle. This is the lesson of the ASTI conference in Bundoran in early April.

The right wing had orchestrated a campaign to derail the fight but were decisively defeated at the conference.

A letter circulated to press before the conference claimed teachers in Galway wanted to retreat on the union's pay policy and that the CEC was out of touch with real teachers' feelings.

Invitation

As one ASTI activist told *Socialist Worker*, "That was organised by head office who organised a meeting by invitation only dominated by school principals. As conference showed it was not representative of grassroots feeling."

Ten past presidents were wheeled out to condemn the union's non-participation in supervision and substitution and rejection of benchmarking.

A number of CEC members have stood out against the obstructionism of Charlie Lennon and his allies.

This group stand for a concerted fight to push forward the union's democratically agreed policy on pay, benchmarking and supervision and substitution.

These saw their position vindicated. Pat Cahill, was elected Vice President on the first ballot and Bernadine O'Sullivan was nominat-

ed as the union's candidate for the senate.

Delegates voted two to one to reject a call to enter talks on substitution and supervision until their pay claim is dealt with satisfactorily.

As Pat Cahill told *Socialist Worker*, "The issue of supervision and substitution was raised as a red herring to divert us from a decent pay claim."

"It would mean no more than five or six hundred pounds a year after tax and PAYE."

Limits

Two years ago ASTI withdrew from the ICTU because of its opposition to the limits imposed by the PPF.

Kieran Mulvey—ex general secretary of the union and now chief executive of the Labour Relations Commission—was invited to the conference to back up Lennon's and the Right's attempt to get the union to revise its policy.

So great was the anger at these manoeuvres to get the union to backtrack on benchmarking and affiliation to the ICTU that his speech was booed and heckled.

Sensing the mood, those promoting the widely flagged motion to rejoin the ICTU withdrew it at the last minute rather see it face humiliating defeat.

The teachers are seeking a 30 per cent pay rise and have refused to participate in the benchmarking process.

They reject benchmarking as "industrialisation" in the words of Bernadine O'Sullivan—past president and a key figure in the fight for decent pay. They rightly

regard their pay claim as justified on its own merits.

Commenting on the conference, incoming Vice President Pat Cahill told *Socialist Worker*,

"The conference had delegates from every branch from the smallest to the largest and accurately reflects the mood in the schools.

"Grass roots members are angry.. They have been led up the garden path by ICTU and so-called 'partnership' during the biggest boom Ireland has seen.

"While the fat cats with their millions can come to nice arrangement with the government over tax, education is left behind.

"Teachers feel left down by the union officials and the ICTU. But we are going to fight on."



Teachers march to the Dail last year

INTO

Battles ahead in National Schools

by an INTO member

TRIBUTES to Joe O'Toole cut the time available for discussion of motions at the INTO congress in Limerick.

However when business was finally got down to the issues of class size, the state of school buildings, the need to protect pension parity and the demands that must be met in the benchmarking report figured high on the agenda.

The leadership has committed itself to winning from the process an increased salary scale starting at €25000 and reaching €50000, on a scale reduced from 25 points to 12.

Whatever benchmarking

offers, and it may be significantly less than this, the danger is likely to be in the detail.

And the rank and file members made it clear that they wanted their conditions of service protected and that they will not be prepared to trade them for increases in pay.

Pensions

On the issue of pensions a number of speakers made reference to the dangers of once off non-pensionable payments and increases in allowances to the protection of pension parity.

Reference was made by one speaker to the Report of the Commission on Public Service Pensions which threatens to break the link between pay and pensions by proposing that instead of

rising in accordance with the rates of pay of the serving equivalent, pensions will be index linked to public sector pay as a whole, including the pay of non-permanent civil servants.

There is a clear agenda to attack the right to a decent pension and benchmarking is likely to reinforce this trend by recommending some non-pensionable increases.

Protecting the integrity of the school year from September 1st to June 30th was won despite opposition from the Central Executive Committee who are prepared to defend a 183 day school year but wanted the freedom to negotiate July working in the special education sector.

While supporting the right of autistic children and children with other special needs to year round educa-

tion on foot of the Jamie Sinnott judgement, delegates felt that it was the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science, and not schools and teachers, to organise and provide summer programmes.

