

Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 40p

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for the Left**

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THE RICH ARE THE REAL SCROUNGERS

Refugees

are



**HARNEY TURNS ON
SINGLE MOTHERS
AND IMMIGRANTS**

welcome

here!

SIX HUNDRED immigrants and refugees are to be deported from Ireland following a racist campaign whipped up during the General Election.

Every socialist and trade unionist should oppose this disgraceful move.

Irish people have emigrated all over the world. Some fled political per-

secution—others had to work as 'illegals' in countries like America.

The right wing politicians in Fianna Fail and the PDs have whipped up an hysteria against refugees. It is no coincidence that they have also tried to scapegoat single parents and attack public sector workers

Refugees who come here are more than will-

ing to work. But they are prevented from getting employment because of absurd laws.

The real scroungers in Ireland are the wealthy who get £1 billion every year in hand-outs from the Irish taxpayer. That is where we our anger should be turned.

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what we think

Ahern and Harney:

We can take on this weak, rightwing government

BERTIE AHERN and Mary Harney will lead the next government. But they cannot claim to have a massive mandate as Fianna Fail got its second lowest vote since 1932 and the PDs returned as a battered and bruised party.

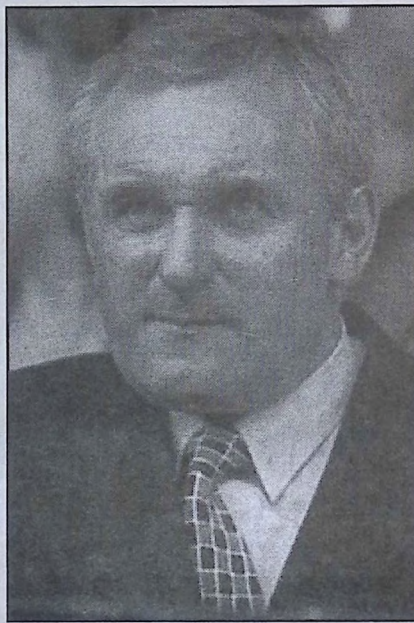
Although their differences with the Rainbow Coalition were marginal, the FF/PD alliance presented themselves as the more right wing and conservative force.

Harney in particular has called for 25,000 jobs to be cut in the public sector.

She tried to stir up a vicious campaign against single parents while others such as Liz O'Donnell attempted to scapegoat refugees.



Harney and Ahern



Wealthy

Both parties are committed to tax cuts which will mainly benefit their wealthy supporters. Ahern, for example, out did Ruairi Quinn by promising a 10% tax rate for business, rather than 12%.

They have both claimed there is too much public spending.

Both the Rainbow and the FF/PD alliance were

committed to more attacks on workers.

But with Mary Harney occupying a pivotal position we can expect those attacks to be carried out with greater gusto.

Fianna Fail will attempt to cover for these attacks with populist rhetoric.

Throughout the election they used the issue of crime to try, unsuccessfully, to rebuild their working class base to what it

was before.

Ahern has also promised the bigots yet another referendum on abortion.

Support

This is a crude attempt to win support of "independent" politicians like Harry Blaney. It was Blaney who led the campaign against the opening of a vasectomy clinic in Donegal.

But none of this will restore Fianna Fail's image as the party of 'the plain people of Ireland'.

Their votes did not pick up even though there was massive disillusionment with Labour.

The days when they commanded massive support from the working class are over.

We are facing a weak right wing government whose policies lead to more attacks on workers. As long as we keep an eye on the union leaders, they can be beaten back.

Why did Labour lose?

'The Independent Newspapers are to blame for our defeat'. This is the popular excuse used by the Labour TDs who got a hammering at the polls.

The Independent Group of Newspapers do have a near monopoly on the press in Ireland, publishing not only the Irish Independent but also the *Sunday World*, the *Daily Star*, the *Evening Herald* and part owning the *Sunday Tribune*. Indeed, four out of five newspapers sold on Sunday are owned or partially owned by this group.

And despite the pretense at press freedom, the newspapers do reflect the ideas of their owner Tony O'Reilly. Last year O'Reilly earned a staggering £40 million—that is over £200,000 a day.

Turned

He wants even more tax cuts for the rich and to see the bitterness in Irish society turned onto groups like the single parents and refugees. This is why the columns of his papers promote the most pernicious right wing ideas.

But none of this explains why Labour lost so badly. The huge vote Labour got in 1992 was not attributed

to support received from the Independent group—so how could their defeat be simply caused by newspaper articles now?

Labour's support in the opinion polls was declining long before the Irish Independent front page editorial appeared calling for a FF/PD vote.

The reality is that Labour lost because they sold out their own supporters. They stood over tax amnesties, covered for Bruton when he lied to the McCracken tribunal, implemented job cuts in Aer Lingus and ESB.

Irish history has shown that every time Labour makes a break through as they did in 1943, 1969 and 1992 they throw it away again.

The party only wins votes when it starts to voice opposition to the privileged—but then it throws away that support because it uses its votes to enter Coalitions with right wing parties.

It is not the Independent which caused Labour's collapse—but its own record of betrayal.

EMU: Single currency in turmoil

Plans for a single European currency by 1999 are in turmoil.

Germany, which up to now has been the powerhouse behind the idea, looks like it may not be able to meet the criteria for entry.

These state that countries which do not limit their budget deficit to less than 3 percent of their GDP are not supposed to be allowed in.

The German state tried at first to re-value its gold reserves to get around this but was told by its central bank that it had to bring in another package of £7.4 billion in cuts.

In France, a socialist government has been elected on a promise that it will not bring in the austerity needed to meet the

criteria for a single currency.

The plans for a single currency have run aground because European capitalism is in major difficulties.

Major

5 million more people have joined the unemployment queues in recent years as the jobless rate reaches 12% in countries like Germany.

As the economic difficulties grow, each national government seeks to gain additional advantages for its own capitalists.

Originally the Euro currency was designed to help bring about the final integration of European capitalism.

It was hoped that with an 'even playing field' gigantic European multi-nationals could arise to compete with

those of the USA and Japan.

But capitalism is a system that is out of the control of national states or the Brussels bureaucracy. They had not bargained for a decade of far lower growth rates and increased signs of recession.

As their plans begin to fall apart, the economic crisis across Europe will deepen. And this is starting to have dramatic political effects. Everywhere the ideas of Thatcherism and free market economics are in retreat.

We are facing a period of intense struggle across Europe as the anarchy of the market leaves its effects on workers lives. It is in those struggles that the ideas of revolutionary socialism can be re-built.

France: a sign of things to come

Two years ago France was in the grip of right wing ideas. Chirac and Juppé had swept to power on the back of massive disillusionment with Mitterand's Socialist Party, (the equivalent to Ireland's Labour Party.)

The strongest Nazi party in Europe, Le Pen's National Front, was meeting little opposition as it kept on winning local council seats.

Today, there is a huge change in mood. And the main reason for the change has been a period of intense workers struggles which began with a series of general strikes in December 1995.

The working class which had been written off by many academic commentators as dead re-entered the stage. In many parts of France, the struggles reached a higher level than even during the May 1968 events, though the

political generalisation was far weaker.

One sign of the new mood was the landslide victory for the Socialist Party in the General Election. Unlike Blair in Britain, Jospin had to turn left to win votes. He promised a minimum wage, an end to austerity and a 35 hour week.

Another has been the growing opposition to Le Pen. After a huge demonstration outside the National Front conference in Strasbourg in April, Le Pen faces attacks from anti-fascists almost everywhere he meets.

The swing to the left holds important lessons for Ireland.

Fianna Fail and the PDs are committed to reducing public spending. They want to ease the tax burden on the upper middle class by cutting social welfare.

With two openly right parties in power, it is more likely that the discontent in the organised working class can break through into mass action if this government tries to implement its cuts.

The union leaders in the ICTU and SIPTU will do all in their power to stop this. They used to claim that social partnership is a way of stopping the New Right in the PDs having too much influence. But despite this excuse they worked closely with the last FF/PD government led by Haughey and Harney.

Refugees and racism in Ireland

by RICHARD WILMSEN

A CONCERTED campaign is underway in the media and among right wing politicians to attack refugees, claiming they are scroungers and that we have no room for them.

Politicians such as the PD's Liz O'Donnell and Helen Keogh have whipped up racism by associating immigrants with 'professional beggars'.

The Irish edition of the *News of the World* even ran a headline on 'Irish Race Riot Fear' and had an editorial on 'Slam door on the scroungers.'

All these attacks on refugees are based on a series of lies.

LIE 1: Ireland is not 'swamped' with refugees.

The body which deals with refugees, the Irish Refugee Council, has estimated that 1290 refugees arrived in Ireland between January and May of this year.

This can be compared to other countries such as tiny Slovakia, which had 250,000 refugees entering last year due to the war in Bosnia.

