

# Socialist Worker

inside

Stop Harney attacking the unemployed—  
Pages 6&7

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# HOUSING MADNESS

**Pictured above is Mark. He is fourteen. For the past two months he's been living "on and off" under the portals of the Bank of Ireland in Dublin's Foster Place.**

He stays with his friends sleeping under layers of cast-off blankets. Four of them together, all under 18.

Cathal is the oldest. He's been on the streets for five months. He hates it.

"It's hard and there's nothing to do dur-

ing the day." Early every morning, he says, "the guards come and shift us".

He has been to the Eastern Health Board but "they always tell us to come back again, or else they send us to the Garda station".

### Accomodation

The police are legally bound to call a social worker who will try to find accommodation. But even when there are places in the hostels, Cathal doesn't want to stay

there.

"They're dangerous," he says. "You never know when you might get attacked."

But homeless people on the streets are just the most glaring sign of the accommodation shortage.

In Dublin's flatlands, Rathmines, Ranelagh and Phibsboro, queues of people waiting for a flat viewing, are a common sight.

There are simply too few flats.

And the problem is set to get worse.

As students return to college, Dublin will see an extra 35,000 people looking for roofs over their heads.

The free market has been given the responsibility of providing accommodation. Yet it's failed miserably. Local authorities have virtually given up their duty to provide social housing.

Last year Dublin Corporation built 200 houses, but that was only one fifth of the number a decade ago.

In the midst of the Celtic Tiger thousands cannot find a place to live.

Continued  
from page  
one

ONE OF the most basic rights, to have a roof over your head, is being denied because of the drive for profit.

If ever there was a reason why this country needs fundamental change, the housing crisis is it.

One of the main reasons why the housing crisis has grown is because local authorities are no longer building houses for those who cannot afford to buy on the open market.

### Authority

In 1971 one house in every six was local authority. Today it's less than one in ten.

In a period when Ireland's rich have never had it so good, the waiting list for local authority housing has jumped a record 20 percent in the last year alone.

"Its now at 45,000," says Margaret O' Gorman of the homeless support group, Focus Ireland.

Gavin is a 25 year old mature student at the end of a line of people waiting to view a flat in Grosvenor Square. Ahead of him are a dozen hopefuls. He's been looking for five weeks: "They want £50-65 for windowless cupboards."

Gavin isn't optimistic. He gets rent allowance from the EHB. Most landlords won't sign rent allowance forms because they are afraid they'll have to pay tax on their rental income.

### Problem

This is not just a Dublin problem.

A survey by the Simon Community in Cork found that three quarters of landlords refused to consider tenants on rent allowance.

Those landlords who do accept health board forms make a fortune out of it.

Private landlords received £5 million from rent allowances in 1989. By 1996, according to a report by Trinity College's Eoin O' Sullivan, this figure had risen an amazing fourteen fold.

Instead of providing sufficient housing the government is subsidising private landlords.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

■ Take up petitions in your workplace and in your area to support the socialist demands on housing.

■ Demand that your union presses an immediate pay claim to cover you for rising accommodation costs.

■ If you want to fight for better accommodation ring, the Socialist Workers Party on 01 872 2682 and we will put you in touch with a local branch.

# WHY WE NEED RENT CONTROL

### In the face of spiralling rents, Gavin calls for rent control.

So does Esther, a low paid contract researcher. She has been living in a dark basement bedsit in Rathmines for 5 years.

Cashing in on the accommodation shortage, her landlord has upped the rent by 50 percent in the last 20 months. The landlord says that government regulations forced him to make

improvements which meant a rent increase.

Esther points at an extractor fan over the cooker. "This is his improvement," she says dismissively, "and it doesn't even work properly."

### Lost

Housing is now at crisis point. The last few years have seen massive conversion, of old three and four storey mansions, previously used for flats, into private homes. As a result rented space for an estimated 2,000 people has been lost over the last few years in the Rathmines area alone.

Average house prices in Dublin increased 25 percent last year. This is five times the average wage increase. House purchase has gone beyond the reach of most ordinary people and recently published figures confirm that prices will continue to go up. Around 44,000 people per year are immigrating to Ireland, mainly Irish people who have returned from abroad. As most of these are in the house-buying 25-44 age group, the demand for housing is set to grow.

Something must be done. Housing is a human right. It can't be left to the mercy of landlords and speculators.

The  
socialist  
solution

**IMMEDIATE steps could be taken to alleviate the housing crisis but it will demand a break from the profit motive. Among the measures advocated by socialists are:**

■ **Public ownership of building land.** Some landowners have made a fortune by bribing local councillors to have their land re-zoned.

It is time to end this corruption by nationalising land that will be needed for a major house building programme.

■ **Rent control on all flats and bedsits.** Control on rented accommodation was removed after a Fianna Fail senator took a High Court action on behalf of a landlords organisation.

Today Irish landlords are the least regulated in Europe. We need measures to stop them raising rents and to make them provide suitable accommodation.

■ **Tax the rich to fund an emergency house building programme.** Local authorities are building fewer houses because they are being starved of cash.

Those who made a fortune under the Celtic Tiger should be taxed heavily to fund a local authority house building programme.



Queuing for a flat

## Spring joins the golden circle

**WHEN DICK Spring was leader of the Labour Party he vowed to fight against the Golden Circle of businessmen who had the ear of the government.**

However when Spring became part of the government, he fell silent in his attacks on the rich. Now it seems he is part of the Golden Circle himself.

Spring has been appointed to the board of five companies in the past few months.

These include software company Airtel ATN, where Spring is non-executive chairperson. Here he is paid £15,000 a year for just 12 days work—an average of £1,250 a day.

On top of this, Spring will get a further £900 a day for "any additional time spent on company business". He also stands to make a paper profit of £1,500 if he exercises his right to buy 100,000 shares in Airtel.

Spring is also a director of International Development Ireland, an international consultancy owned by the IDA

and other state agencies.

IDI was privatised by the last government - of which Spring was a member - and is soon to be floated on the stock exchange.

## McCreevy's very tame crackdown

**A NON-RESIDENT company is being investigated by the Central Bank and the gardai. The company involved is accused of defrauding an Italian business executive of £130,000.**

The government says it is now planning a "crackdown" on non-resident firms which use Ireland to launder money. Finance Minister Charlie McCreevy claims he wants to stop these "undesirable activities".

It seems Labour politicians now have an added incentive to back privatisation—a seat on the board of the privatised companies!

But the whole operation of non-resident companies is "undesirable".

While politicians rail against refugees, they allow non-Irish businesses to register here without paying tax.

Meanwhile Irish consultancy firms make millions by helping these tax dodgers to register here, providing them with ready made lists of directors.

Given Fianna Fail's culture of generous tax breaks to the rich, we can expect McCreevy's "crackdown" to be a very tame affair.

## TOUGH TIMES?

**THE WORLD crisis is severely driving down living standards.**

The world's richest man, the despotic Sultan of Brunei, has cancelled £20 million worth of orders for Rolls Royce and Bentley cars.

Aston Martin has also lost orders from the Sultan for its Vantage models at £190,000 a piece.

The Sultan is so fussy about cars that his Astons are flown to Britain for an oil change.

Never mind! He still has 5,000 cars parked round the back of his 1,788 roomed palace to play with.

Some 20 percent of the population of Brunei live below the poverty line.

what we think

# The real crimes of Bill Clinton



Bill Clinton should be impeached for the bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan.

**BILL CLINTON should be impeached. Bill Clinton should be impeached for the bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan.**

Bill Clinton should be impeached for the murder of Somalis. Bill Clinton should be impeached for starving people of Iraq with sanctions. Bill Clinton should be impeached for lying over welfare, healthcare, civil rights and abortion. He should be impeached for presiding over the millions rotting in poverty in the richest country in the world. Bill Clinton should be impeached, I don't care about the cigars.

In the thousands of column inches devoted to Bill Clinton's exploits in the White House with Monica Lewinsky, the cigar and the occasional pizza, there is little written about the real crimes of Bill Clinton. The Irish media in particular has yet to get over the fawning it did when Clinton came to Ireland.

It is tempting to wallow in the bad jokes and gloat on his decline and fall. But the real story is that the campaign against Clinton has been pushed by special prosecutor Kenneth Starr, a right wing religious zealot who in his campaign for family values has managed to put 400 pages of por-

nography on the Internet.

Starr's initial focus was supposed to be Clinton's dodgy financial deals. But Starr settled on the bizarre sexual goings on in the White House to try and unseat Clinton. Starr is backed by republican right wingers.

### Moralising

Clinton is caught because of his own hypocrisy. In the midst of attacking the poor he has joined in with right wing moralising about family values.

He has been caught out lying in an attempt to try and preserve his "family values" image. He has encouraged the very forces which now seek to destroy him. He has stolen the Republican Party's programme, and now it is strangling him.

And while those attacking Clinton are on the right, Clinton is no left winger. He and his wife, Hillary, were tied up in shady land deals while he was governor of the state of Arkansas, the poorest state in the US.

