

Socialist Worker

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PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY €1.00 / £0.70p

As workers and communities face more Thatcherite attacks...



Privatisation and deregulation are the buzz words coming from our rulers. Everything from transport, health, education and housing is up for grabs.

The government is determined to press ahead with the break up of Aer Rianta and the privatising of Dublin Bus.

It has been made clear that it means to rid itself of social housing by redeveloping and selling off Council Estates with private developers.

From Ballymun to Dun Laoghaire, public amenities are to be sold off to private interests.

Rather than implement a free

National Health service, the government is planning the privatisation of VHI on which many working people who do not qualify for the Medical Card depend.

The only people to benefit from privatisation are the big business interests who stand to make big profits from hand outs from government to provide cut back services.

The Irish Council for Social Housing, recently reported that social housing output now accounts for only 8 per cent of all houses built. "This is by far the lowest share for any period in this century."

There are now a record 48,000-plus low-income households on local authority waiting lists. Of these, 85 per

cent have annual incomes of less than €15,000. More than 9,000 children are in families on the lists.

Yet the government has made it clear that local authorities will withdraw from public housing over the next few years.

Dominate

Privatisation of public transport is a disaster wherever it has been tried. In Britain public subsidies to the railways quadrupled to £3.8 billion since the privatisation. But ticket prices have soared, delays have multiplied and safety has been fatally compromised.

The number of buses on socially vital but "commercially unattractive"

routes fell by 11 per cent

On the buses jobs were slashed, and the real wages of bus-drivers declined relative to other manual workers.

Three multi-national companies now dominate the bus industry there..

Ryanair shows the true face of private enterprise – demanding payment to help disabled passengers with wheelchairs, insisting on special subsidies from airports.

The introduction of Bin Charges is part of the privatisation agenda. In areas where the bin service has been sold off, charges have soared and waivers for low income households have been withdrawn

Oxigen, which is contracted to collect green bins in Dublin, employs its

workers on longer hours, worse pay with a bullying management. After a three month strike it was finally forced to recognise the union, but immediately suspended four of the strike committee as they returned to work.

Bin tax activists, trade unionists and anti capitalists are organising to oppose this agenda. Ireland holds the EU presidency for the first six months of this year. When EU bureaucrats meet on February 20 to plan harmonisation of deregulation and private provision of public services, we need to demonstrate against them and their plans.

We need to organise in the communities, trade unions and colleges to demand Another Europe is Possible.

Corpo attacks free speech

DUBLIN City Council's disgraceful decision to outlaw posters advertising public assembly breaches the European Convention on Human Rights according to the Irish Council of Civil Liberties.

ICCL director Asling Reidy said last week that the move contravened the provisions of the act protecting both freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

This move is an obvious attack on political groups trying to advertise public meetings and protests in Dublin.

Coke blasted

Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola drinks sold in India have been found to contain toxics exceeding international safety levels by over 30 times.

The Delhi based Centre for Science and Environment tested 12 of the companies' drinks. They found dangerous levels of the pesticides Lindane and DDT.

Indian parliamentarians declared these results contradicted company claims that their drinks were safe. The chemicals found in the soft drinks cause cancer and failure of the immune system.

Coca Cola faces protests by villagers near its bottling plants in India. In Planchimada in Kerala it extracts 1.5m litres of water a day and ground water reserves have fallen causing a serious shortage.

Similar protests by locals have begun in Mehdiqanj in Uttar Pradesh and Sivganga in Tamil Nadu. Villagers complain that this results in falling yields of crops, skin disorders and other ailments.

Coca Cola has 60 percent of the Indian soft drink market and pays its workers \$1.30 a day.

In Latin American Coke workers in Colombia are paid \$1 a day and face intimidation and murder when they try to unionise.

Jobless record

WHILE there is an epidemic of overwork and increased pressure on workers, figures released last week showed that global unemployment had risen to the highest figure ever, 186 million.

Hardest hit were some 88 million young people aged 15 to 24, who face a crushing unemployment rate of 14.4 percent. The figures are a gross underestimate because they leave out hundreds of millions. There are, for example, 550 million people in the "informal economy" who don't have a real job and live on less than \$1 a day.

This wasted energy and talent could achieve marvels in this world but capitalism prevents it.

Cement Roadstone profits from Israeli land grab

THE EU, UN and even George Bush have opposed Israel's construction of the 8-foot Apartheid Wall, but Irish company Cement Roadstone are more concerned about profits than human rights.

Cement Roadstone Holdings (CRH), one of the largest companies in the State, is negotiating the purchase of another 25% in Israeli group Mashav, which takes its share in the company to 50%.

Mashav is the holding company for Neshet Cement, Israel's sole cement producer and a key component in the Wall's construction.

Collaborating

When asked about CRH's involvement, the Delegate General of Palestine in Ireland, Ali Halimeh, said, "We will take practical steps through the Arab League against any company contributing or collaborating with the Israeli's in the confiscation of our land".

The Wall, under construction in the most fertile land in Palestine, is a blatant attempt by Israel to redraw the 1967 UN border and, in so-doing to annex more territory, destroy local agriculture and livelihoods and violate human rights.

Measuring in at over twice the height of the Berlin Wall, a further 10% of the West Bank will have been confiscated by the time that Israel's "security fence" is completed.

Construction of the Apartheid Wall is illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention and also violates the Oslo Agreement on territorial integrity and the status of the West Bank.

Although the Israeli government is building the Wall, not a single part of it is being built on Israeli land.



QALQILIYA: A CITY IMPRISONED

THE city of Qalqiliya with its 45,000 residents will be completely encircled by the Wall as well as a 2 metre deep trench, barbed wire and a military road patrolled by the Israeli army.

There is now only one exit and entry point to the West Bank. Local agricul-

ture has been devastated. 45% of Qalqiliya's economy comes from agricultural produce, but the city is now severed from its farmland and wells.

All Palestinian property (including homes and farms) within 35 metres of the Wall has been or will be destroyed by Israel.

In October a number of farmers from Jayous, a nearby village, crossed through to the Israeli side of the Wall to gather their crops.

Return

When then tried to return that day, Israeli sol-

diers prevented them going home.

Some 70 farmers were cut off from their homes for 9 days.

From selling irradiated beef to Iraqis to paying poverty wages to Latin Americans, Irish companies like Cement Roadstone have proved that they are

no more interested in ethical investment and human rights than their nasty counterparts in Coca Cola, Nike or Shell.

Contact CRH plc corporate head office at 404 1000 or mail@crh.com
Information on the Wall at: www.palestinemonitor.org or www.electronicintifada.org

deviates from the Green Line by as much as 6km into the West Bank as it loops back and forth to take in illegal Israeli settlements and makes Palestinian towns into enclaves.

The strategy is to expropriate as much Palestinian land as possible while militarily caging in as many Palestinians as possible, all in an attempt to continue Israel's colonisation and

occupation of Palestinian land and water resources.

Collaborating

At the same time, Israel will effectively isolate Pales-

tinian population centres from one another. One of the cities most affected by this plan is Qalqiliya where the wall highlights Israel's increasingly visible apartheid regime.

Lord Hutton defended butchers of Bloody Sunday



A YEAR ago Tony Blair told the British public repeatedly that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq which could be fired within 45 minutes.

Today everyone knows there were no weapons of mass destruction, except for thousands of nuclear warheads in the possession of George Bush himself.

The recent Hutton Report was nothing more than a whitewash that gave Blair a clean bill off health.

Despite the talk of Lord Hutton being an 'independent', 'respected' member of the judiciary his background is actually of a ruling class conservative, who has always sided with the establishment.

After studying in Queens he entered the Northern Ireland legal establishment, a system which systematically discriminated against the Catholic minority. In one of his first major cases he helped prosecute leading civil rights activists Bernadette Devlin,

independent MP for Mid Ulster.

In 1968 she was involved in the "Battle of the Bogside" riots which broke out when police invaded Catholic areas of Derry with armoured vehicles.

Hutton helped to ensure that she was sentenced to six

months in jail. The same year he was made a QC, entering the top ranks of the British legal system. Three years later he was promoted again, becoming legal adviser to the Ministry of Home Affairs for Northern Ireland.

Massacre

He represented the Ministry of Defence at the Widgery inquiry into the Bloody Sunday massacre after British troops opened fire on civil rights marchers, killing 13 people.

The Derry city coroner accused the army of "sheer unadulterated murder." But Hutton told the coroner, "It is

Another whitewash on the way

TONY BLAIR is following one fake inquiry with another. He thought that Hutton's report would let him off the hook. But within hours of its publication the whitewash had provoked a huge backlash. Now Blair has announced another inquiry-this time into "intelligence" on Iraqi weapons.

But like Hutton's inquiry this Butler inquiry ignores the real issues.

Robin Butler or to give him his official title "The Lord Butler of Brockwell", is to head the new inquiry into intelligence on Iraqi weapons.

An inspired choice. "Half the picture can be true," he famously told the 1996 Scott inquiry into the arms to Iraq scandal under the Tory government.

Butler was Britain's top civil servant and secretary to the cabinet from 1988 to 1998. In the early 1990s he "investigated" allegations that Tory cabinet minister Jonathan Aitken had lied over secret meetings and deals with Saudi Arabian arms dealers.

Butler gave Aitken a clean bill of health. Yet Aitken was guilty and a liar, a truth that emerged when he sued the *Guardian* newspaper and lost.

Harney: Make the old pay



■ **Mary Harney**

HEARTLESS Mary Harney has suggested that families should pay the full cost of keeping their older relatives in retirement homes.

"I know this seems controversial but is it fair that people

require the State to pick up the bill," said the right wing Tanaiste. Harney wants people who have been tax payers all the lives to pay for their own care well into old age.

But the present FF/PD regime not only wants the old to pay it makes the rest of us lie on hospital beds as the hospital crisis gets worse.

Last week the overcrowding crisis in our hospitals was worsening all the time. At the end of the week there was more than 200 patients waiting for beds in the major hospitals in the east of the county.

The worst hit was St. James's Hospital and Beaumont Hospital which had 28 patients each on trolleys.

Bertie doesn't know what he is saying



■ **Bertie Ahern**

IT is now official, Ahern does not even know what he is saying. That's according to his former speech writer economist and broadcaster David McWilliams.

McWilliams in a recent *Hot Press* interview said in the early 1990s he wrote speeches for the then Minister for Finance, Ahern.

"He wouldn't have been very well versed in the intricacies of exchange rates and so forth, so we used to prime him on appropriate reactions.

"I mean I really did observe that at a certain point we could have written more or less anything and it would have been read out."

Socialist Worker

Paper of the Socialist Workers Party
Published fortnightly
For circulation or editorial contact:
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editorial

AHERN AND COWAN BACKED UP BUSH AND BLAIR... Lies, lies and more yet lies on WMDs

THE heat is on both Bush and Blair. After the pronouncements from David Kay and the Chief of the CIA nobody now believes that there were Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in Iraq.

