

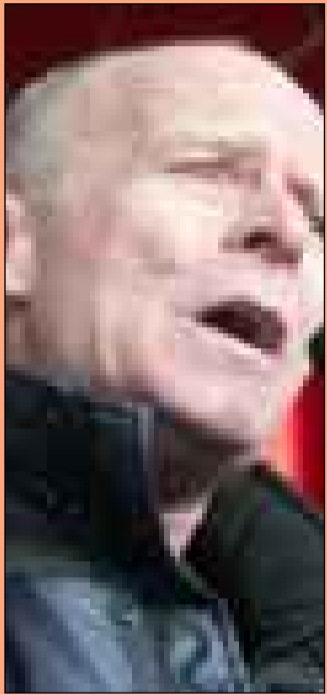
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**EAMONN McCANN
TO STAND FOR
SOCIALIST
ENVIRONMENTAL
ALLIANCE**



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Nurses lead protests over health crisis Enough is enough!

By Dr PEADAR O' GRADY

Nationwide lunchtime protests by nurses and local activists have exposed Mary Harney's irresponsible handling of the A&E crisis.

Colourful and lively protests in mid April were a huge success from Letterkenny and Mayo to Wexford and Cork.

Health Service Executive (HSE) managers were so rattled by the popularity and solidarity demonstrated that they intimidated nurses in several hospitals, notably in Dublin.

Nurses in hospitals such as Tallaght, Beaumont and Blanchardstown were warned not to talk to the media and not to attend demonstrations. Managers told them that "This would not be in your interests".

Up to 400 patients at a time are on trolleys in A&E departments across the country.

The Health and Safety Authority report on 11 hospitals warned that severe overcrowding was causing serious safety concerns leading to injuries, infections and violence. 8 hospitals were reported to fire officers because congestion meant equipment and trolleys were blocking fire exits.

'There are now 10,000 fewer people with medical cards than when Harney became health minister eight months ago.'

Mary Harney's response was to say that the responsibility was now on staff and management to improve the situation! In recent weeks she announced 600 redundancies in the health service.

She also cut medical card holders rights to free prescriptions with her new "doctor-only" cards and legalised the practice of taking up to 80% of elderly patients' pensions to pay hospital charges.

None of the 200,000 extra medical cards promised before the 2002 elections have been given out.

There are now 10,000 fewer people with medical cards than when Harney became health minister 8 months ago.

Harney's "Ten-point-plan" for A&E is in tatters. The promised home care packages and high dependency and "step-down" nursing home beds have been slow to appear. Queue-skipping, private "Minor Injury Units" have been roundly condemned as unfair

by unions and patient groups.



Nurses protest at the Tallaght hospital

In April, Harney moved her target date for implementation of this "emergency" plan from March this year to December 2006!

"At this rate it would be 2016 before these promised 3,000 beds would be in place"

The Irish Nurses Organisation (INO), which organised the protests, rejected claims by Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, that government initiatives to ease A&E overcrowding are effective. INO Deputy General Secretary, Dave Hughes, said: "Government measures are not having any effect on the ground.

If the Taoiseach has any doubt about that let him visit any of the hospitals and he will know the measures are not working."

The truth is that overcrowding will continue so long as patients on trolleys in A&E have no hospital bed to go to.

The FF/DP coalition promised 3,000 extra beds in the 2001 Health Strategy to replace some of the 6,000 beds cut in the early '90s. Since then fewer than 600

have been replaced. Harney has promised only 200 new public beds this year.

At this rate it would be 2016 before these promised 3,000 beds were in place!

Good pay and conditions will be crucial to keep our highly skilled staff in the health service and to deal with the looming nursing shortage.

Because of a once off change in the nursing degree programme no new nurses will graduate this year. It is a disgrace that nurses are still going abroad to look for decent pay, training and promotions when there is so much need for them here.

It would be wrong to think that Mary Harney is stupid or inept however.

Harney's plan for health is to run down the public hospitals and force private health care as the solution.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) has already sold off 27,000 patients' treatments to private hospitals and the plan is to expand it.

New private hospitals depend on the NTPF to get started. Fear of waiting lists and fear of demor-

alised staff and overcrowded and dirty facilities is driving people into the hands of private insurers and private hospitals.

The demands for an urgent increase in beds and staff and an end to two-tier health care are now being raised strongly by both staff and patient groups. SIPTU recommended meetings and lobbying with industrial action if that failed.

It is time for action. SIPTU with their slogan of "Action or else" and the INO with "Enough is Enough" should now ballot for strike action and join up with the other unions to call for a National Demonstration to defend the Health Service.

It is vital that everyone comes together to support the Nurses and all the other workers in the Health Service. We need patients and staff, young and old, to campaign together to defeat Mary Harney and her neo-liberal plan of "Privatisation or bust".

Enough is Enough!

>>See inside page nine for more on the health crisis

BIN CHARGES TO RISE BY 34% Keep up the non-payment campaign



By BRID SMITH, PRO Dublin City Campaign Against the Bin Tax

A Draft Replacement Waste Management Plan for the Dublin Region was launched last week by environmental consultants RPS/MCOS. It reveals that the cost of bin charges is set to rise by 34% over the next three years across the four local authority areas.

According to the consultants, a new EU Directive on Waste Management requires the councils to recoup 100% of waste management costs from the users of the service.

This will bring the increases in bin charges across the Dublin region in a six to seven year period up as much as 200%. And according to the City Council even with this increase they will still have to build an incinerator in Ringsend.

And according to the local authorities, one of their next steps is to introduce a "brown bin" collection service for organic waste.

This news will anger tens of thousands of residents who are already resisting huge increases in bin charges. In Dublin City Council, for example, charges were increased by 74% in the last budget with the new "pay by use" system. But most people are still unaware of how that will effect them. That is going to change as the bills hit the estates over the next two weeks.

In the case of Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown council, waivers for social welfare dependants are already been cut back by over 87%. In Dublin City Council pensioners are being told they have to apply for the waiver every three months.

All of this shows that what the Campaign Against the Bin Tax has argued is borne out. These charges are a stealth tax which are set to dramatically increase each year. They are unjust to workers and the poor in our community. They take no account of ability to pay and are hitting lower income earners the hardest. Council taxes are a huge issue in the British general election. Some councils in Britain charge taxes as high as 1400 sterling per year and give no consideration to pensioners and the poor.

That is why we have to keep up the resistance to stealth taxes. The government will argue that there is no alternative but at the same time are pushing all our public utilities into corporate hands. Massive profits are being made from waste management by private companies who are allowed to increase costs and return little to the public sector. Our struggle against bin tax is part of a wider fight against the neo liberal agenda which is privatising all our services.

Over the next few weeks public meetings are planned across Dublin and Dun Laoghaire to keep up the resistance and encourage people to stick together in a non-payment campaign. We have to plan in every local area for a massive response to any threats of non-collection and organise local protests.

Bin Tax Campaign Public Meetings

Drimnagh Wednesday 27 April 8pm in the Bosco Club

**Ballyfermot Wednesday 4th May 8pm
Ballyfermot United Football club**

Dun Laoghaire Tuesday May 3rd at 8pm Farrell's Pub, Marine Road. (Top floor of shopping Centre)

Crumlin: Thursday 28th April, 8.15pm in the Transport Club

Residents in fight over Dun Laoghaire Baths

By Richard Boyd Barrett, convenor of SOS and local SWP rep

The Save Our Seafront (SOS) group and local residents in the Dun Laoghaire area are gearing up for a major fight after the council announced plans for the redevelopment of the Dun Laoghaire Baths. The plan includes a public water amenity, but it is tacked onto a massive 8-storey block with 180 exclusive apartments and a shopping complex.

SOS stated that the huge development will destroy the coastal environment and privatise a large section of the seafront - turning it into an exclusive area. They also believe the development will set a precedent for further private high-rise developments and privatisation of the coast-line.

SOS are holding a major public meeting on Thursday April 28th in the Kingston Hotel from where they expect to organise large public protests over the coming weeks.

If the council get away with this, Monaco-style high-rise commercial development will follow right along the seafront. It will destroy our coastal heritage and the public character of the seafront and further drive up the outrageous cost of housing for ordinary people in the area.

It seems once again the council have opted to put the interests of developers and the super-wealthy before the needs and wishes of ordinary people.

The council wants to sweeten the pill by saying there will be 36 affordable dwellings. This is pure hypocrisy. The council allowed developers to wriggle out of the 20 per cent "affordable" in every private development in Dun Laoghaire in recent years. The council delivered only 19 "affordable" houses in five years costing from €225,000 (1 bedroom) to €325,000 (3 bedroom).

After big protests stopped the council's earlier plans for a 19-storey office block or 104 bedroom hotel on the site, they promised proper public consultation before any new plan was put forward. No public consultation ever happened. Yet, behind closed doors, council officials were drawing up plans without consulting anyone.

Disgracefully, the Labour Party Cathoirleach, Niamh Bhreatnach, has already joined Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the PD's in welcoming this outrageous plan. All of them say that some degree of privatisation is needed if we are to get any public amenity. This is what

they call public-private partnership. The public get no say in the decision to hand over public property to greedy developers and are expected to be grateful for getting a small bit of it back for an amenity.

Save Our Seafront (SOS) submitted a proposal to the council for the baths, which included a sea baths, an indoor heated pool, a toddlers pool, seaweed baths, water related health treatments and a modest café/restaurant. It would cost a fraction of the €140 million in the council's plan. It could be funded from the Departments of Health, Education, Sports, Heritage & Tourism and lottery money if the council were willing to fight for it instead of bowing down before big business.

SOS believes the seafront belongs to everyone. The needs and views of the public should decide the future for Dun Laoghaire baths and our seafront. The council does not have the right to turn any part of it into the private property of a privileged few."

■ For more information contact Richard Boyd Barrett 087-6329511 or Nicola Sarat 087-4115015

GAMA workers vow to continue protests

Following weeks of inspirational protests by Turkish and Irish workers the construction company GAMA is trying to force the workers into signing statements that hand over workers rights to GAMA in return for getting their passports.

They are also threatening to cut food, hostel and pay from the striking workers.

But a GAMA worker speaking to Socialist Worker said: "GAMA are liars, we won't stop. We are going to continue to protest on O'Connell St. We have rights".

A large turnout on April 30th May Day protest is important to show our solidarity with the GAMA workers.

■ See also the solidarity meeting on May 11th.



Asylum seekers continue to protest against deportation threat



Over 270 asylum seekers from hostels in Dublin city centre were on hunger strike for over a week in protest against their requirement to sign on twice daily at immigration and against their threatened deportation.

Most of these are parents of Irish born children. The asylum seekers held a very successful protest at the Dail. The next protest is on Wednesday 27th April 2pm at the GNIB on Burgh Quay. Peter, one of the asylum seekers told Socialist Worker: "Moral is low, we don't know our fate, we are trying to keep our head above water, but we are going to keep up the protests."