In Norway, which has a similar population to Ireland, 3,379 refugees entered the country in 1994.

In the same year Ireland granted refugee status to just 34 people.

Only a few years ago an average of 44,000 people were leaving Ireland every year.

LIE 2: Refugees do not receive massive handouts from the state.

They receive a weekly payment from the Eastern Health Board of £91.40, including Rent Allowance.

This is roughly the same amount as someone on the dole in Ireland.

As they are not allowed to work, this is their only income.

They are not even eligible for local authority housing.

LIE 3: The refugees are not 'spongers'.

They have fled the type of horror we have seen on our television screens in Rwanda and Bosnia.

If they return home many face torture and execution.

The real spongers in Ireland are business men like Larry Goodman who got £100 million in grants after he gave donations to Fianna Fail.



Protesting against racist restrictions in Britain

'Black people are being insulted on the street'

THOSE WORKING with refugees are very concerned about a rise in tension over the last few weeks.

According to Gary Quinn of the Cities Anti-Racism Project: "The real issue is racism. People do not know who is a refugee and who is not."

"Yet black people are being taunted on the streets."

"The media have been disgusting. They give the impression that the arrival of

foreigners always means conflict."

The racism is being stirred up by politicians who know that there is huge disillusionment with the establishment.

During the election, Colm McGrath, a Fianna Fail candidate in Dublin South-West, published an openly racist leaflet alleging that immigrants had been ritually slaughtering animals.

It is no surprise that this sort of propaganda has encouraged physical

attacks on immigrants on the streets.

FocusPoint reports that landlords have been refusing accommodation to African tenants.

Daubed

There are strong suspicions that an arson attack on the Sinclair House B&B in Hardwicke Street which houses refugees was started by racists.

Perhaps most worryingly, swastikas have been daubed on

immigrant's doors in Phibsboro, Dublin, suggesting that fascists are keen to exploit the situation to their advantage.

This ugly racism has to be combated.

Every year thousands of Americans, Australians and British people arrive in Ireland and no one says a word.

The attacks on refugees have become a code for attacking anyone who is of a different skin colour or are from outside the EU.

we think

SOCIALISTS do not believe that racism is 'natural' or caused by fear of people different from ourselves.

For thousands of years peoples of different colours and races lived together without assuming that one colour was superior to another.

The idea of white superiority came along with the birth of capitalism, when a set of ideas was needed to justify imperialist expansion across the world and the exploitation of indigenous people in mineral-rich parts of Africa.

Many of the most popular racist arguments around today—for example, that black people are lazy, ignorant or violent—can be traced back to the slave trade which pretended that black people were less than

human.

Instead of accepting the arguments of racial difference, socialists argue that racism divides workers along artificial lines.

Instead of fighting amongst ourselves for 'scarce' resources, we can have a world which provides more than enough for everyone.

Famine

Not only should political refugees have a right to come here but those who are seeking work should too.

Emigrants bring education, skills and the ability to work.

Irish people have always emigrated to make a better living elsewhere.

During and after the famine over one and a half mil-

lion 'economic migrants' left the country for the US and countries all over the world. Some were legal, others were illegal.

They emigrated because they had to follow the capital and wealth which created jobs. Today emigrants from other countries should have the same rights.

In a last ditch attempt to save its skin the Rainbow government announced that it was deporting 600 immigrants on the day of the General election. It was a disgusting attempt to buy votes by pandering to racism.

In Ireland we can learn a valuable lesson from the French.

On one of the massive demonstrations against public spending cuts at the end of 1995 the police arrested two Algerians and threatened to send them back to

Africa.

On one of the following demonstrations a new demand was made—that the two should be allowed stay in France.

As a consequence the de-

cision to deport them was reversed.

The solidarity of people in struggle, united under a common cause is the best way to oppose any attempts to whip up racism.

**Socialist Workers Party
Public Meetings**

**Refugees are welcome here
FIGHT RACISM**

**GALWAY: Monday 23rd June
8.00pm; Curran's Hotel, Eyre Square.**

**DUBLIN: Tuesday 24th June 8.00pm;
ATGWU Hall, Middle Abbey St.**

**CORK: Wednesday 25th June
8.00pm; Connolly Hall, Lapps Quay;.**

**WATERFORD: Thursday 26th June
8.00pm; ATGWU Hall, Keiser St.**

**A REFUGEE
SPEAKS OUT
'Why I
fled
tyranny'**

IT IS estimated that there are 15 million refugees around the world today.

Refugees are people who are granted the right to stay in another country owing to a well founded fear of persecution.

Socialist Worker spoke to Khalid, a Shi'a Muslim from Iraq.

He was granted asylum to stay in Ireland last month after a one and a half year wait.

I was active in the opposition movement in Iraq. We were protesting against the massive number of human rights abuses in my country.

"The army are in control in Iraq, and they have tanks and all sorts of weapons, but we have very little."

"My two brothers had already gone to England and been given asylum fourteen years ago, and I decided to join them."

"To get to the border with Iran we had to walk for fourteen hours through land which was covered with mines."

"Finally we made it to the camps on the other side and I was given a false passport."

Khalid's problems did not end when he reached Ireland.

"A man at the Department of Justice told me to go back to Russia because that is where I boarded a plane from."

"I met some friends from the opposition movement in Iraq and they helped me."

Principles

"All the time I was waiting to see if I would be allowed to stay in Ireland I wasn't allowed to work or study."

"I have a degree in Physics and I speak five languages. I left my family, my land, everything in Iraq because I was involved in the opposition."

"It wasn't for money that I did all this—it was for my principles."

Do the politicians who are attacking refugees want to see people sent back to be executed?

"I don't think it is the majority of Irish who are racist. I have a good relationship with people here."

"I am ready to speak out. For myself I don't care. My life has been full of dangerous moments."

"If the regime discover I am active in the opposition it will be horrible for my family."

"The regime have eyes everywhere."

Now granted asylum, Khalid is free to work in Ireland. But there are still restrictions on his freedom to lead a normal life.

If he moves house, for example, he has to report to the Gardai within 48 hours of moving to a new district.

And he feels he has lost years of his life which could have been spent contributing to his new society.

"Refugees should not just be granted asylum, but the right to lead a normal life."

"They should be allowed to work as soon as possible after submitting their application."

At the moment, refugees in Ireland are not allowed to work or study.

It can be up to five years or so before they find out if they are allowed to stay in Ireland.

Opposition to bigotry grows

The Orange Order has written a letter to each of the 1500 nationalist residents on the Garvaghy Road. It is a first admission by the Order that they don't have an automatic right to march wherever they want.

The Order claimed that their marches were not sectarian. But marches which have gone through Catholic areas like the Lower Ormeau Rd have taunted local residents about UVF murders at a local bookmakers.

Nevertheless the letter reflected the pressure of thousands of ordinary Protestants who want peace rather than another Drumcree.

The Unionist leaders are worried about their ability to stay in power if there was a lasting peace. They were frightened by the rhetoric of new parties like the PUP which de-

nounced the 'fur coat brigade'.

This is why they beat the Orange drum by insisting on their right to march through Garvaghy in 1995.

At that time Paisley and Trimble united in a deliberate move to raise sectarian tensions.

But this only produced a new determination among Catholics, work-

ing class and middle class alike, that there would be no return to Orange Rule.

Respect

Opinion polls that the majority of Protestant working people want to live in peace with, and to respect, their Catholic neighbours, workmates and friends.

The new questioning

about sectarianism was also seen at the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church which was held in Belfast at the start of June. Ministers and lay members at the Assembly spoke of their members' opposition to anti-Catholic bigotry.

A week later, the Methodist Church meeting in Derry called for a new enquiry into Bloody Sunday,

without which, they said, there could be no lasting peace. They also said that Methodist ministers had been having talks with Sinn Fein and opposed de-commissioning as a precondition for Talks.

While these are positive developments, they will remain pious aspirations unless it is linked to a political unity that opposes sectarianism.

Seagate: Workers need real unions

THE ANNOUNCEMENT of 1,200 new jobs at Seagate's Derry factory was welcomed by everyone in a City hard hit by unemployment. But the issue of workers' rights at the plant is still a sore point.

Seagate's Derry plant already produces nearly 20 percent of the world's magnetic recording head wafers for computer disc drives.

Seagate management doesn't like unions. Even the tiniest hint of union activity is enough to get you

sacked from the plant. Just how scared management is that the workers might get organised was seen recently when a petition went round the plant demanding better food in the canteen.

Almost everyone signed the innocent petition. Management's re-

sponse was to say that they did not accept any kind of collective approach from the workforce and it they wanted better food, each worker should write a separate letter of complaint.

Complaint

Tragically no one on the Derry City Council - which now has eight Sinn Fein Councillors - has spoken out about the lack of workers'

rights there.

