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# Socialist Worker

## No to cuts in services and jobs

# GIVE COWEN THE SNIP



THE GOVERNMENT wants to cut €5 billion in public services. The new report to be published this week is designed to terrify people into accepting major cuts in our public services.

FF and the Greens want to cut €1.5bn in Social Welfare payments. Mary Hanafin, minister for Social Welfare said Child Benefit would be targeted – she confirmed that it would either be taxed or means-tested. Rent allowance will also be cut again.

Once again it is the most vulnerable who are facing attacks.

FF and the Greens also want to cut 20,000 jobs in the public sector. The bulk of these cuts won't be fat cat managers and bureaucrats but nurses and teachers in already failing public services.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Ireland already has a disproportionately small and underfunded public sector. After these cuts, our public services could collapse.

The government want to force workers

to maintain the same level of service with fewer hands. These cuts are on top of the wage cuts and levies announced earlier this year that included cutting the xmas welfare bonus payment.

The Government also wants to re-introduce third level fees. Whereas children of the rich can pay in advance and get a reduction, workers will be forced to take out loans of over €20,000.

All the fake disagreements during the election between FF and FG have disappeared now that they are all attacking workers and our public services.

### Proposals you won't see from the Government:

■Nationalise our natural resources. €350 Billion in resources were handed over for nothing by FF to local tycoons like Tony O'Reilly and the global oil companies. We say TAKE THEM BACK!

■Tax the rich. Far from Ireland's bosses feeling the squeeze, they are cash rich.

According to boss-friendly organisation, ICC Information, Irish companies have more than €37.5 Billion cash assets on their balance sheets.

■Scrap the two-tier health system. We could have a more efficient and higher quality health service if we abolished private medicine. Stop subsidising private health insurance and big pharmaceutical companies.

■Invest in clean energy – Ireland has the best wind and wave resources in Europe. We could save €6 Billion every year by converting the ESB from buying oil to using renewables.

The bosses' solution is to turn Ireland back into a low wage economy. Only people power will make this government stop. The ICTU and the union leaders need to follow the example of the electricians strike. We need an Autumn of protest to kick Cowen and his government out.

## OPINION

## New Criminal Justice Bill further attack on civil liberties



By MADELEINE JOHANSSON

THE NEW Criminal Justice (Amendment) Bill passed by the Dail on the 10<sup>th</sup> July is another attack on civil liberties by the Fianna Fail/Green government.

The Bill, designed to crack down on gangland crime, was supported not only by the government parties but also by Fine Gael and a few independents (although not newly elected Maureen O'Sullivan).

The new laws include the abolition of jury trials for certain offences, provision for secret hearings and the use of garda 'opinion evidence' regarding involvement in criminal gangs.

The proposal of the Minister for Justice Dermot Ahern to transfer gangland trials to the non-jury Special Criminal Court where cases would be heard and tried without a jury is a severe attack on our civil rights.

The right to trial by jury is written into the Irish Constitution, and lawyers opposed to the Bill claim that this could even be a case for the European Courts of Human Rights.

The new legislation also gives the right to conviction regarding involvement in criminal gangs based on opinion evidence by a garda of any rank.

This means that someone could be convicted to a jail sentence without evidence—only an opinion!

In addition, secret hearings may be conducted when seeking an extension to detention. These hearings can be made in the absence of the detainee and without his/her lawyer or even a prosecution lawyer or a judge's clerk.

These new laws look frighteningly like something from a dystopian police state.

The government claims that the new legislation is needed for the protection of jurors and witnesses, while laws already exist concerning those issues.

When a criminal gang is defined in the Bill as 'a group of at least three people whose main purpose or activity is serious crime' there is a huge danger of the legislation being used for other purposes than gangland crime.

A letter of criticism of the Bill was written and signed by over 130 defence and prosecution lawyers voicing concern over the legislation and calling for the bill to be withdrawn.

The Irish Council for Civil Liberties also accused Minister Dermot Ahern of abusing the Dail by pushing through the amendment in only two Dail sittings leaving no time for debate on the issues addressed.

Though it is good to see workers in the justice system speaking out against these dubious laws, there has not been any discussion as to the causes of crime in society.

Looking at areas where gangland crime is prominent you find that they are often very disadvantaged areas.

High crime rates are linked to poor housing and poor community facilities, high unemployment and drug abuse.

With community funding being severely cut in the last budget this government has made clear its intention to tackle effects without any intention of curing, or even finding, the cause.

Slashing funding to drug rehabilitation schemes is particularly hypocritical considering that most gangland crime is drug related.

When a fifth of all prisoners in Britain are in jail for defaulting on fines and 75% are manual workers, it seems that being poor is one of the main reasons for imprisonment and involvement in crime. The same holds for Ireland.

The solution to criminal behaviour is not tougher laws, what is needed is a different, more equal society where the needs of people come before the profits of the rich.

# Pride becomes politicised

By ORLA GALLAGHER

THIS YEAR'S LGBTQ Pride parade, with 12,000 people taking part, and with it's first ever lesbian Grand Marshall (activist Ailbhe Smyth), was as colourful, diverse and celebratory as any there's ever been in Ireland – but this time, it has taken place in a tangibly more politicized atmosphere.

The theme of this year's parade was "Pride and Prejudice", (with the invitation to wear half a wedding suit or dress, representing the half-measures given by the Civil Partnership Bill), but it was at the end rally that people expressed their anger at the bill, when it was symbolically ripped up by members of LGBT Noise to cheers and applause.

The Civil Partnership Bill, is essentially a special set of rules differentiating, and therefore designating as inferior, gay peoples' right to commit to a relationship.

Whether or not you believe



in the institution of marriage, this kind of apartheid is clearly not fair.

The bill does not give the

right to marry; it offers no protection to the children of LGBTQ couples.

Bigots like Brenda Power

of the Sunday Times seek to paint themselves as the protector of children.

She attacks, in the most

homophobic way, the fitness of gay people to bring up children.

Heterosexual people are never scrutinised in this way.

There are many studies which support the fact that there is no difference in the well being of children raised by gay and straight couples.

Power worries that LGBTQ peoples' children will not 'fit in'; the problem for her is not society's prejudices, but people who live in families different from those imagined by conservatives to be 'normal'.

A survey carried out by MarriagEquality found that the majority, (61%) of people feel gay people should be allowed to marry (not that we should have to ask in the first place!!), and indicates that this is the time for everyone, straight people included to get out and protest this inequality.

The next protest will be on August 9th, called by LGBTQ Noise.

## Protest wins respite for Children's Hospital

THE BOARD of Our Lady's Children's Hospital, Crumlin, has announced that the planned cuts in ward's theatres etc are off the agenda, other avenue's would be sought to meet the €9.6 million cut's demanded by the HSE.

While welcoming this news the Save Our Children's Hospital Campaign cautioned that the cuts could continue in a few months time and called on the HSE to fund the €9.6 million and reverse the cuts to date which include the closure of St Josephs ward, with the loss of 25 beds and reopen the theatre that has been closed down.

A motion in the DAIL calling for the €9.6 million to be allocated to our National Children's Hospital, was tabled and defeated by 9 votes. Fianna Fail and the Greens put their political careers ahead of the lives of the children of our nation.

Clr Joan Collins, People Before Profit Alliance, said, "€104 million was spent last year on the National Purchase Treatment Fund to private hospitals and public/private surgeons, when these operations could have been done for much less in our public hospitals.

