

Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 40p

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QUINN'S BUDGET:



Handouts for the rich but... No solution to jobs crisis

RUAIRI Quinn's budget will do nothing for the unemployed.

We are told Ireland is enjoying a boom and the public finances have never been healthier.

Despite this nearly 300,000 people continue to be condemned to a life on the dole.

For the vast majority being without a job means a life of misery.

Poverty

In many households, because of poverty, children go to school without a decent breakfast.

And their parents are treated without dignity or respect.

But Quinn is not going to do anything to solve the jobs crisis.

Instead, he has accepted the argument of his Fine Gael friends and has given even more tax relief to big business.

This is the "trickle-down theory" of economics. If the greed of the rich is satisfied, Quinn hopes that they will create jobs.

So every employer who takes on a long term unemployed person is given an £80 a week subsidy.

Profits

Employers PRSI is cut for the second year running. Tax on profits are reduced.

Even the Yuppie managers will pay out less tax on

their big, fast company cars.

But bribing the rich will not solve the jobs crisis.

Between 1980 and 1990 a staggering £1.6 billion was handed out in grants to the bosses. But they invested in machines to get rid of more workers.

Each year, the employers get £1,000 million in tax breaks. But instead of cre-

ating jobs, they demand extra productivity from less and less workers.

And while Quinn pampers the bosses, his government is pushing through further cuts in public sector jobs.

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Another budget for the rich



Continued from front page

■ 4,000 jobs are to go in the ESB and Telecom. A vicious embargo on public sector jobs has been created.

This government has shown that it has no real interest in solving the jobs crisis. Instead it wants to reward the rich backers of the Fine Gael.

If we are to create jobs, then the money has to be taken off the wealthy and used productively.

The banks should not be allowed to make a £1 million pound profit a day. Instead they should be taken into public ownership and their billions used to invest in jobs.

Hand-outs

The hand-outs to the big farmers should stop immediately. Instead there should be a major house building programme taking on workers and providing homes for the many thousands who are stuck in miserable accommodation.

Of course the Labour Party will never do any of these things. They turned their back on working class people long ago.

Instead, we need to build a real fighting workers' party that takes on the Irish rich.

WHAT WE GET

■ A low income couple earning £16,000 between them will get less than £3 extra a week in tax relief.

■ PRSI has been slightly reduced—but the PRSI tax allowance has been abolished. Net gain for a workers on the average industrial wage is about 36p a week.

■ Social Welfare payments will go up by 3%. But in the small print of the budget, it has been announced that de Rossa must also find £60 million savings in his department.

■ No changes on the arrangements on paying water charges. Labour and Democratic left go back on their promise to abolish double taxation.

■ A 7% increase in our ESB Bill over the next three years.

■ Pressure on the young unemployed to get on a scheme or accept a lousy wage—or they lose their dole.

THE REAL WINNERS AGAIN

BUSINESS: Corporation Profits tax on earnings below £50,000 are slashed by 8%.

This follows another reduction last year. It is the same as a £4,000 hand-out to small firms. But expect them to keep on crying for more.

EMPLOYERS: Get another cut on their PRSI payments.

One economist estimated that they will save £15,000 for every 20 workers employed.

MANAGERS: Relief on the tax on company cars has been increased by 20%.

Those who get a £25,000 company car for free will now save about £600 in tax. This year Gunne motors says that it is doing a flying trade in Mercedes cars. Now they won't believe their luck.

BIG FARMERS: More relief has been given on the inheritance taxes.

Ireland has already one of the lowest inheritance taxes in Europe but John Bruton has made sure that family and friends get even more relief.

PRISONS: The Coalition has never a problem finding money for 'law and order'.

Last year they doubled the prison budget. This year they have added another £3.5 million. Again it will do nothing to solve the levels of crime.

SCAM MERCHANTS: The greatest tax scam over the last decade has been the Business Expansion Scheme.

For every £2 the rich put into industry they get a £1 tax subsidy from the state. They are allowed invest up to £75,000 over three years. Quinn has kept this little scam.

BELFAST HOSPITALS: The McKenna Report will damage your health

Royal Victoria Hospital



THE TORIES' McKenna Report will be a major blow to Belfast's two acute hospitals, the City Hospital in South Belfast and the Royal Hospitals in West Belfast.

It recommends the closure of the Royal Maternity Hospital and the Gynaecology and Breast Cancer treatment services in the Royal hospitals. The City Hospital is to lose its Accident and Emergency Department.

McKenna argues that these

'reforms' are necessary because of 'duplication' between the two hospitals but they are a blatant cost cutting exercise.

Busiest

The Royal Maternity is the largest and busiest maternity

hospital in Northern Ireland. Last year 3,000 babies were born there.

Over the years the City and the Royal have become identified with the sectarian divide in Belfast with the Royal in West Belfast being defended by nationalist politicians and the City in South Belfast defended by unionists.

The Catholic Irish News has mounted a campaign to save the Royal Maternity but has remained almost silent on the City Hospital.

Even the title of the McKenna Report 'Seeking Balance' shows that the Tories want people to judge these attacks on the basis of which community is losing most resources.

But a UNISON shop steward at the Royal told Socialist Worker, "We are not going to let politicians pit one hospital against another and one community against another."

Defend

"We are not going to fall into that trap. We need to stick together and fight to defend all the hospitals and all the services."

Another shop steward said, "If these changes come in it will hit West Belfast very hard but it is the same at the City. We have to say no to the whole of the McKenna Report and not just parts of it."

Since McKenna was published on 11th January UNISON leaders Inez McCormack and Patricia McKeown have talked about a 'big campaign' and 'taking to the streets' to defend the NHS in Belfast but they have yet to put these fine words into action.

But a united campaign involving hospital workers and the various communities that depend on the hospitals could stop the Tories and cut the ground out from under the bigots.

inside the system

★ **A YOUNG worker in Q-Burger in Dublin was asked to do a few extra hours but refused.**

He was warned by a workmate that the manager would 'get him back'.

Sure enough, his clock card went missing and he was refused £16 owed to him for eight hours work. He has since spent £15 on bus fares to and from Q-Burger trying to get his money back.

★ **CORK CITY Council is sending a nine-member delegation to a waste disposal conference in Shannon at a cost to the city of £1,800.**

It will cost £220 to send each councillor to the conference. Those going include Labour councillor Joe O'Callaghan, who last year did a spectacular about-turn to support the water charges and so win himself the Lord Mayorship of the city.

But the Shannon trip is only the start of the Cork councillors' junkets for the year. In 1996 the Council will spend £50,000 on junkets at home and £20,000 on trips abroad.

Belfast in Scotland

His 'get tough' policy

NEW LIGHT has been shed on Major's stalling of the Northern Ireland peace process.

It seems some Tories believe Belfast is part of Scotland.

The £29 million new Scottish Office building in Edinburgh features huge glass etchings of Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth, Pais-

ley and BELFAST.

A Scottish Office spokeswoman says:

"These are stirring visual representations in general. They should not be viewed with specific cities in mind."

REMEMBER NEW York vigilante Bernhard Goetz who shot four unarmed youths who approached him for five dollars?

He has been praised in New York as the city's police adopt a 'get tough' strategy on crime.

A profile of Goetz recently revealed his own ideas on getting tough.

After firing four shots Goetz saw one of the youths was not injured so he fired another bullet and severed his spinal cord saying, "You don't look too bad - here's another."

Goetz's ideas show all the hallmarks of Thatcherism taken to its logical conclusion. In an interview he said:

"The guys I shot represented the failures of society. They came from an average family

size of five and a quarter children, and none of those families have sufficient income.

Price

"Forget about them ever making a positive contribution to so-

ciety. It's only a question of how much a price they are going to cost.

"The solution is their mothers should have had abortions."

He added that "non-contributing" citizens should be "controlled or done away with".

Jet setter

THERE IS one item that Ruairi Quinn had no difficulty finding money for: the cost of the Irish Presidency of the EU.

£20 Million has been set aside for lavish spending during the six months that the Irish government will chair EU meetings.

Part of the money will go in leasing out a second jet. According to Gay Mitchell, "we simply cannot conduct an efficient presidency with one jet".

When this government was formed, they said they would stop high spending on government planes. But this is just another promise they have broken.

we think

ESB - prices up while jobs are cut

The decision of the ESB to raise prices and cut 2,000 jobs shows the madness of free market economics. The price rise is part of a package to break the ESB up into different units that will compete against each other. Some units will produce electricity; others will buy it.

This all goes under the buzz word 'rationalisation' and is supposed to make state companies more efficient.

It is nonsense. The ESB used to have the lowest electricity prices in Europe. But now this 'drive to efficiency' means that there will be a significant price hike.

There are already nearly 300,000 people on the dole in Ireland.

But despite talk of the 'rigours of the market' 2,000 more jobs will go in the ESB with £210 million set aside for a redundancy package. Some 'efficiency'!

The government is, in reality, trying to hide its true purposes. Their plan for the ESB has two main objectives in mind.

