

Socialist Worker

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**TAX EVASION,
CORRUPTION,
BRIBERY:
TRIBUNALS
ARE NOT
ENOUGH...**

JAIL

THE CORRUPT POLITICIANS!

THE constant drip feed of revelations of corruption from the Tribunals has now almost become a flood.

There are daily reports of meetings in backrooms between property developers and politicians, money changing hands between wealthy speculators and the leading lights of the political system.

Tribunals have cost the taxpayer €101 million since

1997, new figures from the Department of Finance reveal.

But despite the tribunals no politician has gone to jail for any substantial period of time because of corruption.

At the centre of this lies the leading Fianna Fail politicians of the early 1990s, some of whom are still with us.

The 1989 Fianna Fail/PD government led by Charles Haughey is where most of the most high profile corrupt politicians originated.

Ray Burke, Pee Flynn, Charles Haughey have all since fallen from grace.

Burke has since been found to have taken hundreds of thousands of pounds in corrupt payments from big builders and businessmen. He is now facing charges for tax evasion and corruption.

Haughey while telling the rest of the country that there had to be cut backs in health and education because of "budgetary considerations" lived a life of luxury.

He has been the subject of three judicial inquiries. He pocketed over €8 million from personal donations from businessmen during his

career.

But sitting pretty in that Haughey led government was also Bertie Ahern. Ahern was no non-descript back-bencher in that government, he stood at the powerful right hand of his political mentor.

Devious

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

The man that Haughey called "the best, the most skilful, the most devious and the most cunning of them all" is

very much part of the FF Rogues Gallery.

Ahern told the Moriarty Tribunal that he signed blank cheques for Mr Haughey.

Ahern currently denies all knowledge of a meeting in 1989 with the property developer Tom Gilmartin. Gilmartin alleges that he attended a meeting in government buildings attended by Haughey and numerous other ministers including Ahern. The meeting was organised by one Liam Lawlor.

After discussing a major retail development at Bache-

lors Walk Gilmartin left the meeting where he was confronted by an unnamed man who asked the developer for a £5million donation for FF. Gilmartin is said to have told the man that "you lot are worse than the Mafia".

Whatever transpires at the tribunals one thing is clear substantial numbers in the political and business establishment in Ireland over the past decade have been up to their eyes in sleaze and corruption.

It is time that some of these politicians spent some period

TB scandal as hospital closes its doors

TB is a very infectious disease which spreads in conditions of poverty and overcrowding.

But Ireland's only specialist facility has closed its doors to new admissions.

The Peamount Hospital managers sacked their TB consultant, Luke Clancy last month and refused any new admissions of TB patients.

Clancy has been engaged in legal action to stop the move and keep the facility open and has refused a large cash offer to go away.

As one medical insider told *Socialist Worker*, "This is cutting off the oxygen to our national TB service. Many TB patients will

have nowhere satisfactory to go."

Acute TB patients need months of treatment to cure the condition. They need to be constantly monitored to check on the progress of the infection. If they stop taking the drugs before time they risk developing a strain of drug resistant TB which can infect others around them and which is very difficult to treat.

Homeless

Particularly at risk are the poor, homeless or those living in overcrowded conditions. In some cases patients need to recuperate in hospital for up to nine months.

But with the closing of the Peamount no such facility will exist. Patients will need to be referred to over-

crowded general hospitals which are geared to treating patients with acute conditions who can be discharged within a couple of weeks. Long stay beds do not exist in those hospitals. Moreover the isolation facilities necessary for treating TB are much less in these hospitals, leading to TB patients mixing with others when they should be isolated.

One doctor told *Socialist Worker*, "In Peamount, there are doctors and nurses with

20-30 years experience of treating TB patients. Peamount has now decided that it doesn't do TB anymore but no arrangements have been made for a replacement.

Disastrous

"This is a disgrace. People will be more likely get sicker and even die as a result. It is now more likely that the disease will spread." According to the World

Health Organisation, TB is being spread around the world particularly by wars and the movement of soldiers.

In Ireland the high cost of accommodation is forcing many into overcrowded conditions which are ideal breeding grounds for the disease.

Why has the management of this voluntary hospital taken this disastrous decision, when no alternative facility exists?



Peamount hospital in West Dublin

Insiders point to the fact that the hospital has 500 acres of land on the edge of

the rapidly developing Lucan area that could make a pretty penny if sold to developers.

Cheney's company extends interests in Iraq and Ireland

THE National Roads Authority has named a subsidiary of Halliburton, the controversial oil company formerly run by the US Vice President Dick Cheney, as a preferred bidder for a multimillion euro 17.5km bypass between Fermoy and Rathcoormac. The Halliburton sub-

siary is also the construction supervisor for the €650m Dublin Port Tunnel.

The Halliburton subsidiary expects the Fermoy bypass contract to be awarded by the summer.

The company provides "logistic" support to the US army in Iraq.

It was awarded a two year \$7bn contract by the Army

Corps of Engineers to put out oil well fires and "evaluate" the Iraqi oil fields.

The greatest beneficiary thus far from the Bush administration's "war without end" approach to fighting terrorism has been Vice President Dick Cheney's former company, Halliburton.

The vast bulk of the \$3.9 billion Halliburton received

from the Pentagon in 2003 went for the company's work in and around Iraq and Afghanistan, including everything from building military bases, to providing meals, to doing the laundry, to maintaining military vehicles, to rebuilding Iraq's oil infrastructure.

The \$3.9 billion the company earned in 2003 doesn't

include billions in new contracts that have been issued since that time for rebuilding oil infrastructure in southern Iraq or for work in other parts of the world.

The *Irish Times* journalist in Iraq Lara Marlow has said that she has spoken to disillusioned American troops who have said that they are not happy to fight "Halliburton's war."

Bosses say 'Be happy with what you have'

IBEC have told Irish workers that they can no longer expect "major pay increases" in the future.

The organisation representing the rich and powerful bosses in Ireland said that "business leaders are very worried about our lost competitiveness."

And while IBEC are telling the unions as part of the new partnership talks that workers should expect their wages to be capped, are they saying the same about profits, or rent, or house prices?—are they hell!

Fianna Fail frauds

IN a desperate attempt to unveil some "populist" policies in the run up to the local elections in June, FF are grasping at straws.

Charlie "Cut Back" McCreavy has "promised action on high fees for tribunal lawyers." But this is just plain hypocrisy.

Last year McCreavy gave sanction to increase the brief fee at tribunals from €20,000 to €60,000 and increase of over 200%.

He also increased the lawyers fees for non-sitting days from €1,270 to €2,250.

Dempsey's tables

TAKING the worst aspects of the Tory educational policy in Britain the Minister for Education Noel Dempsey also wants to see school league tables introduced

in Ireland.

The Minister has said in the future that schools will be assessed through targets and school tables.

The teachers unions have come out against such a move.

One union member said that this would lead to a bigger gap between middle class and working class schools.

"The introduction of league tables would not do anything but accelerate the creation of a two tier division of schools based on affluence and post codes rather than equality of access," said the ASTI member.

McCreavy's friends

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has severely criticised two Government Departments—Agriculture and Finance—over their failure to properly evaluate the €15 million funding for an agricultural and equestrian eventing centre at Puncchestown Racecourse in Co Kildare.

The PAC found the centre "was hardly used" in its first year, and that only a third of events held there last year were of an equestrian or agricultural nature.

Minister for Finance, Mr McCreavy is the main man behind the centre which is in his constituency.

He personally approved the funding, including a doubling in its cost to €13.8 million in the space of six months in 2000, and a further €1.5 million top-up in January 2002.

He also met the Puncchestown racecourse management on at least two occasions to discuss the project.

The PAC report found that the "need for the centre was not properly evaluated" by the Department of Agriculture.

Powell lied about intelligence



Colin Powell

Even Israel knew there were no WMDs!

ONE OF the US's staunchest allies is now calling intelligence on Iraq that helped launch war into question.

A new report by the Israeli parliament into Israeli intelligence used by Britain and the US to make the case for war, says that the information was based on "speculation-not fact".

Claims that Iraq was expanding its armory were based on "dubious interpretations".

The report concluded that there were "serious intelligence failures" in the run-up to the war.

DURING HIS famous theatrical performance at the UN Security Council in February 2003, US Secretary of State Colin Powell talked about Iraq's "mobile biological facilities".

He cited "eyewitness accounts" of trucks that could produce enough deadly anthrax "in a single month to kill thousands upon thousands of people".

"We have first-hand descriptions of biological weapons factories on wheels and on rails," he said.

Now intelligence officials in the US have revealed that the eyewitness accounts were based on the dubious testimony of a single discredited Iraqi defec-

tor, known as "Curveball".

US intelligence did not meet him or know his real name when Powell addressed the UN.

It was later discovered that Curveball is the brother of a senior aide to Iraqi exile Ahmed Chalabi, the convicted fraudster once pushed by Bush as a possi-

ble future ruler of Iraq.

Bush had asked Chalabi to help "search for evidence" proving the existence of biological warfare trucks in Iraq.

Curveball, an Iraqi exile with a degree in chemical engineering, suddenly "appeared" in Germany

US flies the flag of war in Dublin

A US war plane was caught on camera flying the "Jolly Roger" flag at the Baldonnel aerodrome last week. The flag was unfurled after the plane landed and positioned itself on the run way.

The flag is traditionally seen as a triumphant symbol of victory in war. The flag was flown by a Royal Navy submarine after the sinking of the Belgrano in the Falklands War.

So no longer are the US military simply flying into Shannon they are also using airports closer to the capital.

No doubt Anzar did lie

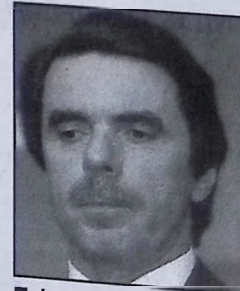
THERE IS further proof that Spain's former prime minister Jose Maria Aznar lied when he announced the Basque separatist group ETA was behind the bombings in Madrid.

Police officers and firefighters involved in the rescue told the *Financial Times* last week that they knew immediately ETA could not have carried out the bombing.

"The impact of the explosions pointed to a kind of bomb and a type of explosives that ETA had not used before," said an officer from the fire brigade who was at the scene.

Yet Aznar announced the exact opposite.

He told Spain's Euro-



Jose Maria Aznar

pean allies and the United Nations on the day of the bombing that the explosives marked out ETA as responsible.

Aznar lobbied the UN for an immediate Security Council resolution explicitly condemning ETA.

His foreign minister, Ana Palacio, rang round the reluctant countries to swing the vote.

Spain even rejected the US's alternative resolution which expressed in general terms solidarity with Spain's fight against terrorism, including ETA. Palacio also instructed Spain's ambassadors to "use every occasion to confirm the authorship of ETA".

She added, "The explosives employed and the pattern of the attacks are used by ETA."

Aznar's interior minister said at a press conference, "The government has no doubt that ETA was responsible for the attacks."

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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.

■ **27,000 sick people on waiting lists that FF/PD promised to end by May 2004.**

■ **€15m spent on PuncHESTOWN centre for the rich**

The spending priorities of ... Ahern's government for the rich

THIS rotten right wing FF/PD government have made it clear where its spending priorities lie.