Rather than fund our public hospitals the Governments answer to the crises in our health service is to line the pockets of private hospitals and consultants.

The government has called a second Lisbon Treaty referendum for October.

This referendum will cost millions, millions that could be used to save the Children's Hospital.

The Irish people have already said NO to LISBON, to call a second referendum for a treaty that is the same as the one we already voted on, is to deny us our democratic right to say NO. This government does not listen to the people."



Photo: Paula Geraghty

## Protest stops closure of Cherryorchard care unit

THE PROTESTS by patients and their families organised by Councillor Brid Smith were successful in stopping the closure of the Beech respite unit in Cherryorchard hospital.

Carers and their loved ones who receive roll-over respite care in Cherryorchard Hospital collected over 7000 petitions to stop the closure of the unit.

The management at

the hospital wanted to close the unit for the Summer months. However, they could not give any guarantees as to when it would reopen.

Last year the carers also campaigned with Brid Smith to stop the permanent closure of respite care services. Following that campaign the Beech unit at the hospital was renovated and extended.

Cherryorchard management wanted all roll-over patients to receive respite care in private nursing homes. There was no guarantee that these homes would be located locally.

The knock-on effect of the closure of the Beech unit would have meant longer waiting periods for families whose loved ones needed permanent respite beds in the hospital.

But Councillor Smith says, "This shows what people power can achieve. Protests, petitions and occupying the HSE headquarters showed them we meant business. This is the second time we stopped them closing the unit. We need more resources put into the health service not less, if they can find money to bail out bankers then they can find money to bail out our health service."

## Revolution on film

THE WATERFORD Council of Trade Unions has invited writer/director John Sayles to introduce his film 'Matewan' at a special screening organised by the WCTU on Thursday 15th October in Waterford.

John Sayles is known as the Godfather of independent films for his refusal to succumb to the Hollywood studio system. His films examine the

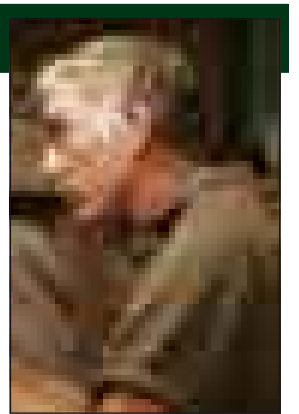
moral and physical corruption of a society that worships naked greed over equality, fraternity and liberty.

'Matewan' is based on the true story of the Battle of Matewan where workers from the Stone Mountain Coal Company fought with hired mercenaries from the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency.

The attempts to prevent

the workers from joining the IWW union resulted in a pitched battle on the streets of Matewan, West Virginia on May 19th 1920, which resulted in ten deaths including the mayor of the town.

It focuses on the rank and file experience of the 1920 strike with the intention of inspiring similar solidarity and courage among the working class today.



John Sayles

# 4.9% pay increase: Electricians show how to fight

THE WEEK long strike by electricians showed how workers can respond to the crisis. Instead of workers shouldering the burden of the economic crisis with a 10% pay cut, as the construction bosses wanted, electricians instead won a 5% pay increase.

The workers were balloting on the proposal as Socialist Worker went to press.

The mantra from the government, the bosses and the media over the last year is that we all have to take some pain. The reality is different. The construction bosses were charging for pay increases they didn't pass on to their workers for the last two years. Now that there is a crisis they immediately turn to cutting workers pay instead of their own profits.

When the building boom collapsed, all of the employers launched attacks on sick pay schemes; pension provision, travel time and subsistence



allowances.

The same is true in other industries. It's time our union leaders got off their asses and started fighting

like the TEEU. The government wants to slash public services and wages even more in the coming year. We have to stop them.

The electricians strike has already demonstrated that talk about how unions cannot fight in a recession is just plain wrong.

The strength of the TEEU pickets and the tremendous solidarity that they received forced the employers to go to the Labour Court to look for a settlement. Bosses will try to undermine the 'analogue' agreements that link different trades pay. They will also try to drag their feet on paying wage increases that are owed for two over years.

The bosses have no answer to the economic crisis. Cutting wages just means people have less money to buy goods and therefore deepens the crisis. Ireland's boss class want to get back to a low wage economy while keeping their own wealth intact.

The TEEU strike showed what determined action can do. The ICTU should listen to its members and call a one day national strike and send this government packing. We need an Autumn of discontent to get rid of this Government.

## Refuse workers: 8 weeks on strike

By JONNY CLONO

A STRIKE by 40 workers employed by Mr Binman, a waste collection company, in Carrick-on-Suir is entering its eighth week.

The strike began in May over wage cuts of up to 40%, as well as attacks on working conditions and the refusal of the company to recognise the workers union SIPTU.

Mr Binman is owned by 69 year old Martin Sheehan. Sheehan made his fortune in the building boom with his machine contracting business and building land reclamation across Munster and the south east.

He entered the waste disposal industry in the 1990s when Limerick City contracted out their waste collection service.

Sheehan has spent €100 million over the last 10 years buying out rivals and is soon



to become the second largest waste operator in the country.

His latest project is a €30 million development of his new 18 acre facility at Toynes Port on the Shannon. The attacks on his already low paid workers' wages and conditions is to pay for these

projects.

Sheehan recently stated that he "employs non-nationals to keep mannes on the Paddies" exposes a ruthless exploitation and use of racism.

Both Irish and 'non-national' workers have joined the union and are standing

side by side on the picket line.

The Waterford branch of the UNITE union has donated €4000 to the strike fund. Tommy Hogan, president of the Waterford Council of Trade Unions said the WCTU will work with the Limerick Trades Council to picket the Mr Binman headquarters in Limerick.

Many companies are using the crisis as an excuse to attack workers wages and conditions, but the electricians have shown we can resist them.

A rally in Carrick-on-Suir last week mobilised public support for the strike. There will be another protest in Waterford on the 18th July at 3pm.

Donations and messages of support to: Mr Binman strike fund, c/o Davy Lane, SIPTU, Connolly Hall, Summerhill, Waterford.

## Cleaners tell Gormley to clean up his act

THIRTEEN CLEANERS working in the Department of the Environment offices in the Custom House for the last six years are on strike since July 1st because they were unfairly sacked by their employer, Schorman Cleaning.

Schorman Cleaning refused to accept their responsibility under the Transfer of Undertakings (Tupe) regulations that state when a new company takes over an existing contract they must offer the work to the current workers first. Breda, one of the cleaners said, "We received a letter from Schorman Cleaning on May 28, 2009, welcoming us into the company, admitting their responsibility to them as the current workforce. they even got new badges made up for us".

"But on June 22

Schorman told us that the company had reconsidered and would not be taking us on. They said there would be no TUPE transfer and that we were out of a job".

"Schorman has brought in its own team of workers to carry out cleaning in the Custom House. They have reduced workers' hours from four hours to about two and a half hours per day".

"We have been left with no option but to go on strike".

It is outrageous that a Government Department can stand over such a flagrant breach of the laws of the country. Even more so when the Minister is John Gormley, a politician who claims to be about progressive policies.

The Department of the Environment can tell the company to re-hire the workers immediately or face losing the contract.

## Port workers on strike

WORKERS AT Marine Terminals Ltd (MTL), the main container operator at Dublin Port, are on strike over management attempts to impose compulsory redundancies and cuts in pay and conditions on the workforce.

