

Socialist Worker

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U.S./U.K. TROOPS OUT OF IRAQ - U.S. MILITARY OUT OF SHANNON



THE US army wants to murder Falluja. They want to make an example of its citizens so that the whole of Iraq will be frightened to resist their rule. But the people of Falluja have fought back.

Socialist Worker salutes that resistance – the Iraqi people have as much a right to fight their occupiers as the French resistance movement during WW2 or as Irish people did when they fought the Black and Tans.

The corporate media has tried to demonise the people of Falluja. They do not treat them as real human beings who are frightening, angry and who share the same emotions as ourselves.

Here we re-print how one resident describes the terror that has been visited on their city.

'When I hear bombs falling around my neighbourhood, I keep thinking - any moment now, I could be killed.

It is worst during the night, when the bombardment is most intense.

If a big bomb lands somewhere nearby, you often hear crying and wailing afterwards.

It is a very strange feeling because in between the screaming, there is the sound of more missiles flying.

That is when I think - I could be next.

Another sound you hear during the bombing is that of prayers. People pray loudly because they are so scared.

Sometimes, you hear people say quite unusual things - they improvise, making up their own prayers.

We followed the US elections very closely from Falluja.

It was a matter of life and death. Many people were hoping John Kerry would win because they felt he would not have allowed our city to be attacked like this.

Of course, we also know that the US policy in Iraq at large is not going to change. We do not forget that George Bush and John Kerry are two sides of the same coin.

Still, as far as our city is concerned right now, a Kerry victory would have brought some hope.

I left my old house in the north of the city a month ago, when the Americans began bombing that area all the time.

Now I live with a small group of friends near the centre of Falluja.

We are just men here. All our wives and children have left the city - some we sent to Baghdad, others to quieter areas closer by.

We cook and eat together and spend most of our time in the house.

If you want to leave the house, the safest time to do so is between seven in the morning and one in the afternoon, when the Americans take a break from the bombing.

The souk [market] in the centre of Falluja is open from morning to midday and, fortunately, it has not run out of food so far.

But I can't see how long the supplies will last - two days ago, the government said it was cutting off the roads from Falluja to Baghdad and Ramadi.

I don't know what we will eat then.

I guess we might still be able to grab hold of some meat - I've seen a lot of goats in the city.

There is only one road out of the city that is still open now - but it runs through a checkpoint manned by US soldiers.

We think they're going to cut this route off quite soon as well.

Hospitals

A lot of people have left Falluja. Mostly only men remain.

This used to be a city of 500,000 people.

Now, my guess is there are about 100,000 still here.

Some people who tried to leave earlier on found they had to come back because there was no way of surviving away from their homes.

Iraq is a difficult place to live at the moment. There are not many opportunities.

The hospitals I have seen are full of people but empty of supplies and medicine. The erratic electricity also makes operating difficult.

The injured know they won't get much treatment. They come just to be near the doctor, to hear the doctor talk to them.

STOP THE SLAUGHTER OF FALLUJAH

WE THINK

AN APPEAL:

Stand with the people of Fallujah

WHEN YOU go to Fallujah, what grabs your attention is the destruction. You see the destruction everywhere. This is what 28 year old Hal Shamari said as he fled his city just before the US final assault.

"The US marines want to punish Fallujah just like the Russian army destroyed Grosnyia in

Chechnya or Franco's forces blasted Guernica during the Spanish Civil War."

"It is naked, brutal oppression tinged with imperialist jingoism

According to Guardian newspaper in military jargon the city has been "depersonalised"—disticts are given American names like Queens to replace their Iraqi names.

Every anti war activist needs to respond. We cannot let the people of Fallujah fight alone. No one should fall for the lie that they are fanatics of fundamentalists.

The real fanatics are running the US marines and take orders from the the number one fundamentalist in the White House.

The US army has overwhelming fire-power but they can be

defeated politically by the worldwide anti war movement.

During the Vietnam war the Vietcong launched the Tet Offensive and lost militarily. But by bringing home the reality of US occupation they galvanised the global anti war movement of the day. The solidarity helped to destroy the US hold over Vietnam.

We need the same active soli-

arity now. In the coming days every activist must ask himself or herself what am I doing for Fallujah? What protest am I helping to organise? How can I awaken the conscience of those who marched on February 15 to act.

No matter how small the gesture, organise active support for Fallujah. March, sit-down, resist—but above all, act!

OUT NOW



A new pamphlet from the Irish Anti War Movement, **The US Military & Shannon Airport** by Kieran Allen €4 from IAWM PO Box 9620 Dublin 1

Shannon: A jump off for Fallujah

MANY OF the marines who are attacking passed through Shannon airport. Transport Minister Martin Cullen says it is just business.

But Ireland is being dragged into fighting Bush's war. Almost 20,000 US soldiers pass through Shannon every month.

The government is using repressive tactics to defend the US presence.

Over 30 people have been banned from Co Clare for

minor forms of civil disobedience.

Mary Kelly, the anti-war campaigner who disabled a US warplane, has been convicted in a blatantly biased trial.

The judge refused to let her call witness who ques-

tioned the legality of the war – even though these witnesses were not allowed at an earlier trial.

She is due to be sentenced shortly – and anti-war activists should respond strongly to any attempt to criminalise her.



New Global Warming report

A NEW report on Global Climate Change by 250 scientists just published shows that the Arctic is heating almost twice as fast as the rest of the planet.

The resulting thaw threatens millions of livelihoods and could wipe out polar bears by 2100.

The extent of the ice has already shrunk by 15-20 per cent in the past 30 years.

The "Arctic climate is now warming rapidly and much larger changes are projected", according to the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment (ACIA), funded by the United States, Canada, Russia, Denmark, Iceland, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

Arctic temperatures are rising at almost twice the global average and could leap 4-7 degrees by 2100, roughly twice the global average projected by UN reports.

Siberia and Alaska have already warmed by 2-3 degrees since the 1950s.

Another report showed the effect of global warming on wildlife. With global temperatures expected

to rise another 2.5 degrees to 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit (about 1 degree to about 5 degrees Celsius) by 2100, "future global warming is likely to exceed the ability of many species to migrate or adjust," said the Pew Center, citing the evidence of 40 scientific studies.

Mr Klaus Toepfer, head of the UN Environment Programme, said the Arctic changes were an early warning. "What happens there is of concern for everyone because Arctic warming and its consequences have worldwide implications," he said.

The melting of glaciers is expected to raise world sea levels by about 10 cm (4 inches) by the end of the century.

Many of the four million people in the Arctic are already suffering.

Buildings from Russia to Canada have collapsed because of subsidence linked to thawing permafrost that also destabilises oil pipelines, roads and airports

This is what UN Battle Groups mean

THE LATEST plan to erode Irish neutrality even further is the establishment of UN 'Battle Groups'. These are 1,500 strong military divisions which are designed to intervene in crisis situations.

UN supremo Kofi Annan recently visited Ireland to call for involvement in these groups. He said that they might eventually be sent to Iraq.

Government spokespersons tried to soften the blow by stating that 'we will keep our triple lock'.

This means that before any Irish troops are sent abroad there will have to be a UN mandate and the government and the Dail must assent.

But they used the same argument before Bush's war on Iraq – and eventually re-called the Dail to let US troops use Shannon, even though there was no UN mandate.

Fine Gael is trying to take the matter further by saying there is no need for a 'triple lock'.

But the whole debate is a fake – because both sides want Irish troops to commit to colonial wars under the guise of humanitarian interventions.

IVORY COAST: Battle Groups in action

THE LATEST outbreak of violence in the Ivory Coast in West Africa shows the reality behind all the UN's talk about 'crisis management'.

French bombers have wiped out the country's air force and surrounded the Presidential palace.

A spokesperson for the government of the Ivory Coast said, 'The French presence is scaring people. They're crying and they think that President Gbagbo is going to be overthrown'.

France obtained its first foothold in the Ivory Coast in 1842. It was involved in the plunder of the country, stealing ivory and taking slaves.

The Ivory Coast is the world's main producer of cocoa and French companies grab as much of the profits as they can.

France is also the biggest seller of arms to Ivory Coast. For over 40 years it propped up two dictators, Felix Houphouet Boigny and Henri Konan Bedie and supplied them with weaponry.

The disastrous collapse in the price of cocoa has destroyed the country and in recent years a civil war has broken out between the North and the South of the country.

The French intervened in this conflict and were given UN sanction to impose a 6,000 strong force – based on 4,000 French soldiers and 2,000 others.

Under the guise of peacekeeping French imperialism tightened their grip. The currency of the Ivory Coast, for example, is still the franc – even though it has been abolished in France!

Meanwhile frustration in Ivory Coast turned against the ex-colonial masters who had returned.

The French responded with overwhelming force – and then received all out UN support for their terror tactics.