If you are one of the thousands of working class people on hospital waiting lists trying to receive care in Micheal Martin's messed up medical service—then you are ignored by FF/PD.

However if you are a rich stud farmer or indeed a prize stallion then you are priority number one for Charlie "Cut Back" McCreevy.

Ahern and his FF gang promised 200,000 extra medical cards before the last election. FF broke the promise as soon as the election was over.

The actual reality is that more people have been denied this vital facility.

Currently only 29 per cent of the population qualify for a medical card as opposed to 39 per cent in 1977.

A working class family can earn a paltry €260 a week and be deemed above the income levels for medical cards.

On the front line of health care cut backs in drug treatment has meant that the total number of deaths from heroin use in Dublin is now on par with the number of road deaths!

The total number of opiate related deaths in Dublin over the four year period between 1997 and 2000 was 233, giving an annual average of just over 58 deaths per year the same number as road deaths in Dublin.

Heroin

Poverty and health cut-backs are fuelling the problem of heroin abuse in urban Dublin.

FF/PD also promised to end all the hospital waiting lists by May this year. That's right they said ALL waiting lists would end.

What a sick joke that has turned out to be.

27,000 sick people are still waiting, some for months and years, for treatment.

Ahern admitted on a *Week in Politics* last week that it was never going to happen.

However while the sick are ignored by FF/PD if you are a member of the rich 'hobby set' or if you are a prize stallion this government showers thousands of tax payer euros on you.

Last week the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) has severely criticised two Government Departments—Agriculture and Finance—over their failure to properly evaluate the €15 million funding for an agricultural and equestrian eventing centre at PuncHESTOWN Racecourse in Co Kil-

dare.

The PAC found the centre "was hardly used" in its first year, and that only a third of events held there last year were of an equestrian or agricultural nature!

Minister for Finance, Mr McCreevy is the main man behind the centre which is in his constituency.

He personally approved the funding, including a doubling in its cost to €13.8 million in the space of six months in 2000, and a further €1.5 million top-up in January 2002.

While quick to take the knife to the social welfare, health and education budget earlier this year he had no problem providing this obscene funding for this plaything of the rich in his own constituency.

It's time we shattered the smug arrogance of Ahern, McCreevy, Michael Martin and the rest of the FF/PD cabal.



■ Ahern: No extension of medical cards

AHERN ATTEMPTS TO FINALISE NEW EU CONSTITUTION

A charter for privatisation and militarism

AHERN has put the signing of a new constitution for Europe right back at the heart of the agenda of the Irish Presidency.

The FF leader wants to see the constitution signed at the final EU heads of government meeting in Dublin in the summer.

This constitution will have "primacy over the law of the member states"—it overrides all national constitutions and is irreversible!

It will create a highly centralised, undemocratic federal state under the political hegemony of the bigger states (mainly France and Germany).

At the heart of this Constitution is the prioritisation of neo-liberalism and militarisation as the twin driving forces behind the EU project.

The constitution establishes a common foreign and security Policy to "lead to a com-

mon defence".

All member states are required to "make civilian and military capabilities available to the Union for the implementation of the common security and defence policy" and to "undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities".

It also establishes a European Armaments, Research and Military Capabilities Agency to promote the EU arms industry and makes the promotion of the Nuclear industry a priority.

The new EU constitution prepares the way for privatisation of health and education services as part of the Common Commercial Policy.

Article III-27 of the proposed new constitution says "The Common Commercial Policy shall be based on uniform principles.

"With regard to ... trade in goods and services ... the

achievement of uniformity in measures of liberalisation and aim of the progressive abolition of restrictions on Foreign Direct Investment and lowering of other barriers".

But while Ahern forges ahead with trying to get a new constitution signed another plank of the Irish Presidency has collapsed.

Planned

The government has cancelled its 'Beautiful Night' concert planned for O'Connell St. Dublin on May 1st.

It was to be part of their 'Day Of Welcomes' for the new accession states and an attempt to get attention away from the fact that they will be wining and dining the 25 EU leaders in Farmleigh house.

Now the concert is finished the government and right-wing media are whipping up fear and tension saying that

thousands of anarchists will descend on Dublin and burn it to the ground.

This is nonsense and the only anarchists planning to come to Dublin are the "White over-alled Wombles" who engage only in peaceful symbolic actions.

One way of fighting the neo-liberal Europe as outlined in the EU constitution is to take part in the 'Another Europe is Possible' carnival on May Day. (see page 10 for more details).

It will be a peaceful carnival with families, workers, immigrants mixing together with music and symbols of peace and people before profit.

■ **Get your union, community group, school together and get a contingent on the carnival march. For info, leaflets, posters contact 086 1523542**

Join the Socialists!

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

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Name.....
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comment



Eamonn McCann

Should workers be tread softly to maintain public support?

ANYONE who listens to 'phone-in programmes or reads letters to local papers will know that there's widespread support in the North for the civil servants, members of Northern Ireland Public Sector Alliance (Nipsa), currently involved in industrial action in pursuit of decent pay.

Which makes it all the more frustrating that the dispute is dragging on, and management seems under little pressure to give way.

One of the reasons the dispute hasn't come to a head is that there has been no all-out action. Instead, the union has called out groups of workers for a week here, a week there.

Asked what lies behind the stop-go strategy, officials explain that Nipsa is "boxing clever". An all-out stoppage would "play into management's hands."

At first sight, this may seem plausible. The reason the public back our cause, the argument runs, is that we are seen to be reasonable, moderate-minded people, fighting only for fairness.

If we were to act more militantly and seriously inconvenience the same public, support might well drain away—particularly when we'd be roundly denounced by the media.

So our best strategy is tread softly and ensure that the action is as undistruptive as possible.

This is exactly the argument used last year by leaders of the Fire Brigades Union, who began a campaign for a 30 percent rise with huge public good-will, and saw it frittered away as sporadic stoppages dragged the dispute out.

The FBU ended with a bad settlement and a frustrated membership.

What the FBU experience illustrates, in the first instance, is that public good-will doesn't win strikes. Of course, it can help.

Honking horns

Any group of workers on a picket line will be in better heart if passers-by are honking horns and shouting encouragement, rather than yelling abuse.

But public backing, while worth having, isn't the key factor. If it were, nurses would be on double the wages.

If the desire for public support leads a union into fighting with one hand tied behind its back, it can be counter-productive.

The most important factor in winning a strike is a willingness to use to the maximum whatever industrial muscle the strikers possess and a readiness if necessary to call on other workers, too, to give as muscular support as they can manage.

What's more, a determined strategy of this sort won't necessarily turn public support off. The stop-start strategy of the FBU leadership confused and alienated many members of the public who had been generally positive at the onset of the dispute.

It should be noted, too, that there is no evidence in either the public or private sector that managements respond to union reasonableness by making a reasonable offer. The opposite is the case. They tend to see moderate tactics as a sign of weakness and resolve to put the boot in.

The most effective way to win public support is to make the connection between the workers' demands and the interests of the majority in society. The Nipsa dispute provide an apt example.

In the middle of the dispute, Chancellor Gordon Browne announced 40,000 civil service jobs cuts. Three quarters of these are of jobs starting at £12,000 a year, in pension centres, job centres and social security offices—the jobs of the Nipsa strikers and their colleagues, also on sporadic strike action, in the PCS across the water. The effect will be cuts in services to the unemployed, pensioners, the sick, the disabled.

Does anybody doubt that coordinated all-out action across the civil service both to protect jobs and conditions and defeat this assault on the welfare state would attract strong public support?

Union activists should be organising and arguing for a strategy along these lines. In most contests, the public, sensibly, supports those who most want to win.

Blair afraid of Finucane Inquiry

SECURITY forces in the North, in the course of the Troubles, colluded with paramilitaries in the murder of people regarded as enemies of the State.

There is no need for a spate of inquiries to establish this. What inquiries might do is establish how far up the political or security chain of command the collusion extended.

It is for this reason that the Blair Government was reluctant to concede any of the inquiries it had promised under the Cory Report, and why, even now, it has not announced an inquiry into the murder of solicitor Pat Finucane.

The reason given for the Finucane delay—that a court case is pending—makes no sense.

There is a court case pending arising from the assault and kidnap of Bobby Tohill by a Provisional IRA gang in Belfast.

But that hasn't prevented the Northern Ireland Office calling for a report from the "monitoring group" on whether the Tohill kidnap breached the Provo ceasefire.

What makes the Finucane case different from the others covered by Cory—Robert Hamill, Rosemary Nelson and Billy Wright—is that the evidence of collusion is far more clear-cut, and reaches higher into the political and security establishments.

The facts which have so far emerged leave open the possibility that collusion in the Hamill, Nelson and Wright cases was at a relatively low level.

This wouldn't excuse it. And the facts which have yet to emerge may lead inquiries to higher levels.

The point is, we already know that the trail in the Finucane case reaches into the office of the North's top-



■ Pat Finucane, Billy Wright, Robert Hamill, Rosmary Nelson and Tony Blair

ranking soldier, the General Officer Commanding (GOC).

It is this which explains the extreme agitation of Secretary of State Paul Murphy at the contents of Cory, and his uneasy excuses for refusing a Finucane Inquiry.

Justified

In the Commons, Murphy justified the Finucane delay by quoting Cory: "Society must be assured that those who commit a crime will be prosecuted and if found guilty punished". So let's wait for the outcome of the prosecution...

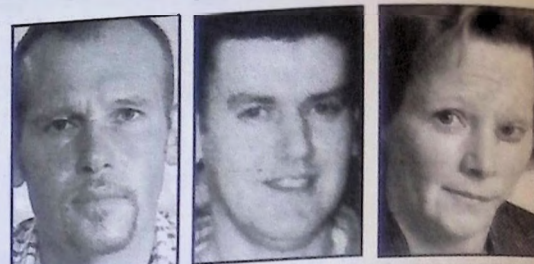
What he didn't do was quote Cory's next sentence: "This may be one of the rare

situations where a public inquiry will be of greater benefit to a community than prosecutions."

Murphy knows that the man who supplied the Finucane murder gun, William Stobie, was a RUC Special Branch informer. So was the man now charged with pulling the trigger, Ken Barrett. And the man who selected and targeted Finucane, Brian Nelson, was jointly run as an agent by the British Army's Force Research Unit (FRU) and MI5.

The commander of the FRU at the time, Brigadier John Kerr, has said that he reported directly to the GOC. MI5 is run by the Home Office.

Did the GOC alert the



Defence Ministry to the activities of the FRU? Was the Home Office kept abreast of MI5's role?

It is easy to envisage the appalling vista which opened up before Murphy, Blair, Defence Minister Geoff Hoon and Home Secretary David Blunkett as they pondered their response to Cory's recommendations.

Democracy

It is the essence of democracy that citizens are entitled to know what the State does in their name. Unionist leaders who decried the Cory inquiries as sops to Nationalism are, in effect, telling their supporters that it's their duty as Protestant-

Unionists not to demand that the State be held to account.

The socialist message to working class Protestants is the opposite.

What has the British State done for workers of any religion or none in the North that they should allow it to get away with murder? It's in the interests of every citizen that the truth be openly proclaimed.

Just as it's in the interests of the ruling class that the truth be suppressed.

Unionist leaders want ordinary Protestants to line up with the British State in denying rights to their fellow citizens.