In May MTL cut 19 jobs. The company then wrote to the remaining workforce threatening to sack them if they did not accept new wages and conditions.

The 13 workers who have been made compulsorily redundant in May got an average severance payment of €37,000, despite claims from MTL of payments of over €75,000.

MTL is owned by The Mersey Docks & Harbour Co, now Peel Ports Group, and had enough money to recently complete a €25million refit operation

in Dublin Port.

The strike is also about respecting the right of workers to be represented by their trade union SIPTU.

The dockers are continuing their pickets despite MTL getting an injunction "to prevent striking dock workers disrupting the smooth operation of the Port of Dublin."

## Shell and State push through pipeline

THE IRISH Government, that includes the disgraced Greens, mobilised 300 Gardaí, two Navy vessels, 20 security and gardai boats and helicopters to protect Shell's pipelaying ship, the Solitaire, during its operations in Rosport over the last month.

During that period one of the protest organisers, fisherman Pat O'Donnell, was held at gunpoint when his boat was boarded by masked men and

sunk. His fishing equipment was also destroyed during the laying of the pipeline.

The Government has spent tens of millions to push through Shell's pipeline.

This is on top of an extraordinary deal FF gave the Energy multinationals under Ray Burke and Bertie Ahern. A deal that means the Irish people gain nothing from the natural resources off our coast.

Attention is now turning to the onshore section of the pipeline which will run from Broadhaven Bay for 9km to the refinery under construction at Bellenaboy. Shell have yet to be granted planning permission, although a decision is expected soon. Granting permission would open the way for drilling and construction work across pristine river estuary, peat bogland and heavily contested farmland

and commonage.

Niall Harnett a protestor in Rosport said "We are also acting in protest against the theft of Ireland's natural resources. At a time when unemployment levels are set to reach record numbers and the government attacks ordinary people with levies taxes and pay cuts it is obscene that Shell are allowed to steal billions of euro's of our resources."

## Bin Tax Camapign wins important court victory

CLLR RICHARD Boyd Barrett of the People Before Profit Alliance (PBPA) welcomed the district court decision on Friday to strike out two cases taken by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co. Council (DLRCOCO) against local residents for non-payment of bin tax. The Judge also awarded costs against DLRCOCO.

Over recent months debt collectors and solicitors acting for DLRCOCO had stepped up a campaign of harassment and threats against thousands of residents with bin tax arrears.

However, PBPA, who oppose bin tax as an unjust tax that penalises the less well-off, have also maintained that the Council had no legal claim on the arrears of non-payers because the bin tax failed to comply with the "polluter pays" principle as set out in national and European legislation.

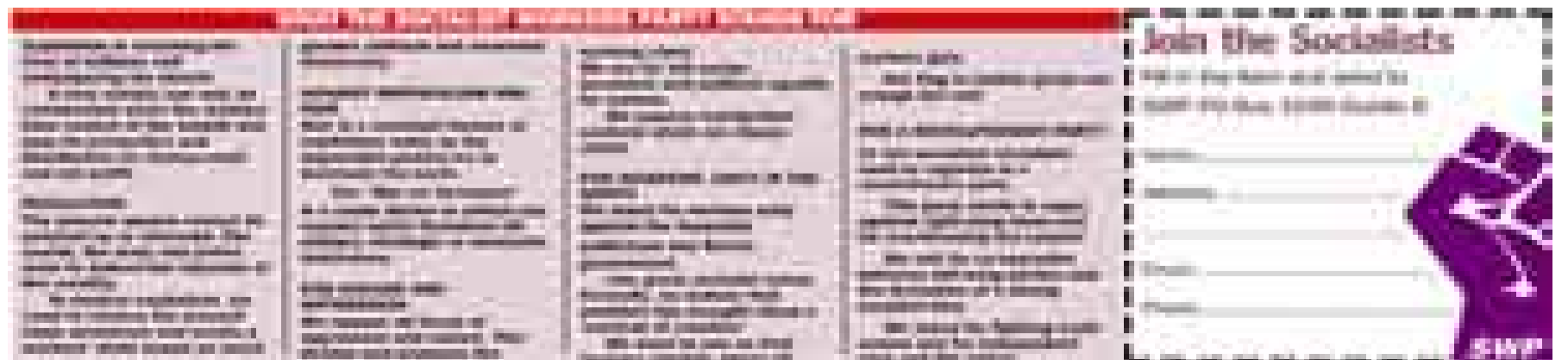
Further cases are due before the Courts later this month and a test case is pending in the supreme court later this year to adjudicate on the legality of bin charges.

Cllr Richard Boyd Barrett of PBPA said, "Households had to put up with disgraceful bullying by the Council and debt collectors over the last year or so.

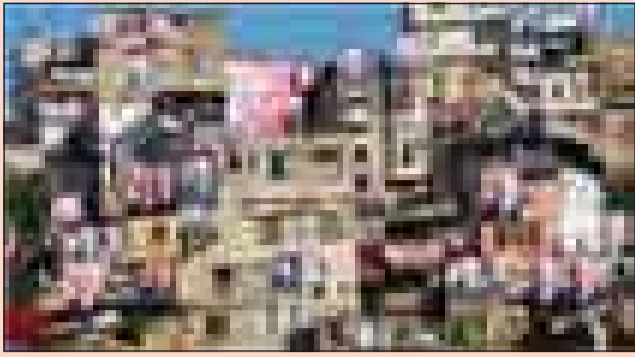
The Council and their solicitors failed to show-up in court because they knew they would lose. We intend to provide legal representation to anyone else who is summonsed in this area over bin taxes.

One of the first things I did on being elected was to meet the County Manager, Owen Keegan, and put it to him that the Council and debt collectors should cease their harassment and threats of legal action against non-payers.

The Council should save court time, public money and stress for householders by halting any further legal action over bin taxes."



## COMMENT



## US petro-dollars shape Lebanese Election

By DR ABDULLAH, IRISH Anti-War Movement Steering Committee

LEBANON WENT to the polls amid Western fears that Hizbullah might gain power. The new American administration expressed their worries by sending the American vice president to visit Beirut and meet the pro-West candidates in an atmosphere of blatant interference in Lebanese affairs.

According to the *New York Times*, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states pumped millions of petrodollars into Lebanon to boost their allies.

Magazines like Germany's *Der Spiegel* also tried to influence the election outcome by accusing Hizbullah of being involved in Al Hariri's assassination.

The election was fought by two main groups: the pro-West group of businessmen, right wing Lebanese Forces Party, and the Phalangists who both have a history of going along with Israeli policies in the area. This coalition is headed by Saad Al Hariri, head of Al Mustakbal Movement, the son of assassinated prime minister Rafiq Al Hariri (Lebanon's assassinated prime minister, and a tycoon close to the Saudi royal family).

The other group is a coalition of a wide range of parties led by Hizbullah and the Christian National Patriot Party. It includes several secular parties like Amal, Syrian Nationalist and Baath Party. These parties consist of a new generation of mostly middle class politicians attached to the idea of the right to resist Israeli aggression, for social justice, and for a non-corrupt government.

Lebanese society was divided along religious lines by the old imperial powers after WWI when it gained independence from Syria. The constitutional setup enshrines these divisions in the state institutions which haven't been updated since independence. The opposition coalition wanted to change this setup to a more democratic arrangement based on one person, one vote in a PR election.

