

Socialist Worker

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AS U.S. TOP OFFICIAL FINALLY ADMITS THERE ARE NO WMDs

14,000 U.S. TROOPS PASS THROUGH SHANNON TO IRAQ EACH MONTH

BERTIE AHERN IS BUSH'S COLLABORATOR



GEORGE Bush's case for war in Iraq has been publicly exploded.

Top US official, David Kay, who was in charge of the search for alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq has finally admitted that he does not believe that the now occupied country possesses stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons.

As Irish Anti War Movement spokesperson Fintan Lane commented: "It is now absolutely clear that the pretext for the US invasion of Iraq was built on falsehoods and

disinformation, much of which was repeated uncritically by people such as Bertie Ahern and Brian Cowen."

Not only did Ahern and Cowen slavishly repeat Bush and Blair's lies about weapons of mass destruction, they threw open Shannon airport for the use of the US military to launch their invasion of Iraq.

Neutrality

This was done despite Irish neutrality and the opinion of the majority of people in Ireland that we should take no part in the war.

And US troops and military

equipment are still freely flowing through Shannon as the occupation of Iraq continues in the face of growing resistance.

Over 125 thousand US troops have passed through Shannon airport in the last year. Currently 14,000 troops are passing through, many armed, without any formality.

As Fintan Lane pointed out, "The extension of facilities at Shannon airport to the US military is in effect an endorsement by the Irish government of an entirely discredited US adventure.

"How can Fianna Fail and the

PDs now justify the misuse of Shannon airport for US military purposes?"

The truth is that Ahern and the rest of the government are collaborators with US imperialism.

Crisis

As we go to press, British Prime Minister Tony Blair faces a crisis that could end his leadership.

We need to do no less here in Ireland.

Anti war groups need to be re-energised.

Anti war activists need to link up with activists and organise public meetings in the areas pointing the

finger at Ahern and Co; organising local protests at Aer Rianta offices and government TDs clinics.

The Irish Anti-War Movement has called a large demonstration in Dublin on March 20th to co-incide with global protests against the ongoing occupation of Iraq.

We need to distribute leaflets in schools, colleges, workplaces and communities to build the biggest possible protest focussing on exposing and opposing Irish government complicity with the US military.

Now turn to page two

One holiday for the TD and another for the teacher!

AFTER almost six weeks on holidays the country's TDs have just returned to the Dail last week.

After his long leisurely break the first thing that Minister for Education Dempsey has done is put his boot into teachers.

This Minister had the cheek to send inspectors around to schools on the day before Christmas Eve to check that schools had not been closed.

Having snooped on teachers before the holidays Brennan has threatened teachers that they would lose their benchmarking payments if they missed any time just before Christmas.

So while he can enjoy a super long holiday, teachers who miss out on one day before Christmas will potentially lose their hard earned benchmarking rise!

BNP speech at UCC cancelled

THE visit of Tony Wentworth (BNP) to UCC was cancelled last week by the Department of General Services at UCC.

The Department called off the visit because they feared the large protest against the speech would cause disruption.

A coalition of forces had come together at UCC to oppose the invitation to the racist Wentworth sent out by one of the student societies.

Ahern too busy to face the music

BERTIE Ahern has written to campaigners and councillors who are against the delay in the development of the Cork School of Music to say that he is too busy to meet them!

Campaigners in the city have called on the government to provide the much needed funding for the school.

"It looks like Bertie is distancing himself from the project," senior lecturer Gerry Kelly told the *Sunday Tribune*.

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Top US official admits: 'There were no WMDs'!

THE US official, David Kay, who was in charge of the search for alleged "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq made an overdue admission last week.

Kay publicly admitted that he does not believe that the now occupied country possesses stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons.

"It is now absolutely clear that the pretext for

the US invasion of Iraq was built on falsehoods and disinformation, much of which was repeated

uncritically by people such as Bertie Ahern and Brian Cowen," said Fin-tan Lane from the Irish

Anti War Movement.

"The cold truth is that the Bush administration was intent on invading

Iraq and invented a pretext to undermine those opposing the drive to war.

"The occupation of

Iraq is simply old-fashioned US imperialism rather thinly disguised as something more benign."

Cheney's firm in fresh Iraq scandal

HALLIBURTON, the oil services company formerly run by US Vice President Dick Cheney, is embroiled in another scandal.

Halliburton has revealed that two executives of the company are under investigation for allegedly taking bribes of \$6 million from a Kuwaiti

firm overcharging the US military for logistical services.

Halliburton has been awarded contracts by Bush insiders totalling over \$9 billion for "rebuilding" Iraq.

In a separate development, the Pentagon was forced to launch an investigation into charges that

the company has overcharged the US government by more than \$61 million for petrol deliveries in Iraq.

Awarded

Halliburton subsidiary Kellogg Brown and Root was secretly awarded contracts, without competitive

tender, to rebuild Iraqi oil installations last March before the US invasion.

A few weeks ago the contract, worth \$1.2 billion was finally put up for tender and guess who bagged it? None other than Kellogg Brown and Root.

Clearly Halliburton can consider the \$33 mil-

lion golden handshake to Cheney when he formally left the company in 2000 money well spent.

Meanwhile a French judge has said that Cheney could face extradition over charges that Halliburton bribed the Nigerian government \$180 million to win the contract to build a gas plant in that country.

An insider's guide Bush's White House

THE recent publication of the memoirs of the former Treasury Secretary to the Bush administration has thrown some much needed light onto the workings of Bush and his cronies.

Paul O'Neill who was sacked by Bush just over a year ago said that the President had decided to invade and occupy Iraq from day one of his administration, long before September 11.

The horror of 9/11 was used by Bush as an excuse and a smokescreen to invade Iraq and plunder that country's great oil wealth.

In his book O'Neill quotes from a Pentagon document produced in the early days of the Bush government.

Carving Up

In this document entitled 'Foreign Suitors for Iraqi Oilfield Contracts' it talks about carving up the country's fuel reserve between the world's oil companies.

When commenting on Iraq's supposed possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) O'Neill writes "In the 23 months I was there, I never saw anything that I would characterise as evidence of WMD."

He also said that he saw a document in early 2001 that was "marked secret and said Plan for Post-Saddam Iraq"

US attacks press freedom

THE world's leading press agency Reuters has made a formal complaint to the Pentagon following the wrongful arrest and brutalisation of three of its reporters by occupying US soldiers in Iraq.

This follows an incident in the town of Falluja where US soldiers opened fire on two cameramen.

They then chased and arrested the reporters and held them for 72 hours. US soldiers hit the reporters and put bags over their heads during the incident. They told them that "they would be sent to Guantanamo Bay"

and other soldiers whispered "Let's have sex" in their ears.

At one point during the interrogation according to the

family of one of the cameramen a US soldier shoved a shoe into the mouth of the Reuters cameraman.

So far the US military has refused to apologise and have bluntly told Reuters to "drop" its complaint.

WESLEY CLARKE IS NOT SO ANTI-WAR



EX NATO General Wesley Clarke and Democratic Party candidate for the presidential nomination is making much of his supposed record against the war in Iraq.

Last October he said "I've been against this war from the beginning. I was against it last summer. I

was against it in the fall.

I was against it in the winter. I was against it in the spring. And I'm against it now."

But in an article he wrote for the *London Times* in April 2003 he sounded a little more gung-ho about the invasion.

"Liberation is at hand.

Liberation—the powerful balm that justifies painful sacrifice, eases lingering doubt and reinforces bold action.

Already the scent of victory is in the air," he wrote.

"President Bush and Tony Blair should be proud of their resolve in the face of so much doubt".

Cardinal displays anti-gay bigotry

YOU would think after all the recent sex scandals the Catholic Church would be one institution that would shy away from calling other people "sexual perverts", but apparently not.

A Belgian Cardinal Gustaaf Joos recently said in a magazine interview that only five to ten percent of gays and lesbians were actually gay and the rest

were "sexual perverts".

"I am willing to write in my own blood that of all those who call themselves lesbian or gay, a maximum of five to ten percent are effectively gay or lesbian," he said.

"All the rest are just sexual perverts."

Cardinal Joos has not yet been reprimanded by the Catholic Church for his outrageous comments.

McGuinness hob-nobs with the rich

MARTIN McGuinness was an honoured guest at the "World Economic Forum" in Davos. The WEF has been described by the BBC as the "trade union of the rich and powerful".

McGuinness's allying himself with those who plunder the developing world and want to privatise everything that moves has caused great embarrassment to some members of Sinn Fein, particularly those who think they are members of an anti-capitalist party.