This is what Unionism has always done, and Protestant workers have always been the losers.

Local anti-racism groups respond to racist attacks

RACIST attacks continue in Belfast.

In the last week of March, a Chinese woman was attacked in South Belfast and a Chinese man was hospitalised in an attack on the Falls Road.

In addition, racist leaflets were handed out in Shaftsbury Square.

The growth of the local Anti-Racism Network groups means that, unlike last year, racist incidents are responded to.

On Saturday 27th March, West Belfast Anti-Racism Network (WARN) held a vigil outside the park where the Chinese man was attacked.

Some local papers suggested no racist incident occurred.

But John Price of WARN told *Socialist Worker*: "After checking with the Chinese Welfare Association who assured me that a racist attack took place we held a very successful vigil, getting fantastic community support for our actions, Racist



■ Stop racist attacks

attacks are not the preserve of only one community and our vigil is as much in support of the travelling community who are attacked regularly in West Belfast," he said.

South Belfast Anti-Racism Network held a vigil in Shaftsbury Square on Friday evening 26th March.

They countered the recently distributed race-hate leaflet linked to loyalist paramilitaries with an anti-racism leaflet which

encouraged local people to support refugees and fight against racism.

The Queens Anti-Racism Network held a rally against racism on Thursday 25th.

Thirty students heard Kafeel Ahmed of the Islamic Students Association talk about the demonisation of Islam and Muslims since the advent of the war on terror.

Kerry Stinson, chair of QARN suggested, "While this rally has been called against all racist attacks our job is to make Queens University a Racism Free Zone.

We are here today making a pre-emptive strike against any racist who may want to attack students."

Damien Kavanagh from the Students union emphasised the need for encouraging diversity throughout Ireland and David Carlin, Chair of the ARN spoke about the importance of building local groups.

Upgrade rail link now!

THE publication of the report of the Northern Ireland Railways Strategic Rail Review has inspired a redoubling of efforts by socialists, environmentalists, trade unionists and train enthusiasts to save the rail link between Belfast and Derry.

In reality, the campaigners know, saving the rail link means having it upgraded to a high-speed line.

The report presented three options, two in detail. The option to close the rail line was not expanded on. The two options examined in detail were maintenance of the status quo and expanding the rail service across the region.

Detailed analysis in the report indicates that only the expansion option is likely to bring "significant net economic benefits to the Northern Ireland community".

It is hard, therefore, to understand why the report also suggests that the case for spending on "the non-core" parts of the network is not clear cut when broader social, environmental and economic factors are considered.

The "non-core" part includes the link between Belfast and Derry. It is clearly nonsense to suggest that the rail link between the two largest cities in the region is "non-core".

The distinction between "core" and "non-core" is based on passenger numbers. Since it takes an hour longer to travel from between the two cities by train than by road, there are few passengers on the link.

However, a high-speed train link, which could take as little as one hour and 25 minutes would be highly popular with the many workers who presently commute on a daily basis by bus or car.

In fact, the report admits that investment in upgrading the rail network would bring many benefits, including "travel time savings, reduced traffic accident costs and environmental benefits".

FRANCE

Lessons for Left in elections

by ALEX CALLINICOS

THE HEADLINE news in France's regional elections was that there was a big swing away from the ruling right to the parties of the "plural left"—the Socialists, Communists, and Greens. But, for the revolutionary left, the story was a different one.

The coalition of Lutte Ouvriere (LO) and the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) won 4.95 percent of the vote in the first round of the elections the previous weekend.

This was too low a vote for the slate to go into the second round. It's important to get this in proportion. As a share of the national vote, 5 percent isn't bad for open revolutionaries.

But two years ago, in the first round of the last presidential elections, the far left candidates won 10 percent. Arlette Laguiller of LO and Olivier Besancenot of the LCR each won a higher share of the vote than the candidate of the Communist Party (PCF).

This was a historic result given how the PCF has dominated the organised working class in France since the 1930s. This time, however, the PCF won 7.6 percent of the vote.

Yet France last May and June was swept by a massive strike wave against the government's attack on pensions. LCR and LO militants played a leading role in the strikes.

The reformist left seems to be benefiting from popular bitterness against the right. Of course, parliamentary elections aren't revolutionaries' natural terrain. Activists can lead mass movements but find themselves cut down to size on polling day.

Moreover, in April 2002 the official left were in government, implementing neo-liberal policies. The far left and the Nazi National Front were able to give a voice to the resulting disillusionment.

But, once out of office, the Socialist Party and the PCF have been able to rebuild a degree of credibility. There is an important lesson here.

LO and, to a lesser extent, the LCR tend to portray the official left as no different from the right. They did not call on their voters to switch to the Socialists and Communists in the second round of the elections.

This stance reflects a failure to recognise the enduring hold of reformism on the workers' movement.

Even a party as corrupt and discredited as the French Socialists can, by tacking left rhetorically, act as a vehicle for working class discontent.

By putting the parties of the plural left in the same bag as the ruling right, LO and the LCR may have isolated themselves from voters traditionally loyal to the Communists or Socialists.

Moreover, the far left campaign focused almost exclusively



■ Olivier Besancenot of the LCR and Arlette Laguiller of LO

on economic issues and more particularly the high level of unemployment. Of course, unemployment is hugely important, but revolutionary candidates have to address political questions as well.

Opposition to corporate globalisation, imperialism, and war brought huge numbers of young people to the anti-capitalist festival at Larzac last August and the European Social Forum in Paris in November. There are also less positive issues.

President Jacques Chirac and his prime minister, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, drove through, with the support of the plural left, the notorious law banning Muslim young women from wearing headscarves in state schools. Scandalously, LO has supported expelling Muslim school students for wearing headscarves. The LCR is split.

Chirac has used the issue to divide the far left and push them onto the defensive.

As a result, they have cut themselves off from the largest Muslim population in Europe, which seethes with anger over official racism and the "war on terrorism".

Some of these criticisms are also being made by a right wing minority within the LCR. They oppose building a revolutionary alternative to the official left.

Instead of a slate with LO, this minority wanted to cosy up with fragments of the reformist parties.

Even before the first round had taken place, they started a media campaign calling on the LCR to support the plural left in the second round. There is a real danger that the Ligue will now implode into faction-fighting.

Italy: Million demonstrate in general strike



■ Italian strikers crowd into Rome

THE ITALIAN general strike at the end of March against the attack on pension rights was a massive success.

All three trade union federations called the stoppage, which was almost totally solid in engineering and transport, while 70 percent of teachers struck. The fall of Aznar's right wing government in Spain has created a mood that it's possible to defeat the administration of Silvio Berlusconi—the media magnate who heads the most right wing government in Europe.

This new level of

resistance is reaching into new areas of the workplace and into regions of the country, particularly in the south and the islands, where the workers' movement has been traditionally weak.

One million people took part in demonstrations across Italy, with 200,000 marching in Milan, 120,000 in Palermo, the capital of Sicily, 80,000 in Naples, and 50,000 in both Bologna and Genoa. The success of the strike follows the two million strong anti-war demonstration in Rome on 20 March.

Now Clarke has claimed that

counter-terrorism chief, have rocked the US White House.

Exposed

Ten workers from the central branch of the bookshop chain Feltrinelli joined the strike and rally in Rome's Piazza del Popolo.

One of them, Fabrizio, explained, "We are fighting to build the union and we felt we had to make a stand over the question of pensions and Berlusconi's neo-liberal assault."

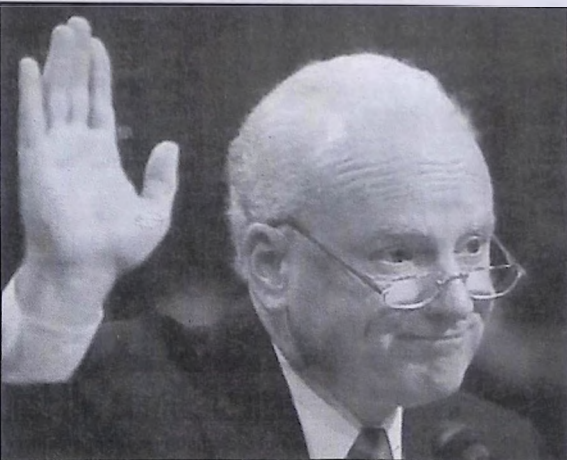
"All of us are young and have taken part in the protests against the war, and I was in Genoa in July 2001 for the G8 protests. This is another important step in that same road."

Two things have contributed to this growing movement of resistance.

One is that Berlusconi's attempts to push through more of his neo-liberal agenda has coincided with warnings from employers that the country's economy could face an Argentinian-style melt down.

The second is the hope inspired by the fall of the Aznar in Spain. Rifondazione Comunista issued a call for a general strike to defeat Berlusconi. Attention is now focusing on the European elections.

Lifting the lid on the Bush regime



■ James Clarke and Condoleezza Rice



IT IS not just Blair's government which has been plunged into crisis after lies about the war started to be unearthed.

Revelations from Richard Clarke, who served under both Clinton and Bush as a

counter-terrorism chief, have rocked the US White House.

Exposed

Last week Clarke exposed Donald Rumsfeld, the US secretary of defence, who pleaded to be allowed to bomb Iraq within days of the 11 September attacks.

Now Clarke has claimed that

the Bush administration may have known about the 11 September attacks before they happened.

He challenged Condoleezza Rice, US national security adviser and Clarke's employer, to reveal e-mails and memos he sent her warning of the threat of Al Qaida.

Clarke says he warned Rice about the danger of Al Qaida

attacks as early as January 2001—but that she did not seem to know what the organisation was.

Rice has now had to agree to testify before a Congress committee, after earlier refusing to do so.

The move is a humiliating U-turn for Rice and her master in the White House.

EL SALVADOR: US BACKED RIGHT WINGER WINS

THE US backed Elias Antonia Saca won the recent Presidential election in El Salvador.

The right wing incumbent defeated his rivals after receiving the backing of the United States.

In the week before the election US government officials warned Salvadorans to think twice before voting for Saca's rivals.

Mr Otto Reich the White House envoy for Latin America told reporters that if the people of El Salvador choose the left wing candidate Handel there would be consequences.

"We could not have the same confidence in an El Salvador led by a person who is an admirer of Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez."

What the SWP stands for

Can there be socialism in one country?

THERE ARE two fundamental reasons why socialism has to be international. Both rise from the nature of capitalism. The first is very simple and material.

by COLIN BARKER

One of capitalism's historic achievements has been the formation of a world market. If we think about our own everyday lives, it is immediately apparent that we depend on the products of the world.

We wake in the morning in bed, made of cotton, or some mixture of fibres drawn from across the globe.

The bed itself may be built from timber grown anywhere in the world. Likewise with the floorboards, the linoleum or rug onto which we step. Our breakfast cereal and coffee or tea may come from Africa, America, Asia. There's rubber in our shoes and the bus tyres that take us to work. And so on and on, to just about every aspect of our daily life.

To get through a single day, we use the products of the labour of hundreds of millions of workers across the world.

True, some of these goods could be produced more locally. But it's also the case that our lives are immensely enriched by our material interdependence with the whole world. The idea of relying purely on local resources is deeply reactionary.