We still have to sign on everyday at 5pm and there a threat of mass deportation on May 4th. I wouldn't put anything past them". It is important that immigrants and Irish unite to fight these deportations. There will be a national demonstration on June 18th

Waterford Council of Trade Unions fights deportation

Joao Pintu, his wife Juliana and their two children Joao Junior (12) and Jonathan (9), fled Angola over four years ago for political and religious reasons.

They were due to be deported on May 10th from Dublin. That deportation has been temporarily reprieved.

Mr. Pintu spoke of the poverty and lack of

educational facilities that his sons will be forced to live with. "There are no jobs in Angola and no schools like here. My children have learned a lot since coming to Ireland and I don't want that taken away," stated Mr Pintu.

President of the Waterford Council of Trade Unions, Tom Creedon stated "We are

calling on Michael McDowell not to deprive these children of their education and separate them from their friends".

He went on to say "it is time that the Irish government followed the example of Spain, The United States and others by granting an amnesty to asylum seekers currently in the country".

Campaign against mobile phone masts in Dublin City Centre

Under a programme called Transforming State Assets, an initial 20 public buildings are to be made available to telecommunication companies for the installation of multiple mobile phone masts.

Vilicom has been hired by the government to pick which sites are suitable, take a share of the rent mobile companies will have to pay for the buildings and will also be monitoring the sites!

Staff in these buildings have been assured that the masts will comply with health & safety guidelines and planning regulations.

However those Health & safety guidelines are 9 years old - very dated in relation to this fast moving technology.

Microwave levels in Ireland are about 40 times what they are in many other countries, and these guidelines only take in to consideration thermal microwave radiation, i.e. radiation which produces changes in a body temperature, not the non-thermal microwave radiation these masts produce.

Recent research points to illnesses, related to the effects of non-thermal microwave radiation including childhood leukaemia, headaches, decreased memory and attention, slower reaction time in children, increased blood pressure in men, brain and breast cancers as well as miscarriages and neurological diseases such as Alzheimers Disease.

The exemption of public and commercial buildings from planning permission means that as long as masts are under-2 metres high and

28 days notice is given then the masts can be erected.

There has been no consultation with the workplaces and communities affected.

The Central Statistics Office in Rathmines, Dublin has so far had two masts placed on their building they were given just one days notice of their erection. 8-10 members of staff were allowed to ask questions of Vilicom, but had to submit the questions in advance. The CSO is also beside a school, St.Mary's College. If these masts were subject to proper planning permission procedures they would have to be between 50 and 200 metres away from schools.

Recently union reps in the CSO organised a lunchtime protest, which attracted many local representatives and both teachers and students from St.Marys.

There have been large fringe meetings at the CPSU and PSEU annual conferences addressed by members of the Irish Doctors Environmental Association to explain the danger of these masts.

Now workplaces and communities need to come together in the areas affected through meetings and protests to demand either these telecommunication companies take the cut in profits to make the masts safe or the masts come down.

■ Contact 087 6101340 for info on the campaign

■ Irish Doctors Environmental Association: Tel.: 01 8314065; Email: info@ideaireland.org

■ www.mastaction.org

CPSU Conference: mood of anger is rising

By DENIS REDFERN CPSU executive committee (personal capacity)

Recent years have seen increasing flexibility from CPSU members tied to staggered salary increases which amount to a pittance. This combined with a leadership unwilling or unable to lead a fight-back made for an angry CPSU Annual Delegate conference.

Members in An Post have not even received payment under the current partnership agreement- Sustaining Progress. Despite an agreement on flexibility and modernisation no pay increase under Sustaining Progress has been made with the company citing inability to pay. And despite An Post's 'universal service' obligation that requires them to provide loss-making services, the Government does not subsidise the provision of these services such as rural post delivery. These are steps towards a privatised postal service. And part of the cost workers will pay for the 'liberalisation of public services'.

A motion was passed unanimously calling on the union not to enter the next round of national wage/partnership negotiations until An Post members have been paid in full.

In a separate motion it was agreed that a full review across government departments of

the attacks on the terms and conditions of members under national wage agreements before any further partnership negotiations begin. Also the review will find the highest terms & conditions available to clerical staff with the aim of making these the standard.

Decentralisation- we'll have to fight to keep it voluntary!

Before Christmas a proposal came from the Department of Finance for promotions to be linked to willingness to decentralise. This would coerce people into the decentralisation programme, which is meant to be voluntary. Motions were passed seeking industrial action and withdrawal from the programme if the current promotional opportunities are sacrificed to facilitate decentralisation. The union must not allow decentralisation on the cheap.

IMPACT Merger?

Talks with IMPACT began last year, and given its consistent support for partnership there was immediate suspicion among members of a proposed merger. This suspicion has been confirmed by a look at the undemocratic structures of IMPACT in comparison with CPSU. Conference decided that a two-thirds majority would be required at next year's con-

ference before the proposals would be put to members for a ballot.

Masts

Over 30 people came to an anti-partnership fringe meeting where a speaker from the Irish Doctors Environmental Association spoke on the health risks associated with the mobile phone masts which are being put up on 20 buildings where CPSU members work. Planning permission procedures do not apply when erecting these masts. No local consultation or independent impact assessment were undertaken by our 'partners'.

It is workplace representatives that have taken the mast issue seriously and began a fight on the issue. Four new members who are not ideologically bound to partnership were elected on to the executive to join others with similar views. Now we have to increase cross branch contacts and initiatives, such as the fringe meeting mentioned above. Not only to display whom are the elected representatives reflecting the attitude and real interests of members but also to win influence over the membership away from pro-partnership union officialdom.

This will be vital to win the battles ahead

Dundrum: Give us our swimming pool

The SPLASH campaign to get a swimming pool and other facilities built at the Dundrum Family Recreation Centre is set to continue after a public meeting on Tuesday was attended by over 150 residents.

Speakers from the campaign repeated the need for a pool with full amenities to be in the area. Brian Arrigal claimed that "this campaign is about quality of life". Local politicians all praised the campaign and claimed to recognise the need for the pool but not one of them could say that they had come up with an extra €3m in funding needed for the proposed pool facility.

It was also learned that none of the councillors had put down a motion requesting extra funding from the council. Those assembled at the meeting unanimously voiced disapproval for a proposal to replace the existing plans with a cheaper model with a lower standard of facilities.

The meeting agreed to organise a protest at the council offices in Dundrum on Monday the 25th. With an expected €27m in rates coming in from the new Town Centre alone next year €3m seems a small amount to pay for such a vital public service. Thomas McNulty

Anti-racist protests against McDowell in Belfast

The decision by the SDLP's Alistair McDonnell to issue an invitation to the so called Justice Minister Michael McDowell to assist him in his campaign for election to Westminster in the upcoming elections was an appalling one.

To have invited him to speak in South Belfast of all places was indefensible. In late 2003 Minister McDowell issued a number of statements in relation to the non-national mothers of Irish children, referring to them as "maternity tourists" as part of his drive to change the Irish Constitution.

There is little doubt that his comments were in part used to justify horrendous attacks in South Belfast during the Christmas period of 2003

when a nine months pregnant Bangladeshi woman was attacked in her home, closely followed by an attack on the Chinese mother of new born twins.

South Belfast has suffered more racist attacks than anywhere else in the north.

However, if Michael McDowell's trip to Belfast proved anything, it proved that he is a figure of hatred on both sides of the border.

Despite the short notice 15 activists from the anti-racist network (ARN) got inside the hotel to stage a protest while McDowell addressed members of the SDLP.

Instead of bolstering the campaign for Alistair McDonald, McDowell was forced to answer

questions from attending journalists on his policy of deportations and whether or not his policies were racist.

In turn the SDLP were forced to defend their reasons for inviting McDowell in the first place. Local press led with the story of the protests.

Well known human rights lawyer Padraigin Drinan who was on the protest said "this protest was incredibly important. Mr McDowell's right to speak in Belfast is nothing when compared to the rights of children not to be deported from their homes".

The lesson for the SDLP will no doubt be to choose their friends more carefully in future.

Bairbre Muldoon

Ballymun says save our swimming pool



Ballymun's Save Our Swimming Pool protest

Photo: Colm McIntosh

AROUND forty people from Ballymun picketed Bertie Aherne's constituency office in Drumcondra on April 23 to demand that the public swimming pool in

Ballymun be kept open. Dublin City Council and its subsidiary Ballymun Regeneration Limited (BRL) plan to close the pool and open a privatised "leisure

pool". The new pool will effectively exclude local youth clubs, volunteer life-saving classes etc. Thousands of signatures have been collected by the Ballymun Save Our

Swimming Pool Campaign.

Campaign coordinator and Ballymun SWP rep Kevin Wingfield said, "The regeneration of Ballymun is not being undertaken for the good of the community but rather for the profits of big-business. Our green spaces and youth facilities are under threat. Local people are up in arms and this protest is just the beginning."

Paddy Haughey of the Plough Youth Club, who has been working for the community for thirty years, said, "We have to organise the whole community to make sure we keep our swimming pool."

Contact Ballymun Save Our Swimming Pool Campaign: Paddy Haughey 087-2094846 or Kevin Wingfield 086-3074060.

Ballymun mother of three sit-in protest

Ballymun mother of three Adrienne Cahill vowed to continue her sit-in in the Civic Offices in Ballymun despite being put out by gardai.

Adrienne Cahill lives on the third floor of a block of flats in Ballymun with her three children.

Her youngest, five year old Megan, suffers from cerebral palsy and is wheelchair bound.

Adrienne was due to be moved to a house suitably adapted for her special needs last year.

But after repeated broken

promises, and being told she will have to wait another two years, she began a sit-in in the BRL offices.

Recently Adrienne and her family were forced to move into bed and breakfast accommodation because of severe fungus in her flat.

Adrienne was hospitalised after an asthma attack brought on by the fungus and Megan missed an important medical procedure when she too developed breathing difficulties.

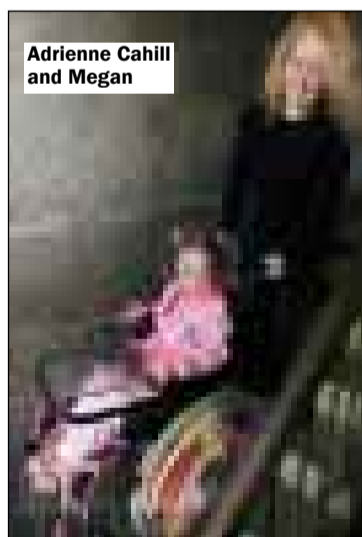
After being escorted off the premises by gardai, Adrienne

was defiant:

"I will be back tomorrow and the day after and the day after that to highlight the intolerable situation BRL and the Council have put me and my family in.

"I have had enough of being fobbed off by BRL and my daughter's development is suffering. How can a public body treat people this way?"

Messages of Support: Adrienne Cahill c/o PO Box 1648 Dublin 8 086-3074060



Adrienne Cahill and Megan

Irish Deaf society march for recognition

The Irish Deaf Society held a march on 10 April to highlight the position of Irish Sign Language (ISL) in Ireland, which was attended by members of the deaf community, their families and friends.