Instead Sinn Fein's Gerry O Hearn could only urge the company to "afford the youth of Derry the chance to become the directors and decision makers of industry in their own country and eliminate the need for foreign management being given the plum jobs."

But even if one of two Derry people got managerial jobs, real unions are needed to defend the plants workers.

Brutality in Ballymoney

The full horrors of loyalist bigotry was seen in the kicking to death of an RUC man Greg Taylor in Ballymoney.

The response of Unionist politicians to the savagery behind the RUC man's death was very different to their response to the killing of two British army corporals at Casement Park nine years ago.

Then, the torrent of condemnation labelled the entire community of West Belfast as 'savages'. About the barbaric incident in Ballymoney, unionist politicians were either silent or ambivalent.

The morning of Taylor's funeral a poster went up in Ballymoney. It read: 'Greg Taylor - he reaped what he sowed'.

Allowed

A number of Unionist MPs tried to claim that the murder was understandable given that Orangemen had not been allowed to parade through Dunloy.

This 'understanding' on the part of the MPs is similar to the attitude of DUP politicians to the siege of Harryville and simply helps to keep the bigoted minority from feeling too isolated.

These acts of barbarism are not signs of growing support for extreme loyalism, they are signs of its weakness.

Single parents want jobs and childcare

Tony Blair made a speech in London two weeks ago where he pledged to help the "forgotten millions" into work.

He announced plans to invite single parents into job centres to encourage them to work.

It is about time the needs and problems of single parents were recognised after years of being scapegoated by the Tories.

The vast majority of single mothers, nine out of ten according to some figures, are desperate for a job.

But single parents need decent, free public childcare provision and jobs which pay a decent wage to enable them to go to work.

Unfortunately, Tony Blair did not offer this. The only extra money for childcare is to be a chance handout from the lottery.

Savaged

Public spending cuts have savaged council childcare provision. Many parents struggle to find private childcare. But the cost of childminders and nursery places is beyond reach to many.

Proper nine to five childcare

can cost a family with two children under eight as much as £115 a week, according to one study.

There are also questions about Labour's plans for "after school clubs".

Current provision for out of school childcare only covers two out of every 100 school children.

The Kids Club Network says the number of places at after school clubs would have to at least triple if Labour's scheme is to succeed.

Are Labour's proposals about really providing the funding and resources to help those who want to go back to work?

Or are they, as some Labour Minister's suggest, about saving the British state money and cutting costs by penalising single parents?

Will they stop benefit? The bitter baroness

Tony Blair said plans to invite single mothers into job centres would be voluntary.

But many are worried about the direction Labour's plans are headed in. Labour has refused to rule out the element of compulsion in such schemes in the future.

Labour's social security minister Frank Field would like to see such compulsion.

In a speech in March, he argued that all single mothers with children aged over four should look for work or attend training courses or be denied benefit.

Most single parents would love

a job. But that does not mean that every single parent should be forced into work.

Any woman, or man, who does not want or cannot cope with a job alongside childcare should have the right to stay at home without feeling "guilty" or facing dire poverty.

The idea that looking after children and housework is some kind of "easy option" is a complete myth.

Why is it when a working class woman is at home looking after her children she is considered to be getting 'something for nothing' but when a woman nannies for a family like the Blairs the same job is considered work?



Born in the USA

WHAT ARE the "welfare to work" plans from the United States that are said to have influenced Labour's thinking on welfare?

US President Bill Clinton, far from helping people to work, has presided over a savage war on single parents and their children.

This has hit 13 million of the poorest Americans, nine million of whom are children who have had all help denied them.

Families are only entitled to claim welfare benefits for five years during their lifetime, then they are left to fend for themselves.

The 'head of the family' often a single parent has to find work within two years or they are thrown off benefit.

Mo Mowlam's suggestion that a new role should be found for "Baroness" Denton, former Tory minister in charge of, among other things fair employment, has caused amazement in the North.

Only the election saved Denton from being forced to resign her position after an inquiry into a case of sectarian discrimination in her private office confirmed the allegations against her and revealed that she had been responsible for a number of breaches of the employment code.

The vicious attitude of the Tory grandee to Catholics within the civil service in the North was again demonstrated

at the start of June when she appeared on the BBC "Hearts and minds" programme.

Advice

She attacked DED chief civil servant Gerry Loughran by name and said that he had given her unreliable advice and suggested that the best way to deal with the allegations of sectarian discrimination "was to pack her bags and go back

to London"

In fact, the inquiry had praised Loughran as the only civil servant who had insisted that fair employment procedures be followed to the letter.

Denton is obviously determined to make sure that her sectarianism lives on after her departure. It seems her attack on Loughran was an attempt to scupper his chances of becoming the first Catholic head of the civil service in the North.

The episode shows that sectarianism doesn't arise naturally but is carefully nourished by the British ruling class.

ALGERIA:

The junta's Western backers

OVER 60,000 people have died in Algeria since 1992, the year the country's democratically elected Islamic government was toppled by a military junta with Western backing.

The 1992 Islamic government, the FIS, was elected on a huge wave of popular support following a workers' revolt in 1988 and serious gains in the 1990 local elections.

The party had addressed the terrible hardship most Algerians faced and argued for a return to Islamic values and a split with the West as a solution.

But within months, the former government with its Western backers had overthrown the FIS with a military coup.

The party was banned, its leaders jailed and others detained in the Sahara. Two armed Islamic forces emerged in the aftermath, vowing to fight the military rulers.

One of them, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), has been blamed for virtually all 60,000 deaths since 1992.

Ousted

The Islamists were ousted from government, the argument goes, and now they're conducting a holy war or jihad against Algeria's pro-Western government and their supporters.

But the truth may look very different. There is growing evidence that the Algerian government itself has butchered hundreds if not thousands of workers and villagers in an attempt to demonise its Islamic opposition in the eyes of the West and to justify its brutal dictatorship over the Algerian people.

Algeria's Western backers also have good reason to keep the current government in power. British Petroleum (BP) pumps vast amounts of oil from the south of the country.

France still has a strong trade link to its former colony and Algeria supplies the world market with oil and gas worth £8.5 billion every year.

But an Islamic government such as that elected in 1992 could easily have cut trade links with the West.

Therefore, France, Britain and the US have been more than happy to support President Liamine Zeroual and his National Democratic Rally (RDN) against the Islamists which have strong roots in the population.

In return, Zeroual has gone along with the Thatcherite free-market policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund.

He was returned to office in this month's general election. "Everyone knew it would be fixed", wrote the *Observer's* Algeria correspondent.

"That the regime kills innocent people is plain," he added. It is not the Algerian regime alone, though.

Equally responsible are Britain, France and the US who have kept Zeroual in power and

supplied him, in Britain's case, with military hardware.

In January of this year, a pro-government trade unionist was assassinated outside his office.

It now appears to have been the work of the government, but Algeria's rulers blamed a man in the flats opposite.

The military launched a rocket-propelled grenade into his flat, killing four men, two women and two children.

The suspect survived and was dragged onto state television with a black eye to admit his guilt. He was never tried.

On 2 April, his family was shown his body, riddled by bullets to the groin, stomach, back and the neck.

Other regime dissidents are simply taken to the police headquarters for the 'blowtorch' treatment.

A 27-year old was released with parched skin on his face and body; many others have simply disappeared.

Just how many of the bombs and mass killings that have been reported in recent months were perpetrated by the government, is unclear.

But even former prime minister Abdelhamid Brahimy admits that the government's involvement is beyond doubt.

"The Algerian junta is killing Islamists and blaming it on them ... The massive killings are always among the fundamentalists in the area where they are strongest," explains Brahimy, who was in office before the military took over.

The French secret service now openly states that some of the bombs which exploded on the Paris metro, and blamed on Algerian "Islamic fundamentalists", were probably ordered by Zeroual's government.

Yet in May of this year, British arms supplier RBR (Armour) Ltd. sold a gun test bed, used for lining up rifle sights, to Algeria.

Hush-hush

The *Observer's* managing director Douglas Garland who said:

"It's awfully hush-hush. You can't mention this ... This is testing equipment for manufacturing helmets."

Pressed on Algeria's human rights record, he continued: "I am as concerned about human rights as the next man."

"We're not fast buck merchants. This is not just bullshit ... If you mention human rights again I'll put the phone down." And he did.

Britain's new foreign secretary Robin Cook says he is committed to human rights.

But the Blair government has done nothing to date to stop arms exports to Algeria or other notorious dictatorships such as General Suharto's in Indonesia and East Timor.

Any decent Labour politician would call for a complete stop to arms exports.

—JENNY WITT

AFTER THE ELECT

Which way for the Left

WRITING IN *The Irish Times*, Fintan O'Toole claimed that the results of the general election showed that Irish society was 'exhausted by a period of unprecedented change' and in looking for a 'quiet life'.