Both Blair and Bush have launched investigations into the pre-war 'intelligence', but this is nothing more than a ploy to silence critics and to shift the blame onto the spooks in MI6 and the CIA. In reality both Bush and Blair used WMDs as an excuse to invade and occupy Iraq.

The new inquiry established by Blair is going to be nothing more than another Whitewash.

Like Hutton's inquiry this Butler inquiry ignores the real issues. Blair went to war alongside George Bush on the basis of a lie.

He insisted again and again that Iraqi weapons were the reason to go to war. There were no weapons. All the flannel about weapons and intelligence dossiers was merely the cover for a decision already taken to go to war. The spies produced what their masters wanted.

"We are witnessing the biggest establishment political cover-up of modern times," was how one anti-war activist in Britain reacted to the Hutton Report.

A year ago Tony Blair told the British public repeatedly that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq which could be fired within 45 minutes.

Today everyone knows there were no weapons of mass destruction, except for thousands of nuclear warheads in the possession of George Bush himself.

Independent surveys show that 80 percent of BBC coverage accepted that lie, even though up to half the British population opposed the war.

But Hutton has decreed that no blame at all must be attached to Tony Blair and his government. Hutton has done exactly what Blair appointed him to do.

Irish Involvement

Our own FF/PPD government backed this war and argued that Iraq had WMDs.

Bertie Ahern will be meeting George Bush in the White House

on St. Patrick's Day and he should be pressurised into raising these concerns with the President. However we all know that he won't.

Ahern, despite some recent backsliding, fully supported the war in Iraq and handed over Shannon to be used by the American war machine.

Over 125,000 US troops have passed through Shannon airport last year and currently 14,000 troops are passing through without any problems.

In March 2003 Ahern justified the decision on Shannon on the grounds that Iraq "has shown a willingness given the opportunity to strike directly against US targets." That has proved to be completely false.

In justifying the war in October 2002 the Foreign Minister Brian Cowen said "there is no guarantee that Iraq no longer possesses these dreadful and illegal weapons (WMDs). Instead, there is good reason to suspect that Iraq has continued to pursue this programme."

In September 2002 speaking at the UN Cowan said "There can be no doubt that Iraq is willing to use these weapons". These weapons that it turns out do not exist!

He added "Ireland shares in the growing international consensus that the Iraqi regime poses a potential threat to regional security."

Finally in January of 2003 Cowen showed that the Irish government had swallowed the US/UK line on WMDs completely.

"This defiance (by Saddam) is ultimately as much a threat to international security as is the possession of weapons of mass destruction. But the possession of these weapons is the immediate threat which must be dealt with."

The use of Shannon by the American military was defended on a number of grounds by this FF/PPD government but the supposed existence of WMDs in Iraq was one of them.

As that has turned out to be a lie, then the Irish government should now stop allowing the US military using Shannon to continue their bloody occupation of Iraq.



McDowell's racist Bill

Justice minister McDowell is rushing through the Dail a racist piece of legislation, The Immigration Bill 2004.

It has provoked uproar from immigrant rights groups. In a Joint Response, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, the Irish Refugee Council and the Migrant Rights Centre commented that the bill as "a draconian piece of legislation lacking in basic ... It contains discriminatory and retrospective provisions in violation of international law..."

The Bill establishes a Non-National Register,

Non-nationals will be forced to inform immigration officers within 48 hours if they change their residence to a different registration district.

It also requires households, homeowners and landlords to inform immigration officers if a non-national who has been resident in the state for more than three months, is living as part of the household.

The Bill provides no right to appeal, or any effective legal remedy.

Hoteliers and landlords may be jailed for up to a year for failing to maintain hotel registers of non-nationals.

The Bill also creates an offence for a non-national not to report to the Gardai a co-habiting non-national, but it is not an offence for a national to fail to report it.

As the Joint Response comments, "This section implies the use of 'racial profiling' - where non-nationals because of their colour, ethnicity or descent may be singled out for examination".

Immigration Officers can refuse entry to "non-nationals that suffer from a prescribed disease or disability". If the Minister decides "that it is conducive to the public good that he or she remain outside the State".

Immigration officers may, without cause to search, examine and retain any nature of printed material and section 7-(4) criminalises non-nationals for failing to comply with these sections.

Non-nationals must inform immigration officers within 48

hours if they change their residence to a different registration district..

Households, homeowners and landlords must inform immigration officers if a non-national who has been resident in the state for more than three months, is living as part of the household.

Subjected

And to be subjected to all this discrimination non-nationals will be required to pay fees for permission to enter the state, certificate of registrations and travel documents.

While Fortress Europe shuts

the door on people migrating, Ireland and the EU are busily removing all restrictions on capital flows.

Money is free to travel without let or hindrance in search of markets and labour to exploit for maximum profits. People looking for a better life are to be shut out. Nothing illustrates the anti-human priorities of capitalism better than this nasty Bill and the nasty right-wing government that is forcing it into law.

People must come before profits. We must resist McDowell's racist Bill, and fight for a world without borders.



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



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.

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
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Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Email.....

Union/College (if applicable).....



Eamonn McCann

Why Fianna Fail is not so unusual

IAN PAISLEY looked a little bewildered at Belfast's Ramada Hotel on February 6th at the launch of his party's proposals for restoring devolution.

Some observers thought he was a bit out of it, on account of decrepit old age. But more likely he was perplexed by the unusual experience of one of his policy initiatives failing to draw hostile fire from any mainstream media or political direction.

"A blueprint worthy of study," reckoned the *Irish News*.

"A thoughtful and constructive document," declared the *Belfast Newsletter*.

"Some very interesting ideas...I think they are worth discussing," mused Northern Secretary Paul Murphy.

None of the other main parties rushed to endorse the proposals. But none dismissed the document out of hand either. All agreed to discuss it.

Among the wider public, there wasn't exactly a fever of excitement. Radio journalists dispatched to record reaction on the streets had difficulty finding passers-by who knew what the proposals were, and even greater difficulty coaxing comment out of them.

For the record, the DUP is offering three possible new arrangements at Stormont—voluntary coalition, mandatory coalition and corporate Assembly. Anyone desperate for the detail can look up the DUP website. Essentially, all are ways of ensuring, (a) that there can be no Executive without the DUP and, (b) that the DUP cannot be forced to sit on an Executive with Sinn Fein if the IRA hasn't disbanded.

The DUP says the proposals are its opening shot in the renegotiation of the Agreement. The other parties say there'll be no renegotiation but that they'll discuss the proposals in the context of a "review" of the Agreement. Talks are already under way about how to organise the renegotiation/review. But nobody expects progress until June at least, because none of the parties wants to go into the European election having conceded ground to anybody else.

Background

Against this background, it's small wonder hardly anybody outside the membership of the mainstream parties can muster interest.

The sense of futility is increased by a widespread feeling that sooner or later, when it suits them, all four main parties are certain to do the business and resume office. After all, Sinn Fein has accepted that partition will remain until such times as the majority in the North says otherwise—which has been the Unionist position since 1921. At the other end of the sectarian spectrum, the DUP has accepted that Nationalist assent is necessary for any system to work. So, there's a solid basis for a deal already there.

It might be thought, then, that there'd be signs of rising frustration and increasing pressure on the parties to get on with it. But that's hardly the case either. Which suggests that few people expect that a functioning Assembly and Executive would have a dramatic effect on the day-to-day problems which they face.

Functioning

If there was palpable feeling that a functioning administration would have a positive impact on wages, living standards, the state of the health service, the funding of higher education, whatever, then we'd expect loud insistent calls on the parties to get on with it. Unions, community and student groups, campaigns of one sort and another would be making their voices heard. But there's little sign of this happening.

Certainly, a majority of people on all sides in the North would prefer a devolved administration to the present set-up. The line-up of third-rate Blairites at the NIO has something to do with this. And, as one NIPSA striker remarked at a Guildhall Square rally in Derry, "When it's the local lot, you at least think you have a chance of getting your hands on their throats."

But it's a broad preference, not a sharp, desperate desire, for devolution. Because it's widely sensed that the action that's needed will come elsewhere.

Whatever happens in the renegotiation-review over the coming weeks, the real problems will continue to seethe. Assembly or no Assembly, the struggle goes on.

HOUSING CRISIS IN THE NORTH

Fighting for the right to a home

THE GROWING housing crisis in the North has seen a re-emergence of the kind of housing rights' agitation last seen in the late 1960s and early '70s.

It's obvious why this is the case—there are fewer and fewer houses being built by the social housing sector and a huge number of former social housing has been sold off, so reducing the stock even further.

This was Margaret Thatcher's great idea: let everyone buy their own house. Sounds great but the reality has now become clear: the houses were sold for less than what it would cost to build a new house and the money paid for them goes straight to the Treasury, not into building new houses.

The housing issue is further complicated by New Labour's insistence that most new social housing be built by Housing Associations. This has seen the figures for newly built social housing dropping drastically—from 2,051 houses in 1998/99 to just 669 in 2002/3.

The result is a homelessness crisis not seen for over 30 years. The Simon Community says there are now 23,000 homeless people in the North, the most ever. Nearly half of the homeless are deemed 'single' people by the Housing Executive.

The problem is that more and more 'single' people have children who do not live full-time with them and need more than the tiny one-bedroom flats, effectively bedsits, they are often offered.

As a result, more and more people have to turn to the private rented sector.



■ The Simon Community says there are 23,000 homeless people in the North

Unfortunately, the rents in most of these properties is more than what is available from housing benefit, so people living on miserly benefits end up having to

pay £25 or £30 a week out of their dole to top it up.

Further, as property speculators—many of them from the South—start to buy up properties in working class

areas, they drive up property prices until local people cannot afford to live in their own area.

The level of anger being provoked by this growing

crisis was seen at a packed meeting in Glenview Community Centre, Derry at the start of February.

The meeting heard calls for a "return to the tactics of the early civil rights movement" to ensure demolition of the Glen Courts flats.

The meeting was hosted by the Glenview Community Association following an approach by the Socialist Environmental Alliance and was addressed by Eamonn McCann of the SEA. Councillors from the SDLP and Sinn Fein also took part.

Speaker after speaker from the flats and surrounding area spoke of the dreadful conditions in the complex.

Despite Sinn Fein Councillor Billy Page urging people to 'be realistic' about the possibility of getting the flats demolished, there was a consensus that these conditions should not be tolerated for another six days, still less the six months the Housing Executive have said will be needed before any decision will be taken on demolition.

The meeting unanimously agreed to write to the Housing Executive demanding an immediate decision in principle to demolish the flats.

It was amusing to watch Sinn Fein and SDLP councillors try—unsuccessfully—to damp down the militancy of the local residents.

Eventually, they had no choice but to agree with them that, if a demolition decision was not taken immediately, housing offices should be occupied to force the decision!