Other participants at Davos read like a Who's Who of TNC robber-baron: Josef Ackermann, boss of Deutsche Bank; Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, CEO

of babykillers, Nestlé; Douglas N. Daft, Coca-Cola's CEO, Michael S. Dell, the computer billionaire; Samuel A. DiPiazza Jr, Global CEO, PriceWaterhouseCoopers. And those are

just the A to D names!

We should not be surprised by McGuinness's choice of sides to take. Gerry Adams stood in line at Hillsborough

Castle last April to meet George Bush while US bombs were falling on Iraq. So much for Sinn Fein's anti-imperialism!

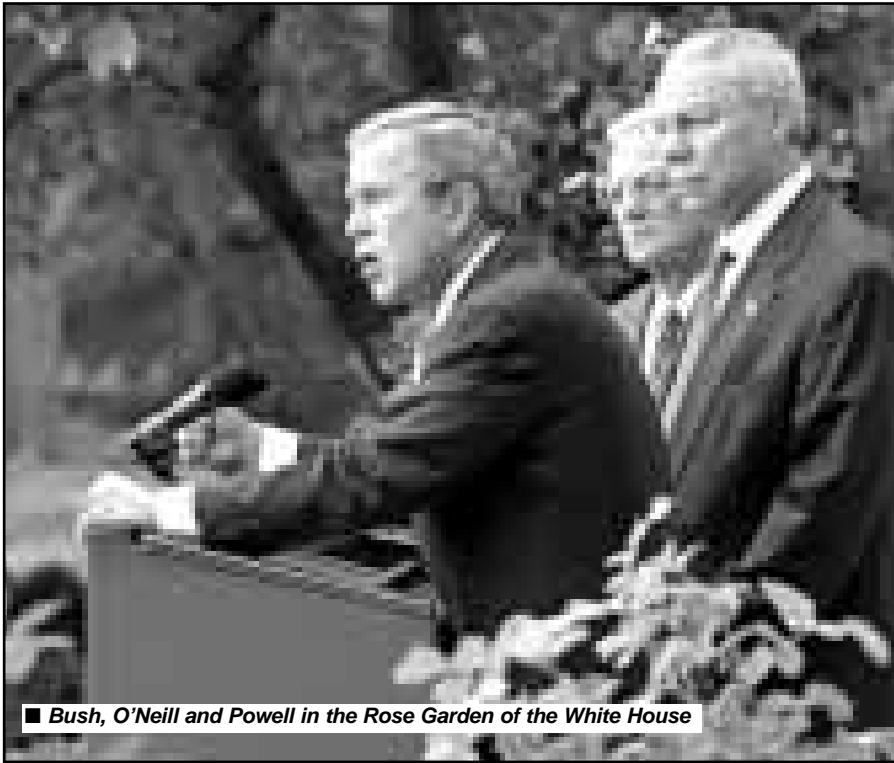
IRISH ARMS DEALERS

ARMS deals that are taking place here in Ireland are leading to the loss of life in the bloody civil war in the Congo.

According to a recent report released by Amnesty, deals are being made on Irish soil that are killing civilians

in the Congo. Because there is no law on arms brokering in Ireland deals can be made here which allow weapons to be sold around the world.

Amnesty has called on the government to bring in laws to prevent arms sales in Ireland.



■ Bush, O'Neill and Powell in the Rose Garden of the White House

UK/US use Intelligence from 1918

THE US occupiers of Iraq are scrambling to end a dispute with Shia leaders over plans to elect an interim government in Iraq before July.

It has emerged that American commanders are seeking to reach out to tribal leaders by relying on a report devised in 1918 by Britain, the country's then occupier!

Lieutenant-Colonel Alan King, head of the Tribal Affairs Bureau set up by the US-led coalition admitted last week that he had been referring to the pages of the British report to fathom Iraq's network of tribal sheikhs.

The report dates back to the First World War.

editorial

US schemes sham democracy for Iraq

THE true nature of Bush and Blair's claim that their war on Iraq was a fight for democracy was made all the clearer last week.

Tens of thousands of Shia Muslims demonstrated in Baghdad last week to demand free elections now, yet the US won't allow free elections to take place in Iraq.

No wonder the Iraqi Shia Muslims, a group oppressed under Saddam Hussein's regime, held a 100,000-strong protest march in Baghdad.

Following this show of force on the streets of the capital some 30,000 Iraqis marched through the southern city of Basra to also call for elections.

The Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the leading figure amongst Iraq's Shia Muslims, called for a rejection of the US plans.

But the occupying powers do not want any democracy in Iraq. The US plans to have a system much more favourable to their rule.

The US wants "notables" in each region in Iraq to meet to appoint an assembly that would then select a government. It wants to ensure that groups like the Shia, who make up 60 percent of the Iraqi population, do not win any election.

Bush and his allies want to hand over power to a hand-picked Iraqi government in June. The "government" would then ask the US troops to stay to provide security. Ali Sistani and the Shias' opposition to the selection of a government has panicked Paul Bremer, the US overlord of Iraq. He rushed back to the US for discussions with George Bush.

Bremer also met Kofi Annan, the United Nations general secretary, on Monday of last week to press for the UN to send its staff back into Iraq and help supervise the selection.

All this exposes how hollow the warmongers' cries of "freedom and democracy" were.



Supporters of Ali Sistani demand direct elections

FIGHT BRENNAN'S PRIVATISATION PLANS

DESPITE the last minute cancellation of strike action at Aer Rianta last week, there is still huge anger amongst Aer Rianta workers about Brennan's plans to break up the company.

Coming under huge pressure from the government and the right-wing media the SIPTU leadership caved in and called off the action.

Despite the clear support among Aer Rianta workers for strike action to disrupt the Irish Presidency of the European Union, the union leadership called off the action at the last moment.

Brennan, supported by Ryanair's anti-union boss Michael O'Leary, is in favour of the break up of Aer Rianta and more discussions will not change the fact. The union leadership said that the undertaking given by the government that they would

research a "business plan" was a concession. However the government already commissioned a Pricewaterhouse Cooper study which said that said that the break up of Aer Rianta would make "no economic sense".

Brennan is ideologically in favour of the break up of Aer Rianta and the eventual privatisation of Dublin Bus. He is committed to the imposition of the neo-liberal FF/PP agenda.

His warning to the workers at Dublin Airport that change would come no matter what "even if it has to be through the courts or through Europe", makes clear that the government is in favour of the wider neo-liberal drive in Europe.

In this agenda the government has strong supporters in the media and in big businesses. Last week most sections of the media put the boot into

the Aer Rianta workers calling them "trade union dinosaurs" who were "afraid of change".

The *Sunday Tribune* ran a disgraceful editorial that attacked Aer Rianta workers for wanting basic job security. "Nobody should be guaranteed a job for life. It's bad for business and ultimately stifles the development of the company and the individual."

Michael O'Leary called for the army to be brought in to break any potential strike.

But the only way that the workers can stop this privatisation drive is by taking on the government and embarrassing them during the EU presidency.

Brennan has already shown that he is not negotiating in good faith and he has already made up his mind to break up Aer Rianta and privatise Dublin Bus.



Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy. To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth. Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government. Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction' We want to see an Irish workers republic where all workers gain. Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

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. We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc. We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

DEMONSTRATION:

END THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ

US MILITARY OUT OF SHANNON

Saturday 20 March National demonstration on the day of worldwide mobilisation to mark 1st anniversary of the invasion of Iraq.

Assemble 3 pm, Garden of Remembrance, Parnell Square, Dublin 1.

IRISH ANTI WAR MOVEMENT

Join the Socialists!

To join the Socialist Workers Party or for more information: Fill in the form and Send to:

ROI: SWP PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, Phone (01) 872 2682

NI: SWP PO Box 143, Mallusk Road, Mallusk, Phone

0774 2531617

Email membership@swp.ie Web: www.swp.ie

I want to join the Socialist Workers Party

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Email.....

Union/College.....
(If applicable)

Eamonn McCann

Why Fianna Fail is not so unusual

AS THE Tribunals at Dublin Castle trundle endlessly on, the question is asked: what is it about the political culture of Southern Ireland, and Fianna Fail in particular, which makes it so vulnerable to the back-hander and the brown envelope?

Huge tracts of the Amazon have been scythed down to provide newsprint for pondering the answers. Is it the malign influence of Charlie Haughey? Or weak regulation? Or a tradition of local cronyism carried into the world of big business?

Before answering these questions, we might ask another: what it is about Italian politics which has led to a spate of corruption stories, of which the dodgy dealings of Prime Minister Berlusconi and the Parmalat affair are merely the most prominent?

Or, what aspects of US politics helped produce the swarm of scandal engulfing vice-president Dick Cheney's Halliburton company? The latest twist has seen the company, and Cheney personally, accused of bunging more than \$100 million to officials in Nigeria to smooth the way to a multi-billion gas plant contract.