It is a view that will be confirmed by those who want to draw pessimistic conclusions.

They argue that people are turning back to the Civil War parties of Fine Gael and Fianna Fail and that there is little prospect of socialists making gains.

However, the evidence does not bear out this pessimism.

The reality is that the main right wing party, Fianna Fail, only increased its national vote by 0.2%.

The huge 'bonus' it got in seats, came from clever vote management rather than a huge popular appeal.

The party has failed to reverse the decline that set in at the last election.

Then it received its lowest vote since it first came to power in 1932.

Fine Gael increased its vote but only by a marginal 3.4%.

Traditionally Fine Gael has been the party of the big farmers and the professional classes with little appeal to urban workers.

It was only able to broaden its appeal because Labour and Democratic Left helped it develop an image as a 'left of centre party'.

The irony is that five years ago Spring claimed that Labour could replace Fine Gael as the second major party in the country.

Despite all this, Ireland is in for a period of political volatility.

Attack

The weakness of the FF/PD government means that they will try to garner support from the minority of bigots who want to have an abortion referendum in order to turn back the clock on the changes that have taken place in Ireland.

But the 1990s are not like the 1980s.

This time around the right wing will face huge opposition to their attack on women's rights.

They will also have to confront a working class movement that is growing in confidence.

This is why there are major prospects for a strong left wing party growing in Ireland.

The real question is where is it likely to come from.

the Left

Labour back on the opposition road

THE Labour Party were the big losers in the election.

They lost nearly half of their deputies and in many areas won only a few thousand votes.

After the election a number of Labour TDs called for a 'new identity'.

There are already signs that Labour will pull out of the Rainbow Alliance and use the period out of government to regroup.

Historically, Labour has turned to the left when it goes into opposition.

At the end of the 1980s, Labour was decimated after its experience of Coalition but then began to talk more left in order to recover.

Repeated

The calls for a 'new identity' mean that many TDs hope the same experience can be repeated again.

While this cannot be ruled out, it is vital to remember that the aim of the Labour leadership will be to enter another Coalition in a few years time.

Weakness

The experience of the last five years carries important lessons about the weakness of reformist politics.

Labour held the key Ministry of Finance which they

claimed change.

They most successful in the South.

But they couldn't afford to show they can win.

SINN FEIN: Anti-establishment why support Fianna Fail

The Sinn Fein vote came as a shock to the establishment.

Not only did the party get one TD elected but it came close to taking seats in North Kerry and Dublin South West.

An exit poll showed that the Sinn Fein vote came predominantly from working class males, many of them young.

Key issues of concern to these voters were the North, drugs, unemployment and, unusually, law and order.

Support for Sinn Fein has grown for two main reasons. One is the continuing effects from the Drumcree crisis last year.

The sectarianism of the Northern state was on full view when the RUC stood aside for small numbers of Orangemen but fired over six thousand plastic bullets

at nationalist protesters in Derry.

The second reason for growth is the sell-outs of Labour.

The Labour Party's roots in working class communities are weaker now than before.

Picking up on an ambiguous rhetoric on drugs, Sinn Fein presented themselves as the voice of a working class that was neglected.

Denounced

However, there is every sign that Sinn Fein will throw away its radicalism.

A decade ago, it rightly denounced Fianna Fail but today it has begun to offer them support.

Sinn Fein canvassers in Cavan-Monaghan called for second preferences for Fianna Fail while the party

leaders Adams and McGuinness made it clear they would back Ahern for Taoiseach.

Sinn Fein argues that Ahern will be better for the peace process than Bruton.

Yet even if Ahern does more to pressurise Britain to allow Sinn Fein into party negotiations, there is little chance that these talks will change the conditions facing working class Catholics in the North.

Both Ahern and Reynolds have stated that they do not see a united Ireland happening for decades.

Meanwhile a terrible price will be paid for supporting Fianna Fail.

Just as Labour helped to prop up Fine Gael, it looks like Sinn Fein will give their support to a party that promotes the interests of the Irish rich.



ELECTION:

for left?

On the road

cannot be ruled out to remember the Labour Party to enter in a few weeks. They presided over the most successful period of economic expansion in the South. But the fact that they couldn't deliver gains for their supporters - at a time when Irish capitalism could afford to give concessions - shows that revolutionary change is only way workers can win.



Spring joyous but Labour's vote collapsed

Good vote for socialists

SOCIALISTS received a higher vote in this election than before. In Dublin West, Joe Higgins from the Socialist Party capitalised on the water charges protest and community work in the area to take a seat at the expense of the Labour Junior Minister, Joan Burton.

Other Socialist Party candidates in Dublin North and Dublin South West also polled very well.

Two Socialist Workers Party candidates who stood for the first time won over 700 votes.

In Waterford, Jimmy Kelly was squeezed by increased support for the Workers Party candidate, Martin O'Reagan, but still came in with a respectable vote.

Victorious

In Dublin North Central, Ritchie Browne, a TEAM Aer Lingus shop steward, got just under a third of the votes of the victorious Labour candidate, Derek McDowell.

More important than the votes are the roots laid down by the SWP.

A systematic effort was put in to establishing a regular readership for *Socialist Worker* with over 400 papers being sold in the Dublin North Central constituency.

Throughout the election campaign just under 40 people joined the SWP, including a number of key union activists.

The key issue now is what direction socialists should take.

Here there is an important difference between the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party.

The Socialist Party describe themselves as a democratic socialist organi-

sation and believe that preparations for the next elections should be the main focus of their activity.

Hoping to build a broad based grouping, they fail to criticise union officials like PJ Madden from the nurses organisation for selling out his members.

The SWP by contrast is a revolutionary socialist party committed to bringing about change by mass workers action from below.

For us the Dail can only be used as a stage to agitate.

Behind parliament lies a state machine which is unelected and subject to the control of the wealthy.

Power

The only thing that can break this is the organised power of workers.

This is why the SWP concentrates on building a base in the factories and offices.

Instead of relying on fake-left union officials, the party emphasises the power and militancy of the rank and file.

But while there are important differences between the two parties, the new audience for socialist ideas shows there is ample scope to work together against the establishment.

What do socialists say?

Is inequality inevitable?

WHAT CAUSES the enormous inequality we see in society today?

Right wingers, supporters of capitalism, and indeed privileged classes through the ages, have always claimed that social and economic inequalities reflect and are caused by natural differences of ability.

It is a fact that differences of ability exist. Some people run faster than others, some can lift heavier weights, some are better at maths, others are better at playing the piano.

It is wrong to call these differences "natural". Human beings are always social, and upbringing and social conditioning inevitably play a huge role in determining which abilities people develop and how far they can develop them.

Nevertheless, differences exist and will continue to exist for the foreseeable future.

The only way to eliminate them would be to turn everyone into clones and ensure that they had identical experiences from birth - an obviously impossible task.

What is really wrong is to suggest that differences of ability either explain or justify social and economic inequalities.

There are a number of arguments that show this quite conclusively.

Economic inequalities are completely disproportionate to any possible differences of abilities.

Even if we grant that Tony O'Reilly is in some general sense more able than the average newspaper worker (and I don't accept this), it cannot be that he is 40 or 50 times more able.

The range of human abilities is simply not that great.

Yet his income is 40 or 50 times higher than a newspaper worker's.

It is also clear that in most cases, both today and in the past, wealth and social standing have nothing at all to do with ability.

The British monarch, for example, is the richest woman in the world without displaying any outstanding ability in any sphere whatsoever.

The Sultan of Brunei is not one of the world's richest men because of his intelligence or business skills, but simply by virtue of being Sultan of Brunei.

Nor is the hereditary principle limited to royalty. It applies throughout ruling classes everywhere. Look at Michael Smurfit. He got where he is because of his father, Jefferson.

Rewards

Even in those few areas, such as sport where there is some connection between measurable ability and economic reward, the extent of rewards is a result of definite social and political decisions.

Until the 1960s the best athletes were more or less amateurs and the best footballers, even the likes of Stanley Matthews, were subject to a low maximum wage.

Now such people earn millions.

The range of abilities has not changed but the inequality of rewards has soared.

Finally, and most importantly, history shows that social and economic inequalities have not always existed.

Indeed they have not existed for the vast majority of the time that human beings have been on this planet.

Humans have a his-

tory stretching back between two and three million years.

But systematic social and economic inequality dates only from the development of herding and agriculture between 8,000 and 10,000 years ago.

Prior to that, all humans lived as gatherers and hunters in small nomadic bands.

Some of these societies - like the Eskimos, the Pygmies, the Aborigines and the Kung San in the Kalahari Desert - have survived into recent times.

They work together as collectives, accumulate no property that cannot be carried on their backs and are based on sharing food out equally.

With farming and herding came the division of society into classes and the development of private property.

A minority gained possession of the key means of production and used that possession to exploit the majority who did the work.