Convention of the Left to fight for a real alternative

ACTIVISTS from groups as diverse as the Green Party, Women's Coalition, SWP, CPI and campaigners against the war, water charges and privatisation were set to meet up as Socialist Worker went to press.

They will join with those seeking to defend the environment, public services, women's and gay rights at the Convention of the Left in Derry on Feb 14th to discuss standing a candidate in June's European elections.

They say all these issues are affected by the way the European Union is developing and there are particular concerns about the impact of some of the Articles of the proposed European Constitution.

The "Convention of the Left" is being organised by the Socialist Environmental Alliance (SEA), a Derry-based alliance of socialists,

environmentalists, trade unionists anti-war and community activists.

In its open invitation to the Convention, the SEA says that 'without a radical anti-sectarian intervention

the European election will amount to yet another "dual referendum" to determine who will champion each community vis-à-vis the other.

It will take a united

broadly based campaign to make such an intervention credible'.

The Convention starts at 10.30 in the Verbal Arts Centre and organisers say it will finish by 4.30 at the

latest to facilitate those romantics who want the evening to celebrate Valentine's Day!

A crèche is provided and all are welcome.

★ A former Royal Marine, jailed for passing security details to loyalist death squads has been employed as a 'security operative' in Iraq.

Belfast man Derek William Adgey, convicted on ten counts of soliciting murder, is employed by London-based Armor-Group but working with US multinational Bechtel in Iraq.

Adgey was recognised by former policemen and servicemen also working as 'security contractors' in Iraq.

They were alarmed when they realised he has access to US and UK mili-

tary bases and contacted the *Belfast Telegraph*.

The newspaper contacted his employers who said they had no knowledge of Adgey's criminal past but would have discovered it eventually during 'the full set of checks required by company policy'.

Some war against terror!

★ The North's waiting lists continue to be the worst in the UK - and they are growing!

The latest Dept. of Health statistics show that, in September 2003, almost 20,000 people were waiting for a first outpatients' appointment at an

orthopaedics consultant clinic.

Around 7,000 of these have been waiting more than a year, 3,352 for more than two years.

These are just the figures for outpatients. A further 6,253 are waiting for an in-patient appointment for orthopaedic surgery, many of them in great pain.

★ When the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast introduced car parking charges for everyone, including staff, there was uproar.

For nearly two years, staff refused to pay the charges until hospital management came up with a scheme subsidising car

parking for staff. Those subsidies mean the hospital pays about a half million pounds a year to Belfast firm Car Park Services (CPS), who run the privatised car parks.

Now it has emerged that CPS is making huge profits from the car parks. The big scandal is that of every pound spent in the hospital car park by patients or staff, only seven pence goes to the hospital itself.

So, just £15,000 a year of the huge profits made by CPS goes to the Royal. Just a small example of what the creeping privatisation of our health service does to it.

THE RACE FOR THE WHITEHOUSE

Are the Democrats the answer?

Leading American dissident Michael Moore has called for a vote for candidate Wesley Clarke, a former NATO General. The rationale for many on the left in supporting the Democrats is that anybody is better than Bush and a Democrat President would be the "lesser of two evils".

However this sort of logic has prevented a true radical force from growing in the US. *David Lynch* looks at the race for the Democrat nomination and the history of Democratic Party.

THIS is election year in the United States of America and come the end of November a huge number of the world's population will be hoping that George Bush will no longer be the President.

Having inflicted two wars on the world the removal of Bush from office has become the central task of many antiwar activists and dissidents in the United States.

The Democrat Party is seen by many radicals as the main vehicle for change. The present nomination race is receiving a huge amount of interest as many activists who had campaigned against the war in Iraq now throw themselves into campaigning against Bush.

One commentator compared the thousands of young people who volunteered for candidate Howard Dean to "something from the late 1960s. There has been nothing like this in terms of involvement in politics by the young since the Vietnam War".

Others have compared the Dean campaign to previous Presidential elections.

"Although Dean himself is a rather ordinary centrist Democrat with an austere record as governor of the state of Vermont, his campaign has aroused elite fear and loathing not seen since the nomination of George McGovern on an anti Vietnam War platform in 1972," writes American socialist Mike Davis.

"Dean's campaign now rapidly being refashioned and moved to the right by party regulars—originally grew up in the political and moral vacuum created by the Democratic leadership's abject surrender to Bush's war on terrorism.

"Dean became a hero to angry students and trade unionists because of his willingness to articulate what millions believe but no other Democrat had the guts to say—that the president of the United States is a warmongering fool controlled by a cabal of oil millionaires and Christian fanatics."

Shifted

Dean's campaign has shifted the whole race onto the issue of the war with present front runner John Kerry also making anti-war statements.

Indeed Kerry suddenly showed brief signs of his former self—the militant anti-war veteran who so eloquently denounced American war crimes in Vietnam before Congress in 1972. But Kerry for all his talk about ridding the White House of "vested interest" receives huge amounts of cash from big business. His wife is also the heiress of the Heinz fortune.

According to Mark Walsh an Irish socialist currently working near Portland, Howard Dean's supporters are disappointed that their man has recently taken a whack in the polls, but they are united against Bush.

"It does look like Kerry is going to win it, but among the Dean supporters I think they will

How the US primaries work

THE US presidential election will take place in November this year. George Bush is almost certain to be the candidate for the Republican Party, one of the two parties which dominate official US politics. The other main party, the Democratic Party, is in the middle of a complex process of selecting its candidate.

This takes place through a series of votes in each US state. In a few, like Iowa last month, meetings called caucuses are held. In most states ballot box votes called primaries take place. These elections select delegates backing a particular presidential candidate. A national party convention of all these delegates then takes place in the summer to decide (in reality rubber stamp) the presidential candidate.

Those who vote in the primary elections are usually registered voters who have declared support for one or other of the two main parties. In the final presidential election in November all registered voters are entitled to cast a ballot.

In November's vote each state elects delegates to an electoral college which then selects the president in a way which means that the candidate who gets the most votes across the US does not necessarily win.

George Bush got less votes than his Democratic Party rival Al Gore in the election in 2000, but was declared the winner.

Bush also secured victory by grabbing all of the state of Florida's votes in very dubious circumstances and amid accusations of ballot rigging—with some help from his brother who was the state governor.

just get behind Kerry if he tops the poll," he said.

"I think most Democrats and radicals just want Bush out, they do not care who wins the race in the end. It is all about beating Bush, a huge number of Americans absolutely hate him."

The bomber of Belgrade and the Clintons' stealth candidate, General Wesley Clark, has so far proven more of a stiff cardboard cut-out than a charismatic hero.

Clark is a former NATO general but has won the support of many radicals most notably, Michael Moore.

Moore argued on his website,



■ Top: Howard Dean addresses enthusiastic crowd, below left: John Kerry and right: Wesley Clark

Two Big Business Parties

IRISH people will be aware of the phenomenon of two major parties with very little political difference between them.

The division between Republican and Democratic parties is not a clear left-right split.

Nor did it grow out of a division between a party of the bosses and one with roots in the trade unions—as with the history of Britain's Tory and Labour

parties.

Both Democratic and Republican parties are financed by and totally controlled by the very rich and big business.

These rival big business parties and candidates use their wealth and control of the media to dominate the election campaign and exclude anyone seeking to challenge their domination of politics.

This makes it hard for a "third party" or left wing challenger to the two main parties to gain a hearing.

It is not yet clear whether there will be a similar challenge to the big business candidates this year, as many radical figures have mistakenly called for supporting one or other Democratic Party candidate against Bush.

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.

Nixon

"President Bush and Tony Blair should be proud of their resolve in the face of so much doubt". Clark also voted for Richard Nixon in 1972 and Ronald Reagan in 1984.

Despite a facade of deep debate,

all the leading Democrats, including Dean, have no higher aspiration than to be the new Bill Clinton, whom they all profess to adore.

None has dissented from US policy in Afghanistan or unconditional support for Israel.

All endorse the war on terrorism (but want it more focused) and all vow to pour more, not less, money into Homeland Defence and the promotion of national paranoia.

Kerry, meanwhile, is a bigtime World Trade Organisation internationalist, Edwards) a wealthy trial lawyer, and Dean a notorious fiscal conservative.

The ultimate anti-Bush,

Naider's bid in 2000

MANY Democrats blamed the Green Party and their presidential candidate Ralph Nader for George Bush's elections victory in 2000.

This argument has been taken up again this year as Democrats call on independents and leftists not to support a radical third candidate and rally behind the Democrats to get Bush out.

However far from costing Democrat Al Gore the election in 2000, it was the rotten weak Democrat campaign that was the real reason for his failure.

Even with this weak campaign Al Gore actually won the 2000 election. George W. Bush became President when a biased US Supreme Court allowed election manipulation by Florida Republicans.

Gore ran a campaign with no clear message. He failed to defeat Bush in the debates and even lost his home state of Tennessee.

When the Black Caucus challenged Bush's election victory in January 2001, not one Democratic Senator stood up in support. Senate Democrats failed to push for an investigation of the Florida vote debacle.

For many years, Democrats never objected when officials removed African American and other voters from the voter rolls in Florida and other states. Why didn't the Democrats sue when 90,000 Florida voters were disqualified earlier in 2000? Why were Democrats (including Gore) silent about disqualified votes in the weeks after the election?

In the 2000 election Ralph Nader did stand, with backing from the US Green Party and many radical and left wing activists. He was right to stand, and his campaign was a breath of fresh air. Nader won 2.6 million votes, around 3 percent.

inevitably, will be a clone of Clinton, promising rapid (but not immediate) withdrawal from Iraq and partial repeal of some of Bush's fiscal giveaways to the super-rich. "Freedom" fries, moreover, may become French again, and allies may be occasionally consulted about bombing targets.

What is slouching toward November, then, is a dispiriting choice between the Bushite "super-imperialist" status quo and the Democratic "normal imperialist" status quo.

"Ralph Nader, meanwhile, has bowed out of a Green Party nomination and, indeed, the Greens are bitterly divided over what to do in November," writes Mike Davis.

"Third party forces may still get their act together (perhaps behind California Green Peter Camejo) but, for the moment, it looks as if the Democrats will once again succeed in stealing the thunder from the grassroots."

Dean: In the footsteps of McGovern

IN the late 1960s and the early 70s a number of Democrat Party candidates stood on a somewhat antiwar campaign.

Much like today's candidates they wanted to tap into the huge anger that there was in the United States during the period of the Vietnam War.

While seeking support

among Democrat supporters, radicalised by the anti war movement, they talked left wing. However when they went up against the Republicans in the main race they diluted their politics in an attempt to win "middle America".

In 1972, Hunter Thompson wrote yet

another ground breaking book, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72*.

A forceful work of truths, fiction, lies, rumours and it is an enduring testimony of what it's like to really follow a presidential campaign.