Whenever Clinton has been faced with a challenge from right wing political forces he has caved in, echoed them and then outdone them.

When George Bush and the Republican Party tried to whip up racist scare stories about crime in the 1992 elec-

tion campaign. Clinton, "the liberal", sped back to Arkansas to gloat over the execution of a mentally ill black man, Ricky Ray Rector, to outflank the right.

In 1993 he abandoned promises of healthcare to placate private insurers and the big drug companies. The same year he fired cruise missiles against Iraq, which had already been devastated in the Gulf War, to demonstrate US power. His invasion of Somalia killed thousands of civilians for the same reason.

### Assault

Clinton then joined the assault on welfare launched by Newt Gingrich and the Republican Party. He lectured young single mothers about why they would be better off married. He signed the right's Defence of Marriage Act which scapegoats lesbians and gay men.

But to be clear, socialists are pro-sex. We are pro people acting in whatever way they want to gain consensual pleasure. But Clinton's "personal morality" is that of his class. He spent his time with fabulously rich business people, looking, among other things, for campaign contributions. It is no surprise that he behaved in private like a typical middle aged businessman, having

an affair with a younger employee and then ridiculing and humiliating her.

He pleads that his sex life should be private, but he has helped open everyone else's up to state and public scrutiny. Clinton's lying is not simply a character flaw. It is built into a system which claims to rule in the interests of all, but serves only a wealthy elite.

When the US president, a supposed pillar of democracy, admits he is a liar, and that his system forces him to lie, we should take that as a cue to question everything he and that system stand for.

## UN report exposes Irish poverty

According to the United Nations Human Development Report, Ireland has the second highest proportion of its population living in poverty in the industrialised world.

Yet the Celtic Tiger has been hailed as a success story for free enterprise capitalism.

The only other country that was worse than Ireland was the United States where black children below the age of one in New York have a higher mortality rate than some Third World countries.

The scale of poverty in Ireland reveal the

fraud of social partnership.

When the partnership agreements between the unions and the employers were first introduced in 1987, the ICTU leaders claimed they would help prevent the worst excesses of the New Right.

### Jungle

They argued that Thatcher and Reagan were developing a form of 'jungle capitalism' and the unions had to align with politicians like Charles Haughey to produce a different model.

Tragically these ar-

guments won support from a variety of campaigning bodies who wanted to tackle poverty.

Some of these organisations such as the Conference of Religious in Ireland even claimed that there was a "contented majority" among PAYE workers whose selfish interests could only be restrained through partnership agreements which looked after the poor.

The findings of the United Nations Human Development Report has devastated these arguments.

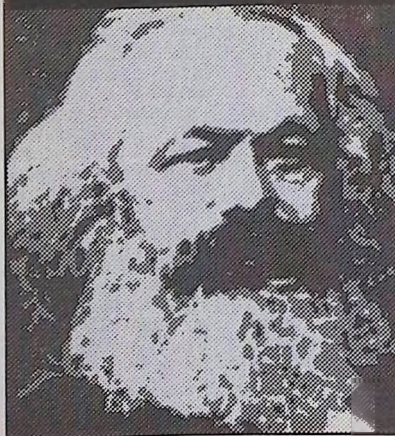
Far from social partnership producing a

kinder and more caring version of capitalism, that reduced "social exclusion", it sacrificed the poor to the economic laws of the jungle.

And when workers made sacrifices in their pay packets, this did not help the poorest sections of society in the least. The bosses simply pocketed the fruits of wage restraint — and then asked for more.

The next time you hear politicians attacking striking workers claiming that they want to protect, 'the weakest and most vulnerable in our society', tell them where to get off.

# MARXISM 98



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# news of the world

## Indonesia:

# Habibie in the hot seat

INDONESIA HAS been one of countries hardest hit by the financial and economic crisis in Asia.

Students, who were in the forefront of the May revolution that overthrew dictator Suharto, have taken to the streets again in the last few weeks.

Suharto's successor, president BJ Habibie, promised change and reform.

But his failure to deliver is now provoking a new wave of protests.

Hundreds of students blocked roads leading to the parliament building in the capital, Jakarta.

The day before, students had invaded the parliament building, recalling the student occupation of the building that became a focus of the revolt against Suharto.

Meanwhile over 2,000 people confronted President Habibie when he visited the city of Surabaya last Wednesday (see picture).

The students have wide popular support. One of their demands is that Habibie steps down unless he lowers prices of basic commodities.

Rice has doubled in price since Habibie came to office and could be set to go higher as the government last week agreed with the IMF to end food price subsidies.

Reports from around the

country suggest there are already continual outbreaks of rioting and protest over food prices.

Meanwhile Indonesian workers have been showing you can fight the impact of the crisis.

### Order

Thousands of workers at a plant owned by Tryfountex in Solo, in central Java, struck demanding better wages and conditions to cope with the crisis.

Bosses said they couldn't pay and threatened to close the factory. The workers' response was to say that if the management couldn't pay decent wages and provide proper conditions the plant should be nationalised.

When the management then victimised militants, hundreds travelled to Jakarta and demonstrated outside the labour ministry, winning a government order for the sacked workers to be reinstated.



RIOT POLICE hold back protesting students in the city of Surabaya. The students are demanding the resignation of President Habibie who was on a visit to the city. The banner reads, "Reform is not finished. People united cannot be defeated"

## U.S. Telecom workers win

A FOUR week strike by over 6,000 telecom workers in New England has ended with big gains for the workers.

They were fighting for decent wages and an end to a two tier system that saw new workers get \$8 an hour less than other workers.

The workers voted by 3,146 to 935 last week to accept a deal that gives them a pay increase of over 15 percent and ends the two tier pay system.

The president of the workers' union said, "This is the best settlement anywhere in telecommunications since 1983." The bosses of the Southern New England Telephone Company brought in managers and supervisors to replace the strikers.

### Scabs

And they offered friends and family of management \$20 an hour to act as scabs.

The successful strike follows victories by pilots at Northwest Airlines, telecom workers at Bell Atlantic and car workers at General Motors.

It shows US workers are putting struggle firmly back on the map.

## Bangladesh:

# Chaos as floods subside

"IT IS better to die in the flood than live in such squalor." They are the words of a woman in the poor south Asian state of Bangladesh, devastated by flooding over the last two months.

Now, as the floods subside, the after-effects are threatening to engulf the country in disease and famine.

Nearly 25 million people have been made homeless and over 1,000 have died.

Cattle have been killed. Crops, bridges and roads have been destroyed.

Hundreds of thousands of landless labourers are without work and production is in chaos.

### Spreading

Now disease is spreading as slums run with contaminated water and thousands of people live in shabby flood shelters.

Diarrhoea—a killer in poor countries—is spreading rapidly.

It may seem like a "natural disaster", but flooding in Bangladesh is entirely preventable.

Bangladesh is a low lying country. One third of Bangladesh is less than one metre above sea level.

It is also the exit point for three major rivers—the Ganges, the Meghna and the Brahmaputra.

In an average year one fifth of the country is submerged during the wet season.

But this is no reason for the devastation of the recent floods.

London would be vulnerable to flooding if it were not for the Thames Barrier.

Holland is only secure from the sea because of massive engineering works.

But no such projects have been undertaken in Bangladesh because of the country's poverty.

### Stripped

So the devastation is repeated again and again—as in 1987, 1988 and 1991.

This year's floods are the worst this century. They are getting worse because of the deforestation of the Himalayan mountains.

The forests covering the foothills of the mountains have fallen from 60 percent of the area in the 1960s to under 15 percent today.

Once the trees are removed the soil is stripped away at 400 times the speed.

The trees are cut down by big companies in search of profit and by peasants who use the wood for fuel. The peasants are so poor they have no alternative but to burn wood.

The devastating effect of the flood is also worsened by the free market economics pushed on countries like Bangladesh.

The IMF and the World Bank call for cuts in public

works programmes when they set economic policy guidelines for poor, indebted countries.

"Governments are increasingly unable to support public works, like embankments and flood control," says Peter Walker of the Red Cross.

"Private capital has flooded into many poor countries, but it is after the quick buck. It is not interested in public works, social welfare or development projects which can increase people's capacity to cope in crises."

But Bangladesh need not be poor.

When the British first colonised the Indian subcontinent, the Bay of Bengal was one of the richest parts of the region.

### Wealth

The British sucked out so much wealth, famine resulted.

The area then became East Pakistan when the British withdrew from India in 1947.

But all investment by the new Pakistani ruling class was concentrated in West Pakistan.

Bangladesh became independent in 1971 following the break up of Pakistan.

The war that accompanied the break up of Pakistan meant the new state was ravaged to begin with.

But Bangladesh has rich soil, plentiful water supplies and lots of sunshine—all the ingredients to feed the population.

A US Senate study in the 1980s found Bangladesh, "is rich enough in fertile land, water, manpower and natural gas for fertilizer not only to be

self sufficient in food, but a food exporter, even with a rapidly increasing population size."

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation says, "Bangladesh is possibly the richest country in the world as far as inland fishery resources are concerned."