What is happening in the Ivory Coast is a dire warning of what will happen if Ireland joins UN battle groups.

MEDICAL CARDS

AN ATTACK ON LOWER EARNERS

In Brief

Big Spenders

PITY THE poor FF hopeful, Niall Ring. He spent €28,000 just trying to get elected to Dublin City Corporation. That was more than €28 each for every voter. And he lost.

Reports

FORMER MINISTER for Health, Michael Martin, is another big spender — except that he spends our money. As the hospital crisis was going from bad to worse, he spent over €30 million on 114 health reports.

Social Housing

20 PERCENT of all new housing developments were supposed be reserved for “social housing.” The builders got to work, lobbied their friends in Fianna Fáil and the provision was weakened. Instead, they agreed to pay a 1 percent levy on all houses valued at €270,000 to fund social housing. Now it has been revealed that the levy was collected in just 1 percent of cases. They have been allowed to defy a law that they wrote for themselves.

Free Travel

FORMER DUBLIN Assistant County Manager, George Redmond, wanted the corruption tribunal to finish early recently. He wanted to use his free travel card, which can only be used before rush-hour, to save the bus fare.

Junket on Sick Leave

FIANNA FÁIL councillor Rosaleen O’Grady could not miss a council junket to Gibraltar. The Leitrim based councillor took medical leave from work to go on the trip. The conference included a day trip to Morocco to educate councillors on the “borders between rich and poor nations.”



■ 101,270 people have lost medical cards since 1997, (above right) Health Minister Mary Harney



afford it. A visit to your GP now costs €30–€40. And the Drugs Payment Scheme has been cut back regularly since Fianna Fáil were returned to power in 2002. You now have to pay up to €78 a month for prescribed medicines.

This means that a single person earning just above the medical card threshold level may have to pay out a third of their income to visit a doctor and purchase any medicines prescribed. In this situation, it could end up being a matter of choosing between medicines and food.

For parents who are just above the medical card threshold level, this is a nightmare. Mothers often deliberately neglect their own health so that they can afford to pay for their children.

Fianna Fáil is trying to develop a new “caring” image. However, this attack on lower earners gives the game away.

They are a right-wing party who hate the idea of free public medicine. They want to divide the poor into the “deserving” and the “undeserving”, making the former beholden to them by claiming “we got you the medical card.”

With Mary Harney at the helm, the Government also wants to push more people into taking out private health insurance, just as in the American model.

Right-wing parties are in politics to cut taxes for the rich. They let the banks pay just 12.5 percent in tax on their profits even though, proportionately, that is far less than what most PAYE workers pay. They allow the richest people to get away with paying no tax at all — under the pretext that they are tax exiles who live outside the country for 182 days a year.

And to fund these scandalous practices, they have driven lower earning poor people off the medical card scheme.

IN 2002, Fianna Fáil promised to “extend medical card eligibility to over 200,000 extra people, with a clear priority being given to families with children.”

It is yet another broken promise. Since taking office in 1997, they have driven thousands of poorer people off the medical card scheme.

101,270 people have lost medical cards since 1997 because of a deliberate policy not to increase income threshold levels, currently at €142.50 a week for a single person and €206.50 for a married couple.

Above these levels, there are a few cases allowed at the discretion of the Health Boards. Fianna Fáil politicians sometimes use this clause to pretend they got the medical card for potential voters. However, in government they are cutting back on the numbers who can apply as of right.

They have done this quietly and secretly and the full effect of it is only now coming out.

First, they have deliberately kept the threshold levels for medical cards well below the level of wage increases. Since 1997, the average industrial wage has risen by 51 percent, while the medical card threshold has risen by only 28 percent.

Second, a number of Social Welfare recipients have become ineligible for a medical card. These include a single person living at home who is getting

Unemployment Benefit, a couple on Disability Allowance or a family who receives Family Income Supplement.

The fall in the number of medical cardholders has been disguised by a decision to grant medical cards to all those aged over 70, regardless of wealth.

If this were taken into account, the numbers forced off medical cards would rise to over 200,000.

Medical cards for the over 70s are known as “higher rate” cards because doctors receive a higher fee for treating

them due to new contracts that were negotiated. One result of this has been a tendency for doctors to move practices to areas where they get higher fees.

For example, there is no local GP in Mulhuddart, which has a population of 10,000. According to international practice, a population of this size should have six.

Driving people off the medical card scheme is causing real hardship.

The Vincent De Paul and the ESRI have both confirmed people are neglecting to go to doctors because they cannot

Join the Socialists!

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

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

Why Sinn Fein can get on with Bush

ANY SUSPICION that Mary Lou MacDonald was speaking on the spur of the moment when she refused just prior to the US election to say who she hoped would win was removed in the aftermath of Bush's victory.

MacDonald had been on "Questions and Answers" the week before the poll when the obvious question came up: who would the panel vote for in the US? "I'm taking the Fifth on that," said the Sinn Fein MEP—referring to the Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution which lays down that witnesses can't be forced to answer questions which might incriminate them. Pressed by John Bowman, she refused to elaborate.

Nobody would have expected MacDonald to plump for the Left's Ralph Nader. But some thought it odd that a representative of a party which advertises itself as anti-imperialist would think it incriminating to say that she'd like the architect of the war out of office.

On the day after Bush's triumph, SF's other MEP, Bairbre de Brun, spoke at a press conference in Dublin announcing the November 13th Shannon demonstration. Representatives of the Labour Party and the Greens had no difficulty expressing disappointment at the outcome. But de Brun point-blank refused to join in the sentiment.

Both Republicans and Democrats had been very helpful towards the "Irish peace process," said de Brun, and that was the key issue.

In New York two days after the poll, Gerry Adams went further and congratulated Bush on winning four more years. What he went on to say threw light on the thinking behind his party's neutrality on the presidential contest.

If the DUP refused to share power with Sinn Fein and re-establish the Assembly, Adams told a glittering "Friends of Sinn Fein" fund-raiser, the British and Irish Governments should do a deal over their heads and exercise joint power in the North. He hoped that the US administration would support this line.

This was, essentially, a repeat of Mitchel McLaughlin's suggestion a month earlier that the British Government should form an "alliance with Irish Nationalism" to bring the Unionists to heel—a far cry from the traditional SF line that the British presence in the North was imperialist and that Brits ought to get out now.

The cynical view, favoured by many ex-Provo commentators, is that the SF leadership fears alienating any US administration because it wants to keep the corporate funds flowing in and doesn't want crossed off the guest-list for White House wing-dings. But that's not the main point.

The point is that SF is not a party of the Left but a party of Nationalism. By far its closest precedent is Fianna Fail in the late 1920s and early '30s, when de Valera's outfit still had the whiff of anti-imperialist struggle about it and was regularly denounced in Independent newspapers as "Bolshevik." The readiness of SF now to contemplate coalition with Fianna Fail confirms that, behind the radical rhetoric and coy presence on anti-war platforms, the Shinners are following in the same footsteps, bidding for the same franchise.

Sections of the Irish Left still have a sneaking regard for Sinn Fein, a shifty reluctance to distance themselves clearly from the associates of the armed strugglers of the day before yesterday. To say this is simply to say that sections of the Left are themselves infected by Nationalism.

To treat Sinn Fein as a party of the Left is to collude with Nationalism in fudging the edges of socialist ideas.

Marxism 2004

Another World is Possible

November 26/27/28, Trinity College Dublin. Advance ticket €20 (€10 conc)