Thompson followed

George McGovern (who Howard Dean is often compared to) and it is a book well worth reading to see how the once radical democrat can soften his message as the election comes closer into sight.

Unfortunately, although millions of Americans are complete-

ly alienated from the two big business parties, arguments about the "lesser evil" have led generations of radicals to divert that anger into support for the Democrats.

This has been, and remains, a major obstacle to the emergence of a large scale and genuine alternative.

Ryanair has its wings clipped

by KIERAN ALLEN

MICHAEL O'LEARY is the poster boy for Irish capitalism. His recent wedding was attended by such luminaries as **Mary Harney**, her husband **Brian Geoghan** former head of **IBEC** and now of **FAS**, **Sean Barret** the champion of neo-liberal economics in **Trinity College Galway**

O'Leary is a hero because he takes on 'communists' like **SIPTU** and bureaucrats who try to 'stifle enterprise with red tape'.

However, the real working of capitalism is different from the myths spun by the professional ideologues.

And the recent collapse of Ryanair's share prices shows exactly why

Officially, Ryanair is a rugged individualistic company that despises state support.

But the row over the Charleroi airport in Brussels is precisely over hand-outs of public money.

Under a secret deal, Ryanair received a state handout of 1.3m euro from the regional Wallonian government in Belgium.

It also got help with staff training and staff accommodation, incentives to set up additional routes, free offices and cut pricing charges.

These sweeteners were not available to other rugged individualistic companies who hated state support.

Which tells you something quite important about real existing capitalism—big companies strike a relationship with local states and seek to gain favours.

The reason why Ryanair makes donations to Progressive Democrats is that they want influence over the building of a new terminal in Dublin. They buy political influence like they buy any other commodity.

The symbiotic relationship between capital and state bureaucrats is easily demonstrated. The vast majority of US multinationals have their headquarters in Washington—not in Alabama where rents are cheaper. Despite all the neo-liberal twaddle about relying solely on the market, they need state support to survive.

Something else came into view in the recent debacle at Ryanair. Officially, under capitalism all shareholders are equal—all isolated little atoms in the market place. All have 'perfect' knowledge of market signals and make their rational investment decisions accordingly. Or so the myth goes.

Reality is a little different. In early January, the Ryan family suddenly sold off their 47 million worth of their shares, which were then valued at 6.90 euro each.

Two weeks later, the share prices dropped by 30 percent after the company issued a profit warning.

O'Leary answer to this little scandal was that he did not know

Under a secret deal, Ryanair received a state handout of 1.3m euro from the regional Wallonian government in Belgium.

ANTI RACISTS ORGANISE IN THE NORTH

Standing up to racism

Davy Carlin Chairperson of the **Belfast Anti Racism Network (ARN)** spoke to *Socialist Worker*

SW—How did the Anti Racism Network come about?

Back in Sept 2003 a meeting was called in the Multi Cultural Resource Centre (MCRC) in Belfast to discuss the increasing rise in overt racial attacks and racism in general, and to see what could be done about it.

The mood was downbeat, people thought we could do little as we 'would not get the numbers'.

But some of us argued against this I was told why don't I organise another meeting to do something.

And so we began to organise. We thought that not only did something need to be done but something could be done and we went forward.

So by the time therefore that we had called the second meeting of what was now called the Anti Racism Network, ARN, we had around a dozen organisations in attendance.

They were made up of most of the main minority ethnic organisations, such as the Belfast Islamic Centre, the Chinese Welfare Association, Multi Cultural Resource Centre (MCRC), the Belfast Travellers Support Group, the Black Youth Network etc.

Also there were representatives from political parties, human rights organisations, trades union councils, trade unions, community organisations and student groups amongst others.

We then agreed that the ARN's primary role should be as an activist based network that seeks to take a practical, visual and collective stand against racism from whatever quarter or area that it came.

After September 11th, when the airline industry hit a temporary crisis, Ryanair approach was to cut prices even further to ensure that they flew with an 80 percent capacity.

Ryanair were so confident that they also snapped up new airplanes from Boeing at knock down prices due to the depression in the industry.

But, their rivals embarked on the same strategy. Soon Ryanair found that they were flying with a 70 capacity and this was eating in to their profits.

O'Leary, the king of cost cutting began whinging about his competitors 'dumping' and 'below-cost selling'.

As profits dropped the company became worried about paying for the new aircraft it had ordered.

If ever there was a classic example of the laws of the market as expounded by Karl Marx over a hundred years ago, it is here.

What is rational for one capitalist, becomes irrational because all follow the same path.

The madness of the system leads to waste and job losses. Listen to O'Leary explain his predicament.

'If it's a shit market, then it's a shit market. The message is we're kicking the shit out of everybody else, but it's costing us some money to do it'.

One little omission—it will cost his workers.

him to be expelled from his party. Within two days we had ten minority ethnic organisations, trades union councils, many leading figures from several trade unions, leading human rights organisations, community organisations and hundreds of individuals signed up to the statement.

We then got the statement printed in the main press and had called on others to issue similar statements from their organisations.

We also hand delivered the statement directly into many of the UUP leadership hands such as David Trimble, Reg Empey, Stephen King, David Burnside etc at their conference.

Our call for others to speak out prompted many of the churches, student and community umbrella networks to issue statements against racism.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions issued a statement on the same day as ours against the racist attacks happening in Craigavon.

The effect of this was that Fred Crowe then censured by the Ulster Unionist Party and the whole issue of racism was then raised by the secretary of state for Northern Ireland in the House of Commons

We now needed to do something visual and collective. So we decided to call a visual and representative vigil on December 10—International Human Rights day.

A lot of people were again pessimistic believing that only a few people and organisations would turn up but a number of us worked tirelessly to make it happen.

Actually up to twenty five organisations attended including all the main minority ethnic organisations, trade unionists, community workers, human rights organisations and many others from across the 'divide'.

It gave many organisations a boost that we could unite and work together.

This was important as such unity would be needed and very much tested as systematic and orchestrated race hate attacks were to happen only a few weeks later in the Village area of South Belfast.



■ Last month's protest in Belfast against racist attacks

SW How did the ARN respond to the attacks.

Firstly it must be said that the attacks were not only systematic and orchestrated but there was also paramilitary involvement.

The sheer brutality of the attacks on heavily pregnant women along with arson attacks on homes and seeing people getting bricks smashed repeatedly in their faces attracted the international media to the issue.

The world press were now calling Belfast the 'race hate capital of Europe' with the concentration of the media due to that sheer

brutality on the minority ethnic community now focused on that particular local area.

Many of the networks were away over the Xmas and uncontactable but we did what we could.

We spoke on the media and got people together for an emergency meeting. We all agreed something needed to be done and we agreed on various strategies as to how to attempt to bring a halt to the attacks.

We called a rally to give people a chance to express their anger at this, again some were pessimistic that we couldn't deliver, yet it was argued hard for by some and was eventually agreed to. It

would take place on Jan 27th, International Holocaust Memorial Day.

By this stage, although unfunded and with voluntary participation only, the activist based ARN had already become the leading anti racism voice in the North.

The international media was contacting us from all over the world with more than fifty interviews and meetings within a week.

Both the situation and therefore the ARN were now the focus for the international press.

We needed to show that the minority could not dictate for the majority and that our collective

voice of opposition to such attacks would be heard and send out a clear message.

So with that we started to work on our various strategies while at the same time seeking to create a 'public momentum' for the rally. For the ARN our immediate priority was to attempt to bring a halt to the attacks.

As the momentum built up the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) offered their full support for the rally.

I chaired a joint press conference of ICTU and the ARN the day before the rally.

Our final ARN meeting held in the MCRC a few days before was packed right outside the door

seeing and welcoming many new faces including those we had contacted on numerous occasions from the very start to get involved.

On the day around 2,000 rallied outside Belfast city hall on a bitterly cold lunchtime to show their opposition towards the attacks.

Not only was it one of the largest rallies of its type to make a stand against such racist attacks in Belfast but its make up made it unprecedented in Northern Irish political history.

One newspaper commented 'It was surreal'.

There were trade union banners from the FBU, NIPSA,

NAFHE and UNISON amongst others.

Trades council banners flew alongside minority ethnic support organisations banners. Human rights banners stood beside home made banners.

Community representatives and workers from the Shankill to the Falls Road were in attendance.

From the Village to Twinbrook, from North, South, East, and West Belfast they came. Republican and Loyalist, Nationalist and Unionist, Catholic, Protestant and dissenter all represented.

The ARN now with the support of the trade union movement and many others had stood shoulder to shoulder, spoke out, and stood firm.

The rallies' impact has given inspiration and strength to many others to now speak out. The collective and united nature and stand by the ARN has now enabled others to get organised or to find the strength to make a stand as they now know that they are not alone.

The ARN and its actions have given a breath of fresh air to the call and workings of unity for a common cause as opposed to the sectarian politics of division.

As importantly, to date the overt racist localised attacks have all but ceased with also a significant decrease in racist incidents reported for the last few weeks around the North

SW—Where now for the ARN?

The ARN is to hold public meetings around the North to set up local branches. We are also to host anti racism gigs to let music express and put out the anti racism message to younger people.

We will of course be dealing with many other issues such as the plight of asylum seekers and refugees to dealing with the impact of various legislation on the minority ethnic communities.

Our main focus though and the reason for our establishment was to take a practical visual and collective stand against both racial attacks and racism.

Anyone who wants to take a stand with us can e-mail the ARN at antiracism_ni@hotmail.com

HOSPITAL CONSULTANTS' STRIKE

Rich doctors want more hand-outs

By **Dr. PEADAR O'GRADY**

WHEN the elite group, known as Hospital Consultants, threatens strike action you know the issue of the crisis in the health service has taken a funny turn.

The same week FF Health Minister, Micheal Martin, was pressured by grieving parents to launch investigations into the deaths of their two children who were sent home from casualty in under-funded rural hospitals.

The Consultants' dispute is about a new insurance scheme where the State will cover Consultants against negligence claims rather than them paying insurance companies for cover.

The Consultants' main complaint, they say, is that the companies they were insured with (the MDU or MPS) refuse to cover them against future claims about past cases.

On this point the state should sort out an agreement with the MDU/MPS to cover past cases involving public patients.

These companies should not be allowed to dump their responsibilities on taxpayers.

The Consultants' other complaint is their real issue.

The massive concessions to them that Martin has already made to cover Private practice are not enough.

They want more.

In the past the state reimbursed 80 – 90 percent of consultants' insurance bill to cover their private work in public hospitals.

Private Practice

This meant a massive subsidy. While the salaried Consultants who do the most private practice made an average of 50 percent of their income on private fees they only paid 20 percent of the total insurance bill.

In the new proposal the state would insure, for free, all of their work, public and private, carried out in public Hospitals.

Despite this continuing massive subsidy, salaried Consultants are demanding their private work outside the public hospitals be covered too!