But exploitation of ordinary people, first by British imperialism and now at the hands of the world market and the local rich elite, means Bangladesh remains one of the poorest nations on earth.

## World roundup

■OVER 200,000 metal workers were due to strike in South Africa on Tuesday.

The action was in solidarity with some 50,000 auto-components workers who have been out on strike over wages for the last three weeks.

Workers are demanding rises of between 12 and 18 percent, while employers are only offering 4.5 percent. The strike is hitting production at South Africa's car plants, with some being forced to close and others only maintaining limited production.

■OVER 5,000 workers at Turkey's two biggest

car plants walked out on strike last Friday in protest at a rotten deal done by their union leaders.

The workers walked out at Oyak Renault, a subsidiary of the French Renault company, and Tofas, which is partly owned by Italy's Fiat.

Union leaders in the Turk Metal-Is federation had done a deal giving workers a 43 percent pay rise. But with inflation running at 67 percent, workers wanted more. ■WORKERS at Hong Kong Telecom banned overtime this week following a weekend of street protests and petitions against the bosses' demand for a 10 percent pay cut.

The company made a profit of over £766 million last year but, is demanding massive cutbacks as part of its response to the Asian crisis.

Unemployment in Hong Kong has just reached a 15 year high.

■TRADE UNIONS in Ecuador have called a general strike for next Thursday in protest at government austerity measures, in part sparked by the currency turbulence on world money markets.

■OVER 30,000 mainly young workers marched for jobs in the German city of Frankfurt last Saturday as the country's general

election campaign entered its final week.

The protest and the rally which followed also took on a sharp anti-racist and anti-Nazi character, with a live giant video link to an anti-Nazi protest in the Baltic city of Rostock.

In Rostock some 3,500 supporters of the Nazi NPD party marched, protected by some 6,000 police while a series of anti-Nazi protests in the city attracted some 10,000 people.

■I'M THE only political leader in Sweden who doesn't want to be Tony Blair," was how Gudrun Schyman explained the breakthrough of her Left

Party in Sweden's general election last Sunday.

The election saw the ruling Social Democrats (Labour) remain as the biggest party, and the party is likely to stay in office under some form of coalition.

But the Social Democrats, who have ruled Sweden for 57 of the last 68 years, saw their vote slump from 45 percent in the last election to just 36 percent.

The biggest winner in the election was the Left Party, made up of former communists, feminists and dissident left wing Social Democrats. It saw its vote double to over 12 percent.

The Social Democrats lost support after pushing through welfare cuts over the last four years.

# NORTHERN ASSEMBLY OPENS...

by JOHN ANDERSON

# Time to oppose the bigots talking shop

IF THE opening of the new Northern Assembly is anything to go by, the hopes of the May referendum are likely to be cruelly disappointed.

A taste of the Assembly's likely future came in the first few minutes, when Sinn Fein deputies demanded resources to translate speeches made into Irish. The DUP immediately hit back by demanding "parity of esteem" for Ulster-Scots, before complaining that there was no Union Jack flying over the Assembly.

The Ulster-Scots "language" is spoken by nobody and was invented by loyalists in the 1980s as a spoiler to stop any recognition for Irish. But this episode also shows how Sinn Fein's "equality agenda" offers no challenge to loyalism.

Instead, it plays the same old game of two communities trying to get one up on each other.

## Joke

Laura comes from a loyalist estate in Belfast. She says, "The Assembly has hardly started and it's already become a joke. I couldn't believe it when the DUP started complaining about the seating arrangements, saying they wanted 'parity of esteem' in seating and an equal number of desks.

"And then everybody else, instead of just saying this was petty nonsense, took them seriously and gave them their two extra desks. The Assembly is supposed to be our new future but it looks more like Belfast City Council on a grand scale."

This sectarian competition is built into the new structures of government. The architects of the Belfast agreement wanted an end to the armed conflict —



■ 'Gerry, are you coming in yet?'

but they also wanted to keep the sectarian structures which have divided and weakened the workforce. Northern Ireland has wages that are 13 per-

cent below the British average and infant mortality 20 per cent higher.

John, a socialist from Antrim explained "The North has

become a low wage paradise for the bosses — at the expense of workers. The Agreement aims to make every economic decision part of a sectarian

battle over which 'community' gets a new factory or loses a hospital.

"The Major government used sectarianism to push through cuts in the health service, deliberately playing off the RVH and City Hospital against each other.

"We are going to see the same sort of thing on a grander scale when this assembly gets up and running."

The Assembly was opened just as the first signs of recession were hitting Northern Ireland. Already there has been a wave of redundancies in the clothing and textile trades.

All of this means that the talk of a 'peace dividend' has become hollow.

Far from delivering on a promise of a better future, the North's politicians will preside over a more run down economy.

## BIGOTS WHO FEED OFF BITTERNESS

**Sectarian politicians are already working hard to gain from the bitterness that will come with disappointed hopes in the new Assembly.**

An example of what the future could hold, if there is despair at mass unemployment, can be seen in the terrible in-

cidents at the Aghadrumsee primary school in Fermanagh.

After two Catholics were appointed as cooks in the school, bigots organised pickets to insist they be sacked and the jobs given to Protestants.

For three days, the Catholic workers were intimidated and refused entry to the school. The Western Education and Library Board did

little to break the sectarian picket.

A Unionist councillor, Harold Andrews gave his full backing to this vicious protest.

Andrews is a member of the Fermanagh District Partnership Board which allocates grants for 'peace and reconciliation'. Yet he whipped up naked bigotry in his own back yard.

**SAY NO TO BLAIR'S PFI PLAN**

RELIABLE REPORTS indicate that the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), is to be extended to Northern Ireland and the new 'shadow cabinet' of the Assembly will have to implement it.

PFI is an extension of the Tories' policies of privatisation and compulsory competitive tendering (CCT), and was enthusiastically embraced by New Labour when they came to power last year.

John Prescott even claimed that PFI could provide much-needed funds to regenerate run-down public services. But the experience in Britain is that PFI does not improve services at all and is actually less efficient than old-fashioned state spending.

The way PFI works is that the state pays the private sector to

do the state's job. In the Health Service, for example, it means that the NHS will pay a private health company to build and run a new hospital. Under a mortgage-type arrangement, the NHS will then buy the hospital back until it becomes state property, in about fifty years' time.

### Practice

In theory, this is supposed to mean that the country will get brand new hospitals with less cost to the taxpayer under the new "public-private partnership". But in practice, it will cost the taxpayer more without providing a better service.

The NHS will effectively be paying twice over for the same hospital. Staff at PFI hospitals will be paid less than the already miserably low NHS rates.

The only winners from PFI in the health service will be private health companies. Long marginalised by the NHS, they will be able to massively extend their reach.

Their costs will be underwritten by the taxpayer. They will be able to make big profits from lucrative private wards in the new hospitals, reinforcing the two tier nature of health care.

PFI does not just threaten the NHS. It is to be extended throughout the public sector, supposedly to improve inefficient services.

The few successes for private firms in Britain were won by offering rock-bottom bids based on poverty pay.

There is just no evidence that bringing the private sector into public services will bring any improvement — quite the opposite.

The experiment in private prisons, for instance, has proved to be a complete disaster.

The reason the Blair government is pushing PFI so hard is because it fits with their corporate agenda. They want to treat the public services like a business, and turn them into profit-making businesses if they can. The public won't benefit, but pals of the North's Assembly politicians in the big corporations certainly will.

PFI must be fought, and it can be fought.

The last year has seen some terrific public sector strikes in Britain, in the hospitals, the colleges, the firefighters and the Post Office, amongst others.

The same sort of fighting spirit is needed in Northern Ireland.

## FIGHT FOR A NEW AGENDA

THE OPENING of the Assembly presents new opportunities for socialists.

For the past few decades, politicians from the Unionist Party to Sinn Fein have played off communal tensions — but then claimed that they opposed hospital cuts and attacks on social welfare recipients.

As long as they were all in opposition they could blame the British government in Westminster. So even David Trimble could join marches to protest at the closing of the Banbridge hospital.

But now the old communal politicians are supposed to be learning the 'art of government' where they are to take responsibility for running capitalism in Northern Ireland.

### Agenda

This will mean that their real economic agenda will come under scrutiny for the first time.

So although Gerry Adams may continue to appear in his shirt sleeves, he will still have to explain what social services are to be abolished in order to finance the tax cuts he advocates for big business.

But this does not mean that support will automatically fall away from the communal politicians. Their strategy is to work together while still maintaining the sectarian tensions that keep their 'communities' lined up behind them.

It will take a rising tide of class struggle and, crucially, the intervention of a strong socialist organisation to make the difference.

However, the first step in all of this is to start from a position of outright opposition to the communal politicians.

Rather than trying to lobby those who claim to be on 'our side', we have to work to build the fight against them.

# BOARDROOM PANICS AT ECONOMIC MELTDOWN

**FORGET THE cheery stockbrokers and economic experts who pop up on the Irish media. A sense of panic is gripping the boardrooms of big business.**

Economies that account for nearly two fifths of the world output have already entered recession. Japan, the second largest economy in the world, has a banking system with £1,000 billion in 'unproductive loans'.