What is missing in Lebanon is an election law that would ensure more democratic representation based on Lebanon as a single constituency with proportional representation. Instead, the people must accept what is called the 1960 law as a compromise, which allows the Christian voters to choose their representatives without a disturbing influence from the part of other religious blocs.

This means politics is dominated by religious sectarianism rather than by debates on social needs.

Some areas of Lebanon are so mixed that a small minority can inadvertently shape the outcome of the election. For instance, Hermael-Ballabak with 108,455 voters is a Shiite majority area entitled to 10 MPs but because of religious division two MPs of Maronite minority constituency are elected with only 13,066 votes for the winner.

Overall, this undemocratic setup resulted in the pro-West group gaining 693,973 votes and 71 seats while the pro-resistance group got 839,741 votes but only 57 seats.

In a show of openness to change, Hizbullah backed five candidates from smaller secular parties for seats in its party strongholds. They fought the elections as a referendum on the popular support for the Resistance. They stressed the question of mismanagement of the country and endemic corruption. They also highlighted Lebanon's role as an outpost for American policies in the Middle East, which seek to ferment sectarian tensions across the region.

The pro-West camp set out to buy the election using Saudi petrodollars. They also own most of the Lebanese TV stations and newspapers, which they used to raise fear of Hizbullah by saying that the pro-West Gulf states would not invest any more petrodollars in Lebanon if Hizbullah won, creating another Gaza in Lebanon.

Buying votes is not a new phenomena in Lebanon, but this time high prices were paid for votes or even not to vote in some areas. Some reports suggest the price reached US\$5000 per vote. Loaded chartered planes of Lebanese were flown home from abroad, all expenses paid. It is estimated that 100,000 Lebanese votes cost the pro-West factions around \$300 million dollars. Compared to 20,000 supporters who travelled to vote for the opposition, mostly self-financed.

Gerrymandering of addresses of mostly pro Al Hariri Sunni voters was used to shift the religious balance of areas in favour of the pro-West alliance.

All this exposes Obama, the US and their allies talk of 'spreading democracy' in the region. The next step depends on the new American administration and their allies in the region: how far they want to confront Hizbullah and the outcome of the 2006 war.

# Afghanistan, rebuilding the

*A. Khan has just returned to Ireland from the Swat Valley region of Pakistan. Here like the Taliban. Rather, the religious movements, who were previously funded by the*

PAKISTAN, SINCE its independence has always been in some kind of crisis. The lack of vision of its leaders and mounting corruption in all its institutions have resulted in a country in complete chaos.

But the current insurgency and militancy is fueled by a widening gap between rich and poor. Many poor people are used by the militants and given false hope of revenge on the rich.

The income gap between the different classes of society is beyond comprehension and without a socialist revolution the survival of Pakistan as sovereign country is not foreseeable.

Decades of injustice and farcical strategies of supporting extremists are now rebounding on the ruling class.

A few thousand guerrilla Taliban cannot reach and control the country's nuclear war-heads, but they can destabilize the state with ease and comfort.

The important aspect to note is that the majority of people living in the North West Frontier (the troubled province) are liberal and retain some independence from the religious extremists.

This is evident from the 2007 election, where despite fear of the Taliban, people went to polling stations and elected a highly liberal nationalist party. This party was viewed as infidels in the Cold War era just because of its red flag and nationalist approach.

The media, including the Pakistani state propaganda machines, are also involved in portraying a false picture of the area as barbarians and uncivilized people so that the state can get more funding from the EU and US.

However, the truth is very different. The NWF has fought invading armies from Alexander the Great to the British Empire, and won. This history of resistance and courage may portray them as warriors but the fact is that they never invaded any other country or state.

It is because of their geo-strategic location that they were always invaded and attacked.

Despite continuous conflicts and battles, they nourish their art and culture and they have produced some great musicians, sportsmen, philosophers and poets.

## A region scarred by Imperialism

THE INDEPENDENCE movement in British India reached its peak during the Second World War, when the British empire was engaged in Europe for its own territorial survival.

In 1947, India was divided into two separate nations, Pakistan and India. In Pakistan, power was handed over to aristocrats and landlords who were loyal to the British Empire before independence.

Common people laid down their lives for freedom but when it came to the question of who would rule the country, the elite classes, with the cooperation of the army, formed Pakistan's first parliament.

Unfortunately, the rule of landlords and army has never changed in principal since independence.

Only the faces have changed from one political party to another, and from father to son. Hereditary politics with army marshal law is a curse which this beautiful and resourceful country has now endured for more than six decades.

The only time Pakistan saw a true socialist movement was in 1967, when labor unions and rural workers united and shut the whole country down.

This wave of militancy was capitalized on by Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who formed the Pakistan Peoples Party.

But a decade later when he was hanged by Marshall Law administrator, Mr. Zia Ul Haq, the whole party changed its politics 180 degrees and another revolution was betrayed.

The rulers of Pakistan always favored American policy. The Pakistan army was immensely funded



An Pushtan family in a refugee camp

by the US to curb any leftist movement and any uprising against the ruling class of Pakistan. Thousands of people sacrificed their lives for socialist movements – many disappeared, were exiled, or extra-judicially murdered. Poets and literary Marxists were sent behind bars for decades.

In the 1960s, Pakistan became a member of various regional treaties against Soviet Russia, sending a clear message that the British empire was now succeeded by a new American imperialism.

## The US role in creating religious extremism

DURING THE Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s, the Pakistani army in collaboration with the CIA, did everything possible to turn the Afghan people against the USSR occupation, including transforming the whole region into a safe haven for fundamentalists.

Drugs mafias and war lords were given free hand to recruit young people and control the region with their own laws. In Peshawar, a famous city near the Afghan border, the US funded a university apparently for agriculture research, but was actually used to propagate extremists and fundamentalism.

Religion was used to distort common people's minds by preaching that people who believe in the Bible (such as those in the US) are your friends and they are here to support you against infidels (i.e. the Communists).

This strategy worked for a time, until the withdrawal of Russia from Afghanistan, but had deep repercussions on Pashton society (people living

in North West of Pakistan).

Local militias were only trained to fight and barbaric fundamentalist clan alliances and power structures were nurtured with US and Saudi Arabian support.

The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 1990s was a post-Afghan war phenomena, which triggered the extremist movement on the other side of border in Pakistan.

## Swat Valley: Corruption fuels support for religious resistance



THE SWAT valley is an example of where the corrupt government machinery was brought to its knees by few thousand organized fighters.

Far from being a hotbed of extremism, Swat is

# Pakistan and the US Empire

*It exposes the simplistic myths that the region is in the grip of 'dangerous extremists' and that the CIA and the West, gain support because of deep poverty and state corruption.*



famous as a tourist destination in Pakistan.

Swat valley merged into Pakistan in 1971 to avail of the benefits of a republic but they soon regretted this decision as the introduction of a pro-capitalist society totally changed their livelihood.

They were shocked and shattered by the level of corruption in the judicial and political system in Pakistan.

A steady fundamentalist resistance started in that region because law and order agencies were only interested in protecting the elite.

Resistance to this state violence and corruption was organized by religious groups whose politics are extremely right wing.

The people of Swat are now caught in the cross fire of the cruelty of an elite class and the brutality of foreign and local extremists.

The situation in semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is no different and lack of interests by Pakistani government in that region has resulted in an underdeveloped society where many people are still illiterate and health facilities are scarce.