The 1,700 Consultants employed by the state earn the largest salaries in the health service.

According to the Dept of Health their average state earnings in 2002 were €150,000. About 600 of these Consultants earn little or no private fees.

According to sources quoted in Maeve-Ann Wren's excellent book *Unhealthy State* the other roughly 1,100 of them earn an average of a further €130,000 a year.

That is an average total of €280,000 per year or about ten times the average industrial wage.

A significant minority make more than €500,000 per year and the very top earners make over €1 million a year!

The system of subsidising private practice means 20 percent of beds in public hospitals are reserved for non-urgent treatment of private patients but who occupy 25 percent of bed days and more than 30 percent of Day treatment stays.

In the Dublin area public patients wait twice as long on average for admission to a public hospital than private patients.

Currently emergencies account for 70 percent of public hospital admissions and this is often the only way public patients can now get in to hospital. Public hospital waiting lists stand at almost 30,000.

Tax Deductible

Health insurance and private fees are tax deductible and public hospitals do not charge the full cost of accommodation to private patients.

The wealthier private patients also have access to Private Hospitals like the Mater Private or the Blackrock Clinic.

Giving priority to wealthier and therefore, in general, less ill people is an insane way to run a health service and is criticised in numerous reports.

It is no wonder that increasing numbers of workers are being forced to take out health insurance for fear of being the ones kept waiting until their condition becomes an emergency or have their children sent home from A&E.

An end to subsidising private practice and an outright ban on private work in public Hospitals is urgently required.

This would mean taking on the Consultants' private practice.

This does not fit in with FF plans to sell off the health service or to ensure a two-tier Health service for their rich friends so Martin will do a deal.

The main Consultant body, the IHCA, was founded in 1988 declaring a no strike policy in protest at junior doctors who had rightly gone on strike for shorter hours and against cutbacks in 1987.

We should support more strikes for better conditions for all health workers but oppose any bid to further entrench privatised healthcare in Ireland.

Rooting out the cancer of racism

COMMENTATORS on Northern Irish politics have been searching for explanations for the poison of racism.

Most reduce the rise in racism to two things—loyalist or Nazi thugs or a lack of education about racism.

Others suggest that there is a germ of racism in all of us and therefore when confronted by a rise in the number of immigrants racist attacks are inevitable.

Even well meaning anti-racists can give succour to the racists by suggesting that we should limit the number of

refugees or immigrants entering Northern Ireland.

These explanations cannot account for racism in nationalistic areas, or the fact that some of the best-educated people, like Ulster Unionist Party leader David Trimble, propagate racist ideas.

Nor does it explain the institutionalised racism from airport authorities "profiling" visitors or the police attacking refugees.

Socialists point out that racism is a product of capitalist society, emerging with the rise of the slave trade.

The need to ensure that African people could be subjected to the most inhumane treatment, as well as ensuring that white indentured servants and black slaves would be unable to unite and revolt against plantation owners, required an ideology.

Driven

The ideas that black people were born inferior to white people satisfied these demands.

Racism and racist ideas were and are driven from above by the capitalist class.

The whole basis of such ideas is to divide our class and allow their class to rule us.

Today racism has been slightly modified to suggest that it is cultural differences that make it hard for people to live peacefully with each other.

In Northern Ireland this argument has some resonance because it has been used to bolster sectarian conflict.

Northern Ireland like anywhere else immersed in the globalisation process suffers job-slashing multinationals, cuts to health, education and welfare have created the

poverty and despair on which racism feeds. Bush, Blair, Blunkett and some Assembly politicians have driven the demonisation of Muslims, which set the tone for attacks on Muslims in Craigavon.

The criminalisation of asylum seekers opens the door for the racist thugs.

Racism cannot be educated away but must be confronted and fought alongside the fight against the war on terror and the neo-liberal agenda.

The causes of unemployment, housing shortages, hospital waiting lists, low pay and

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LATIN AMERICA IN REVOLT

The neo-liberal policies of privatisation, abolishing capital controls, increasing inequality and poverty were implemented across Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s.

Trade agreements like the GATT and then NAFTA have opened up countries to foreign multinationals seeking cheap labour and no environmental standards.

From the Argentine people rising up in December 2001 and overthrowing the hated De La Rúa government to the Brazilians electing a member of the Workers Party as President and from the Bolivians ousting their president to the Venezuelan people's popular uprising that re-instated Hugo Chavez after a US-sponsored coup it is clear that Latin America is a continent in revolt.

The struggle of its people shows that the neo-liberal model of global capitalism can be challenged and that the anti-capitalist resistance is not just in the west.

Those fighting for an autre monde here in Europe need to study the lessons of these recent revolts.

Here RORY HEARNE looks at recent experiences in Brazil and Venezuela.

■ **MES:** The landless farmers' movement in Brazil

Can Lula and Chavez deliver?

Along with the rest of Latin America Brazil is straddled with huge debts (\$400bn owed to the IMF), inequality and poverty.

For example, 70 million of Brazil's 175 million population live below the poverty line, in 1999 the top 10% of the population received 47% of the national income while the bottom 10% shared only 8%.

The Cardoso government (1994-2002) had a large part to play in worsening the poverty and unemployment in Brazil.

From the moment he came to power he made deals with the IMF to get more loans in return for implementing neo-liberalism through privatisations, liberalising imports, throwing the doors open to foreign capital and slashing public sector wages.

Meanwhile in the rural parts of Brazil over 100,000 families were being forced off their land each year to give space to the large exported-oriented agri-companies to produce cash-crops.

The Brazilian people were demanding radical change to end the misery of their conditions and it was on the back of this popular anger and hope for somebody to stand up for ordinary Brazilians that Lula de Silva got elected as President of Brazil in January 2003.

Elected

So where did Lula come from? Lula was elected as leader of the militant Metal Workers Opposition Union in 1978 and promised "to fight even if it costs us the sacrifice of our lives to improve the conditions of life of the engineering workers".

Huge strikes took place in the factories at this time and Lula was arrested.

It was this high point of the workers struggle in Brazil that Lula came to symbolise.

After the strikes they set up the PT (Workers Party) and the union CUT.

The Union and the PT made no mention of socialism in their policies and oriented themselves on electing left officials and neglected building rank and file militancy at the base.

Lula stood for election as President in 1989 and won 47% of the national vote.

He stood again in 1994. After this Lula and his team concentrated on the 'governability' of Lula and the PT.

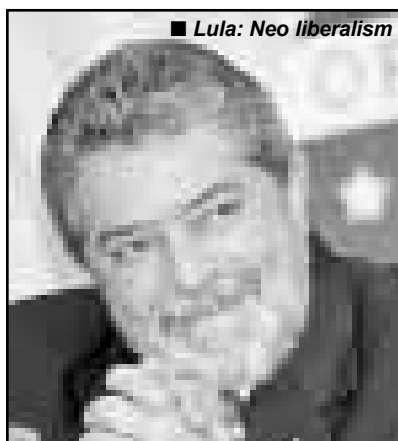
In the run up to the 2002 elections 'governability' required Lula satisfying the international financial markets (which rallied against the Brazilian currency the Real until Lula made his pro-market stance clear) and Brazilian capital by Lula

expressing pro-business sentiments and declaring that he would continue to pay back the IMF loans.

Since becoming elected Lula has not reversed Cardoso's neo-liberal policies but is actively implementing them.

For example, cutting wages and increasing taxes on workers to payback the debt, pushing through pension reforms that increase by seven years the amount of time civil servants have to pay into pension funds, very little land reform has occurred, the number of children between 10 and 14 in Brazilian cities who must work increased by 50% between January and September 2003.

Lula and his party claims their hands are tied by global capital, they are trying to solve poverty with the Zero Hunger Programme but under globalisation they have no choice but to implement the neo-liber-



■ **Lula:** Neo liberalism

al agenda.

However, Lula has attempted to win better deals against the developed world in

WTO talks by forming alliances with other governments in Latin America and across the developing world (Lula was central to the walk out at the failed WTO talks in Cancun).

The power that Lula could turn to for real change for the ordinary people of Brazil are the very people that are protesting against his reforms.

Firstly in order to get significant land reform Lula could, rather than trying to negotiate and plead as he is doing now with the huge land owners and multinational agri-businesses he could support the MST in their land occupations.

The MST is the landless peasants movement and has managed to occupy and redistribute to the Brazilian landless millions of acres of land.

This is a movement that began in 1984 and has struggled heroically and success-

fully.

He could link up with other developing countries and refuse to pay the debt on the basis that the people demand cancellation (a plebiscite on debt cancellation was organised by the MST in 2000 where 90% of the 5 million who voted called to end the debt).

He could threaten multi-nationals (as during the Portuguese revolution) with expropriation of their factories by their workers.

There have been huge strikes and marches against Lula in the past few months by factory workers, civil servants, teachers and students.

These are the movements that can force change.

Just as in Venezuela during the coup in April 2002 Chavez, the elected president was re-instated by popular mobilisations by workers and the poor.

Chavez in Venezuela: A balance of power



■ **Chavez:** Recession

Hugo Chavez was elected as president of Venezuela in 1998 on the promises of ending poverty and corruption.

In his first year, as Venezuela was in severe recession he introduced Plan Bolivar 2000 which ordered all branches of the military to devise programmes that would benefit the poor.

The Human Development Index (HDI) rose during Chavez's presidency (0.7694 in 2001 compared to 0.689 in 1990).

This is despite two attempts in 2002 by the Venezuelan upper classes to overthrow his government.

Chavez has taken a few minor steps that have damaged the interests of the country's ruling class and traditionally corrupt political and military establishment.

He pushed through a law in November 2001 that gives all Venezuelans a right to

apply for a piece of land for their family.

A huge programme of both rural and urban land re-distribution is under way.

He upset the US by selling oil to Cuba and encouraging other OPEC countries to take measures at forcing up international oil prices (Venezuela is the third biggest supplier of oil to the US).

He also introduced currency and credit controls attempting to stop capital flight after the employer stoppages in December 2002.

Privatised

Other than these policies Chavez has done little to damage capitalist interests.

He has privatised the national phone network and recent economic policies have been quite neo-liberal.

Chavez, however, similar to Lula and indeed with marked similarities to the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende in Chile in 1972 aspires to reform

Venezuela society from the top down.

He hopes to keep the ruling class and imperialism along side while implementing some re-distributive reforms.

However, as Allende discovered and Chavez is now discovering the ruling class will ditch democracy and attempt to re-impose their rule through savage means if the working class and poor appear to challenge their power.

The oligarchies in the oil industry along with the private media, sections of the military and sections of the business classes in Venezuela have organised coups, workers-lockouts and stoppages, armed protests and now are organising a referendum to oust Chavez from power.

In response to this Chavez has called on the poor and workers of Venezuela in his defence.