This is par for the course in Nigeria, it seems, where three former cabinet ministers have just been charged with pocketing huge bribes from French suppliers of computer systems. What does this say about the political culture of the African State?

Then there's Israel, where property developer David Appel has been indicted for slipping \$700,000 to the son of Ariel Sharon for help in pressuring Greek officials for the go-ahead to build a gigantic casino-cum-hotel complex on a Mediterranean island. Something to do with the cultural assumptions on which Israeli politics rest, perhaps. But what?

And what's the connection between British political culture and the complicity of the Bank of England in the staggering Bank of Commerce and Credit International affair?

BCCI turns out not to have been a bank at all but to have been an elaborate scam from the outset, set up to siphon zillions from victims all over the world.

Key to its success was its Bank of England licence, issued despite glaring evidence of wrongdoing, endorsing BCCI as an upstanding, properly-constituted institution.

Then there's tycoon Mikhail Khordorkovski, currently resident in a small cell in Moscow awaiting trial on theft and political corruption charges involving sums beyond the range of imagination. This may tell us something about Russian political culture. But what?

Disgrace

Former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl now lives in obscure disgrace after revelations that he accepted illegal political donations. Is there something German about this, some flaw in the political culture of that country that leads to chancellors trousering bribes?

We could make a world tour of political scandals at the moment. France, Australia, Sweden, Brazil, Japan, etc., etc. Everywhere, we'd find local commentators earnestly wondering what it is about their particular country or their leading political parties which has brought this appalling situation about.

But if the explanation is to be found in the political culture of individual countries, or in the underlying nature of Fianna Fail, Likud, Forza Italiana, the US Republicans or whomever, how come the phenomenon is found everywhere? Isn't it more logical to look for an explanation in what these countries and parties have in common?

For the last 20 years, all across the capitalist world, governments have bowed down to market forces. "Regulation" has become a dirty word.

Establishment commentators pour scorn on the notion of State enterprise or control. The free-wheeling entrepreneur fixated on quick profit, with no time for red tape and no patience with petty interference, is the hero of the hour.

What do all the countries and parties mired in scandal have in common, then? Capitalism, that's what. And a prevailing political culture holding that capitalist market forces must be given free rein.

That's not the conclusion we find in the mainstream media. Because the mainstream media are themselves part and parcel of the capitalist system.

LEFT CONVENTION MEETS IN DERRY

We need a voice in Euro elections

AS analysts produce a breakdown on the implications of the proposed EU Constitution, the kind of European vision held by our rulers becomes ever clearer.

Theirs is a vision of a Europe run by transnational corporations, with a US-style welfare, education, health and care system.

They want a militaristic Europe that can back its economic muscle with the threat of war.

Yet the proposed Constitution will allow the EU to close its borders to refugees fleeing the resource wars caused by the neo-liberal policies it is pursuing.

It is vital, therefore, that there is an anti-capitalist intervention in every part of Europe in the forthcoming elections to the European Parliament.

We need to give a voice to the growing numbers who want a Social Europe that puts people and the public services they need ahead of profits.

In Northern Ireland, the need for a radical alternative to communal politics is even more urgent.

That alternative is already there, on the streets, in the workplaces and communities of the North—in the anti-war and anti-racism movements, in the civil service strikes, the campaign against the water charges.

Amanda Doherty (15) is studying for her GCSEs but she is taking time out to go to the Convention. "I walked out of school on Day X to protest against the war. Like thousands of other young people who were anti-war, I'm worried about our future in a militarised Europe.

"I also canvassed for the SEA in the Assembly elections and saw the hunger there is for an anti-sectarian alternative.

Debt

"There's always money for war, but they want us to go into huge debt to pay for University.

"I could go on and on, there are



■ Eamonn McCann campaigning with the SEA in the Assembly elections last year

so many reasons why it's really important lots of young people get to the Convention in Derry on the 14th February."

Frances Dowds is the Development Co-ordinator of the Northern Ireland Anti Poverty Network, part of the European Anti Poverty Network.

She is also centrally involved in Communities Against the Water Tax.

Speaking in a personal capacity, she told *Socialist Worker* why she is planning to go to the Convention. "the pressure for privatisation that is seen at all levels by the EU has a massive impact on the lives of people living in poverty, it drives down wages and introduces charges for services that should be public and free, like water.

"It is vital that we organise a counterforce to that vision of Europe, that we in Northern Ireland are part of the fight for a Social Europe"

A Convention of the Left is to be held in Derry on February 14th to discuss a united Left slate in the

June 2004 European election.

The convention is being organised by the Socialist Environmental Alliance (SEA) and is open to anyone who is for a social Europe and against a neo-liberal alliance of different parties, campaigning groups and individuals offering voters a radical, anti-sectarian alternative to parties based on one or other of 'the two communities'.

The SEA interventions in Foyle and East Derry showed that a credible, united left campaign can attract a level of support which cannot be derided or ignored.

Without a similar intervention, the European election will be another sectarian headcount. But it will take a united, broadly-based campaign to make a Left interven-

Alliance

tion credible.

The SEA has said that it wants to see a broad alliance covering the north and "are very open to argument from others as to how best we can jointly achieve this".

However, if that cannot be achieved, they will go forward on their own with Eamonn McCann as a candidate.

Euro elections offer a chance to link day-to-day local concerns to major issues being fought out at European level. Water charges and environmental issues cannot be understood except in a European perspective.

The rise in racism is connected to the "Fortress Europe" project. But above all, the sectarian polarisation in the Assembly elections means there is a duty for the Left to ensure a radical anti-sectarian alternative across the North.

Contact SEA:
028 71371592
■ seaderry@hotmail.com ■
www.seaderry.co.uk

Together we can organise to stop the racist thugs

WE GO to press just before the anti-racism rally scheduled for 27th Jan. in Belfast.

The rally is expected to be large, backed as it is by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, many of the large trade unions and all the political parties.

The level of formal condemnation of the racist attacks and support for the rally would make a visitor from another planet wonder how come there have been any racist attacks in the North.

As this paper has argued before, the recent

spate of vicious attacks were not random acts of violence by a few mindless thugs.

They were the orchestrated act of loyalist paramilitary groups who have a long-standing relationship with far right Nazi groups such as the BNP and Combat 18.

However, this is not to say that Northern Ireland is not fertile soil for racism.

It is and, despite what some may argue, there is as great a problem with racist attitudes in the Catholic as in the Protestant community.

Why? Poverty, that's why. Poverty prepares

the soil for the seeds of racism planted by politicians like Blunkett and Blair who rant about 'floods' of 'bogus' asylum seekers.

A Select Committee of MPs were in Belfast recently to investigate child poverty and were horrified.

Admitted

They admitted that levels of poverty are far greater than anywhere in Britain.

A mother approached an anti-racism stall in Derry and told of being driven out of Ballymacgroaty, an overwhelmingly Catholic estate, because her child is mixed race.

Ballymac, as it is known locally, has a 90% unemployment rate, many lone parents struggling on miserly benefits and has been neglected by government agencies.

Gordon was recently on a 'New Deal' course with young men from Ballymac.

He told *Socialist Worker* "I was horrified with their casual racism, especially their attitudes to asylum seekers. 'These asylum seekers coming here and taking our jobs and houses' was their general view.

"I pointed out there have never been jobs in Derry, and it's down to

government policy that there is a housing crisis.

"They had never met an asylum seeker, there are none in Ballymac. They were just accepting what David Blunkett says on the news."

Nazi groups like the BNP can use the poverty and despair of young men like these to organise in Northern Ireland. In the week before the anti-racism rally, BNP leaflets were put on cars in Coleraine.

They are afraid as yet to show their faces, we must ensure they never have the confidence to spread their filth openly here.

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM IN MUMBAI

Many battles, but one enemy



Over 100,000 anti capitalists assembled in Mumbai

Thousands of anti-capitalists, trade-unionists, socialists and other activists against the WTO/IMF policies of neo-liberalism recently gathered in Mumbai, India to discuss how best to fight privatisation and war. CHRIS HARMAN from the British SWP sends this on the spot report from the fourth World Social Forum in India.

OVER one hundred thousand people gathered in Mumbai (formerly Bombay) in India at the World Social Forum in late January.

A succession of banners with chanting crowds behind them filled every pathway in the exhibition ground which hosted the fourth World Social Forum in Mumbai.

"Stop privatisation" "No war in South Asia" "Dalit [untouchable] rights" "Debt domination is human rights violation" "Power to the people" "Another world is possible" "Free Palestine" "A socialist world is possible".

Several thousand trade unionists from Mumbai marched through the forum.

Among them were women and men construction workers, seafarers, metal workers, bank and insurance workers.

All displayed the pride of organised workers in India's most important industrial and financial centre.

It was often the smaller meetings which were the most interesting.

