

Socialist Worker

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Ahern: Get Rumsfeld and his troops out of Shannon!



WHAT A blatant insult!

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is pictured giving a pep talk to US troops on their way to Iraq in Shannon airport.

He arrogantly poses for publicity photos and chats to journalists.

Rumsfeld is one of the chief architects of Bush's war and occupation of Iraq.

He lied to the world about Weapons of Mass Destruction.

He lied about mobile chemical weapons factories.

He lied about Iraq receiving uranium from the Niger.

So far the war has cost the lives of tens of thousands of Iraqis.

The occupation forces are overseeing the grab of Iraqi oil for US interests.

It is awarding contracts for the privatisation of telephones.

It is creating a quisling police force to clamp down on opposition.

The US has refused elections and instead plans to hand over power to puppets that it has chosen.

Over 125,000 US troops have poured through Shannon on their way to the war and occupation in Iraq.

Each month 14,000 more pass though.

And the Fianna Fail/PD government is quite happy to let this happen.

While Ahern is in the pockets of the Bush regime, a clear majority of the Irish people have opposed the invasion of Iraq.

They oppose Irish collaboration through the use of Shannon as a staging post for US troops.

They also oppose this blatant affront to Ireland's supposed neutrality.

We need to show once again that Ahern does not speak for us.

We need to build a huge demonstration on March 20th against the US/UK occupation of Iraq and the craven collaboration of the Irish government.

Now turn to page 3

**Demonstrate
March 20th
GLOBAL DAY
OF ACTION**
• Dublin 3pm
Parnell
Square

**Organised by Irish
Anti War Movement**

END THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ!

More Lies in Iraq

ANOTHER one of the Bush administration's leading sources of pre-war intelligence in Iraq has admitted information it supplied to the US was intended to start a war and may have included inaccuracies.

Ahmed Chalabi, the pro-US and pro-war head of the Iraqi National Congress said that his own pre-war reports about Weapons of Mass Destruction may have been "exaggerated but the ends justified the means."

Last month the US State Department for the first time admitted much of the first hand testimony it had received regarding WMDs was "shaky at best".

British troops kill civilians

The Ministry of Defence in Britain is facing the prospect of a string of lawsuits over the deaths of at least 18 Iraqi civilians allegedly killed by British soldiers, the *Guardian* revealed last Friday.

The incidents, hitherto unreported, are separate from the suspicious deaths of seven Iraqis who were being held by British troops in the notorious Camp Bucca detention centre near the port of Umm Qasr, south of Basra.

The threat of legal action comes as the conduct of British troops serving in southern Iraq is under intense scrutiny, with MPs and human rights lawyers demanding independent inquiries into the deaths at the prison camp as well as civilian fatalities in and around Basra.

US/UK wrecked chance of peace in Iraq

A joint British and American spying operation at the United Nations scuppered a last-ditch initiative to avert the invasion of Iraq, *The Observer* revealed last weekend.

Senior UN diplomats from Mexico and Chile provided new evidence last week that their missions were spied on, in direct contravention of international law.

The former Mexican ambassador to the UN, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, told *The Observer* that US officials intervened

last March, just days before the war against Saddam was launched, to halt secret negotiations for a compromise resolution to give weapons inspectors more time to complete their work.

Aguilar Zinser claimed that the intervention could only have come as a result of surveillance of a closed diplomatic meeting where the compromise was being hammered out.

He said it was clear the Americans knew about the confidential discussions in advance.

"When they [the US] found out, they said, 'You should know that we don't like the idea and we don't like you to promote it.'"

The revelations follow claims by Chile's former ambassador to the UN, Juan Valdes, that he found hard evidence of bugging at his mission in New York last March.

No elections coming in Iraq

THE United Nations last Friday indicated that elections are unlikely to take place in Iraq before 2005—despite demands for an early poll by religious and political leaders.

The country's leading Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, has led calls for elections to be held by June 30 this year—when the US occupying powers are due to hand power back to the Iraqis.

Hospital waiting list grows

The FF/PD government's record on Health continues to be sickening. Some women are still waiting up to four months for the results of their cervical smear tests, it emerged last week.

Waiting times are longest in the north west and mid west. Plans for a national screening programme have not yet been extended past the three year old pilot programme in the Mid Eastern Health Board region.

Cervical cancer is one where early detection is absolutely crucial and these long waits only add to the huge amount of stress suffered by the women.

Fianna Fail: The best party money can buy



■ Rogues gallery: clockwise from top: Flynn, Haughey, Burke, Cooper-Flynn and Lawlor; Below: Aherne

THE corruption of major figures within Fianna Fail was brought back into the spotlight recently with more revelations regarding former FF European Commissioner Pádraig Flynn.

These are just the most recent in a steady stream of evidence of corruption that has flowed out from the FF top brass.

The FF 'disgraced list' is almost endless, Haughey, Flynn, Burke, Lawlor...

However one of the pivotal figures from the FF Cabinet in the 1980s that contained all these rogues remains in power. Speaking on the *Gerry Ryan* radio show last week Bertie Ahern tried to put distance between himself from his former friends, colleagues and political role models. Ahern said that he knew "nothing of the corruption".

This is hard to believe. Ahern was no non-descript back-bencher in the Charles Haughey government, he stood at the powerful right hand of his political mentor.

He was FF Treasurer, Minister for Trade and Employment as well as Minister for Finance during this period.

Not only that, on becoming Taoiseach in 1997 he appointed disgraced Ray Burke as his Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The man that Haughey called "the best, the most skillful, the most devious and the most cunning of them all" is very much part of the FF Rogues Gallery.

Bertie Ahern

For many years Ahern has insisted that he did not meet property developer Tom Gilmartin in the late 1980s. However in recent weeks former Minister Mary O'Rourke has said that such a meeting did in fact take place and Ahern was present.

Ahern has now said that he may have been in contact with Gilmartin but he could not remember what was



discussed.

■Gilmartin's allegations are truly amazing and will come before the Mahon Tribunal in the coming weeks. Gilmartin alleges that he attended a meeting in government buildings in 1989 attended by such kings of sleaze as former Taoiseach Charlie Haughey and Pee Flynn.

According to O'Rourke both herself and Ahern were also present. The meeting was organised by one Liam Lawlor.

After discussing a major retail development at Bachelors Walk Gilmartin left the meeting where he was confronted by an unnamed man who asked the developer for a £5million donation. Gilmartin is said to

have told the man that "you lot are worse than the Mafia".

Padraig Flynn

The former European Commissioner and leading FF Minister has been in the political doldrums for a number of years.

This came about after it emerged that Mr Flynn received a £50,000 (enough to buy two expensive houses today) donation from developer Gilmartin in 1989.

The money which was meant to be a political donation to FF never reached the party's accounts.

■Pee Flynn's daughter and backbench FF TD Beverley has been accused of helping her parents salt away the £50,000 donation off-shore.

Despite her current Supreme Court challenge, Beverley was found by a High Court jury to have had encouraged a number of persons in Mayo to evade tax.

■Bertie Ahern and Flynn were joint party treasurers at the time of the 'political donation'.

Despite the money never reaching FF the party has never had their own investigation into why this money never reached their coffers. You would think that FF would have been a tad annoyed that this large amount of cash did not get to the party.

Maybe FF are afraid of what else they would uncover with such a

investigation?

Haughey & Burke

■The McCracken Tribunal in 1997 found that it could not "accept most of the evidence" from former Taoiseach Charles Haughey.

The Tribunal found that he was aware that huge amounts of monies were held for him off-shore in the Ansbacher Caymen Island account.

The tribunal also said that Haughey received huge personal donations such as the £1.3million cheque from Ben Dunne.

While calling on the Irish people to show restraint in harsh economic times, Haughey lived a life of luxury with huge cash donations from business barons. Much of this money was kept off-shore.

■Ahern was a huge political supporter of Haughey. Haughey appointed him to a number of senior cabinet posts.

■Former Minister for Foreign Affairs Ray Burke had to resign after it emerged that he had received payments from a building developers. Burke had been appointed Minister by Ahern in 1997.

Despite the overt attempts by Ahern to isolate himself from the former rogues in FF, he was at the centre of political life during a period of unprecedented corruption.

The Mahon Tribunal will look into the Gilmartin allegations in the coming months and the nature of Ahern's own involvement will become clearer then.

But one thing is clear: substantial elements in the political and business establishment in Ireland over the past decade are up to their eyes in sleaze and corruption.

While working class families had to scrimp and save during the 80s and early 1990s the rich got fat on profits helped in every way possible by their powerful friends in FF.

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editorial



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.

BUSH AND BLAIR: GET OUT OF IRAQ!

U.S. MILITARY OUT OF SHANNON

ALMOST a year on from the start of their bloody invasion of Iraq the US/UK forces are continuing their occupation of that country.

Despite not finding any weapons of mass destruction Bush and Blair have forged ahead with their plans to bleed the oil wealth of Iraq dry while denying democracy to the people of Iraq.

The resistance in Iraq to the occupation continues on an almost daily basis with the US/UK body count continuing ever upwards.

Since it has been found out that there are no WMDs and that Bush and Blair had lied before the war, everyone knows that the occupation forces have no intention of bringing democracy to Iraq.

Mr Paul Bremer the chief of the American occupation forces was recently asked what would happen if Iraqi leaders wrote into the interim charter that Islamic law should be the principal basis of the future constitution.

Showing an open honesty that has been severely lacking from the American authorities over the past year, Bremer simply said "Our position is clear," he said "It can't be law until I sign it."

Last week an ambush in Baghdad brought to 540 the number of US service men who have died since the US launched the invasion in March 2003. Most of these have died since Mr Bush declared an end to active combat last May. Attacks have continued against the occupation forces despite the capture of Saddam Hussein.

The American government downplays the number of injuries that its forces are picking up in Iraq. Wounded soldiers are flown back to the US in the dead of night and Bush never publicly visits the injured and their families.

The economic condition that Iraq is in is dire. While the US authorities have been quick to open up the oil market to private US interests the rest of the population have had to suffer growing unemployment figures.

"We have a dire unemployment situation now. Unemployment is up to 50 or 60% of the total labour force, and there are no serious investment programmes currently being undertaken apart from those that are related to emergency reconstruction," the US backed Minister for Trade told BBC's Newsnight.

The same BBC report showed how thousands of Iraq women were forced into prostitution because of the economic state of the country.