This was the real route of economic inequality and the division of society into rich and poor.

Since then class exploitation has taken a number of different forms: slavery, feudalism, capitalism.

But the basic division, between owners and workers, exploiters and exploited, has remained and the gap between rich and poor has grown.

Two things follow from all this.

Firstly, that economic inequality is social and historical in origin, not natural and so can be changed.

Secondly, that the way to change it is for the majority, the working class, to seize control of the means of production and transform them into the property of society as a whole.

— JOHN MOLYNEUX

Government, but Fianna Fail?

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Avon-Monaghan victor Caoimhghin Ó Caoláin with Gerry Adams

Out now!

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ECONOMICS MADHOUSE



THE CITY of Benin from a 1668 European view



BENIN'S ART was in advance of Europe's

WE ARE of told that Africa had no history before the Europeans arrived.

Films and novels, like *Tarzan of the Apes* have reinforced the picture of Africans as primitive and savage people who were only civilised by white Europeans.

The image is a racist myth, and a recent one at that.

When Europeans came into contact with African peoples in the Middle Ages they found sophisticated and diverse civilisations which they compared favourably with their own.

It was with the rise of capitalism and the slave trade in the 18th century that rulers in Europe argued that the people of Africa were backward and incapable of building civilisation.

EUROPEAN explorers managed to sail far enough to trade with people in west Africa only in the 15th century.

Portugal was one of the main seafaring powers at the time and one of the first societies that Portuguese traders came across was the west African kingdom of Benin in 1472.

The city of Benin was situated near the delta of the river Niger in the western part of what is Nigeria today.

The Portuguese established a trading post in 1487 at Ughoton, a river port of Benin.

The usual image of trade between Europeans and other peoples is of primitive people foolishly exchanging precious metals and spices in return for worthless European trinkets. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Europeans bought finely woven cloth from Benin in return for copper and bronze. These African printed cloths became highly prized in Europe.

The idea of trade and exchange was not new to Benin's wealthy rulers.

The city was already involved in networks of trade with other west African states.

All these states were linked by trade routes across the Sahara to the Arab cities of north Africa and the Middle East which were thousands of miles away.

These west African states were all capable of smelting iron and other metals and had developed agriculture to an extent which allowed a surplus to be produced which could be traded.

These societies were nothing like the primitive Stone Age settlements we see in adventure films.

-OUT OF AFRICA- Civilisation

The different African empires which rose and fell and competed with one another were centred on highly organised cities.

In 1600 a Dutch trader who entered Benin, which was bigger than most European cities, wrote:

"The city looks very big when you go into it. You enter by a great broad street, not paved, which seems to be seven or eight times broader than the Waroes street [the main street in Amsterdam]."

"The houses in the town stand in good order, one close and even with the next as our Dutch houses are. These people are in no way inferior to the Dutch in cleanliness. They wash and scrub their houses so well that these are as polished as a looking glass."

At the time standards of sanitation were higher in Holland than in most of the rest of Europe.

The same Dutch trader was so impressed with the similarities between Benin and European states that he mistook its social and political system for a form of feudalism.

Benin was certainly a class society with a ruling class of the royal family and state officials. But the main way the rich gained their wealth was not from owning land but by exacting tribute from the villages it could dominate militarily.

European rulers did not regard their counterparts in Africa as inferior savages.

In 1514 the king of Benin sent an ambassador to Portugal. A report at the time said:

"This ambassador was a man of good speech and natural wisdom. Great feasts were held in Portugal in his honour. He was shown many of the good things of Portugal. He resumed to his own land in a Portuguese ship. When he left, the king of Portugal made him a gift of rich clothes for himself and his wife, and also sent a rich present to the king of Benin."

In 1506 the Scottish king, James IV, organised a huge ceremony in Edinburgh in honour of an African princess who had happened to land in Scotland.

The renaissance artists Rembrandt and Velazquez painted portraits of African nobles.

LATE MEDIEVAL feudal lords were not alone in recognising the achievements of African civilisations.

Before the rise of the Atlantic slave trade it was normal for European thinkers to measure African societies by the same yardstick they used for their own.

Two thousand five hundred years ago the ancient Greeks, often regarded as the founders of western civilisation, recognised Egypt as a more ancient civilisation than their own.

They built on many of the scientific and mathematical ideas which had originated in Egypt and the Middle Eastern Babylonian state.

The Greek mathematician Pythagoras spent 21 years learning mathematics in Egypt.

Greek travellers wrote of their awe at the Egyptian temples of Abu Simbel and the pyramids of Gizeh.

The Great Pyramid at Gizeh was built around 2,400BC. It is 500 feet high and contains 60 million tons of stone slabs.

By the Middle Ages Europeans had every reason to respect the societies they knew about in north Africa.

In Europe the philosophy and science of the Greeks had been shut away in li-

braries or small communities of monks during the Dark Ages which lasted till about 1000AD.

In the rapidly expanding Islamic empires of the Middle East and north Africa, however, these ideas were developed to a higher level.

In the Middle Ages Cairo and the African city of Timbuktu were greater centres of learning than the tiny universities of Christian Europe.

THE development of capitalism changed the European view of Africa. Capitalism was a much more dynamic and productive class society than any that had gone before.

It did not come about as the result of some supposedly inherent European superiority. The particular form of society in Europe allowed pockets of capitalist production, based on wage labour, to grow. However, it took a revolution in England in the 1640s for the capitalists to replace the feudal lords.

It also took the massive use of slave labour on plantations in the Caribbean and America to provide the wealth to kickstart industrial growth.



GREAT ZIMBABWE — racists did not believe black people could have built it

When the resistance of white labourers to enslavement grew too strong the capitalists turned to Africa for slaves.

There had been slavery in many of the African states but it was mainly for domestic service.

Now slaves were used on a brutal industrial scale in the colonies in the New World.

The capitalists claimed their system stood for freedom and fairness. They could only justify enslaving Africans by claiming they were inferior to white people.

These racist ideas grew in the 18th century.

By the 19th century they were used to justify the colonisation of large areas of the world by the capitalist powers in Europe.

Pro-capitalist intellectuals had to reverse the ideas of ancient and medieval thinkers and write Africa out of history.

When white explorers came across the magnificent remains of the stone city of Great Zimbabwe, they could not fit it into the picture of Africans as primitive savages.

So they invented the idea that this city, along with Egypt and other African cities, was built by mythical white settlers who were "quick witted". This myth became the accepted historical theory in Europe in the 1920s.

It was presented in more popular form in books like *King Solomon's Mines* by Rider Haggard.

What remained of societies like Benin was destroyed as capitalism and colonialism spread.

In 1896 the British, desperate for palm oil and rubber, launched a huge military expedition against Benin. They ripped apart a civilisation which had prospered for over 1,000 years.

Benin's enormous collection of very fine brass and bronze statues was broken up and sold off to Victorian gentleman collectors.

CIVILISATION IS not some thing unique to Europe. In fact Europe was, by world standards, a late developer.

Different civilisations have grown up across the world and have developed most rapidly by exchanging ideas with neighbouring societies.

Capitalism has spread out from Europe to cover the whole globe. It has done so through ripping apart the societies in its path.

There is no going back to those societies, which in any case suffered from their own forms of injustice.

Capitalism has, however, created a working class across the world which shares a common interest in fighting against exploitation and for a society based on the needs of all, not the profits of a few.

The working class also shares a common interest in rediscovering the achievements of previous societies as part of a common world history.

The McLibel Two

Wiping the smile off Ronald's mug

THE LONGEST trial in British legal history, the "McLibel" case, is about to reach a climax.

From June 1994 to December 1996 giant beefburger multinational McDonald's has been confronting environmental activists Helen Steel and Dave Morris in the courts.

The case has already taken up 313 days of court time and the judge is not expected to issue his verdict until next month.

Whatever the final outcome, the McDonald's decision to use the courts to crush its opponents has been one of the biggest corporate public relations blunders ever.

A new book, *McLibel, Burger Culture on Trial*, by the *Guardian's* environment editor, John Vidal, explains why.

The book paints a devastating picture of business values. It gallops through the history of the burger empire, its treatment of staff, its attitude to the environment and food safety, and its cynical advertising techniques.

Along the way the book highlights how the legal system stacks the odds in favour of the rich and powerful. The judge in the *McLibel* case refused to put the proceedings before a jury.

McDonald's employed a top libel lawyer whose fees look set to top £1 million by the trial's end. In contrast Helen and Dave were re-fused legal aid.

The *McLibel* case had its origins in a leaflet given out by the London Greenpeace group warning that McDonald's products were unhealthy and denouncing the business practices of the corporation.

McDonald's decided to issue writs against five members of the group. They thought they would cave in.

Court

After all, at least 50 national and local newspapers and television companies had apologised to McDonald's rather than face court in the previous four years.