In one tent two or three hundred people would be talking about how to defend the 90 percent of India's working class without employment rights, and in the next tent there was discussion about how globalisation is increasing domestic violence over dowry payments.

Across the way there was a packed meeting for peace between India and Pakistan, around the

corner a highly successful Globalise Resistance meeting of another two to three hundred on globalisation and war.

Probably the biggest forum to take place was that on "globalisation, economy and social security". Five or six thousand people listened for two and half hours to a virtually unprecedented platform.

Anti-Capitalist

JOSEPH Stiglitz, the Nobel prize winning economist sacked as head of the World Bank for criticising International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies, spoke alongside anti-capitalist economists like Samir Amin from

Egypt and Prabhat Patnaik from India, and activists like Trevor Ngwane from South Africa and Indonesian trade unionist Dita Sari.

All provided devastating critiques of the policies imposed by the IMF and accepted by governments around the world.

There were necessarily disagreements about the alternative.

Stiglitz argued for liberalisation and markets, but with state controls to ensure that they were accompanied by improved living standards for the poorest. Patnaik argued that capitalism, not just neo-liberalism, was at fault, but saw the way to fight it as powerful state intervention.

Samir Amin made the link between the spread of neo-liberalism, the needs of capitalism in a period of recurrent crises and the military onslaught of the US. He called for a new alliance of the governments of "the South" to fight this.

Dita Sari and Trevor Ngwane both insisted it was not just a fight of people in the poorer parts of the

world.

"The problem is capitalism, and the enemy are the capitalists, those who run industry and finance and those who run capitalist governments."

Trevor said. "We need a movement against it that is international, just like the movement against Bush's war. We need radical, direct action. And the key force is that which creates the profits of capitalism, the working class."

Dita spelled out how "capitalist globalisation" was creating poverty across wide areas of the Third World, and in the wake of poverty came war and horrible communal, ethnic and religious strife.

Fighting this means "not just economic policies but addressing the question of a political alternative. And we have to win solidarity from the working class in the West."

"The mobilisations on the streets of London, Washington, Rome, Tokyo are the sort of pressure we need. This can bring us much closer to socialism as another world is possible."

India: Oppression and sparks of Resistance

SOME 1,400 million people, close to a quarter of humanity, live in the Indian subcontinent.

Most live on the breadline or below it. Many live in unrelenting, dire poverty, their emaciated bodies visible on virtually any city or village street.

They exist against a backdrop of hoardings advertising the latest consumer goods and luxury products available from local big businesses or multinationals

Two years ago the two nuclear powers that dominate this region, India and Pakistan, came close to war with each other. Today, Pakistan's military dictator Musharraf and India's Hindu chauvinist prime minister Vajpayee are holding amicable talks with each other.

They are both loving up to George Bush and his drive for world dominance. Both Musharraf and Vajpayee are committed to the full range of neo-liberal policies—dismantling legal protection for workers, unleashing capitalist interests in the countryside, privatising state-owned industries and social provisions.

They both depend for their power on political forces that set workers, peasants and the urban poor of one religion, nationality or ethnic origin against those of another.

Fundamentalist

Vajpayee leads India's BJP party and is a member of the Hindu fundamentalist paramilitary organisation the RSS. Eleven years ago they physically tore down the Babri Masjid mosque in the north Indian city of Ayodhya.

Shiv Sena, the BJP's political ally in Mumbai, took part in riots that followed. Two years ago the BJP government in the state of Gujarat, just north of Mumbai, sat back while Hindu chauvinists murdered every Muslim in sight.

Musharraf came to power in a military coup four years ago.

The Pakistan military intelligence, the ISI, played a central role in the military machine he controlled. Then it still provided massive backing for the Taliban forces it had built up in Afghanistan with US support. And it backed heavily armed "Jihadist" groups who attacked religious minorities in Pakistan.

Since 11 September 2001

Musharraf has been forced to abandon support for the Taliban. But a section of the Pakistan military intelligence continues to use the Jihadists to whip up chauvinism and to attack its opponents.

Musharraf is doing deals with the "mainstream" fundamentalist coalition, the MMA, to stabilise his power. The MMA preaches the same conservative message of intolerance and communal hatred as the Jihadists and the BJP, its mirror image in India. The only difference is that the MMA relies on its contacts within the military and the state rather than shootings and bombings.

Unfortunately many on the Left are deeply pessimistic

Many left-leaning liberals in Pakistan put their faith in Musharraf, claiming only he can stop the fundamentalists.

In India the main left party, the Communist Party (Marxist), is trying to get an electoral coalition against "communalism" with the country's once-dominant Congress Party. But the Congress Party is just as committed as the existing government to neo-liberalism.

Resistance

But there are sparks of resistance. In Pakistan, dock workers protested against job losses in preparation for privatisation. But when the dockers demonstrated with slogans against the ruling class, the union leaders stopped them.

The government used the "emergency" created by the clashes with India as an excuse to place rail workers under military control and ban their union, the oldest in the subcontinent. And, like the dockers, the workforce on the railways has been slashed. Some 38,000 out of 135,000 have lost their jobs.

The textile workers are the biggest section of Pakistan's workforce. Most have no work contracts and are subject to instant dismissal. Yet short stoppages do take place, and they do force some concessions.

Among university teachers attempts to impose short term contracts led to a completely unexpected outbreak of militancy some 15 months ago. There were demonstrations, sit-ins and clashes with the troops who occupied the campus.

The peasants of Okara, south of Lahore are refusing to pay taxes after the government swindled them out of land they were promised. At every harvest the military tries to seize the crops and huge demonstrations of peasants turn out to stop them. In the protests last year the army shot eight dead and wounded many others.

As one observer remarked, "At a 400-strong village meeting I attended the men sat at the front while the veiled women sat at the side. But in the protests it was the women who went to the front, hitting the soldiers with their sticks."

"Women and men together chanted "zindabad" (long live) when a local Punjabi poet told them, "When the revolution comes, their cars and their wealth will not save the ruling class."

VOICES FROM THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

"FOR MORE than 50 years we Indians and Pakistanis have been taught to hate each other.

Ordinary people in Pakistan do not regard Indians as their enemies. It is our rulers that cultivate this hate and fear. The World Social Forum has helped bring us together. The Pakistani delegation has been welcomed by Indian delegates."

□ Iqbal Uddin, Pakistan

"IN SOUTH Asia communalism presents the greatest danger. In 2002 thousands of Muslims were murdered by Hindu extremists and that fact should shame all Indians.

But the media here are adding fuel to the fire. They are using divide and rule tactics against us. I hope that the WSF can generate a new opposition to communal-

ism and fundamentalism."

□ Sanjeevani Kher, journalist, Mumbai, India

"CASTE IS being used as a weapon by this BJP government. They say we are untouchable so we cannot expect good jobs.

They want to keep us out of higher education, sometimes they even stop us at primary school. Here at the WSF we have found others who will fight alongside us. I have met some people in the trade unions here who will take up our cause."

□ Manesh Sarvagod, President of Ambedkar Student Association, India

"PALESTINE IS today the symbol of the anti-war and anti-globalisation movements because it is a symbol of resistance as well as a symbol of oppression.

People are raising the Palestinian flag in the same way an older generation raised the Vietnamese flag."

□ Michael Warshawsky, Israeli activist

"I WAS with the one million who marched in London on 15 February last year.

Many in the anti-war movement are not only opposed to war but also against neo-liberalism and in favour of economic justice. Those in Europe threatened with the loss of their job, or their pension, or their health service must be told that the poor of the Third World are not their enemies.

It is the bosses of the multinationals that should be blamed. The poor of the world should come together. There is another power on the planet and it is here in Mumbai."

□ Jeremy Corbyn, Labour MP, Britain

Why we must oppose the ban on the hijab



Irish Times columnist Fintan O'Toole has attacked the Irish Anti-War Movement for supporting a Muslim protest against banning the veil.

Here two anti-war activists reply.

■ *Left: Fintan O'Toole. Right January 17 protest at French Embassy in Dublin*

PHOTO: PAULA GERAGHTY



by KIERAN ALLEN

'Something aggressive'. This is how the French President Jacques Chirac described Muslim women wearing a veil, or hijab. From September 2004, girls wearing the veil are to be banned from French schools.

There are about five million Muslims in France, most of them coming originally from North Africa.

This large minority already faces enormous discrimination. There are no Muslim members of the French parliament—and very few top officials are Muslim.

Even before the ban, there are already some 400 cases of girls being expelled from schools. Many Muslim women have been denied ID cards, driving licences and even passports because they wore the veil.

On Saturday, January 17, there was an international day of protest against the banning of the veil. 10,000 marched in France, 1,000 protested in London and 200 turned up to the French Embassy in Dublin.