"A lot of women are selling themselves now. Families take their daughters to the hotels to be enjoyed by the Americans. This is the only way, and the easy way, to get money," Azhjan a prostitute

from Baghdad told the Newsnight reporter.

The 'intelligence' used by the US before the war to paint Iraq as an imminent threat has completely unravelled. Even members of the US and UK intelligence services have admitted as much.

Ahmed Chalabi, the pro-US and pro-war head of the Iraqi National Congress said that his own pre-war reports about Weapons of Mass Destruction may have been "exaggerated but the ends justified the means."

Admitted

Last month the US State Department for the first time admitted much of the first hand testimony it had received regarding WMDs was "shaky at best".

Despite all the US talk their is no real democracy planned for Iraq.

The Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the leading figure amongst Iraq's Shia Muslims, called for a rejection of the US so called election plans. But the occupying powers do not want any democracy in Iraq. The US plans to have a system much more favourable to their rule.

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

Even the UN has come out now to say that "free" elections will more than likely not be held until 2005.

The real agenda behind the US/UK agenda is becoming clearer by the month.

However while it is nearly one year since the launch of the invasion of Iraq it is also 12 months on from the massive inspiring worldwide antiwar protests.

Millions across the globe, including 150,000 here in Dublin, marched against the war on February 15th 2003. Further huge protests followed in the weeks and months after March.

The antiwar movement has not gone away and the constant exposure of the naked lies spun by both Bush and Blair has meant that anger is growing against this occupation. The Irish Anti War Movement national

demonstration Saturday, 20 March 3pm at the Garden of Remembrance, Dublin against the occupation and the use of Shannon airport by the US military must be supported by everyone who is against this occupation.



■ US troops harassing Iraqis

Ahern has blood on his hands

The Fianna Fail/PD government has backed Bush's war and occupation of Iraq all the way.

Despite the fact that a clear majority of Irish people have always opposed Irish involvement, and in flagrant breach of neutrality, the government has made available Irish airspace and Shannon airport facilities to the US war machine.

Up to 20,000 Iraqis have died in the past year because of the

war and occupation. The blood of these men, women and children is on Ahern's hands.

Last year 125,855 US troops passed through Shannon airport and over 600 military flights landed—no doubt many of these carried cluster bombs and "daisy cutters" to rain death and devastation on the people of Iraq.

This war and occupation is clearly an imperialist venture designed to strengthen the US political and economic grip on the region.

And the Irish government, representing the moneyed interests in this country, is no doubt trying to curry favour so some of the profits accrue to Irish capitalists.

Just as it attacks working class people at home, through stealth taxes, bin charges, hospital cuts and privatisation, Ahern's government is assisting Western imperialism's attack on working class people and the poor in the Middle East.

Everybody who opposes oppression and exploitation, at home or abroad, and everyone who wants peace and democracy should throw everything into building the biggest possible demonstration on March 20th.

We need to tell Ahern and his gang: No co-operation with this bloody occupation!

■ Contact the Irish Anti War Movement for leaflets, posters, etc: 087-6329511, info@irishantiwar.org

**DEMONSTRATION:
END THE
OCCUPATION OF
IRAQ
US MILITARY
OUT OF
SHANNON**

**Saturday 20 March National demonstration on the day of worldwide mobilisation to mark 1st anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Assemble 3 pm, Garden of Remembrance, Parnell Square, Dublin 1.
IRISH ANTI WAR MOVEMENT**

Join the Socialists!

To join the Socialist Workers Party or for more information: Fill in the form and Send to:
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NI: SWP PO Box 143, Mallusk Road, Mallusk, Phone 0774 2531617
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comment

Eamonn McCann

What lies behind the Ardoyne tragedies?

Virtually every piece of commentary on the suicides of young men in Ardoyne mentioned the area being left behind by the peace process. But few ventured to suggest what it was about the peace process which had brought this about.

Local Sinn Fein and SDLP leaders claimed that, compared with Protestant areas, Ardoyne has been starved of facilities. All four leisure centres in north Belfast are in areas Catholics wouldn't be safe travelling into, for example.

The message is that the process is tilted against Catholics and that this has helped create conditions in which young men have despaired, and turned inwards.

This is curiously reminiscent of the explanations offered a year ago for the attacks on Ardoyne children walking to school past neighbouring Glenbryn.

Glenbryn had been left behind, it was said. Local residents couldn't visit the post-office in safety. Abandonment and alienation had generated resentment, directed outwards against Catholic children making their way to Holy Cross.

A £9 million refurbishment programme was put in place for Glenbryn. Now it's reported that, "special efforts will be made to tackle the lack of facilities for (Ardoyne) teenagers."

Some might wonder how the same situation can have sparked despair on "both sides." If the Catholics are left behind, surely the Protestants must be forging ahead? Or vice-versa.

But, as this paper has long argued, not only is it possible, it's inevitable that "both sides" will feel short-changed as the process is played out.

The Agreement corrals Catholics and Protestants into separate camps, assuring each of fair play as they compete for diminishing resources. This is a sure-fire recipe for generating grievance on both sides.

This does have relevance to the spate of suicides in Ardoyne. Urged by all in authority to find your sense of validation in the advance of your community vis-a-vis "the other side", the realisation that, actually, you are regarded by society as worthless, and that there's no communal remedy, can devastate the spirit.

Grotesque

But it would be grotesque to advance this as a full explanation. Every suicide is a specific and personal individual act which cannot be rationalised by reference to general truths.

The specific factors in Ardoyne include "punishment" attacks by the "Irish National Liberation Army." Although this, too, cannot be offered as a full explanation, neither can it be coincidence that Anthony O'Neill and Barney Cairns, both 18, who ended their lives in recent days, had been victims of INLA assaults.

A spokesman for INLA's political wing, the IRSP, explained the assaults: "The INLA, against their will (were) acting under pressure from the community."

According to his family, young O'Neill had been stripped by an INLA gang and left trembling naked down a manhole for hours before being dragged out and subjected to a prolonged vicious beating.

The notion that the INLA had done this "against their will...acting under pressure from the community," is an insult to the people of Ardoyne and to working class people generally. It's hard to imagine anything more calculated to reduce a youngster's sense of self-worth to nil.

The socialist approach is from the opposite direction. It begins from observing two solid facts—that the main cause of "anti-social behaviour" is poverty, and that, overwhelmingly, young people want to play a positive role in society.

Tackling the problem is only possible in the context of fighting against poverty. And young people have to feel that they have a valued role in this fight.

And it's the fight against poverty that the divisions enshrined in the Agreement can be overcome.

Neither the pro-Agreement commentariat nor the likes of the INLA have anything to contribute to this project. Youngsters from Ardoyne, as from any working class area, need politics which invite them to take control of their own lives as part of a movement of the working class and the marginalised to take control of society. Only revolutionary socialism can offer this vision.

RECENT ATTACKS IN BELFAST SHOW WE MUST...

Don't let the racists crawl out

THE recent racist attacks on three black men in the Botanic area of Belfast has come as an unwelcome reminder to anti-racist campaigners in Belfast that racism has not gone away.

Although the work of the Anti Racism Network has pushed back the level of organised attacks by loyalist paramilitaries, the attacks in Botanic showed that racist attacks generally have by no means stopped.

Undoubtedly the racist attacks are being fuelled by a prevailing attitude of racism at the top of society. In the wake of the tragedy that saw 20 cockle pickers lose their lives in Morecambe Bay, every headline screamed—"illegal workers drown". The politicians, eager to reduce the scale of their culpability and the immense human tragedy involved, chose to dehumanise those who had died down to a level where their immigration status was of more significance than their lives.

Combined with this, we have the furore over the expansion of Europe and the surrounding circus of xenophobic comments from politicians and media alike about the "potential floods of benefit scroungers".

This has an effect. Essentially the

message to the countries about to join the EU is "We want you to fight our wars. We want your goods and we want you to take our goods. Occasionally we will have highly skilled but very low paid jobs that we will want you to do. However, don't believe just because we jet off to Prague for the weekend that you can think of doing the same here."

Credentials

It is hardly surprising that the level of institutionalised racism in Britain's health service is on the rise. Every second day health care professionals are being reminded by New Labour that "NHS tourists are bleeding the country dry".

They are being actively encouraged to weed out "undeserving scroungers". Of course it goes without saying that those who will be asked to prove their credentials or who will be suspected of being "undeserving" are non-whites.

Racism is not inevitable. However, in the current climate, a serious and sustained campaign from anti-racists that seriously challenges the disgusting anti-refugee and immigrant policies of the British government is the way to begin to deal with where racism is coming from and attempt to stop it in its tracks.



Racist graffiti in Belfast

Anti war activists day in court

A GROUP of activists who were arrested in Belfast almost a year ago will be in court on March 12th.

Last April, after an ICTU /Stop the War Coalition "die-in" in front of City Hall, a number of activists sat and occupied the road in front of City Hall.

This protest was initiated by a group of white suited protestors but was soon joined by other activists.

The sit down had been the standard practice at Anti-War events leading up to the day the war actually started and the protests that occurred subsequently.

The riot squad was brought in to

baton the protest off the road, the savagery of their attack severely wounding a 14 year old school student and a number of women protestors.

Show of Force

One of the arrestees, Padraig said "Everyone knows that day the police were out for a show of force.

"They had been unprepared for the size of the opposition to the war particularly from school students and wanted to stamp out this form of protest."

"For the past year we have waited while the PSNI gathered evidence to prosecute us for "sitting

on the road maliciously"."

"We are hopeful that we will win given that we were sitting peacefully protesting against an illegal and unjust war.

"We knew then that there were no weapons of Mass Destruction and that it was a war for oil and control of the Middle East."

"Whatever the decision in court we know that we were right to protest then and we are still right to protest against the occupation of Iraq."

There will be a rally of support for the activists on the day outside Laganside Courts in Belfast.

Convention of the Left

Almost eighty people attended the Convention of the Left, called by the Socialist Environmental Alliance and held in Derry on Feb. 14th.

Organisers were disappointed by the turnout, two thirds of which came from Derry itself.

While the majority of those in attendance were not members of any political party, representatives of the Communist Party of Ireland (CPI), the Green Party, the SWP and the IRSP attended. The IRSP walked out towards the end of the day when it became clear that the SEA's opposition to paramilitarism extends to any party with a military wing.

There was a strong view that the European elections should not be allowed to be another sectarian headcount and general agreement that Eamonn McCann is the left candidate likely to be most credible to the broadest range of radical anti-sectarians. On that basis, the Convention agreed to nominate Eamonn as a candidate in June's elections.