Over 40,000 people in Ireland use ISL as their primary method of communication, despite the language having no official state recognition.

The aim of the march was that ISL should be given equal recognition in Ireland as a third language along with Irish and English.

The Irish Deaf Society was also advocating that a sufficient number of sign language interpreters be trained so that people with hearing impairment and deafness can participate fully in Irish society.

Martin O'Sullivan

Justice for Bhopal

Bhopal is an Indian city where in 1984, the multinational Dow-UCC through their wanton greed allowed gas to leak from their plant, causing the deaths of over 7000 people immediately and an approximately 25,000 deaths since.

Over 30 people attended a meeting with Rashida Bee, a leading member of the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal. Rashida has lost

five gas-exposed members of her family to cancer and is herself partially blinded from the gas.

Rashida called for the corporations of the world to be held to account, not just for their actions in Bhopal, but for all the actions that have endangered human rights around the world.

For more information you can visit <http://www.amnesty.ie/content/view/full/3669/>

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IRAQIS DEMONSTRATE AGAINST OCCUPATION:

'There will be no security and stability unless the occupiers leave'

By Richard Boyd Barrett

On Saturday April 9th, the second anniversary of the toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, between 100,000 and 300,000 Iraqis spilled onto the streets of Baghdad, calling for an end to the US occupation of their country.

The demonstration was the biggest since the US invasion and possibly the biggest political protest in Iraq since the 1958 revolution.

The huge protest exploded US lies that resistance to the occupation in Iraq is limited to ex-Baathists and Sunni extremists like Musab Al Zaquarwi. It was called by Shia Cleric, Muqtada Al Sadr and was made up overwhelmingly of Shia Iraqis from the impoverished Baghdad suburb of Sadr city. Many protesters also travelled from the mostly Shia cities of Basra, Amara and Nassariya in the South to join the demonstration.

The protest showed that Shia Iraq is as hostile to the US presence as their Sunni counterparts. Protesters chanted "No, No, No to the occupiers." They carried placards with Bush on one side and Saddam on the other to suggest they were two sides of the same coin. Three giant effigies of Bush, Blair and Saddam were symbolically toppled at the final rally in Firdos Square in a reference to the toppling of Saddam's statue in the same square two years earlier.

The occupiers must leave my country

Al Sadr, who the US said they would "kill or capture" after he led two uprisings against the occupation last year, was not present at the rally but a statement from him was read out to the huge crowd:

"We want a stable Iraq and that will happen only through Independence. There will be no security and stability unless the occupiers leave. The occupiers must leave my country."

The main demands of the protest were for the withdrawal of US troops, the release of all prisoners and the speedy trial of the "American agent" Saddam Hussein under the control of the Iraqi people.

In an ironic reference to the so-called "Sunni-Triangle" of insurgent resistance, protesters condemned the "Triangle of death - Bush, Blair and Saddam." The blame for continuing violence in Iraq was laid firmly at the doors of the US occupation.

Muraf Abbas, a chemical Engineer from Amara said, "America is the mother of all terrorism. All the explosions are happening because they are here."

Shia and Sunni march together

Although a mostly Shia demonstration, many Sunni and Christian Iraqis also joined the march. The influential Association of Muslim Scholars who have close ties to Sunni insurgent groups called on their supporters to join the protest.

AMS leader, Sheikh Harith Al Dahri said of the protest, "Many of our bothers have welcomed the call and we will take part. The people must speak with one voice and say no to the occupation. The occupiers must leave. Two years have passed and all we see is bloodshed, destruction and looting."

A simultaneous demonstration also took place in the mostly Sunni City of Ramadi where 5000 protesters joined the protest calling for an end to the US occupation. In what must be a particularly worrying sign for the US and the "government," media reports say Iraqi police raised their arms in a clenched fist of solidarity with the passing demonstrators.

These huge demonstrations show a growing unity and co-ordination between Sunni, Shia, Christian and secular Iraqis despite US propaganda that American withdrawal would lead to a civil war.

The protests also confirm that those Shia Iraqis who voted in the dubious January elections did so in the belief they were voting for an end to the occupation. With the new Prime Minister, Ibrahim Al Jafari, now backsliding on election promises to achieve US withdrawal, the protests point towards further escalation of the resistance in the coming months.

DEFENDING THE OIL COMPANIES:

Irish government to send troops to Sudan and war

By Thomas McNulty

The Irish government has recently been asked to provide troops as part of a UN mission in the south of Sudan.

The UN secretary general Kofi Annan's representative in Sudan Jan Pronk requested to Minister of State Conor Lenihan that Ireland be part of an initial 750 man military observation force to be deployed in the area. It is expected that this force will grow to encompass 10,000 military personnel.

The UN mission would be sent to police the peace agreement between Khartoum and Southern rebel groups, which came after a 21-year conflict that has ravaged the oil rich country.

However there is no guarantee that this force will bring peace to the people of Southern Sudan who have suffered extreme brutality meted out by government forces.

The history of UN interventions is not the one of benevolent "boys in blue" maintaining peace and neutrality, uninfluenced by either tribal hatred or the interests of states.

The first time Irish troops were deployed with the UN was to the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly the Belgian Congo) in 1960.

UN troops were officially in the country to aid the elected radical government of Patrice Lumumba but in reality protected Belgium's puppet government in the breakaway province of Katanga, with the UN secretary-general stating that "The UN mission could not continue with Lumumba in office".

The UN allowed Belgium to arm the rebels and eventually declared Lumumba's government illegitimate allowing Joseph



Irish troops: Sudan next posting?

Mobutu to begin a thirty year dictatorship with a bloody coup.

The case of Namibia is also one that brings shame to the history of UN peace-keeping. The Namibian people had been fighting a war of independence against the South African apartheid regime for decades and at the end of the eighties victory seemed near.

It was then that UN forces entered to monitor a ceasefire. They made sure that the SWAPO resistance forces were disarmed but turned a blind eye to the contin-

uation of terror carried out by SA forces up to the elections in 1989.

The similarity between the situations in Namibia and in Sudan today is striking. In our times where the dominant power is gripped in a struggle for domination of oil reserves it is unfortunately unlikely that the UN will act as a neutral body in the interests of the Sudanese people. We must insist that the Irish government not send one soldier to protect the interests of big oil even if they wear the diplomatic camouflage of a blue helmet.

Pope Benedict XVI — A German Shepherd?

By PEADAR O'GRADY

To the shock and dismay of many liberal Catholics, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, known as "God's Rottweiler", was elected Pope Benedict XVI by 115 unelected Cardinals — all male obviously. This reflects a move by the Vatican to consolidate its central authority and send a clear message that the Roman Catholic Church is not about to soften its line on traditional teaching nor embrace a more ecumenical or embracing attitude to other religions.

Ratzinger was the most powerful member of Pope John Paul II's hierarchy. JPII made him head of the oddly named Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith — the modern successor to the Spanish Inquisition! He was Vice Dean of the College of Cardinals and presided over the last Pope's funeral mass. Yet most media and church commentators believed it would be a more moderate candidate from outside of Europe who would be chosen. Almost half of the world's 1.1 billion Catholics live in Latin America.

Ratzinger is likely to continue with the



The new Pope

policies he was central in promoting under JPII. He censured the liberation theologians, criticised Asian priests who took a more inclusive approach to other religions and emphasised the church ban on women priests, euthanasia, abortion and contra-

ception — even the use of condoms to stop the spread of AIDS. He described homosexuals as "objectively disordered" and other Christian faiths as "deficient".

Ratzinger encouraged US Bishops to deny presidential candidate John Kerry communion because he supported a woman's right to choose, against church teaching. The death sentence and the Iraq war are also against church teaching but Ratzinger levelled no criticism at Bush.

Ratzinger has come out quietly at first, saying he is "a simple, humble labourer in the lord's vineyard" and that he wanted to open dialogue with other religions. Few believe it. The legacy of JPII's Papacy is becoming clear — an arch-conservative hierarchy who quickly elected an arch-conservative pope. Those looking for social justice and solidarity will have to look elsewhere.

True spiritual liberation will be found in the solidarity of the global movements against poverty and war rather than in the medieval relic that is the Roman Catholic Church.

Hundreds take part in bring them back protest in Athlone

On Saturday, April 16th, the streets of Athlone echoed to the cries of "Bring them back!" as hundreds of people demanded the return of two mothers who were deported by Michael McDowell last month.

Africans and Irish, black and white, old and young united in a powerful display of people power to stand up for a multicultural Ireland, and for the reunification of families torn apart.

It is time to reunite these Athlone mothers with their

children. Elizabeth and Iyabo and their two youngest children must come back to Ireland.

John O'Neill, Principal, St. Joseph's Convent of Mercy Primary School, Athlone and Assistant P.R.O. of Athlone Families Together, talked to Joe Carolan of Socialist Worker:

"In one night the people of Athlone raised over 4,000 signatures for a petition in support of the two Athlone mothers. The vote of the people of Ireland in the

citizenship referendum can perhaps be interpreted as an indication of their wish to control immigration into this country, it cannot by any stretch of the imagination be interpreted as a carte blanche to deport people who, through no fault of their own, have had to wait in Ireland for up to five years for a decision on their applications for asylum".

There is considerable public support for applying humanitarian considerations

in these cases.

In a recent Sunday Independent survey, more than 60% surveyed felt that personal circumstances should be taken into account before deportation orders are enforced.

This Mr. McDowell, is the voice of the people of Ireland saying to you that they did not vote in the referendum for the heartless deportation of mothers or children who are now, like it or not, part of Irish society.

MAY DAY 2005

WORKERS OF THE WORLD Protest for migrant workers rights

UNITE!

May Day, the international workers' day, has been given an injection of life by the anti-capitalist movement. Last year saw thousands of people take to the streets of Dublin as part of a day of action for 'Another Europe' and against a 'Europe of Capital and War'. Encouragingly, this year the Dublin Council of Trade Unions has made migrant workers' rights the theme of the April 30th march.

Here are the views of both Irish and immigrant workers concerning the significance of May Day and the workers' movement in Ireland.

Jo Tully, a nurse and member of the INO Executive

Jo said that with one-fifth of nurses coming from abroad, the role of migrant workers was central. The health service would be completely crippled and disabled without overseas nurses, Ms Tully said, so the fact there is a demo for migrant workers is hugely important. For nurses working in private care or care for elderly in homes there is an enormous amount of exploitation, with workers being paid less than the going rate and with very few rights. She hoped the INO banner would be represented on April 30th. "Unfortunately May Day for decades in Ireland has been meaningless," Ms Tully said. "In my working life May Day was not even an event until the anti-capitalist movement started to emerge." "The excitement now is that hopefully it will emerge as a workers day, hopefully this is the start to getting a fight back, to start getting it back to something it should be," she said.