For six decades the Pakistani government never gave FATA people their rights and was not interested in the development of the area.

FATA is still ruled under the atrocious Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) law, under which if a person commits a crime, the political agent (president of that area, a government official) can intern the whole family of the suspect behind bars until that person is released.

These kinds of laws are a disgrace to human beings in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Pakistani government is very proud of its army and nuclear weapons but its power to rule rests on horrendous laws.

## Baluchistan: An oppressed minority

BALUCHISTAN, ANOTHER province of Pakistan, is a rich province with natural resources and a population of only 7 million (Pakistan's population is 170 million).

Some of its natural resources include Oil, Natural Gas, Gold, Uranium, Coal, and Iron Ore. The coast of Gawader is on the Indian Ocean. Many people believe the reason the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan was to reach warm waters through this port.

This province is even poorer than Swat valley and has a sad history of deprivation. The total budget of Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, a small city in the centre of Pakistan, is more than this whole province receives.

Baluchistan's development is far behind any other province of Pakistan. Since independence in 1947, the people of Baluchistan peacefully protested their discrimination in the corridors of power but were never given a hearing.

An uprising in 1971 was suppressed by the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Army and many innocent people were sent to jail accused of involvement in the uprising.

The corrupt rulers of the province have never supported autonomy, against the wishes of the majority.

The Baluch Liberation Army (BLA) is now fighting the Pakistan army with more force and power and government writ is challenged everywhere. All websites and other communications of the BLA are banned and association with BLA is considered treason.

The situation is now changing: big players on the world stage are taking more interest. China has

built a major port in Gawader (Pakistan awarded the development of Gawader port contract to China in 2005, which was seen by the US as a huge blow but they couldn't do anything because of their dependence on Pakistan in Afghanistan).

This was the second setback to the US in the Indian Ocean region, as Sri Lanka had already given its sea port to China for development. Regional forces are worried. Dubai and Oman are scared of Gawader because they might lose business if this port is launched fully.

This is the real reason why Obama, the US and the EU want to wage their brutal war in the region. They want to make sure their empire remains top dog.

## WE SAY Afghanistan: Pull the troops out now

By MARNIE HOLBOROW

IN EUROPE and the US, more people are asking why there are troops in Afghanistan (and Pakistan). It costs Britain's £4.5bn a year. It will cost the US \$2.4 trillion, or nearly \$8,000 per person, over the next decade. Amid unemployment and cutbacks, these figures are an obscenity.

Within Afghanistan, support for the foreign troops is dwindling. Only 32% - down from 68% in 2005 - support the way the US is conducting the war.

### Surge

The number of civilian deaths vary from 6,300 to 23,600. On just one day in May this year, U.S. bombs killed 140 people. And there have been over 1100 coalition soldiers killed. More British soldiers have now been killed in Afghanistan than in Iraq.

Despite this, Western forces continue to support the invasion and occupation. By the end of the year, some 30,000 American soldiers will be added to the 32,000 already there. The White House also wants to give Pakistan nearly \$1.5 billion in 'aid', plus \$400 million in fresh military assistance.

Europe is also deeply involved. It is the first operation outside Europe carried out by a newly-expanded NATO. International Security Assistance Force troops working under NATO command has 61,000 personnel from 42 different countries, including Ireland. Ireland is offering its services, ominously, for "counter-intelligence" activities.

The effects of the occupation, bombing civilians and villages, have swelled support for the Taliban. The Taliban now is stronger than at any time since the invasion.

### Women Suffer

One of the main reasons given to combat the Taliban is their attacks on women's rights. Yet the UN says that conditions for women are little better now than under the Taliban.

Rangina Hamidi, a women's rights and peace activist in Kandahar said the ongoing conflict was the main cause of the rise in violence against women in the public and private spheres.

### Troops Out

NATO generals warn that the conflict will worsen this year. Resistance has driven the foreign occupiers out - first the West and then the Russians. Those who resist the invasion today - and the Taliban includes many who just want the occupation to end - have history on their side.

Ireland should offer no support to the NATO led troops. At home, we will see our politicians line up to force us to accept the Lisbon Treaty including its military provisions which draw us ever closer to NATO-EU cooperation. The bloody war in Afghanistan is what this kind of support means and we should have no truck with it.



Trade unionists protest the ouster of president Manuel Zelaya

## The coup in Honduras

By JULIEN MERCILLE

ON JUNE 28, a military coup in Honduras ousted Manuel Zelaya, the country's president. The world has condemned the coup almost unanimously but the US reaction has been more tepid.

Why did the Honduran military overthrow the elected civilian president? And why has Washington not taken a firmer stand against the coup?

What happened is a "recurrent story in Latin America," observes economist Mark Weisbrot, an experienced analyst of Latin American affairs. It is the result of a struggle between, "a reform president who is supported by labour unions and social organisations against a mafia-like, drug-ridden, corrupt political elite who is accustomed to choosing not only the supreme court and the Congress, but also the president."

An important point is that "the US has almost always sided with the elites."

Zelaya was elected in 2005. First he was not particularly radical, but then he started moving to the left. He got closer to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, from whom he accepted a favourable oil deal. Zelaya also implemented modest progressive policies on the domestic front, such as raising the minimum wage, which did not please the business community. And he linked up with the Venezuela-led Bolivarian Alternative for the America, a challenge to Washington's neoliberal policies in the region.

Those moves gained him support from campesino groups and some trade unions. But the traditional elite resent him; as does the military, which eventually removed him. Army Attorney Colonel, Herberth Bayardo Inestroza, declared after the coup: "It would be difficult for us [the military], with our training, to have a relationship with a leftist government. That's impossible."

There has been much speculation regarding the exact role of the US in the coup. Did Washington actively support it?

Did it oppose it?

Or is it something in between?

As of now, there's no evidence that the US organized the coup, although it may come out in time.

Nevertheless, Washington has some responsibility for making it "impossible" for the Honduran military to tolerate a "leftist

government."

There are strong links going back decades between the Honduran soldiers and Washington. Colonel Inestroza and coup leader and army chief General Romeo Vasquez were trained at Washington's infamous torture and counterinsurgency school, the School of the Americas (now renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation).

During the 1980s, the US used bases in Honduras to train and arm the Contras, Nicaraguan paramilitaries who committed atrocities in their war against Nicaragua's Sandinista government.

Today, the Honduran military is armed, trained, and advised by Washington, which maintains a base with 500 troops in the country.

American support makes it possible for the Honduran military to maintain a powerful position in their country's politics, no matter what the US role in the coup was.

Supporters of the coup have claimed that Zelaya was about to rewrite the Honduran constitution to allow him to extend his time in office. It is true that he was seeking to amend the constitution, but such changes would likely have involved making it more progressive, and evidence of his intentions to hold on to power is not clear.

But in any case, nobody can know what this constitutional reform would have entailed because the military blocked it; and concerns about moves to modify the constitution are no grounds to carry out a military coup.

Ongoing negotiations may lead to Zelaya returning to Honduras as president. But the problem is that the Honduran elite and the US could extract concessions from Zelaya as the price to pay to return. Those concessions would obviously benefit the elite and Washington's interests in the region.

This possible scenario has been referred to as the "Haiti Option," as happened in 1994 when Bill Clinton restored Jean-Bertrand Aristide after he was deposed by a coup, under the condition that Aristide would support, not roll back, IMF and World Bank structural adjustment policies.