First and foremost, they are terrified of the power of ESB workers which was shown in the 1991 strike. After the strike the Board set as one of its objectives "the reduction in the effectiveness of trade union power".

Their main strategy is to break up the company so that workers are seen to compete against each other.

As the Irish Independent industrial correspondent, Tim Hastings put it, "overall union power could be diluted if workers had significant elements of their pay set locally".

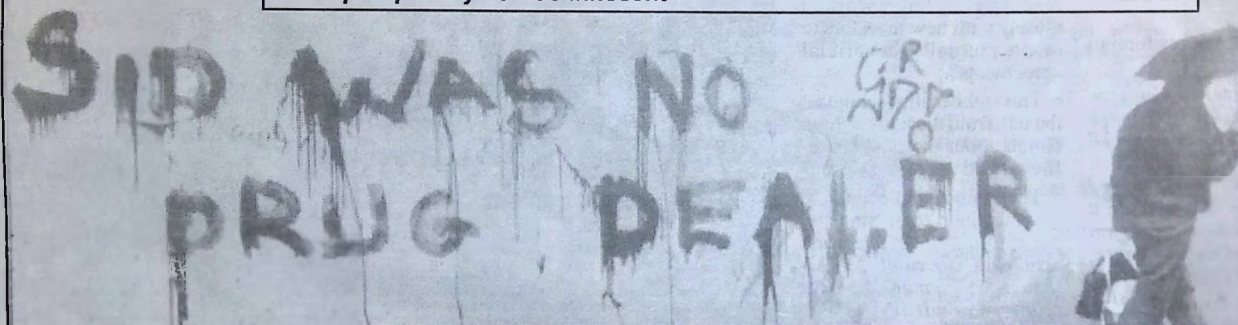
This is why they are willing to pay out a high redundancy package now -- so that they can lower wage costs in the future.

The government is re-structuring the ESB to fatten up the profits of big business. Domestic consumers are being asked to pay more for their prices -- so that business can now be subsidised.

Big companies will be allowed buy electricity from independent producers -- in order to get out of paying any of the social costs of bringing electricity to remote areas around the country.

Drugs-have the executions stopped?

Christopher "Sid" Johnson was shot while he was on bail for smuggling cannabis. Local people say he was innocent



The campaign of executions by Direct Action against Drugs seems to have stopped for the moment.

The group was a cover name for sections of the IRA. Alongside other spurious organisations such as "Derry Concerned Parents against Drugs" they had taken it on themselves to clean up the country.

They claimed to have executed seven drugs barons. But it was a lie. One of their victims, Sid

Johnson, lived in the poverty stricken Ormeau Road area and worked as a plasterer—hardly the circumstances of a major drug baron.

Drugs have become an issue which right wing politicians believe they can make mileage on. They ignore the fact that people take drugs because there is so much drudgery and misery in their lives.

Instead of tackling the underlying causes, they search for scapegoats who can be blamed for 'cor-

rupting the youth'.

Behind all the rhetoric of concern, the issue is used to justify more repression in society.

In the South, Nora Owen wants to find a reason to maintain police powers after the end of the Northern conflict. So she seizes on the drugs issue to give them powers like seven day detention.

In the North, the RUC suddenly discovers there is a major drugs problem -- even though there are only 60 registered addicts. So they

increase the size of the drugs squad by 50 per cent to help justify their bloated numbers.

The actions of the republicans over the last two months shows that while they oppose the repression of the British army, they share the same reactionary ideas and methods of the Tories.

Once you fail to oppose capitalism you have nothing but a bullet to offer those whose lives are so miserable that they turn to drugs.

Church and State club together

The High Court has ruled that the State can continue to pay the salaries of the 76 chaplains currently employed in community and comprehensive schools around the country.

A case had been taken by the Campaign to Separate Church and State, claiming that the payment of chaplains' salaries by the government breaches the guarantee in the constitution that the state will not endow any religion.

But Judge Costello said that in paying for chaplains in schools the state was respecting the rights of parents to give religious education to their children.

He said that the school chaplains play an important role in community schools - not only in terms of their religious instruction but also by providing school students with help on moral, social, educa-

tional, personal and family problems.

Of course, he also fully accepted that in Catholic community schools the chaplain carrying out these tasks would be a Catholic priest.

These priests are appointed not by the board of management but by "competent religious authority to the school".

Each year the state pays a total of £1.2 million for chaplains' salaries.

Not surprisingly, the case put forward by the campaign was opposed by an alliance of church and state.

The outcome of the case maintains the status quo. It confirms that the

church controls education in this country and that taxpayers money will continue to fund this situation.

It is an absolute disgrace that state education should impose religion on the school-going population in this way.

And it has now emerged that religion is to be included as an examination subject in secondary schools. While the syllabus is not yet available, we can only assume that it will continue to be Catholic instruction. A survey conducted over a

year ago found that the majority of parents, given the choice, would prefer multi-denominational education for their children. It is obvious from this court decision that the government will not grant this. It will have to be fought for.

QUINN'S SILENT PR FIRM

The real scandal of the divorce referendum is that the government's PR firm, QMP, was barely noticed.

The firm was owned by Ruairi Quinn's brother and they got the contract from a Labour dominated government committee.

As one pro-divorce activist put it, "Every-

one can still remember the horrible slogans produced by the anti-divorce lobby. But not a single one of this PR firm's sticks in your mind"

QMP were given a £500,000 contract to organise a campaign.

But from the word go their advice was to "avoid issues we cannot win". Instead they

decided to stress that "divorce would change nothing".

With this attitude it was no wonder QMP and the Coalition made a mess of the campaign and came within an inch of losing.

Still Ruairi's brother will be happy that a family connection led to a bit of extra profit.

QUEUING FOR A HOME

There were over 1,300 families in Cork on the waiting list for corporation houses by the end of 1995.

There were just 150 new homes available last year, and by the end of 1996 the Corporation will have built only 200 new houses.

In the country as a whole there was a decrease in the number of local authority houses built in the second half of 1995. But this is justified by government ministers like

Dem-ocratic Left's Liz McManus, Minister for Housing, who said recently that it was no longer satisfactory to respond to the local authority housing crisis simply by building more houses. Her response is to do nothing.

Meanwhile, thousands are forced to live in inadequate conditions.

A document from the Industrial Development Board which has come into the hands of **Socialist Worker** shows that the North is being marketed to multi-nationals as a source of cheap labour. Eamonn McCann reports.

IDB plans for a Cheap Labour Paradise for Multinationals

A docile, low-paid, non-union work force - that's what the multi-nationals are being offered as an enticement to set up in the North.

Through its offices in major US and European cities and at "investment conferences" like the one held in Washington last year, the Industrial Development Board is assuring profit-hungry companies that Northern workers can be had on the cheap and can be counted on not to stand up for their rights.

As this strategy is pursued, pay rates in industry in the North fall even farther behind Britain.

Neither the official trade union movement nor the leaders of any of the major political parties, Nationalist or Unionist, offer any opposition to this strategy.

The IDB "fact sheet" currently distributed to potential investors is blunt:

"Labour costs in Northern Ireland are lower than the rest of Britain and Ireland and are among the lowest in Europe. The total average hourly cost (including overtime and social costs) for manual workers is 14 percent lower than the UK, 52 percent lower than Germany, and 22 percent lower than the US".

Under "Working Patterns",

the fact sheet assures foreign capitalists that:

"There are no Government restrictions on work hours for adults over 18 years of age in factories. Workers in Northern Ireland are happy to accommodate a variety of shift patterns. There are no Government restrictions on overtime".

Despite the low pay and oppressive conditions which this indicates, investors are promised that Northern workers are unlikely to fight for improvements.

A chart illustrates the fact that the number of days lost per thousand employees each year is slightly lower than for the UK and under a third of the Southern Ireland figure.

As for unions ... the document declares:

"in Northern Ireland there is no law requiring an employer to recognise a trade union. Single or non-union agreements are common.

The question of unionisation is a matter for the company to decide".

Even where unions do exist "The excellent industrial relations ... applies to companies with both union and non-union agreements. In IDB's experience, trade union representatives have worked closely with new investors to reach mutually beneficial agreements".

This is the reality behind all the talk from the likes of John Hume about the post cease-fire attractions of the North.

The mainstream economic commentator John Simpson put it in a *Belfast Telegraph* article in December: "Although few managers would publicly admit it, there is something of a suspicion that Northern Ireland is attracting attention because wage costs, by comparison with Britain and the other EU countries, are indeed low and drifting further apart".

The latest survey of earnings by the North's Department of Economic Development puts figures on this.

In the manufacturing sector, average male manual earnings in the North are £263 a week, average female earnings £171 a week.

The male figure is 84 percent of the UK average, the female figure 86 percent. In 1987 those figures were 89 percent and 92 percent.

From the worker's point of view, in comparative terms things are not good and getting better but bad and getting worse.

Unionised before the factory was built

Insofar as they felt threatened by the establishment of non-union plants, the union bureaucrats react with ever more abject assurances that if they're allowed to recruit they keep the workers in line.