Tom O Connor, Bus driver and member of the NBRU:

Over the last 15 years May Day has become a lot less important to people regarding their rights. "The government's PR machine has brain washed the working public in to thinking they were happy," he

said. "We need to re-engage with the working classes to make them realise that they are not as well-off or as wealthy as they believe. "The Irish League of Credit Unions has warned people on borrowings - a small rise in interest rates could have serious consequences for those in debt," he said. The reality is that workers were not being paid proper wages, conditions have been pared down and privatisation is turning workers into economic slaves. The solution according to Mr O'Connor is to organise together, because 'as individual groups we don't stand much chance'.

Patrick Mophoso, Migrant Worker:

"Migrant workers are decent, hard working individuals that bring energy and expertise into the labour force," said Mr Mophoso. "We must not be used as a commodity that can be switched on and off whenever it suits employers. Migrant workers must get out there to make sure their rights are protected by the government and employers - May Day is about "making sure employers comply with their entitlements while we must assure Irish workers that they should not be threatened by us, as we are here to work together with them to ensure we all get our entitlements and not to bring down wages," he said.

Section of 1947 New York City May Day parade.

May Day Demonstration Solidarity with Migrant Workers Saturday April 30th Assemble 2.30pm at the Garden of Remembrance in Parnell Square.

The demonstration will march to Liberty Hall and is on the theme of solidarity with migrant workers.

Called by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions

John, council worker and union activist, Dublin :

"This day when workers come from all over the world to celebrate worker's rights is a time to come out and show our strength and protest against conservative unions who are in partnership with the government. It is also a day of solidarity with migrant workers especially GAMA workers, a day to show how we as a people feel against the injustice being done to refugees who are being deported at the moment. We need to show solidarity with nurses, prison workers and others threatened by

privatisation and show for the future in Ireland we are not prepared to be messed around and stood on as a doormat."

Rachel Hickey, SIPTU, UCD :

"As a new recruit to the world of Unions I find that all is not as I thought it was. I assumed that Unions were far more united. I thought it would be more 'all for one and one for all'.

"However, I do believe things are changing. I look at the Irish Unions and see them as a sleeping giant who is just starting to wake up - and just in time! All across this island people are being taken

advantage of, particularly among the immigrant population. Greed seems to be the order of the day. Now is the time for people to join the unions and make a difference. It's not enough to say the unions are useless. You have to change them. As people living on this island we have to work together to improve and change our circumstances. There is nothing more powerful than a union run by its members."

Sara O'Rourke, English language school worker

"I think that it's very significant that the theme of this year's

FOR MIGRANT WORKERS' RIGHTS, NO TO DEPORTATIONS, REGULARISATION NOT DISCRIMINATION

Public Forum
Speakers:

Mick'O Reilly (ATGWU), GAMA worker, Patrick Maphoso (Migrant worker's campaign), Fred and Peter (asylum seekers on protest against deportations), Owen McCormack (Busworkers Action Group and SWP)

Wed. May 11th, 7.30 pm
ATGWU Hall, 55, Middle Abbey St
Hosted by Civil Rights Movement Ireland,
contact 086 1523542 for details

May Day march is on Migrant Workers because it brings back the emphasis on solidarity," she said. "Too often we have seen migrant workers being blamed for conditions that have been caused by the government. "Instead of workers standing together rifts have been encouraged by the government and the media.," she said.

"Unions also can't be blameless, as one workers asked me recently, what ever happened to 'one out, all out'. "So workers of the world uniting on the same day to march for their rights symbolises for me the solidarity that we should be fighting for," Ms O'Rourke said.

The battle for the eight hour day and the origins of May Day

By DAVE LYNCH

THE historical origins of May Day go back centuries; however its role in the socialist and labour movements can be traced back to the United States in the late 19th century.

While May Day rituals cropped up with Saxon and Celtic celebrations of the first spring planting many hundreds of years ago, it was in the historic battle for an eight-hour day that the modern origins of the day are to be found.

On May 1st, 1886, workers declared strikes across the United

States and Canada to press for an eight-hour day.

In Chicago police attacked the striking workers and killed six.

Working conditions in the city were miserable, with most workers working six days a week, twelve hours a day, under dangerous conditions.

On May 3rd, workers who were striking for an eight-hour day were meeting near the McCormick plant.

Then they marched on the McCormick plant where police attacked with no warning whatsoever, killing six strikers and mauling several others.



The following day a bomb exploded at a demonstration at the Chicago Haymarket, killing eight policemen.

One flier alleged that the police had murdered the strikers on behalf of the businesses affected and called for workers to seek justice for the murdered strikers and to fight back with weapons: "To arms, we call you, to arms!" exclaimed the flier.

The police arrested eight trade unionists, four were found guilty of murder and executed by the state of Illinois.

Three years later, in 1889 in

Paris, the International Working Men's Association declared May Day a holiday for the workers of the world.

They did so in memory of the Haymarket Martyrs - the workers hanged in Chicago after protesting for an eight-hour day.

The Red Flag was adopted as a symbol of blood spilled by workers in the great class struggle.

Socialists, trades unions and the labour movement have marched in commemoration of International Workers' Day ever since.

Momentum building for G8 protests in Scotland

By DAVE LORDAN

Momentum is building for the anti-G8 protests in Scotland in early July.

Following an earlier decision by the public sector union UNISON, the Scottish Trade Union Congress representing over a million Scottish workers voted unanimously to affiliate to G8 Alternatives, a broad based activist coalition, and to back all of the anti-G8 protests and events.

This comes after weeks of rising tensions between activists and the British establishment, with right wing newspapers like the Scottish Evening Herald and The Times running a series of police inspired made-up scare stories about violent protesters who are intent on bringing chaos to Scotland. Police had let it be known that they were going to seek a ban on protests against the G8. This is not because the protesters are violent but because huge anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist demonstrations, in particular at Gleneagles on the Wednesday, will be a political disaster for Tony Blair and New Labour, who have already been badly damaged by the anti-war movement.

But this attempt to criminalize legitimate protest has caused such a public outcry in Scotland that the Scottish Parliament has voted to back the right to protest at Gleneagles. According to Joshua Brown of G8 Alternatives, despite their best efforts the right wing press have not been able to find a single villager from around Gleneagles to come out and condemn the protests.

This shows the huge breadth of support the movement has in the wider population.

Joshua added, "We already had a very diverse range of groups coming together to support the anti-G8 protests; everybody from CND to Basque and Palestine solidarity campaigners to anti-privatisation campaigners from Africa; but the support of the trade union movement brings us to another level again in terms of potential mobilising power.

"It means that we will be able to speak directly to the grassroots of Scottish society and to win many thousands of them to getting on board buses from every corner of Scotland to the

G8 protests.

"These will be the biggest protests in Scottish history. If enough people come we can make sure that the movement sets the political agenda.

"As with the huge anti-war protests of the recent past we hope that our mobilisation against the G8 will be an inspiration to everybody across the world who are standing up to the bullies and the warmongers to build a more just peaceful and democratic planet for all.

"That is why we are appealing to activists around the world to join us. Let's show Bush and Blair who this world really belongs to. Let's show them what democracy really looks like."

Activists from across Europe are gearing up for the Gleneagles demonstrations too. A G8 Alternatives meeting in Edinburgh attended by activists from, among others, ATTAC Germany, Rifondazione, COBAS, the Campaign to End Third World Debt, Stop The War Coalition, Irish Anti War Movement, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, International Socialists (Holland), CND issued the following call to action:

All out against the G8!

Bush, Blair and the G8 richest nations have appointed themselves rulers of the world. We must continue the tradition of mass protests to oppose the G8 and its policies of poverty, war and imperialism.

This meeting calls for a mass mobilisation against the G8 to converge in Edinburgh, 2-6 July, 2005.

This meeting calls on all social movements, trade unions, left parties and networks from across the UK and Europe to organise delegations to converge in Edinburgh, Scotland for five days of demonstrations, actions, the alternative summit, cultural events, community and much more.

Join the mass march to the gates of the Gleneagles Hotel on Wednesday, 6 July- the opening day of the G8 Summit.

They are G8, but we are six billion!

FIVE DAYS OF ACTION AGAINST THE G8

30th June Make Poverty History Rally Dublin 6.30 pm, O'Connell St

11am Saturday, 2 July- "Make Poverty History" Massive Demonstration in Edinburgh.

Sunday, 3 July- "Ideas to Change the World" Alternatives Summit in Edinburgh.

Monday, 4 July- "You can't end poverty unless you end war" Faslane Nuclear Base Blockade, Faslane -30 miles west of Glasgow

Tuesday, 5 July- "Close Dungavel, No-one is Illegal!"

Dungavel Detention Centre Mass Protest

12noon Wednesday, 6 July- "Another World is Necessary" Demonstration- March to the gates of Gleneagles Hotel- opening day of the G8 summit.

For more information visit G8 Alternatives at www.g8alternatives.org.uk

An Irish mobilisation network called G8 Mobilise (supported by IAWM, Sinn Fein, SWP, SP, Labour Youth and others) is organising Irish buses to the G8 protests- contact G8 Mobilise at 0872703564 Or mobiliseireland@hotmail.com www.freewebs.com/mobiliseireland

Activists involved with G8 Mobilise speak out

"I think it's vital that people committed to building a more just and equal society unite together to demonstrate against neo-liberalism, poverty and war".

Patrick Nulty, vice-chair of Trinity Labour

"Eight white men sitting in a luxury hotel to set the global economic agenda is fundamentally undemocratic and an obvious outgrowth of capitalism as a system - complete anathema to popular democracy.

The real democrats will be in the streets of Edinburgh in July"

Justin Moran, Sinn Fein

"I'm going to protest against the G8 because they have to be shown that there's another superpower in the world - us; people who refuse to accept war and the other consequences of a system driven by profit. If we can threaten the power of the representatives of that system, it can strengthen the resistance against the war - and if the Iraqis won, every

oppressed group would see a chance to win against the powers that be. In my opinion, everyone who protests against Bush, Blair and those they do business with will be helping bring the occupation a little closer to collapse, and helping fight the root-cause of so many other problems in the world - it's all inter-linked"

Orla Gallagher, SWP and anti-war movement, Dun Laoghaire

"I want to make my stance perfectly clear when I join the G8 protests in July. I come from a background of comfort and blissful oblivion and began to wake up to the realities of the inequality and deprivation in this world when I changed my lifestyle six years ago.

I've become a war and poverty resistor late in life and I'd like to emphasise that it's never too late for people to begin to protest.

I hope that there are many others like me from all over Europe and that I'll be meeting up with them in Scotland!"

Deirdre O Rielly, Anti-war activist

School students against poverty in Belfast

On the 6th of April, as a reaction to the Make Poverty History campaign, Students Against Poverty was set up in Belfast. From the humble beginnings of three members, the organisation has grown to thirty with the view to getting one hundred young people over to Scotland for the MPH demonstrations and to protest against the leaders of G8.

A representative says, "We also felt that it was important to attend the G8 Alternatives summit as the often ignored student voice needs to be heard. We have organised meetings to discuss matters such as war, poverty and free education, doing away with the myth that young people do not care about politics in the world."