This year's timetable

Friday 26th November (Arts Block, Trinity College Dublin)					
6:30 - 7:45	Evolution: Cuba: The last island of socialism? Kevin McCormick	Islam & Social Change: Modern Chemistry: The media & democracy David Kennedy			
8:30 - 9:30	RALLY: Iraq, Resistance and Revolution Richard Boyd Barrett, Iraq Demosetel Against the Occupation speaks, James Juma (Stop the War Campaign), Pauline...				
Saturday 27th November (Arts Block, Trinity College Dublin)					
10:00 - 11:15	Globalisation: The Highest Stage of Capitalism? Barry Forgas (ITAC activist) Kevin Whelan	Islam & Social Change: Commodification, Muslim's Big Mad Usman Hamed			
11:45 - 1:00	Socialism in the 21st Century: Does the movement need political parties? Lorraine...	Political repression: Do we need a new women's movement? Deirdre Conboy	The 'war on terror': Tablets and pills: How the pharmaceutical industry rigs up off? Peacor O'Grady	Introduction to a revolution: The Russian revolution Kevin Moran	
2:00 - 7:15	Is it time for a New Left in Ireland? Peter Beck, Lorraine...	The Modern World: Capitalism & Food: From famine to obesity Dr. Julie Brennan	Does the movement still exist in the US? Can it still be a Left in the US? Helen Kelly	Islam & Social Change: Antonio Gramsci and hegemony Martin Hudson	Islam & Social Change: Sean O'Casey & the Theatre of revolt Paul O'Brien
3:45 - 5:00	The Middle East: A Just Peace? Peter...	James Joyce: Case in the US: Equality & education in Ireland? James...	Political repression: From Stroomant to Seattle: The struggle for gay liberation... Joe...	Culture & Internationalism: The Hollywood: Film & social change Roy Hassey	Islam & Social Change: Leon Trotsky on imperialism Kevin Moran
7:00 - 8:00	Islam Today: Planning, participation and the housing crisis: Michael...	The Middle East & Jerusalem: Israel's occupation - Mass demonstration: Rally to Islamic Resistance: Michael...	Islam Today: The Celtic Tiger: Can it be followed? Drew Lynn	Culture & Internationalism: British Days - What was going on? Shay Ryan	Introduction to American and the Spanish Civil War: Colin Bruce
Sunday 28th November (Arts Block, Trinity College Dublin)					
10:30 - 11:30	Islam in the 21st Century: Muslim: Why does Lorraine obey the GOP? Joseph...	Islam & Social Change: Rosa Luxemburg and the German revolution: Sarah...			
11:45 - 1:00	Islam Today: Can there be national liberation in a globalised world?...	The Middle East & Jerusalem: WWI from nationalism to revolution: James...	Culture & Internationalism: From Orwell to Abbas: Oppress & Oppressed in SF: Joe...	Introduction to American and the Spanish Civil War: Colin Bruce	
2:00 - 3:15	Islam: The day after tomorrow: Get the film seen: John...	The Middle East & Jerusalem: Why is the West afraid of Islam? Richard...	Does it still exist? Can Hugo Chavez survive? Deirdre...	Islam & Social Change: From Fanon and the Algerian War of independence: Aine...	Introduction to American and the Spanish Civil War: Colin Bruce
3:30 - 4:45	Introduction: Forward: After the collapse: Is Ireland better? Aine...	Islam Today: From sectarian to Civil Service: Is the Irish Working Class Changing? Kevin...	Introduction to American and the Spanish Civil War: Colin Bruce	The Middle East & Jerusalem: The Crusades: Gerard...	Introduction to American and the Spanish Civil War: Colin Bruce
4:45 - 5:15	CLUBBING RALLY: Building a New Left in Ireland Kevin McCormick, James Allen, Roy Hoare				

WE LIVE in a violent, unequal world where bombs are built instead of hospitals - Bush and Blair spent billions on war while half the planet live on less than \$2 a day.

Behind this 'war on terror' our rulers have launched a war on workers living standards and on civil liberties.

But the resistance is growing.

The greatest super-power in history - the US, is being humbled every day by the resistance in Iraq.

A new movement is challenging war and the power of capitalism - the global anti-war and anti-capitalist movement.

This Summer in Ireland 30,000 people marched against Bush when he came to visit, thousands marched on Mayday for a world where people come before profit.

At Marxism2004 we will discuss how we can build this global movement and how we can start to build another world without war, poverty or greed ... a socialist world!

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PALESTINE

After Arafat: What future for the Intifada?

By SÍOFRA NÍ CHONGHAILE

PALESTINIAN Authority President Yasser Arafat hangs between life and death in a Paris hospital. One thing is certain, a refusal by Israel to permit Arafat's burial in Jerusalem, will spark massive protests, not only in Palestine but across the Middle East.

Arafat's three-year virtual imprisonment at the Muqata in Ramallah is symbolic of Israel's efforts to stifle the Palestinian resistance.

Preventing his burial of choice would be a final acknowledgement by Israel that it has no intention of ever ending its occupation.

Exactly who that new leader will be is unclear. Popular radical, Marwan Barghouti (leader in the armed offshoot of Fatah - *Tanzim*), is currently serving several life sentences in an Israeli jail.

Other contenders include the former and current prime ministers, Mahmoud Abbas and Ahmed Qurei, and Mohammed Dahlan, instigator of the recent challenge to Arafat's rule and believed by many to be too close to the US administration to be trusted.

Whoever is selected, if the PLO is to regain credibility it must renew the struggle for justice for all Palestinians and stop policing the occupation.

From fighter to compromiser

AFTER GRADUATING Arafat moved to Kuwait where he and other secular nationalists founded *Fatah*. Fatah played a decisive role in recreating national identity and changing the Palestinian cause from a humanitarian one to a political and military struggle.

Following Israel's 1967 occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, Fatah took over the leadership of the umbrella *Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)*.

In 1969 Arafat was elected PLO chairman. Youth across the Western world adorned his black and white keffiyah as a symbol of struggle against oppression and injustice.

In December 1987 the first *Intifada* exploded onto the streets. This spontaneous outpouring of anger brought women to the fore, organising agriculture, education, food storage, medical and security committees.

The intifada gave the PLO new leverage to negotiate with Israel.

Arafat's black and

white keffiyah

became a symbol

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oppression and

injustice



Arafat signed Oslo II, under which the West Bank was divided into three areas under absolute power of Israel

However the *Palestinian National Council* (Palestinian parliament in exile) met in Algiers and produced a charter proclaiming its willingness to accept the existence of Israel and to negotiate a final settlement.

In 1988, the PLO renounced terrorism and announced it would forgo 77 percent of historic Palestine in return for a free and independent state on the remaining 23 percent.

At the end of October 1991, negotiations began in Madrid between Israeli and Palestinian representatives.

Almost simultaneously, Israel opened a secret round of talks in Oslo negotiating primarily with Arafat and his chosen associates.

In September 1993, the Declaration of Principles was publicised with the White House handshake.

The agreement stipulated that final status talks were to conclude within five years. In the interim period Israel would withdraw completely from Gaza and Jericho and a *Palestinian National Authority (PA)*

would be established with municipal control.

All the major issues which had fuelled the intifada, the occupation, refugees, Jerusalem, were to be left to final talks.

Most of the PLO affiliate parties rejected the agreement and were outraged that Arafat consulted neither their national executive nor the Palestinian National Council.

Edward Said wrote of Oslo as "deeply flawed" and "potentially fatal to Palestinian national aspirations".

In effect, the intifada was liquidated so that Arafat and the PA could become the joint administrators of the occupation.

In the years between Oslo I and II, illegal settlement construction increased dramatically. Between 1992 and 1995 the settler population rose from 74,800 to 136,000.

The construction of bypass roads and superhighways allowed the Israeli army to enforce closures on Palestinian areas..

Yet, despite all this, the now

President Arafat signed Oslo II, under which the West Bank was divided into three areas with various degrees of municipal Palestinian control, but all under the absolute power of the Israeli state.

Flawed from the start, the Oslo process was designed to segregate the Palestinians in economically unviable bantustans policed by Arafat's security forces.

The four million Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Syria were told to abandon all hope of return.

The Myth of the 'Generous Offer'

DESPITE HIS moral and political degeneration, Arafat's redeeming feature was his refusal to sign the Camp David agreement offered by Ehud Barak (Israeli Labour prime minister 1999-2001).

Israel and the US propagated the myth that Arafat refused 98 percent of the Occupied Territories. In fact, it was closer to 65percent (of what in

itself is only 22 percent of historic Palestine) of lands criss-crossed by a matrix of settlements, highways and checkpoints, with no control over its borders and water resources.

Just weeks after Camp David, Ariel Sharon brought 1,000 armed police in a provocative visit to the Al-Haram al-Sharif, Islam's third holiest site. As an army general, Sharon had directed the 1982 massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon. The visit sparked the second intifada, an uprising directed not only against the occupation, but against years of failed 'peace talks' and the corruption of the PA.

Under cover of the 'war on terror', Israel responded with sheer brutality, killing to date over 3,370 Palestinians and injuring a further 27,000.

Meanwhile, Sharon continues to create facts on the ground, expanding settlements at a ferocious pace and seizing another 14 percent of Palestinian land through the construction of an 8-foot high wall.

This escalation in Israel's violence, combined with an utter disillusionment in 'peace talks' and the never-ending humiliations of the occupation has forced many young Palestinian men and women to turn themselves into living bombs.

Can there be a Palestinian state?

ISRAEL DEFINES itself as the nation of the Jewish people and not a nation of its citizens. It breaches international law and accords lesser rights to the 20 percent of its population that is Palestinian.

It refuses to allow the families of 800,000 Palestinians exiled in 1948 return to the homes they were forced to leave. A future settlement which leaves this apartheid state intact beside a bantustan Palestine is a recipe for hatred.

For over a thousand years, Muslims, Jews and Christians lived together in Palestine in relative peace. The only guarantee of a peaceful coexistence is the creation of one state with equal rights for all its citizens. How to get that state is the question.

A generation of Israelis, brought up surrounded by walls, believing that they are under siege, is unlikely to be a major force for change.