Not surprisingly, three of the London Greenpeace campaigners agreed to stop criticising the company.

Helen and Dave, however, would not. Through their sheer dogged determination they effectively put McDonald's itself on trial.

Image is crucial to the burger giant and the *McLibel* trial has exposed how that image is constructed and what lies behind it.

For example, the company boasts of how it has given more than \$100 million to children's charities since 1984.

It is less keen to say that over the same period it has made \$9 billion in profit.

While children are seduced by massive advertising and the Ronald McDonald figure, parents



Enough to make your stomach turn

are got at through the company's "nutrition guides" which claim its products can be part of a balanced diet.

But the company doesn't believe its own propaganda. An internal company document admitted, "We can't really address or defend nutrition. We don't sell nutrition and people don't come to McDonald's for nutrition."

The company was also hard pressed to address food hygiene standards. The court heard how McDonald's had been implicated in some of the first fatal *E coli* outbreaks in Britain.

Witnesses described how conditions in its supply and processing chains produced chicken meat with a 25 percent "burden" of salmonella, up from 1 percent in live birds.

One of McDonald's expert witnesses claimed food should be cooked to a minimum 73°C to prevent food poisoning, yet the company's Operations Manual says a minimum of 64°C.

Crass style

McDONALD'S has expanded round the globe in spectacularly crass style.

In Japan, with memories of the Second World War still fresh, it opened its first restaurant in Hiroshima, near the site of the atomic bomb explosion.

The wound was deepened when the McDonald's president of Japanese operations declared:

"The reason Japanese people are so short and have yellow skins is because they have eaten nothing but fish and rice for 2,000 years.

"If we eat McDonald's hamburgers and potatoes for 1,000 years we will become taller, our skins will become white and our hair will be blond."

McDonald's is only one of a host of fast food multinationals. All operate in the same manner. What the *McLibel* case shows is that far from the consumer being king, we have little choice and are forced to eat bad food, badly prepared.

McDonald's is as cavalier with its workers as it is with its customers.

Drives

Company founder Ray Kroc hated unions and ensured that 400 separate unionisation drives in the US during the 1970s failed.

Kroc boasted about how McDonald's paid the lowest possible rate. When Paul Preston, the company's UK chief, gave evidence in 1994 he insisted that McDonald's starting rate of £3.10 an hour was high pay.

In Britain four out of five of its workers are part time, averaging 20 hours a week. A third are under 18 and two thirds under 21.

McDonald's crews have no guaranteed hours or pay, no paid mealbreaks, and face cuts or the extension of hours at a manager's whim.

Any effort to organise a union provokes instant reaction from a top management hit team.

The result is not just exploitation but danger.

The trial revealed a damning secret Health and Safety Executive report into McDonald's which made 23 separate recommendations for improvement.

The company went to court to prevent any of this sort of information coming out in public.

Twice during the trial the grounds for the action were changed in a way which made it easier for the company to prove its case.

The company repeatedly held back documents the defence wanted to see.

Despite this, the *McLibel* Two have humbled a mighty corporation.

The McDonald's attempt to draw a veil over its foul business methods has instead resulted in unprecedented disclosure of its practices.

■ *McLibel, Burger Culture on Trial* by John Vidal, Macmillan, £15.99.

by MIKE SIMONS

book

When the orange juice magnates pollute the water

by ROISIN CRONIN

A *Civil Action* reads like a thrilling courtroom drama, except that this is no John Grisham novel.

It's the true story of how the residents of a US city fought to bring those responsible for polluting their water and poisoning their children to justice.

The city at the centre of the story is Woburn, near Boston.

Since the 1960s, people in Woburn had known that there was something seriously wrong with the water that was coming into their homes.

Shortages

Although they didn't know it at the time the cause of the problem was two wells that had been drilled in a nearby marsh to solve

the city's water shortages.

The engineer in charge of the wells said at the time, "We feel the city is fortunate in finding an additional groundwater supply of good quality in East Woburn."

But the people of East Woburn didn't feel so fortunate.

The water that they were supposed to drink and bathe in was foul-smelling and discoloured.

It was clear to them that something was wrong.

In fact, in summer 1967 the Massachusetts Department of Health suggested that the wells should be shut down because of "the poor bacterial quality of the water supplied therefrom".

But city authorities argued such a move would be too costly, and the wells remained open.

By 1967 locals had succeeded in forcing the mayor to shut down the wells but in Spring 1970 they were reopened, even though it had become clear that the water was seriously affecting the health of the people.

Large numbers had felt nauseous, got rashes, or

suffered from respiratory illnesses.

But most serious was the fact that there was a disproportionate number of cases of Leukaemia and other cancers in the areas served by the wells.

It was nine years later that the evidence to prove what the people had suspected all along was discovered.

Dumped

More than 180 barrels of industrial waste were discovered dumped near the wells. It became clear that someone was contaminating the water.

A *Civil Action* follows the legal battle that ensued. Two companies were responsible for dumping toxic waste into Woburn's water supply.

One was WR Grace, the multinational chemical company.

The second was Beatrice Foods, the massive multinational that makes a whole range of products, from Samsonite luggage to Playtex bras to Tropicana orange juice.

It emerged during the trial that with the full knowledge and permission of the bosses of both companies, huge quantities of used solvents, debris and animal waste were dumped near the river.

Much of the dumping was done under the cover of darkness.

The book is very readable, written in a clear style that makes sense of the complex detail of the case.

It illustrates just how difficult it is for ordinary people to take on the bosses on their terms.

With the bosses and their seemingly endless resources, the state authorities and the legal system itself all colluding to cover up what really happened, it's easy to see how the odds are stacked against.

This case does, however, show the determination of people to stand up to the big corporations whose primary concern is always their profits, even if that means endangering the health and lives of ordinary people.

■ *A Civil Action* by Jonathan Harr, Arrow Books, £6.99

Euro jobless march

ON THE weekend of 13 June thousands of unemployed people from all over Europe converged in Amsterdam.

Their aim was to highlight the fact that nothing is being done to tackle growing unemployment and poverty in Europe.

The marchers came from fourteen European countries, including Ireland.

Their arrival in Amsterdam was timed to coincide with the signing of the new European treaty.

Paul Smyth of the Galway Centre for the Unemployed was part of the Irish contingent.

He says the experience of unemployment is shared by people across Europe.

"There are more than 20 million registered unemployed people in Europe today," says Paul. "Five million people are homeless, and its estimated that more than 50 million people are living in poverty. This situation is totally unacceptable."

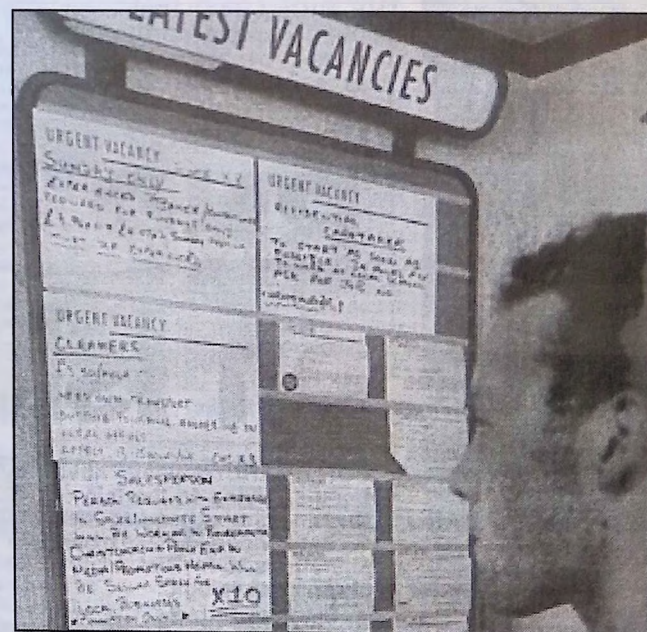
Demanding

"Despite all the talk about prosperity and stability in Ireland, we've got the highest rate of 'workless' households of all the western economies, and according to 1996 Central Statistic Office figures, that number is rising."

"It's the same story right across Europe. The bosses are demanding more deregulation and greater freedom of movement for capital while governments are giving us cutbacks and unemployment in return.

People are being harassed off the dole and into deeper poverty. In many of the Southern European countries - Spain, Italy and Greece - there is no means tested social welfare and even the social insurance benefit system is being cut back."

The European marches are part of a wider fight to protect living conditions of working class people.



That fight has also seen tens of thousands of workers, in countries like France and Germany, take to the streets in protest against attempts to drive wages down and cut jobs.

Paul Smyth welcomes the fact that unemployed people are marching, but he's critical of the official slogan adopted for the protest. The marches were organised under the banner of "a social Europe".

This is the same cry that was taken up so successfully by the leader of France's socialist party, Lionel Jospin, during the

French elections. Paul says the European organisation behind the march - the ENU - is trying to limit peoples demands to reform within the current European context.