However, it was also agreed that the forces at the Convention were too narrow and Derry-based. So, a series of meetings is being organised across the North over the coming six weeks to establish groups in every county to work on the election campaign.

In his acceptance speech, Eamonn McCann made it clear that the purpose of these local groups should be to create a network of socialists who can work together on issues such as water charges and defence of the public sector, not just in elections.

Anyone willing to help should contact the SEA at seaderry@hotmail.com or telephone 07973528772.

Jobs Crisis in Northern Ireland

WORKERS in Northern Ireland felt the full impact of the government's commitment to globalisation and neo liberal economic policies this week.

The Japanese owned seat belt manufacturer, TK-ECC, closed down its East Belfast factory, shedding over 500 jobs and Herdman's Mill in Sion Mills, a local company that had been in business for over 170 years, announced its closure and the loss of 270 jobs.

Less than one month ago, Ian Pearson the Government's Enterprise Minister said, "the Northern Ireland economy continues to outperform the rest of the UK and most of the rest of Europe.

Unemployment remains at low levels and the number of people in work in Northern Ireland is the highest on record.

Export demand continues to grow, tourism

visitor numbers are increasing and the economy is forecast to grow by 2.5 per cent this year."

The latest figures reveal this to be as much of a lie as Blair's 45-minute claim about Saddam's capacity to attack Britain.

The unemployment rate has increased from 5.5 per cent to 6.3 per cent.

There are 20,000 fewer people in work in Northern Ireland now than in December 2002.

With the loss of 1200 jobs since the New Year this shows no signs of abating.

The latest closures come on the back of the Desmonds and Shop Electric closures late last year.

Whereas a couple of years ago multinationals located in Northern Ireland because production costs were cheap and wages were among the lowest in the world, bosses now seek to

transfer jobs to Eastern Europe and Africa where production costs are even cheaper.

In the case of the Herdman's staff, some had actually been to South Africa to train workers there, and now management is moving production to its South African factory.

Promised

So much for its commitment to local people.

The rosy neo-liberal future that workers here were promised would accompany the Peace Process and a commitment to neo-liberalism, has proven to be as elusive as Weapons of Mass Destruction are in Iraq.

Assembly politicians like Reg Empey who crowed only a couple of years ago about the reduction in unemployment and the importance of multinational investment have merely whimpered about task

forces being set up to encourage other multinational employers to set up in Northern Ireland.

This is hardly a reassuring strategy.

The more worrying scenario is that government's commitment to privatise whole swathes of the Civil Service, the largest employer in Northern Ireland, will worsen the jobs crisis immeasurably.

The struggle over wages and conditions being waged by Civil Servants now takes on extra significance.

Whoever wins will lay the foundations for the struggle to retain public sector jobs.

The struggle at Shorts, where workers went on strike to fight pay cuts and to stop the Canadian Multinational Bombardier from sacking another 1000 workers shows that there is an alternative to simply allowing the job shedding to continue.

IRAN Clerics face rising challenge

DESPITE the gains for the conservative clerics on a reduced poll in Iran's recent election, it marked the most serious crisis facing Iran's rulers since the revolution in 1979.

The conservative clergy felt the pressure from the popularity of democracy movement. The Guardian Council, an unelected constitutional watchdog consisting of conservative clergy, disqualified 3,600 reformist candidates out of 8,200 prospective candidates.

In response, 80 reformist MPs (14 of them women) held a sit-in in parliament. This was followed by the resignation of 134 out of 290 MPs. Under these pressures, the Guardian Council removed the bar from 1,150 candidates but announced that the other 2,450 will remain barred.

The Participatory Front, the largest reformist party, and other parties who have the support of the democracy movement called for the boycott of the election. The conservatives who control the judiciary, army and the state media could rig the election and undermine the reformist majority in the parliament.

But this is likely to be a short-lived victory. Since the early 1990s workers, women and students have been demanding changes.

They have high expectations—the desire for equality before the law, equal political participation, the right to health, education and employment, and women's rights to choose whether or not to wear the Islamic hijab.

Many are disillusioned with the reformists' conciliatory approach.

They say the pro-reform President Khatami should have fought the conservatives when they vetoed reforms, when they closed down newspapers and journals, when they arrested students, workers, women and journalists.

The democracy movement is diverse. Some are secular, the majority Muslim.

There are also religious minorities (Jews, Armenians, Zoroastrians) and ethnic minorities (Azari Turks,

Kurds, Arabs, Baluchs and Turkamans). They have been working together for democracy.

The 1979 revolution overthrew a vicious dictatorial regime supported by the West. This was achieved by 18 months of demonstrations and strikes, and a general strike led by the oil workers.

The democracy movement, which began in the early 1990s and which today is unstoppable, is deeply rooted in the experiences of the revolutionary struggles of 1978-9.

The neo-conservatives in Washington have formed a "coalition for democracy in Iran" which advocates "regime change". Iranians resent these pressures on their country. People in Iran are patiently struggling for their own idea of democracy that may ultimately have a progressive impact on the region.

They remember well that during the 1980s Iraq-Iran war America and the West supplied Saddam Hussein's chemical weapons, which burnt and suffocated their families.

Overthrow

Older Iranians have not forgotten that MI6 and the CIA overthrew the popular nationalist government of Mossadeq in 1953 and replaced it with the Shah's puppet regime, which denied the majority of the population basic human rights, access to health, education and employment.

Today women exercise more rights in Iran than in neighbouring US-backed states.

They have the right to vote, and more gender-banced family law, education and employment laws.

However, the West ignores these achievements, which are the result of 25 years of bitter struggle, and only highlights women's hijab as a symbol of women's oppression.

Therefore for many in Iran, Bush and Blair's concept of liberation and democracy is pure hypocrisy.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL REVOLT

Poverty and racism spark riots

THE ABORIGINAL area of Redfern near Sydney in Australia exploded in a riot last weekend after a 14 year old died.

JARVIS RYAN from Socialist Worker's Australian sister organisation reports.

ON SATURDAY morning Thomas Hickey, a young Aboriginal boy, was riding his bicycle through Redfern. Somehow he fell off, was impaled on a fence and died.

The exact circumstances aren't known. But rumour spread through the Aboriginal community that he had been pursued by police.

By Sunday evening there was a full-scale riot. It took nine hours before the police could get control. The police admit they have never seen anything like it. Up to 50 of



■ Protests after the death in Redfern

them were injured. The government has tried to put it down to misunderstanding, alcohol and the very hot weather.

But Redfern was a tinderbox waiting for a spark. The death of Thomas was a catalyst for all the grievances of Aboriginal people.

They suffer an 80 percent unemployment rate. They die 20 years younger compared to the rest of the population.

The rate of incarceration of Aboriginal people is incredible. There is hatred of the police. Thomas's aunt was reported in the press saying,

"They are nasty. They treat our kids like dogs."

Many think the very heavy police presence in the area after Thomas died was a source of the anger. Some of the Aboriginal leaders applauded the young people. Redfern is one kilometre from Sydney's central business district, the wealthiest part of Australia. You can stand and look at that while in front of you is a Third World slum.

The conditions are terrible there. But the area is synonymous with Aboriginal Australia. The people there want to stay. Redfern is part of an inner city area that is being gentrified.

The government wants to sell off the public housing and "improve the social mix" which means getting rid of the poor people.

The reaction to the riot from the government and media has had to be very restrained. Sydney is this "world city" with a big problem in the middle of it. And Aboriginal people are angry at the racism they face.

US backs uprising in Haiti

THE small island nation of Haiti (the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere) is gripped by an armed uprising by right-wing gangs.

The democratically-elected government of Jean Bertrand Aristide faces a growing threat of being overthrown in a violent coup d'état.

For weeks, gangs of armed groups have attacked police stations and other government outposts. More than 50 people have been killed and the US-covertly backed rebels daily increase their weapons supplies.

Aristide's official government forces are ill-equipped to defend against the violence. Haiti has no army and the national police are estimated at around 3,000 men. Aristide supporters have clashed regularly with the insurgents and other opponents of the Haitian president.

Although US Secretary of State Colin Powell officially denied US involvement, those claims are unconvincing. US officials have hinted that they want Aristide gone. Many of the leaders of the armed gangs are men who were at the forefront of the campaign of terror in the early 1990s in Haiti that ultimately led to the overthrow of Aristide and have ongoing links with Washington.

The uprising is supported by the opposition and was launched by the



■ Right wing rebels supported by the US celebrate

Gonaives and the Resistance Front (formerly known as the Cannibal Gang) which had once been allied to Aristide, but turned against him, claiming that Aristide's government was behind the assassination of the group's leader.

The rebellion followed mounting protests by the Democratic Convergence, an opposition dominated by Haiti's wealthy.

Reports indicate that rebels with US supplied M16 rifles are pouring across the border from the Dominican Republic.

Threatened

They currently hold several towns and have threatened a bloodbath unless Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, surrenders without resistance

next week.

It is probable that the US would use the situation of civil strife to intervene, either directly, or through France and Canada, to depose Aristide and impose their nominee.

The former colonial power, France, has announced that its troops in the region are ready to intervene. Canada has said it too will assist any French intervention.

WHO IS ARISTIDE?

ARISTIDE emerged in the late 1980s. A Catholic priest, he seemed to offer hope to the poor with his message of liberation theology delivered in the slums of Port-au-Prince.

He was swept to power in the 1990 elections.

However, his efforts to introduce reforms were overwhelmed by interference from abroad.

The currency lost half its value, unemployment increased and poverty deepened.

He was ousted in a coup but reinstated by the US after agreeing to implement the policies demanded by the IMF, international financiers and multinational capital.

As Noam Chomsky noted, "The Aristide government [was] to keep to a standard "structural adjustment" package, with foreign funds devoted primarily to debt repayment and the needs of the business sectors, and with an open foreign investment policy."

Some 80 percent of the country lives in poverty. Life expectancy is just 50 years. A 1999 estimate put the number of people with HIV/AIDS at more than 5 percent of the population. The economy hasn't



■ Haitian President Aristide

grown in three years and the U.S. put a virtual embargo on aid to Haiti since 2000.

In the face of vice-like grip, Aristide discouraged the militancy, begging the poor in true Christian style not to rebel but to remain meek (and poor).

With the Aristide government's popularity having slumped, because he failed to stand up for the people he promised to help, the right-wing, backed by the CIA and Washington insiders, are seizing their chance.

Aristide's only defence has been to resort to police violence to quell demonstrations.