And while the Palestinian resistance is heroic, it will never outfight Israel's F-16 fighter jets, helicopter gunships and US billions. In other countries, workers have used their collective labour power as a weapon to gain freedom. But Palestinians, living under curfew and closures, lack that social power.

Their best hope is to link their struggle with that of the wider Arab working masses, to appeal to them to join in a regionalised intifada against, not only the Israeli occupation, but the corrupt US stooges ruling over all the Arab peoples.

Further information:
www.ipsc.ie
www.stophthewall.org
www.btselem.org

LEGACY OF INTOLERANCE: RACISM AND UNIONISM IN SOUTH BELFAST

By **BILL ROLSTON**

What lies behind the recent spate of racist attacks on Africans and Asians in the Village, a Unionist stronghold in south Belfast?

Bill Rolston is a professor of sociology at the University of Ulster, Jordanstown.

ON FEBRUARY 6, 2004 the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) announced that it had stood down its commander in the Village area of South Belfast.

Such a move is rare among the North's loyalist paramilitary groups, and is usually linked to major power struggles within the organisation concerned over issues of military strategy, moves toward peace, control of weapons, or all too often, over territorial control of the drug trade.

But this action related to something entirely different: the occurrence of a spate of racist attacks in the Village area. To begin to understand the connection between racism and the demotion of a local 'warlord', it is necessary to look a bit

A few summers ago, the UDA posted the area with notices warning any Catholic students renting in the area to move out.

more closely at the area itself.

New residents

The Village consists of about a dozen streets of small tenement houses. It is bounded by busy roads, a motorway and a railway line, with no possibility of expansion in any direction.

On the contrary, beyond these barriers are processes afoot which seem to threaten the survival of the area. A large area of commercial outlets - B&Q, Homebase, car showrooms, etc. - moves closer to the working-class homes with every passing year.

And on the other side of the railway line is cosmopolitan South Belfast, with Queen's University, offices, numerous restaurants and the City Hospital.

Many previously owner-occupied houses in South Belfast are now owned by landlords and rented out to students, nurses, young professionals and others.

The pressure on property is immense, and landlords can charge higher rents than they could elsewhere in the city.

Given that, it was inevitable that the private-rented sector would push its way towards and into the Village. Most of the houses in the Village are rented from the state housing authority, although some residents have taken the opportunity to buy their homes. But now new, expensive, pri-

vate apartments overlook the railway line yards away from the working class tenements.

And landlords (including, amazingly, a large number of investors from the South of Ireland, flush with profits from the Celtic tiger) have seized every chance to buy houses which have gone on sale in the Village and turned them to multiple occupancy.

There are now university students, Catholic as well as Protestant, Filipino nurses, Chinese, Indian and Bangladeshi food retail workers, African students and nurses, and some eastern Europeans living in the area.

This has been a sudden and profound change for the Village. It was once somewhat mixed, but the minority of Catholics who lived in the area were forced out between 1969 and 1971, with the start of the 'troubles'.

Since that time the area has been not only Protestant in character, but also staunchly loyalist.

In the early and mid-1970s it boasted a small paramilitary force which called itself the Village Assassination Squad, and, true to its name, it was responsible for the murder of a number of unsuspecting Catholics who worked nearby or who made the mistake of taking a short cut through the area on the way home at night.

Even today almost every gable wall in the area sports a militaristic



Top: Gable end mural in the Village, above: David Ervine of the PUP found it troubling

wall mural. The difference from the 1970s, though, is that there are two main loyalist paramilitary groups, the UVF and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), each with deep roots in the area.

Throughout the North overall the UDA is the larger group, but in the Village area they seem to be evenly represented.

Consequently each group has taken alternate gable walls for its own murals, and some walls as yet unpainted are marked as 'reserved' by whichever organisation believes that the balance of visual display is about to be upset.

Intimidation

Between them, the UVF and the UDA control the Village. It is not far-fetched to say that nothing happens in this small cluster of streets without these groups knowing, or even more, authorising it.

This is why the local reaction to the recent arrival of outsiders is significant. A few summers ago, the UDA posted the area with notices warning any Catholic students rent-

ing in the area to move out.

And in the past few months there has been a rise of attacks on minority ethnic people in the area. A Pakistani family moved out less than a day after moving in when a plank of wood was thrown through their window.

A Chinese couple, including a pregnant woman, were beaten and forced out just before Christmas. A Zimbabwean woman had to leave at a moment's notice after direct threats.

Local minority ethnic people tell of being visited at night by men who force their way into their homes, taking stereos, televisions, etc. and telling them: 'You won't be needing these; you'll be leaving soon'. And a local estate agent received a visit from some 'heavies' who advised him not to rent to any more foreigners.

As widespread condemnation of the people behind this racist intimidation grew, denials emerged from certain quarters in the Village. Locals told the *Observer* that the attacks were being carried out by a gang of burglars eager to divert attention

from their criminal activities!

More seriously, the political representatives of the political groups linked to the two paramilitary groups - the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), linked to the UVF, and the Ulster Political Research Group, linked to the UDA - denied that the respective paramilitary groups were involved.

At the same time, the police stated that it was their belief that there was local paramilitary involvement. The allegation was particularly troubling for the PUP and its party leader David Ervine.

Although the smaller of the loyalist paramilitary groups overall, the PUP sees itself as the more principled. The UVF calls itself 'the people's army', a title with an almost anti-colonial ring to it, and the PUP has aspirations to being a socialist grouping.

It is unusual for either group to have a good word to say about the UDA, which is regarded as a federal and disjointed organisation, infiltrated by British security spies, and riven by frequent turf wars over guns and drugs.

There are at least two factors which can help explain this phenomenon.

First, unionism/loyalism is a relatively broad church, containing as it has done in recent decades people like the Rev. Robert Bradford, former Westminster MP for South Belfast, who espoused the beliefs of the British-Israelite Society (that the British race is descended from the lost tribes of Israel), and others to the left of the political spectrum.

But it is a political position which is circumscribed by the very foundation of the Northern Ireland state. When Ireland was partitioned, northern unionists abandoned their fellows in three counties of historic Ulster (Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal) and went for self-government of six counties on the grounds that they could continue to maintain a majority over nationalists in six counties much easier than in nine.

As a result, there is a strong strain in unionism which encourages protectionism, conservatism, narrowness of vision and opposition to anything which may threaten its need to be in the majority. Traditionally, the threat to majority has been seen to come from the nationalist community. But it is a small step to extend one's attention to any new 'threats', including those from the minority ethnic community.

Thus those unionists of Craigavon who oppose the mosque have not suddenly discovered a streak of intolerance which was not there before; they have been intolerant of nationalists for generations. And the loyalists of the Village have likewise in the past shown their intolerance towards Catholics in their midst; it is not a major step to apply the same principles and tactics to others who move into the area.

While PUP chair David Ervine may condemn his fellow loyalists who act in this way, just as Ulster Unionist Party chief David Trimble has condemned the councillors of his own party who have opposed the building of a mosque, intolerance within unionism is a legacy which has not been overcome by recent peace moves, modernisation or realpolitik.

Links to British fascism

There is also a more immediate factor involved in the rise of racism. Sections of loyalism in particular have had an on-again, off-again relationship with fascist groups in Britain over the last three decades. Often it has been to the mutual benefit of both groups to collaborate; thus loyalist links to Scottish fascists have produced funds and weapons for the loyalists while raising the profile of the fascists.

At the same time, the relationship has often been a fraught one; thus, when the National Front opened up an office in East Belfast in the 1970s, it did so with the blessing of the UDA. But the UDA later closed down the office and sent the National Front packing when they discovered that they were accepting membership from Catholic fascists as well as Protestant ones!

The North is obviously attractive, almost virgin territory for British fascists. But it is territory in which they often run afoul of the splits and turf wars between loyalists.

Combat 18, for example, managed to make some valuable (from their point of view) inroads in teaming up with Johnny Adair, the boss of Belfast's Shankill Road C Company

of the UDA in recent years.

As Adair wooed the Loyalist Volunteer Force in Portadown - in an attempt to create an alternative empire to challenge the other commanders in his own organisation, the UDA - Combat 18 found its way into that area too.

But the British fascists backed the wrong horse in this instance. Adair is currently in prison, his empire is under new management, his supporters in the Shankill have been forced out to Bolton (where Combat 18 supporters helped them resettle) and Combat 18 is no longer wanted by the UDA. Combat 18's links have not been only with the UDA, however, and in fact, with losing the UDA connection, their connection to the UVF undoubtedly became all the more important. It is significant therefore that the recently demoted UVF commander of the Village had links with Combat 18.

Combat 18 is not alone in targeting the North. The British National Party is planning to run candidates in council elections in Northern Ireland. The White Nationalist Party claims to have 80 members in Antrim, Belfast and Portadown and has leafleted Craigavon in opposition to the possible mosque: 'This is Ulster not Islamabad. No mosques here'. The heartland of loyalism is seen by the British far-Right as fertile recruiting ground.