The protest in Dublin was supported by the Irish Anti-War Movement.

But the movement was attacked by one of the Ireland's best known liberals Fintan O'Toole. O'Toole argued that liberals should not accept the argument about diversity if it led to inequality. He compared the protesters to members of the Portmarnock golf club who exclude women in the name of 'diversity'.

The comparison was nonsense. There is nothing vaguely progressive about a right wing French politician targeting an oppressed minority.

O'Toole's support for the ban arose from a mistaken notion that Chirac is defending the secular tradition of France against 'backward' religious ideas.

But this is a mistaken.

Firstly, the issue is not whether public schools should display religious symbols—but rather the right of individuals to wear what they want in secular schools.

Socialists are for secular education. We are opposed to church control of any schools and do not see why any particular religious view should be endowed with financial support from the state.

But this does not mean that pupils should not be allowed to wear any dress they wish. Giving the French state the right to ban the veil is also giving them the right to exclude pupils who wear Che Guevara T-shirts. Rasta hairstyles often express a religious outlook on life—are they also to be banned?

Those who support the ban are either condemning children to a life of illiteracy—or forcing them back into privately run religious schools.

Secondly, official secularism in France is deeply inconsistent. Chirac is not threatening to exclude any pupil who says a prayer or blesses themselves before eating a meal.

Inconsistent

When Alsace became part of France

in 1918, a religious agreement was concluded which means that primary schools in Alsace are religious schools. Chirac has not changed this situation.

The target is mainly Muslim and the context is the racist spin off from the 'war against terrorism'.

The hypocrisy is evident in the particular wording of Chirac's proposal. The ban will only apply to 'ostentatious'

religious symbols. In other words, crucifixes which happen to be small can still be allowed.

This same hypocrisy is evident in the proposals to 'integrate' Muslims into French society. Sarkozy, the Prime Minister, has advocated a particular 'French Islam' and only wants French trained imams practicing in France. He has even offered to pay for a theology school for them!

Nuria Mustafa, anti-war activist:

'Secularism is not about eradicating all differences. At least in the original French idea of the Republic it was not.

'I decided to wear the hijab three years ago. It was a personal and radi-

cal decision—not political or about identity. I found I could use it as a tool for my beliefs.

'Some may find that ironic. And I also understand that the hijab can be used to oppress women. But so can many different tools

from many other religion.

'I am not a conservative in any sense. I think that every woman has a right to wear the veil—or not wear the veil as she chooses. Millions of Muslim women do not wear the veil. It is their

choice.

'Fintan O'Toole is exactly personifying—and it is sad—because he is of the left—a self regarding arrogant imperialist attitude.

'Why does he not allow Muslim women the right to choose?'

Is Islam a reactionary religion?

Support for O'Toole's position comes from those who claim that Islam is a reactionary religion. This arises through a not too subtle association of the word 'Islam' and 'fundamentalist'.

It is assumed that the vast majority of Muslims are 'fundamentalist' and this in turn means 'backward' and 'reactionary'.

The vast majority of Muslims do not hold 'fundamentalist' views. Like most religious believers, they hold a variety of political views.

The association, however, is a product of the demonisation of Islam that has arisen with Bush's war on terrorism.

In order to justify a new era of military spending Bush has drawn on a tradition that dates back as far as the Crusades to create an atmosphere of fear against Islam—in much the same way that fears about 'communism' were whipped up during the Cold War and then applied to anyone with left wing ideas.

The reality is that Islam is neither more or less progressive than any other religion.

Marx described religion as 'the sigh of the oppressed, the heart of the heartless world the opium of the peo-

ple'. All the world's great religions originated from prophetic movements against the bitterness and anguish of people's lives and offered paths for salvation. But to survive they turned into institutions that depended on the support of the rich as well as the poor.

Thus Christianity developed among poor Jews—but spread throughout the Roman Empire when it won the protection of the emperor Constantine.

Peace and Order

Similarly Islam arose in 7th century Arabia when the prophet Mohammed fled Mecca to set up a place of peace and order in Medina. But soon after his death, his followers re-integrated themselves with the elders of Mecca and built an army that conquered much of the Middle East.

The meaning of any religion does not reside primarily in a set of religious texts—but rather in the social conditions under which its adherents practice that religion.

Catholicism in Ireland with its dark emphasis on repressing sexuality was a very different religion to the Catholicism of Latin America. However, Irish Catholicism was a product of

a land system of small farmers, who were obsessed with preventing illegitimate offspring making claims on the land.

Similarly, the meaning and practice of Islam can also vary. The Koran itself does not mention the veil, but simply urges women to protect their modesty. However, modesty meant the veil in the societies which Islam conquered. (Up to twenty years ago, Irish Catholicism insisted that women wear a scarf going to mass!) The veil was often incorporated into Islam—but with often very different meanings for those who wore it.

In rural Afghanistan, the bitterness and poverty of rural life combined with a particular teaching of Whabbism produced the Taliban movement which advocate the burkha.

But the outlook of young Islamic women in the suburbs of Paris who wear a veil, take contraception and listen to pulsating music is quite different.

Anyone who thinks Islam is a particularly reactionary religion should ask why Catholicism brought the Inquisition in Spain to crush Muslim and Jews—while the Ottoman empire displayed a relative tolerance towards Christians and Jews.

A woman's right to choose

FINTAN O'Toole's liberalism has always had one blind spot. He believes that a 'civilised' state can impose a liberal tolerance on 'backward' people

So he supported the NATO bombing campaign against Serbia believing that US warplanes could bring some civility to relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

In similar way he believes that the French state—racist and all as it is—is preferable to Islamic 'backwardness'.

But this is a fundamental misunderstanding on how people come to liberation. It assumes they are often pawns with little capacity for self-liberation.

Islamic women in France and elsewhere wear a veil for all sorts of reasons. Some because they accept a 'traditional' role that have been laid down for them. Some because they are not too enamoured by constant imagery that women's bodies are to be objectified and commodified. And, others as an act of defiance against a racist society that regards Islam as a threat.

In the fight for women's rights in Ireland, countless marches have shouted 'Not the Church, not the State—women must decide their fate'. It is a slogan that applies even more aptly to the present debate.

comment

100 years of the Abbey From riots to privatisation

by CONOR KOSTICK

A HUNDRED years ago the Irish National Theatre Society took over Dublin's old city morgue on Abbey Street and provided a home for what has become the flagship institution for Irish Theatre.

What exactly it means to have a 'national theatre' is as impossible to define as national identity itself.

Certainly the founders of the Abbey Theatre, W. B. Yeats, Lady Gregory and their milieu could not be said to be typical representatives of their country.

Although the Theatre is associated with Ireland's struggle for independence and a desire to create a specifically Irish cultural tradition, early productions did not find favour with the kind of dour conservative nationalism of Arthur Griffith who wrote that J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* (1907) was "a vile and inhuman story told in the foulest language we have ever listened to from a public platform." Irish men and women swearing was not something that should be displayed in a national theatre.

Riots

Audiences also objected to the amoral enthusiasm of the community for a murderer, and the portrayal of deference towards a priest as being abject and pitiful. The final straw was a line about "a drift of females standing in their shifts". The audience rioted at this point, and rowdy audiences subsequently drowned performances out.

J.M. Synge identified the source of these attacks in a letter to a friend "... the scurrility and ignorance and treachery of some of the attacks upon me have rather disgusted me with the middle-class Irish Catholic. As you know I have the wildest admiration for the Irish Peasants, and for Irish men of known or unknown genius ... but between the two there's an ungodly ruck of fat-faced, sweaty-headed swine."

In its one hundred years, the Abbey has probably no finer period than in refusing to conform to the narrow representation of the Irish character desired by the more conservative nationalist and in continuing to champion *The Playboy of the Western World* against the prevailing public opinion.

In recognition of this, one of the key activities of the current centenary year program is a summer tour of the play around the country.

In its hundred years of existence the Abbey has had to strike a balance between championing new work and commercial interest, between performing new and established works. At various times in its history it can be accused of being conservative and insular, one particularly inexcusable failing being a lack of productions written or directed by women.

But a hundred years from its foundation the Abbey faces a difficulty. The basic physical structure of the current buildings is in crisis. Apart from the fact that the staging area is antiquated, that disability access is restricted (and non-existent for the Peacock) the building itself is no longer safe. An Office of Public Works report in 2002 concluded that the building was "operating at the limits of safety." And a note to the Minister for Arts in October 2002 stated that "failure to take action will lead to the closure of the theatre in the short to medium term on health and safety grounds."

Creeping Thatcherism

Back in February 2002 the Cabinet amended their plan for the redevelopment of the Theatre by saying that it should take place as a Public-Private Partnership.