The result is a deepening cynicism about trade unions among many workers, particularly young workers coming into industry for the first time.

The point is made by the two most recent US owned plants to set up in the Derry area.

Workers at Fruit of the Loom - open more than three years now - discovered they were in SIPTU only when they saw the union subs. deduction on their pay-slips.

SIPTU and the management had struck a single union deal even before the factory had been



Multinationals bring jobs only if they can get low wages and bad working conditions

How sectarian politics help the bosses

The need for militant trade union organisation to stand up for workers' rights in this situation is obvious.

But as the IDB document accurately points out, far from putting up a fight the union leaders are enthusiastically collaborating in the strategy.

They have not even registered an objection to multinational companies being told that in Northern Ireland "The question of unionisation is a matter for the company to decide".

There is a clear and urgent need for a voice which will speak out loudly in all this for the specific interests of the working class.

One of the obstacles to such a voice emerging is the communal politics which dominate the North. The leaders of both nationalism and unionism see every issue naturally in terms of the

separate interests of their "own community".

From the DUP to Sinn Fein, they all go along with the strategy of selling the North as a low-pay high-profit economy. Their only concern is that their side gets its fair share of whatever lousy jobs result.

Thus, the only critical comment to come from Sinn Fein about Seagate Technologies has been a complaint that not enough locals were being trained as managers. Only socialist politics provides a solid base on which to build militant rank and file action.

collusion with management as to be useless, then workers should go ahead on their own anyway.

The Liverpool dockers have shown the way. Faced with sackings, they were told it would be illegal to strike.

But they organised themselves for action, and won the support of other rank and file workers when they went out and looked for it. The union bureaucrats were forced to back them as openly as the anti-union laws would allow.

The reason so many workers in Belfast and Derry contributed readily to the dockers' appeal was that they sensed the relevance of their action to their own situation.

This feeling for struggle has to be organised and given political direction if it isn't to be wasted.



Yeltsin has blood on his hands

THE ESCAPE of the Chechen guerilla leader, Salman Raduyev, after a recent hostage taking episode, has dealt a major blow to the credibility of the Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Yeltsin unleashed a ferocious assault by the world second most powerful army against the Chechens. He put the lives of the hostages at risk, in a wanton disregard for human life.

Yet all report indicate that the Russian action was completely chaotic.

Yeltsin's butchery was spurred on by those who claim to be his opponents.

The Communist Party, which won most votes in recent elections, demanded that force be used to end the crisis.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky, the fascist who leads the liberal democrats, said that Chechen villages should be napalmed.

Behind the hostage taking lies the century long struggle for freedom from Russian rule. The people of Chechnia have never agreed to be part of Russia.

For generations they signalled their desire to determine their own future. In December 1991, Chechnia broke away and declared independence. Three years later Yeltsin launched a bloody war.

He wanted to divert attention from Russia's own problems and grab control of Chechnia's valuable oil resources in the Caspian sea.

Tens of thousands of Chechen civilians have been killed and 500,000, almost half the country's population, made homeless. The slaughter was encouraged by the silence of the Western leaders who have called it 'an internal matter'.

The war was unpopular inside Russia itself and relatives of the soldiers have held many demonstrations.

The Chechen armed resist-



Yeltsins troops crush Chechnia

ance conducted a heroic struggle against air raids and heavy artillery. But by the summer of last year they were effectively defeated.

Since then small groups of armed fighters have kept up a low level guerrilla war. The hostage taking was part of this.

Many of the hostages who were released spoke of their good treatment and condemned the Russian bombardment.

Seizure

But the seizure was a bad tactic. The hostages were overwhelmingly of Dagestani origin. The neighbouring population of Dagestan has actively fought against Russian intervention.

Yeltsin's action are a sign of his weakness rather than his strength. The future for the Chechens lies in building on their campaign of protests and demonstration in recent months and making links with workers throughout Russia who oppose Yeltsin market reforms.

Under the heel

CHECHENIA'S people have been oppressed by Russia rulers for well over 100 years.

The Russian king, the Tsar, ordered the invasion of the territory in the 1860s as part of the expansion of the empire. It was the same process as British colonisation in Africa and India.

Russian troops used brutal measures to defeat the opposition.

After the 1917 Russian Revolution there was a brief period of improved consideration for Chechen rights. But the new ruling class under Stalin reversed this.

In 1944 the whole population of Chechnia, at the time some 400,000 people, was forcibly deported thousands of miles to the deserts of

Kazakhstan. A third died of hunger and cold during the journey.

By the time they were allowed to return many years later, only half of them made it back.

'Western governments' "concern" for the Chechens is pure hypocrisy. Only a few hundred miles away Britain and the US governments are backing the Turkish regime in crushing the similar national demands of the Kurdish people.

Western leaders have their own hopes of grabbing control of the region's oil.

In October 1994 the United Nations staged a military exercise in Britain, practising for a landing in "one of the Caucasus countries" meaning oil rich Azerbaijan.

Vultures wait on Angola settlement

ANGOLA, one of the wealthiest countries in Africa, has been devastated by civil war for more than 20 years.

The war began when the old apartheid regime in South Africa helped set up the UNITA guerilla force to overthrow left nationalist MPLA government.

The war has come to a close after a UN brokered settlement which brings the UNITA thugs into the government. But even then the UNITA leader, Savimbi, has dragged his heels on disarming his troops.

Prospect

As the prospect of a settlement grows, the old colonialists are returning to Angola to rob its resources.

Right wing whites from South Africa are moving into Cuango Valley and Catoca which has the biggest diamond bearing vein in the world.

The De Beers company is not buying up these diamonds — with no question asked.

For the mass of ordinary Angolans, war and poverty has made life a terrible misery.

People only earn an average of \$10 a month. Inside Luanda, sup-



Victim of the war

port for the MPLA government has dissipated as they make no attempt to improve water and sanitary conditions.

Militancy

the main hope for Angola is that the militant working class of Luanda will use the new talk of

peace to start flexing its muscles.

In the 1970s, their militancy helped to destroy Portuguese colonialism.

Now they need to build an alternative to the corruption that runs through the MPLA government and the right wing fanatics of UNITA.

Arafat wins poll for Palestinian Council

ELECTIONS in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in January returned a resounding victory for PLO leader Yasser Arafat and his Fatah party.

The council, which has strictly limited powers, was set up under last year's agreement with Israel for the administration of territories occupied by Israel since 1967.

The Western press which once hailed Arafat as the world's most wanted terrorist have welcomed the vote as a 'sign of peace'.

But the harsh reality is otherwise. There are tens of thousands of Palestinians who have been driven from their homes who never got a vote.

Inside the West Bank, Arafat operates a huge patronage machine with Israeli support which gives

favours for his friends.

Former guerrillas have been recruited into a bloated police force to prevent any resistance to the Arafat-Israeli settlement.

Convene

Under the terms of the peace process, Arafat must now convene a meeting of the Palestinian National Council to get rid of their historic de-

mand for a secular Jewish and Arab state to replace the racist state of Israel.

By contrast, Israeli settlers will still hold onto land that they seized in the West Bank after the 1967 war. Huge numbers of Israeli troops protect them and harass the surrounding population.

Arafat has won a victory today—but the tensions that gave rise to the conflict in the Middle East has not gone away.

CIA's secret arms dumps

NEW revelations in the *Boston Globe* has shown that the CIA stashed away arms dumps across Europe after the last World War.

The dumps were to be used to by right wingers in the event of a socialist uprising or an invasion by the Red Army.

They contained small arms, ammunition, and money to finance a guerilla struggle.

The CIA decided to ignore any claims about neutrality.

In Austria, nearly 80

arms dumps were set up despite an agreement that Austria remain a neutral country.

Even today the US and British government are refusing to reveal to the Austrians exactly where all the dumps were placed.

Evidence

The new revelations confirm suspicions that the CIA organised a secret network or right wing fanatics across Europe.

Some years ago, investigators discovered evidence of an anti communist network called Gladio. Prominent right wing politicians were involved.

In the 1970s, the Gladio network was implicated in right wing terrorist activity, possibly even the fascist bombing of the Bologna train station.

These hypocrites of the CIA may talk about 'respect for democracy' but they were ready to fund terrorism all along.

Keeping us in the dark

by Catherine Curran

Amniocentesis is a test which can be carried out during pregnancy to show up certain defects in the foetus such as Down's Syndrome or Spina Bifida.

It is a test which has been available worldwide for the past twenty years. The test is particularly useful to women over 35 who run a higher risk of some foetal defects.

However, it is only in the past six months that this service has been available on demand to Irish women who want to avoid it in the Republic.

And since it was revealed that the Rotunda hospital was providing the service, there have been the usual cries from the pro-life campaign that this should be stopped on the grounds that it leads to abortion.

The real question is why the service has not been available for so long in this country.

In the past, Irish women who actually knew of the existence of amniocentesis and requested it were forced to go to Belfast or to the UK to have it carried out.

The laws against abortion in this country would have meant that Irish doctors were reluctant to advise on it or to refer patients.