They responded by organising mass demonstrations to re-instate him and the workers broke the lock outs and kept the oil industry and other industries in opera-

tion when the bosses tried to shut them down.

Central to organising mass resistance to the ruling class attacks have been the formation of Bolivarian Circles.

Radical

They are a radical project in participatory democracy and were formed to defend the democratic revolution and the 1999 Bolivarian Constitution.

They are an attempt to get around the perceived failure and infighting among left wing parties and unions.

They help form local co-ops, education, health and so on.

But central is the defence of the revolution and ordinary people understanding the need to organise and defend democracy by taking control themselves of different parts of the country.

Many members of the Bolivarian circles are unionised workers and leaders.

How can we defeat neo-liberalism?

The lessons from Brazil and Venezuela show that the fight against neo-liberalism will not be won in one country in isolation or by reformist governments at the top.

It is important that socialists fight against the ruling class offences to defend the policies of Lula and

Chavez that benefit the workers and the poor.

But it is important to understand that Lula and Chavez also put in place the policies of neo-liberalism (and as in the case of the PT will discipline those within their party who oppose neo-liberal reforms) and in

order to get real reform and stop the neo-liberal attacks—revolutionaries must organise independent rank and file movements from below.

That links together workers, landless and poor internationally as the force that can take on global capital.

book

Revolutionary science in a revolutionary era

by CONOR KOSTICK

ONE of the most well known stories about scientific discovery is that of Isaac Newton and the theory of gravity. Looking from a window towards his orchard, Newton saw an apple fall and that moment, it is said, he realised the planets were all falling towards each other, attracted by gravity.

There may well be some truth to this story. But as an illustration of the method of scientific advance, it feeds into the school of history that says that epoch shaping events are the result of the action of significant individuals, such as Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln, or Hitler.

There is a general problem with this 'great man' (and it is usually men who are cited) view of history.

A view which the German socialist writer Brecht wittily drew attention to in his poem 'Questions from a worker who reads': The young Alexander conquered India/Was he alone?/Caesar beat the Gauls/Did he not have even a cook with him?/Philip of Spain wept when his armada/Went down. Was he the only one to weep?

Nobody exists free from interaction with other human beings. Although Newton above all scientists was inclined to be reclusive, he was profoundly influenced by the extraordinary social circumstances that surrounded him.

For he was living in a part of the world that was breaking up the political and economic structures of feudalism and struggling to give birth to a revolutionary new society.

Fundamental Shift

England in the middle and late seventeenth century was a society in ferment, one in which the various classes were engaged in enormous convulsions. One of which, from 1642-49, saw a fundamental shift in the balance of power. Most dramatically represented by the axe descending on the neck of the King Charles I.

Accompanying the class conflict was an explosion of intellectual activity, as ancient established philosophies were cast off in favour of a new rationalism, represented by Francis Bacon and John Locke. There was also the appearance of three scientific societies, the French Royal Academy, the Italian Academia del Cimento and the British Royal Society, of which Newton was a member.

In turn, this upsurge of a fresh approach to scientific thinking had been maturing as a result of the rise of new approaches to production. The British economy in particular had seen developments unprecedented in human history, with an industrial revolution that forced scientific thinkers to grapple with totally new questions.

For example, to raise water from mines, or to solve the question of stabilising ever greater merchant ships required a new approach to the property of fluids.

The growing use of artillery by the military raised questions of gas compression, air resistance, the free fall of bodies. Navigation across the seas of the whole planet demanded accurate answers to the movement of the celestial bodies.

Although prone to retreating into isolation and contemplation, Newton was nevertheless fully engaged with the issues of his day.

Innovative

His genius lies precisely in his innovative solutions to the new questions of the day rather than some timeless speculation that could have been discovered by any thinker of any period in human culture.

He worked with the latest machines, including steering and navigation systems, the construction of forts, glass polishing, anti-corrosion measures and metal stamping.

It's safe to say that throughout history apples have been falling from trees, but humanity's early scientists simply did not have the technical and intellectual background to make the same breakthroughs as Newton.

As the socialist Fredrick Engels put it, "if society has a technical demand, then this will advance science more than ten universities put together."

Much has recently been made about Newton's interest in alchemy, which so shocked the liberal economist John Maynard Keynes that when he purchased Newton's papers (from Lord Lynton, the Earl of Portsmouth, who auctioned them to raise money for the British Union of Fascists) he called Newton the 'last of the magicians.'

But even this unfruitful project was concerned less with mystical transformations than with the need to find a new source of copper for the military at a time when natural supplies were scarce.

This emphasis on the circumstances of Newton's life is not to belittle his intellectual achievements, the importance of which are tersely and effectively explained in James Gleick's new biography, but it is to appreciate them in context.

The context of a revolutionary century which is missing from Gleick's otherwise sharp presentation of the ideas of Newton and their place in intellectual history.

■ *Isaac Newton* by James Gleick, (Pantheon).

dossier

How they fitted up the Colombia Three

by KEVIN WINGFIELD

ONE MONTH before 9/11 three Irish republican were illegally arrested at El Dorana Airport in Bogota, Colombia. Niall Connolly, Jim Monaghan and Martin McCauley — the Colombia Three — were held for six months without charge in constant fear of their lives.

The President of Colombia publicly claimed they were IRA members engaged in training left-wing FARC guerrillas. This was echoed by British and American government sources.

Their trial begun in October 2002 and concluded in August last year in a no-jury court. Judge Acosta, sitting alone, reserved judgement and the verdict was still to be delivered.

A number of people from Ireland, Britain, America and Australia travelled to Colombia to observe the trial.

These include former Foreign Affairs minister and MEP Niall Andrews, trade unionist Des Bonas and criminal lawyer Pat Daley and others.

Their commentary on the arrest, imprisonment and trial of the Colombia Three is devastating.

At that time their was a peace process which was aimed at ending the



■ Niall Connolly, Jim Monaghan and Martin McCauley — the Colombia Three

40 year civil war and establish negotiations between the FARC and the government.

As supporters of the Northern Ireland peace process, the three travelled to a demilitarised zone in the south east of the country set up under the now aborted Colombian peace process. There they met with FARC guerrillas and discussed the peace process.

The prosecution claimed they were handling weapons. Colombian forensic tests proved negative after 113

tries, but the US embassy claimed that tests it conducted were positive.

Testified

World famous independent forensic scientist Dr Keith Borer examined the materials of the US embassy tests and concluded there was no forensic evidence against the men.

The Irish ambassador to Colombia testified that the men were with her in Cuba on key dates which the prosecution claimed they were with the FARC.

Other alibi evidence included time dated videos showing the men in Dublin at times and dates when they were alleged to be in Colombia.

The trial was conducted under an atmosphere of intimidation and terror. The accused were kept in prisons along with right-wing death squads who had openly killed leftists under the noses of the guards.

The Colombia government is keen to get even more cash aid from the US to fight the civil war and in the context of the

"War on Terror" the prosecution was clearly undertaken to play to US government's priorities.

The Bring Them Home Campaign, which has published this 90 page dossier, is calling for a campaign of lobbying Colombian ambassadors and ministers to demand the early release of the Colombia Three.

■ *Colombia: Judge for Yourself*, published by the Bring Them Home Campaign, Dominick Court, 41 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1, www.bringthemhome.ie.

television

The experience of low pay on TV

by DAVID LYNCH

IF you were to believe much of the output from RTE, then most of us should be living the latte drinking lifestyle portrayed in *Bachelor's Walk* where life takes on a consistent leisurely pace and Dublin is always sunny.

Or if you listened to RTE's economic editor George Lee's breathless reporting of economic figures you would think that there was huge amounts of cash being spent by everyone, not only the rich.

However the Des Bishop *Work Experience* series on RTE has brought to the screen an almost forgotten part of Irish life. Those who work on, or close to, the minimum wage.

The American comic who is well known on the live scene in Dublin travels around Ireland doing a succession of low-paying jobs. Each week of the show focuses on one of his month long terms in employment.

Last week it was work-



■ Des Bishop

ing in Abrekebabra in Waterford and this week he has been working in the Leisureplex in Tralee. Bishop has to stay in the job for a month, working on the minimum wage having to pay for food, accommodation, and health bills. His excellent show has proved that this is an impossible task.

Committed

Bishop is no Michael Moore or Mark Thomas, this is not politically committed comedy, but if anything this actually helps force the point home about the scandal of low pay in Ireland. Interspersing clips from himself on the job with clips of Bishop talking about his experience in his stand up rou-

tine works very well.

Bishop's time in the fast food joint in Waterford was very revealing. The staff, almost all foreign nationals, had to put up with almost nightly racial abuse from some of the drunken customers.

The management dragged their feet on paying time and a half on a Bank Holiday until Bishop himself started to lose the rag. There was also some sinister talk of the management paying the staff overtime with 'food' rather than cash.

Speaking on the Joe Duffy Radio Show last week about the programme Bishop explained how many foreign nationals are working in Ireland at the moment.

"I do not know how the people I met do it. Some of them work three jobs. They scrimp and save on everything and people should be aware of that when they go to their take-away or petrol station."

Bishop also wanted to know what the average income of a medium business in this country was. The show utterly exposes

the exploitation of foreign as well as Irish workers on the minimum wage by employers who are making huge profits.

The need for the trade union movement to make the push for unionisation in these jobs a priority is also urgent.

But despite what some trade unionists argue, Partnership has not improved things.

The reality of life on the minimum wage in Ireland proves that to be a fallacy.

The British writer Polly

Toynbee did something similar in the 1960s and of course George Orwell wrote *Down and Out in Paris* in the early 1930s, but this new series must be welcomed.

Rarely (if ever) has the plight of the low paid in Ireland been presented on TV in such an honest, revealing and sometimes funny way. Not to be missed.

■ *Des Bishop Work Experience* is on Network Two on Monday nights.

International Socialism Journal 101

International Socialism Journal is a quarterly journal published by the SWP in Britain. The current issue has major articles on Women's Liberation today and The Politics of Food.

Despite huge, almost unimaginable, changes in the position of women since the sixties—these have not lead to equality and the end of oppression. Women on average still earn a fifth less than men in similar jobs.

The continued existence of sexism is typified by the comments made in favour of lap dancing clubs by Dublin's FF Lord Mayor.

Women are constantly told that they can't have it all but are expected to do it all—diligent worker, conscientious mother and demon lover. Lindsey German in the lead article argues that the involvement of women in the growing global movement raises the possibility of bringing the fight for equality back to the centre of the struggle.

ISJ 101 is available from your local SWP Branch €6 /£4 or from SW Books PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

ANTI-RACISM:

Fighting deportation in Tralee

FIFTY people attended a public meeting in Tralee last month to on Stop the Deportation of Asylum Seekers.

A third of those attending were from the town's 500 strong asylum seeker population which represents just over half the total number for County Kerry.

The meeting was hosted by the Tralee branch of the Socialist Workers' Party and following discussion it was agreed to set up the Kerry Immigrants' Rights Support Group.