If you would like more information about Students Against Poverty, e-mail students_against_poverty@hotmail.com or ring Seán on 07717123462.



Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees to protest at Dungavel detention centre on July 5th

As part of the week of action around the G8 summit the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees (GCWR) is calling for a day of mass action at Dungavel on Tuesday the 5th of July. Dungavel is a former prison in a remote location outside Glasgow.

It is now a detention centre for about 200 asylum seekers, many of them children. Dungavel is part of a network of camps throughout Fortress Europe where refugees are held captive and segregated from local populations, often in appalling conditions where abuses of their human rights and dignity are kept hidden from the outside world.

Refugees often arrive penniless in Scotland yet they need up £500 to pay court costs for a hearing to try and win

their release.

This money is often put up by local activists but refugees can languish for many months at a time in the centre with little or no outside help or contact.

Suicide rates are very high inside Dungavel and the imprisoned refugees have repeatedly accused the Scottish home office of maltreatment by prison officers and staff.

According to Scottish anti-deportation campaigners Dungavel detainees have "absolute zero status" on Scottish soil and no rights whatsoever.

Michael Collins of GCWR writes, "This is going to be a massive day-long rally. In 2003 we supported a rally organised by the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC). Despite its

remote location, about 2000 people came.

This year we know we can mobilise far more, with coaches running from G8 convergence centres in Edinburgh and shuttle busses from Glasgow.

Also, we are going further than the STUC demands which, in order to be as inclusive as possible, were along the lines of "get the children out and don't detain asylum seekers unless you really have to". In the week of the G8 summit we are making the link between imperialism, global capitalism, forced migration and racism.

We are calling for an end to detention, and end to deportations, for equal rights and freedom of movement for all."

Can Make Poverty History and the G8 protests really succeed?



By Rory Hearne

Since Make Poverty History (MPH) was launched in the UK, more than 80,000 people have emailed Tony Blair. Last Friday over 25,000 people gathered in London for an all-night vigil for Trade Justice. Over 100,000 have registered on www.makepovertyhistory.org and there are a million white wristbands being worn.

This shows that the protests at the G8 summit will be very big. Up to 500 people have been packing into Make Poverty History public meetings in Northern Ireland. In the Republic most of the focus has been on high level lobbying of the government on the 0.7% UN aid target but the Debt and Development Coalition are leading a rally on June 30th at the spire on O'Connell St with the theme of: "Drop the Debt".

Socialists should enthusiastically work with these NGO activists to build for the Dublin and Belfast rallies. We must also work on the "G8 mobilise" group and promote unity between the left political parties and the NGO activists to build for these rallies on debt, trade, aid and the G8 events.

The MPH campaign demands

1. Trade justice:

■ Rules that ensure governments, particularly in poor countries can choose the best solutions to end poverty and protect the environment — these will not always be free trade policies

■ End damaging export subsidies

■ Make laws that stop big business profiting at the expense of people and the environment

2. **Drop the debt**, without conditions such as privatisation and liberalisation

3. **More and better aid**, without strings — in particular reaching the UN target of 0.7% of GNP for overseas aid

(see www.makepovertyhistory.ie).

These demands are excellent. They point the finger clearly at governments and institutions for the problems (which is a long way from Live Aid and traditional charity).

The strategy of the campaign is to pressure these governments, banks and institutions such as the World Bank (WB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organisation (WTO) to act. NGO activists recognise that it has been the so-called development policies of these western governments and institutions that have caused poverty to increase. Economist, Jeffery Sachs, the former promoter of neo-liberalism, states in his new book *The End of Poverty* that: "The situation is worsening for the world's poor".

The Irish Government recently reneged on its promise to reach the 0.7% target. That is disgraceful. Hans Zomer, director of Dochas



Washington, DC, April 15—Leading advocates of poor country debt cancellation gathered in a rally outside the G-7 Finance Ministers meeting to call for full debt cancellation for impoverished nations without harmful conditions. The event highlighted the message that most of the debt has already been paid. Between 1970 and 2002, Africa received about \$540 billion in loans and has already paid back over \$550 billion to wealthy creditors such as the G7 countries, the World Bank and the IMF. But interest charges mean Africa's debt stands at nearly \$300 billion! With the G7, the IMF, and the World Bank in charge of global debt policy, there is no escape from this debt trap. Participants called for building a better world on a foundation of hope and human security. An essential first step in that process will be the cancellation of 100% of foreign debt for all countries in crisis, without harmful economic conditions.

Photos: Orin Langelle/Global Justice Ecology Project

said that, based on current spending plans the government will not reach the target until 2028!

Important debate

But within this movement there are important political questions we must debate.

Firstly, if all the MPH demands were implemented immediately would it make poverty history?

It would certainly decrease levels of poverty. But in order to end poverty we must change fundamentally the structures that create it. Poor countries will never be able to compete 'on a level playing field' within the existing global framework. Hundreds of years of colonialism, imperialism and capitalism have left these countries reliant on a small number of commodities like coffee or sugar. The capital and wealth is now concentrated in the hands of the rich in the west.

The neo-liberal policies of trade liberalisation, privatisation and financial liberalisation perpetuate mass poverty.

These policies, therefore and the institutions that enforce them such as the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF must be abolished. A very different global economic model is required.

This radically different model will require a historic reversal. It will require a redistribution of wealth from the rich in the west to the poor in the developing world and to the poor in the west.

The workers and poor of the First world are not benefiting from this situation. It is the same corporate elite that exploits call centre workers in the West and the clothing workers in South Asia

End to war

Above all what is needed to end poverty is an end to war and consequently changing spending priorities.

Unfortunately those in the MPH campaign are excluding this aspect. We have the ludicrous situation where the US will spend \$200 billion by the end of this year on the war on Iraq. That is three times the global aid budget. This spending on arms to defend empires and conquer new resources is inherent to global capitalism. So a model without empire and war is required to end poverty.

How are we going to achieve these changes? The limited demands in UK finance minister Brown's plan for Africa (which incorporates some of the MPH demands) already faces opposition from the US and

Germany. So how can radical change be carried through?

Furthermore, while we all hope that this pressure from mass mobilisations will force change immediately, it is not overly cynical to ask if it is realistic that these same governments and institutions who enforce poverty are suddenly going to become the saviours of the world's poor? They lied over the war on Iraq and are responsible for the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan and Chechnya.

The same governments mistreat people who reach our shores after fleeing the impacts of this unequal global system — and then deport them.

'Saviours' of Africa

Blair and other leaders have been rattled by the anti-war movement and see the G8 and MPH as an opportunity to pose as the saviours of Africa.

But just as Blair's lies over "Weapons of Mass Destruction" didn't convince anyone, neither will empty promises about poverty.

It is fair to conclude that we shouldn't rely on these institutions and governments to bring change. Instead we should organise to overthrow these institutions and governments and support the movements of workers and poor around the world who have taken action and directly confronted the empire such as in Venezuela, Bolivia, Iraq and the public sector workers in Europe.

The MPH campaign is a welcome pressure on our leaders, but simply focussing on politicians like Blair and Aherne in the hope for a change of heart will leave us disillusioned. It will require a defeat of US and British imperialism and a dismantling of the WTO, the IMF and the WB.

It will take mass movements from below in street protests, occupations and overthrowing our governments and creating a new democratic society both in the global north and global south, to fundamentally change the system of capitalism and truly make poverty history.

Our movement cost the Spanish prime minister his job and has forced countries to withdraw their troops from Iraq. It has forced the G8, the WTO and the IMF to meet surrounded by miles of barbed wire and tens of thousands of riot police in secluded places like Qatar, the Rocky mountains, and now in the highlands of Scotland.

We have our leaders under serious pressure. Now is not the time to hand the momentum and aims of our movement over to Brown and Blair.

Everyone should continue building the movement that can liberate all of humanity and end poverty forever rather than rely on the liars and war criminals inside the summit hotels. The G8 protests are a key step in that direction.

Socialist Worker

Campaign for the Socialist and Environmental Alliance

The comment in the mainstream press talks about the Northern Ireland elections being a watershed as Sinn Fein and the DUP will replace the SDLP and the UUP. The election results will re-affirm that one of the main outcomes of the Good Friday Agreement has been the institutionalisation of sectarian politics in Northern Irish society. Both compete even more strongly for the largest share of the votes from 'their' community.

However, on the real issues that affect the majority of people's lives very little separates the four communal parties.

But there is an alternative to that sectarianism and the acceptance of neo-liberalism. The Socialist and Environmental Alliance (SEA) is standing Eamonn McCann in Foyle for the Westminster elections and five candidates in the locals in Derry.

When it comes to the airport, the rail link, poverty wages, water charges or the Iraq war, McCann says: "All the main parties are at one in bowing down before big business". Colm Bryce, SEA candidate in the Northland ward summed up the SEA alternative: "There's plenty of money for bombs to flatten Fallujah, but not to pay speech and language therapists, badly needed by children in Derry." These elections are an important opportunity to begin creating a left alternative in Northern Ireland.

Between now and May 5th socialists should do all they can to help the SEA candidates run a strong campaign and show a socialist alternative to sectarianism is possible.

Respect in Britain

Tony Blair appears on course to form another New Labour government after the British general election. However New Labour faces a challenge from the left in the form of Respect.

Respect - the Unity Coalition was born in January 2004 out of the massive anti war movement and is standing 26 candidates in the general election. It is giving a voice to the millions across Britain who are disenfranchised by New Labour's lies and neo-liberalism.

Across Europe the radical left is re-forming and creating new alliances which offer a genuine left political alternative. It is only through such left alliances that socialists can really challenge the onslaught of neo-liberalism. Respect proves that it is possible.

Bubbling discontent – let's unite and win some more victories

In the south, McDowell, the PDs and Fianna Fail claimed during the citizenship referendum last June that the blame for the health crisis lay in pregnant asylum seekers "swamping" the maternity wards. This lie was clearly swept away last week as nurses led angry protests against the A&E crisis at hospitals throughout the country. The blame for the crisis was put clearly at government cutbacks in beds and chronic underfunding.

Indeed, at the same time as the nurses were protesting, Turkish workers were into their second week of a strike over super-exploitation and 270 asylum-seekers went on hunger strike looking for the right to work and against their deportation. It was never clearer that migrant and Irish workers are both exploited by the same state and greedy private companies.

There is a rising mood of discontent not seen for years. Nurses want to take on the government and they should be encouraged to lead a national protest movement uniting patients, hospital workers and the general public to force the government to tax the rich like Ben Dunne and invest in the health service. We don't want Harney's US model of privatisation.

Similarly, we must continue the momentum of the Kuncle and Athlone anti-deportation campaigns or the Gama workers struggle and build for the national demonstration against deportations and for migrant workers rights on June 18th. We can unite asylum seekers, NGOs, migrant workers and Irish workers. McDowell and the government are on the back foot.