Investors are pulling money back from emerging markets such as Brazil, after they have seen the economic meltdown in Russia.

## Slump

For most of the business press, the argument is whether the coming downturn will resemble that of 1981-82, which was the worst since WW2, or will it be more like a full scale 1930s style slump?

There are already indications that the latter scenario is quite realistic.

**Commodity prices are tumbling because of the crash in South East Asia, with industrial commodities at their lowest level since the 1930s.**

A major cause for concern are the very elements that were supposed to symbolise the success of the free market in recent years.

Booming stock markets led many commentators to believe that increases in the level of real production was not a central component of a modern economy.

In a 'post-modern age' it was believed that wealth could be generated simply from the miracles of high finance itself.

The example which seemed to prove this was the modest growth of the so-called "Goldilocks" economy — neither too hot nor too cold — of the US. Here rising share prices encouraged the upper middle class to engage in lavish consumption and so feed demand.

But now there is panic on the over-valued stock exchanges.

**As the recession spreads across the globe the chances of a Wall St crash that could trigger further chaos has increased.**

Right wing commentators who praise the market have no explanation for what is happening.

The Sunday Tribune editor, Matt Cooper, for example could only note superstitiously that "October is always a difficult month during a bull (rising) market for no other reason than it has been historically so."

## Inevitable

Yet over a hundred years ago, Marx was able to point to why booms and slumps are inevitable under capitalism.

An unplanned system driven by an endless drive to accumulate comes up against its own demands to reduce wages, resulting eventually in 'over-production'.

Marx, however, did not leave it at that. Instead he encouraged workers to resist the insane logic of the system, no matter how much they were told this resistance was "unrealistic".

As long as there was the possibility of organising society on the basis of workers control and the planning of production, the most realistic option for workers was to stand up for their class interests.

Today the 'experts' who claim the Celtic Tiger will last for decades are in for a rude awakening.

As the first major wave of redundancies hits factories like Fruit of the Loom, it is more urgent than ever to build a socialist organisation that will challenge the madness of the market.

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# STOP HARNEY THE UNEMPL

**IN JUNE Mary Harney launched the Government's Employment Action Plan which aims to force the jobless into low-paid work. Only last year Harney launched an attack on single parents. This year she is attacking the unemployed.**

She chose the Small Firms Association conference in June to announce the plan. The scheme, which kicked in during September, involves the calling in for interview of all unemployed people under 25 after six months on the dole.

A team of 176 FAS inspectors grills them about why they are still on the live register.

They will then be cut off the dole if they do not accept whatever job is offered to them or do not take up a place on a training scheme, community employment or work experience.

Those over 25 will face the same blackmail after a year on the dole.

Harney announced that soon the time limits will be further reduced to four months for under 25s and eight months for others.

This scheme was pioneered by Proinsias De Rossa when he was Social Welfare Minister in the last Coalition government. He had those aged 18 and 19 called in and taken off the dole.

## Intimidated

De Rossa claimed a fall of 20 percent in the young jobless as a result. Some of these would have found work anyway, but other were intimidated off the live register and were forced back into dependency on their parents.

The government Employment Action Plan is designed to force 40,000 people off the dole in 18 months. Harney's threats have caused an outrage. SIPTU, the largest union in the country, has denounced the "threatening and abusive harassment of the unemployed".

**One hundred extra snoopers are to be recruited and FAS will provide 176 inspectors to investigate the unemployed and "inform them of their obligations."**

This level of investigation contrasts

sharply with Harney's approach to rich tax dodgers.

Over the last year it has been revealed that almost every leading businessman in Ireland have been using off shore accounts and other scams to avoid tax.

But Mary Harney never increased the number of tax inspectors to bring these rich spongers to justice.

**There are no new FAS places and no new resources for training.**

As the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed say, "The Minister should explain how an offer can be made to 30,000 young people with a pool of 7,500 training places."

The INOU points out that many FAS courses are low quality and fail to address the needs of people seeking training: "All the evidence shows that when people are given the opportunity of getting on relevant and useful training courses, with some prospect of a job at the end of it, they jump at the opportunity."

**'Savings' targets have also been drawn up for cutbacks on social welfare spending.**

Over the past ten years social welfare spending has fallen as a proportion of gross domestic product from 11.5 percent ten years ago to 9.8 percent today.



Signing on at the dole and (inset) Mary Harney

# It's the

# Forced off the dole

**FAS investigators are now implementing the policy of forcing young unemployed to accept low paid jobs or training.**

One man in Bray was contacted by FAS out of the blue within a week of the Plan starting and told to take a place on a training scheme to become a fork lift driver or lose his dole.

FAS had never contacted him before or discussed with him what jobs he might train for.

The first targets appear to be college leavers with qualifications and degrees.

## Work

Nearly all of these would find work in their field after a little time, but the welfare cutters are not prepared to wait.

David from Cabra told Socialist Worker: "I left college recently having graduated in Electronic Engineering.

"I am qualified and have been looking for a job

that can use my skills. As a graduate starting out it can take a bit of time to find the right job but I'm keen to work in the industry.

"I was called in to the dole office and told me they wanted me off the register immediately. They said there was a suitable job for me — as a grave digger.

"I had no choice. They said if I didn't take the job my dole would be stopped."

Pat from Dun Laoghaire has a similar story. "I have been looking for work as a sound engineer. I've done the courses and I am qualified.

"A Social Welfare inspector told me they would not tolerate me continuing to sign on. I must get a job — any job and quick.

"He insisted I take work in a restaurant at £2.17 an hour. I refused it.

"I was cut off the dole. I then lost the appeal against that decision. I'm now left with no money coming in. I have to depend on my parents."

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# THEY ATTACKING EMPLOYED



(set) Mary Harney

## the rich who are the real scroungers

**THE MEDIA try to portray those on social welfare as spongers living off the rest of us. The Irish Independent for example, hailed Harney's scheme as a plan to "reduce the number of work dodgers by more than 40,000."**

Many workers, seeing their wages decimated by PAYE, are resentful at what they see as an additional burden being placed on them.

But the reality is that there are not thousands of workshy individuals living "the life of Reilly" at our expense.

The government claimed that one in seven of those interviewed about their eligibility for welfare payments signed off subsequently.

But the majority of the unemployed are looking for proper jobs at a living wage and will take such jobs when they can.

Departmental figures show the major-

ity of claimants sign off because they have found work. Another third of long term unemployed sign off to take a place on a training or community scheme.

The government admitted that only .026 percent of those who signed off in June did so because the "were not available or genuinely seeking work".

Last year the Department investigated 450,000 social welfare claims. As a result there were 245 prosecutions.

Yet investigations of 7,000 employers found 20 percent were "non-compliant" in payments of PAYE/PRSI for their staff.

In other words one in five employers were shown to be on the fiddle while only one in two thousand social welfare recipients could be prosecuted for fraud.

The attack on jobless is aimed at lowering wages for employers rather than saving "taxpayers money".

In the US 1.4 million people have been cut off social welfare since 1994 and states must get 50 percent of wel-

fare recipients into work by 2002. In Idaho half of those on welfare benefits lost them in a single day as a result of local state "reforms".

A study in Tennessee found that as many as half of those cut off from welfare do not find work and of those that do most families remain in poverty.

But the America's new welfare laws have led to a \$3 billion increase in the federal welfare budget as services and inspectors are put in place to force people off welfare and into poverty-pay jobs.

The employers have always tried to use the unemployed — what Marx described as "the reserve army of labour" — to force down wages and undermine conditions throughout industry.

The real purpose of Harney's clamp-down is to force workers into low-paid jobs.

And this will affect workers already in jobs and undercut existing wages and conditions.

## What do socialists say?

# The road to plenty

**THE QUALITY and productivity of labour will greatly increase under socialism because the producers will — for the first time — have a direct, vested interest in production and be healthier and vastly better educated.**

It is this economic advance which will lay the material basis for the transition to a completely classless society.

by **JOHN  
MOLYNEUX**

In the first place it will make it possible to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter - the necessities of life - for everyone on the face of the planet. Never again will any child die of malnutrition or of easily preventable diseases.

This alone would be more than enough to justify socialism. But in fact it is only the beginning of what socialism will offer.

Beyond the achievement of a decent standard of living for all lies the road to abundance and free distribution according to need.

This point is fundamental to the Marxist conception of the higher stage of socialism, communism as Marx called it, and requires further explanation.

*From the start the socialist revolution will produce a great equalisation in the distribution of goods compared with the massive inequalities built into capitalism.*

The enormous accumulations of wealth deriving from exploitation and property ownership will be expropriated and the inflated salaries paid by the ruling class to itself and to a section of the middle class will disappear.

### Increased

The wages of the working class, and especially the low paid, will be rapidly increased.

Nevertheless, at first because socialism begins with the resources it inherits from capitalism—the supply of goods will remain limited and workers will still work for money wages which in turn they will use to purchase these goods.

Progressively, however, socialism will increase the production of an ever wider range of goods to the point where supply exceeds demand.