At a follow-up meeting on February 2, a committee was established with Bia O'Neil as chair, Kristina Avric as the secretary and Kieran McNulty as the organiser.

Membership of the group is open to anyone including those with political affilia-



■ **Anti Deportation march in Dublin last year**

tions and those with none, so long as they agree with the basic principles of the group which are centred around an

anti-racist ethos and solidarity with immigrants.

While the group's aims included campaigning on

national issues including opposition to the government's deportation laws and supporting individual asy-

lum seekers facing deportation and supporting their right to work while awaiting a decision on their case for citizenship, a number of specifically local demands will also be made especially concerning accommodation, school transport and the treatment of visitors at hostels.

The group agreed to leaflet and petition the general public on these demands, hold future public meetings and link up with similar groups around the country.

■ **Future group meetings will be held every second Tuesday at 7.00pm in the Abbeygate Hotel, Tralee, all welcome.**

■ **Contact Kieran McNulty on 087-6716009 or email kierantralee@yahoo.com**

Dun Laoghaire:

Campaign to fight Carlisle Pier plan

THE Save Our Seafront group has called for outright opposition to the four proposals short-listed for the redevelopment of the Carlisle Pier in Dun Laoghaire.

SOS says the four proposals which they say amount to the effective privatisation of a substantial section of the harbour

As part of their ongoing campaign of opposition SOS is organising a major public debate on the "Future for the Carlisle Pier & Dun Laoghaire Seafront" on Monday January 16th at 8pm in the Kingston Hotel in Dun Laoghaire.

A representative of the Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company has also been invited to speak at the meeting.

The group have started a

major leafleting and petition campaign to mobilise opposition to the four proposals. The four proposals which they say amount to the effective privatisation of a substantial section of the harbour.

Over one thousand signatures of opposition have already been gathered and SOS expects the petition to reach several thousand over the next couple of weeks.

Richard Boyd Barrett, convenor of the SOS group said, "The Harbour Co. have dishonestly suggested that these are proposals for a major cultural amenity on the Carlisle Pier. They are not.

The central feature of all four proposals are hundreds of luxury apartments and in three of the proposals, large exclusive hotels.



■ **Richard Boyd Barrett**

In all the proposals the cultural element represents less than ten per cent of the development."

"These are plans for an exclusive playground for the very wealthy. The cultural elements are simply "add

ons" to huge hotel and apartment complexes to make the public think they are getting something out of the development. The Save Our Seafront group has been warning for years now that the Harbour Co. and the council were planning to privatise the Carlisle Pier. The details of the plans confirm our worst fears."

"We are being asked to choose between four versions of privatisation. The Harbour Co. call this "public consultation!"

They never consulted the public before they made the key decision to hand over public property for private residential and commercial development.

Real public consultation would mean the public is con-

sulted before a shortlist is drawn up."

"If exclusive apartments or hotels go up on the Carlisle Pier it will pave the way for further privatisation and the building of more exclusive developments in the harbour and along the seafront. The council are also proposing to remove the restrictions on this kind of residential and commercial development on the seafront in the new county development plan."

Nicola Sarat, Secretary of SOS said, "Save Our Seafront believes the Carlisle Pier should be developed to provide public amenities that are accessible to all.

■ **For more information contact: Richard Boyd Barrett 087-6329511**

Protestors greet Ahern in Trinity College Dublin

OVER 60 students attended a protest against the recent visit of Bertie Ahern to Trinity College.

The protest was jointly organised by Labour, Sinn Féin and Socialist Worker Societies. It was called to oppose the savage cut backs in government funding for Third Level education and against Ahern's support for Bush's war on Iraq.

Organisers felt that with the current state of cut backs in government funding of Universities having such an impact both on student services and indeed on academic activities that it was imperative that such a protest be mounted.



While they can make cutbacks in education they can find €12.8 million to spend on a new missile defence system for the army. The protest was in good

spirits throughout and in no way posed a threat to anything.

Despite the jovial nature of the crowd however the Gardaí decided to forcefully move protesters back down the ramp of the Arts block.

The Iron gate used to close off the Nassau street entrance to College at night was used as a battering ram by the Gardaí to drive protesters back.

This type of behaviour is a totally unacceptable response to peaceful protesters. The Student's Union did not support the protest but instead handed in petitions to Ahern.

Dates for your diary

Families of US Soldiers speak in Ireland against Iraq occupation and use of Shannon airport

A representative of Military Families Speak Out will be speaking in Ireland this month.

Stephen Cleghorn, is the stepfather of a serving US soldier who is currently deployed in Iraq. He is a Vietnam veteran himself and was court martialled for objecting to that war. He is presently the deputy executive director of the Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness in Washington.

Military Families Speak Out is an organisation of about 1,000 families and loved ones of US soldiers.

Their mission statement states 'As people with family members and loved ones in the military, we have both a special need and a unique role to play in speaking out against war in Iraq. It is our loved ones who are, or have been, or will be on the battlefield. It is our loved ones who are risking injury and death. It is our loved ones who are returning scarred from their experiences. It is our loved ones who will have to live with the injuries and deaths among innocent Iraqi civilians.'

Stephen Cleghorn will be highlighting the use of Shannon airport to transport US troops to the war zone. Last year, 125,000 US troops flew through Shannon making it a major hub in the transport of US troops to Iraq.

- Drogheda:** Sunday February 15th February: Connolly Hall 8pm
 - UCD:** Monday 16th February Arts Block 1pm
 - Waterford:** Monday 16th February 8pm Connolly Hall
 - Cork:** Tuesday 17th February: Venue to be confirmed 8pm
 - Trinity College:** Wednesday 18th February 1pm
 - Maynooth College:** Wednesday 18th February 5 pm
 - Dublin:** Wednesday 18th February Liberty Hall 7.30
 - Queens University:** Thursday 19th February Peter Froggat Centre 1pm
 - Belfast:** Thursday 19th February: Unemployment Resource Centre 8pm
 - Magee University:** Friday 20th February: 1pm
 - Derry:** Friday 20th February: Venue to be confirmed
 - Galway:** Saturday 21st February: Venue to be confirmed
- Organised by the Irish Anti War Movement

MARXIST FORUMS

(Political discussions hosted by the SWP)

- Ballymun:** Lula and Chavez: Can the left deliver in Latin America, Thursday 12th February 8pm, Axis Centre, Ballymun
- Bray:** Vietnam and Iraq: Is the US making the same mistakes? Thursday 12th February, 8p.m, Speaker: Dave Lorden, Lenihan's pub (upstairs), Main Street, Bray
- Dublin Cabra/Stoneybatter:** Lula and Chavez: Can the left deliver in Latin America, Tuesday 17th February 8pm, Aughrim St Parish Centre, 13 Prussia St,
- Dublin Rathmines:** McDowell's Racist Legislation, Why Socialists Oppose Immigration Controls, Monday 23rd February, 8pm Madisons Pub Rathmines
- Dublin North Central:** The Zapatista Rising Ten Years On, Wednesday February 25, 8pm The Snug Dorset St
- Dublin South East Inner City:** McDowell's Racist Legislation, Thursday 26th February, 8pm, Donovan's Pub (upstairs) Tonswend St
- Waterford:** The AIDS Crisis and Big Business Thursday 12th Feb, 8pm, Olde Rogue, Michael Street

OTHER MEETINGS

- Dun Laoghaire:** Save Our Seafront, The Future for the Carlisle Pier & Dun Laoghaire Seafront, Monday February 16th, 8pm, Kingston Hotel, Dun Laoghaire
- Gorey:** Public Meeting on the Hanley Report, Broad Platform of Speakers, Thursday 19th February, 8pm Coach House (upstairs)
- Rathmines Against War:** Meets every Thursday at 9pm in Madisons Pub Rathmines
- Ballyfermot/Inchicore Anti Bin Tax Meeting:** Thursday 12th February, 7.30pm Ballyfermot United Social Club, Blackditch Road

Another Europe is Possible

Demonstration:
Another Europe is Possible
No trade in public services People not profit
Defend public housing, health and education,
No to the Bin Tax
No to the break-up of CIE and Aer Rianta
No privatisation of our Universities
Protest 1pm Dublin Castle Friday 20th Feb
As the EU Article 133 group meets to discuss trade and the corporate takeover of public services
Other Key Dates:
March 20th-National anti-war demonstration
April 2/3 Meeting EU Finance Ministers meet Kildare May 1st
Protest Dublin
All-Ireland meeting, Saturday Feb 21st, Teachers club 2pm

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BIN TAX: Campaigners organise to beat non-collection

THE anti bin tax campaign in South County Dublin was on the

streets resisting non-collection in early February.

This follows the introduction of a pay-by-tag system. Only refuse that

has a tag certifying that the charge has been paid, is collected. Refuse without tags is left uncollected.

Bin tax activists and local residents came out and followed the bin trucks round emptying the uncollected rubbish bins in a number of areas in Tallaght and Clondalkin.

Don't abuse the bin men

BIN WORKERS in South County Dublin had been resisting the introduction of a pay by tag system which the Council demanded as a condition of them receiving payments due to them under benchmarking.

The council had also demanded a number of other productivity concessions in return for the payments.

When the bin workers continued to reject the council's proposals, each worker was individually visited at their homes with a notice threatening that with immediate effect the bin collection service would be outsourced.

When the union met management they were told that the workers would receive their benchmarking award, all productivity would be taken off the table and a €40 bonus would be paid to each worker if they agreed to accept tagging.

Faced with the threat to jobs, the workers felt they had little option but to

accept.

Although this is a setback for the campaign, it is important that residents and anti bin tax activists maintain friendly relations

with the bin workers.

Nothing will be achieved by abusing a group of workers who have had a pistol held to their head by management.

COUNCIL TAKES RESIDENTS TO COURT

MEANWHILE a number of outstanding summonses for non-payment of bin tax have meant a number of people have been brought to court.

Although the court judgement went against them, the campaign is considering a legal appeal.

Shay Ryan, Co-ordinator of the South Inner City campaign told *Socialist Worker*, "I utterly condemn the bringing up to court of a small number of non-payers in the last few days."

"We need to stand firm and not be intimidated."

"We need to fight this



■ Shay Ryan

injustice with mass non-payment, big public meetings and demonstrations.

"A number of meetings are being organised around the South Inner City area in the next week or two."

Bye-Law

This is perfectly legal under an established bye-law.

Gino Kenny, a co-ordinator of the Clondalkin anti bin tax campaign, was helping out.

He told *Socialist Worker*, "By introducing tagging into South County Dublin, the council has escalated the fight."

But many residents are sticking with the campaign. In the areas where I was helping out there were more than half the bin without tags.

"We need to step up the campaign now so that lots of local people are dumping their rubbish in the bin lorry."