Regime change is now the immediate, if covert, policy of the US administration.

US intervention in Haiti

THE US invaded the island in 1915 and occupied the country for 19 years

US marines butchered around 60,000 Haitians, installed a president and took control of the economy. They seized the customs houses, the National Bank and gold reserves; organised forced labour to construct roads and other projects; rewrote Haiti's constitution to allow foreigners to own land and extract the country's resources; and created and trained a new army that became notorious for its ruthless repression.

In 1956 the US backed François 'Papa Doc' Duvalier military coup. Duvalier's murderous regime was maintained by the notorious Tontons Macoute militia. His son 'Baby Doc' took over in 1971. The regime lasted until 1986, massacred tens of thousands of Haitians and stole hundreds of millions of dollars from the national coffers.

A military junta led by US-trained soldiers seized power in 2001, seven months after Aristide's landslide election. Thousands of Haitians were killed

and tortured.

Three years later, in September 1994, President Clinton sent 20,000 troops to re-instate Aristide. Clinton's 'Operation Restore Democracy' was undertaken to stem the tide of refugee 'boat people' arriving on rafts in the US and to forestall a popular uprising against the junta.

In exchange for his return to power, Aristide agreed to accept an IMF-dictated programme for maintaining low wages, privatising state enterprises and eliminating tariffs and other controls on imports. Donor aid was explicitly linked to Aristide's agreement to privatise nine crucial state entities.

Despite Aristide's compliance, the US was not satisfied. In May 2000 elections Aristide beat Washington's favoured candidates. The opposition protested and the US and the Organisation of American States organised an international blockade of millions of dollars of aid. A few months ago Haiti was forced to pay US \$30 million in arrears on loans.

Six key facts about Iran

- In 1979 a popular revolution, with mass strikes and demonstrations, toppled the Shah of Iran, a dictatorial ruler who was the West's key ally in the oil-rich region.
- After almost two more years of upheaval a group of conservative clerics linked to the merchant section of the capitalist class consolidated its grip on power. The figurehead for this group was the religious leader Ayatollah Khomeini. He combined repression at home with opposition to US policy in the Middle East.
- The new rulers allowed for elections, but also put huge powers in the hands of a Guardian Council, an unelected body of conservative clergy.
- This regime also repressed workers' and students' organisations, and fought to restrict women's rights.
- The growing mood for change among the mass of the population was reflected in the landslide victory in 1997 of Mohammad Khatami in presidential elections. He was re-elected with an equally large majority in 2001.
- Khatami represents a section of Iran's rulers who wanted some reform, and his supporters are dubbed "reformists", while those who want to stop change and dominate the Guardian Council are dubbed "conservatives".

Why socialists are internationalists

by COLIN BARKER

IN 1919, dockers in the city of Seattle refused to load arms for use against the recent Russian Revolution. They were followed by dockers in San Francisco, London, Hull and elsewhere.

In that same spirit of global solidarity, Lancashire cotton workers supported Abraham Lincoln in the American Civil War, understanding that the war was against slavery.

In 1889, Australian and other workers sent financial support to the great London dock strike. The recent refusal of Scottish train-drivers to move war materials was another example of a vital tradition.

Black people's struggle against apartheid in South Africa attracted immense worldwide solidarity.

International solidarity has a long and honourable tradition in the labour movement. It is central to the idea of socialism.

Workers can and do recognise, against the barrages of nationalist propaganda, that they truly "have no country", as Marx wrote in 1848. Their real kinship is with other members of their class across the world.

Now, more than ever in history, capitalism is a global system. It can only be transformed into a different world through international solidarity among workers.

There can be no "socialism in one country". Of course, internationalism is not the only current within the popular mind. We're bombarded daily with what seem "common sense" images.

They support the idea that we belong to a nation and that this nation must compete with other nations.

In sport we're supposed to identify with "our" team. In culture, we must cheer when a "Irish" film does well in the Oscars.

What does nationalism assert? That we, as "the Irish" or "the French" or "the Ruritania" people have more in common with each other than we have with people from "outside".

So the exploited worker has something in common with the rich company director or the landowning Duke?

Divides

Nationalism ties us all together under a particular nation-state, and divides us as a class.

That nationalist strand in "common sense" is not the only one. The opposing strand arises from our common experience of exploitation and domination.

Ordinary people's capacity to empathise with others, regardless of nation, colour, religion and the rest, appears in all manner of forms.

Older readers will remember how images of famine in 1980s Ethiopia were captured and crystallised in mass sympathy by Live Aid.

Black people's struggle against apartheid in South Africa attracted immense worldwide solidarity.

Today, hundreds of millions identify with the Palestinians as symbols of resistance to injustice.

As in economic life, so in politics and ideas.

There are two impulses in every worker's experience.

One responds to the competitive character of capitalism, to worries about getting or keeping a job, to fear and isolation.

That impulse produces division and weakness in our movements.

The other impulse involves recognising a brother or sister in the suffering and struggles of the exploited and oppressed across the world.

It is the impulse to solidarity, reaching across borders.

WORKERS AND COMMUNITIES FIGHT TO RESIST...

Privatisation madness...

BREAK UP OF CIE:

'They'll be no competition —except between workers'

Transport Minister **Seamus Brennan's plan to break up CIE and franchise out 25 per cent of its routes has sparked massive resistance from bus workers.** Last week CIE workers stopped work and took to the streets to oppose Brennan's plans. Socialist Worker spoke to **Owen McCormack, of the rank and file Busworkers Action Group.**



■ CIE workers stopped against Brennan's plans in February

What was the background to last weeks work stoppages?

There has been a lot of anger building up. These plans which ultimately lead to the privatisation of CIE have been ongoing for three years.

In the last year three times the unions have called off action because of talks with the minister, but each time Brennan was telling the media he was intent on the break-up of CIE and the franchising of routes.

The four-hour stoppage was a response to lack of progress on talks. A chairman of the talks had not even been announced.

The unions were under tremendous pressure to call action.

Busworkers hope this was not just allowing the workers to let off steam but will be followed up if the Minister does not withdraw his plans.

What will Brennan's plan involve?

Complete privatisation is the long term goal. The immediate plan is the break-up of CIE into three completely separate commercial companies.

Then the franchising out of 25 per cent of Dublin Bus and Bus Eireann routes each year.

This would mean that all routes would be fully franchised in four years and then every four years the routes would come up for tender again.

There would be constant pressure on workers threatened with being undercut and losing routes to non-union operators.

Wages and conditions would necessarily suffer in this environ-

ment 'to be competitive' with the lowest cost operators.

The German government is in dispute with the EU over exceeding its budget deficit targets, but the world hasn't stopped. It is important we don't let Brennan get away with this sleight of hand.

What happens now?

We have been told that the National Public Transport Forum set up under the previous minister Mary O'Rourke agreed to the introduction of private operators and the break-up of CIE.

But the workforce have been given no details of this. CIE workers have consistently demanded that the break-up of CIE and the franchising of routes is taken off the agenda.

At a previous day of action hundreds of bus workers voted to demand the unions walk out of talks immediately if this does not happen.

CIE workers need to ensure their unions do not concede on these important principles. Bus workers in Dublin will be lobbying the talks to keep the pressure up.

The unions must be pressured to give a fighting lead in this fight in which so much is at stake.

At the end of the day it is down to the willingness of CIE workers to take action that will decide the issue.

What about Brennan's claims EU rules demand 'liberalisation' of the public transport market?

He is using this as an excuse. It is clear that the government is committed to the neo liberal agenda being touted around the world at the behest of big business.

He says the courts would force his hand. But the Irish government has refused to implement EU tax rules for multinationals and they have not been forced to comply.

It seems they have one standard for dealing with multi-

The British disaster

Seamus Brennan claims that privatising Dublin Bus will result in competition between different companies. This will mean lower fares and better services.

Exactly the same arguments were made in the 1990s in Britain when public transport was privatised there.

Despite breaking up the various regional bus operations into small companies, and bringing in smaller private operators, within a short time the industry became dominated by three huge multinationals — Stagecoach, Arriva and Delgro — who carved up the lion's share of the market between them.

And far from lower fares, they increased. Bus fares in Britain have gone up by 87 per cent in real terms since 1974.

Far from a better service, the companies only wanted to cherry pick the most profitable routes and times.

This has resulted in a worse off-peak and evening service: The Director of Transport 2000 says they are infrequent at times when companies reckon they can make less profits.

And the pressure to cut corners to cut costs has meant a slump in employment, wages and conditions. Lack of investment in the industry led to operators hanging on to older, more unreliable buses.

The average age of buses in Britain increased by 30 per cent after privatisation.



■ 'Let them drink Coke': Confrontation in Cochabamba

The big water scam

Water is an essential for human life. But 60 per cent of the world's population lacks access to essential sanitation facilities. In the next 25 years it is estimated that the proportion of the world's population living in countries with significant water stress will double from a third to two-thirds.

But instead of treating this as a serious emergency to be dealt with, big business sees the chance of mega profits.

Water services have been privatised in major countries like Britain, where in 2000 seven of the ten worst polluters prosecuted in the courts were water companies including Wessex Water Ltd (owned by Enron).

Big business interests have been pushing to have the GATS agreement implemented across the world through the World Trade Organisation. Financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF have required developing countries to open up their water distribution to private sector investment and foreign companies as a condition of rescheduling debt.

Bolivia had to accept complete water privatisation as a condition of receiving new loans. The Bolivian government privatised Cochabamba's water resources, granting a monopoly to a company ultimately owned by US conglomerate Bechtel.

In addition to making people hand over (without compensation) autonomous

water supplies and requiring them to pay to collect rainwater from their roofs, the company immediately introduced price hikes of \$20 a month — over a fifth of the minimum wage.

It took massive protests on the streets to force the Bolivian government to back off.

Gerard Mestrallet, Chairman and Chief Executive Office of French-based multinational Suez Lyonnaise commented, "Water is a product which would normally be free, and our job is to sell it."

Suez-Lyonnaise has been a major partner since 1993 in the privatised utility supplying water to Buenos Aires' 10 million inhabitants.

An independent study found that prices rose more than 20 percent since privatisation. Poorer families — if connected to the supply at all — can no longer afford to pay their bill.

The sewerage system, which was supposed to be renewed under the contract, does not function. 95 per cent of the city's sewage is dumped in the Rio del Plata River, causing environmental damage which must be cleaned up at public expense.