For the first time in history capitalism has created a genuinely world society, where all our lives are entwined together in a common history and a common fate. Materially, socialism will build on that achievement, extending and developing our mutual solidarity with working people in every corner of the globe.

World System

The second point is decisive. Capitalism has made a world system, but has always done so by the most brutal means. The making of a world market was achieved by conquest, robbery, piracy, enslavement, threats, bribery and even compulsory drug-trafficking.

Ferocious exploitation and equally ferocious competition, often in warlike form, have marked world capitalism from its birth to the present. Under capitalism world inequalities have deepened despite all the talk of wealth "trickling down" to the poor through further capitalist development. These realities of world capitalism give the question of socialism in one country an urgent sharpness.

As bitter experience has shown time and again over the past century, even quite mild and non-socialist popular movements meet with bitter resistance from the world capitalist class. US capital mobilised to overthrow Mossadeq's moderate democratic government in Iran in the 1950s, and the British and French invaded Egypt when Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal.

Cuba has been placed under US economic blockade for decades, and in Chile the US backed a bloody military coup against a reformist socialist government.

The IMF, the World Bank and the WTO place immense pressure on any government that attempts even the mildest of reforms, like supplying cheaper drugs to their sick and dying.

If "moderate" governments provoke foreign economic and military

interventions, just think how the capitalist class would respond to the outbreak of a genuine socialist revolution!

The fate of the Russian Revolution of 1917 is sufficient evidence. Faced with the first workers' republic in the world, the world's capitalist powers sent soldiers and guns to back the counter-revolutionary Whites in the civil war that raged between 1918 and 1920. Terrified that "Bolshevism" would spread, they used every means they could to isolate and defeat the revolution.

Defeat

The costs to the infant revolution were immense. Although the Bolsheviks could eventually defeat the Whites militarily, the pressures of the civil war effectively drowned the brilliant popular democratic institutions that had made the 1917 revolution.

The very working class that had led the revolution shrank in size. The cities depopulated.

There was a terrifying death toll, not just from bullets, but above all from the diseases brought by famine conditions.

Only one thing could have saved the Russian Revolution: the spread of the socialist revolution to other countries. This was not a utopian hope. The end of the First World War initiated the greatest wave of working class insurgency ever seen in Europe.

New communist parties inspired by the Russian Revolution were created overnight. They lacked, however, the clarity needed to seize the opportunities of the time. The Bolsheviks knew their revolution could only succeed if it spread.

That was why they devoted so much energy to forming a new Communist International. Its key purpose was to unite all the best militants across the world, and above all in Europe, around clear revolutionary principles and strategies.

For half a decade, everything was in the balance. The revival of soviet democracy in Russia was still a real possibility, but needed aid from abroad.

There were titanic labour battles in Germany, Italy, France, even Britain, but the young communist forces were insufficiently prepared.

The social democratic parties worked to contain working class militancy, siding with conservatism rather than the left. Workers across Europe suffered immense defeats. Russia remained isolated, and the tendencies to "degeneration" of the revolution strengthened.

It was in the process of the decay of the Russian Revolution that Stalin put forward his proposal for "socialism in one country". It was a signal, not of victory, but of defeat.

In the next article, we will see what "socialism in one country" would mean in practice: a completely anti-democratic system of exploitation and counter-revolution.

ISRAEL'S KILLING on March 22 of Hamas' founder and spiritual leader, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, has provoked widespread condemnation. Yassin and eight others were killed by missile fire as they left prayers in al-Sabra, Gaza City. The killings were immediately followed by demonstrations of tens of thousands across Palestine. AOIFE BRESLIN looks at the murder and the wider repression suffered by the Palestinians at the hands of the Sharon government.

The killing of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was Sharon's murderous response to Likud critics who argue that the plan to "disengage" from Gaza would hand the strip over to Hamas extremists.

In killing Yassin, Sharon hopes to detract international attention from the colonial wall under construction around the West Bank.

The killings were also governed by the pressures of financial investigations against him and his sons and his falling popularity ratings. Despite Israel's 50-year program of colonisation, displacement and theft, it has failed to empty Palestine of its people and to smash their spirit of resistance.

Sharon knows that the escalation in the conflict caused by this act, could very well serve as a pretext for Israel to execute a final military solution.

'Targeted' killings

Yassin is just the latest in a list of resistance leaders to be killed by the Israeli Army in so-called "targeted" assassinations.

With the fourth strongest army in the world, Israel could easily have arrested the quadriplegic and partially blind 66-year old.

However, lacking the evidence for a trial, Sharon preferred an extra-judicial execution.

Such killings occur regularly in densely populated areas and have resulted in the deaths of 337 Palestinians, according to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, including over 100 innocent bystanders and dozens of children.

Intifada

While the media focuses on suicide attacks, three times as many Palestinians have been killed since the outbreak of the Intifada as Israelis (5 times as many when it comes to children). Since 29 September 2000 2,780 Palestinians were killed and 956 Israelis, including 528 Palestinian and 106 Israeli children. In the same time, 185 Palestinian schools were shelled or fired upon by the Israeli army while 2 Israeli schools were fired on by Palestinians. These tragic figures reflect the imbalance of a conflict where a first world army seems intent upon obliterating a third world people.

Palestinian incomes have plummeted since 2000, as Israeli curfews and closures prevent

Sheikh Yassin

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin was widely known as a moderate force within Hamas.

He formed the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood and subsequently the Islamic Charitable League in Gaza which evolved to develop an anti-PLO stance.

In December 1987, following the outbreak of the Intifada, he established Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, as an opposition to Arafat's Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) which he viewed as "pork eaters and wine drinkers".

He also held hostile views towards left nationalists such as the Democratic and the Popular Fronts for the Liberation of Palestine.



access to work. The average Palestinian earns \$900 per year, while Israeli incomes average at \$17,000. 60% of Palestinians subsist beneath the UN poverty line (less than \$2 per day), while one third of the working population is unemployed. According to USAID, more than 25% of Palestinian children suffer from chronic malnutrition. The daily traumas and humiliations endured by every Palestinian child virtually guarantees that they will grow up determined to resist in whatever way they can this brutal occupation.

'Disengagement'

Sharon's announcement that Israel was to "disengage" from the Gaza strip was timed to deflect global attention from the Apartheid Wall and was announced just weeks before the International Court of Human Rights in

The Hague began its deliberations. However, within days of the announcement Sharon was already saying that the "withdrawal" would take 1-2 years. This is not news to the Palestinians. At the launch of the Oslo Accords, Yitzak Rabin made the same announcement. He lied. All of the settlements were left intact, Israel increased its land grab and built a heavy fence around the Strip. This time is no different.

The tiny Gaza Strip has a total area of just 365km² and is home to 1.4m Palestinians and 8,000 Jews. 20% of the Strip is currently under Israeli control. Before "pulling out" of Gaza, Israel will finish building its West Bank Wall which diverts from the Green Line by up to 8km at points to take in the main illegal settlement blocs and the Modin-Jerusalem Highway. In return for "disengaging", Sharon hopes that the US will support the construction of the Wall and formally repudiate the right to return demand for Palestinian refugees.

Only 17 settlements are likely to be removed, the largest settlement in the Katif bloc being postponed to a later stage. The Netzarim settlement, which cuts the Strip in two, is currently being fortified and the electronic fence surrounding it strengthened. The Philadelphia road, along the border with Egypt, is being widened to at least 1km in width. Meanwhile, settlement-building across the West Bank continues at a rapid pace. Israel has just announced thousands of new settler units and recently allocated \$1m in funding for yet another Jewish-only road.

THE KILLING



One more in Israel war on

What is Hamas?

Last November, the Palestinian Authority Housing Minister was forced out of a Gaza refugee camp after confrontations with refugees outraged at the PA's failure. It is Hamas, and not the PA who give daily governance to the impoverished people of the world's most overpopulated territory.

Media portrayal of Hamas reflects the Western stereotype of political Islam - fundamentalist terrorist organisation intent on the destruction of Israel - while attitudes amongst the Left are often no more refined. Liberals and Socialists of every shade tend to either rally behind Hamas as a progressive anti-imperialist movement or condemn it as a reactionary quasi-fascist faction.

These approaches either

ignore the mass popular base of Hamas' support or assume that just because Hamas uses radical rhetoric and has a mass following that it is a progressive force for change.

A great part of Hamas' success is due to its social infrastructure, called *Da'wah*, which provides free medical services, scholarships for students and community employment for disaffected youth.

Hamas, meaning "zeal" or "bravery", is the largest Palestinian group opposed to reconciliation with Israel. Since the early 1990s it has served an both an ideological alternative to the PLO and its revolutionary wing, *Fatah*.

Hamas and its military wing, *Izzedin Qassem*, grew out of the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood which feared it could lose control of the Palestinians to the Unified

National Leadership by the Hamas and co-led by Yassir Arafat (1989) initially gave support to Hamas' struggle against the PLO and its leadership. Palestinian Hamas was founded in 1989 and is the largest of the PLO/UNT. While the PLO has the support of the majority of the Palestinian people, Hamas has a much larger following. Hamas is a popular movement and not just a political party. It is the largest of the Israeli PLO. Contrary to the PLO, Hamas is an organisation that is organised as a

KILLING OF YASSIN..



more death Israel's bloody on Palestine

National Leadership Union, set up by the PLO to co-ordinate and control the first Intifada (1987-1992). Israel initially gave financial support to Hamas seeing it as a counter balance to the secular PLO and hoping to foster divisions within the Palestinian resistance. Hamas was only banned by Israel in 1989 - one year after the PLO/UNLO committees!

While the PLO abandoned the military struggle in favour of diplomatic means, Hamas advocated no compromise on a Palestinian State, based on Islam, that stretches from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River.

Its popularity has swelled with Palestine's youth, sickened not just at the brutality of the Israeli oppression, but with the compliance of the PLO. Contrary to the corruption of the PA, Hamas has an image of an efficient, organised alternative.

ular base or assume Hamas uses and has a change. of Hamas' its social called provides free scholar- and com- at for dis- ng "zeal" he largest opposed to th Israel. '90s it has ideological LO and its is Fatah. s military sent, grew an Muslim h feared it ol of the he Unified



WE THINK The One State Solution

Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei, has threatened to abandon the quest for an independent Palestinian state in favour of a one-State solution.

Although the PLO lacks the political will to back up its rhetoric with action, the view that the two-State solution is a rapidly evaporating mirage is gaining currency in Palestine.

At its heart, the two State solution envisages a Palestinian State within the West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital. However, Israel's continued colonisation has meant that even the 22% of historic Palestine promised under Oslo has never been delivered.

The two-State solution offers nothing to the Palestinian refugees, whose final status will be left to an eventual "permanent status agreement". Tens of thousands of Palestinians live on the margins of society in the Lebanon today prevented from working in 72 specified jobs and barred from owning or inheriting property. Israel has conspicuously refused to recognise UN Resolution 194 which demands that the refugees be permitted return or appropriately compensated. However, it guarantees the right of "return" to anyone of the Jewish faith born anywhere in the world. Recent fears of changing demographics in Israel have prompted Sharon to smooth the process of immigration and absorption of non-Arabs even if they weren't Jewish, in order to provide Israel with a "buffer" to the burgeoning Arab population within Israel.