*It will then become possible to cease selling these goods and begin distributing them on the basis of need.*

To illustrate how this can be done let us take the example of water. In many parts of the world today water — especially clean water - remains in desperately short supply.

But in all the industrialised countries the problem of water has been overcome, even under capitalism.

There is more than enough water to go round, so it is simply available to everybody 'on tap'.

This does not result in people madly consuming water. Apart from a certain amount of waste which is easily accom-

modated, people just consume what they need.

What capitalism has been able to do for water, socialism — with the growth of the productive forces outlined above — will be able to do across the board.

*Housing will be an obvious area to start. We will simply build more houses than there are people to house and allocate them according to need.*

In order to move, people will either transfer to vacant accommodation or exchange houses instead of buying and selling them.

Such an arrangement would not only solve the problem of homelessness but also be infinitely simpler to operate than the present tedious and complex house buying system.

### Transport

It goes without saying that education and health services will be completely free. So too will public transport, which will be massively expanded (probably to the point where the private car becomes redundant).

As each service becomes free, so the labour of all the various money collectors such as estate agents will be put to better use.

*In time the free distribution principle will spread from water, housing, health, education and transport to food, clothing, communications, entertainment and so on, until it becomes all-embracing. Buying and selling will fade away.*

Money, the seemingly all-powerful god of capitalist society, but in reality the means by which the products of human labour are exchanged, will steadily lose its usefulness to the point where it can be dispensed with altogether.

### Outlandish

Thanks to the capitalist indoctrination we all receive from birth, this may seem outlandish.

But given the premise that international socialism will unleash the productive forces hitherto confined and restricted by capitalism, there is nothing unrealistic about it.

In fact there is only one serious counter-argument, that if everything is free, nobody will bother to work.

This will be dealt with in the next issue when I discuss the nature of work under socialism.

## Robin Blackburn on the slave trade



# Capitalism relies on racism

**ROBIN BLACKBURN** is editor of the *New Left Review* socialist journal. He is also the author of a pathbreaking new study of the development of the Atlantic slave trade — the making of new world slavery. He spoke to **HASSAN MAHAMDALLIE**

### HOW WAS the Atlantic slave trade different from earlier forms of slavery?

IT WAS more intensively geared to a commercial system of commodity production than was the slave trade in Ancient Rome.

Slavery existed in the colonies, not in the centre. Most importantly, the slavery of the ancient world was not based on a simple racial distinction.

Ancient slavery was a very harsh and exploitative system, but it didn't have the same capitalist or racial character as the colonial slavery of the last 300 to 400 years in the Americas.

In many traditional slave societies slavery had a quite various character. Slaves could have very important or responsible jobs.

In the New World slave system almost all slaves were concentrated in menial occupations. They were tied to extremely harsh labour regimes and defined as slaves in racial terms.

In traditional societies slaves were working for the more limited appetites just of their own master and a few of his neighbours.

In the modern colonial slave systems of the Americas the slaves were working for the unlimited, vast market of a developing capitalist society.

### IN CLR JAMES'S book *The Black Jacobins* he talks of the slave plantations as being like an industrial nursery. Do you think there's a truth in that?

INDUSTRIAL METHODS were first developed on the slave plantations. There was a coercive coordination of the workforce. There was gang labour, invigilated by the overseer's whip. The workers were concentrated in one place.

In that sense this was an anticipation of industrial methods, and this had an impact on the slaves' consciousness. They had been taken from very different peoples with different languages and customs and religions.

By being assembled together they developed new languages and new religious beliefs. They developed stories and a culture of resistance.

### WHY WAS racism so important to slavery?

THE MASTERS stumbled into it almost by accident. They discovered that racial division was a necessary insurance as far as they were concerned.



A Sketch showing captives being sold to European slavers on the West African Coast. During slavery solidarity grew between slaves on the plantations and white workers in Europe

They needed the support of the white colonists. By giving skin privileges to white labourers the planters were able to cut off potential solidarity between white and black workers.

And that solidarity did develop. When I talked about the way in which the slave community would acquire common interests, very often poor white workers were included.

They would have a familiarity with the new languages and participate in the new religious cults.

There were many incidents, above all in the 17th century and early 18th century, of common action between white workers and the slaves.

Racism was one of the means by which a wedge was driven between these two communities.

The racial system only develops two or three or even four decades after the foundation of the colonies.

Racial ideologies were products of the slave system, not its causes.

### ERIC WILLIAMS'S book *Capitalism and Slavery* has been assaulted by people attacking his argument that slavery was central to the growth of early capitalism. How do you think Williams's argument stands up today?

I THINK it stands up very well, above all the argument that industrialisation in Britain derived a lot of support from exchanges with the plantation zone and with Africa.

The slave plantations were crucially important as sources of supplies of raw material, as markets and also the source of a very considerable profit.

Eighteenth and early 19th century Britain carried out huge investments in infrastructure, in harbours, in canals, roads, and a lot of the costs were covered by the profits of plantation related trades.

So the central point of Eric

Williams's argument is true. But we should realise that it was early capitalism in Britain that developed New World slavery.

It was capitalism that produced slavery and not slavery that produced capitalism.

### WAS THERE solidarity between workers in Britain and slaves?

ABSOLUTELY, BUT it took time for each community to reach that point. The first use of the word strike is when seamen struck their sails in 1766 in the Port of London, sailors who were sustaining this trade with the plantations.

There were a number of important battles in which free workers supported attempts by slaves to rise up and claim their liberty.

White workers, even those with some racial feeling, would still feel that it would not be a good idea for their employers to own slaves.

You have to remember that the conditions for workers in Britain were in many ways little better than those of the slaves.

The death rate in Leeds around 1780 was very similar to the death rate on the West Indian plantations.

In this sense the fetters on the slaves were matched by exploitation of the English working class.

This provided a milieu which was quite favourable to anti-slavery ideas and this was the origin of the anti-slavery movement that later developed.

### IF THE slave trade was so profitable how did it come to an end?

THE SLAVE system continued to be profitable down to its last days. But there were important sectors of the capitalist economy not directly engaged in the slave system.

'Me impetus to break with slavery

arose around what historians call the age of revolution, following on from the American Revolution and the French Revolution.

It also happened at a time when there was a transition to this new mode of capitalism, industrialism.

You also get a faction of middle class reformers who are hostile to the layer of the capitalist class which is most heavily involved in the slave plantations. These reformers wish to parade their own enlightenment and piety.

This doesn't have a direct effect until you get a willingness to question private property.

The first time it becomes possible to attack slavery is with the revolutionary crisis in America and France in the 1780s and 1790s.

That's when white people in Europe and North America moved from saying that the condition of the slave is a deplorable one to saying that the master must be expropriated.

That development is only made on a small scale in North America, in Vermont in 1771, in Philadelphia in the 1780s, as a consequence of popular mobilisations against the rich.

But it grows when the torch of revolution passed across the Atlantic to France, and you get the Great French Revolution.

It's in 1793 and 1794 at the height of the Jacobin republic you get a real attack on the rich and on property, and the emancipation decree of 1794. That was very much encouraged by the gigantic slave revolt in Saint Domingue (now Haiti) after August 1791. It is the radicalisation both in the colonies and radicalisation in the metropolis as well.

You get what CLR James called the Black Jacobins, and they got significant amounts of support from Jacobins in France itself.

The French Jacobins sent a third of a million rifles to the slaves! It needed the ideas of the Black Jacobins to construct a new structure of freedom and black power and

eventually a new state, the republic of Haiti.

### SO WE can rule out the notion that the British ruling class saw the error of its ways and struck out slavery?

THAT'S A myth perpetuated by a certain type of British imperial historian. Eric Williams once observed that these people write as if Britain invented and practised the largest slave trade in history because it wanted the satisfaction of suppressing it!

Parliament did not ban the slave trade until 1807.

At that time the British rulers needed a glorious cause to motivate the mass of people to fight Napoleon.

In the British colonies slaves didn't win their emancipation until the 1830s, after a new wave of slave unrest, in Demerara in 1823 and the revolt of 30,000 slaves in Jamaica in December 1831.

This made the planters feel very insecure and open to schemes of compensated emancipation. The planters did receive compensation from the British parliament £35 million, which was a gigantic sum in those days.

### HAS YOUR study of slavery affected the way that you view history?

THE HISTORICAL lesson for us is that it is possible to resist and that structures of exploitation and oppression, no matter how formidable and ferocious they seem, are vulnerable and have been destroyed.

I think that is quite an inspiring story.

*The Making of New World Slavery by Robin Blackburn (£15). Also available is Blackburn's earlier work, The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery (£17). Order from SW Books, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.*



# Profits and antibiotics

"SUPER BUG threat to health" is a familiar headline on the dangers of growing physical resistance to antibiotics.

Some months ago the science and technology committee of the British House of Lords warned that the widespread use of anti-biotics was producing a new generation of bugs resistant to them.

This threatens a catastrophic return to the days when infections that are easily treated today, routinely killed people.

"Unless we introduce stringent new controls we could suddenly find ourselves with a public health crisis of major proportions," concluded the report.