In short, while the US may or may not be behind the coup, there appear to be reasons why the Obama administration may not want the coup to be completely reversed.



## Why we must vote No (again) to Lisbon

By SINEAD KENNEDY,  
Editor VoteNO.ie

WHEN DOES “No” mean no? The people of Europe have essentially rejected what is now the Lisbon Treaty three times, and yet, still, they keep making us vote again.

It was rejected first by the French, second by the Dutch (both in the EU Constitution form in 2005), and third by the Irish (in its present Lisbon Treaty form). Ireland only got a vote on Lisbon because its political elite could not wriggle out of a constitutional requirement to have a vote.

Now, in the vain hope that the *fourth* time will be the charm, the Irish are being made to vote on October 2nd on exactly the same Treaty. This is the second time that Ireland has been told to vote again on an EU treaty after rejecting it the first time.

One of the favoured arguments of the Yes camp during the previous referendum was that the Lisbon Treaty was really about strengthening EU democracy.

Yet, the behaviour of the government, the opposition parties, the EU elites and the media clearly show the lie in this argument. From the moment it became clear that the Irish people had rejected the Lisbon Treaty, their first thought was how to we get around this. Brian Cowen, shamefaced, took himself off to Brussels to apologise for the Irish vote and then spent the next year colluding with EU leaders on how to “sell” the Treaty to Irish voters a second time.

In a rare display of candour, EU Commissioner, Charlie McCreevy revealed the attitude of the European elites towards Irish voters: “When Irish people rejected the Lisbon Treaty a year ago, the initial reaction ranged from shock to horror to temper to vexation.”

But, he added, this fury later subsided because “I think all of the politicians of Europe would have known quite well that if a similar question had been put to their electorate in a referendum the answer in 95 per cent of countries would have been ‘No’ as well.”

Initially at least, Eamonn Gilmore, the Labour leader, pretended that he respected the Irish vote. In an interview just after the No vote he said: “I don’t think there’s any question of this Treaty being put a second time to the people... People have made a decision. The Lisbon Treaty cannot now be ratified. And I

think that the decision that has been made by the Irish people has got to be respected by everybody. Got to be respected by the Taoiseach, by the Government, by the other Member States, by the political leadership in Brussels.”

A lot, it appears, can change in twelve months. Gilmore and the Labour Party have joined the other mainstream parties in deciding that Irish democracy is not good enough for them and they now support the holding of a second referendum and are, again, calling for a Yes vote.

The reality of the situation is that politicians and the media have never gotten over the fact that they were beaten by a grassroots anti-treaty campaign. People voted against the treaty because it endorsed a militarised, neoliberal, and fundamentally anti-democratic vision for Europe.

To secure a Yes vote this time around, the government have spent the past year securing a series of meaningless legal guarantees, that guarantee little and are not, in fact, legal.

An editorial in *The Irish Times*, revealing their contempt for No voters, described them as “Lisbon for slow learners”.

However, what the political class and media are banking on this time around is that the fear factor will work. During the previous referendum, the predicted catastrophe for Ireland if people voted No didn’t work. But this time, given the extent of the economic crisis that has engulfed Ireland, they are hoping to play on people’s real fear and uncertainty. They are hoping that the economic crisis will do the job and shift people into voting Yes out of fear that Ireland might be cut loose from the EU and that the economy will collapse even further.

However, given the extent of the economic crisis it is more important than ever that we vote No to Lisbon a second time. The current crisis is the direct result of a neoliberal economic agenda whose policies this Treaty will enshrine.

Instead, what we need to do now is to fundamentally rethink the free-market fundamentalist direction in which the EU has been driven. We need to build a different type of Europe, one that puts the interests of people before those of profit and big business.

**An upsurge of workers militancy in support of the resistance during the war of independence led to a wave of workplace occupations across Ireland that pushed the limits of the revolution and demanded more radical democracy.**

**The largest of over a hundred ‘soviets’ was in Limerick. On Sunday 13 April 1919, the Limerick Trades Council declared the town to be under the control of the ‘Limerick Soviet’. Here, Conor Costick, author of *Revolution in Ireland* tells what happened.**

# The Limerick Soviet



Members of the Limerick Soviet

THE BRITISH military, in an attempt to combat IRA activity, declared Limerick city and part of the county a special military area. They insisted that everyone apply for a pass from the police, the RIC. They also levied extra rates.

The local trades council took the unanimous decision to call a general strike in response. They immediately set up committees to take charge of propaganda, finance, food and vigilance.

The workers’ response was immediate and overwhelmingly supportive. Soon, water, gas and electricity supply was under the control of the committee, who were quickly referred to as the ‘Soviet’, copying the name of the new workers’ government in Russia.

Work was allowed to take place at bacon and condensed milk factories, but the bakers and Cleaves’ creamery workers walked out anyway to join what was becoming a carnival atmosphere.

In all, 14,000 workers were on strike. Large crowds gathered throughout the city to discuss events.

The local RIC telephoned Dublin for 300 reinforcements but were told this was impossible as ‘there are so many strikes going on elsewhere.’

Restoring ‘order’ was the RIC concern. During the two weeks of the Soviet no looting took place, nor did a single case of theft arise in the courts.

The first priority for the Soviet was to secure food supplies for the city’s 38,000 inhabitants. The British tried to create a panic over food scarcity. The strike leaders responded by asking the bakers to resume work, and fresh bread was thereafter made available in the mornings.

A few delegated shops were given permission to open and sell foodstuffs, but only at prices set

by the soviet. These prices were put on posters and placed around the town.

More radically still, the soviet decided to expropriate seven thousand tons of Canadian grain that was at the docks. They also organised food from farms outside the town. Workers also smuggled food into the city past the military with relays of boats and even in a funeral hearse.

The committee took charge of transport in the city. Large crowds of strikers ordered any vehicle that was travelling without permission of the Soviet off the streets.

Through its sub-committee of four city councillors, thousands of permits were issued to doctors, tourists, merchants and others.

As money began to fall into short supply, the Soviet printed and issued its own currency, which came out in one, five and ten shilling notes. A list of shopkeepers and merchants who would accept the new currency was posted.

The Soviet went on to exert control over the local news. The Limerick papers were allowed to publish one issue a week providing they carried the bold imprint, ‘Published by Permission of the Strike Committee’.

The soviet also produced its own *Workers’ Bulletin* that began as a single sheet and ran for seven issues, becoming more and more like a newspaper. Its legend ran, ‘Issued by the Limerick Proletariat.’

To be a worker was a matter of pride during the general strike.

A journalist for the *Daily Express* expressed the panic of the bosses: ‘the leadership mean to win, and it certainly seems as if the workers of Ireland were with them... I have witnessed many strikes in England but never one bearing any resemblance to this. It is the grand slam, and it suggests possibilities on which it is not pleasant

to ponder.’

Despite support flowing in from Limerick from across the country, and from towns in Britain with large Irish populations, the military took a gamble and persisted in their measures.

On Wednesday 16 April, the dispute looked as though it was about to escalate drastically as the local railworkers took the decision to go on strike, despite a circular to the contrary from the National Union of Railwaymen’s (NUR) headquarters in London. This raised the possibility of a national railway strike, which could have spread to Britain.