Oslo, Camp David, the Road Map and the Geneva Accords, were doomed to fail as they ignored the fundamental nature of the Apartheid Israeli State, which precludes genuine co-existence on an equal basis. As long as the Zionist ideology of acquiring Palestinian land while excluding the Palestinian people prevails, a negotiated settlement based on the right of two people to live in peace will remain elusive.

A one-State solution acknowledges the reality that the history and future of the Israelis and Palestinians are intertwined. It is the only way to guarantee a just settlement for the Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories, inside Israel and within the Diaspora. Of course, it goes against the interests of all the major players in the region - the US, which depends on Israel as its regional bulldog, the EU, which views Israel as its last remaining colonial outpost and even the PA, which has sold its soul in exchange for the rule of a Bantustan State.

"The whole idea of trying to produce two States is at an end. The Oslo peace process is really in tatters... The lives of Israelis and Palestinians are hopelessly intertwined. There is no way to separate them. You can have fantasy and denial, or put people in ghettos. But in reality there is common history. So we have to find a way to live together. It may take 50 years. But the Israeli experience will gradually turn back toward the world they really live in, the Islamic Arab world. And that can only come through Palestinians".

- EDWARD SAID

Why do the union leaders sell out?

by KEVIN
WINGFIELD

The recent decision by national officers of SIPTU to torpedo the fight against privatisation in Aer Rianta and CIE caused anger and consternation among the members.

In both companies, union members had balloted overwhelmingly for industrial action in the face of threats to their jobs and conditions as a result of the planned break up of the companies paving the way for privatisation.

But at the eleventh hour, National Officers of SIPTU used rule 169 to call off action that would have meant an effective national transport shut down.

But it would be a mistake to see this simply in terms of the treachery of individual officials.

In almost every serious industrial dispute it is the union leaders who blink first, urging a poor compromise on their members.

This practise has been institutionalised in years of so-called "Partnership" where the trade union leaders, employers and government act as partners to decide national wage agreements.

Trade unions were formed to bring the power of organised labour to bear against the employers.

But many members despair of their unions really standing up to the boss.

Far Cry

The difficulty is the existence of the trade union bureaucracy. They straddle the class divide in industry. On the one hand they enjoy managerial standards of living—national officers of SIPTU like Jack O'Connor are paid over €100,000 and other perks. This is far more than the average industrial wage and a far cry from the minimum wage of €7 an hour that many ordinary members of the union are paid.

Their conditions of life are far removed from that of ordinary workers and have much more in common with the managers and bosses they are negotiating with.

Being remote from the frustrations of the shop floor, and on first name terms with the bosses they are negotiating with, they come increasingly to adopt a managerial attitude—disputes have to be "resolved", not won. Their jobs are secure and they don't have to suffer the rotten conditions of a bad deal.

In addition, being a trade union leader opens up opportunities to sit on quangos alongside bosses.

For example, Con Scanlon, General Secretary of the CWU which represents worker in An Post and Eircom, sits on the board of Eircom, presides over the ESOTs of both Eircom and An Post. From each post he draws a hefty salary far beyond the expectations of the workers he represents.

This does not mean that trade union leaders are simply part of the

management and state. It is only on the basis that they stand at the head of the mass workers' organisations that gives them an importance to the bosses.

If they did not represent in some form the aspirations of their members they would have no importance for bosses and would not be able to sustain their privileged position. But just as they represent some of the interests of their members to the bosses, in the name of "realism" and "being reasonable" they also represent the interests of the bosses to the members.

This is why they adopt partnership and continually seek compromise.

In any industrial dispute, a compromise may be necessary, but only as a result of measuring the balance of forces in battle.

Avoid

This is precisely what the union bureaucrats try to avoid.

Strikes and industrial action are interruptions to the normal process of negotiation as far as they are concerned, to be avoided and settled as quickly as possible.

In fact the bureaucrats straddle the class divide, with one foot in the workers camp, where their base is, and another in the camp of the bosses and government, where their meetings, discussions, rounds of golf, etc take place.

The anti-union provisions of the Industrial Relations Act give the union leaders a ready-made excuse for lack of action.

Socialists do not think there is nothing that can be done in the face of this.

Obviously some officials are better than other and socialists will back the left against the right in trade union elections. But differences between trade union leaders are small in comparison to the gulf that divides them from the membership.

The fact is the material conditions of their existence mean that the trade union bureaucracy is a conservative layer within the workers' movement.

Our aim is to democratise the unions so that they truly represent the interests of their members.

Socialists fight for all trade union officials to be subject to regular election and to be paid no more than the average of the workers they represent.

But important as electing good trade union leader is, the real strength of the movement comes from the rank and file.

In the 1970s Dublin's shop steward movement was able to lead a mass fight independently of the officials.

As the movement revives and faces the challenge of privatisation, downsizing, "rationalisation" and continued bosses demands for wage restraint, shop and office floor organisation is key and the linking together of shop stewards and union activists through rank and file organisation is the way forward.

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PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

The privatisation of our public services

By RORY HEARNE

FOR the third year in a row Ireland has been ranked the most globalised economy in the world. The country received one of its highest ever Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow of \$24.7 billion.

We were the prize neo-liberal model of economic development paraded and praised by McCreery and RTE Economics commentators at the EU Finance Ministers Summit in Punchestown.

At the heart of the Celtic Tiger neo-liberal policies that McCreery and the government are pursuing is the introduction of competition, de-regulation, liberalisation and privatisation into public services.

Government cutbacks since the 1980s and demands by the EU to keep borrowing low have meant that public services and infrastructure in this country are hopelessly under funded.

The government is now offering multinational companies the opportunity to make huge profits from this terrible situation.

A significant portion of the increase in FDI is made up of operators taking over public service provision and creaming off huge profits. There is little spoken about the most sinister form of this, which is Public Private Partnerships (PPP).

This article is an analysis of PPP development in Ireland and will show, if anyone was in doubt, the determination of this government to follow Thatcher type policies despite clear evidence that PPPs have failed internationally and private sector fat cats are the only ones who benefit.



Connex trains: a rare sighting

WHAT ARE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS?

Public private partnerships are where a state institution gets together with the private sector to provide public services or infrastructure.

The normal arrangement is that both sectors put finance into the project and the private company then constructs and operates the service/infra-

structure over a set period where they will have the opportunity to make huge profits both from government subsidies and/or user charges.

It is also used to 'regenerate' public spaces like Harbours, City Centres and local authority housing estates. In these cases the private company is given the public land (and public funding) to

construct a new development, which involves a small number of public housing or services and private apartments or commercial space, which the developer can sell at a huge profit.

McCreery and the rest of the free marketers claim that public-private partnerships save public funds through private sector initiative and efficiency.

Yet the findings show that providing public services through PPPs is more expensive than public finance because one, shareholders of private companies need dividends and two, it costs more for private companies to raise capital on the markets than governments who can get lower interest rates.

Furthermore, PPPs in hospitals,

schools and the London Underground have shown that in the absence of rising revenues private companies will cut back on services, sell off buildings, cut staff, lower wages, increase fares, introduce user charges for services that had previously been free.

And if all that fails - we, the tax payer bail them out!

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF PRIVATISATION: IT DOESN'T WORK!

Privatisation has clearly failed abroad and it's failing here too. The UK government has been forced to bailout a number of companies that have gone belly-up after privatisation.

Examples include Railtrack, British Nuclear Fuels, the Royal Armouries Museum and the Channel Tunnel Rail link venture.

The National Air Traffic Services (NATS) were part privatised under a PPP in July 2001 by Labour when they transferred control of NATS to private consortium, Airline.

Within a few months the government was forced to intervene to stop bankruptcy and provide financial support to ensure essential air traffic control services continued.

In the Argentine capital Buenos Aires the water was privatised in 1999 and handed over to a private consortium Aguas Argentinas and they considered it too expensive to extend water provision to the shanty town.

PPPs in Ireland

Here in Ireland PPPs are identified as a key element in the delivery of public infrastructure in the National Development Plan (with a minimum target for PPP investment of 2.35bn euros). The Department of Transport says there is "solid Government support for the concept of PPPs at the very highest level".

There is now a Central Public Private Partnerships Unit in the Dept of Finance to lead, drive and co-ordinate the PPP process with units set up in Dept of Env and Local Gov, Dept of Transport, Dept of Education and Science, Dept Health, Office of Public Works, National Roads Authority, Railway Procurement Agency and the Courts Service.

Budget 2004 announced specific targets for private sector investment in capital spending of 3.6bn euro by 2008 through PPPs (in addition to targets of 1.35 bn over same period for PPPs funded by user charges).

Already there are almost 80 PPPs completed in Ireland. PPPs have been used in the development of Car Parks, Car Testing Supervision Centres, Drivers Theory Test, the proposed Metro, the M50 Westlink Bridge, Sewage Treatment plants, wastewater treatment plants and water supply systems.

A brief overview of the completed and proposed PPPs shows both the extent to which privati-

sation of our public services is taking place and just who is benefiting. These private companies are receiving a direct subvention from the tax payer every year.

Education: The Cork school of Music is set to be operated by Jarvis (the same multinational educational provider that constructed and is operating 5 secondary schools as PPPs around the country) as a PPP for 25 years at a cost of 60 million.

Jarvis would receive 8.2 million euros per annum. The total cost to the tax payer will be 205 million.

The National Maritime College of Ireland is under construction at Ringsakiddy Co Cork at a cost of 51.3 mill euros.

Plans are for it to be constructed and operated for 25 years under PPP by Focus Education Ltd (Bovis Lend Lease and Halifax Bank of Scotland).

Health: A PPP Unit was established in the Department of Health to oversee two health pilot PPP projects to provide Community Nursing Units to the Eastern Regional Health Authority (450 additional beds) and to the Southern Health Board (400).

Roads: N4/N6 Kilcock-Kinnegad PPP scheme is the first major inter urban PPP scheme contract to be signed by the National Roads Authority. SIAC Construction and a major Spanish multinational will construct and toll the 40km stretch of motorway for thirty years.

Dick Cheney's former compa-

ny Halliburton Brown and Root Ltd is bidding to construct and operate the NS Fermoy Bypass.

Waste and waste water treatment: Under NDP 2000-2006 investment in waste management infrastructure includes provision for 571 million euros of private finance, which represents almost 70% of the overall investment under the National Development Plan. Multinationals like Indaver and Onyx are licking their lips just waiting for the opportunity to enter this market.

Oxigen (the union buster) and the four Dublin Local Authorities operate a PPP in the recycling collection scheme to the greater Dublin region. Not only do the private operators, like Oxigen, reduce workers conditions and wages but a Combat Poverty Report showed that where refuse services were privatised the private operators rarely provided

waivers and charged much higher refuse charges.

Ringsend will be treated to the Dublin Thermal Treatment Facility—Ireland's first waste to energy facility incinerator which will treat 500000 tonnes waste per annum and be operated by a private company in a PPP.

The Ringsend wastewater treatment plant was constructed by ABA (a consortium of Ascon, Black and Veatch and Anglian Water) and will be operated by them for 20 years. Already there have complaints such as pouring untreated sludge into Dublin Bay.

The Dun Laoghaire Harbour—(Carlisle Pier and Dun Laoghaire Sea Front), is set to be developed as a PPP. One of the bidders is Urban Capital (also bidding to develop the Fatima Mansions PPP).