Delegates felt it was important to pass this motion so that no teachers could be pressurised into this supposedly voluntary July working arrangement.

The Congress provided a clear signal that any Benchmarking report with a derisory pay increase and/or conditions attached will be greeted with contempt by primary teachers.

The rounds of applause for those speakers who referred to the ASTI's pay battle showed that, despite the hostility of the INTO leadership to our sister union, teachers themselves

want to make common cause and industrial action may soon be on the agenda across the education system.

The Minister for Education in his speech to Congress mentioned that in response to the crisis of school buildings public private partnerships would be introduced into the primary sector to facilitate building and refurbishment programmes.

This is a typical strategy of a government who wants to introduce privatisation into the public sector—starve the service of the necessary funds and then get the private sector to "bail it out".

Unfortunately, the leadership made no criticism of this approach and it will be now up to teachers to raise the issue of PPPs in their branches and to fight to resist corporate incursions into our education system,

Strike at Cork Airport

CATERING workers at Cork Airport—members of SIPTU—have been on official strike for the past three weeks in a bid to win a Sunday working premium equivalent to double time.

Cafe Kylemore reneged on a Labour Relations Commission recommendation 18 months ago after buying out Campbell Catering and ever since have not issued workers with con-

tracts.

The multi-ethnic workforce have received huge support from bus workers and taxi drivers who refused to pass the picket lines—one driver even giving a donation every day to strikers to buy tea and sandwiches.

Scabs

The company have reacted by bringing in scab labour from outside the country even though it is estimated that paying up would only have amounted to

a few hundred Euro.

Cafe Kylemore also began cutting tea-breaks in order to reduce working hours below the level needed for full time status.

One striking worker who spoke to *Socialist Worker* said, "The low pay in this country is a disgrace, I was paid nearly as much ten years ago before I left the country. This is what I'm returning to".

The workers are potentially in a strong position, particularly if they called on solidarity action from other workers in the airport.

SIPTU have let the strike go to Labour Relations Commission.

★ **MANDATE** has called off its six-week strike at the South African embassy after securing a 5.5 per cent pay increase for members backdated to October 2001. It is the first pay rise local employees at the embassy have received since 1998.

The embassy has described the increase as a "cost-of-living" payment. It has still not recognised Mandate's right to represent staff or accepted that it needs to pay increases under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.

Irish Activist in danger in South America

LATIN AMERICAN Solidarity Campaign member Gearóid O'Loingsigh, who is working voluntarily for Sembrar, a human rights organisation in Colombia, is in hiding in a remote part of Colombia.

O'Loingsigh and a German colleague were recently detained briefly by the military at a regional airport en route to meet with farming and mining communities in the Bolivar province, in order to assist with investigation and documentation of human rights abuses.

That night, the hotel to which the military had taken them and instructed them to stay in after their release, was searched by a paramilitary death squad looking for Mr. O'Loingsigh.

He remains in the area,

fearing to travel back to the relative safety of Barrancabermeja, the city where he is based, as long as the Paramilitaries are searching for him.

Sembrar has expressed serious concerns for his safety should he leave the area. Please write to the authorities listed below by fax, letter or email

Urging them to take every measure possible to ensure that the Colombian authorities co-operate with Sembrar in taking immediate and protective action to ensure safe passage of Mr. O'Loingsigh from the area to which he is confined

Ambassador Victor G. Ricardo, Embassy of Colombia, 3 Hans Crescent, London
FAX: 00 44 207 581 1829

PHONE: 00 44 207 589 9177
More details contact the Latin American Solidarity campaign at lasc@iol.ie

★ At the same time in Ecuador Nick Jones, an Irish environmental activist detained in Ecuador, was released from prison.

Jones and 17 others were arrested and imprisoned in Quito, the nation's capital after peacefully protesting against the construction of an oil pipeline through the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest.

"The oil company failed to show in court," explained Alicia Poapanta, a legal aide who attended the court hearing.

Hundreds of protesters arrived instead."

Socialist Worker

(01) 8722682 <http://www.swp.ie> swp@clubi.ie

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