In Manila, another Suez subsidiary was given permission to increase rates by more than half, despite the privatisation project failing to meet its key target of providing 24 hour water supply to all connections.

Public investors require profit rates of 15 percent to invest in public projects. To achieve this they depend on cutting staffing numbers, cutting wages and cutting corners.

The government has announced that Mountjoy Prison is to be replaced by a new facility that is privately run.

One of the companies tendering for the contract is likely to be US based Wackenhut Correction Corporation.

Their contract to run work-shops at Britain's Coldingley Prison was cancelled after a government audit was leaked which alleged the managers had shown "a total disregard for fundamental tenets of government accounting and Prison Service financial policy."

In the US Wackenhut opened two prisons in New Mexico. Within 18 months the prisons had suffered several riots, nine stabbings and five murders.

Observers pointed out these events followed on from impossible conditions caused by reckless cost cutting.

Don't let them privatise our universities

by MARNIE HOLBOROW SIPTU Education Branch

THERE are, it seems, no off-limits as far as privatisation is concerned.

Now it is the turn of the universities. Dr Don Thornhill of the HEA, one time civil servant in the Dept of Finance, has suggested to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Education Report that some institutions in the university sector go private and follow the illustrious trail of Harvard and Yale.

His models are as ridiculous as they are undesirable. Harvard fees this year were \$40,000. Ivy League universities in the States have enormous private funds on a scale a long way from NUJ.

Nevertheless, his suggestions drew a quick, positive response from this privatising mad government. Noel Dempsey, Minister of Education, the peoples man in Fianna Fail, said he had nothing in principle against university privatisation.

However, in the longer term, this government seeks to follow the UK universities where state money only accounts for 67% of all their funding or the US where it is only 34%. Dempsey hopes that private funding will replace what the government is taking out.

The cost of this strategy falls back on the students. As it is, Ireland has one of the worst records of access for low-income students. Private units within the universities will be free to charge fees which will make universities even more elite.

In the US students have to fund their college attendance themselves through loan systems. The damage in social terms is that young American blacks are more likely to enter a prison cell than they are a college library.

But there are other issues at stake here. Multinational corporations running universities attacks the very basis of academic freedom.

Being able to carry out research away from the pressures of commercial interests protects objectivity and intellectual honesty. Corporate funding carries with it corporate bias. Oil companies, tobacco companies, pharmaceutical corporations do research to bolster their own products.

They select research projects which are specific and with immediate application. Disinterested, visionary, politically sensitive research goes out the window. Indeed, if companies want research conducted why cant this work be carried out in their own laboratories at their own expense rather than cashing in campus facilities provided by the taxpayer?

More private units within the universities also impacts badly on those working in Third Level Education.

Fixed salary scales with uniform rights of contract will become individual agreements which favour high-fliers and leave many other low-paid at the bottom.

For Admin. Staff workloads will become greater and more flexibility demanded of them as is already the case in some existing campus companies.

The public sector status of all staff in these proposed private units will go along with permanency and pension rights.

Education is a very political issue because it goes to the heart of how society sees itself and how knowledge can contribute to social progress. McDonaldisation, corporate branding, and a profit at any price pervades a lot of our daily living. Let's ensure that it stays away from how we learn and think as well.

The OECD is the information wing of neo-conservatism. What this is really about is reducing government spending on third level education. The Irish Government contributes 79.2% to the total of universities income.

McCreevey's engineered cut-backs at Christmas has already meant a freezing of posts, pruning of degrees, reductions in library facilities and books.

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International Women's Day

International Women's Day was borne out of struggle. The international socialist movement designated it a day of action by women at the start of the last century.

IWD has a proud history. In 1917 it was the March 8th demonstration by women that set in train the events that led to the fall of the tsar.

March 8 became a very significant date in the 1970s during the struggles of the women's movement.

Women in Britain marched for equal pay, equal educational and job opportunities, free 24 hour nurseries and free contraception and abortion.

Unfortunately today, IWD is a day usually marked by fairly light-hearted newspaper articles reminiscing about the struggle for women's liberation. The implication is that the struggle is over and women are now just getting on with things.

However when you consider the demands of British women at the height of the struggle it is obvious that in reality there are huge limits to what has been won.



■ Women trade unionists in 1919 America

The fight for women's liberation

Life for women has obviously changed enormously over the last thirty years. Up until 1973, women once they married were forced to leave their jobs in the civil service, banks etc.

For women today that seems absurd. Nowadays over half of married Irish women are active in the workforce.

Up until the early seventies there was a total ban on contraceptives. Today women believe they are entitled to have and enjoy sex. They are increasingly postponing marriage until their late twenties/early thirties and they are choosing to have children later in life.

Women are studying to the highest levels at third level and the female rate of participation in the workforce now stands at 47%.

This constitutes a massive step forward for women and reflects the power of the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s to win change.

All the legal rights and legislative changes are a direct testament to the women all over the world who got organised and took to the streets in those years.

However, this is only part of the story. Today women across the globe still endure oppression, which manifests itself at many different levels.

Work

Women's participation in the workforce is increasing but on a global scale women earn less than 50% of the wages of men

Despite the existence of equal pay legislation women in Ireland are paid on average 15% less than their male counterparts.

In some areas of the economy this pay gap is directly attributable to the demands of family life on women.

According to a recent ESRI Report "for a typical man and woman, identical in terms of educational achievement, the arrival of one child when aged 26, and another when aged 29, will lead by the time the second child is 18, to the woman having nine years less labour market participation than the man".

It reflects the way in which our society places responsibility for the care of children directly onto women to compensate for its failure to provide funding for childcare.

This is part of the double burden that women today face. Not only are they increasingly part of a badly paid, exploited workforce but they also

face family responsibilities.

It means that the more government cuts back on health and social services spending the more women have to pick up the slack by caring not just for children but also for elderly relatives. This phenomenon is evident right across the globe.

Education

While in the West women are increasingly gaining access to education at the highest levels, worldwide rates of educational participation reinforce in very stark terms the inferior position of women.

Two thirds of all children who do not attend school are girls, while 70% of those who are illiterate in the developing world are female.

In countries where access to education is not freely available boys get priority as girls primary role is still considered to rest within the family. In reality when they grow up girls are increasingly likely to join the labour force in the developing world.

Sex

Attitudes towards sex and sexuality have been completely transformed over the last twenty years.

As a result men and women feel much freer to enter and leave relationships, women can discuss their sexuality and sexual needs openly and the stigma of having children outside of marriage has lessened to an enormous degree.

However along with these benefits come more of the old problems. Rather than signalling an end to sexism, sexism has been repackaged in the last ten years.

The New Lad of Men Behaving Badly is a

means of reasserting traditional male "values", where women are objectified, dominated and demeaned but this time its all just a joke.

When accused of sexism, the defence is always irony.

As a new post feminist world is increasingly proclaimed- usually by the middle class leadership of the women's movement- women are encouraged to laugh along as this no longer poses any kind of threat.

Today images of women in various stages of undress have been mainstreamed and feature in the most mundane advertising in "respectable places"- publicly owned TV stations and the broadsheets. The unfortunate thing is that they go largely unchallenged.

The culture of the new lad magazines like Loaded and FHM is one of beer, sport and sex with a copious amount of glossy advertising thrown in.

It doesn't reflect real men's lives and experiences but is part of the commodification of every aspect of people's lives under capitalism.

It has led to high levels of sexual exploitation of women from poorer parts of the world.

It is estimated that 300,000 women are trafficked from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union for sexual exploitation every year.

They end up working in lapdancing clubs and brothels, often subjected to violence and abuse.

In a more general sense, the objectification of women has huge affects on young women in particular.

The concern about body image has led to growing levels of eating disorders among women under the age of 25 across the world. In Ireland it is estimated that at least 9000 women under the age of 20 suffer from an eating disorder.

The growth of the plastic surgery industry is an indication of just how limited sexual liberation has been for many.

Are men in crisis?

People like John Waters claim that it is men today who suffer oppression as a result of the gains of the women's movement.

He blames the feminist movement, even though it barely exists today, for all the difficulties men face.

He criticises the courts for awarding custody to mothers rather than fathers. However judges in Ireland have never been the allies of women. Time after time in rape cases they have blamed women for leading men on.

When they award custody to women they are merely reinforcing the view that women are the main carers in society.

The question of access rights to children is an important one.

It can best be dealt with by providing supports to both parents and allowing the space for those involved to come to an agreement that is beneficial to all involved.

Male suicide rates, particularly amongst the young, are increasing at a rapid rate. However the rate of mental illness, including depression, is higher amongst the female population.

The truth is across the population, whether male or female, black or white, people are feeling increasingly unhappy, pressurised, isolated, disempowered.

It reflects the increasingly vicious nature of capitalism- the drive to exploit people more and more, the violence and war that the system promotes to serve its interests

and the division that it whips up between people based on gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation. It is not increased rights for women that is causing distress but rather the system itself.

Concern in the West about girls outperforming boys in state exams is exaggerated.

What we may be witnessing is merely an evening out of educational achievement after years of girls playing a lesser role within the education system.

Class difference in educational attainment remains the more obvious problem and that requires urgent action.

Ordinary working men and women across the globe are all suffering as a result of the way the system works.

We are all robbed of real control over our lives, we are all exploited for the needs of big business. Now more than ever the need to fight together is obvious.

Men do not benefit when women workers are paid less than them. Men have no interest in a system that places the financial burden of caring for the old and young on the family instead of the state.

Men gain no benefit from human relationships that are commodified and distorted.

The fight for women's liberation is a fight that men also have every interest in winning. And the fight for real women's liberation can only be won as part of a fight to transform all aspects of society.

comment

Disney Corporation: A shameful history

by DAVID LYNCH

COMCAST'S attempted takeover of the Disney Corporation last week brought into the media spotlight that hugely significant economic and cultural powerhouse founded by Walt Disney.

One of the most recognisable institutions of popular American culture, Disney can often seem just like one of its famous animated creations. A harmless creator of fun and entertainment for both young and old alike.

Indeed despite some of the more obvious reactionary themes of much of its output, it can't be denied that in its day Disney has employed some incredibly talented animators.

However this is much more than just an animated factory of beautiful dreams, it is in fact a corporation with a very murky past and a very questionable record as an employer.

Firstly the Disney Corporation is a huge business.

In total, Disney earned \$400 million in the third quarter 2003 on \$6.18 billion in revenue. During the comparable quarter a year previous, Disney earned \$364 million, on \$5.8 billion in revenue.