Housing: Fatima Mansions, St Michael's Estate in Inchicore and O'Deveney

Gardens are to be re-developed as PPPs.

The Fatima Mansions Housing Regeneration Project is an 11-acre site. Dublin City Council want to give a developer this public land to build 220 social and affordable housing and 300 private residential, sports and community facilities and commercial retail space. This is a huge reduction in the number of social housing units on these sites at a time when waiting lists for social housing reaches into the tens of thousands.

Transport: The LUAS is set to open in June this year. Connex has been given a five-year contract with a further five-year option to operate it.

They will be paid by the government to provide the service AND their fares will be more expensive than the Dart (according to none other than privatiser in chief Seamus Brennan). Issues already include the fact that Connex has recruited only 40 drivers.

Yet this is to run 40 Trams with a 5-minute peak service schedule as well as a promised night-link service. The workers had to sign a 'no strike' clause as part of their contract of employment.

Connex is a wholly owned subsidiary of Vivendi a huge global multinational that has operations in water, waste, energy services and transport. This same company is involved with Aguas Argentinas, the Ringsend waste water treatment plant and private recycling operators in Dublin.

Resistance against the corporate masters

Free public services available to the working class has been something that we have fought for over decades. Bernard Cassan, George Monblot and others argue the national state is becoming impotent in the face of this corporate takeover of public service provision.

Yet the reality is the state, through PPPs, is actively promoting neo-liberalism and helping their corporate friends to make a killing from state assets.

We need to follow the examples of the Oxigen workers, the bus workers and the Bin Tax Campaign and stop this privatisation madness through strikes and mobilisations.

Start by getting your Union to join May Day - the day against privatisation!

Irish media

The political power of O'Reilly exposed

by DAVID LYNCH

WITHOUT fear or favour is supposedly the touchstone motto of most of the media in the western world. "Free" and "Independent" media is touted as one of the mainstays of western democracies. A free press that undertakes to carry out objective forensic investigations of the governing authorities in an attempt to search for the "truth".

The real truth, however, is much different. The mass media is owned by the rich and almost invariably reflects the attitudes, ideology, and class interest of the ruling class. While the capitalist class owns the means of production in society (factories, offices etc) they also through their ownership of newspapers and TV stations control the means of mental production.

The powerful nexus between leading media barons and politicians was brought into sharper focus during former Taoiseach John Bruton's evidence last week at the Moriarty Tribunal. For a brief period of cross examination the power of media barons and their ability to influence leading politicians was brought into stark light.

Speaking about his time as head of the Rainbow Government in 1997, the former FG leader outlined a meeting he had with the head of Independent Press Mr. Tony O'Reilly.

Bruton met "Sir" Anthony alone in his luxurious west Cork home and listened to what the former Taoiseach agreed were the businessman's "gripes".

This very meeting exposes much of the hypocrisy of the present form of democracy we live under. One of the chief lies is that everyone no matter what their background will be treated equally by the political system and the government. However what ordinary worker could expect to have a personal meeting with the Taoiseach where they can let off some steam about their own economic gripes!

Eye-Opening

The letter that Sir Anthony O'Reilly sent to Bruton subsequent to the meeting is also eye-opening.

"My dear John, Thank you for dropping in on Sunday morning for the proverbial cup of tea. I hope that our conversation served to convince you or at least explain to you how disappointed I am in the course of action taken by the present government in regard to 'private business', as it is quaintly described.

"I and my colleagues are alarmed at the inattention of certain ministers, and equally alarmed that we have become something of a political football in other areas of our business."

The "inattention" of certain ministers was code from O'Reilly for a number of issues dealing with his various business interests that he was not happy with.

The background to the fraught relationship between the powerful newspaper group and Mr Bruton includes Independent's investment in 1989 in MMDS licences for the distribution of TV signals.

(The investment was to eventually cost the group €100 million.) Illegal defector groups were taking business away from the MMDS company, and Independent was annoyed that the government was failing to act against these groups.

Also O'Reilly was annoyed at the fact that Mr Denis O'Brien had won the second mobile phone licence competition despite international bidders.

Evidently following the meeting Bruton and his government did not react the way that O'Reilly wanted, because the *Irish Independent* ran an unprecedented front page editorial on the morning of the 1997 election calling for a vote for the Fianna Fail and Progressive Democrat opposition.

The whole incident proves a lie to the "objectivity" that the Irish papers wax lyrical about. O'Reilly's *Independent News and Media* control 64% of daily newspaper sales and its three Sunday papers have 75% of Irish title sales. These titles reflect the political whims and interests of O'Reilly and also the wider business class of which he is a central figure.

O'Reilly's numerous papers have a very particular political bent and that is confirmed by no less than the arch-duke of all right wing global media barons Rupert Murdoch.

Last year Murdoch told *The Dubliner* magazine that O'Reilly "uses his newspapers as instruments for his own political views.". This is a quite amazing observation considering that when Blair and Bush invaded Iraq, editorials in all 175 of Murdoch's worldwide newspapers supported the war.

The meeting between Bruton and O'Reilly is just the tip of the iceberg. The power that corporate media wields in political and economic circles in Ireland is immense. The whole incident exposes the sham objectivity and the real political interests that control the newspaper industry.

music

A musical chronicle of four decades of protest

by DAVE LORDAN

THIS box set is a 101 track retrospective of singer-songwriter Christy Moore's four decade long career.

It is a masterly artistic record in song of the major transformations and struggles that have taken place in Irish society during that time.

Chances are if there's been something to protest about in the last forty years—nuclear pollution, British and American imperialism, the oppression of women and of travellers, censorship and state cover-ups—Christy Moore has been singing about it and we have been singing along with him as he marched right beside us.

Super Talented

But Christy is not just a protest singer, he is Ireland's greatest living traditional artist.

He has been chief among those passionate, radical and super-talented musicians and singers who have fought and won a struggle to rescue our folk tradition from the rack of reactionary nationalism and the soul murder of mass market shamrockery.



■ Christy Moore: *Anti war*

Christy is not only an Irish but a world artist.

From very early on in his career he recognised

the common impulse to preserve and eulogise the experiences and struggles of the working poor in the

likes of American Woody Guthrie and Scotsman Ewan MacColl and made some of their most affect-

ing songs a part of his repertoire.

Christy has also extended and deepened the tradition by popularising the work of many less well known Irish songwriters such as Jimmy McCarthy, Christy Hennessy and Bobby Sands.

In doing all this he has performed a vital service to the Irish left.

His obvious delight in his art and his ability to focus on that heart-rending or fist-raising detail in his songs have added much needed energy and rhythm to the movement.

His songs have given form and expression to the dignity and essential humanity of our actions and have been like torch-flames to hold aloft when the black holes of war and exploitation have threatened to swallow us in heavy darkness.

Deepened

All the signs in his latest work is that his political understanding has deepened with experience.

He is a supporter of the anti war movement not only in words but deeds. Get this box set and win your heart out along with Christy to the beautiful music of the masses.

■ *The Box Set—1964-2004 6 CD Box Set. €55.*

television

England expecting resistance

by KERRI PARKE

"ENGLAND EXPECTS every man to do his duty." So runs the motto of lead character Ray in this new BBC drama (*'England Expects'*), appropriated from Nelson's battle cry at Trafalgar.

This duty is apparently to ensure that all ethnic minorities are forcibly removed from his east London community.

Steven Mackintosh gives a convincing performance as a security guard with latent fascist beliefs that resurface when his family is refused a council house.

They are under the impression that they will all be given to asylum seekers or Muslims.

So, to make himself feel better, he decides to revisit his old haunts and discovers that the old party of football hooligans and street thugs is now mainstream and respectable and is standing a candidate in the local elections.



Fuelled by hopelessness and despair at his life falling apart, he finds solace in the politics of hate that the fascists provide and gets stirred up by the hysteria around

Muslims and asylum seekers. The first two episodes of this drama reveal some good intentions and are quite accurate in a number of areas.

The suited leader of the party, Larry, explains to Ray that it might help their

cause if there was a small attack on someone, nothing major, just enough to get the Muslims to react.

This is a very accurate picture of fascism today, where they appear in nice suits in public but behind the scenes are still engaging in the same strategy of violence and intimidation to get what they want.

Despite appearances, nothing has changed in the last ten years. But the programme falls down in many

other areas.

The view that we must be watchful of all Muslims as they are all potential terrorists, and that asylum seekers are taking over, is one that is portrayed as the norm and it goes unchallenged.

Not one voice of opposition to this racist filth is heard from a single character. The fascists are seen as having a point when an Asian family do get a new council house.

A protest is held outside a fascist meeting, but there is not one white face present.

All white people are portrayed as racists or sympathetic to their views about Muslims and asylum seekers—not one is shown as being able or willing to fight back against racism.

Much more could have been done with what was a potentially a good idea, especially as it comes in the year that the British National Party (BNP) is making an unprecedented assault on the electoral system on 10 June, in Britain

But at least in real life there is loud opposition in the form of Unite Against Fascism—a coalition of anti fascists recently launched.

Unite will be campaigning across Britain to make sure that the BNP does not make the electoral breakthrough it expects to, in the local, Greater London Assembly and European elections.

■ *'England Expects' starts Monday 5 April, 9pm, BBC1.*

local action/campaigns/union news & reports

Come to the May Day Carnival

By Rory Hearne

THE government has cancelled its Beautiful Night concert planned for O'Connell St on May 1st.

It was to be part of their Day Of Welcomes for the new accession states and an attempt to get attention away from the fact that they will be winning and dining the 25 EU leaders in Farmleigh House!

The concert was cancelled due to incompetence and the fear of creating greater unpopularity for the government with the closing of O'Connell st for a week running up to the concert.

Now the concert is finished the government and right-wing media are whipping up fear and tension saying that thousands of anarchists will descend on Dublin and burn it to the ground.

This is nonsense and the only anarchists planning to come to Dublin are the White overalls Wombles who engage only in peaceful symbolic actions!

Unfortunately, the broader left political parties (including the Greens and Labour

and Trade Unions are uneasy about taking part in any march on May Day because of perceived 'anti-EU' interpretations.

The Dublin Council of Trade Unions are not holding their traditional march and are instead holding a social event in Liberty Hall on the night.

We think however that it is vital that we get thousands to take part in the Another Europe is Possible Carnival on May Day.

We can bring together those fighting de-regulation and privatisation in the sale of public housing, health, education, bin tax, break-up of CIE, Dublin Bus and Aer Rianta, the anti-war movement and all anti-racist groups to oppose our governments and the EU's agenda of neo-liberalism and war.

Already supporting the Another Europe is Possible Carnival:

Mick O'Reilly (ATGWU), Patricia McKenna (Green Party MEP), Pat Cahill (ASTI), Barry Nevin (SIPTU Aviation Branch), the Irish Anti-War Movement, Residents against Racism, the NGO Peace Alliance, Irish Palestine Solidarity Cam-

MAYDAY
CÉAD MÍLE FAILTE
to all people of the world
NO TO RACISM WAR AND CORPORATE GREED
CARNIVAL
Assemble May 1st 12noon Central Bank (Dame St) Dublin
Another Europe is Possible
www.freewebs.com/anothereuropispossible 086 1523542

paign, Campaign against the Bin Tax, Community Workers, Sinn Féin, Socialist Workers Party, Workers Party, Socialist Party and hopefully more will come on board.