As readers of *Socialist Worker* know, PPP is the buzzword in government for a kind of creeping Thatcherism. In all sorts of spheres of activity, from the large scale organisation of education to the local provision of a swimming pool, PPP has meant cuts in services and an increase in costs to the public. It was inevitable that the pro-market approach of the government would come to bear on arts organisations, and with very predictable consequences.

Artistic decisions are going to be made by accountants and risk will be minimised in favour of plays that are guaranteed to maximise paying audiences. Since there is little tangible gain for private investors to make in the arts, the overall result of a PPP approach in this area will be less artistic activity in Ireland.

For the Abbey to flourish for another hundred years a different approach is needed, one that does not simply reduce cultural activity to a financial balance sheet.

movie

A unsentimental portrayal of war

by DAVE
LORDAN

COLD Mountain features a suite of A-list celebrities including Irish actors

Brendan Gleeson and Killian Murphy and was shot in the spectacularly beautiful surroundings of the Carpathian mountains.

It has received 13 Oscar nominations.

The film tells the not too original tale of the idealised love of two white American heterosexuals. Their story is set against the catastrophic background of the American civil war.

Generally *Cold Mountain* is a refreshingly unsentimental portrayal of the horrific social and economic consequences of warfare and this is what makes the movie watchable. Indeed it could be described as an anti-war film.

The first scene depicts an entire front line of Confederate troops being blown sky high by tonnes of explosive secretly mined beneath their trenches.

The ensuing 'chicken shoot' is one of the most convincingly brutal portrayals of close combat I have ever seen.



■ Convincing portrayal of American Civil War

The American civil war was the first modern war. Trains provided armies with unprecedented mobility, trenches bogged them down like never before. High technology and long range weaponry sent casualty lists zooming into the millions.

Cold Mountain, a vibrant and growing community in South Carolina, is turned into a ghost town by this total war. More and

more of its young men die at the front and the condition of its remaining inhabitants edges closer to ruin every day.

Radical

On a rundown farmhouse on the outskirts of the town Ada (Nicole Kidman) awaits the return of her true love Inman (Jude Law) from the front.

The film is the story of Ada's long vigil and of Inman's hazard-filled

journey back to her after he leaves the front in the dying days of the war, thereby placing himself under sentence of death as a deserter.

The antagonists of both are the Home Guard, the Black and Tan like volunteers who are empowered under martial law to terrorise civilians and massacre deserters and escaping slaves.

As Inman travels away from the destruc-

tive carnage of battle and towards the productive and orderly embrace of his lover he encounters a variety of amusing character types, gothic, exotic, and erotic, who either hinder or help him along.

There are a few slushy moments and you should ignore the over-romantic epilogue but all in all I found *Cold Mountain* a touching and entertaining movie and even a tad informative.

book

A critical look at the Celtic Tiger

by DAVID
LYNCH

IF journalism is meant to be the first draft of history then throughout the recent Celtic Tiger boom journalists have failed to come close to getting a handle on the great changes that occurred in Ireland.

Normally getting their 'analysis' straight from IBEC sponsored think-tanks, and Charlie McCreevy's press releases the Irish media have in the main concluded that the boom in the economy was down to partnership deals between the

unions and bosses and funding from the European Union.

This utterly ignores the fact that there were partnership deals and EU membership in the dark old days of the 1980s when the Celtic Tiger was a far away dream.

On a cultural level the analysis has been, if anything, even more shallow. The image of Dublin as a coffee drinking 'modern' European city has been celebrated with little interest paid to those who have been left behind by the 'roaring economy'.

Radical

It seems strange that the first decent draft of the history of the Celtic Tiger comes from the world of academia and cultural theory. But this is the case with the book *The End of Irish history?*

Critical reflections on the Celtic Tiger.

Edited by NUI Maynooth academics Colin Coulter and Steve Coleman, this book brings together a range of (mostly) radical interpretations of elements of the Celtic Tiger.

The standpoint of the book is that a critical approach to the course of development being followed in Ireland is urgently required and the book sets out to provide that approach.

A series of essays seek to undermine some of the easy assumptions made by many commentators about all the supposedly "positive" characteristics of modern Ireland.

The first essay *The End of Irish History?* An Introduction to the Book by Colin Coulter sets the tone as a witty, intelligent deconstruction of what it

means to be 'Irish' now. Using some of the best leftist critical theory (Fredric Jameson and others) and applying it to Irish society Coulter sets the scene for what turns out to be a very thoughtful questioning book.

Challenge

The strength of the book is that it does not only stay in the realm of the "cultural", there are a number of solid essays dealing with practical changes in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger. Neither Boston Nor Berlin: Class Polarisation and Neo-Liberalism in the Irish Republic by Kieran Allen Welcome to the Celtic Tiger: Racism, Immigration and the State by Steve Loyal and Irish Women and the Celtic Tiger by Sinead Kennedy all stand out.

Overall the book is a

brilliant challenge to the belief held by many liberals and some on the left that everything in modern Ireland is "good" and that this is contrasted with everything as "bad" in old Ireland. The "modernisation" of Ireland is uncritically celebrated by many critics and commentators.

However this book challenges this line of thinking and provides an intelligent critical balance sheet on the phenomenal changes in Ireland over the last decade. Highly recommended.

■ *The End of Irish History? Critical reflections on the Celtic Tiger* (Manchester University Press) Edited by Colin Coulter and Steve Coleman.

'Another Europe is Possible Alliance' publicly launched

THE 'Another Europe is Possible' Alliance had its public launch meeting on Thursday 22 January in Liberty Hall, entitled 'Peace not War and People not Profit—Another Europe is Possible.'

Speakers included Jack O Connor (President SIPTU), Clare Daly (Bin Tax Campaign), Salome Mbugua (African Women's Network), Tom Ryan (President DCTU), Richard Boyd Barrett (Chair, IAWM)

The Alliance—condemns the Irish Government's priorities for the EU Presidency: competitiveness, continued support for the so-called 'war on terror', making the asylum system more restrictive, and unconditionally promoting the draft EU Constitution.

The 'Another Europe is Possible' Alliance has other priorities: opposing neo-liberalism and privatisation, ending Irish support for war and occupations, and opposing the deportation of asylum seekers.

The Alliance is also critical of the draft EU Constitution—which it says promotes the interests of big business and the militarisation of the EU rather than the needs of ordinary people.

The Alliance will be organising protests and demonstrations on these issues during the Irish Presidency.

Commenting on inequalities in health care, Jo Murphy-Lawless said:

"The growing pressure on governments to make health care systems a source of profitability is destroying a core human right—the right to build good health with preventative health measures, and to access excellent health care when illness strikes.

"We urgently need to re-think health care strategies across Europe, and to resist the formidable pressure from the private health-care lobby to go further down the road of privatisation.

"As health spending has

soared, private medicine has flourished, but so have health inequalities. We should not commodify health spending—it is a social good which must be fully supported and evenly distributed across our societies."

Condemning the hostile attitude of the EU towards African immigrants, Festus Ikeotuonye said:

"African countries today are entirely the product of the 'scramble and partition' colonial history of a number

of European states.

And many of those who have been running African countries were trained by and in the West.

The conditions prompting the movements described as 'migration' are a direct

result of the policies and ideologies of these same European countries."

The Alliance will be holding a number of protests and meetings during the period of Ireland's EU Presidency

Galway Protest against Neo-Liberal Europe

THE EU employment and social policy ministers who met in Galway recently were greeted by a series of protests, writes Orla Ni Chomhraí.

The largest of these was the 'Another Europe is Possible' demonstration which said no to war, racism and privatisation.

This lively protest was attended by over 400 people, including those from human rights, anti-war and environmental groups, left-wing political parties and trade unions, who want a more just and peaceful Europe.

The protest, and the work which was done to build for it, brought some critical issues to the attention of people both locally and nationally.



■ Convincing portrayal of American Civil War

It also showed that people are concerned enough to get out on the streets and express their opinion

on the state of the country and the direction the EU is taking. This is a great start to the next few months of

activities around the EU presidency, which will see both local and national protests.

LIBERTIES TENANTS FIRST:

Fight Against Privatisation of Estates

CLOSE to fifty people attended a lively meeting in the Liberties area last Wednesday night of Tenants First, writes Rory Hearne.

Tenants First is a new group that aims to unite local authority residents from a number of different estates across Dublin City Centre.

They are campaigning against the plans of Dublin City Council (DCC) to regenerate the estates through Public Private Partnerships.

After years of allowing local authority estates to

become run down DCC is now proposing to regenerate the estates by selling off this land to private developers who will build up private accommodation along with a certain amount of 'affordable housing'.

This plan is in line with the proposals from Brendan Kenny the Assistant City Manager to hand over the responsibility of social housing provision and maintenance to Housing Associations and private developers.

Residents spoke angrily against the plans and said that this is all about private developers profiting from public land.