Antibiotics became widely available, at least in the industrialised world, from the 1940s onwards.

**The discovery of antibiotics such as penicillin, and many more since, was one of the greatest ever medical advances.**

Diseases like TB, largely untreatable before, could now be tackled. Infections from wounds or surgery, even dental abscesses, used to kill people. In the last 40 years these have become easily treated.

Antibiotics work by inhibiting the growth of the bacteria, micro-organisms, responsible for infections.

But bacteria also evolve in the face of their environment, in exactly the way Charles Darwin first explained last century with his theory of evolution by natural selection.

In any batch of infectious bacteria there will be some which are more resistant than average to the antibiotic.

Prolonged and persistent use of the antibiotic means those which cannot resist it die out, but those which have some resistance may survive and multiply.

## Resistant

Eventually processes like this mean the vast bulk of the bacteria involved can become resistant to the antibiotic.

Some argue that it is the overprescription of antibiotics to patients that is the problem.

It is certainly true that doctors sometimes prescribe antibiotics when they are not needed.

For instance antibiotics are no use whatever against viral infections such as the common cold or flu.

**Another problem is that doctors, pressed for time and lacking in resources, prescribe antibiotics aimed at a wide range of bacteria.**

It would be better, but would take more resources, to find out more precisely which bacteria was causing the infection and prescribe a more narrowly targeted antibiotic.

A further problem is that people often do not complete a course of antibiotics because they feel better after a day or two.

The result is that the most resistant bacteria are likely to still be surviving, and they then multiply.

All these are genuine problems which do need to be tackled.

The solutions are simple enough: more resources for the health service and for public health education.

But those are the very things not on offer from governments across the world pushing public spending cuts.

A far bigger problem though, is the behaviour of big business in its chase for ever greater profits.

**Stuart Levy is the president elect of the American Society for Microbiology. In a recent article in the reputable Scientific American magazine he notes, "More than 40 percent of the antibiotics manufactured in the US are given to animals."**

He points out that most of these are used to encourage animals to produce more meat, not to combat disease. This boosts profits, but it can be medically disastrous. The animals become "laboratories" for selecting increasing numbers of resistant bacteria.

They may then pass these on to the workers who look after them and to people who prepare and consume undercooked meat.

Capitalism's crazy priorities fuel the global growth and spread of bacteria resistant to antibiotics, with potentially lethal consequences.

The giant drugs companies which manufacture antibiotics are also to blame.

In the 1980s they hit on an easy way to boost their profits. Instead of continuing research into new types of antibiotics, they cut back on such research and instead concentrated on raking in profits by selling the drugs they already made.

Over the last 15 years the result has been that bacteria have grown more resistant to the existing array of antibiotics.

**There is no reason, especially with the advances in microbiology, why new antibiotics cannot be developed to tackle those bugs resistant to existing ones. But it can take some 10 to 15 years to develop such new drugs.**

In any rational society continuous research could keep abreast of evolving antibiotic resistance in bacteria.

The problems that hide behind clichés about the 'superbug' are worrying.

The madness of profit chasing and cutting public expenditure risks plunging the world backwards and the return of killer diseases that should have been conquered.

**PAUL MCGARR**

film

# MOGULMANIA

**THE RECENT buy-out of Manchester United by Sky television was heralded as one of the worst things to have happened to football.**

Even Tony Blair claimed that 'the game may be losing touch with its roots'.

But there was never any hope of him blocking the bid for fear of upsetting Rupert Murdoch, who has close links with New Labour.

## Money

The 'people's game' has always been run by businessmen who see it as a money making opportunity.

Their contempt for the fans who pass through the turnstiles meant that safety at the grounds used to be an afterthought.

One result was the terrible Hillsborough tragedy when 96 people died in 1989.

When the Taylor Report was issued in its aftermath, it recommended all seat stadia.

The clubs used this as an opportunity to replace terracing with stands packed with corporate bosses to attract the rich to football.

Massive price hikes on tickets have pushed thousands of long time supporters away from the grounds.

This has killed off the



atmosphere at matches, with a new breed of fans politely applauding scores.

## Throwing

Manchester United have even introduced a policy of throwing people out of the stadium if they stand up too many times during the game.

This is now regarded as 'unacceptable behaviour'.

It is also more difficult for ordinary fans to

follow their team on television.

Subscriptions to Sky Sports have increased significantly every year since its introduction.

All of this has happened because English football has been left to the mercy of the free market.

Like almost everything else, Murdoch's take over of Manchester United shows that little has changed in Blair's Britain.

—PADDY MOEN

play

# Passionate propaganda

by SINEAD KENNEDY

**AS PART of the Dublin Theatre Fringe Festival (29th Sept-17th Oct) the Vesuvius Theatre Company is presenting an adaptation, by Vincent Woods, of Ignazio Silone's remarkable novel, Fontamara.**

Fontamara is a powerful tale of struggle against fascism. Set in Italy in the 1930's during the rise of Mussolini's it tells the story of the resistance to fascism displayed by one tiny peasant village, Fontamara.

After the Fascists came to power in Rome, the local peasants immediately began to suffer.

## Benefit

In a calculated move, the nearby stream, the chief source of irrigation for the peasants crops, was diverted to benefit a rich landowner. Yet this is only the first of a series of events that will change life as they have known it, forever.

One of the most telling episodes in the novel, is when a representative of the new fascist government comes to the local bar and orders that a sign saying: "POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS FORBIDDEN HERE", be displayed.

The owner of the bar says that nobody in Fontamara knows what politics are. "No one has ever talked politics in my bar... We talked about prices and wages and taxes and laws". The government official tells them they can't talk about these things anymore and replaced the sign with another saying: "ALL DISCUSSION STRICTLY PROHIBITED."

In his Preface to the novel Silone writes that he wanted to tell the story in the "language of the peasants". The playwright, Vincent Woods, who adapted the novel for the stage was conscious of this. He said he wanted to remain close to Silone's words, "to the truth of the novel".

Silone's novel inspired thousands to defy fascism in the 1930's. Leon Trotsky described Fontamara as "a book of passionate political propaganda. But revolutionary passion is raised here to such heights that it creates a truly artistic work".

With the resurgence of fascist parties throughout Europe, the powerful message of defiance that is captured in Silone's novel, is as relevant to us today, as it was in the 1930's.

*The play will be staged in the old riding school in Collins Barracks. It runs from the 29th Sept- 17th Oct. Matinees on Saturdays*

review

# Tackling the Tiger

**READING THE media of recent times, we get a very confusing view of the world — reports on economic crises in Russia and elsewhere exist alongside forecasts of unending economic growth in Ireland. The newly launched Socialist Worker Review comes as a welcome relief from all that.**

The leading article "Mauled by the Celtic tiger", cuts through the jargon of politicians and union leaders, to give a realistic appraisal of life in contemporary Ireland. Kieran Allen looks at the prospects for a socialist alternative when a "boom" under capitalism means 34 percent living below the



poverty line and the second highest rate of low paid employment in the industrialised world.

In his article on Northern Ireland, Colm Bryce looks in dept at the peace process and argues the need for socialist politics to really challenge sectarianism and unite Catholics and Protestants along class lines.

Overcoming racial di-

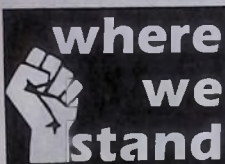
visions in society is an important priority for socialists and Marnie Holborow's article on racism is an excellent guide to understanding where racism comes from, but also why a strategy of working class activism is needed to put an end to it.

There is also an interview with Tony Cliff, founder of the International Socialists and an article on Bertolt Brecht.

The review is an important aid to Irish socialists in clarifying the arguments that are needed to bring socialist politics to the fore both North and South. This first issue is essential reading.

**Socialist Worker Review is available from Po Box 1648, Dublin 8. for £1.50 +75 p+p.**

—GRACE LALLY



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.

# Union activists say: 'Build the solidarity'

Nearly one hundred trade unionists agreed to set up a rank and file solidarity network at a conference in September.

by KEVIN WINGFIELD

The Rank and File Conference which was organised by Socialist Worker brought together shop stewards and union activists from Waterford Glass, Limerick Corporation, TEAM Aer Lingus, the bricklayers union and firefighters.

The theme of the conference was how to organise for the battles ahead. Workers discussed building in the workplace and organising the power of the rank and file to overcome the dead hand of the trade union officials.

Socialist Worker editor Kieran Allen, gave the opening speech to the conference. He pointed out that the years of "partnership" had been a disaster.