Controlled

The master of Holles St. maternity hospital, which is controlled by the Catholic Church, has stated that at the moment, the hospital will only offer amniocentesis if there are other indications, from ultrasound or physical examination, that there might be something wrong.

However, he stressed that if there was no physical evidence, and the woman "just wanted a test for peace of mind, then Holles St. could only refer them to Belfast".

The reason for this has less to do with lack of resources, which are always available to patients in private clinics, than with the control which the Bishops still have over the ethics and conduct of the Irish health service.

Service

The church has always prevented women from receiving any service which might help them make an informed decision on whether to continue with a pregnancy.

Only last year, at the Annual General Meeting of the Mater Hospital, the Archbishop of Dublin Dr. Connell, launched an attack on those who questioned the church's control of hospitals.

There was no question, he alleged, that society could be

content to leave moral dilemmas to be determined between patient and consultant alone.

The church, he said, claimed the competence to intervene in these matters, not only on behalf of its own interests but in the interest of the common good of society.

What this means is that women do not have the right to information on the state of their pregnancy. Rather the church has the right to deny them that information "for the common good of society".

Forcing

It also means forcing women to go ahead with the delivery of severely mentally handicapped babies. According to medical authorities in Northern Ireland where women tested positive for Down's Syndrome last year, 90% were estimated to have had an abortion.

In severe cases of Spina Bifida, it was estimated that 70% of women sought terminations.

On the other hand, studies in Dublin between 1990 and 1994 among women where neuro-tube defects were apparent, associated with spina bifida and hydrocephalus, 95% of women delivered or had miscarriages.

It is not clear whether women would go ahead with abortions if they were informed of foetal defects, but what is clear is that they should have the right to make an informed decision.

Access

That means free access for all women to amniocentesis or other tests, not just where a consultant considers it "useful", but where the woman herself feels she wants it for peace of mind.

For the Catholic Church and Dr Connell to claim entitlement to public money for the upkeep of Catholic hospitals while denying women basic health information is a disgrace.

All hospitals should be freed of this authoritarian and bigoted control.

Instead of sacking nurses and closing down wards, the government should sack the likes of Dr. Connell and his bigoted allies in the ranks of overpaid consultants.

Crime:

Is Ireland becoming more violent

Crime, crime, crime. According to the Evening Herald, Gay Byrne and many politicians Ireland is witnessing a serious crime-wave. One of the causes is supposed to be the fact that prisons such as Loughran House are like a 'Butlin's holiday camp'.

Yet is Ireland really becoming more violent? And are ordinary people afraid to walk their own streets. Jason McElligott investigates.

FACT AND FICTION

There is a heightened concern about crime at the present. Yet the Evening Herald is using it for its own purposes, to sell newspapers. It also has a hidden political agenda.

It is demanding that the Minister for Justice, Nora Owen reverse the Cabinet decision not to go ahead with building Castlereagh prison. They are also campaigning for the removal of an automatic right to bail and the scrapping of the early release system.

The press campaign means that many people believe that they live in an increasingly violent society. However, the evidence does not support this view.

The 1991 rate of serious crime was almost exactly 200% of the 1973 rate. This sounds like a massive increase, but in real terms it was an increase from 13 crimes for every 1000 citizens to 26 crimes per thousand. The Irish serious crime rate is less than one-quarter of the English and Welsh rate. In addition, the rate of growth in crime is smaller in Ireland than in any other European country.

What the newspapers do not tell you is that this increase varies greatly. There has been a noticeable increase in non-violent crime against property, such as car thefts. And the value of goods stolen has increased from less than two million in 1973 to almost 40 million in 1994. However, other types of crime have not increased greatly.

So, the level of indictable crimes against the person is actually less today than it was twenty years ago. Similarly, there were fewer armed robberies in 1993 than in 1973.

Of course, there have been horrible incidents. Only two months ago, thieves broke into an old man's home in Cork and tortured him with a red hot poker until he told them where his money was. There is great concern about such crime in rural areas. But the sensational reporting ignores the fact that there are fewer such attacks than ten years ago.

The level of homicide within a society is a very accurate measure of the violence of that society.

Following the murder of Marilyn



Rynn, Irish Times columnist Mary Cummins claimed that women were in fear of going out at night.

Yet Ireland's murder rate is the lowest in Europe. More importantly, it has not increased in the last twenty years. In 1973 there were 21 murders in the Republic, twenty

years later there were 23. There is no long-term trend either upward or downward.

All the indications are that while petty crime, especially drug-related crime has increased sharply over the past few years, serious crime is either stable or falling.

In fact, the early 1980s was the most vio-

Who are the real criminals

IN IRISH society most of the really violent criminals get off scot free.

Last year, for example, six building workers died on construction sites in Dublin. None of their bosses have been jailed for breach of safety laws.

When bosses are convicted for being responsible for the death of a worker, they usually only pay a fine of around £400.

And when it comes to robbery,

it is only the small fry who end up in prison.

In 1992, a total of £40 million was stolen. Much of it was small scale.

But the figure did not take into account the amount of 'white collar crime'. This is a polite expression for the illegal fraud and swindling of big business.

In 1992, for example, the Garda Fraud squad investigated no less than 50 frauds involving more than

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Is becoming violent?

Lock 'em up and throw away the key?



Thomas Toner who had his face shattered by the RUC. Is the reality of what more active policing means.

Politicians believe that there are votes to be won for being 'tough on crime.' In recent months they have joined the chorus of voices calling for more Gardai on the streets and more prisons to be built. But just how effective would these measures be in the fight against crime?

Contrary to popular belief, Ireland is highly policed by international comparisons. In Denmark there is one policeman for every 500 citizens, and in Britain the figure is one to 390. Yet in Ireland there is one Guard for every 325 people.

There are currently just over 11,000 Gardai. This is a massive increase on the 7,700 members of the force in 1973. Over the same period the annual Garda budget has increased two-fold to £26 million. One might expect, therefore, that the Gardai would be in a better position to solve crime.

Yet in the last twenty years the Gardai's 'General Detection Rate' has fallen from 48% to 33%. When Ireland was more rural and the Guards tended to know people personally they had a fairly high detection rate.

But as the population has moved to the cities more Gardai, have in fact, been solving less crime. This trend is likely to continue. In England, for example, the annual police budget is £6 billion but the detection rate is a mere 2%. More Gardai will not get rid of crime.

Are more prisons the answer?

Politicians would have us believe that Irish prisons are too soft and that criminals are enjoying Butlin's style accommodation complete with TVs, jacuzzis and saunas.

But if life in prison is so wonderful, why are there so many prison suicides. Why have there been investigations into prisons like Wheatfield after several prisoners killed themselves?

There are 2,000 prison places in Ireland but about 12,000 people enter prison every year in the Republic. Calls are now mounting for the Minister for Justice to build a new prison in Castlereagh, at a cost to the tax-payer of £160 million.

But prisons do not deter crime. In 1958

there were only four prisons in the state - Limerick, Portlaoise, Mountjoy and St. Patrick's Institution. Today there are ten, but crime has not fallen.

Prison does not reform criminals, it hardens them. Even those who want to go straight after a spell in prison tend to find it impossible because few companies will employ an ex-convict. Prison locks people into a cycle of crime.

Prisons mainly lock up the poor. At any one time hundreds of people are behind bars because they failed to pay fines or debts. In 1991, just over, 250 people were imprisoned for such 'crimes', at a cost of over £10 million. Building more prisons will not halt crime. It is an expensive waste of PAYE taxes.

what do socialists say?

Is the liberal agenda over

by MARY WHITE

Fintan O'Toole wrote an article in the Irish Times recently with the headline "With the big battles over what's left to keep us interested?"

In it he claimed that the significant Church-State battles are now finished and that 1996 will not be like any other year in the history of the state.

O'Toole has an honourable record of exposing the power of the Bishops in Ireland. He has a particular talent for unravelling the deep seated elitism and undemocratic attitudes of the Church hierarchy.

This makes his new declaration, that the fight with these same Bishops is now over, all the more startling.

Divorce

However the reality is very different. The divorce result was a hugely significant victory but big Church-State battles remain on the horizon.

Take the issue of education. There are only ten schools in the country that are not under the control of the various churches. Just this month the courts upheld state funding of Catholic chaplains in supposedly non-denominational community schools.

The vast majority of the Irish population still only have access to church-controlled schools.

What has tended to be obscured in much of the debate over the last number of years, is that church control over the schools and hospitals is a class issue. It suited both the liberals and the fundamentalists to ignore this.

A survey by the National Parents Council in 1991 found that 35% of primary school funds are contributed by parents, either directly or through parish contributions.

Parents in wealthy areas, of course, can contribute much more than those in poorer ar-

reas. As a result, primary schools in working class areas are more run-down and less well-equipped.

A secular system of education would make sure that schools received equal levels of resources.

Meanwhile in hospitals the religious have stood over the development of a two-tier health system which ensures that those who can afford it get a decent service in private hospitals while poorer patients must face long waiting lists.

So the Church-State issue is not resolved. But there is now a difference. The so-called liberal agenda is firmly becoming a working class issue.