It is incredible then, at this time, when the left should seize the opportunity to bury the right wing agenda that the Labour Party has failed to offer a left opposition in this country. Labour has just voted to recommend a pre-election pact with Fine Gael — the party of Michael Lowry, big business and privatisation. Now is the time for the Left, immigrants and Irish workers to unite and win victories against the Right.

LETTERS

There are thousands of Gama's out there

Patience is the first thing you need in dealing with migrant workers, it takes a long time to gain their trust.

As a migrant worker myself I have vast experience in dealing with them and the issues concerning them.

The greatest fear is losing their job and becoming illegal or losing their permit which is their licence to work.

The work permit is so powerful that it can make you lose your integrity.

In some cases employers strip you of your dignity by holding your passport, it's unbelievable to see how vulnerable migrant workers are.

Most Irish people do not know how we happen to be here but I will tell you. None of us, those on work permits or work visas, were picked

up from the streets with no job.

We had jobs in our countries, be it South Africa, India, Pakistan, Australia, Botswana or many other countries.

The decision to leave out jobs in our countries and come here was not an easy one.

Even if you made the wrong decision it is not easy to just go back home as jobs are scarce and the one you had is gone elsewhere.

The breaking up of families is very common as our spouses are not allowed to work, something we did not know.

It's very difficult to quit your job and come to Ireland to join your spouse, just to watch telly and take the kids to school or be the nanny at home.

Not working, you lose your dignity, like one of my friends who committed suicide a few months ago after quitting a very good job in South Africa.

I made the same mistake by persuading my wife to quit her job in South Africa.

I thought it would be very easy to get her a job and she could find an employer who would apply for a permit on her behalf.

Instead employers were asking her for a permit which she did not have so she can not work even if she wanted to.

Believe me it is not a piece of cake. There are thousands of Gamas out there.

□ PATRICK MAPHOSO
(Migrant Workers Campaign)



Photo: Paula Geraghty

DEBATE ON HERITAGE:

Government intent on privatising every section of our lives

I would like to congratulate Sarah O'Rourke on her article in the last issue of Socialist Worker regarding the skewed approach of the current government in relation to Irish heritage.

In particular but not exclusively in relation to very poor planning decisions such as at Woodstown, Co. Waterford (see Cathy Swift interview in SW 240), Carrickmines and perhaps most notably the Tara Skryne Valley.

Yet this approach is also reflected in last year's break up of Dúchas, which was effectively a move to break the influence and power of this widely respected agency because they exposed and opposed government policy.

The motorway will also

include two toll plazas which will delay people's journeys in rush hour traffic as well as line the pockets of private developers while costing regular commuters a fortune.

From an esthetical and heritage perspective the four-lane motorway will have an obvious impact on the environment and the visual nature of the Tara Skryne landscape.

The proposed floodlit interchange right on the foot of the Hill of Tara will change this national monument for ever.

However, what is almost more worrying is the expected follow on development to the construction of the M3, with large shares of the surrounding lands having already fallen into the hands of major business developers.

In other words, large swathes of the motorway will be lined by industry, retail parks and warehouses not green fields, parks or schools and residential developments.

As Ms. O'Rourke points out, there are alternatives, yet these are not being explored.

The debate seems to centre exclusively on how to route or re-route the motorway.

The most environmentally friendly and sensible transport option that of reintroducing the Dublin to Navan railway line is the one least discussed.

The people of County Meath, as elsewhere in Ireland, need real transport choices.

Yet these can only come about through a holistic approach to development and infrastructure and more impor-

tantly an emphasis on developing local communities, not new strategies on how to most effectively ship people into the capital.

To achieve this we do not need the help of private contractors under Public Private Partnerships.

Conversely we need to rid ourselves of the greed of these corporations such as Gama (who have been involved in many recent infrastructural projects) and National Toll Roads Ltd.

But especially we need to rid ourselves of a government seemingly hell-bent on privatising every section of our lives.

□ THOMAS KADOR,
Dublin 15

COMMENT

EU CONSTITUTION DEBATE:

The meaning of a No vote

By MIRIAM MURPHY

On Saturday 9th April, at the Youth Conference on the EU Constitution, 'independent' analyst Simon O'Connor argued that the Constitution is being opposed by both the 'right' and the 'left' for mutually contradictory reasons.

The 'right' is opposing it because it enshrines too many 'left' principles and the 'left' is opposing it because it enshrines too many 'right' principles.

It is important for us to recognise that the interpretation of the No vote by member-state governments and institutions of the EU will be as important as the size of that vote itself.

A majority No vote seen to stem from dissatisfaction with the increasingly neo-liberal direction of the EU would do more than defeat the Treaty; it would prompt a debate around the acceptability, to the people of Europe, of the EU's current trajectory.

The Yes camp are likely to paint all No voters as narrow-minded, scare-mongering right-wingers.

They ignore the detailed and legitimate arguments of No voters who

highlight articles in the Constitution which enshrine free market competition and provide a framework for the liberalisation of trade in public services.

Indeed, recent polls in France demonstrate that 'left' No voters who oppose the Constitution, on the grounds that it will undermine social rights and public services, are growing in number.

The 'right' No contingent remains constant. However, the numbers indicating that they will vote No have increased alongside growing social dissatisfaction and social remobilisation.

And yet, it is the 'center-left' Yes group which most vocally denigrates No voters as selfish and petty nationalists.

They deny even the possibility of an ideological slant in the Constitution.

At the Youth Conference, Labour's Tony Brown insisted that the Constitution will leave each Member State free to choose how their public services are to be planned, delivered, financed and regulated.

This stance ignores the absence of national vetoes on trade in essential

services and the position of fundamental importance afforded to "free and undistorted competition" by the Constitution.

He argued that, under the Constitution, policies will continue to be determined by the political choices of each Member State's electorate.

Neo-liberalism or neo-liberalism is not a choice. Indeed, one of the most regrettable implications of this Constitution is the removal of political choice.

The Constitution prevents those of us who wish to pursue a different model of economic and social development from proposing an alternative that we would be allowed to implement.

That is why we should vote no and actively campaign against the EU Constitution.

Contact the Campaign Against the EU Constitution at euconstitution@eircom.net

Miriam Murphy is a member of Democracy and Public Services in Europe (DAPSE) and a Sinn Fein activist.

Why is the Health Service in Crisis?

By JO TULLY,
Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) Executive
(Personal capacity)

After more than a decade of the Celtic Tiger economy characterised by spectacular profit rates we have a health service which plummets daily to new depths of depravity.

The problems are now affecting every A&E department in the country all the year round. But what is wrong with the health service in Ireland, a country that, according to the latest economic reports is now the 4th richest country on the planet? How can we have a health service that is now worse than it was in the 1980s?

In answer to this the government has pushed the 'bottomless pit' theory. It insists that a state run public health service is inherently inefficient. What is required, it argues, is the tying down of the trade unions even further by deals like 'sustaining progress' and the tendering out of as much of the health services as possible to the private sector.

The pamphlet: "Why is the Irish Health Service in Crisis", by Dr. Peadar O'Grady, cuts straight across this argument. Peadar demonstrates that the Irish Health Service was stripped of its resources from the late 1980s and into the 1990s and this deficiency continued into the era of the Celtic Tiger.

He further argues that there is a global plan for health care. But it is a plan that is not concerned with the delivery of health care to those who need it. It is concerned only with the profits that can be creamed out of the provision of health care to those who can afford

to pay for it.

As patients and workers we face a stark choice:

Either: we fight for a health service delivered on the basis of need by a workforce properly paid for the work we do;

Or: we have imposed on us a US model of health service delivered only to those who can

pay and return vast profits to the vested interests.

This pamphlet makes the case for a real fight to end the crisis and to stop the drive towards privatisation. It is an important contribution to the debate about defending health care as a public service that needs to be had, both in our unions and in society as a whole.

Out Now
New pamphlet by
Dr Peadar O'Grady

€3 from SW Books, PO Box
1648 Dublin 8

To get a copy of this
pamphlet or get involved in
the campaign phone
087-9879489

Nurses, patients and supporters speak out at angry protests over the A&E crisis

Over 100 nurses and supporters joined the INO protest at the Mater Hospital in Dublin in April.

Jean, a nurse in the Mater and a member of SIPTU, told Socialist Worker: "The situation in the hospital is dreadful. We are working for more than our paid hours just to keep our head above water. Not only is there a shortage of beds but there are too few nurses. I blame this on the government's ceiling for staffing levels. They have their priorities all wrong. The health service is chronically underfunded. We cannot do our job. Working in this chaos is bad for patients and bad for us. This is not what I became a nurse to do."

Teresa is a nurse and an INO union activist. She commented: "The situation in A&E at the moment is very frustrating. I worry about the health and safety aspect for patients and staff. We are trying to work in the most cramped and overcrowded conditions. All this works against privacy for patients and delivery of care. We are looking for additional resources. That is the least the patients deserve in the twenty-first century."

Another union activist told Socialist Worker that hospital nursing administrators and management were intimidating staff in some hospitals from speaking out against the conditions they are working under or joining the protests. "Morale in the job is very bad, but we need to keep up and widen the protests to make Harney move," she added.



INO protests brought staff, Patients Together and other supporters at the Mater Hospital (top) and St Vincents

Socialist Worker also spoke to those at the protest at St Vincent's Hospital.

One staff nurse attending said, "Poor sick people are left lying on trolleys without any dignity. The staff are working very hard but getting nowhere. Patients are not getting the proper care despite all our

efforts. The situation is a disaster. It is an accident waiting to happen."

Philip McAnenely, INO Industrial Relations Officer said: "Since we last highlighted the crisis in A&E the issue has been relegated to the middle pages of the newspapers. Yet the problem hasn't gone away.

It has actually got worse. We have no choice but to come out and protest. Only those who shout loudly get heard.

"Today there are 31 people lying on trolleys in the A&E department in St Vincent's. Yet 50 beds have been closed in this area. 30 of those beds have been closed in the Leopardstown Hospital within 200 yards of where the Tanaiste and Minister for Health, Mary Harney, lives. If all these beds were open we could accommodate those now lying on trolleys and have a surplus. Nurses are at breaking point because of a totally unnecessary situation.

"We have no confidence in the health service management or the government to deal with this situation. If they don't do something after these protests we will go back to our members again to see what further action they want to take."

Eddie McGeough, Patients Together, speaking at the protest told Socialist Worker: "The situation is a joke. They spend millions on things like Croke Park but do nothing about people lying on trolleys, sick. Don't get me wrong, I don't begrudge money going on sport, but surely people who are sick should come first.

"My own mother was waiting two weeks at home on a priority list waiting to get in. She died four weeks later of lung cancer. She had to suffer much more pain because they had no beds. People have had enough of this kind of thing."

Charity no solution at the Mater

By JULIET BRESSAN

The recent decision to open up St Brigid's military hospital to relieve pressure on the Mater Hospital is a pathetically overdue emergency measure.

During the 1980's and 90's, hospitals like St Brigid's were closed all over Dublin.