"Wages as a proportion of national income had fallen from 73 per cent ten years ago to 63 per cent today, with a

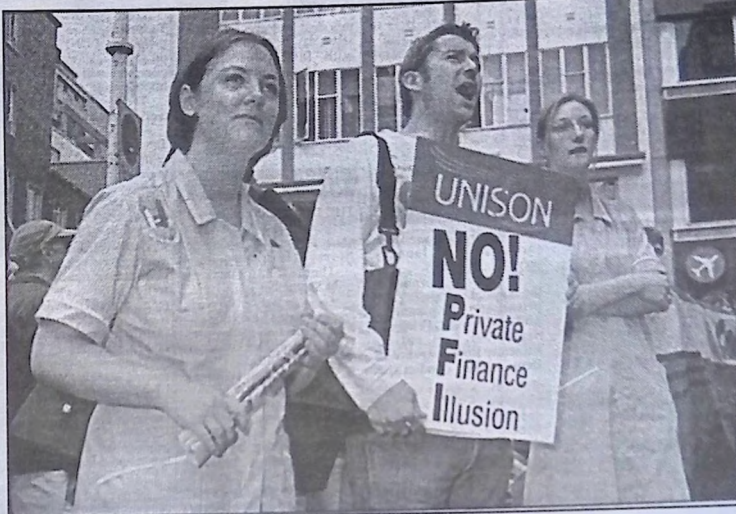
corresponding increase in the proportion going to profits. Over a similar time span company tax on profits had fallen from 50 per cent and was set to be just 12 per cent in a couple of years time.

"This proves that the central strategy of the trade union leaders—partnership with the employers—doesn't pay," he said. What is needed is a rank and file strategy allied to a political vision that rejects partnership.

**Privatise**

A shop steward from TEAM Aer Lingus drew the lessons from the recent decision to privatise TEAM.

He pointed out how the ideology of the "inevi-



Nurses taking action.

tability of the market" was accepted by the trade union leaders.

However he drew the conclusion that privatisation is not the end of the road, it is still necessary to fight to defend conditions under private ownership.

## 'We can break the anti-union laws!'

DAVE, a bricklayer who is a member of the Dublin Shop Stewards Committee of BATU, spoke on the impact of the Industrial Relations Act.

The law demands ballots, outlaws secondary action and prohibits "defamatory" placards, etc. But the law acts through the union leaders.

"They want to control the members, to put them in a corner."

"They are more concerned with protecting their salaries, and claiming to be protecting union funds so they cave in and refuse to bring in other workers, to widen a dispute."

**Unofficial**

Dave spoke about how a unofficial rank and file body, 'Building Workers Against the Black Economy' had defied the law to defend jobs and union organisation in Cramptons during the winter.

"We took secondary action, organised mass pickets of other Crampton sites, organised unofficial stoppages."

"The employers got injunctions against pickets and even prevented newspapers publishing pictures of the dispute.

"The union leaders disowned the strikers.

"But there were big numbers of building workers prepared to go jail, to defy the law.

"And throughout the country there was a wider network ready to shut down their workplaces—this is the model."

## Unity on the shop floor

Jim Barbar, Executive Council member of Fire Brigades Union opened the session on trade unions in Northern Ireland. He spoke of the importance of fighting trade unions for overcoming sectarianism.

Jim also spoke of the Essex firefighters dispute where the local fire authority tried to get rid of 38 jobs and withdraw a number of appliances, seriously threatening safety for the firefighters and the public.

"We won because we threatened illegal mass secondary action by 57,000 FBU members throughout the UK." After a series of actions the local authority was forced to concede most of the strikers' demands.

A member of NIPSA in the Child Support Agency explained how action by rank and file CSA workers had united Catholic and Protestant workers against threats by the INLA and UVF.

**Protest**

"We got an overwhelming vote by two of the major offices to walk out. 1,300-1,400 walked out every day."

Colm Bryce explained how the legacy of sectarianism meant wages and incomes in Northern Ireland were 15 percent lower than the rest of the UK. Trade union leaders had sought influence in the old Stormont and had failed to give a lead throughout thirty years of the Troubles, refusing even to protest over internment or Bloody Sunday.

Now these same leaders wanted to meekly lobby the new Assembly. Eamonn McCann a member of the NUJ and Derry Trades Council argued that in the past all the parties in the North would protest at Downpatrick over closure of the hospital. But the Northern Ireland parties, including Sinn Fein and the Unionists would now be ordering the closures themselves.

"There are now better possibilities for class politics than have been seen in living memory," McCann said.

## Building a rank and file movement

An ATGWU shop steward in Waterford Glass argued that in the early seventies the unions in the factory had become moribund.

It was a tradition of socialist politics that motivated a new layer of activists to rejuvenate the unions in the factory.

Shop stewards in Limerick Corporation, who spearheaded recent industrial action over pay, spoke of the campaign of intimidation and bullying from the management and union leaders. But the base they had built made it very difficult for this campaign to succeed.

One Dublin Bus driver and member of the Busworkers Action Group described how protests organised by the NBRU and SIPTU were cancelled when the employers threatened legal action.

However the Busworkers Action Group organised for them to go ahead anyway. A three hour stoppage throughout Dublin Bus and a huge demonstration was held.

The continual organising of the Busworkers Action Group meant Dublin Bus drivers felt strong enough to decisively reject the union-backed renegotiated plan in early Summer.

The meeting voted to set up a Rank and File Solidarity Network with Carolann Duggan as Secretary. A six-weekly bulletin would be circulated and the links maintained.

For more details on the rank and file network, contact Carolann Duggan, Rank and File Solidarity Network, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

**SWP branch meetings—all welcome**

**ATHLONE**  
Contact (01) 872 2682 for details

**BELFAST CENTRAL**  
Meets every Thurs 8pm, Garick Bar, Chichester Street.

**BELFAST SOUTH**  
Meets every Weds at 8pm, Queens University Students Union Club Room.

**CORK**  
Meets every Thursday at 8pm in Dennehy's Pub, Cornmarket

**DERRY**  
Meets every Tues in Badgers Bar at 8.00pm.

**DUN LAOGHAIRE**  
Meets every Tues at 8.30pm in Christian Institute.

**ENNISKILLEN**  
Meets every fortnight.

Contact (01) 872 2682 for details

**GALWAY**  
Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Currans Hotel, Eyre Square

**LIMERICK**  
Meets every fortnight. Contact (01) 872 2682 for details

**WATERFORD**  
Meets every Thursday at 8pm in ATGWU Hall, Keyser St.

**DUBLIN NORTH-WEST**  
Meets every Thursday at

8.30pm in The Snug, Dorset St.

**DUBLIN ARTANE/COOLOCK**  
Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm Artane/Beamount Recreation Centre opp Artane Castle

**DUBLIN DRIMNAGH**  
Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in the Black Forge (formerly the Bentley), Drimnagh Rd

**DUBLIN NORTH CENTRAL**  
Meets every Wed at 8.30pm in Conways, Parnell St.

**DUBLIN RATHMINES**  
Meets every Weds at 8pm in O'Connell's Pub, Richmond St.

**DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL**  
Meets at 8.30pm in the Trinity Inn, Pearse St.

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

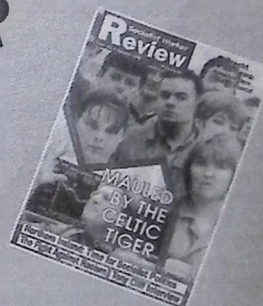
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# Pay the nurses

**HEALTH Minister Brian Cowan is trying to stop nurses getting what is rightfully theirs.**

Earlier this year, nurses agreed to postpone strike action after they were awarded pay increases and the promise of a commission to inquire into their work.

But when the commission reported that nurses needed extra allowances, Cowan claimed that the whole matter would have to be deferred until the public sector unions in the ICTU met!

## Policeman

Cowan seems to think that the ICTU should be acting as a policeman over public sector pay.

The Report of the Commission on Nursing recommends that nurses with special skills should be paid the equivalent of a higher grade.

Nurses who are trained as midwives, for example, get very little for their skills at the moment.

The commission recommends that they be paid the same as ward sisters.

Today many nurses are leaving the job early. In Dublin the shortage of nurses means that

200 acute beds have had to be closed.

Yet despite this shortage of nurses, Cowan is doing nothing to increase the rewards for the difficult work that nurses undertake.

Instead he lectures them about the importance of pay restraint.

Yet the Fianna Fail/PD government have no problem with looking after their rich friends.

## Taxes

They have cut taxes on inheritance and windfall profits without the slightest hint that the rich

need to 'restrain' their greed.

Like all other workers nurses are suffering from the dramatic rise in accommodation costs which have eaten into their last pay rise.

Nurses and other workers fully deserve major pay increases.

## The item that is missing

The one area where the Report of the Commission on Nursing fell down was on early retirement.

During their huge protests nurses demanded that they be allowed to retire at 55. Gardai, prison officers and psychiatric nurses already have provision for early retirement.

But the Commission kicked the issue off to another official body, the Public Service Pension Commission, in the hope of burying it.

Nurses should bring forward their demand for early retirement when they fight for higher allowances.

## We need action now!

Brian Cowan has shown that he thinks commissions are only designed to issue reports that suit him.

His treatment of nurses needs to be met with strong and decisive action.

Nurses union leaders have said that the vote for strike action has only been 'deferred' and can be implemented at any moment.

They should call for an immediate shut down to shake this government that only looks after the needs of the wealthy.