The divorce referendum signalled this. As the *Sunday World* put it "The working class delivered the goods". In housing estates in Ballyfermot, Mulhuddart and Tallaght over 65% voted in favour.

Ten years previously, many older working class areas voted against divorce. The shift in working class consciousness is happening at the same time that the main political parties and feel that they have gone far enough with the liberal agenda.

Factor

It is fairly easy to see why. For all their dislike for the way the Bishops encroached on their personal freedoms and lifestyles, most of the Dail politicians understand that the Church has been a major factor for stability in the South.

They want to push back its 'sphere of influence' -- but they do not want to break its power in Irish society.

The approach of

all liberals is to separate political issues from economic issues. It is an artificial divide that capitalism always tries to reinforce.

Fintan O'Toole ends up mirroring this approach. He operates within the traditional 'stages approach' that used to characterise the Irish left.

This argued that before the class struggle could really begin it was first necessary to deal with the Church-State issue.

This was done through left wing parties joining either Fine Gael or Fianna Fail in Coalition.

Now that it has been achieved, there can be a return to the agenda of economic equality.

(The same argument about the North, by the way, used to come from the republican left)

Unfortunately for Fintan, neither the Labour or Democratic Left politicians show any desire to behave according to these schemas.

Managing capitalism was, and still is, far more important to them than economic equality.

And it is precisely their concern to manage that system that prevents them from carrying through any further fights with the Bishops.

The most startling conclusion that O'Toole comes to is that we have gone a long way towards "making the Republic for the first time a recognisable democracy in which power does genuinely derive from the people".

Tell it to the PAYE workers who will pay the £100 million fine to the E.U. for the crimes of the Irish beef barons which he exposed so well in his book, *Meanwhile Back on the Ranch*.

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£100,000.

The total amount stolen was nearly £30 million.

This led one senior Garda to acknowledge that

"it is a real possibility that the illegal gains from white collar crime far exceeds the gains from the much more acknowledged and feared areas of robbery, burglary and larceny."

Tories on their last legs but...

Would Blair be any different?

The Tory government in Britain is on its last legs with opinion polls showing that Major is a hated and despised figure.

When he took over from Thatcher, this merchant banker presented himself as 'the boy from Brixton' who was working for a 'classless society'.

Today it is a cruel joke. Although corporate profits have risen by £32 billion since 1992, there is no great sign of extra investment.

Instead the rich pay themselves ever higher dividends for doing nothing more than owning shares.

No wonder there is a huge impatience to see a Labour government under Tony Blair. But what would this government look like? What can modern Labour parties really offer their supporters today?

In the course of a recent speech to businessmen in Singapore, Blair set out to give some answers when he unveiled his vision of a 'stakeholder' society.

Blair has taken the term from a hugely popular book in Britain, *The State We are In*, by Will Hutton, the Guardian economics correspondent.

Crisis

The book gives a devastating description of the crisis at the heart of British society. It details the growing class divide and the destruction wrought by the 'market reforms' in healthcare and social services.

But it was far weaker when it came to solutions. Hutton's alternative was a 'stakeholder capitalism'. The government had to create a culture where every individual was given a stake in society.

Companies had to 'construct trust relations with groups of workers'. Instead of paying out high dividends they had to re-invest in machinery and the training of their workers.

At the centre of Hutton's analysis was a view that British capitalism was peculiarly bad because the financial centres of the City of London were encouraging a get-rich-quick short term outlook.

As an alternative he looked to economies like Japan where there was an emphasis on long-term growth, training of workers and a policy of 'social partnership'.

Hutton ignored the fact that capitalism is based on relentless competition and exploitation and that this leads to a boom-slump cycle where vast resources are wasted.

Behind the rhetoric of



British Labour Party leader Tony Blair



Miners' leader and left-winger Arthur Scargill

trust and partnership, Japan's workers have the longest working hours of all the developed world's economies.

Their economy is now in the grip of the longest recession since the Second World War, with thousands being laid off.

Blair's proposals are far more vague than even Hutton's. He talks about 'empowerment' but never says how it will happen exactly.

He wants Britain's capitalists to move away from a low skill, low pay strategy—but he refuses to legislate for a £4.15 minimum wage.

Blair is terrified about being identified with the un-

ions and only talks about individuals getting a greater stake.

Bosses

In reality he ends up with a plea to the capitalists to behave like the old style paternalistic bosses of the 19th century.

There will be no legislation to push them; there will be no extra tax on their profits to garner funds for public investment.

There is only an appeal for them to think of the public good rather than their own profit.

The pathetic quality of Blair's proposals was shown

when he held up Marks and Spencer as an example of a 'stakeholder' company.

These sharks have recently been exposed for paying Moroccan workers 20p an hour and importing their produce under the label 'Made in Britain'.

His choice only showed that asking capitalists to think of the public good is like requesting lions to take up sheep shearing.

Today many hope desperately for a Blair led government.

But the vague rhetoric will turn into attacks on his own supporters tomorrow—just as surely as Dick Spring's did.

REVOLUTIONARIES AND ELECTIONS

REVOLUTIONARIES take a different attitude to elections than Scargill's new party.

We are for contesting elections because we see a need to provide a political alternative to the sell-out politics of Labour.

But the aim is not to use parliament to bring about real change. In-

stead we see the electoral contest and the winning of a parliamentary seat only as a platform to encourage people to fight themselves.

This is why the full resources of the party are not geared to preparing for election—but rather to deepening the struggles that take place daily.

What does Scargill offer?

ARTHUR Scargill, the miners leader has announced the formation of an alternative party to Blair's, the Socialist Labour Party.

He is putting forward a candidate in a bye-election in the safe Labour seat of Hemsworth which takes place on February 1st.

His decision came after Blair dropped the famous Clause 4 which advocated public ownership of industry.

"Socialist Labour is born out of the frustration and anger trade union and labour movement activists who feel disenfranchised by New Labour," said Scargill.

Scargill now accepts that it is impossible to bring real change from inside the Labour Party. Some other left wingers, like Ken Livingstone, have attacked him for going into the political wilderness.

But throughout Britain there are thousands who hate the Tories but do not trust Blair. They want to see a real fightback against the class which the Tories stand for.

In Liverpool, for example dockers have been on unofficial strike for months and have become an inspiration for thousands throughout the country.

Scargill is absolutely right to leave Labour—but the real question is what sort of an alternative is he pro-

viding.

And here there are problems. Scargill's aim is to build a party that is mainly geared to the elections.

He has announced that he wants the party to "fight in every parliamentary seat".

This suggests that he sees parliament as the real focus of change in society—rather than building a workers movement which builds its power through strikes and demonstrations outside parliament.

Labourism

While Scargill is leaving the Labour Party he has not broken from labourism. At the heart of his project is an idea that there once was a 'Golden Age' of old Labour, when it stood for the working class.

In fact Labour Parties have always been committed to running capitalism.

Nor is there a definite answer to the question of whether the capitalist system can be reformed by using the existing state—or whether it has to be overthrown by a revolution from below.

The emphasis on electioneering has consequences for how Scargill sets about

building the party. In reality, it will push him towards looking for union officials who use some left wing rhetoric outside workplaces—while going along with sell-outs to the bosses inside. Scargill, for example, has refused to openly criticise Bill Morris for not making the Liverpool dockers strike official.

This is a dangerous road. In 1992, when the Tory Minister Heseltine launched his final offensive to close down many pits there was a mood in Britain to call a general strike.

But Scargill failed to do this in case it would upset his allies among the left wing union officials.

The focus on electoralism is also a tactical disaster, at the present time. Millions of workers are willing to swallow their suspicions about Blair because they are desperate to be rid of the Tories.

Standing candidates in marginal seats where Labour is challenging Tories is therefore a mistake. It is necessary instead to recognise that workers will learn from their own experience about why there is a need to confront Blair. A party that starts the argument with Blair now while relating to workplaces struggles will make far greater gains in the future.

comment

The Car, the Bus and the By-Pass

HOW IS it that money spent on building roads is 'investment in infrastructure' but if the same money is spent on public transport it is called a 'subsidy'?

Over the five years up to 1995, the Irish government has been allocated £2,611 million from European funds to improve the transport system.

They choose to spend the vast bulk of the money on roads—63% of the total, in fact. On the other hand, the LUAS tram system for Dublin and other public transport initiatives account for only 13%.

Much of this spending on roads could be justified by the fact that outside the main cities, people live in scattered areas throughout the country. As a result the only realistic way of doing the shopping or bringing kids to school is by the car.

However, the big money is not being spent on these smaller secondary roads. As any car user will tell you, the size of potholes in some counties is still the stuff legends are made of. Spending on roads is largely going on by-passing congested towns such as Leixlip, Maynooth and Kilcock on the Dublin-Galway road. Fortunately many of these by-passes do not have the same negative effects on the environment that the Newbury by-pass has in Britain.

This has become the centre of a major protest with the Tory Roads minister John Watts making his usual denunciation of "anarchists who have taken the law into their own hands".