"The ENU is calling for full employment and a rethink on the tough economic criteria for entry into European Monetary Union," says Paul.

"But they need to look beyond the immediate issues and organise a generalised fightback against the system that causes unemployment, racism, and homelessness..."

where we stand

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.

VOTE REFLECTS TWO YEARS OF STRUGGLE

France rejoices at huge left vote

FRENCH VOTERS confirmed opinion poll predictions when they overturned a massive right wing majority to give the Socialist Party a landslide victory.

The result has humiliated the country's conservative president, Jacques Chirac, who will stay in office alongside a government led by Socialist Party leader, Lionel Jospin.

Chirac gambled on calling the election a year early, hoping to win a new mandate to push through cuts but it backfired completely.

No one can claim Socialist Party leader Jospin won because of his charisma or media image.

He is a dour leader of a party that was caught unprepared for

the election, without even a manifesto.

The scale of the Socialist success and the enthusiasm with which it was greeted in France reflect the real reason for the election result.

Millions of people have rejected the market and attacks on welfare, and that rejection has erupted into waves of struggle.

Four years ago the Conservatives won a landslide election victory. Two years ago Jacques Chirac won the presidential election.

Earthquake

But the Conservatives ran into fierce resistance when they tried to push through savage cuts to meet the conditions

for the planned European single currency.

In November and December 1995 France saw the biggest workers' revolt since 1968 as millions of public sector workers struck and took to the streets.

It was an earthquake which altered the entire political landscape.

It forced the government to backtrack on many attacks, gutted the right wing's confidence and fuelled a surge to the left across French society.

Ever since there has been a continuing workers' resistance.

The feeling for change has also found expression in the biggest anti-racist movement for many years.

Earlier this year an upsurge of protest, culminating in a 100,000 strong march in Paris, greeted the Conservative government's harsh new immigration laws.

The same feeling has also stoked a wave of protest against the Nazi National Front.

All these protests have in common a different vision of society from that held up by the bosses and bankers.

A rejection of cuts, the market and racism has gone hand in hand with slogans like "A social Europe, not a bankers' Europe."

This mood, and the struggles which have expressed and reinforced it, have wrecked France's conservatives and carried the Socialist Party to electoral victory.



Can Jospin deliver?

THE MOOD for change and struggles below have forced the Socialist Party to adopt some of the protesters' language.

Jospin hailed Sunday's election victory as "a vote for change" and against "hard capitalism".

The party had to give tacit support to the December 1995 revolt, and this Easter Jospin marched at the head of the 70,000 strong anti-Nazi demonstration in Strasbourg.

The party manifesto pledged a halt to the privatisation programme and to create 700,000 jobs.

It also promised to cut the working week from 39 to 35 hours without loss of pay.

Jospin talked about re-negotiating the Euro-currency conditions to avoid more austerity.

However, Socialist Party leaders want to push in a different direction in office.

The party, like Ireland's Labour Party, is absolutely committed to running the bosses' system, not

challenging it. It was in office for most of the 1980s and early 1990s pushing savage cuts through while unemployment tripled.

Jospin himself and many of his ministers were in office and played a key role in this dismal record.

Now the pressures will again be on them to do the bosses' and bankers' bidding—and they will undoubtedly bow to them.

Jospin even began backtracking during the election campaign, turning the cut in the working week from an "immediate aim" to a "long term ambition".

The 700,000 job creation programme was similarly downgraded while Jospin underlined his commitment to the Euro-currency project.

Nevertheless, the Socialist Party government will also face great expectations arising from recent struggles which will have been heightened by the election victory.

BOSSSES' SPLITS FUEL THE CRISIS

THE RIGHT lost their election gamble partly because of working class resistance over the last two years.

But they were also hit by the deep splits within their own ranks, which reflect a split inside France's ruling class.

Some want a traditional policy as defined by the post-war leader de Gaulle.

This is a similar outlook to the traditional Fianna Fail approach. It is absolutely committed to capitalism but emphasises state intervention and economic protectionism.

France, more than most west European countries, has a very high level of state run industry.

French industry also tends to invest more at home than other major Western powers.

These factors shape the views of some of the right wing, espe-

cially in Jacques Chirac's RPR party.

But other sections and bosses want a different approach. They enthusiastically embrace the world market, call for privatisation, and "flexibility", and are sometimes rightly dubbed "ultra Thatcherites".

The scale of their defeat means France's Conservatives are likely to be plunged into internal fighting.

But the splits they reflect inside the ruling class will not go away. Instead they will soon put strong and differing pressures on the new government too.

Warning in size of Nazi vote

THE NAZIS of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front got their best ever result in national parliamentary elections.

They won 15 percent of votes, some 4 million, but only managed to win one TD—in the southern town of Toulon where they already run the town council.

The Nazis' vote is a terrible warning of what will happen if the new government does not meet the expectations of those who voted for it. They have a significant base in many areas and will hope to feed off disillusionment if the hopes reflected in the Socialist election victory are dashed.

Serious

However, the last few months have seen the growth of a serious anti-Nazi movement.

During the election campaign Nazi leaders were confronted wherever they went. In Lyons 3,000 people demonstrated against a Le Pen meeting, while 5,000 demonstrated in Lille.

Two weeks Le Pen revealed his real face when confronted by hundreds of local people during a surprise visit to Mantes-la-Jolie, near Paris.

The Nazi leader violently assaulted the local Socialist Party candidate, pushing her against the wall and throwing her to the ground.

Le Pen's action provoked outrage and he and his thugs were forced to take refuge in a cafe under a hail of stones and eggs before fleeing the town.

NEW GOVERNMENT CAUGHT IN MIDDLE

THE PRESSURES facing the Socialist Party will be intensified by the unstable political balance emerging from the election.

There will be tension between President Chirac, who retains wide powers especially in foreign and European policy, and the government.

Depends

The Socialist Party also depends on TDs in the left wing Communist Party for its parliamentary majority.

The Communist Party did well winning one in ten votes in the first

round and increased its representation from 24 to 35 deputies.

The party is linked to the powerful CGT trade union federation and many Communist Party members and CGT activists have been at the heart of recent struggles.

The Communist Party leadership will be keen to accommodate to the Socialist Party but will also be forced to reflect the feeling of its base and the mood for change.

Another sign of the scale of that mood came in the 500,000 plus votes for revolutionary socialist candidates.

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CAROLANN DUGGAN VICE PRESIDENCY CAMPAIGN

'We're going to take SIPTU back for the members!'

Carolann Duggan's campaign to win the Vice-Presidency of SIPTU got off to a magnificent start when over 200 workers turned up to the local branch meeting of the union in Waterford.

Word had got out that a concerted effort was underway by the headoffice in Liberty Hall to stop Carolann getting on the ballot paper.

Despite the fact that candidates for the post of Vice President are supposed to be nominated at open branch meetings, the reality is that only tiny numbers have been encouraged to turn up.

This has allowed the union bureaucracy to keep control of the process and push their favourite candidate, Des Geraghty.

Carolann Duggan's vote of 38,000 in the last election for President has sent the union leaders into a panic.

She had stood as an anti-Partnership candidate who

was a committed socialist, a member of the Socialist Workers Party.

So far their response has been to mount a campaign of vilification.

Working through a number of right wing activists in Waterford they even stopped Carolann being nominated to the annual conference of SIPTU.

Insult

"This was the final straw.

"It was a real insult to the thousands who had voted for Carolann and we were determined to do something about it," one SIPTU activist told *Socialist Worker*.

In the week running up to the most recent union meeting word went around the factories to turn up to vote.

"The right wing could



not believe what they saw. The tiny union hall was thronged with workers.

"There were women with children in their arms. The hallways were full

up," said one worker.

At first the right wing tried to claim that meeting was 'unconstitutional'.

A few of them got up to say that members had not been properly informed, even though it was the biggest union meeting in years.

Claimed

A supervisor even tried to stop the meeting because he claimed that his nominee was not on the ballot.

But to no avail. Despite the obstruction 158 workers voted to nominate Carolann Duggan to run for the union Vice-Presidency against only 20 for Des Geraghty.

"We're going to take our union back from the bureaucrats. This is only the start" is how one activist summed up the mood.

Where is SIPTU going?

'IT WAS militants like Carolann Duggan who created the atmosphere where anti-union laws were brought into Britain' so claimed Des Geraghty on Waterford Local radio a day after the local branch of SIPTU ratified her.

Geraghty's argument is based on a distortion of recent history. Union militancy does not cause right wing governments to attack the unions. If anything, it can make them afraid to act.

In Ireland, anti-union laws which jailed ESB workers in the sixties were destroyed when shop stewards organised strike action against them.