The strike was delayed by the intervention of William O’Brien, a general secretary and key leader of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Council (ILPTUC). He sent a telegram to the Limerick railworkers saying, ‘railwaymen should defer stoppage pending national action. National Executive specially summoned for tomorrow.’

In Limerick this was taken to mean that a general strike of Irish workers was about to be called on their behalf. As the leader of the Soviet, John Cronin, said in an interview, ‘the national executive council of the ILPTUC will change its headquarters from Dublin to Limerick. Then if military rule isn’t abrogated, a general strike of the entire country will be called.’

In fact, having sought advice during the course of three days of talks with leading nationalists, the leadership of the ILPTUC were anxious to defuse the crisis, not escalate it.

Eventually they revealed the plan that had been agreed with the nationalist activists, which was to evacuate the population of Limerick. Understandably, the Limerick leaders were dismayed by this absurd proposition.

As word of this scheme started to spread, the middle class, who had been cowed by the strength of the Soviet, suddenly recovered their own political will and on Thursday 24 April Bishop Dr. Hallinan and the Mayor entered into negotiations with the British to obtain a compromise to the pass system, which was that the passes would not be checked at mealtimes. They then issued a letter the next day insisting on an immediate ending of the strike.

Stalemated by their own union leadership, the strike leaders gave up and effectively called the strike off when they said that all those who did not need to show passes should return to work immediately.

Rank and file workers, threatening to set up another Soviet, tore up the posters announcing this retreat. In Russia, the Soviets were based on direct elections from the workplace, so if a body of workers felt they were being misrepresented they could recall their delegate within twenty-four hours and give the mandate to another person.

But in Limerick the label ‘Soviet’ was attached to the trades council because it was acting as a workers’ government. The leaders of the movement were delegates elected through the slow moving workings of the individual trade union affiliates. To replace them in a matter of hours was impossible, even if the majority of strikers desired to continue the fight.

As a local republican news sheet put it, the people had been let down ‘by the nincompoops who call themselves the “Leaders of Labour”’. But while it had lasted the Limerick Soviet demonstrated to everyone, not only the potential for the working class to defeat the British authorities, but that a socialist organisation of society was possible.

# Hundreds rally against racist attacks in Belfast

AROUND FIVE hundred people joined the rally against racism at City Hall in Belfast called by the Anti-Racism Network over the attacks on Romanians living in the Village area of the city on Saturday 20th June.

Barbara Muldoon, chair of Anti-Racism Network in Belfast said it was an excellent turnout for a rally organised at 24-hours notice by emails, texts and word of mouth.

Speakers at the rally included Patricia McKeown from ICTU, who said, "No migrant worker caused the economic recession, no migrant worker stole a job off any Irish or British worker."

The Romanian families who suffered the attacks expressed their thanks for the overwhelming kindness they had received from the people of Belfast and their understanding that the racists represented only a tiny fraction of people.

Barbara Muldoon, the main organiser of the rally, said she hoped it would be the first in a series of demonstrations to highlight public opposition to the recent attacks on migrants in the North.

"Your children deserve to go to bed and not to feel fear that some racist thug is going to take a brick in their hand and throw it through the window. You deserve to walk the streets of this city without being spat on, you deserve the respect all of us deserve."



About 200 people attended a similar rally in Derry opposing racist attacks. The rally was called by Love Music Hate Racism and SEEDS, the local multicultural network, and addressed by a range of political parties (including the Mayor, Paul Fleming), trade unionists and migrant workers.

Her second message was to the racists: "You do not speak on behalf of the people of Belfast or Northern Ireland. Your shame is not our shame."

Ms Muldoon said she rejected headlines that Belfast was the race

hate capital of the world and that people were ashamed. "We are not ashamed, we are absolutely bloody furious at what you have done to our neighbours. We reject any notion that somehow the Romanian nationals who live in

this community are responsible for social deprivation, responsible for a lack of jobs," she said. "The responsibility for that lies in Stormont and lies in Westminster."

## Come out of the Wardrobe (closet) Jeffrey ... There's a lion and a witch in there.

By DAVY MCAULEY

THE LAGAN Valley MP Jeffrey Donaldson has been forced to pay back £555 that he claimed on his expenses for hotel pay-per-view movies.

Just like British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith's husband, who claimed on her expenses for pornographic pay per view films, Mr Donaldson saw nothing wrong in asking the tax payer to pay for his movies.

All the films that Mr Donaldson claimed for were the highest priced films available. This covers two categories: pornographic material and 'blockbusters'.

The Democratic Unionist MP claimed for a total of 68 films over a two year period while he stayed in some of London's top hotels.

For one movie, Donaldson had us pay a hefty £14.95 and on another occasion he claimed for the same film twice in one night. Currently the top priced film in the Marriot Hotel County Hall, one of the places most used by Donaldson, is the dubious sounding, 'Sexy Scenes 2009', series 2, series 5 and series 7.

Mr Donaldson claims that the films were a great way to relax after a hard day in the House of Commons and he liked nothing better than to kick back on his bed and watch a family blockbuster.

He claims in this time he watched the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe and the Star Wars Trilogy among many other 'family friendly films'.

The red faced MP has said that the security situation in the North at that time prevented

him from going to the cinema, so he was forced to watch films, late at night, alone in his hotel.

The revelations are hot on the heels of the news that the North's First Minister and his wife, gay-bashing Iris Robinson, claimed almost £160,000 in expenses over a four year period, including almost £31,000 in food.

The expenses scandal is said to have had a major impact on the DUP vote at the European Election.

What it certainly does show is the contempt that the elected politicians in the North show for those who elect them.

All of the local parties are engaged in double- or even treble-jobbing: serving as local councillors, MLAs, MPs, and ministers in the North's Executive. Despite massive salaries that the North's politicians receive, they still try to fleece the taxpayers into paying for 'specialist movies', like Donaldson, or for luxury food and second homes, like the Robinsons.

While unemployment and poverty sore throughout the six Counties the local politicians have never had it so good. Their huge salaries insulate them from the privations faced by the people who voted for them.

We must build a radical alternative to the greed and backwoods politics of the likes of Donaldson and the Swish Family Robinson.

The success of People before Profit in the Republic must be a catalyst to forge ahead with radical politics in the North. A politics not based on sectarianism or greed but in representing communities in struggle.



Hundreds of feminists, pro-choice campaigners, socialists and others rallied in O'Connell St at short notice on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July in a counter rally to the nationally organised anti-abortion march.

Despite what pro-life groups claim, most voters support choice. In 2007, for example, more than half those surveyed in an opinion poll answered Yes to the question, "Do you think the Government should legislate to allow abortion to take place in Ireland?"

Saturday's lively coalition consisted of pro-choice supporters from a variety of political backgrounds. The rally should just be the start of a much broader campaign to make these aspirations a reality.

Photo: Paula Geraghty



## Gaza Aid activists arrested

By GERRY CARROLL

THE CAPTURE of Mairead Corrigan Maguire and Derek Graham and other aid workers in the Gaza strip on the 1st July has once again exposed the true nature of the Israeli state.

Mairead and other aid workers travelled to Gaza to deliver aid to an area still under siege from the might of the Israel state. There still exists an imposed embargo on the people in Gaza. It prevents food, aid and anything else that would give the people a glimmer of hope from entering the strip.

The brutality of the Israeli state is such that, not only does it have to entrap 1.5 million people in 360 km<sup>2</sup> in the Gaza strip, but it also cannot face letting aid workers into the area for fear of what they might do: deliver aid.