Racism in West Belfast?

On the other side of the political divide in the North, things appear different. While most members of all major political parties in the North have publicly condemned racist attacks, it was left to Sinn Féin councillors in Belfast City Council to launch an anti-racist charter for local councils in July 2003.

At the same time, it would be wrong to believe that there were parts of Northern Ireland that are not and never could be guilty of racism. The largest nationalist area of Belfast is West Belfast; it is the cockpit of Sinn Féin's political rise, the area which has elected Gerry Adams as Westminster MP. It boasts a high-circulation paper, the *Andersonstown News*.

At the time when Sinn Féin councillors launched the anti-racism charter, the editor of the newspaper seized the opportunity to warn against smugness. 'There are those within the nationalist/republican community feeling very smug about the racist attacks which have taken place lately... It's comforting for this community to believe that racism is the sole preserve of tattooed loyalists with a bit of time to kill before the next drug deal.'

But he goes on to put the matter in perspective: 'Because there's not the same number of black people in West Belfast as you'll find in the south of the city, or hostels full of asylum-seekers on the Andytown or Falls Road... we don't get to find out whether the language of hate translates into hate crime.' He then proceeds to recount the way in which local people easily tell racist jokes or use offensive language.

It is a timely message. For, to paraphrase Brecht, racism is undoubtedly a bitch in heat in Northern Ireland at the moment. And there's no telling how large the litter will be.

■ This article is taken from the *Institute of Race Relations website*. <https://www.irr.org.uk/2004/february/ak000008.html>

FOUR MORE YEARS

HOW DID BUSH WIN?

HOW DID Bush win? He led his country into an unpopular war based on lies. He handed out tax breaks to the wealthy while millions lost jobs. Over the past year the price of America's primal fluid — oil — tripled.

The election was John Kerry's to lose. And he lost it by 3.6 million votes. So weak was Kerry's appeal that the Republicans made inroads into the Democrats' working-class base.

According to CNN exit polls, some 42 percent of people on the lowest incomes backed Bush.

The Mirror has a crude explanation. "Why are Americans so dumb?" it screamed.

They seem to have forgotten that the British voted *three times* for Maggie Thatcher or that the Irish have twice voted for the Ahern and Harney team.

Voting for right-wing fanatics is hardly unique to Americans.

Nor are American brainwashed. The concentration of media ownership certainly brings more pro-war and pro-business propaganda, but the media cannot lie about job losses and the growing inequality



of US society.

The real reason for Kerry's defeat was his politics.

Bush made an effective appeal to his own constituency, playing on the concerns of the religious right, with Republicans organising referenda on gay marriage in 11 states to mobilise the vote.

Kerry, however, could offer nothing to motivate the millions angry at the Bush administration.

Instead of seriously challenging Bush on the issues of war, workers rights and social provision, the Democrats accepted the assumptions of the Republican Right and argued over details and style.

Kerry twisted and turned on the Iraq war, voting to authorise Bush's invasion, criticising it during the primaries to cover his left flank and, after clinching the nomination, swinging right once more.

He boasted of his military credentials and declared that he would have backed an invasion of Iraq *even if he knew there were no weapons of mass destruction.*

He repeatedly claimed that he would manage the Iraq occupation "better" than Bush and endlessly vowed to "kill the ter-

rorists." As American journalist Doug Ireland put it, "Bush won by making the link between Iraq and the war on terrorism — the Big Lie which Kerry could not effectively counter, because he'd bought into it at the beginning."

Kerry even tried to outflank Bush on the right, accusing the White House of going soft on Iran and North Korea and of withdrawing from Falluja in April.

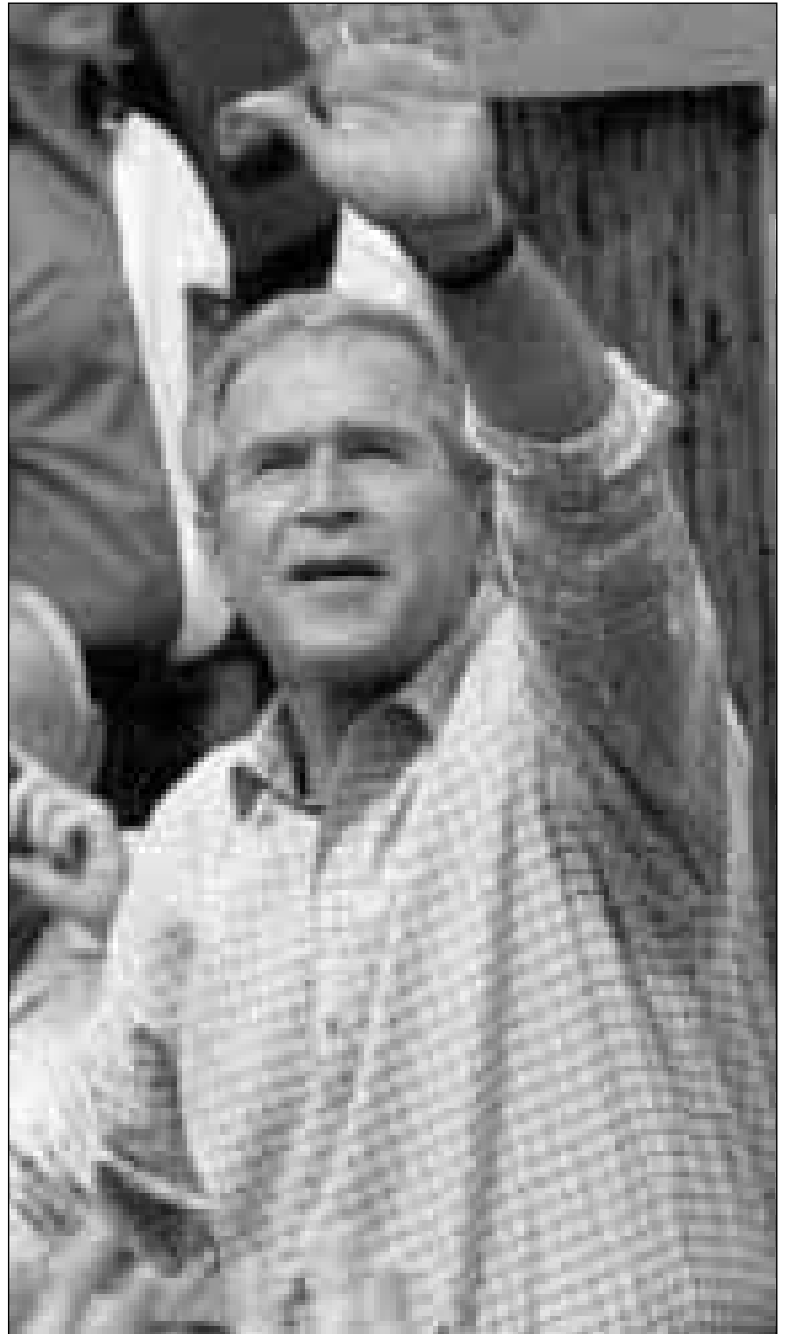
He scored some points on Bush's tax handouts to the wealthy.

But by making tax cuts for corporations and the balancing of the federal budget the centrepieces of his economic policy, Kerry could offer only cutbacks in social spending rather than the urgently needed funding for public housing, job creation and anti-poverty programmes.

Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St Clair from the Counterpunch website summed it up: "The Republicans played, on the ground, to the bedrock members of their party, and got them to the polls."

"The Kerry campaign conducted an air war from 30,000 feet, bombarding the population with vague alarms and somehow thinking that ABB (Anyone But Bush) would pull them through."

"There was indeed a lot of popular animosity towards Bush but the Democrats could never capitalise on it."



Top: A triumphant Bush, Below: Much of the US left put their faith in Kerry (left)

How the US Left got it wrong

MANY ON the left — in the anti-war movement, the unions and the social

movements — were convinced that Bush was so bad that defeating him was simply a matter of backing the Democrats.

Noam Chomsky, Michael Moore and Naomi Klein all echoed this call, with varying degrees of enthusiasm.

This was crystallised in the slogan Anyone But Bush (ABB). This argued that the Ralph Nader's campaign in 2000 had deprived Democrat Al Gore of the presidency and so his running again would objectively help Bush. Accordingly, the ABB movement heaped abuse on Nader even though he was the only candidate to openly oppose the war and call for universal health provision and a living wage.

Kerry was seen as the "lesser evil" and sometimes opposition to his left challenger reached hysterical levels. One union, the SEIU, spent \$70 million

on propaganda against Nader and on efforts to keep him off state ballots.

This time around no one can blame Ralph Nader because his half-million or so votes had no influence on the outcome of this election.

This brings into question the scapegoating that is sometimes directed at radical left candidates.

Just as in the French election when Le Pen got on the second ballot rather than the moderate socialist Jospin, scapegoating is used as a cover for not asking the question: Why do reformist or liberal candidates fail to defeat the right?