The Newbury by-pass travels through three areas of internationally agreed areas of scientific interest.

Scandal

The biggest scandal in Ireland on road building has probably been the by-pass in Co Kildare. The most logical route for this by-pass would probably have been straight through the estate owned by Tony O'Reilly for weekend retreats. Instead the new road was routed around O'Reilly's estate.

The poor state of the roads which made journeys longer and more dangerous explains why there has been so little protest in Ireland at the road building programme. The low ownership rate of cars also means that this country has not reached the road building craze in Britain.

If anything, therefore, socialists should remain opposed to proposals to

bring in tolls on the new roads. These have been welcomed by environmental groups like the Green Party.

But as their support for water charges, indicates the Greens never bother with the class effects of such charges. In reality the people most effected by tolls are those on low incomes who need a car to get to and from work.

However, while not blindly opposing every road development, socialists still need to insist on the particular benefits of public transport.

There should be more investment in railways so that there is a cheap, energy efficient, non-polluting alternative to the car.

There should be an integrated transport policy that links buses, rail and roads in order to cut back on car usage. This could help to reduce the incidence of diseases like asthma.

Stands

It simply stands to reason that if you provide cheap, safe, regular transport, a bus or tram can carry roughly 70 people. This is compared to the average of 1.3 persons per car.

In the past, many European and American cities, including Dublin, had a tram system. However the tracks were often torn up in the 1950s with a little gentle pressure from petrol companies who wanted to encourage the car.

The proposed LUAS electric tram system for Dublin is to be welcomed. The Tallaght and Dundrum lines will make it easier to get in and out of the city centre. The real issue is how is it to be run.

In Manchester, the tram system has been privatised and is quite expensive to use.

In France, though, the trams get big subsidies from the government and employers are required to pay their workers public transport costs.

The danger with LUAS is that it will be pressurised to balance the books rather than provide a service. If that is the case, the promised service every six minutes at peak times will be impossible. The trams will not be cleaned after every journey. Prices will rise continually.

Fighting for a decent transport system in the end will mean opposing the logic of the capitalist market.

Susan O'Connell

film:

Seven deadly sins but no fun!

by RUTH O'CONNOR

It was pure LUST, one of the seven deadly sins, that brought me to see actor Brad Pitt in the film "Seven".

But this movie, about a serial killer murdering sinners, is also a defeatist film that accepts the evils of society without question. It shows us how perverse and rotten modern society is and yet pretends that it is all inevitable.

Stereotype

It's the usual, overplayed, stereo-type-cop movie. You could almost write it yourself: Two cops; Morgan Freeman, Brad Pitt, one black, one white, one experienced, about to retire; one fiery, ambitious, new and not-so-experienced, etc.... and after a bit, come to grips with working together.

An important scene is one where both men are discussing the killer. The

older cop knows that the person they are looking for is well-read, calculating and not short of a few bob. Young Brad, on the other hand, reckons the killer is just another loony, who smears peanut-butter all over his naked body and leap-frogs while conjuring up suitable retribution to all his victims....

When confronting the killer face to face for the first time, he says "On the floor, you bastard, you sick f... He's rash, dismissive, and typical of a lot of right-wing elements in police forces worldwide.

Society

Indeed, so eager with ambition is he, that he never stops to consider what makes a person or



indeed a society as rotten as it appears.

The, movie isn't that bad. It's not a "lived-happily-ever-after" affair either. Some scenes are terrifying and the suspense will keep you at the edge of your seat and make you want to smoke at least 45 cigarettes, and of course there's Brad Pitt... what did he say about peanut butter?

book:

The monstrous tyranny of war

In a century that has seen many horrors the trench warfare of the First World War still stands out as one of the most horrific.

Millions of men, as the historian Eric Hobsbawm put it, "lived like, and with, rats and lice" waiting for the order to attack which would result in almost certain death or mutilation.

At Verdun in the six months from February to July 1916 there were over two million casualties. Sixty thousand were killed on the first day of the British offensive at the Somme.

And in all those years of bloody slaughter neither front line advanced by more than a couple of miles.

It is this period that is brilliantly captured in Pat Barker's trilogy of novels. The last published, *The Ghost Road*, won the 1995 Booker Prize.

The first book, *Regeneration*, is centered in a mental hospital for shell shocked officers. The second, *The Eye in the Door*, is based in civilian Britain and depicts some of the working class opponents to the war. The third brings us back to the killing fields of France.

In all three a number of themes stand out. There is the madness of war - the madness of "the great ones of the earth... and the monstrous tyranny they have brought to birth".

The war is not only with the so called 'enemy'. Class society and its divisions continue. Shell shocked officers are sent to a mental hospital so that they can be made 'sane' enough to be sent back to the insanity of the trenches. But shell shocked soldiers were usually shot for cowardice or desertion.

In the early days class conflict lies hidden. But when it re-emerges the accumulated bitterness gives it greater strength.

All the old certainties for men and for women are challenged. "He's only to think for a second of the stinking yellow mud of the salient, that porridge in which the lumps were human bodies, or parts of them, for an impassable barrier to come between his mind and these words."

Thousands of women went to replace the men in the war industries. They worked in terrible conditions. But for the first time in their lives they had a taste of independence. Their confidence and hopes are beautifully captured in the comment of one woman to her friends. "I'm going to get myself some false teeth, and I'm going to have a bloody good time".

But most of all there is a sense of the end of an era, of no going back to the old society. And it is this that makes these novels so powerful and contemporary.

The First World War ended with a revolutionary wave of working class struggle across Europe. With horrific wars still a feature of the world today these novels give us a glimpse of the possibilities of the future. Highly recommended.

Regeneration: £5.99
The Eye in the Door: £5.99
The Ghost Road: £15.00 (published in paperback soon) by PAT BARKER

-Willy Cumming

music:

Bruce Springsteen: The Ballard of Tom Joad

Ten years ago Bruce Springsteen was singing about the end of the American dream. In *Born in the USA* he sang about an unemployed Vietnam veteran, about the loss of faith in a system that promised equal opportunities to get rich but only gave equal opportunities to be poor.

The title of his new album comes from the main character in John Steinbeck's classic novel about the great depression, "The Grapes of Wrath".

The novel told the story of the thousands who were exploited and robbed by big business and the banks in the 1930s. Many had to travel as migrant workers to California, where their hopes of a better life, fed by the lies of the bosses, turned to dust.

Springsteen sings about how, in the 1990s the lives of the poor and the working classes are once more being decimated by the ravages of the system.

While his earlier work suggested there was still some place where the American dream could still be found, if only in the ordinary lives of work-

ing class people, his songs now carry a bitter aftertaste...

"In a cardboard box near the underpass

Got a one-way ticket to the promised land."



Bruce Springsteen

He sings about migrant workers and border patrolmen, immigrant kids running drugs to make enough money to live, of people riding freight lines in search of work, just as they'd done in the Depression.

And his songs, in the tradition of Woody Guthrie, have hit a nerve.

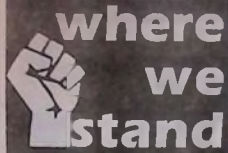
There is a socialist tradition in the United States, and a tradition of fightback among workers that Springsteen sometimes hints at but never really makes clear.

In the midst of the great depression, Flint auto workers gave the world a lesson in the tactic of the sit-down strike.

If Springsteen's new album sounds a bit pessimistic, it's because he hasn't really recognised the enormous potential for fightback among the American working classes yet.

Who needs the American dream when we can have international socialism?

-Catherine Curran



Workers create all the wealth in capitalist society. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be reformed out of existence. Parliament cannot be used to end the system. The courts army and police are there to defend the interests of the capitalist class not to run society in a neutral fashion.

To destroy capitalism, workers need to smash the state and create a workers' state based on workers' councils.

FOR REAL SOCIALISM, EAST AND WEST

The SWP welcomed the break-up of the USSR and the end of the East European dictatorships. These states were not socialist but were run by a state-capitalist class. We are against the domination of the globe by imperialist powers and we oppose their wars. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We stand for: free contraception and free, legalised abortion and the right to divorce; the complete separation of church and state, an end to church control over schools and hospitals; an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians; an end to racism and anti-traveller bigotry.

We argue for working class unity in the fight against oppression.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH:

Northern Ireland is a sectarian state, propped up by the British Army. Catholic workers are systematically discriminated against by the state. The division between Catholic and Protestant workers weakens the whole working class.

Workers' unity can only be won and maintained in a fight to smash both the Northern and Southern states.

We stand for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Violence will only end when workers unite in the fight for a workers' republic.

FOR A FIGHTING TRADE UNION MOVEMENT:

Trade unions exist to defend workers' interests. But the union leaders' role is to negotiate with capitalism - not to end it. We support the leaders when they fight but oppose them when they betray workers. We stand for independent rank and file action.

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY:

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party. This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. The SWP aims to build such a party in Ireland.

news & reports—politics; the unions—

Nurses

Militant nurses' rallies build for strikes

NURSES' unions have been holding regional rallies to build for industrial action over pay. At the first meeting in Cork, latecomers stopped to exclaim 'Oh My God' when they saw the size of the meeting. Around 900 nurses, many still in uniform had turned up.