World leaders turned a blind eye when the Gaza strip was in flames earlier this year as a result of a campaign of aerial bombardment by Israel. Now world leaders ignore the aftermath of that brutal assault and the effects the siege has had since 2007 on the people of the Gaza strip.

It was only last week when the leaders of the 'free world' met at the G8 summit in Italy. Where was the focus on Gaza? Where was the attention given to the greatest humanitarian crisis in the world? Despite the huge crisis faced by the Palestinians and barely any aid allowed in - world leaders still ignore the reality in the Gaza strip.

However, ordinary people have responded differently to the situation in Palestine - just like earlier this year when thousands of people came out on the streets to demand an end to the bombing in Gaza. And now, through the Viva Palestina

operation, people will once again have the opportunity to show solidarity with the Palestinians.

On October 4th a convoy of ambulance drivers, medical supplies and aid will be brought into Gaza as part of an international campaign to rebuild Gaza after the effects of the bombing campaign this year and by the brutal siege imposed by Israel since then.

This convoy comes at an important time when Barack Obama has called for an end to the illegal settlements being built in the West Bank and also for a two state solution. Obama has tried to put a wedge between the policy of Bush and himself in the Middle East.

Despite this, Obama is still committed to the War on Terror and wants to take it in a new direction - into Pakistan.

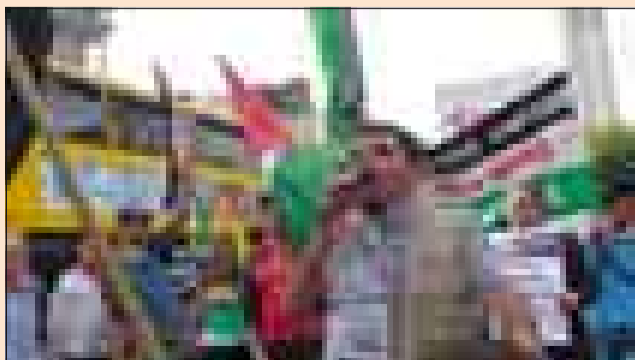
In terms of Israel, the Obama administration is still committed to arming and maintaining a strong Israeli state to serve as the watchdog for the United States in the Middle East.

Obama's dialogue provides us with an opening to intervene in the discussions about the future for the Palestinian people.

A two state solution cannot work for the Palestinian people: it doesn't take into account the situation of the refugees and re-emphasizes the idea that Arabs and Jews cannot live side by side.

It also leaves intact the racist state of Israel whose ideology doesn't recognize the rights of Palestinian people.

Justice for the Palestinians can only come about when American imperialism stops funding and arming the state of Israel and when the people of Palestine exiled 60 years ago have the right to



# Socialist Worker

## Catholic and Protestant...

# UNITE AND FIGHT

## For jobs, homes & services

By GORETTI HORGAN

THIS YEAR has seen sectarianism at its highest level since the mid-1990s.

There have been a series of attacks on catholic homes and GAA halls, followed by attacks on Orange Halls.

A Catholic family was forced out of the Fountain estate in Derry and people told the local radio station that "Catholics aren't welcome here; this is a Protestant area."

Such open bigotry is new. In the past, people would have been ashamed to put sectarian hatred into public words like that.

The sudden explosion of flags in loyalist areas – and 3 or 4 flags on every telegraph pole in those areas nearby that are considered 'infected' by Catholics – marked the start of the build-up to the 12<sup>th</sup> July.

That is, the build-up to the height of the sectarian season – otherwise known as the Orange marching season.

Coleraine, where Catholic man Kevin McDaid was beaten to death by a loyalist mob in May, has seen the worst of the rise in sectarianism.

Loyalists 'explained' that the mob which descended on the mainly Catholic housing estate had done so because tricolours had been erected in the estate.

The police ombudsman's office is investigating allegations that a policeman sent a text message to the loyalists advising them about the tricolours.

Since then, the town has become so divided there is a de facto curfew, with people afraid to leave their 'own' areas in the evening.

While a number of loyalists were remanded in custody charged with McDaid's murder, death threats have been issued against six witnesses to the murder.

One of those witnesses, a neighbour of Kevin McDaid's, is facing a charge of incitement to hatred.

He was arrested last month after he was alleged to have shouted abuse at loyalists erecting flags near his home (and remanded

in custody for a few weeks – so much for the impartiality of the PSNI).

Since then, a poster threatening this witness appeared at a bus shelter in Bushmills and a poem circulating on the internet identifies him and the other witnesses to the murder.

Six witnesses to the murder have been warned of death notices by police. One of them was given until July 12 to leave Coleraine, otherwise he would be assassinated.

Meanwhile, a July 13 Orange parade was allowed to pass within yards of the murder scene.

Less murderous versions of life in Coleraine are repeated in towns, cities and villages across the North.

The 12<sup>th</sup> of July is the day, as Radio Ulster wit Gerry Andersen says, when we 'celebrate our differences'.

The problem is that 'celebrating our differences' is now institutionalised in Stormont where Executive parties agree that Catholics and Protestants have separate 'cultures' which will never be capable of uniting.

In fact, politicians – particularly those in the DUP and Sinn Féin – are happy to emphasise the differences between the two communities, since without them their electoral appeal and political power would be undermined.

There is an alternative to the vicious cycle of sectarianism. It lies in the tradition of Protestant and Catholic workers uniting to fight as a class against the bosses, as seen recently at Visteon.

The problem is that every time this happens, sectarian politicians move quickly to stir up sectarianism.

That is why socialists need to be organised in every community, in every local area across the North, and be unafraid to challenge the attachment of Protestant workers to loyalism and of Catholic workers to republicanism and trying instead to build on what unites, rather than what divides us all.

This has never been a more urgent task.

## Nortel workers step up the fight



By GERRY CARROLL

**WORKERS IN the Nortel plant in Newtownabbey Belfast have stepped up their fight after being laid off in April this year.**

87 workers were sacked in similar circumstances to that of the Visteon workers.

They were given no notice, redundancy package, or compensation from Nortel – all this despite chief executive Mike Zafirovski paying out \$45 million in bonuses last year alone.

Workers who were sacked by management have begun to fight back.

There have been mass meetings, protests outside the factory and Stormont..

Just like the example of Visteon, Nortel workers have shown that you can fight back and take on the bosses and big

corporations.

Across the UK, Nortel has got rid of 200 staff – now there are clear indications that they want to close up shop completely and force hundreds of staff onto the dole queue.

Nortel has filed for administration, which will mean sooner or later redundancy for another 400 workers.

Despite filing for redundancy, the cash balance last year of Nortel was \$2.48 billion – this is another example of the bosses using the recession as an excuse to sack workers, protect profits, and move somewhere else where it can gain access to cheap labour and more exploitation.

When it comes to fighting for entitlements or keeping the factory open, real power lies within the factory itself where 400 workers are still employed by

Nortel.

They are the only ones who can bring the Chief Executives to their knees and force them to honour commitments.

The company was given at least £20 million by Invest NI executive in order to lure it to Northern Ireland – this should now be taken back by the government.

And if Nortel vows to close, then the money acquired by the executive should go into nationalising the factory to ensure that workers can keep their jobs.

One of the crucial aspects in determining the success of the Visteon struggle was solidarity action.

If we are to ensure the struggle in Nortel is successful then we must spread their story and build solidarity across the country.