Last year was actually seen as a bad year in terms of profits for the company.

Disney is much more than animation and is actually a powerful political player in the worlds media.

In addition to its theme parks and stores, media conglomerate Disney owns ABC television network, radio stations, Walt Disney Studios and stakes in several cable channels.

The founder of Disney is often portrayed (mainly in his almost 'friendly uncle' persona in Disney's own programmes) as a dreamer who just wanted to bring joy to young people.

In fact Walt Disney himself was a right wing supporter of nuclear power. He was an extremely anti-union employer who denounced Hollywood activists to the McCarthy led un-American committee in the 1950s. In the post war period Disney also employed Nazi war criminals in his company.

Walt had long established relationships with the American government dating back to the early years of the Second World War. Disney was a major creator of political propaganda for the American government.

Pearl Harbour

As one writer has commented "In a sense, Walt Disney went to war before America did, producing war shorts on contract for the National Film Board of Canada and military production films for Lockheed Aircraft."

Days after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour, Walt Disney was in Washington meeting with top government officials. The result of these meetings was *The New Spirit* (1942), an animated film made to encourage citizens to pay "taxes to smash the Axis."

But the relationship between Disney and the American political elite was to take an even more sinister turn when Disney started to create pro-nuclear animated shorts.

In order to counter opposition to the military use of atomic weaponry, the Eisenhower administration began a public relations effort called "Atoms for Peace," in which positive propaganda would be developed to promote the use of atomic energy.

The most infamous of all the Disney political productions was *Our Friend The Atom* (1957). This cartoon was produced by Disney in cooperation with the U.S. Navy and General Dynamics, builders of the nuclear submarine *USS Nautilus*.

As a "Tomorrowland" segment of the *Disneyland* television show, *Our Friend The Atom* relates the history of atomic energy, beginning with a clip from the earlier film *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea*, which erroneously maintains that author Jules Verne predicted the use of atomic energy.

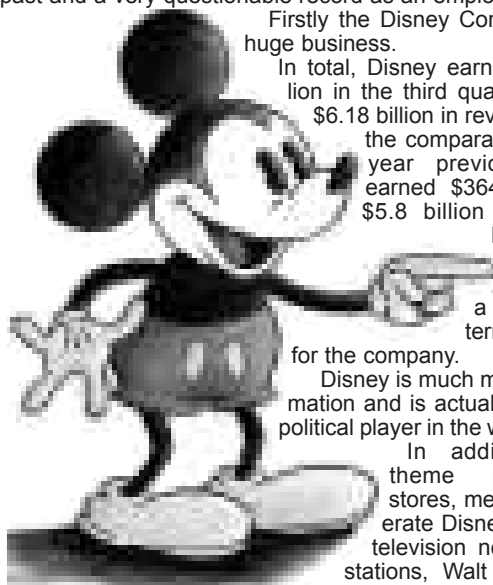
Nowadays long after the death of Walt the company continues to have a reputation as an anti union employer.

On an international level Disney creams massive profits of the sweat of underpaid workers.

"In 1996 the year in which Disney's chief executive Michael Eisner made \$565m, the workers stitching Disney branded clothes in Haiti were earning as little as a dollar a day," writes journalist George Monbiot.

"In China today, according to a new report by the US national labour committee, a factory producing Disney toys enforces 130 hour weeks, with a day off every two months."

The animated creations of Disney are more than just figures of fun, they front an organisation that has helped promote US imperialist interests while also treating its own workforce in a disgraceful manner.



music

Champions of creative independence

by DAVE LORDAN

THIS giant collection of seventy b-sides and rarities (*Join the Dots*) spans the years 1976-2001 and proves that, despite the lazy labelling of many in the music press, *The Cure* are neither an 'eighties' nor a 'Goth' band.

Indeed, though *The Cure* are capable of making great music in a breathtaking variety of styles, they have never been part of any corporate sponsored musical 'scene'.

Their second single, 1979's *Boys Don't Cry*, was described in the NME as 'John Lennon at 13' and last year they signed a new three album deal with Nu-Metal producer Ross Robinson.

In between came a raft of hit albums and singles ranging in style from the post winter of discontent gloom of 1982's grinding underground classic *Pornography* to the infectious pop optimism of *Lovecats* and *Friday I'm in love*.

Join the Dots contains too many gems to do it credit in this short review. The uplifting guitar and sax jangle of *The Exploding Boy and Hey You!!!*.

The ambiguous musical fusion and lyrical teas-



■ *The Cure, what's the disease?*

ing of *A Man Inside My Mouth* and *The Upstairs Room*. anthems like *Maybe Someday* and *Harold and Joe*. The sweeping semi-classical textures of *This is a Lie* and *The Big Hand*

Be it joy or despair, love or hate, anger or apathy, lust or disgust, The

Cure's musical and lyrical patch has always been out on the extreme edges of human emotion, and they have never been faking it.

Puppets

Since the short and tragic life of punk came to

an end with Thatcher's rise to power in 1979 popular music has increasingly become the domain of corporate puppets peddling us the same shit over and over again in a different dye.

Throughout this era the Cure have been champions of creative

independence and self-expression.

So are we. Buy this album and listen to one of the most consistently authentic and refreshing artistic voices of our time. Then go make your own music.

■ *Join the Dots*, The Cure.

pamphlet

Fighting racism in Ireland

by KEVIN WINGFIELD

RACISM is frequently claimed to be the result of ignorance. The solution is then supposed to be that "enlightened" people "educate" the ignorant out of their prejudice.

This ignores the fact that racism comes from the top of society, and is fuelled by sensationalist and misleading stories in the media and claims that there is "not enough to go round to meet the burden of immigration" from our rulers.

When our rulers create shortages by slashing housing programmes and health provision and

employers look for every opportunity to attack jobs, wages and conditions, it is no surprise that in the poorest communities, competition for inadequate resources results in tensions. These can sometimes be turned into resentment against immigrants and those with a different colour skin.

Of course it suits our rulers to have racist divisions. If people are blaming their neighbours their anger is deflected from their real enemies.

Therefore the fight against racism requires not just opposing racist manifestations and uniting communities against racist out-

rages—essential as these tasks are.

It also involves fighting in disadvantaged communities for the decent provision of jobs, housing and services that can benefit all and pointing to the people who are really responsible for misery and shortages—the rich and powerful.

Impact

Building Solidarity Across Communities, by seasoned anti-racist Pat Guerin and the South West Inner City Network is an extremely useful pamphlet.

It plots the impact of immigrant, refugee and asylum seekers in a poor

Dublin community.

It disposes of some myths promoted on talk radio: "Stories such as asylum-seekers receiving free cars, mobile phones and 'socialising money'."

Despite the fact that none of these stories are true, and that asylum seekers receive lesser benefits than Irish people, they remain widely believed and only encourage resentment and even hostility towards refugees and asylum-seekers...

The media and the government help push the racist myths: "Asylum seekers are continuously mentioned in the context of illegal immigration, yet all

asylum applicants are legally resident in Ireland while their cases are being examined... these factors have helped to generate resentment of asylum-seekers and to encourage anti-refugee racism in Ireland."

This well researched pamphlet would have been even better if some local people, both immigrant and native Irish had spoken of their experiences in their own words.

■ *Building Solidarity Across Communities*, by Pat Guerin and the South West Inner City Network, SWICN, 48 Hamilton St Dublin 8, Tel (01) 4732141

Send to Letters, Socialist Worker PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

letters

Email: socialistworker@swp.ie

PAISLEY'S PROGRESS

□ I AM aware that it can be misleading at times to use long forgotten quotes from politicians to try and establish what their future actions will be.

However I believe that it is interesting to look at some of Ian Paisley's actions and words in 1971 to find out how he will deal with the ongoing negotiations on the future of the north of Ireland.

By 1971 Ian had

already been through rough times. He had been imprisoned for organising attacks on civil rights marches, faced the embarrassment of having close confidants imprisoned on UVF bomb charges and was derided as being on the lunatic fringe of Unionism by the Official Unionist Party.

In 1971, Ian had been engaged in negotiations with the SDLP, which led to an agreement between the parties to oppose Official Unionism by oppos-

ing internment, 'Community Government' and demanding radical action on unemployment. In a radio interview Paisley said the principle obstacle to the unity of Ireland was the south's theocratic constitution which if altered he said 'you would have an entirely different set of circumstances'.

In an Irish Times interview afterwards Paisley clarified his position on this point and it looked like Unionism's 'fire brand' might be looking for ways forward in the North's

problems. Ian was feted by all and sundry, an SDLP source described him as a latterday United Irishman, Daithi O'Connell head of the Provo's believed Paisley was the way forward and Finance Minister George Colley invited him to Dublin to help draft a new constitution. So what does this all mean for today?

Paisley has been seen as the greatest 'NO' man of all the Unionists, as he retreated from his 1971 opinions steadily building his

party and church in order not to alienate his support base. However now he has reached his present position I believe that the bluster will subside and the practical nature will see a deal done relatively quickly.

The really big question is will an agreement change anything. I have my doubts but surely any place, which tries to attract investment by running radio adverts saying it is a low wage economy does need to change.

□ DAMIAN LAWLOR

AHERN'S INSULT

□ AS a bus worker I was annoyed by Bertie Ahern's statement that the 4-hour stoppage by CIE workers was 'unnecessary'.

He would be better off addressing the unnecessary hospital waiting lists and the unnecessary Bin Tax than attacking public services and the workers.

Perhaps it's time we said Ahern and Fianna Fail were 'unnecessary'. □ PAT JUDGE, Finglas

ANOTHER EUROPE IS POSSIBLE:

Protest at Eurocrat meeting



■ Demonstrators outside Dublin Castle

ANOTHER Europe is possible held a protest outside Dublin Castle on Friday at a meeting of the Article 133 Group of the EU.

The secret discussions at the Article 133 Committee meeting were about plans to make European business more profitable, whatever the social cost.

With profits from manufacturing at a low ebb, big business wants to get into public services.

Essential services like public transport, health, education, social housing, water and waste disposal can be turned into business opportunities— with guaranteed incomes and big profits.

This is what the EU's drive to 'liberalise' is all about. And the draft EU Constitution, which would make privatisation of health and education much easier, would put this neo-liberalism at the heart of

EU law.

The EU's intention is to create the conditions for big companies to take over and run public services, both in Europe and in developing countries—where the effects can be disastrous. We call for the needs of ordinary people to be the priority, not the profits of big business.