The "lesser evil" strategy has been a disaster for the American anti-war movement. Rather than challenging Kerry on Iraq, they quietly joined his electoral operation.

Instead of focussing on building popular protests from below, the movement was demobilised.

The Abu Ghraib torture scandal barely provoked protests in the US and the big demonstration at the Republican National Convention in New York



targeted the "Bush agenda" rather than the war and occupation.

If the left had built up the street protests, called for the withdrawal of US troops and backed Nader it would be in a far stronger position now. In 2000, Nader held rallies of 15,000 plus in cities like New York and Chicago — even before Bush got into difficulties on Iraq. Tragically, it was left

to small organisations like the International Socialist Organization and the Counterpunch to back him this time.

The danger now is of despondency among the ABB left. This might hinder critical analysis or leave them open to suggestions that they need to tack even further right in the future "to connect with the American heartland." An

important new bestseller by Thomas Frank, *What's the matter with Kansas*, suggests a different direction.

Frank returned to his native state of Kansas to examine how the evangelical movement and conservative Republicans won a base among the poor. He argues that they use a form of distorted class rhetoric to channel rage against the establishment.

The establishment is defined as a "liberal elite" of college professors, Hollywood stars and latte drinkers who show no sympathy for the old manual working class. The big corporations who create the mass consumer culture, which the Conservatives purport to despise, get off scott free.

The Democrats play into this because they have dropped all talk of class and so "they have left themselves vulnerable to cultural wedge issues like guns and abortion and the rest whose hallucinatory appeal would ordinarily be overshadowed by material concerns."

Frank is more than a

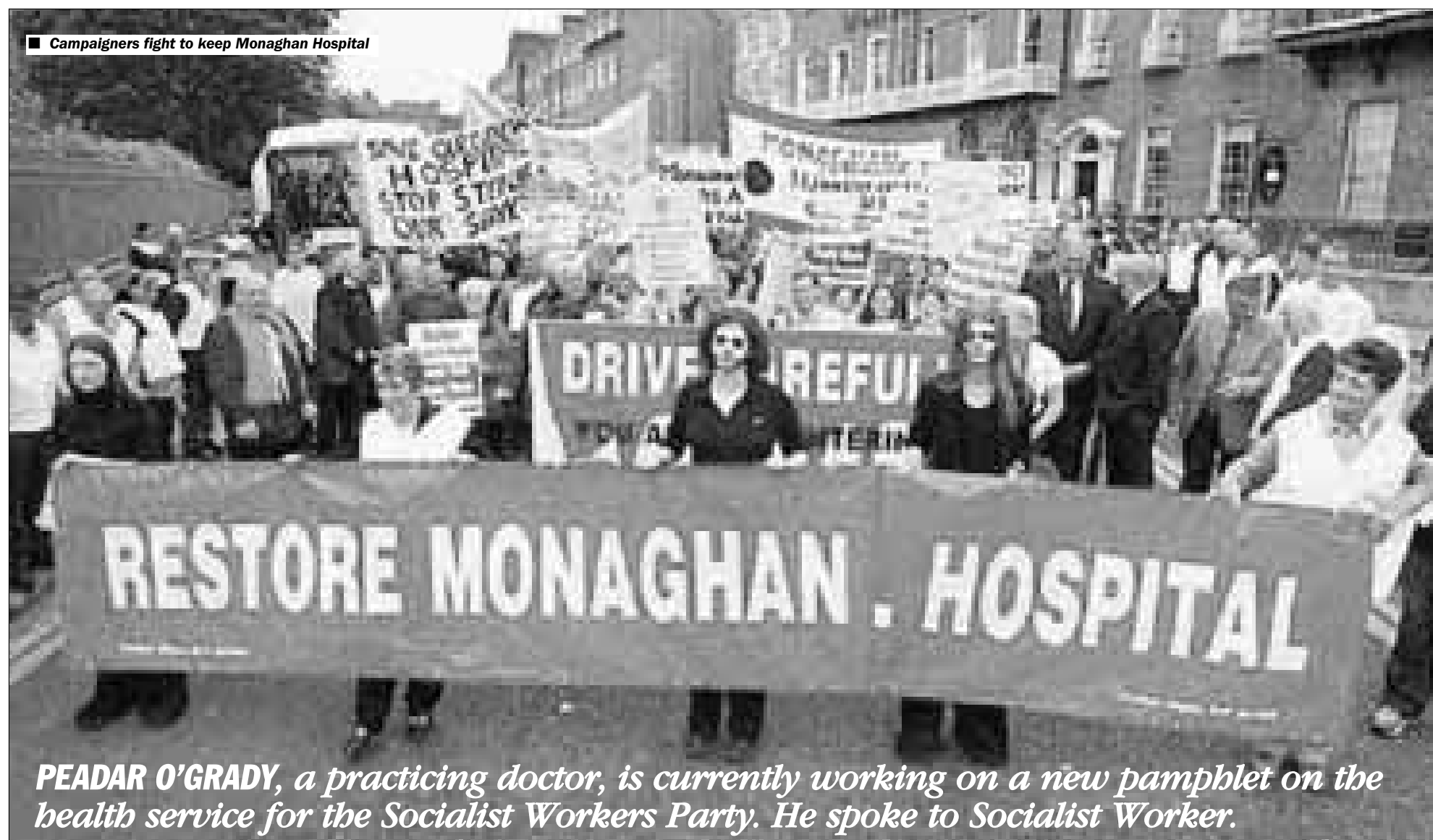
little romantic about the old style Roosevelt Democrats but his central point is correct. If the left does not talk the language of class, it will be destroyed by Bush's fake cultural crusade. By hooking up with "lesser evil" candidates, it throws away its trump card.

The mood of pessimism among the ABB movement is not justified. Opinion polls consistently indicate large numbers of Americans are opposed to the war, favour universal health care, a living wage and abortion rights. But none of this is reflected in the big-business party duopoly of US politics.

In 1972 Richard Nixon was re-elected by landslide, capturing every state bar one. Within a year he was forced to pull out of Vietnam. The pressure of the anti-war movement combined with resistance in Vietnam destroyed his electoral mandate.

Which shows there is more to politics than ballots — and much better ways to bring change than backing one war mongering billionaire to beat another.

THE FIGHT TO SAVE OUR HEALTH SERVICE



PEADAR O'GRADY, a practicing doctor, is currently working on a new pamphlet on the health service for the Socialist Workers Party. He spoke to Socialist Worker.

Q: Why is there a crisis in the health service?

A: Two basic reasons. First, there is massive under-funding. Primary care — where people go to a family doctor in a clinic with other professionals like physiotherapists, health nurses, language therapists — has been run down.

There have been terrible cuts in the number of hospital beds. The Government promised to reverse at least 3,000 of these in the 2001 Health Strategy but they have not delivered. There is also a lack of beds in nursing homes. This is what is causing the problem.

This is made worse by two-tier access. Private practice warps the health care system so that people who are basically healthier and wealthier get priority. Older and poorer people, who are likely to be sicker, are kept waiting until their condition becomes even more complicated. The crisis in the A&E is result of all this.

Since 1991, 20 percent of public beds are reserved for private practice while 70 percent are emergency beds — which leaves only 10 percent of beds available for planned admission for treatments. It is amazing that people get into elective beds at all in Dublin, particularly when 40 percent of beds are taken up by patients referred in from outside Dublin.

Q: Do you think Harney and the Government have a strategy of running down the public sector to facilitate the entry of the private sector?

A: Absolutely. Running down public services encourages people to look to private options. In the 1970s, the VHI had a membership of less than one in

five people. Today it is one in every two.

The reason is that people are afraid of being kept waiting and they want to see a properly qualified specialist. These are the two things you don't get on the public lists. So running down the public service helps to promote private medicine.

Q: We were told that the A&E crisis was caused by patients occupying public beds when they should have been in nursing homes. Is this true?

A: These patients have been described as "bed blockers" and this is really unfair. There were 850 support nursing beds promised in nursing homes in 2002.

Two years later Mary Harney announced these beds have been delayed because of negotiations for providing them under a Public Private Partnership.

Bertie Ahern then said that the Government was looking at providing these in private nursing homes as a long term solution. But the private sector has not got involved in high support nursing activities in the past. They concentrated instead on low levels of care. The concern is they will not provide beds with the level of support people need.

Q: How do people who are not privately insured get access to places in nursing homes?

A: Uninsured people are entitled to a subvention of €190 for beds that cost up to €1,000 a week. In some exceptional cases, people can get €680.

Insured people can get access to convalescent beds, but it all depends on the insurance policy. The most basic plan on VHI covers you for hos-



pital charges and nothing else.

Q: What is the situation with medical cards?