## Lifts strike

# Arbitration as strikers face strike-breaking

**STRIKING lift maintenance engineers have allowed their dispute with the Lift companies and IBEC go to arbitration.**

The workers have been on strike for twelve weeks for a pay rise. The companies have, until now, insisted on conditions to any pay award.

These include cuts in travelling time which would mean that many lift engineers would be little better off as a result of such a deal.

The strikers have had to put up with vilification from the employers, press and radio.

In particular, the media has used the situation in the Ballymun flats to attack the strikers.

Pat Kenny on his daily radio programme and the *Irish Independent* have continually accused the strikers of inflicting suffering on the residents of the flats complex.

Socialist Workers Party members and supporters in the area have tried to build links between the residents of Ballymun and the strikers. A message of support was taken up and was signed by many Ballymuners. A bus-load of residents also went to support the workers picket at Pickering in Dunboyne.

Constantly the point was made that the workers were entitled to their rightful pay increase and the residents to working lifts.

The best way to ensure this, was for residents and strikers to stick together to force Pickering Lifts to pay up.

Many residents, despite the hardship of broken lifts, saw the sense of this. They understood that Pat Kenny was no friend of the residents.

He had insulted Ballymuners a few months earlier on account of the litter problem in Ballymun.

He accused tenants of being being worse than animals "who don't live in their own filth". He refused residents the right to reply to these insults.

Scandalously Sean O'Coinnigh, a well-known Workers Party activist in

Ballymun, has spearheaded a campaign that invited Dublin Corporation to organise scabbing.

O'Coinnigh and his followers have been demanding that the Corporation repair the lifts. He along with other residents took a case to the High Court. An injunction was granted which demanded Dublin Corporation do "everything in its power" to repair the lifts.

The army was brought in but lacked the skills to repair the lifts. The TEEU engineers agreed to step up voluntarily repairing the lifts on an emergency basis and donate the money that would be due to them to local charities for the benefit of Ballymun residents.

£10,000 was raised for local people in this way.

However that agreement broke down after lift engineers had been subject to abuse and assault by a minority element.

## Enforce

O'Coinnigh and his supporters then went back to the courts to have the judges enforce the injunction.

It was suggested that lift companies in the North or England would supply scabs to repair lifts.

One striker told *Socialist Worker*, "We have been under pressure from a hostile media and the employers—we would have expected better of people like O'Coinnigh."

Under this barrage of pressure the workers agreed to arbitration and to return to work in Ballymun pending the outcome.

The tragedy is that the Workers Party once attracted to itself trade unionists and others, sympathetic to socialist ideas. However this sympathy has greatly declined in recent years.

But it must sicken its remaining sympathisers to think that one of its most prominent leaders is prepared to invite scabbing to advance his own electoral ambitions.

■ The SWP organised a fund-raising social after the recent Rank and File Conference that raised £150 for the TEEU lift strikers.

## Tullamore

# Victory at Tullamore Hospital

**WORKERS at the Tullamore Hospital scored an important victory after a short two days of strike action.**

A dispute arose after management broke an agreement on the transfer of workers from

a nursing home.

Against the wishes of the union members, it re-integrated staff who were moved from a nursing home into general duties in the hospital.

"This had repercussions for workers who were temporary, or for others who were looking for promotion.

We have some people in here, who are 4 years on temporary and their jobs could have been in jeopardy if this arrangement had gone ahead" one worker told *Socialist Worker*.

After management refused to back down, workers launched full scale strike action and only offered emergency cover for road traffic ac-

cidents.

The officials in SIPTU also responded well by bringing down a caravan for workers and also getting them free meals.

The result was that 23 new permanent jobs have been created and the posts and conditions of the temporary staff have been maintained.

## Hartmann

# Industrial action saves 27 jobs

**THE WORKERS protest vigil against the closure of the Hartmann plant in New Ross has been resolved after the company guaranteed to keep some jobs and offer a higher redundancy settlement.**

Hartmanns originally announced the closure of their plant while the workers were on holidays.

They sent in security guards with dogs to patrol the perimeter of the plant to intimidate workers.

However, workers soon established a round the clock 'vigil' to protest at this disgraceful behaviour by the company.

After standing up to the bosses for several weeks, they forced through an important settlement.

Hartmanns agreed to pay four weeks per year service for the majority of workers.

They also agreed to keep part

of the plant open and to employ 27 SIPTU members on the same pay and conditions as before.

The workers' action had forced the government to intervene. They threatened Hartmanns that they would have to pay back the £1.1 million in government grant aid that they got from the IDA.

"We have no doubt that we achieved something", one shop steward told *Socialist Worker*. "We forced them to keep a small number of jobs and to increase the amount of redundancy pay. That is why there was a unanimous vote to return to work when the settlement was announced."

There was however, a nasty

sting in the tail of the settlement. one key shop steward was not offered his job back at the plant. The company is hoping to have a docile workforce in future.

But the hope is that the experience of taking strong action will encourage workers to rebuild their organisation at Hartmann.

## WHY DID COUNCIL GAG THE WORKERS?

Hartmanns workers were not allowed to address the local Urban District Council to discuss their struggle.

Many believe that this decision is linked to the behaviour of a key officer of the council who bought land from the IDA at a knockdown price some years ago.

The same councillor has managed to get the IDA to lease the land back from him, for local factories.

It is believed that negotiations on further rents for his land was in progress during the threatened Hartmann closure.

## COLLEGE MANUAL STAFF PUSH FOR 15% RISE

Manual staff in the universities are up in arms over an attempt to peg down their wages below that received by manual workers in Dublin Corporation.

The corporation workers received a minimum increase of £16.80 with some workers receiving much more. In addition they got extra leave and the chance of more promotions. In all the increase amounted to a rise of 15 percent.

However the university authorities want to peg their manual staff to a rise of only 5.5 percent.

This cap on public sector rises was agreed by the ICTU and the government, but it is now far below workers expectations.

The new term in the colleges could see industrial action if management do not back down.

## Toyota

**Workers at Toyota staged a brief sit-in in their canteen after management presented them with an ultimatum to increase flexibility.**

Management wanted to be able to move workers anywhere within departments at their beck and call. They also demanded that store workers work to targets.

"They wanted us to put a board over our head and note down the number of parts dealt with each hour.

"We had agreed to a certain degree of flexibility before but the company wanted continuous improvements", one worker told *Socialist Worker*.

Workers originally mounted a small picket outside the plant but they were told that the company would not negotiate unless they came inside.

In a most unusual situation, the company encouraged workers to come into the canteen where they even got meals served to them.

It would seem that Toyota is very concerned about its image in Ireland and wanted to hide the fact that it had pushed its workforce into industrial action for the first time in over a decade.

# Socialist Worker

inside

Stop Harney attacking the unemployed—  
Pages 6&7

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## STUDENTS:

# IT'S TIME TO REVOLT

Students who go to college this year face worse conditions than ever before.

In the North, fees of £1,000 have been introduced. This is having the effect of forcing working-class students out of colleges. A recent report showed that 20 percent of students will drop out of their courses due to financial pressure.

In the South, the tiny maintenance grants are disappearing in rent payments.

The housing crisis has meant that more students are living in tiny bedsits on exorbitant rents.

Colleges are overcrowded and run down. Classes of up to five or six hundred students, in first year, are no longer unusual.

It is a different story for the elite who run the universities.

Queen's University Vice Chancellor, George Bain is sacking 107 lecturers and has increased the rent in student halls.

Bain himself earns £105,000 a year and that is before his many perks. He then has the nerve to recommend that the minimum wage be set at only £3.60 an hour.

Capitalism needs an educated and productive workforce today. But it wants to provide education on the cheap, turning universities into education factories which 'process' graduates in the most efficient way possible.

It is high time that students started to revolt against this state of affairs.

Who said that uprisings were a thing of the past!

### BERTIE'S BOYS RUN OUR UNIONS

IRELAND's main student union, USI, is run by a clique of Fianna Failers.

They see the union only as a training ground for their political skills.

No wonder they have done nothing to organise a fight on behalf of students.

Their latest policy is to call for tax cuts for landlords who take on students.

As if the rich were not looked after enough! Instead of tax cuts, there should be strict rent



control on the landlords who are exploiting, not only students, but everyone who is desperate for a home.

This year we should take our union back from the careerists who only look after their own interests. We need fighting unions that organise demonstrations, occupations and struggles to win back our rights.

### GET ORGANISED, GET POLITICAL

The injustices do not stop at the college wall. We are living in a crazy world that is run on profit and greed.

The richest 225 people on this planet have more wealth than the poorest 47 percent of the world population - some 2.5 billion people.

There are 15 individuals who are worth more than the whole of sub-Saharan Africa - some 600 million people.

No wonder we live in a world torn apart by wars and famines. Only a socialist solution which places wealth in public ownership offers any hope.

As the market system once again heads towards a global recession, we need to fight for a socialist society that is built on workers control and planning of production.

But that takes organisation. If you want to get active and political, join the Socialist Workers Student Societies which are organised across most colleges in Ireland.

#### Join the Socialist Worker Student Society

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

College \_\_\_\_\_

Return to SWSS PO Box 1648, Dublin 8