In the north inner city the Jervis St and Richmond hospitals were closed to make room for new criminal courts and a shopping mall. The "replacement" hospital, Beaumont, is in a different part of town and was developed with an overall reduction in the number of beds.

This 'merger and move' trick was repeated in Dublin's South inner city where the Meath, Adelaide and Harcourt St hospitals were all closed in the early nineties, leaving room for luxury apartments and office blocks in an expensive part of town.

Again, the beds lost were "replaced" in Tallaght - over an hour's journey away from the catchment area which the closed hospitals served.

This deliberate closure of public health facilities, and the transfer of ownership of the land and buildings into the corporate sector, has now resulted in the appalling overcrowding of the only two remaining inner-city Dublin hospitals, St James' and the Mater.

In response to shocking revelations by the nurses' unions that over four hundred patients were being treated on trolleys in A&E all over Ireland, multimillionaire Ben Dunne on the Joe Duffy show offered to provide a €30,000 portakabin to the Mater hospital!

In the same week Dunne was also in the news because apparently no tax was paid on the bribes he paid to Fine Gael TD, Michael Lowry, or Fianna Fail's Charlie Haughey.

The Mater hospital politely declined the portakabin, as unsuitable for emergency care, but invited Dunne and the other businessmen who called Joe Duffy to contribute to the hospital's own development plan.

Disgracefully, the Mater Private Hospital was sold in 2000 for €25 million and is now a "for-profit" hospital making €6.6 million profit in 2003.

What is needed in the Mater, as in hospitals all over Ireland, is the 3000 more public hospital beds promised by this government - and the nurses and other staff to treat the patients in them.

Traditionally, charitable donations by private individuals or churches provided most health care for the poor.

Appalling conditions and short life expectancy meant workers were unfit to work or defend the Empire as soldiers.

This convinced many Victorian capitalists to share some of the crumbs of their surplus wealth with the 'unfortunate poor'.

In the UK in the 1980's, Margaret Thatcher set about actively and ideologically dismantling the post-war welfare state.

Under Thatcher the rich became richer and the National Health Service was opened to market forces. Mary Harney is the wannabe Thatcher of Irish politics.

Harney's government has operated a Thatcherite neo-liberal policy of abolishing taxes on the rich so as to promote vast wealth for business people.

Now she wants to hand over as much of the health service as possible to the private 'for-profit' sector.

Failing to tax the rich has meant that hospitals have suffered. Since the election of the FF/PD government, funding for the welfare state for medical cards, dietary allowances, drug refunds, grants for the disabled, home helps for the elderly and public health nursing have all been cut back.

Millionaires like Dunne and his business colleagues, who have benefited hugely from neo-liberal policies in this country now seem ready to throw a few crumbs to the sick and the dying - but not to pay taxes. 29 of the top 400 earners in 2002 paid no tax at all because of tax-free property schemes.

But Irish workers have already paid for this health service over and over again in taxes, while the rich have been cosseted by the state.

A decent health service should be funded through taxing the rich, not from a begging bowl.

FICTION

Imagination in a world of terror

Saturday by Ian McEwan, Jonathan Cape

Reviewed by Sinead Kennedy

Writing in the Guardian on 15 September 2001 about the terrorist attacks on the US, writer Ian McEwan said that one of the hijackers' crimes was 'a failure of the imagination':

"It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to someone other than yourself is . . . the beginning of morality."

This is not the same thing as saying that the hijackers would not have completed their mission if they had been more interested in literature. Indeed in McEwan's own Booker prize winning novel, *Atonement*, the protagonist Briony's insight does not prevent her from committing the crime on which the story turns. Saturday, McEwan's latest novel, address further interrogates this question of imagination and rationality.

A materialist doctor, Henry Perowne, reflects on the frailness and dignity of humanity while showing that it is possible to have human sympathies without aid of literature and religion.

He is a neurosurgeon who makes his living from his understanding of the human brain and how it is responsible for everything we are.

Perowne frequently reflects on the brain's 'fundamental secret': the way that 'mere wet stuff can make this bright inward cinema of thought, of sight and sound and touch bound into a vivid illusion of an instantaneous present, with a self, another brightly wrought illusion, hovering like a ghost at its centre'. He believes that the secret of 'how matter becomes conscious' will one day be revealed: "That's the only kind of faith he has.

There's a grandeur in this view of life'. This last sentence adapted from the closing sentence of Darwin's *Origin of Species* haunts the novel: What is human nature? How much choice do we have, are human beings slaves to their genes?

The canvas on which these issues are explored is the day of global protest against the impending war on Iraq, February 15 2003, the greatest ever massing of people in the history of humanity.

Although Perowne shares the national concern with war, he contains both poles of the debate about Iraq at the edges of his thoughts and throughout the day he drifts between them. Perowne is ultimately a well-meaning but powerless by-stander in the Global War on Terror, appearing at times almost lost in the gravity of the events that surround him.

Perowne is a character that socialists tend to find irritating. He is the quintessential liberal who agonizes his way through the world. He is guilty about the pleasure he obtains not only in driving a Mercedes but in the act of its ownership. He is scathing at times towards the protesters: "If they think - and they could be right - that continued torture and summary executions . . . are preferable to invasion, they should be sadder in their view", yet he later acknowledges "I honestly think I could be wrong".

Still Perowne is a compelling character who desires to understand the world in which he lives, a world that is increasingly plagued by terror.

This terror enters into his private life in the last section of the novel as Saturday hardens into something much darker and involves questions of how people confront terror, in all its forms, to protect ones they love. On this Saturday of all Saturdays, these questions carry difficult implications to which simple answer cannot be forthcoming.

REVIEWS

Ireland and the Palestinian Question

Ireland and the Palestine Question 1948-2004 by Rory Miller, Irish Academic Press

Reviewed by Raymond Deane

This is the book for you if you are already sufficiently well-versed in "the Palestine Question" to ignore the author's misrepresentation of Middle-Eastern history.

Read about De Valera's warning in 1937 against the partition of Palestine, partition being "the cruellest wrong that could be done to any people..."

Read how Liam Cosgrave advised Jews and Muslims in 1956 to settle their differences "in a spirit of Christian charity."

Marvel at the Evening Herald's rejection of Frank Aiken's insistence that Israel should return territories occupied in 1967, wondering whether he "would be just as anxious to hand back the Hill of Tara if it had been used to shell Meath farmers..." and boasting that "Irish settlers have helped to build the [Israeli] state..."

On a more serious note, recall with nostalgia that in Bahrain in February 1980 the late Brian Lenihan demanded an end to the Israeli occupation, a just solution to the refugee problem, and recognition of the PLO's right to speak for the Palestinian people.

Four months later, in Venice, this was enunciated as official EU policy - perhaps

Ireland's most formidable diplomatic achievement, and one from which we have been rowing back ever since.

In the course of outlining these events, Dr Miller falsifies history shamelessly. He claims that the refugee problem ensued after "the invasion of Israel by the combined [Arab] armies on 15 May 1948", but omits to mention that the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians had begun long before the invasion took place.

He states as "fact" the Zionist claim, accepted by nobody else, that "the absence of the definite article 'the' from the official English drafting of [UN Security Council resolution 242] was an acknowledgment...that... Israel would not have to return to [pre-1967] borders..."

He fails to mention that 242 emphasises "the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force".

He asserts that "The war occurred because Israel (correctly) believed that the various Arab states... were preparing to mount a final offensive against the Jewish state."

But he fails to cite such statements as this by Menachem Begin (Israeli prime minister from 1977-84): "The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him."

Such honesty is foreign to Dr Miller.

Most unpardonable of all is his attempt to exculpate Israel for the Sabra and Chatila massacres in 1982: these, he tells us, "were carried out by Lebanese Christians rather than the Israeli army." He refers to Ariel Sharon's "alleged role in the massacre while he was Israeli Minister of Defence..." (my emphasis).

There is no mention of Israel's official Kahan Commission of February 1983 which found that Israel "had indirect responsibility" for the massacre, that Sharon was "responsible for ignoring the danger of bloodshed and revenge when he approved the entry of the [Christian] Phalangists into the camps", and which forced his resignation.

Dr Miller ends with the claim that Ireland's supposed loyalty to Arafat "threatens to tarnish Ireland's reputation among a younger generation of Palestinian leaders."

Of course such leaders have long since given up on Ireland, because of our abandonment of an independent foreign policy within the context of increasing EU support for Israel.

In the guise of writing Irish history, Dr Miller has put his pen at the service of ethnic cleansing.

Raymond Deane is a founder and current chairperson of the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign

FILM

Looking for a way to fight a sick system

The edukators

Reviewed by Rory Hearne

The opening scene of this excellent new film, *The edukators*, is a protest against sweatshops.

One of the protestors along with her boy friend and his flat-mate break into rich peoples houses and pile the furniture in the middle of the floor, disturb the contents (putting the stereo in the fridge, porcelain down the toilet), but don't steal anything, just leaving a note - 'you have too much money' or 'your days of plenty are numbered'.

The twist comes when they panic and take a businessman hostage who happens to be a veteran of the '68' movement.

The script of the film is infused with debates over capitalism, globalisation, the impact of protests and whether movements of revolution still exist today or not.

Beautiful scenery, a romantic twist and revolution all intertwine.



Beautiful scenery, a romantic twist and revolution all intertwine.

This film clearly shows the reach of anti-capitalist ideas. It is a must see.

Unfortunately it does not

offer a way to fight capitalism. That's why socialists should be there to leaflet the film afterwards.

Check out the film's great website

<http://www.theedukators.com/>

ARTS NEWS

Western Writers Centre left out in the cold

The Galway-based Western Writers' Centre (Ionad Scríbhneoirí Chaitl na Maude) recently lost its second appeal against refusal of grant-aid by The Arts Council.

The Centre has been refused Council aid no fewer than six times in a row, once for the cost of a single office computer, giving rise to a strong belief, not only locally, that the Arts Council's refusals amount to considered strategy-policy.

"I have seen documents made available under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act and pertinent to our last application," says the Centre's founder-Manager, writer and critic Fred

Johnston; "and it is clear that the Council are concerned about our relationship with the newly-begun literary aims of Galway Arts Centre, whom they will fund, in 2005, to the tune of €330,000."

This issue, he states, was raised again recently on RTE's 'Rattlebag' arts programme, when he quoted from the documents to Mary Cloake, Director of the Arts Council.

But Fred Johnston is eager to emphasise that the Western Writers' Centre have made every effort to work with Galway Arts Centre, but have been rebuffed.

The Arts Centre runs the annual Cuirt Festival of Literature, which Johnston

founded in 1986.

Yet the Western Writers' Centre has never been invited to assist at or contribute to the festival.

"The Arts Centre does a good job, but this sort of thing is made possible because of the Arts Council's not funding us. It's about control. It's about starving us out of existence."

Johnston points to what he terms an 'Orwellian' item in the documents obtained under the FOI Act, where an assessment from the Council states: "... the organisation (the Western Writers' Centre) has not shown an openness to developing a positive relationship with the Arts Council and consequently any

relationship would not be on a sound base."