It will be a peaceful carnival on the day with families, workers, immigrants mixing together with music and symbols of peace and people before profit.

Get your union, community group, school together and get a contingent on the carnival march.

For info, leaflets, posters contact 086 1523542

May 1: Outline of events:

12 noon —meet Central Bank, Dame Street, speakers (including Susan George, international debt campaigner), beginning of march of colour, noise, bring messages of welcome for immigrants, peace and for public services not private profit

1 pm Carnival leaves Dame Street and heads to Phoenix Park—going through the city centre—highlighting that ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

2.30pm Carnival of Music begins at Phoenix Park—including King Sativa, Gospel Choirs, African Music, Jinx Lennon, Happy City Samba School, very Special Guest and many more

South East EU environmental protest and alternative summit

AS PART of Ireland's EU Presidency, the EU environmental ministers will be meeting in Martin Cullen's constituency, Waterford on May 15th & 16th.

The South East Social Forum is organising a protest and alternative summit under the title of 'People and Planet Before Profit—Another Europe is Possible'.

The protest assemblies in the Glen, Waterford city centre at 2.45pm on Saturday 15th May to march to the Waterford Institute of Technology where the EU summit is happening.

Speakers at the alternative environmental summit include: Patricia McKenna MEP (Green Party), Mick O'Reilly (ATGWU), Karin Dubsky (Coastwatch), Richard Boyd Barrett (Irish Anti War Movement), Jean Somers (Debt and Develop-

ment Coalition), also speakers from SIPTU, Zero Waste, AFRI, Feasta, DAPSE, CHASE, The Waterford Council of Trade Unions, Sustainable Ireland, Busworkers Action Group and many more.

The alternative summit opens on Friday 14th May and runs until Sunday 16th May in four venues—

- The Showboat, The Glen, Waterford
- The Forum Theatre, The Glen, Waterford
- Dunmore East, Co. Waterford
- For more information on the South East Social Forum contact 086-3274815 southeastsocialforum@yahoo.com or go to our website: www.freewebs.com/seaf

Dates for your diary

Demonstration and Alternative Environmental Summit

@ EU Environment Ministers Meeting, Waterford May 14th, 15th, 16th Organised by The South East Social Forum
Demonstration @ EU Meeting
Assemble The Glen, Waterford, Saturday May 15th 2.45pm

Alternative Environmental Summit
OPENING MEETING

'People and Planet Before Profit: Another Europe is Possible' The Granville Hotel, The Quay, Waterford Friday 14th May 7.30pm - 9.30pm

Patricia McKenna MEP (Green Party); Jean Somers (Debt And Development Coalition); Dick Roche (President Waterford Council Of Trade Unions); Daithi Doolan (Sinn Féin); Brid Smith (Dublin Bin Tax Campaign & Socialist Workers Party)

'Yes To Irish Neutrality: No To A Europe Of War And Militarisation'

The Showboat, The Glen, Waterford Saturday 15th May 10.30am - 12.15pm

Richard Boyd Barrett (Chairperson Irish Anti War Movement) Eoin O'Brien (Belfast City Councillor) Andy Storey (AFRI)

James Bowles (Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign) 'Global Climate Change, Environmental & Economic Sustainability, Genetically Modified Organisms'

Including The Exhibition: Sustainability Begins At Home: Frats Enjo and Sustainable Ireland
The Forum Theatre, The Glen, Waterford Saturday 15th May 11.00am - 2.00pm

Lunch Break @ 12.10pm - 12.50pm

David O'Keilly (Feasta); David Phillips (Sustainable Ireland) Will Steger (Stop Esso Ireland); Michael O'Callaghan (GM-Free Ireland); Dr. Elizabeth Cullen (Irish Doctors Environmental Association)

Yes to a Europe of Worker and Social Rights; No to a Europe of Profit and Privatisation of Public Services
The Showboat, The Glen, Waterford Saturday 15th May 12.45pm - 2.45pm

Mick O'Reilly (ATGWU); Mike Jennings (SIPTU); Barry Finnegan (DAPSE & Irish Social Forum); Rory Hearne (Convener Another Europe is Possible); Owen McCormack (Busworkers Action Group)

Waste Solutions
The Granville Hotel, The Quay, Waterford Sunday 16th May 2.30pm - 4.30pm

Jack O'Sullivan (Zero Waste); Deldre De Burca (Green Party); Jody Power (Waste Study Group); Carmel Cronin (Down To Zero)

'Our Marine Environment'
Tramore, Co. Waterford Sunday 16th May 11.00am - 2.00pm

Workshop: 'Biodiversity And Sustainable Use Of Natural Resources Focusing On The Marine Environment'

Followed by:
Field Trip: An Illustrated Guide to Looking at 'Real' Life and How It Should Be

Karin Dubsky (Coastwatch Europe Network); James McCartan (Coastwatch Europe Network, Tramore Co-ordinator)

Also: Music And Entertainment Throughout The Weekend
Jenkins Lane Market With Organic And Fair Trade Produce

BURLINGTON PROTESTOR ACQUITTED

A SOCIALIST and anti-globalisation campaigner, arrested at a political protest more than two years ago, had his conviction squashed in the Dublin Circuit Court.

On April 1st after a court battle that lasted for two and a half years 26 year old Thomas Kador, was acquitted of any wrong doing during a demonstration against a Public Private Partnership summit, which was held in Dublin's Burlington Hotel on October 10th 2001.

Gardaí had accused Thomas of having attempted to steal a Garda radio as one officer was calling for assistance. Furthermore it was alleged he had breached the peace, acted in a threatening and abusive manner, as well as having obstructed Gardaí

and resisted arrest.

Thomas Kador had been convicted on all these counts in the District Court in September 2002, yet all charges were dismissed at the recent appeal hearing in the Circuit Court.

In her closing statement Judge Alison Lindsay said that after the prosecution had made their case she was inclined to believe that Thomas Kador did not take the radio, and went on that 'after hearing his own evidence I am convinced he did not do it'.

Thomas's testimony was that not only did he not take any Garda radio but that the very Garda who had accused him of having done so actually inflicted quite serious head injuries on him (requiring stitches) as well as another



Thomas Kador

er protestor by using his radio to hit out at demonstrators.

The prosecution also failed to make the case that Thomas had either acted in a threatening or abusive manner, which comprised a breach of the peace or had committed any of the other

alleged offences.

Thomas Kador was among 16 demonstrators who were arrested at the protest outside the Burlington hotel (see <http://www.indymedia.ie/arc/hives/arc4.html>) and charged with offences under the Public Order Act (of

1994).

When the act was introduced the Government claimed it was needed to deal with violent or threatening behaviour by drunken gangs.

However, since then it has been widely used in many very different (officially not envisaged) contexts, such as against political protesters, striking workers on picket lines, members of the Traveller Community and homeless people.

In the face of this clear misuse of such an act and the obvious fact that the act itself is therefore open to abuse it is time to call a 'spade' a 'spade' and a 'bad spade' (or piece of legislation) a 'bad spade'. Therefore our call has to be loud and clear: 'Scrap the Public Order Act'

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Dun Laoghaire Against War,
Meets every Wednesday, 8pm Farrells pub Dun Laoghaire Shopping Centre. All welcome. 012304621 for details
Ballymun Against War
Meets every Thursday at 7pm in the Axis Centre. All welcome. Phone 086-3074060 for details

TK-ECC

NIPSA

Workers should occupy to save their pensions

UP TO 550 workers at an East Belfast factory that is closing have found a huge hole in their pension fund.

The workers, whose jobs are being moved to Romania, discovered that £40 million is missing.

The Dundonald factory is now known as TK-ECC. It was established in 1988 at the former GM Fisher Body company, then became European Components, before being renamed TK-ECC.

It makes seatbelts. Earlier this year, the east Belfast factory announced it was to close, blaming a slump in the stock market for recent huge losses.

Yet its Japanese parent company Takata, which has 48 plants in 16 countries, is expected this year to break sales records of £1.7bn.

ent company Takata, which has 48 plants in 16 countries, is expected this year to break sales records of £1.7bn.

It is in the pursuit of more profits that the factory is being moved to Eastern Europe.

If they do not take drastic action, workers with more than twenty years in the plant face retirement with only a third of the income they had been promised, according to their trade union Amicus.

"The workers should occupy the factory and hold the machinery there hostage until the company coughs up the money it owes the pension fund", says the SEA's Eamonn McCann.

"Of course, they will be told this is illegal. But what is more illegal—to occupy a factory in order to get back money that is rightly yours or to hold onto £40 million that rightly belongs to others?"

Brown's barmy budget raises the stakes!

By a NIPSA activist

GORDON Brown's recent announcement of 40,000 job cuts across the civil service has added an extra impetus to the current pay dispute involving 22,000 of the North's civil servants.

Already civil servants in Northern Ireland have been told that they will not be immune from the cull.

The current industrial action may well be a prequel to a fight to defend jobs in the near future. However, the willingness of NIPSA members to back their union during the paydispute bodes well for the future.

At the end of March, workers in the Child Support Agency took part in a solid five-day strike and in the week before Easter, the 'selective' strike action moved back to MOT centres in Belfast, Mallusk and Craigavon resulting in the cancellation of a further 3,500 vehicle tests. Also at the end of March, NIPSA held consultation meetings for activists in Derry, Belfast, Ballymena and Armagh.

Each meeting was well attended and the mood was clearly one of anger with civil service management coming

in for heavy criticism for failing to give statutory sick pay to staff that have produced certification from their GP.

This has meant that a number of workers have received as little as £70 pay for the month, at least one received a pay cheque marked '£0'.

One of those affected told *Socialist Worker* "we actually work in the department with responsibility for paying out benefits and emergency giros! The behaviour of management is despicable," John said, "they just want us to back down and not strike."

Activists

The majority of activists at the meetings supported an escalation of the campaign, and for joint action with PCS members in Britain.

Even those who were hesitant about taking more action agreed that it was the only way to go.

There is a real danger that the willingness of low paid civil servants to take more strike action will diminish if NIPSA don't seriously accelerate the strike action.

If the Civil Service Executive of NIPSA wants to win a real pay rise for civil servants,

it must begin to convince workers and management alike of its seriousness.

Union members need the confidence of knowing that every action they take is part of a strategy that can win and that they will be backed up by their union if suspended in the course of that action. Senior

management and the government need to know the union leadership will go all the way.

So far the union membership have stepped up to the mark every time, it's the leadership which has been the weakest link.

A new layer of activists has emerged in NIPSA.

We all need to be involved in organising on a rank and file level to lead the fight to defend jobs before the axe starts to fall.

For a copy of the latest *Uncivil Servant* Rank & File Bulletin contact Ryan on 07789756994 or email uncivil_service@yahoo.co.uk

An Post

'A VICTORY OF SORTS'

"A VICTORY of sorts!" was how one CWU activist described the situation in An Post last week.

Two weeks ago, CWU were poised to take strike action over the refusal of An Post to pay money owed under the national pay deal and a dispute over employee shares.