A: The situation with medical cards is a disgrace. When you exclude the over-70s, the number of people on medical cards has fallen from 35 to under 26 percent since Fianna Fáil came to power. It is a deliberate policy of cutting public medicine.

Q: Why is the Government selling off hospital lands?

A: The government has targeted hospital lands, especially in psychiatric hospitals, to raise money.

There has been a big contraction on the money spent on psychiatric care and there are many patients who need supported accommodation.

The land could be used to build this but Mary Harney wants to sell off public property to avoid imposing taxes on the rich.

Q: The Government says it is spending record amounts on the

health service. Is it?

A: There has been an increase but much of it is capital spending on building work on hospitals and clinics.

Spending was so low for so long, they are now trying to catch up. For twenty years Ireland spent about two-thirds of the average EU level on health. €460 million of facilities are lying idle because they haven't been able to open them and staff them.

You need to be careful about Government propaganda about increased spending. Ireland includes spending on some social services in its budget for health spending but other EU countries do not do this. So comparisons about spending more than the EU average in recent years are invalid.

Q: How can people fight this?

A: Monaghan is a great example of a community fighting back. There was a plan to close Monaghan Hospital saying it wasn't necessary, that Cavan would take over and Monaghan would be downgraded. But there has been huge resistance, which focused on preserving the A&E and maternity services. In 2001, Bronagh Livingstone's baby was born prematurely and died in an ambulance on the side of the road because she was turned away from Monaghan. They didn't even have any proper protocol for sending medical staff with the ambulance.

People were concerned about having heart attacks right beside Monaghan but having to travel to Cavan before they can get their clot-busting drugs. They fought tooth and nail to keep the hospital open and have been partially successful.

We should also oppose state support for private medicine. The Galway Clinic is the first for-profit clinic in Ireland. (While consultants make a lot of money from fees in the Mater Private and the Blackrock Clinic, these services are not-for-profit in terms of shareholders.)

The Galway Clinic received a state subsidy estimated at around €20 million and the building project was tax free. The key clinical backer was Jimmy Shehan of the elite Blackrock Clinic. The key financial backer was Larry Goodman.

Dermot Desmond is the main financial backer of VIVAS, the first for-profit medical insurance company, which opened in September. In 2003-4, VHI and BUPA between them spent €2.5m on advertising in anticipation of competition from the arrival of VIVAS.

The neoliberal policy of opening public services to private companies is an international phenomenon which is driven by multinational corporations, including insurance companies. They have now scored a major victory with the introduction of private, for-profit hospitals and private, for-profit insurers.

The appointment of Mary Harney is another major step in this direction and we need to ring the alarm bells. We need a response from local health campaigners like Patients Together in Dublin, but also from the unions. SIPTU, IMPACT and the Irish Nurses Organisation need to take this seriously.

If health services are privatised, companies will make their profits by cutting staff numbers and worsening conditions and pay. All of this shows why we need a united campaign of unions and community groups to oppose Mary Harney.



**By Independent
Socialist
Councillor
JOAN COLLINS**

BIN CHARGES

RESISTANCE CONTINUES

ON NOVEMBER 1st the Dublin Anti Bin tax campaign organised a protest outside City Hall, the monthly Dublin City Council meeting.

Despite the protest having to be held at 6.30pm, a huge crowd of up to 150 people assembled outside to warn the councillors that after the local elections of June 11th, we expect them to stand with the people of Dublin city and vote out the unjust and hugely unpopular bin tax.

The protest was lively and thousands of petitions from the Crumlin/Kimmage/Drimnagh/Walkinstown campaign were handed in to their Local Councillors.

Over the next number of weeks other areas of the City will be also sending their local councillors similar petitions.

At this meeting a submission from the Finance special protocol Committee on how Dublin City Local Authority should be funded was being discussed.

While the Bin taxes had been withdrawn from the submission, which was very positive a sales tax was still in the submission. With only a few objections to this - including myself - it was agreed by the majority of Councillors.

The campaign of non-payment in Dublin City has been going for over four years.

The most recent official figures show that despite massive intimidation the majority of citizens have paid nothing or paid only part of their bin charges.

The November 1st protest is the start of a Campaign of pressure in the run up to the Estimates meeting to be held on Monday 29th of this month.

Labour, Sinn Fein and the three Independents have a majority of 28 out of 52 Councillors and this group could pose an alternative budget with no bin taxes, and also provide money for public housing, money for amenities in our communities and childcare.

If they were to stick to these



**Anti Bin Tax campaigners
in action last year**

amendments and present them as an alternative to the City Manager's estimates it could create a huge crisis on the Council and ultimately bring the whole situation to a head politically.

If the same approach could be taken in a number of Councils throughout the state where Sinn Fein and Labour with sympathetic Independents had majorities it could create a national political crisis.

It is the Campaign's intention to put huge pressure on Labour to deliver the vote they received from Dubliners to implement these demands. Sinn Fein and the three Independents have already indicated they are willing to do this. Labour should rethink their alliance they have made with Fine Gael.

Dublin City Council is also at the

moment attempting to get every household in Dublin to register their Bin with the Council, many people have received orange and subsequently pinky/ purplish stickers on their bins.

The registration is to assist the corporation in implementing a pay by use system in 2005.

You may think this is a better system but BEWARE: our information is that the new system will entail a yearly Bin Tax as is, PLUS a quarterly charge on the number of times your Bin is picked up.

This is not only a Double tax but a regressive Tax on the Family. Please do not cooperate with the Council. Don't stick on your white tags or ring them.

Also in certain areas of DCC, a number of households have

received litter fines for leaving out bags beside/top of their bin, also unbelievably for having construction waste in their gardens while building extensions.

Please contact the Campaign if you receive one of these. In the mean time do not leave bags out loosely. I have put a motion down and, hopefully, it will come up at the next Council meeting dealing with this matter.

The Campaign will not accept the non-collection of our Bins and will be on the streets if necessary in 2005 defending non-payment of this double tax.

We will organize mass meetings in the Communities to discuss our strategy.

AXE THE TAX!

PATIENTS HIGHLIGHT HEALTH CRISIS

OVER 200 patients' relatives and their supporters marched to the Dail in a protest over hospital beds shortages in late October.

This followed a number of protests by Patients United in response to the crisis in Accident and Emergency Departments with over 200 patients waiting on trolleys because no beds were available.

Paul from Ringsend told *Socialist Worker* of his history of heart trouble. Following an attack he went to the Mater Hospital A&E. "I was left waiting on a trolley nearly the whole day. I could hardly breathe but the doctors and nurses were running about trying to deal with everyone. The staff were all stressed out and that made us, the patients, stressed out too.

"Eventually I went to St Vincent's Elm Park. There I was told I needed a replacement heart valve within six months. I ended up waiting two-and-a-half weeks.

"The operation was done in James Hospital. I was in and out in five days and although I was on 11 tablets a day I was offered no follow up counselling.

"I don't blame the staff, they

are working under fantastic pressure, but the whole service is too run-down to give people the service they need."

Patients Together later met Mary Harney but failed to get commitments and plan to continue their protests.

They are calling another protest on Saturday 13 November at 2m at the Garden of Remembrance.

news from the struggle – news from the struggle – news from the struggle
send reports to Socialist Worker phone (01) 8722682 email socialistworker@swp.ie

NI Civil Servants join strike action

CIVIL SERVANTS in the North have taken strike action over Gordon Brown's plans to slash jobs.

Brown aims to get rid of 104,000 civil service jobs throughout the UK, claiming that he is removing "back room" staff.

The cuts will mean the closure of civil service offices and job centres.

Nearly six thousand jobs are under threat in Northern Ireland, with 2,300 definitely set to go and the rest facing transfer to private sector companies.

The strike action was organised across the UK by the Public and Commercial Services union. About 1,500 members joined the action in towns like Belfast and Ballymena.

However, the main union, NIPSA, sat on its hands while other civil servants were on strike.

When the union branch in



Flashback: Previous NIPSA action. Unfortunately now it officially sat on its hands

the Child Support Agency asked what type of solidarity action would happen, they got no reply.

Eventually a union circular arrived simply telling members to send friendly greetings to PCS pickets and to support their demonstration.

Disgusted by this tokenistic gesture, the rank and file group the Uncivil Servant issued a call for real action.

They figured that NIPSA members could not attend PCS demos if they were at their desks!

About 200 NIPSA members in the CSA building walked out of work at 11.30am on Friday and joined the PCS pickets.

It was a magnificent gesture that showed that workers could unite and start the fight to save jobs across the North

UNOFFICIAL ACTION IN DUBLIN BUS

SUMMERHILL GARAGE is the latest Dublin Bus depot to take unofficial strike action

Workers went on strike over the arrangements for transfer to Harristown, a new Dublin Bus depot near Ballymun.

They were concerned that the compensation package was not enough.

They also felt that management had not put in place proper arrangements for the transfer.

This includes notification of shift and rota patterns.