One speaker said "it is

disgraceful that DCC is reducing the amount of social housing available when the need for it has never been greater".

It was also pointed out that these plans to sell off public housing and land is part of the wider agenda of privatisation that this government is putting in place.

The meeting called for the campaign to force DCC to listen to the views of residents, to call for a march to the Dail, to link up with more estates and to link it up with wider campaigns such as the Another Europe is Possible Alliance.

It is clear that DCC is determined to push through

with the plans to sell off the housing and land. Across the world public services are being handed over to private profiteers.

In order for the campaign to win it should follow the example of the Birmingham Housing Action Campaign who through mobilisations defending the right to public housing stopped the privatisation of their estates.

In order to stop the drive to privatisation the battle over public housing should link up with other anti-privatisation struggles like CIE and Aer Rianta workers and link with mass protests against the government like May 1st.

SWP candidates for June elections

LOCAL elections will be held in the South in June.

But all those who oppose the war and occupation of Iraq, are completely unrepresented by the official politics of the establishment parties.

Movements of people opposing bin charges, trade unionists fighting privatisation in CIE and Aer Rianta, students organising boycotts of Coca Cola and those protesting against capitalist globalisation are similarly left out.

These movements of local activists need to find from their number those who will express their aspirations in the political arena and contest elections to pose a challenge to the establishment stranglehold.

Socialists and anti capitalists need to cooperate in elections and campaigns to further this process.

As part of this strategy, the SWP will be putting forward a number of candidates in the local elections. With a record of activity in anti-war, bin tax and anti capitalist movements they will be seeking to give a voice to those fighting for global justice and against war and profit.

Brid Smith, Ballyfermot

Brid is spokesperson for the Dublin Campaign Against Bin Tax and convenor of the Ballyfermot branch of that campaign. She was imprisoned late last year along with 15 others for fighting the bin tax. She is a carer from the area.

Richard Boyd Barrett, Dun Laoghaire

Richard is chairperson of the Dun Laoghaire Campaign against the Bin Tax and convenor of the local Save Our Seaford campaign. As Chair of the Irish Anti War Movement he played a leading role in organising anti war protests including last February's 150,000 strong

march in Dublin.

Dick Roche, Waterford

Dick is a long-standing union activist and local campaigner. A TEEU shop steward in the city and President of the Waterford Council of Trade Unions, Dick also played a leading role in the campaign for a Radiotherapy Union in Waterford Regional Hospital.

Catherine Kennedy, Bray West

Catherine is a mother of four and has been crucially involved in the campaign for a full-time fire service in the town. She is well known in the area as a long standing community activist.

Christie Moore, Ballybrack

Christie is co-ordinator of the Ballybrack/Loughlinstown Campaign Against the Bin Tax. He is also heavily involved in efforts to sustain and develop the Ballybrack Football Club.

Shay Ryan, Dublin South East Inner City

Shay is a Disability Care Worker in the area and co-ordinator of the Ringsend-Pearse St Campaign Against the Bin Tax.

Ritchie Browne, Coolock

Ritchie works in Dublin airport as a painter and is a shop steward at Team-FLS. He is co-ordinator for the Coolock-Artane anti bin tax campaign

Gino Kenny, Clondalkin

Gino is a care worker and SIPTU shop steward and union activist. He is co-ordinator for the North Clondalkin Campaign against the Bin Tax

Kieran McNulty, Tralee

Kieran has played a central role in building up the anti war movement in Tralee and is heavily involved in the local anti racist campaign.

John Carthy, Gorey

John is secretary of Gorey Socialist Workers Party and contesting the elections in the town.

Terry Connolly, Rathmines

Terry is a library assistant and an IMPACT member.

Kevin Wingfield, Ballymun

Kevin is a local activist who played a prominent role in Ballymun Against the War and is co-ordinator of Ballymun Campaign Against the Bin Tax.

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DUBLIN BUS:

Drivers take action against sell-off

BRENNAN'S plans to break up CIE and privatise routes received a set back in January.

SIPTU bus branch organised a meeting in working hours for drivers. More than 500 drivers from both SIPTU and the NBRU attended the meeting. Many took unofficial action by stopping work and taking their buses out of service to attend.

The mood at the meeting was very militant.

Drivers voted unanimously to demand their union leaders walk out of talks and call strike action unless Transport Minister Seamus Brennan withdraws his plan to contract out 25 percent of Dublin services to private operators.

One busworker told Socialist Worker, "We were very angry. Some of us said we should organise blockades and adopt French style tactics to stop the contracting out."

Unfortunately in some garages the local reps of the NBRU told their members to work as usual, and while this

had an effect on the impact of the action, the support for the action was strong.

It is important that the Dublin Bus unions stick with the agreed policy of rejection of contracting out and call further industrial action, for which they have an over-

whelming mandate from their members, if Brennan's privatisation plans are not abandoned.

■ The calling off of action at Aer Rianta by SIPTU was tragic. The workers there face the break up of the company which implies privati-

sation and the trashing of union conditions and job security.

Assurances

Jack O'Connor the leader of SIPTU publicly stated that the dispute there was simply about assurances

on jobs and conditions.

Of course the real issues is the break-up of Aer Rianta in preparation for a sell-off

Industrial action targeted at EU ministers which was enthusiastically backed by the workforce was shelved on vague promises on jobs

and the drawing up of a business plan.

Many Aer Rianta workers clearly understand that no promises given by a Transport Minister on the eve of the break up of Aer Rianta are worth the paper they are written on.

Dun Laoghaire seafront fight

THE Save Our Seafront group condemned the recent announcement of the Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company to shortlist four proposals to redevelop the town's harbour.

The proposals involve building luxury apartments and exclusive hotels for the rich in what is currently a public amenity.

This involves the

effective privatisation of a significant part of Dun Laoghaire harbour which is currently owned by the public.

Richard Boyd Barrett, co-ordinator of the Save Our Seafront group and SWP candidate in the local election for the area, told *Socialist Worker*, "We condemn this completely undemocratic plan to ram through privatisation of the Dun Laoghaire harbour."

Although the short list was decided some time

ago, the commercial aspects of the proposals have been kept secret until now.

The local council has announced that the shortlisted proposals will be put on public view for one week at the beginning of February and the it will finalise plans by March.

Richard Boyd Barrett commented, "The so-called public consultation is utterly bogus.

"This short list was drawn up and decided

before the public was consulted.

"The proposals are four versions of privatisation.

"The Harbour Company has deliberately kept the details secret

"This is a plan to swindle the people of Dun Laoghaire out of a vital public space and a piece of local heritage."

The redevelopment of the harbour is a large scale commercial development and a flagship

Public Private Partnership project.

Save Our Seafront has collected thousands of signatures opposing the proposals and are organising a public meeting shortly.

A similar campaign of opposition forced the council to shelve plans for the redevelopment of Dun Laoghaire baths involving a massive hotel or 14 storey office block a few months ago.

South East Social Forum organise Another Europe is Possible in Waterford

The South East Social Forum agreed in January to organise a series of events around the EU Environmental Ministers' meeting in the town on May 15th.

The theme of the weekend will be **People and Planet Before Profit—Another Europe is Possible.**

The environment will be the central focus, but broader, more diverse issues will also be included—issues such as privatisation, housing. The weekend will consist of an Alternative Summit, Protest and Carnival.

■ **Friday Night: Opening rally and plenary session for the weekend under the title: 'People and Planet Before Profit: Another Europe is Possible'.**

■ **Saturday Morning: Four or five plenary sessions on the model of the above titles, covering the wider issues raised by Ireland's EU Presidency.**

■ **Saturday Afternoon: Protest march from Red Square to WIT at 2.00pm. To culminate in a rally as close as possible to the WIT.**

■ **Saturday Night: Carnival with indoor and outdoor gigs throughout the city.**

■ **Sunday: Environmental counter summit with meetings and events relating to major environmental issues as per Sam's proposal above.**

Ballymun protest halts road building

RESIDENTS from Ballymun's Connolly Tower, Silloge Road and the surrounding area held a series of protests that halted the construction of a new road in the area.

The Ballymun flats complex is to be demolished and rebuilt over the next few years.

But residents across the area are angry at the removal of green spaces and lack of amenity as well as safety issues and lack of consultation.

This has sparked sporadic protests in different areas of the estate.

In the Connolly Tower area builder trucks were stopped from starting work on a controversial road.

As one resident comment-

ed, "We have safety concerns especially with the children of the area living in an environment where they are not and were not exposed to playing and living so close to a major roadway.

"To impose this now could have fatal consequences."

Residents met recently and decided to step up their campaign to demand that Ballymun Regeneration, and its parent, Dublin City Council, properly address the legitimate demands of residents in respect of safety and other concerns.