The mood was overwhelmingly militant.

When one of the nurses' leaders indicated that they might not win the full claim, a speaker from the floor told him:

"There's no need to talk of backtracking. We've all four unions here, united. You're bargaining from a position of strength."

The four nurses' unions, SIPTU, INO, IMPACT and PNA want limited industrial action to begin on a regional basis from early March.

But speakers from the floor called for more militant action.

When one woman asked, *"Why were they waiting before bringing everyone out?"* she got thunderous applause.

After a reply from the platform, another stood up: *"You said no one wanted to go on strike. Well you are wrong. I do."* Big cheers. Then another asked, *"Why don't we do what they did in the ESB. Just walk out!"*

Nurses are looking for an increase to £21,000 from the current £17,000 maximum pay after nine years qualified service.

Health is one of the biggest items in the budget and

over the last few years has been a prime target for cheese paring.

Low Pay

The health service is facing a crisis of overcrowding, underfunding and understaffing and low pay. Health workers are taking the brunt of this and are angry.

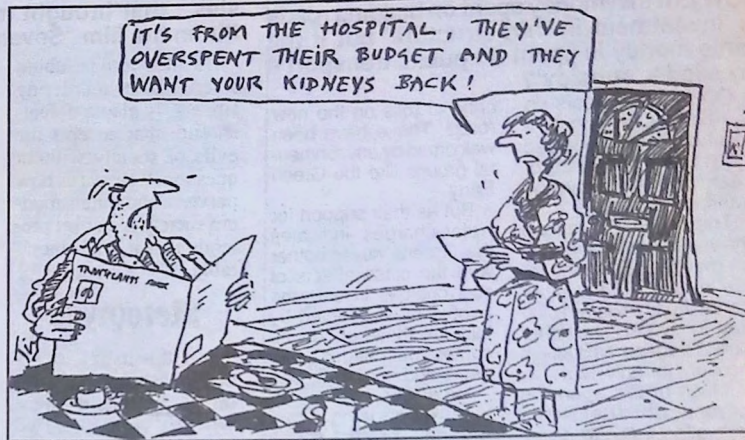
One nurse told *Socialist*

Worker: "I can see an explosion in 1996. The immediate big issue is pay. Nurses are seeing their standard of living going down."

"People are paying for everything and getting nothing, because even our low earnings put us above the medical card limit."

"People are bloody angry. At the last union meeting there was three times the attendance of the previous meetings."

"Before, people would say we can't take action because of mortgages and kids—to day there is none of that. People are boiling".



'It's about conditions as well'

NURSES are angry that their pay levels have fallen behind other workers who have gained from promotions over the years.

But as well as pay, they are bitter about the way in which successive governments have run down the health service.

"The health service is a scandal. It is so underfunded that it relies on voluntary agencies to keep it going. Every nurse knows of scandals, human tragedies, from their own direct experience" one nurse told *Socialist Worker*.

"I know of cases where management closed a ward to reduce the budget and simply crowded the patients into another part of the hospital. We

families cannot afford it. The old person is left at home and the strain on the whole family causes more stress, more misery, more breakdown.

"There's a neighbour of mine retired out of the council with a bad heart. He was told five years ago he was fifth in line for bypass surgery. Last week he was still waiting and was told he was now 55th in line!"

Socialist Worker spoke to a psychiatric nurse in a Dublin hospital.

"Everybody is behind the claim. And they are prepared to fight. The last decent pay rise we got was in 1980 and we had to fight for it then."

Since then our conditions have deteriorated," she said. But nurses are not just concerned about wages. Low pay in the rest of the service is affecting conditions generally.

Domestic

"We only have one domestic to look after the kitchen, floors, toilets. We need another but the health board won't pay. And when they advertise for domestics, applications are down. Why should someone lose their medical card for wages that are barely above the dole?"

"We are short-staffed and always under pressure. In my

geriatric unit we have 25 patients and we have to look after them with just five staff nurses, which is obviously not enough."

"I think the environment of the patients is suffering from too little funding in the health service."

With that and the low pay, unsocial hours and low morale there is a mood now to fight for a decent pay rise."

A student nurse agreed: *"Student nurses have to exist on £5,058 a year."*

"We are supposed to be superannuated and observing but of course we are got to cover up for staff shortages."

SWP branch meetings—all welcome

BELFAST
Meets every Wednesday at 8pm Penny Farthing Bar Central Belfast Jan 31st.

Drugs, What is the solution?; Feb 7th: The politics of 'family values'

CORK
Meets every Tuesday at 8pm in Dennehy's Pub, Cornmarket St. Jan 30th: Public Meeting: Is Socialism Possible? (See Posters for venue); Tues Feb 6th: Lessons of the Russian Revolution

DERRY
Meets every Tuesday in Badgers Bar at 8pm Jan 30th: The politics of 'family

values'; Feb 6th: Can the RUC become a 'police service'?

BRAY
Meets every Monday at 8pm in Mayfair Hotel. Jan 29th: Do we support Irish culture?; Feb 5th: Is Ireland becoming more violent?

DUBLIN NORTH-WEST
Meets every Tuesday at 8pm in The Old Brogue, Dorset St. Jan 30th: Is Ireland becoming more violent? Feb 6th: What is revolution?

DUBLIN ARTANE/COOLOCK
Meets every Tuesday at 8pm in the Artane/Beaumont

Family Recreation Centre, Kilmore Rd. Jan 30th: Is Ireland becoming more violent? Feb 6th: What is revolution? .

DUBLIN DRIMNAGH
Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in the Bentley Pub, Drimnagh Road Jan 30th: Is religion the opium of the people?; Feb 7th: Five years after the Gulf War.

DUBLIN NORTH CENTRAL
Meets every Wednesday at 8pm in Conways, Parnell St. Jan 31st: Can there be a settlement in the North?; Feb 7th Five Years after Gulf War;

DUBLIN RATHMINES
Meets every Wednesday at 8pm in O'Connells Pub, Richmond Street. Feb 1st: Is Ireland becoming more violent? Feb 8th: What is revolution?

DUBLIN SOUTH-CENTRAL
Meets every Thursday at 8pm in Trinity Inn, Pearse St. Jan 30th: Is Ireland becoming more violent? Feb 6th: What is revolution?

DUBLIN TALLAGHT/CLONDALKIN
Meets every Wednesday at 8.00pm, Clondalkin Sports & Leisure centre, Jan 31st: Is Ireland becoming more violent? Feb 7th: What is

revolution?

DUN LAOGHAIRE
Meets every Tuesday at 8pm in Smyths Pub. Jan 31st: 5 years after the Gulf War; Feb 6th: Religion: The opium of the people?

GALWAY
Meets every Thursday at 6pm in Currans Hotel, Eyre Square Feb 1st Public Meeting: Is Socialism Possible.

MAYNOOTH
Meets every Thursday at 6pm in Class Hall D, Arts Block, Maynooth College, Feb 1st: Marx versus Weber: Who are the working class? Feb 8th: The politics of 'family values'

WATERFORD
Meets every Thursday at

8pm in ATGWU Hall, Keiser St. Feb 1st Public Meeting: Is

Socialism Possible? Feb 8th 5 years after the Gulf war;

JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

If you want to join *Socialist Worker*, fill in this form and send it to: PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, Tel: (01) 872 2682

Name

Address.....

.....

Phone.....

★ There are *Socialist Worker* members in:

ENNISKILLEN;
COLERAINE;
LURGAN; CAVAN;
DONEGAL; NAAS;
LIMERICK; KILKENNY;
DUNDALK; ATHLONE;
DROGHEDA.

If you would like to get in touch, contact our national office at (01) 872 2682, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

Socialist Worker

Public Meetings

Is Socialism possible?

- Cork: Thurs 31 Jan, 8.00pm, See posters for details of venue
- Waterford: Thurs 31 Jan, 8.00pm, ATGWU Hall, Keizer St
- Galway: Thurs 31 Jan, See posters for details of venue

send in your reports telephone: (01) 872 2682, fax: (01) 872 3838

CIVIL SERVICE

Action against jobs embargo

THE CIVIL and Public Servants Union is organising a half day stoppage for February 21 against the government's embargo on jobs.

After that they will ban overtime and adopt a policy of non-cooperation.

"This government is trying to make life difficult for a low paid workforce.

"They think that we will cover for absent workers.

"We are just not putting up with it", one CPSU activist told *Socialist Worker*.

In dole offices and tax offices, the workload is now set to in-

crease.

Promotion prospects in the civil service have virtually dried up.

Stuck

If, for example, a clerical officer's post is vacant, it will not be filled and lower grades cannot move.

Thousands of workers would be stuck on yellow pack wages.

The FUGÉ union which organises cleaners and security staff at Government buildings has also claimed that the embargo will lead to greater use of contract staff.

Instead of providing permanent

jobs, managers will use the excuse of the embargo to take on part-time and casual staff.