Organising

Speakers included Bill McCamley, SIPTU Dublin Bus; Eamon Ryan TD; Conall O'Caomh, Dóchas; Jo Tully, Joan Collins, Anti Bin-Tax Campaign; Eddie Conlon, TUI, Rita Fagan, St. Michaels Community Support Centre; Paul Dillon, President UCD-SU.

The movement is going forward and organising for May Day as the big day to oppose the EU and Irish governments policies of racism, war and privatisation.

Waterford Trades Council calls stoppage for Radiotherapy Unit

THE Waterford Council of Trade Unions has unanimously agreed to call a protest to demand a radiotherapy unit in the south-east.

On Friday 19th March—Daffodil Day, the march will assemble at 2.30pm at the offices of the South Eastern Health Board on Waterford's Cork Road marching into the city council buildings.

The WCTU is encouraging workers to stop work to attend the protest.

This is the fourth protest the trades council have called as part of the radiotherapy campaign and the second work stoppage.

The previous two hour work stoppage and protest was attended by 2,000 people with a second protest just weeks later attracting over 3,000 people.

In October last year the government belatedly released the report of the Special Review Group on cancer care which recommended that the south-east should not get the life-saving cancer treatment and that existing radiotherapy units in Dublin, Cork and Galway should be extended as compensation.

It said the region did not have a critical mass of population to justify the unit.

However, the report used outdated figures which underestimated the population of the region.

The only south-east representative on the review group, Dr. Gordon Watson has dismissed the report as politically motivated and is supporting

Save Our Seafront campaign

FIFTY people attended Save Our Seafront campaign meeting in Dun Laoghaire in February.

Harbour company representative Roy Dooney debated campaign spokespeople Nicola Sarratt and Richard Boyd Barrett.

DL/RD County Council has launched a lavish and expensive PR campaign in an effort to con the public into accepting the privatisation of the Carlisle pier.

As part of this four private sector proposals were exhibited in the town hall. None of the four proposals gives more than 10% of its space over to public use, the remainder being taken up by luxury apartments and hotels. According to Mr Dooney these are the only 'feasible' options.

The campaign and its supporters argued that there is a fifth choice



■ Richard Boyd Barrett

which the council is ignoring because of its ideological support for privatisation.

That fifth choice is using the space for publicly controlled amenities for locals and visitors.

The meeting agreed to launch a campaign of mass protest for public control of the pier with a carnival being planned for early summer. Watch this space or contact 0876329511 for more information.

the trades council in their campaign.

The protest is also being supported by the South Eastern Cancer Campaign.

An alternative report by Dr. Jerry Cowley and others, shows how radiotherapy services can be provided in Waterford, Limerick and Letterkenny at no extra cost.

The government's refusal is linked to plans of two separate consortiums to construct private radiotherapy facilities

in the region.

However, those who can't afford private healthcare will still have to face the gruelling six hour round journey to Dublin for treatment.

The failing to provide adequate access to radiotherapy in Ireland means that only 35% of cancer patients receive the treatment, even though 60% require it. With every two month delay in treatment there is an 8% decline in survival rates.

Apprentices strike

As *Socialist Worker* went to press, several thousand apprentices were set to strike for one day following the imposition of charges for their college attendance.

The apprentices, mostly trainee electricians, mechanics and construction trades, attend IT colleges for ten weeks as part of learning their trade.

From the beginning of this year the Department of Education

imposed a charge of nearly €250 where there was no charge before.

The electricians union, the TEEU, called the stay away from college following large meetings it held in IT colleges with apprentices to organise the protest.

College authorities are threatening not to give apprentices their important exam results if they don't pay the charge.

Anti Incinerator Alliance action

THE Anti-Incinerator Alliance in conjunction with the Waste Study Group are to protest outside a presentation by Herhof Environmental Ltd to Waterford city councillors.

The protest will take place on Wednesday March 3rd outside the city council in Waterford at 2.00pm.

Herhof are a German company which is planning to build a 'waste treatment' plant in Belview port, just outside Waterford City.

However, they originally planned to build a domestic waste incinerator with a capacity to burn 150,000 tonnes of waste a year.

The incinerator idea was dropped after a local protest campaign.

Herhof, which is owned by Treasury Holdings, a company known for its strong links to Fianna Fail, have claimed that the plant will create stabilat, a fuel made from waste which will then be exported and burnt

abroad and that it is not a waste incinerator.

Aidan O'Halloran of the Anti Incinerator Alliance told *Socialist Worker*: "The plant would be capable of incinerating waste and would cost millions, financed by the taxpayer."

"It is a white elephant that relies on the generation rather than reduction of waste and no emphasis is placed on manufacturers to limit excess packaging."

"The Herhof process relies on burning recyclables like paper, card, wood and plastics which are linked to cancer causing dioxins."

"Building a genuine recycling industry in this country could provide thousands of jobs and ensure a safe, sustainable future."

The Herhof plant is supported on the Waterford City Council by Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, PD's, Labour Party and independents.

Dates for your diary

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

MARX SCHOOL 2004

February 28 - February 11th - April 1st
The Workers Club, 81 Parnell St, Dublin 1

Rathmines Against War

Meets every Thursday at 9pm in Madisons Pub Rathmines

Dun Laoghaire: Fundraiser - Pub Quiz For RICHARD BOYD BARRETT & CHRISTY MOORE - Local Election Campaign. Friday March 26 at 8pm in Smyth's Pub, Georges St, Dun Laoghaire. €20 per table. €5 per person. Lots of Prizes.

GEORGE GALLOWAY SPEAKS OUT

Against Bush, Blair & Ahern's lies on Iraq

Saturday March 13, 2.00pm, ATGWU Hall, Middle Abbey St US Military Out of Shannon!

PUBLIC MEETING PUTTING THE IRAQ WAR (AND IRELAND'S ROLE IN IT) ON TRIAL

Speakers: Denis Halliday (former Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations); Iain Atack (Chairperson, Afri); Cian O'Reilly (Pit Stop Ploughshares); 8pm Thursday, February 26th 2004, Davis Theatre, Trinity College Organised by Afri For further information contact: 01 882 7563

CASTLEKNOCK:

Irish Anti War Movement Meeting:

Wednesday 3 March at 8 p.m. in Myos Pub Castleknock. Speaker Richard Boyd Barrett (Chair IAWM), info phone Brendan 087 6437822

MARXIST FORUMS

(Political discussions hosted by the SWP)

Blanchardstown: Life After Capitalism, Wednesday 10 March 8.30 p.m. Community Centre, Laurel Lodge Road, D.15

Bray: Advertising the Body - Why Sexism sells, Speaker: Melisa Halpin, Thursday March 11 8pm, Lenehan's Pub, Main St, Bray

Cork: The Brutality of Colonial War: showing of film 'The Battle of Algiers' Saturday Feb 28 3pm, An Spailpin Fanach bar, South Main St
Dublin North Central: The Zapatista Rising Ten Years On, Wednesday February 25, 8pm The Snug Dorset St

Dublin South East/Ringsend: Globalisation and Women's Liberation Today, Thursday 11th March, 8pm, Donovan's Pub (upstairs) Townsend St

Dundrum: Life After Capitalism, Speaker: Peadar O Grady, Monday, March 8, 8pm Dundrum Family Recreation Centre

Dun Laoghaire: International Women's Day - Globalisation and Women's Liberation Today, Speaker: Deirdre Cronin, Tuesday March 9, 8.30pm.

Tralee: Can there be peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples? Monday, March 1st., 8.00pm, Cumman Iosaef Community Centre, Tralee.

Tralee IT: The revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx, Tuesday, March 2nd., 1.00pm, Tralee IT South Campus, Clash, Tralee.

Waterford: James Connolly: Socialist or Nationalist? Thursday 26 February, Olde Rogue at 8.00pm.

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CIE workers strike to stop sell-off

WORKERS from CIE stopped work for four hours in February against Transport Minister's Brennan's privatisation agenda.

Brennan plans to break up CIE and franchise out bus routes.

In Dublin drivers from Dublin Bus assembled with fellow workers from Bus Eireann and Irish Rail in Parnell Square and over a thousand marched to Leinster House.

The action was called by the NBRU and supported by SIPTU following Brennan's delays in setting up talks.

But the mood on the march was angry. "We want these proposals taken off the table. We should not be negotiating the break-up of CIE or contracting out at all," one driver told Socialist Worker.

Stoppages and protests took part in other cities as well.

CIE workers unions plan further action next month unless they get satisfaction.

See special report on privatisation and interview with Busworkers Action Group on pages 6 and 7.



■ CIE workers protest in Dublin in February

Anti war protestor jailed over Clare ban

A DUBLIN-based anti-war activist, Eoin Rice (35), was sent to Limerick Prison in February for refusing to accept a ban from the entire county of Clare as part of his bail conditions.

He was originally arrested on a traffic violation on the morning of December 6th on his way to the national protest at Shannon airport.

After hours of being held at Shannon Garda station

where Mr. Rice alleged he was severely physically and verbally abused, and items removed from his person not returned—camera film and audio recordings etc—a special sitting of Tulla district court was convened at six o'clock on the Saturday evening of his arrest, an unusual event for a traffic violation.

He was originally bailed on a payment of €5. But at a sitting of Shannon District Court, in February Judge Joseph Mangan told Mr Rice that he was adding a ban from County Clare to his bail conditions. Even the gardai or prosecution had not requested this additional condition—it was purely a vindictive whim of Judge Mangan in a case of an alleged motoring offence.

Judge Mangan has heard several cases of anti war protestors brought to the court

and has repeatedly expressed hostility to their stance and imposed bans from Clare as a bail condition.

Bailed

Eoin Rice was then taken into custody following his refusal to accept such a ban.

Refusing to accept the new condition, Mr Rice said,

as he was being brought away to Limerick Prison: "Judge Mangan sought to augment my bail, previously with no conditions, by banning me from Clare. He would offer no reason or argument for this action. I refused to accept this ridiculous imposition and stated frankly that it was illegal and beyond all law."

Fintan Lane, commented: "This particular judge has fallen into the habit of banning all anti-war activists from County Clare, no matter how minor the offence. The attempt to ban Eoin Rice, while on bail for a minor motoring offence, is ludicrous."

Eoin Rice is locked in his cell for 23 hours a day and has announced he is beginning a hunger strike.

■ **Messages of support to: Eoin Rice, Limerick Prison, Mulgrave Street, Limerick City**



■ Judge Mangan: Clare ban



■ Eoin Rice: In Limerick jail

Clare Local Employment Service

CLARE local employment service has been shut down and its workers sacked in an extraordinary move.