BBC walk-outs over Hutton whitewash



■ BBC workers and NUJ members on the protest line in Derry

IT'S not often that you can feel a mood of militancy at the BBC—but there's a real taste of it right now.

People are furious at Hutton's whitewash and the government's attempts to crack down on investigative journalism.

On the 5th of February, thousands of reporters, broadcast technicians, admin workers and others held magnificent lunchtime protests under the slogan "Hands off the BBC".

Two hundred staff came out in Belfast, 20 (virtually everyone on duty at the time) at Radio Foyle in Derry.

The protests had been called by the National Union of Journalists and the technicians' union BECTU, but

many non-union staff also came out.

In a statement to the media, the NUJ members at Foyle said: "Our fear is that the government will attempt to exploit Hutton to crack down on critical, investigative reporting."

Occupied

Elsewhere, it was a massive show of anger, too—stretching from Shetland to Guernsey. In the World Service, protesting journalists gave interviews to Radio France and to the biggest TV network in Mexico.

Elsewhere, people occupied roundabouts (the middle bit, but that's pretty radical for BBC journos), shouted through megaphones and handed out hundreds of leaflets.

And the public respond-

ed. Motorists tooted their horns, people came up to the protests to show their solidarity. It reflects just how cynical people are about Blair's spin, about Hutton and the motives for going to war.

Protests

BBC management tried to portray the protests as a show of appreciation for Greg Dyke, especially the spontaneous walkouts immediately after Dyke's resignation the previous week.

But the slogans at the 5th February protests were no longer "Bring Back Greg". They'd changed to "Beep for the Beeb", "Hoot against Hutton" and "Blair Broadcasting Corporation".

Staff also slammed the grovelling apology by the acting chair of governors, Lord Ryder. Mothers and Fathers of Chapel (shop stewards) have been discussing whether they should call for a vote of no confidence in him.

Rightly so. Ryder was Margaret Thatcher's political secretary and then a fixer for John Major.

The acting director general, Mark Byford, sacked two Arabic trade union activists from the Word Service last year, shortly before the Iraq War began.

Yet management are trying to tell us that we need to back up the governors and whoever takes over from Dyke.

They say we need to accept Hutton and make changes to our reporting practices.

That's why we can't rely on BBC management to stop the government's attempts to silence critical journalism.

The governors are scared of Blair and of the upcoming review of the BBC Charter and licence fee.

They have officially accepted the Hutton report.

It's up to staff to keep up the pressure. Any attempt to change reporting guidelines must be fought tooth and nail.

As the NUJ puts it: "BBC journalists have taken the lead in standing up for journalism."

"Their magnificent actions last week sent a clear message to the governors and management of the BBC that they must stand up for the BBC's independence, integrity and commitment to quality news and current affairs. It also sent a forceful message to government—hands off the BBC."

OXIGEN: Recognition deal won but four victimised

THE strike of 50 SIPTU bin-men in Oxigen, the private company who collect the 'green bins' in areas of Dublin has just ended after three months.

The company had refused to recognise the union and forced workers to do compulsory overtime for no extra pay.

Strike-breakers were brought in from Dundalk during the dispute.

The workers won union recognitions but as soon as

they reported for work four of the strike committee were immediately suspended.

One of the workers told *Socialist Worker*, "We agreed to return to work on an agreement that we had union recognition."

"This allows to negotiate over our conditions and other grievances."

"Both the company and the workers would agree to a return in a friendly spirit, but this is not what happened."

Bye-Law

When they walked in we were handed notices of sus-

pension on trumped up charges.

"Many of the returning strikers wanted to go out on strike again. The issue is coming up in the Labour Court in the next few days."

"From our experience we can say privatisation doesn't work!"

Oxigen are contracted by local councils and paid millions in tax-payers money every year. They also make big profits from the cans and paper we put out for recycling.

Last year Oxigen made €25 million in profits.

If the council ran the service this money would pay for all bin collection and workers would have proper pay and conditions. There would be no need for bin tax.

Councils are using Oxigen to destroy pay and conditions for all bin-men before they privatise the whole service.

By striking the workers have won union recognition, but conditions have not improved.

All bin men should be employed directly by the council. Council workers and residents need to resist any move to privatise Councils' bin service.

Zoe Developments put profits before people's lives

OVER 100 residents in Dublin's Ringsend area attended an angry meeting last week following the collapse of a crane on a nearby building site.

The collapse of the tower crane on the Barrow Street site left large sections of crane dangling in the wind and put the lives of 60 families in the area in immediate danger.

Over 60 families were evacuated and the nearby Dart line was diverted due to public safety fears.

Residents have called for all work on

site to stop until the Health & Safety Authority has published a full report due to concerns that eight other such cranes on site are a potential threat to the lives of local people. Danniger, the company responsible for the cranes, is part of larger construction company Zoe Development, a company infamous for its on-site safety infringements.

Shay Ryan, local council election candidate, said, "Zoe Development has a proven track record of managing unsafe sites. Even a High

Court judge referred to those who run Zoe as recidivist criminals when a building labourer was killed on one of their sites in 1999.

"It is a scandal that those given responsibility to build local housing are putting profits before the lives of their workers and the people of the local community."

"How many more ordinary people will be killed on sites before the government brings in legislation on corporate manslaughter?"

■ For more information contact Shay at 087-914 3703.

Vote for Derwin in SITPU election

TIME is running out on the SIPTU Vice-President elections with voting finished on 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.

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.

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 ph: 01-8375760 or 087 6229686 dderwin@gofree.indigo.ie

Tara Mines:

WORKERS at Tara Mines Ltd in Navan have voted by a six to one majority to take industrial action against the company in a dispute over changes in rostering and welfare issues.

The miners, who are all members of SIPTU members working underground at the Navan mine are refusing a company proposal to introduce a seven day roster which they complain would affect weekend and overtime working and pay levels.

Miners have even proposed to achieve the extra tonnages required by the company through voluntary overtime work, but the bosses still want more.

Socialist Worker

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CRISIS

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FIGHTING RACISM:
INTERVIEW WITH
DAVY CARLIN OF
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PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY €1.00 / £0.70p

STRIKE TO FIGHT LOW PAY!

by RYAN MCKINNEY
Chairperson NIPSA Branch 8
Child Support Agency

THE brilliant unofficial action taken by civil servants across Northern Ireland was the perfect response to the bullying and intimidation by management in the civil service.

Thousands took part in the walkouts on Thursday 5th Feb.

In Belfast angry workers walked out at 11.30am and converged on Churchill House where the author of the threats is based. Around 500 workers from the Child Support Agency marched through the City Centre to chants of "Tommy O'Reilly on yer bike, we're going out on strike!"

When they arrived they were joined by the voices of the thousands of workers already there. Even the mainstream press esti-

mated the crowds as between 3000 and 4000!

The following day the vast majority of the civil service was brought to a standstill by 22,000 striking workers.

From Downpatrick to Derry, Larne to Lurgan pickets were out in force and again the streets of Belfast echoed to the sounds of hundreds of singing pickets on their way to a strike rally at Transport House.

Last week Civil Service management responded to a ban on telephone calls by NIPSA by threatening union members taking part with loss of pay, withdrawal of flexible hours and ultimately suspension from duty.

They did this because the ban was a resounding success or in their own words 'caused chaos'. They hoped that through intimidation they could break the resolve of workers involved in the industrial action. But in the words of one worker "management put their foot in it. Everyone who walked out should be proud of themselves."

Refusal

The industrial action began on December 11th as a result of civil service management and New Labour clone, Ian Pearson's, refusal to sit down with NIPSA representatives and discuss a meaningful pay rise.

On the 28th November in a pre-emptive action aimed at influencing the strike ballot, management imposed the very pay 'deal' that union members voted against in their thousands.



■ NIPSA members taking action

The reaction by union members was to walk out in disgust and wildcat action spread across the North.

Even then NIPSA members were determined, but all the evidence now points to an even stronger resolve to win.

The picket lines on Friday's official strike were much stronger than on the 11th December.

The Pension Service in Derry had 2 pickets first time round this time they had 25. Offices in Lurgan where union members were previously rare had the shutters down and closed signs displayed.

In Belfast's Great Victoria St pickets out side the Child Support Agency sang to, and with, pickets stationed across the road where the Chartered Surveyors Office had tripled their picket line since December's action.

The same was repeated everywhere. NIPSA have a long list of groups of workers asking to be taken out on selective action.

Another important group fre-

quently pointed to by union leaders and the media alike, 'the general public', have shown consistently their understanding of the situation civil servants are in and the low pay which has led to the strike.

What all this does is serve to prove that we can win. As Julie from the SSA said, "I really think we can win this, I wasn't sure before, it's strange but I got a little feeling of power when we stood up to O'Reilly, it has put us in the driving seat."

United

Describing Friday's action Darren from DEL told *Socialist Worker*, "The size of the picket lines proves we are united and we still have the support of the public even though many will face extra hardship due to our action."

In reality NIPSA's leadership have the 'luxury' of being in a situation which many union leaders would envy. It's crucial that union members don't let them blow it. The firefighters

have lit up the road to ruin for us.

The longer the dispute goes on the more public support will wane, the more months the dispute is spread over the more electricity bills and the like we will have to scrape to pay.

Most importantly, the longer this dispute lasts the harder it will be to maintain both morale and solidarity.

What's needed is an all-out strike of all civil servants across the North, ideally co-ordinated with PCS, the civil servants' union in Britain. An all-out strike would bring the government to its knees, force them to pay us a decent wage and to drop their plans for regional pay rates.

We need to push for more action to be called officially and in the meantime resist management's threats by standing together, outside our workplace if necessary.

The 5th and 6th of February was a great example of how every group of workers can fight low pay. Now we need to win!

Intimidation of NIPSA strikers

A MEMO circulated by a Mr. Robert Crampton, an Establishment Officer, to staff at the Grants and Subsidies Payments Branch, Orchard House in Derry, shows just how far management is prepared to go to break the strike.

The ten-point memo informs staff that "the refusal to answer telephone calls" is considered "participating in a course of industrial action short of a strike which amounts to a material breach of their terms and conditions of service."

In order to maintain levels of service provided by the department, rather than raise staff wages which the dispute is actually about, the management will implement "restriction of leave, suspension of Flexible Working Hours Scheme, pay deductions and the introduction of Temporary Relief from Duty."

"From and including 3 February 2004, any member of staff who refuses to handle telephone calls will have withheld from their pay an amount equivalent to 20% of their daily rate on each day that such a breach of terms and conditions occurs."

"This shows how far they are prepared to go to break the industrial action," said one NIPSA member on the picket lines. "They know how high poverty levels are in Derry, especially after Christmas and New Year, but rather than negotiate a decent wage rise they want to cut pay."

"They have seriously underestimated just how angry everyone is about the wage levels."

"The memo probably helped building the picket lines. Compared to the last strike day, we set up earlier and we had more people picketing. That's our response to management intimidation."