By contrast, the Industrial Relations Act was introduced after union militancy declined in the eighties. This law was used to prevent SIPTU winning recognition in the Nolan's Transport company and in Pat the Baker. It was introduced with the co-operation of the ICTU as a trade off for the partnership agreements that Des Geraghty is championing.

There are two real issues in the SIPTU

Vice Presidential election. One is whether Partnership 2000 should continue.

This was rushed through last year to help prop up the budget of the outgoing Rainbow government. In return for what even Bertie Ahern has described as a 'miserable' 1% tax cut, workers were asked to accept wage restraint until the end of the century.

But as property prices soar and interest rates threaten to escalate with the EMU crisis, there is a real chance of the agreement collapsing.

The other issue is union democracy. The top officials of SIPTU are on huge salaries and operate a policy of crushing all dissent. During the Partnership 2000 debate they refused to allow the NO campaign access to official publications and even printed a recommendation to vote YES on the ballot paper.

Another big vote for Carolann Duggan will be another signal that thousands of union activists want changes on these vital issues.

INVESTIGATED FOR TAKING UP A PETITION

A union activist in the Mater hospital in Dublin is being investigated by a special committee of SIPTU for taking up a petition complaining about the lack of representation from the union officials.

The 'committee of inquiry' was set up by supporters of Des Geraghty in the Dublin Hospitals Branch. But the inquiry has been postponed because its members have gone on an expenses paid trip to Sweden.

There is no crime called 'heresy' in the union movement. Instead of investigating union activists, SIPTU should be pressing proper claims for their under-paid hospital staffs.

TEAM WORKERS BALLOT FOR ACTION

TEAM workers have been balloting to take a series of 24 hour stoppages over wage rises.

Workers never received a two and a half per cent pay rise under the PCW which was due on July 1 1996 or a one per cent pay rise due in January of this year.

"We have had no pay rise since 1992 and many fellas are really angry. They want something

done" one activist told *Socialist Worker*.

The workers also want the restoration of the incremental salary scale which was taken off them

after a major lock-out.

Exposed

Meanwhile the TEAM management have been

exposed for victimisation. After a three day hearing at the Employment Appeal Tribunal, the company has been ordered to re-instate Dennis Smyth

and pay for compensation.

Dennis Smyth is a leading shop steward at TEAM who was sacked for attending a union

meeting.

Hearing

The company even refused to allow a union of-

ficial to attend his disciplinary hearing.

The company have been given six weeks to appeal the judgement.

WATERFORD REDUNDANCY FEARS

THE SHIPPING company Bell Ferries has collapsed and there are now fears for the hundreds of jobs there.

The receiver who has been sent in seems to be determined to slash wages and lower conditions in an

attempt to re-float the company with a yellow pack workforce.

£50 million of public money was invested in the Bell View Terminal at Waterford Port which the company garners for itself.

The collapse followed an attempt to compete with the Channel tunnel by reducing costs to

rock bottom.

Workers who have already made sacrifices should resist other attempts to lower wages.

Unions at the Waterford Foods and Avonmore plants have condemned the threat which the prosed merger has posed to jobs. Already there are reports that

500 jobs could be lost as the companies shape up for increased competition on the European stage.

While the big ranchers and city investors hope to make a killing from the merger, the workers who built up the companies are being asked for more sacrifices.

Reports indicate that the members of the two unions involved are determined to resist.

One shop steward said "where is P2000 now?"

"We are supposed to have consultation but this merger is being planned over the heads of the union."

47 strike in Law Society

Forty seven workers are on strike at the Law Society over the dismissal of a MANDATE member.

The strike began when the director of the Law society tried to use a flexibility clause to get an employee to do absurd tasks.

"They would have us climbing ladders and cleaning ceilings if they could," one striker told *Socialist Worker*.

Despite its pretence to represent justice and fair play, the Law Society operates the most Victorian attitudes to its own staff. The dismissal notice, for example, was brought out especially to the worker's house at 10.30 pm.

The strikers are also demanding that bonus payment agreed under a previous Labour Court recommendation be properly implemented. They want a grievance procedure to ensure that that their union is properly recognised.

Hire

At the moment the Law Society are trying to hire new staff on lower rates than that paid to existing employees.

"It is another case of using Yellow Pack labour" is how one striker put it.

Despite pleading the poor mouth to their own staff, the Law Society knows how to spend money on its own little pleasures. This year they have invested a cool £15,000 on their wine cellar and are even spending £80,000 doing up the spires on the building.

Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 40p

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Will there always be inequality?

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Opposition to bigotry grows

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MONTUPET:

SMASH THE ANTI-UNION LAWS

After nine weeks, the Montupet strikers are still determined to win their struggle for a decent wage rise, union rights and the jobs of 20 sacked strikers.

In the face of overwhelming pressure, a hundred people remain on strike, with picket lines at the car components factory in Dunmurray outside Belfast.

Montupet has mounted a massive scab operation, sacked 20 strikers and served injunctions on 28 people for taking part in the strike.

"We heard from a supervisor that they picked the people who they thought would buckle under to serve the injunctions on them," one of the strike leaders told *Socialist Worker*.

"It had nothing to do with what they did on the picket line. They looked at the people who had kids and mortgages. It was just

Black taxi drivers from both the Catholic Falls and Protestant Shankill Roads have pledged to block city streets if the court moves to jail the strikers

to try to get a return to work, to demoralise us and break the strike that way."

Injunctions

On Wednesday 11 June five of the strikers were due to appear in court, charged with breaking the injunctions, which pre-

vented them from picketing or even speaking to other workers about the strike.

"I just can't believe this legislation.

These boys are looking at up to two years in prison if they even phone one of us," said one of the strikers.

"Someone asked me didn't I think that this strike would hurt investment in Northern Ireland," said Eugene Nolan, one of the strikers visiting Derry to raise support last week.

"There's no-one more concerned about jobs here than us. It's our families and children who are going to work in these companies. But they can't come over here and expect us to work for peanuts. They have to realise that this is not a Third World country."

Determined

Throughout the strike they have been determined that sectarianism would not divide them.

"It doesn't matter where you're from, we're all workers here on the picket line, and we get on with each other brilliantly.

"It's the management that tried to use all this to divide us, putting about stories in the newspapers that scabs had been threatened by masked men and all that rubbish," said one striker.

Montupet is a French-owned multinational which set up in Belfast seven years ago with investment grants from the Industrial Development Board.

The strike started over delays in an annual pay rise. The workers asked for 4.5 per cent. Montupet, despite making a 4.5 million profit last year, offered 1.5 per cent.

But the background to the strike was constant pressure to speed-up, changes of shift patterns and intimidation of the workforce.

"At the same time, the company can get away with phoning our wives and families. They phoned my wife last week and asked her about how we were going to afford the mortgage. That's the sort of thing they're doing."

'We'll walk out if any striker is jailed!'

THE STRIKERS have approached shop stewards in major workplaces in Belfast, such as Harland and Woolf and Shorts, who have promised to lead immediate walkouts if any of the strikers are jailed.

People can see that they all could find themselves in

the same position as us," said one of the strikers.

The strikers are from both Catholic and Protestant areas.

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Solidarity is the key

THE STRIKERS are now calling for trade unionists to send letters of protest to the AEEU, calling on them to back the strikers.

The strikers have called a mass picket of Montupet on Saturday 14 June and are expecting delegations from workplaces from as far away as Edinburgh and Dublin.

Delegations from workplaces throughout the North need to be mobilised for the picket to show that the Montupet workers will not be left to fight alone and that any attempt to use the anti-union laws against them will be met with mass action.

A shop steward in a civil service in Belfast told *Socialist Worker*, "It's these people now. It could be our workplace next. The management in our place are bringing in casuals to undermine our conditions.

"The union says we can't take any action because it would be illegal.

"It's the same everywhere. That's why we all have to support the Montupet strikers. If they win, it will be a boost to all of us."

Support for the strike is urgently needed. The strikers are receiving no strike pay from their union and are relying on donations from other workplaces.

Support

Already, three of the strikers have had to sell their houses.

Rush donations and messages of support to Montupet Strikers and Families Support Group c/o 41 Queens Road, Parkhall, Co. Antrim BT41 1AL. To request speakers to address your union meeting phone (01232) 243 920. Donations can be lodged directly at Ulster Bank, Sort Code 98 05 90 Account No 83204031.

Send letters of protest, calling on the AEEU to back the strike, to Amalgamated Electrical and Engineering Union, AEU House, Antrim Road, Belfast.

Mass Picket at Montupet The Cutts, Dunmurry (beside Derrigahy train station) 1pm Saturday 14 June. Bring trade union banners

Benefit night for the Montupet strikers Saturday 14 June 8.30pm til late White's Tavern, Winecellar Entry, Belfast City Centre Musicians and speakers from Montupet strike £3 (£1.50) Organised by the Socialist Workers Party

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