On the Friday the union executive suspended the strike but An Post management immediately introduced new working arrangements at the Dublin Mails Centre which had not been agreed.

Over 600 workers were suspended when they

refused to work new practices

"This was a clear attempt to goad the workers into an all-out strike" a union activist told *Socialist Worker*.

But they were unsuccessful.

Within a week the company was faced with postal chaos and retreated by reinstating all the suspended workers and taking back the laid off temporary workers.

The CWU is now in talks with the An Post management at the LRC and are pushing a clear agenda of cost savings and flexibility in the run up to privatisation. Workers will have to be

on their guard against any attempt to ram through changes against their will.

The attempt by the CWU to link their dispute over pay with ESOT is mistaken and is seen as a concession to the privatisation agenda.

In Eirecom ESOT paved the way for privatisation which left the workforce 5,000 fewer in a couple of years.

CWU General Secretary Con Seanlon, who has also been on the board of Eirecom and heads the Eirecom ESOT may make a killing but the outlook for the workers and the industry in the longer term is very much less rose-

Hibernia Private Teacher Train College

Update, McTeacher: I'm lovin it!

By NIAL SMYTH, St Pats

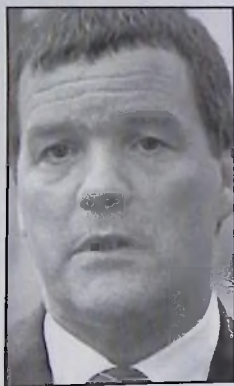
This week we have Charlie McCreavy happily spending hundreds of thousands of tax-payers money wining and dining EU ministers in Punchestown and treating them to expensive wine and four-course meals at Smurfit's K Club.

Recently on 19th March 2004 Minister for Education and Science, Noel Dempsey at the OECD Ministerial Meeting on Education in Dublin Castle, raised concern at the decision of a number years ago not to publish league tables of school results, describing it as "extreme" and that there was a "case to be made" for their publication.

According to the Minister, he had to publish them, as it was "the right of every parent".

What had happened to the right of 'every parent' to have their child with special needs have a place in the school of their choice or the right to a school without a leaking roof or overcrowded classroom? Dempsey has never referred to these conditions as extreme.

But the news is not all unpleasant! Just as Mc Donald's attempted to repackage their junk as a healthy option, Noel Dempsey is attempting to push a Thatcherite agenda in the form of the Mc Teacher, Hibernia College's On-Line Teaching



Minister for Education, Noel Dempsey

Training Course.

Despite his attempts, the course has faced major opposition from student teachers.

Last November over 2,000 trainee teachers marched on the INTO HQ in anger over the unions inaction over this issue and then to the Department in opposition to the

decision to recognise the money spinning private teacher training course.

Since the demonstration, the INTO have met with members of the student body and following a statement from the union in opposition to Hibernia College in November, post-graduate students, nearing completion of their course, with a number of supportive delegates, will be holding a fringe meeting at the INTO Annual conference to encourage other INTO delegates to get behind the fight back against the privatisation of teacher training.

This just shows that when people take to the streets that things can and do begin to move.

We must ensure that John Carr and the INTO leadership match their fine words with action!

Ballymun protest victory

RESIDENTS from Ballymun's Connolly Tower stopped building work next to a local playground last month.

Ballymun Regeneration had begun work at 7.00am on a Saturday with a temporary access road running unguarded by a playground where a child had been killed two years ago.

The residents gathered immediately and stopped the contractors working until it was agreed to divert the road away from the playground. As one resident told *Socialist Worker*: "We were not notified of this work and were determined it would not go ahead until they changed the route of the road. Our action made sure a dangerous situation was resolved."

ESB ballot industrial action

ESB workers are being balloted for industrial action by the Group of Unions.

This follows management dragging its heels and failing to come to talks to discuss a new Pact Agreement to follow on from when the current agreement expires later in the year.

In the run up to privatisation a number of cost cutting measures involving redundancies have been negotiated but management is complaining that the savings "were not delivered".

The unions respond by saying they have delivered what was agreed. If the company didn't make the expected savings, that's not their problem.

Around the country there are local issues coming to the fore over the re-powering of power stations.

To conform to environmental standards, generators are being switched to cleaner processes. But management is using the opportunity to demand radical changes in manning and work practices. This they call "best

European industrial practice."

A series of local re-powering agreements are currently being negotiated with the unions. In Moneypoint for example, management is demanding annualised hours and unlimited access to contractors.

But the move to privatisation and deregulation of the energy market is proving very damaging for the industry. As one ESB worker told *Socialist Worker*: "The government claims introducing competition will lead to lower prices. But in 1998 28 companies were in the wings to get in on the industry here. But they can only be induced to get involved if prices are raised. Electricity prices in Ireland are among the lowest in Europe. The last two increased in prices were authorised by the government specifically to encourage these companies to come in. It's mad. They raise prices to facilitate competition which they claim will lower prices!"

Anti-Racist activist threatened with attack

A RECENT meeting in Dublin which launched the Campaign Against the Racist Referendum was attended by members of 30 groups.

These included: Residents Against Racism, Green Party, Sinn Féin, Socialist Party, Socialist Workers Party, the Anti-Racist Network from Belfast, and Comhlámh

At the beginning of April the Galway branch of the Socialist Workers Party organised a local meeting to highlight some of the issues facing refugees and immigrants in this country and begin the work on a campaign against the referendum. The meeting took place in the Imperial Hotel, Eyre Square.

One of the organisers of a meeting against the upcoming nationality referendum and against deportations received a threatening phone call the

night before the meeting. The caller threatened to organise a group to come to the meeting and rape Orla Ni Chomhraí (one of the organisers of the meeting) and another speaker at the meeting. This was followed up with racist abuse later.

Orla Ni Chomhraí commented, "It is feared that the lead-up to the referendum will see an increase in this sort of abusive behaviour, both towards immigrants and people who stand up for their rights."

"This just proves the point that the actions and comments of the government encourage racist views and abuse. I think the lead up to the referendum will see an increase in these sort of comments and possibly even in racist attacks. I would urge everyone to see through the lies of the government and vote against this referendum."

Union Amalgamation

By a CPSU activist

THE Civil Public Services unions IMPACT, CPSU and PSEU are entering negotiations on amalgamation of their respective organisations.

Motions to sanction this will be put forward at each union's annual conference.

With 50,000 in IMPACT, 13,000 in the CPSU and 8,000 in the PSEU, this new union would become the second biggest.

Allegedly the concept behind this is the formation of "one big union" capable of defending our public services and the conditions of those working within them.

In reality 'it's more about pay structures and career paths for officials than anything else' as one union activist put it, "very different from James Larkin's idea of the same name".

When SIPTU was formed in 1990 from an amalgamation covering 40% of union membership in the republic it received a grant of £700,000 (equivalent to £1.3 million now) from the government.

Why this happened became apparent in the years that followed.

Wage restraint became the norm for Irish workers under the Partnership agreements. Within SIPTU by far the largest union, decision-making became the job of officials not rank and file members. A case in point being is the calling

off of the national transport strike recently.

This kind of sell-out is not unique to any one union, officials across the board have lifestyles and salaries very different from the membership and see their main job as negotiating the ins and outs of agreements with management not winning improvements in wages and conditions through wide spread action.

High a union rep in the CPSU pointed out that "The officials who agreed the Benchmarking deal in the public sector, and those officials who said nothing could be done about improving it, got far larger increases under the deal than the members they were negotiating for."

BATU the building workers union achieved success in fighting subcontracting and increasing wage rates in recent years, and it's a smaller union with about 9,000 members.

It happened because a small number of officials more accountable to a very active and determined membership.

Liam a CPSU union rep believes, "What's needed is for activists to come together at workplace level across union boundaries."

"To raise awareness about what is happening in the civil service, like decentralisation without consultation, contracting, outsourcing and one crap-pay-for-more-work deal after another. Push for action rather than a new union head office."

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AS RESISTANCE TURNS INTO REVOLT IN IRAQ



■ Uprising in Fallujah

STOP

BUSH

END THIS BRUTAL OCCUPATION!

By **RICHARD BOYD BARRETT**

LESS than a year after the so-called "liberation" of Baghdad by US forces a massive revolt is taking place against the US occupation.

The US had previously blamed Saddam loyalists in the so-called Sunni triangle North of Baghdad for continued resistance to the occupation.

Recent events have brutally exposed this lie. Shia Muslims who make up the majority of the Iraqi population and who were among the biggest victims of Saddam's regime, have now joined the revolt against the occupation forces.

On April 4th thousands of supporters of Shia cleric Muqtada al-sadr joined protests in Baghdad and Southern cities after the occupation authorities banned the newspaper *al-Hawza*. Al Hawza is controlled by al-Sadr and has been critical of the US occupation.

On Sunday, in the Southern Shia stronghold of Najaf, troops under Spanish command killed 20 Iraqi Shia's protesting against the ban and the occupation. The killings turned the protests into a full-scale revolt.

In Sadr city, a Shia slum in the East of Baghdad an uprising took place with thousands of Iraqi's storming government buildings and police stations in response to the massacre in Najaf.

None of this should surprise

us. US propaganda about bringing democracy to Iraq and handing power back to the Iraq's is a total fiction.

The US have made clear, that a Shia dominated government would be unacceptable to them. The US fear that Shias look to Iran, a traditional enemy of the US, since the Iranian revolution overthrew the US puppet regime of the Shah in 1979.

The US has tried to play on divisions between the Shias in the South, Sunnis in the centre of Iraq and the Kurds in the North to maintain control of Iraq.

The US had promised to hand-over control to an Iraqi government in June. In reality, the handover is a myth. The new Iraqi 'government' was hand-picked by the US itself. US military forces would still retain ulti-

mate control of the Iraqi police and armed forces. The US has set up a new institution, which will be "solely responsible for the licensing and regulating telecommunications, information and other media."

Bans

A law introduced by Saddam in 1987, which bans workers in state-owned organisations from forming trade unions, is to remain in place.

Most importantly the US are claiming UN justification under Resolution 1511 to leave 110,000 US troops in Iraq until the end of 2005.

Incredibly, Paul Wolfowitz, one of the US hawks who pushed hardest for the war and arch supporter of Israel is being touted as the new US ambassador for Iraq.

In short, the US has no intention of establishing democracy in Iraq.

It wants a US puppet government whose power is guaranteed by the US military. As the anti war movement said all along this was a war for control of oil and to ensure US domination of the Middle East.

The entire population of Iraq know the real US agenda and want the US out. The revolt against the occupation is going to continue and will escalate.

Much horror has been expressed at the recent mutilation and hanging of US personnel by Iraqis in Fallujah. Certainly this was a terrible incident.

But it is the massacre and mutilation of thousands of innocent Iraqis at the hands of the US during the war and still almost

every day under the occupation that has unleashed this terrible cycle of violence.

More Iraqi civilians and young US troops will die unless the US is forced out of Iraq.

Here in the west we must support the resistance to the occupation and keep the anti war movement on the streets. In Ireland, we have a vital opportunity to strike a blow against George Bush's warmongering when he comes to visit this country in June.

We need huge protests to send a message of solidarity to the people of Iraq and the growing anti war movement in the US itself.

We must also challenge our government for collaborating with Bush's war by allowing US troops to use our airports.