As another resident commented, "Everybody in Ballymun is unhappy about the Regeneration. It's time we all got together to link up our fight."

Bin Tax Round Up

Build the protest for February 20

The Anti Bin Tax campaign began the New Year with a call for big mobilisations of protest during Ireland's presidency of the EU.

The campaign has undertaken to build for the meeting of European Article 133 Committee in Dublin on February 20th.

At this meeting EU bureaucrats will discuss implementing the privatisation of services like refuse collection and other public services throughout the EU.

Campaign spokesperson Brid Smith told *Socialist Worker*, "This will be a great opportunity for the many thousands of people who are refusing to pay the bin tax to protest at the neo-liberal agenda that is being pushed across Europe and lies behind the imposition of bin charges.

"Another key event bin tax campaigners need to build for is May Day.

"Throughout Dublin local mass meetings are being organised to build the momentum for these

events."

■ In the South County Dublin area, council managers are trying to implement a pay by tag system.

Large meetings of residents in Tallaght and Clondalkin have been organised to fight this.

So far the council has been unable to implement the scheme because of the opposition of bin workers.

Dun Laoghaire:

DUN Laoghaire Rathdown has imposed a massive 9 percent hike in bin charges for 2004.

Originally the council had planned to raise the charge from €275 in 2003 to €320 this year but massive opposition forced them to settle on €300.

The council has failed to break the back of the non-payment campaign. At the end of last year they began non-collection of non-payers in a number of areas. But locals and campaign

activists came out and threw uncollected rubbish in the bin lorries. The council have now abandoned the non-collection tactic.

The council has now announced a pilot scheme of pay-by-weight. Although this is still completely unfair it represents something of a climbdown in the face of massive non-payment.

In September 2003 Dun Laoghaire Rathdown had €22m outstanding in unpaid bin charges.

A campaign of threaten-

ing letters only yield €3m leaving €19m outstanding representing more than 30,000 household not paying the charges in addition to up to 8,000 households on waivers.

The Dublin Campaign Against the Bin Tax is taking legal advice about a possible appeal to the Supreme Court against High Court's decision."

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Bin Tax Public Meetings

Thursday 29 January 8pm Ballybrack Workmans Club

Wednesday 4 February 8pm Kingston Hotel Dun Laoghaire, 8pm

Tralee: Drive to Increase Privatisation of Bin Service

THE twelve member Tralee UDC has met on four occasions since December in an attempt to agree its annual budget.

The last time was on January 12 in front of a packed public gallery which included members of Tralee SWP who were protesting against privatisation.

Again the council failed to agree a budget and the Minister for the Environment, Martin Cullen was contacted.

He has given the UDC until January 26 to agree a budget or he will appoint a commissioner to run it's affairs until the June local

elections.

If this happens it will be the first time a council has been suspended from meeting since the mid 1980s.

Instead of funding public services including refuse collections, the UDC has pandered to tourism business interests building up a massive debt. Already 2,000 of the councils 6,500 household bin collections are in private hands.

The UDC needs an extra €25,000 to continue it's service.

The council had a deficit of €500,000 at the end of 2003. On the Jennie Johnson alone it has agreed to pay a

debt of €235,000. Also a steam train with a one mile track has cost it €1,000,000.

None of this financial windfall has been spent in any significant way towards improving the quality of life for the people of Tralee,

Meanwhile the budget proposed a bin charge of €340 and compulsory transfer of employment of many refuse workers and possibly redundancy. SIPTU leaders are negotiating rather than threatening strike action.

The Labour town mayor, Terry O'Brien even put forward a proposal that the UDC relocate its 1,100 waver scheme customers to

the private sector for months!

With the exception of Sinn Fein all the parties were split on this issue, it was lost 6-5. The budget was then put to a vote and was lost 10-1.

In the longer term the people of Tralee should demand that central government gives local government more money, raised by increasing tax on big business, less money spent on tourism projects and more power.

They should demand a far greater say on how this money is spent. This is why campaigns against privatisation of local government services need to be intensified.

SIPTU Elections: Vote Des Derwin

VOTING has opened in SIPTU on the important position of Vice President and continues to February 20th.

There is a clear left / right decision to be made in that there are two candidates contesting the position, the radical candidate Des Derwin and the conservative Brendan Hayes.

Des Derwin has been a member of SIPTU and the ITGWU since 1973. He works as an Assembly General Operative at a plastics factory in Finglas, Dublin, where he is a shop steward.

He is currently president of the Electronics and Engineering Branch and a member of the executive committee of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

Des is standing on a platform that includes an end to social partnership; no use of benchmarking to police members; a National Minimum Wage of €8 per hour and union support for bin workers who wish to collect all rubbish bins, including the bins of those protesting against the bin tax.

By contrast Brendan Hayes is very much the establishment figure.

The Secretary for the Dublin Region, he has a long record of supporting social partnership—amongst other roles, he is a member of the government Civil Service watchdog group to monitor the public sector workers' promise to introduce modernisation and flexibility in exchange for benchmarking payments.

His record as an official is one of strict compliance with the 1990 Industrial Relations Act.

For readers of *Socialist Worker* the choice is simple.

The current SIPTU leadership has failed its members with regard to all the recent disputes and helped police agreements that have held down real wages.

At a time when crucial confrontations are taking place in the public sector, especially with regard to public transport, a victory for Des Derwin would be a tremendous boost to those wanting to take action against the government's plans.

To obtain leaflets or to invite Des to your workplace, contact him at Des Derwin 01-8375760 or 087 6229686 dderwin@gofree.indigo.ie

Socialist Worker

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RACISM**

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HIJAB BAN**

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**WORLD SOCIAL
FORUM IN
MUMBAI:**

**MANY BATTLES,
ONE ENEMY**

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Civil Servants show the way

FIGHT LOWPAY

NIPSA rallies of striking civil servants in both Belfast and Derry on Friday 23rd Jan. were so packed many strikers were left outside the halls.

In Derry, organisers expected about 100, over 500 turned up.

In Belfast, the situation was similar.

Across the North, NIPSA members have adhered strictly to "work to rule" and overtime bans.

As a result, major problems have been caused in the Social Security Agency, where members have refused to be trained on the new Welfare Reforms and there are now long waits to get benefit applications processed.

Action by civil servants in the

Department of Agriculture has seen some meat factories closed.

There are similar stories of the action biting in the Forensic Science Laboratories and many other departments.

NI Civil Service Management tried to undermine the industrial action, issuing threats to all and sundry. Most NIPSA members see these threats for what they are—empty and illegal. There has been an influx of new members into NIPSA as those not in the union realise they need to join in the fight.

There is huge public support for anyone taking action to end low pay, but many benefit claimants are being hit and it is hard for someone in that position not to blame the workers.

But when people know the background to the dispute, they see that the workers have been left no

choice.

Civil Service management awarded themselves a nine percent pay rise while offering no rise to low paid civil servants on top of their annual increment.

Many civil servants are themselves so low paid they can claim Working Family Tax Credit.

Fault

Unfortunately, the establishment parties and many local advice centres have fallen into the trap of seeing workers and management in this dispute as equally at fault, although only management is to blame for the difficulties faced by claimants.

Peter McGarrigle is Secretary of NIPSA no. 8 branch in the Child Support Agency (CSA). He told Socialist Worker "the business of calling occasional stoppages here and there is no good. We need an

all-out strike. The rallies showed that people are still solidly behind the action and management threats have backfired.

"There is a danger, though, that people will say this is going on too long. More and more people are saying we need all-out action.

"I look across the water and the PCS union there are on strike next Thursday and Friday (29th / 30th January). We in the CSA here should be striking at the same time.

"We will be careful to watch that no work from Britain will be transferred here but it's obvious NIPSA and PCS should be working together and bringing the CSA—and other departments—out across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

"It's the same fight regardless of whether it's PCS or NIPSA organising it."

Why you should support the overtime ban

This is an extract from the Rank and File Newsletter *The Uncivil Servant*.

It is addressed at those who are not observing the overtime ban which is part of the NIPSA action.

"I need to do overtime because I have bills to pay".

How often have you heard that refrain recently?

Now the people who say this are obviously not aware that there are another twenty thousand civil servants with bills to pay.

Some of those people will not be able to pay their bills at all, because they will always be badly paid.

The reason they will be badly paid is that some people are prepared to work overtime for selfish reasons, and the rest of us can suffer as a consequence.

Now I do have some sympathy for people with bills to pay, and need to do overtime, but they should stop and think for a while.

Ask yourself a simple question. Do senior civil servants need to work overtime?

For a united Left for the June 2004 European election
A CONVENTION OF THE LEFT, DERRY, FEBRUARY 14TH

Organised by the Socialist Environmental Alliance (SEA) Turn to Page Four
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