With nurses balloting for strike action and ESB workers deciding whether they should accept a new package of cuts, the public sector could be in for major battles in the Spring.

Cadbury vote for strike ballot

A GENERAL meeting of production workers in Cadbury's in Dublin voted by a huge majority in favour of a ballot for strike action.

Union representatives say the ballot will be taken within the next two weeks.

The reason for the proposed strike stems from the company's plans for on-going change in production

in the factory.

After the company "contracted out" the transport in Cadbury's, drivers were given compensation payments for loss of overtime and bonuses.

The unions claimed that under a productivity

deal all workers should receive compensation for on-going change and looked for a monetary settlement for all production workers.

Conditions

The Labour Court recently recommended against the workers in this and in another dispute at the plant and the workers will now be bal-

loted on industrial action.

The scale of the vote in favour of taking a ballot for industrial action gives an indication of the willingness of the workers at Cadbury to fight to maintain their jobs and the conditions they enjoy.

Management at Cadbury have been warning of major changes ahead and using the excuse of market forces for huge changes

in production which may be detrimental to jobs at the Coolock plant.

A recent unofficial stoppage by craft workers in Cadbury's was a direct result of the on-going change demanded by the bosses.

It is in the interests of all workers at Cadbury to unite and resist any attempts by management to reduce their conditions or attack their jobs.

Eastern Health Board workers fight over pensions

WORKERS IN the Eastern Health Board are getting ready to take strike action to win a decent pension scheme.

At present they only get a mere £23 on top of the state pension. And this is after paying into a pension scheme for 40 years.

One hospital worker told *Socialist Worker*, "We are working under a superannuation scheme that became law in 1956. And they think that we should be treated like our parents were forty years ago.

"We have fallen way behind other workers on this issue. The explosion in France before Christmas shows just how important the issue of pensions has become"

The government has never started real negotiations about the claim. Instead they have stalled and stalled.

When workers were last balloted on the issue, there was a huge vote of 17 to 1 in favour of action. But the union leaders claimed that not enough people turned out and so a new ballot is being held.

All indications are that there will be an overwhelming YES vote for action.

The action starts off with a four hour stoppage on Thursday 15th February between 11.00 am and 3.00pm repeated eight days later and leading to a 24 hour strike at the end of the month. But to be successful the action must escalate quickly.

TEAM Aer Lingus bosses ban union card check

SHOP stewards in TEAM Aer Lingus were given another taste of the company's nastiness last week.

Full-time union officials were refused permission to enter the hangars in Dublin Airport in January in order to check for union cards with contract workers after shop stewards had been denied facility time.

Agreement

The use of contract work at TEAM is widespread but the company has an agreement with the unions that "only trade union labour will be used".

In fact it is a condition of employment in Aer Lingus that you "must hold membership of a trade union".

Ignoring

TEAM bosses have been ignoring this section of their many agreements with the unions. Last November a serious dispute broke out when the company engaged non-union contract workers.

ANTI WATER CHARGES CAMPAIGN:

Keep up the protests and don't trust the judges

LIVELY protests were mounted over the last month as Dublin's County Councils attempted to have Water Charge non-payers cut-off.

In Balbriggan Judge De Lap, who in November complained of "childish" protests outside his court, adjourned all the cases before him after his ordering a disconnection sparked a noisy protest of 70 people.

In Dun Laoghaire a lively demonstration was mounted outside the court as more cases were adjourned and dismissed.

In a new move South Dublin County Council are now summoning non-payers under the Civil Process for Recovery of Debt.

This process would not involve a court ordering disconnection of water supply. Instead the court could order the non-payer to pay by instalments—and face jail if they refused.

Or the court could grant an order for a Sher-

iff to seize goods from the non-payer's home to pay the bill and costs.

At a recent meeting of Dublin Water Charges Federation, campaign leaders emphasised the legal confusion the courts have got into. They are looking for a suitable case to take to the High Court. They hope this could tie up Councils for months while the legal issues are resolved.

Welcome

But while everyone who opposes water charges will welcome any spanner in the legal works, the over-emphasis of the legal possibilities could demobilise the campaign.

Patsy Cronin, a water charges activist from Ballinteer told *Socialist Worker*:

"At the end of the day you can't win in the courts. The government has given the councils all the legal powers. It is mass action and protests on the streets that will win this issue."

Patsy is quite right. The legal system is designed

to suit the rich, not to dispense fair play to all.

Patsy continued: "It is not a question of legal technicalities or even making a case of hardship—I am not prepared to pay because of the inequality in this country.

"I think this is true of thousands of others. Look at Larry Goodman and the tax amnesty. It is the PAYE worker that has been stuck with this new tax."

On the threat of prison implied by the Councils' use of the Civil Process for Recovery of Debt, Patsy has no doubt:

"I would be prepared to go to jail. With mass non-payment and the feeling being what it is I can see a lot of us knocking on the doors of Mountjoy!"

Activity

Anti water charges campaigners in the localities need to:

■ Keep up regular activities that draw in as many people as possible.

For example picketing Council meetings and politicians surgeries;

■ Get the support of local shop stewards and trade unionists. In Waterford last year it was the support of local trade unionists that was crucial in building opposition to attempts to cut-off water to residents.

■ Maintain regular meetings of the campaign locally to keep up morale. Write to the local paper putting the arguments.

■ Build for an all Dublin demonstration to be called in March by the Campaign federation.

Liverpool dockers still need solidarity

FIVE HUNDRED sacked dockers in Liverpool are still fighting to keep their jobs. They are receiving tremendous solidarity from workers all over the world. Ships which have been loaded by scabs in Liverpool are still being blacked in Australia, Spain, the USA and Israel.

Management in Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has been forced to negotiate, but talks have led nowhere and have been postponed again until the end of the month.

Promises

Bill Morris, the leader of the dockers' union, the TGWU, still refuses to make the strike official and, despite promises before Christmas from Morris that the union would set up a hardship fund, the dockers have not had a penny from the union.

■ Send donations to: Jimmy Davies, Merseyside Port Shop Stewards, 19 Scorton St, Liverpool, L6 4AS, (Cheques made to: "Merseyside Dockers Shop Stewards Appeal Fund")

Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 40p

inside:

Will Labour's Tony Blair be any different?
—page 8

Yeltsin has blood on his hands
—page 5

DECOMMISSIONING:

Who are the real hypocrites?



Tories: No troop reductions

THE Mitchell Committee on De-Commissioning started from one idea: the central problem in Northern Ireland was the fact that para-military groups had arms.

They completely ignored the dangers posed by the British army and the RUC.

But the reality is that Northern Ireland is still an armed camp.

Only 1,600 British soldiers have left the North since the ceasefires. This leaves 16,500 still here. Tory Defence Minister Michael Portillo has said that, "There are no immediate plans for further reductions".

Notorious

The Tories have even announced that the notorious Parachute Regiment is to return to Northern Ireland later this year after being withdrawn after the ceasefire.

The RUC still operates under regulations which give them a free hand to fire live bullets. Last

month, for example, they tried to assassinate a joy-rider in Belfast.

They came close to car-

rying out another Karen Reilly style execution.

Brutality

As if this brutality were not enough, they are now considering adding pepper sprays and 'extended truncheons' to

their deadly arsenal.

Socialists agree that real peace will only be possible in Northern Ireland when the groups that helped to cause the conflict disarm.

But top of the list has to be the forces of the Northern state.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DE-COMMISSIONED

If Northern Ireland is to return to even a semblance of normality there are many items that need to be de-commissioned immediately.

■ **Plastic Bullets:** According to the RUC "273 plastic baton rounds have been fired by police and six by the military since the ceasefire".

On the 12th and 13th August 1995 six people were injured by plastic bullets in Belfast and Derry protesting against Orange parades.

■ **New Police Stations:** 1995 sees a new police station built on the Lisburn Road in Belfast, a new se-

curity base built in Newtownhamilton in South Armagh and a new superbase on Belfast's Springfield Road.

What do they want all these bases for if they really want peace?

■ **Interrogation Centres:** Last year the UN Committee on Human Rights asked the government to use the ceasefire as an opportunity to close Castlereagh. The Tory government shows no intention of doing so.

Republicans under pressure

THE Mitchell Commission was designed to put the republicans under pressure. Both the British and Irish government want them to pay a price to enter the politics of the establishment.

They insist that they give up their weapons in order to humiliate them. They want them to agree to the 'principle of consent'—even though most nationalists never consented to be part of the Northern state.

But even if they agree to all these items, the prospect facing them is a Northern state where there is a re-balancing of interests between the Catholic and Protestant middle classes.

The republicans were right to drop the armed struggle. The problem is that their alliance with Washington and Dublin has brought them nothing.

Going forward now means recognising that Catholic and Protestant have a common class interest. Both sections of the working class face poverty, bad wages and unemployment.

And the plans of the British and Irish governments are only to modernise the sectarian structures—so that workers stay divided.

Workers unity can be forged—but it won't be automatic. It will take a set of socialist politics that owes no allegiance to the Irish or British states.