After the brief two-hour

stoppage, management agreed to put up the rosters on the notice board.

Meanwhile, a row has also broken out in the NRBU over shop steward representation at the new depot.

Officials of the NRBU unilaterally withdrew the shop steward credentials of one highly respected activist and attempted to foist another, who was closer to the union leaders, on the new depot.

The workers have taken up a petition and there are threats to withhold union dues if the union leaders persist with this heavy-handed approach.

Education sector to protest at Dáil

THE EDUCATION sector is to protest at Dáil on Wednesday, December 1st

Education is Not for Sale, the campaign involving teaching unions, students, lecturers and parents, held its launch meeting on October 26th in Liberty Hall. It called for the entire education sector to come out and protest at the Dáil on December 1st.

At the meeting, speakers from the INTO, ASTI, TUI and USI spoke against the Government's education policy, which has left our schools and colleges chronically underfunded and under-resourced.

There was also strong anger against the Government and college authorities who are promoting a corporate take-over.

Pat Cahill, former President of the ASTI said, "The time for

talking is over, we need to get out and march. The only thing that will change this government is getting out and protesting."

Marnie Holborow of SIPTU Education Branch said, "For too long the Government has used the tactic of divide and conquer within education. This campaign represents a historic opportunity for a united opposition."

The campaign suggested that open meetings need to be organised in staff rooms, colleges, classrooms and schools to build for the December 1st protest.

■ **For more information on the December 1st Dáil protest and the Education is Not For Sale campaign, contact Marnie Holborow at 087 9889244.**

CLONMEL: WHY ARE WE FLOODED?

AFTER THE recent flooding in the South and East, the question in many people's minds is, "Why was it so bad?"

When Tom Parlon visited the town, it was presumed that he would explain why the money promised four years ago to build demountable flood defences along the quays has not materialised. He didn't!

He said that he could not remember a promise made in April to allocate €1 million for the design of an early warning system and for cleaning streams and culverts. Instead we got another promise, that work will begin next year, but he could give no start date for the €35 million plan.

"I would have swung for him at the door. He was lucky I was in bed when he called," said Alice O'Brien, a resident of Old Bridge told the local paper.

There are two main reasons why Clonmel was flooded again. Firstly, a lot of land around the town has been built on in recent years. This included parts of the floodplain, which would have absorbed rainwater and overflow from the river Suir. Little or no thought about the consequences of building in particular areas was given by developers, the town and county councils, or by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Secondly, weather patterns in recent years have become more unsettled. There are also more extremes generally in terms of dry and wet spells as seasonal patterns shift. These changes have come about largely as a result of global warming. Scientists have warned about this for more than thirty years.

Ireland is currently the fifth largest producer of greenhouse gases in the world despite having signed the Kyoto Treaty.

Globally, we have the abili-

ty to shift much of the world's industry, food production and transport systems over to less polluting technologies.

However, because it is not

profitable for big business, few governments are willing to challenge their priorities.

So while people's homes are ruined, companies like General

Motors continue to rake in the megabucks and Irish developers build indiscriminately across the country.

—GER QUINN

Successful anti-war meeting in Tralee

ON THURSDAY 28th October, Tralee Anti-War Group (TAWG) held a public meeting entitled "Opposing the Bush Agenda."

About 50 people attended the meeting, which was chaired by Sean Moraghan and addressed by Nigel Baldock, TAWG delegate to

the European Social Forum held in London last month; Kieran O'Sullivan, who is on the Steering Committee of the Irish Anti-War Movement and Patricia McKenna, former MEP and member of the Green Party.

The meeting agreed to support the November 13th

protest in Shannon, to condemn the attacks on Falluja and to support Mary Kelly.

TAWG meets every second Wednesday at 6.15pm in the Abbey Gate Hotel Bar.

■ **For more details, contact Kieran McNulty at 087 6716009.**

DUBLIN DOCKLANDS GET ORGANISED

THE SOUTH docklands is full of expensive apartments and is dripping with wealth.

However, the Dublin Docklands Development Authority has broken their promises to local people about jobs and houses.

In 1997, they said that a minimum of 20 percent of all residential units would be social housing. However a recent report admitted that "the target

has not been achieved in the first five years of the Master Plan."

Paul McKeon of the *South Docklands Action Group* (SDAG) said, "How long more are we supposed to wait for the housing they are legally obliged to provide? And where are the jobs? 20 percent of new jobs were supposed to go to local people.

"Again, the target has not

been met.

There have been a number of apprenticeships and some school leavers have found positions in the IFSC. However, where are the jobs for older people? And where are the upskilling programmes?

■ **The action group are calling a public meeting on the issue. For details contact Paul McKeon on 085-7233839**

EDUCATION IS NOT FOR SALE

Protest at the Dáil against FF/PD underfunding and privatisation in education
Wednesday 1st December at 4pm

Racist attacks in Bray

OVER THE last month and a half, three serious racist attacks have occurred in Bray, where a large Chinese population lives.

Two Chinese people and a Korean were brutally attacked with one man having the bones in his face broken.

Nazi and Ku Klux Klan style graffiti have also been painted up on hoardings near the seafront where many immigrants live.

The local SWP branch took up a petition against the attacks and organised a paint-out of the racist graffiti.

The issue was also raised at the Bray Trades Council and it was agreed to respond strongly to these attacks.

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WATER CHARGES

RESISTANCE WORKS

'Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing'

Arundhati Roy,
Porto Alegre, Brazil,
27 January 2003

We can win

OPPOSITION TO the introduction of water charges and the privatisation of the Water Service is building steadily across the North.

As meetings in local communities vow not to pay this double tax, the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (GCCNI) has also come out against them.

It had initially backed water charges but now it says that "the Government's proposals fail to demonstrate value for money for those who can afford to pay, fail to provide protection for those who cannot afford to pay and fail to encourage consumers to use their water efficiently.

"The Consumer Council believes that any new way of paying for water should be based on the principles of fairness, affordability and sustainability."

The Consumer Council's statement came as anti-poverty campaigners finished calculating the amount to be extracted from householders by the new water charges.

Surprise, surprise, it turns out that the poorest half of the population will pay far more proportionately than will the better-off half.

The rich will get away with paying very little. The charges are to be capped at £750 a year, which means that even millionaires with a swimming pool and half a dozen cars (which their chauffeurs wash every other day) will pay no more than about twice someone living on benefits in a Housing Executive house.

As the BBC Spotlight programme on water pointed out, an extra £35 a year on our rates bills would pay for the upgrading of the water and sewerage infrastructure.

Separate charges are being introduced for one reason and one reason only: to make the North's water attractive to private water companies.



Water charges can be beaten

The privatisation of water in the North — and the resistance to it — is part of a worldwide trend. The UK government is leading the battle to put the profits of huge corporations ahead of human need.

We cannot live without water. But for big business, water is pure profit. Global water markets are worth up to £480 billion a year and dominated by European companies.

In fact, the world's top two private sector water companies, Vivendi and Suez Lyonnaise des Ais (both French), control 79% of all private water delivery between them.

The boss of Suez summed up the attitude of the multinationals when he said that water "is

a product which would normally be free and our job is to sell it."

Now the European Union is trying to have water supply included in the GATS negotiations and wants 72 countries — most of them in the developing world — to open their "water markets" to big business.

But letting multinationals get their hands on water has been a disaster everywhere.

Whether in Chile in South America or chilly Birmingham, water charges have risen far beyond the reach of poorer households.

This leaves people in developing countries without clean drinking water and people in the developed world in poverty and debt.

ACROSS THE world, resistance to water privatisation has been winning victories, with an increasing number of privatised services being taken back into public ownership. Many people have heard of the great victory won when hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets of Cochabamba in Bolivia and forced the government to put their water back in public hands.

When the Argentinean government handed the public water system over to French company Vivendi in the province of Tucuman, charges doubled and brown water came out of the taps.

Residents mounted a non-payment campaign and forced the company out. Water went back to public ownership.

Everywhere that water is about to be privatised, we see the same kind of scenario as in Northern Ireland at present.

In the years leading up to full privatisation, water charges are introduced at a high rate to get people used to the high prices they will be charged by private companies.

This happened in Buenos Aires, Argentina and in Manila, the Philippines. In both cities, Suez has taken control of water. In Buenos Aires, it has been fined twice for overcharging customers.

In Manila, Suez caused the first outbreak of cholera since the nineteenth century. Six people died and 600 were hospitalised. Suez has expressed an interest in the North's water service.

The lessons from across the world are clear: resistance can win. Getting tens of thousands of people onto the streets and — crucially — having a well-organised non-payment campaign can defeat privatisation and water charges.

Getting involved in the campaign against water charges in the North is the best way to fight privatisation. Water companies aren't interested unless there is a profit to be made! If you want to get involved in the resistance to water charges, email info@swp.ie or phone 07973528772.