The service helps disabled, marginalised and disadvantaged people throughout the county of Clare to find employment that suits them.

Sixteen people work in the centre in Ennis and a number of outreach centres across rural Clare.

The scheme is funded by FAS and managed by a board consisting of nominees of the "social partners".

Scandalously the closure was voted for by the local ICTU official and a nominee from the SIPTU Regional Executive.

The 16 workers received their cards in the post.

They are demanding an independent inquiry into allegations of bullying.

One of the workers told *Socialist Worker*, "Eight hundred people have lost a valuable service.

"We are demanding the re-instatement of all workers

and an independent investigation."

Clare Community Forum has called a public meeting at the West County Hotel, Ennis on 20th March at 8pm.

T&G Sacked Airport workers

ALMOST two years after they were sacked by ICTS for going on strike against poverty wages, security guards from Belfast Airport are about to go to court to contest the sackings.

Speaking after initiating a hunger strike at the T&G offices in Belfast Gordon McNeill, one of the sacked shop stewards, said "the bosses at ICTS have to know, and this is a message for all bosses, that they cannot sack workers on a whim."

"We have fought for two years to clear our names and for justice from the company and we are going to get it," he continued.

The hunger strike was initiated after conduct by

Glen Court breakthrough

THERE was a breakthrough for residents of Glen Court in Derry on February 19th.

A packed meeting at the local community centre heard Housing Executive

senior union officials including Tony Woodley, the T&G general secretary, was considered to be unhelpful to winning justice for the sacked workers.

"We have sought an inquiry into the conduct of the union with regards to the dispute which is an unfortunate situation to be in, nevertheless we thought that it had to be done."

"No-one takes going on a hunger strike lightly and we have an assurance that our requests for action will be met."

The workers action eventually forced the T&GWU to hold an internal inquiry.

The workers case is due in court in March.

chief Sam McPherson say that demolition of the flats is "now an option."

This was the second mass meeting on Glen Court in a fortnight, called at the instigation of the Socialist Environmental Alliance. Until now, the Executive's line was that the flats were structurally sound and definitely wouldn't be demolished.

Consultants are to be appointed to investigate the options of demolition, refurbishment and doing nothing. A group of residents will have regular meetings with the consultants to ensure that local views are kept to the fore and to report back to residents.

The flats, built in the early 1970s, have become a dreadful place to live and a blight on the general area. Sewerage seeps into some flats and stairwells are regularly blocked.

The SEA's Eamonn McCann closed the meeting by warning that, "This is not victory but merely a step forward. At every stage, we have to make it plain that demolition and decent rehousing for all is the only acceptable option."

Tenants Action

New collective voice for local authority tenants in Dublin City

by ROISIN RYDER

OVER the past number of months representatives from a number of Dublin City Council flat complexes have been meeting to discuss the selling off of public land to private developers with the aim of reducing social housing and increasing the number of private units on public land.

As a result of this a group called Tenants First has been set up to respond to the changing landscape for local authority tenants.

Huge anger and frustration is obvious at the meetings and the two main issues in people's minds are maintenance of local authority flats and the push by DCC to use public private partnerships as a means to 'improve' or 'sell off' estates.

'Improvements' are offered if tenants are willing to concede that some of the

Building workers stop work over pensions

OVER 500 building workers in Dublin stopped work and joined a demonstration last Friday in protest at the failure of many builders to pay mandatory pension contributions for their employees.

The SIPTU protest to Dail Eireann was prompted by the recent fatalities on site of two building workers, Eoin O' Neill and John Healy.

In both cases, the families of the men killed discovered their employers had not been paying their pension contributions into the pension scheme and lost out on €70,000 compensation to which they should have been entitled.

According to a SIPTU source, the failure of builders to comply with the pension scheme is a widespread with an estimated 60% of building workers not in the scheme. One building worker said that of 30 recent deaths on site only 3 families were paid the compensation they were entitled to.

Scheme

The building workers pension scheme which is administered by the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) is mandatory and failure to comply carries a maximum penalty of €12,500 and/or 12 months in prison.

Yet according to workers the law is never enforced and no builder has ever been prosecuted.

"When we protested to the Minister of Justice, Michael Mc Dowell about this he told us it was none of his business," said Paul a spokesperson for the workers.

Billy a brick-layer from the BATU union who joined the protest said:

"The law should be enforced. The CIF claim they got only 20 enquiries about non-payment of pension contributions.

"When you approach the CIF with enquiries they do nothing. Employers are deducting the contributions but are not forwarding them to the CIF.

Employers should be

hauled over the coals for not paying. We also need more monitoring of contributions at site level by union reps.

I know a crane driver who recently broke his leg on site when concrete fell out of a mixing bin. He went sick and then found his employer had been deducting contributions but not paying them in. He was left high and dry.

But you have to go to the Labour Court or put up pickets to get anything done about all this."

Many workers blamed the widespread practice of subcontracting for the failure to enforce proper regulations.

Darren said, "Sub-contactors shouldn't be allowed on site until they pay their pension contributions. The government should run the pension scheme not the CIF."

Martin said: "This is all down to sub-contactors.

"Workers should be employed directly by the main contactors. Workers are working machines and doing dangerous work without tickets.

"There should be criminal prosecutions against employers using workers without tickets.

"We should stop all the sites where they are not paying proper rates and enforcing the regulations."

Wayne a SIPTU shop steward said:

"I think politicians are getting back-handers from the builders. It shouldn't have to come to this in order to enforce the regulations.

Many workers also said employers were intimidating them not to go on the protest.

Wayne said: "Our company Techrete was intimidating us not to come out today, threatening that we would lose our bonus. Techrete had a turn-over of €36 million last year.

"They made €9-11 million in profit. Yet I know people waiting two to three years for service pay. It is our right to be here today. We shouldn't be intimidated for protesting.

"We should call for a bigger stoppage. Everybody should be out."

land which the flats are built on is handed over to private developers. It's called a community dividend!

For example a much needed youth centre or community hall might be built if one or two acres of land can be sold for development.

Robbery

This is actually daylight robbery.

Not only are communities not getting the services they deserve they are being bullied into handing over green space so that large developers can profiteer from them.

There is no provision for extra units of social housing in any of the developments being proposed.

Land in the Cork St area of Dublin for mixed residential/commercial usage is worth in the region of 10 million euro an acre. This is what development is about.

Tenants First has the possibility to unify all the city local authority housing tenants and can become a strong voice to challenge the madness of this privatisation.

With a countrywide housing waiting list of 47,000 and a Dublin City list of nearly 7,000 we need to be developing this land for people's needs.

At present there are a wide range of flat complexes and tenants represented but the group needs to grow.

Membership forms for individual tenants or tenant's groups can be got from Tenants First, c/o Community Technical Aid, Unit 1 and 2, Killarney Court, Upper Buckingham St, Dublin 1. Ph: 8557015 or email: info@cta.ie.

Join Tenant's First and make sure housing is developed for people's needs and not profit.

Socialist Worker

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ARE WOMEN STILL OPPRESSED?

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LOW PAID CIVIL SERVANTS TELL NIPSA LEADERS TO TAKE THE GLOVES OFF

MORE ACTION NOW!

by NIPSA ACTIVIST
"WE must have more action". That is the message from Nipsa members in response to the latest threats and intimidation from civil service management.

Over the past week management have began suspending union members who refuse to undertake training as part of the 'work to rule'.

All eight suspensions have taken place in the largest union branch in the civil service, Branch 8, Child Support Agency (CSA).

Clearly management's strategy is to break the spirit and the unity of the workers taking

part in the dispute. It has chosen one of the strongest and best organised workplaces to use as a battering ram in order to defeat the dispute.

It has not succeeded. Instead angry union members at a mass meeting of CSA staff on Tuesday voted unanimously to push the union leadership to call a civil service-wide strike of up to 5 days.

Civil servants are sick of low pay; the anger has been demonstrated repeatedly over the past couple of months with huge rallies, wildcat action, fantastic support and big picket lines when the union have called all day strikes.

Workers are increasingly bitter at the treatment they are receiving from management, especially in the Department of Social Development (DSD), which contains 6,500 union members mainly in Social Security Offices and the CSA.

DSD contains the majority of lower grades and therefore lower wages, many workers are in the £10-12,000 bracket and reliant on the same state benefits they hand out, in order to supplement their wages.

The hypocrisy of the government is also becoming increasingly clear.

Just last week Senior Civil Servants received their new pay deal, their second since lower-paid staff last received one.

Minimum

Senior Civil Servants receive a minimum of £70,000 a year, in this year's deal they will get a 2% rise with bonuses of up to £9,000.

That means that in the time since staff in the £10-12,000 bracket have had any pay rise, a senior civil servant on a fat cat salary has received any-

thing up to 6% extra and £18,000 in bonuses.

Their raises—without the bonuses—amount to almost a full year's wages for one of the striking workers.

The bonuses are rewarded when staff hit targets or as one civil servant said, "the harder we work the more they get, the rats are getting the cream!"

Management is relying on a massive propaganda exercise to dampen the anger. Email after email has been sent to all civil servants.

Government minister Ian Pearson issued a memo to all staff in DSD reminding them that industrial action only hurts the most vulnerable in society.

This was on the same day that CSA management suspended a single parent without pay for supporting the work to rule.

One worker, Catherine, told *Socialist Worker*, "the bastards,

they talk about the vulnerable as if our children and ourselves aren't vulnerable too, that's why we have been striking!"

All this has strengthened the resolve of union members to fight for a real pay rise.

But it is clear that the action needs to be official in order to maximise the support in each workplace.

To date the leadership of the union have been far too hesitant in calling the type of action that will win.

Now management are on the offensive, Nipsa must now show how serious it is.

Many union members are angry that NIPSA leadership did not have a strategy ready in the event of members being suspended, they feel let down, some are asking 'is the dispute over?'

The rhetoric from the union's leader at rallies now needs backing up with action.

"Members are starting to say that stop-start strikes and work-to-rule play into managements hands, that we need all-out strike, across the civil service.

"Some point to what happened to the firefighters and argue that we have to learn the lessons of their dispute, and go for all-out instead.

"Many feel that the work-to-rule is too difficult—workers in the civil service feel much more confident when standing outside the building in unity rather than being forced to take on their managers face to face inside their workplace.

"We must regain the momentum, it's our turn to go on the offensive."

□ A NIPSA activist