"That's an ominous and loaded comment, in my view. What is really being said? Good boys get funded - cheeky boys don't. I don't like the feel of that statement.

It sounds like a State directive. Has the relevant Minister, John O'Donoghue, anything to say about such statements?"

The Western Writers' Centre is concentrating meanwhile on launching its upcoming programme of new courses and visits by writers, including Peter Sirt and Evelyn Conlon.

International Socialism 106
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Campaigning for a real alternative

Socialist Environmental Alliance stands five candidates in Derry's local elections

The Socialist Environmental Alliance is standing five candidates in Derry's local elections. Socialist Worker spoke to each of them about some of the issues that have come up.

**Waterside:
Davy McAuley**



Davy McAuley - "for common interests of working people"

Davy McAuley (30) is standing in the Waterside where he grew up. To him the SEA has been the most positive force for radical change in the Derry area in recent years. On the airport, the rail link, council pay, water charges, etc., the SEA has led the way.

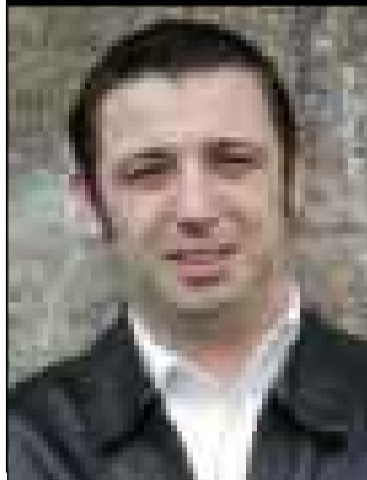
"All the other parties offer more of the same—selling-off public services, acceptance of water charges, poor wages, property developers destroying our environment. The rest are happy to manage capitalism and, whatever their rhetoric, they all accept the logic of neo-liberalism.

"We challenge the agenda which puts profit before all else. We stand for the common interests of working people. What unites people in the SEA most is the certainty that this is the only way to resolve the endless stalemate of communal politics.

"One of the issues I have raised is the fact that emergency contraception is not available at Altanagelvin hospital's A & E. This is a class issue. You can buy the morning-after pill over the counter if you have £24. But that's almost half the benefit of a single person and quarter of what a lone parent with one child would get on benefit.

"In Belfast, Antrim, or Craigavon, any woman can get the morning after pill free in a hospital. But Altanagelvin allows its policy to be dictated to it by an unholy alliance of fundamentalist consultants, Catholic and Protestant."

**Cityside:
Liam Friel**



Liam Friel - "Poverty wages"

Liam Friel (28) is a low paid civil servant who took industrial action for better pay last year and is NIPSA Branch Chair. From Creggan, Liam is standing in the Cityside ward. He is particularly angry at the way the four parties currently on the Council treat its workforce.

"Most Council workers are on poverty wages. Council Officers are paid inflated salaries, however most Council manual workers average around £10,000 a year gross for their basic wage. While binmen get a 33% bonus on top of that, their wages are still way below poverty levels for anyone with a family. But street cleaners get only a 12.5% bonus, bringing their weekly net wage to just over £200 a week.

"As if this wasn't bad enough, the Council recently took on twenty recycling workers on a New Deal-type scheme called KickStart. They are employed for 51 weeks only, as after 52 weeks they would start to have some rights. They work the same hours as regular Council employees. But they are paid the bare minimum wage and no bonus which means they take home about £165 a week. And that's for really hard work, outside in all weathers.

"I've been talking to Council workers and their union reps and they say there is not a cigarette paper between any of the parties when it comes to Council workers and not just on wages. All the parties united to attack workers off sick — some of them because of work injuries or the stress of their jobs — as malingerers. Again, all backed a decision to impose swingeing pay cuts for workers in the city's leisure centres.

**Northland:
Colm Bryce**



Colm Bryce - "demanding a radical re-ordering of priorities, nationally and internationally"

Colm Bryce (39) is standing in Northland ward, where the SEA has two candidates. He says "A frequent argument in relation to our proposals is that the money isn't there. Health and Education boards are faced with Treasury demands for 2.5 percent cuts across the board. So how can they find the money for the improvements we demand?"

"There's plenty of money, plenty for bombs to flatten Fallujah, but not to pay speech and language therapists, badly needed by children in Derry. Plenty for the Euro-fighter and the Trident submarine, but empty coffers when we look for facilities for our young people.

"This is the link between the immediate issues we campaign on and the global issues in which we are also involved. Unless we make that link, we can't carry the argument for more resources forward.

"The SEA will be at Gleneagles in Scotland in July with the Make Poverty History demonstration at the meeting of the major capitalist countries, the G8. We'll be with fellow campaigners from across the world demanding a radical re-ordering of priorities, nationally and internationally."

**Northland:
Oisín Kehoe**



Oisín Kehoe - "government wants us to turn in on each other"

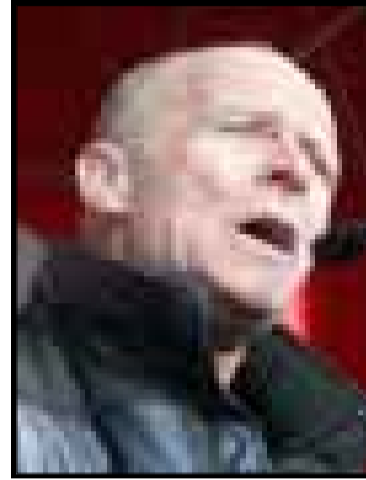
Oisín Kehoe (28), who is also standing in the Northland ward, says it is easy to link local issues to global ones. For example, he says, there is now a shortage of nursery school places as a result of cuts. Because of government policy, some parents are pointing the finger at parents on benefit.

Oisín points out that "People on benefits also want to get the best start they can for their children. They are not the cause of the shortage of nursery places. The government wants us to turn in on each other, thus avoiding the blame themselves. It suits the government to blame vulnerable sections of our society such as immigrants, travellers and those on benefits.

Oisín, who works in a school, pointed out in the local press that £400 million of tax money paid by working people will be spent by the British government on the Iraq war this year. But it is children's books and not bombs that people wanted their money spent on.

As he says "Last month councillors walked out of education board meetings in protest at proposed education cuts. Once the election is over, they are likely to take up these posts again and administer the cuts. We cannot rely on politicians. The SEA will work with parents, pupils, teachers and school workers to organise protests and strike action against the cuts the only action the government cannot ignore."

**Waterside Rural:
Eamonn McCann**



Eamonn McCann - "the main parties are at one in bowing down before big business"

Eamonn McCann (62) is standing in Waterside Rural. He says "I want to highlight the issue of the Ryanair runway. Ryanair demand that the Council evict 17 families and demolish their homes, to build a longer runway. All parties on the Council have supported this 'clearance' demand.

"A House of Commons report showed that the figures the Council and airport management have been working on are heavily dependent on the establishment of additional services by Ryanair. In other words, it's the business plans of Ryanair, not the economic development of the Derry area, which is dictating what happens at the airport.

"The airport issue illustrates the way the main parties, behind all the usual argy-bargy, are at one in bowing down before big business. The fact that there has been no meaningful debate on any of these matters at council level shows the dire need for new blood on the council after May 5th. We need representation for parties which put real issues at the forefront and not the name of the city or whose turn it is to be mayor.

"SEA councillors would move at their first council meeting to have a speedy review of the entire airport operation, and a real debate on whether a far higher priority should be put on modernising our rail link, rather than providing Ryanair with a publicly-funded facility which would definitely be of benefit to them but of very dubious benefit to local people."

WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

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.

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NORTHERN ELECTIONS: WHY YOU SHOULD VOTE SOCIALIST

By Eamonn McCann
Socialist Environmental
Alliance candidate in local
and Westminster elections

The SEA had intended to contest the local elections only. We do not really have the resources to fight a Westminster constituency, too.

But the stale and depressing nature of exchanges between the mainstream parties emphasised the need for a radically different agenda to be put forward.

The contest so far has not been so much an election as two parallel polls, one for Catholics, one for Protestants. Sinn Fein is asking voters to deliver the killer blow to the SDLP and confirm themselves as the sole authentic voice of nationalism in the North. The SDLP's main thrust is to counter this argument. The basic difference between the parties concerns which of them will give the more forceful representation to one community vis-à-vis the other.

The main point for the DUP and Ulster Unionists is which of them will have more right on the day after the poll to speak for the separate interests of Protestant/Unionist community.

Those at the bottom left behind

This pattern of politics leaves people who do not fit into either category completely out of the picture. It also means that issues which do not fit into the Orange-Green template are given a low priority, if they get a look-in at all. On both sides, those at the bottom of the pile are left behind.

This pattern also makes it certain that as soon as the election is over we'll be back to stalemate. A vote for any of the main parties is a vote for more of the same - for stalemate and stagnation.

Meanwhile, we are told that the North is booming. It's booming alright - for the few. There are desperate problems of poverty, especially child poverty, across the North with half of all children living in poverty.

Child poverty is particularly bad in Derry's Shantallow, Creggan and Brandywell, where over 90 per cent of children live in poverty. But no remedy for these problems can be found in trying to advance one community in comparison



with the other.

In the overwhelmingly nationalist debate in Derry, there is little mention of the fact that the statistics also show Victoria and Caw (Newbuildings, Nelson Drive) are catching up fast in the poverty stakes.

The main causes of child poverty are inadequate benefits, low wages and poor public services.

Privatisation

Privatisation and contracting-out cuts jobs and drives wages down. And both destroy our public services. Lack of publicly-funded child care means that lone parents in particular are excluded from jobs. Council workers' pay is being driven down, through cut-backs supported by all the main parties.

These causes of poverty cannot be dealt with by pushing one community's interests forward. Increasing benefit levels and defending wage rates can not be

achieved in one community only.

It would be wrong to say that the main parties are responsible for the fact that poverty is rife across the North. But it would be right to say that they have no policies for dealing with the situation.

Behind the scenes they all operate as local managers of capitalism. And they do not even do that very effectively, being focused 24/7 not on any grand plan but on wrong-footing their rivals within their particular community.

Water charges make the point

All the mainstream parties say they oppose water charges and privatisation. But all are equally opposed to a campaign of non-payment—the only strategy with a realistic hope of defeating New Labour's plan.

The main reason for the reluctance to back non-payment is that it is impossible to fit a campaign of this sort into Orange-Green politics. You can not mobilise

against the charges in one community only. Water charges and privatisation will be defeated through a campaign which transcends the divide or they will not be defeated at all.

Building a serious non-payment campaign would do more to break down sectarian divisions than any other single idea or development on offer. But parties which are based on representing one community and not the other would be directly threatened by a campaign which mobilised people on a basis which has nothing whatever to do with what community they come from.

This is why they all claim to be against water charges but are unanimous in opposing a non-payment campaign.

The SEA is in favour of non-payment for the exact reasons the mainstream parties are against it. This is the difference in a nutshell.

Vote Eamonn McCann, SEA in Foyle Westminster election