

# Socialist Worker

inside

## JAILED BUILDING WORKER SPEAKS OUT

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For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 50p Solidarity price £1

### NORTH AND SOUTH IT'S TIME TO...

# TAX THE RICH TO PAY THE NURSES

On both sides of the Irish border, the two governments have insulted the nurses. They praise them for their vocation but try to make them live on low pay.

In the South, the Fianna Fail government says that if it implements the report of the Commission on Nursing, there will be no money left for tax breaks for the rest of PAYE workers.

"They are trying to divide workers. You would

think from listening to them that we are stealing the bread out of other people's mouths.

#### Strike

But we are only looking for what is rightfully ours. We called off a strike last year because issues were referred to a special commission. But now the government is refusing to honour the full report" one nurse told Socialist Worker.

In the North, the Blair government is trying to keep nurses below a 3 per

cent pay rise.

Every time working people advance their demands the Labour government says there is not enough money in the kitty.

But the fat cats who run the health trusts have never any problem getting a pay rise.

Last year, for example, John Ferguson who closed a hospital in the North Down area got a £26,000 pay rise. That is more than nurses earn in a whole year.

When the two governments talk about North-South bodies they rarely take up the issues that concern workers.

Instead they play around with 'cross border' bureaucracies and try to synchronise their plans for attacks on the health service and social welfare.

Yet workers in every part of Ireland fully support the nurses in their fight for decent pay.

It shows how the politics of this country have been distorted by right wing parties who wave green and orange flags while they link up to attack workers.

We need a real socialist alternative that puts the interests of the working class to the fore.

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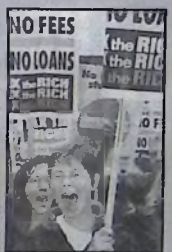
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# If there is money for beef barons... Make the government pay for childcare

**THE NATIONAL Women's Council of Ireland have a march in Dublin on Saturday the 14th of November to demand proper childcare provisions.**

Thirty years ago the women's liberation movement were calling for free 24 hour crèches. But today there is still no adequate childcare for women in Ireland.

"It is a terrible situation. You have to search around to find a creche that might take your child and then pay out at least £80 a week. Otherwise you have to get into the black economy and pay someone under the counter. There is no proper regulation or facilities being

provided when children really need it' one parent told *Socialist Worker*.

## Traditional

The issue of child care is now reaching crisis point because more married women have joined the labour force in the last 5 years than in the previous 20 years. The traditional family where a male breadwinner brought up his wages to a woman who stayed at home is dying. The recent rapid rise in house prices means that a two wages family has become a necessity.

Yet in the booming Celtic Tiger economy there is little provision being made for chil-

dren. Parents are expected to work — and then carry the burden of childcare themselves.

The conservative ideas which employers promote pretends that society has no responsibility for rearing children.

The result is that Irish parents are paying an average of 20 percent of their taxed income on childcare compared with an European average of eight percent.

It is almost impossible for women living in poverty to work outside the home because of the lack of childcare facilities.

The National Women's Council argue that tax relief should be used to cover childcare costs. The problem of

childcare in Ireland will not be solved through tax relief alone.

There are not enough crèches in Ireland to begin with and the ones that exist are so expensive most working class parents can't afford them.

We should be demanding that local authorities provide free crèches in their areas.

Workplaces with a labour force over one hundred should be forced to provide crèches.

But we also need a fight for a better type of society that sees the welfare of children as more important than wasteful items like advertising.

Only a socialist society which takes the wealth off the rich can provide the type of free 24 hour crèches which modern society really needs.

**National March**  
Saturday 14th  
November at  
2.30pm. Meeting at  
the Garden of  
Remembrance,  
Parnell Square and  
marching to the  
Dáil.

## Burke's tax dodging friends

**MICHAEL BAILEY of Bovale Developments is a generous man.**

When he visited former Fianna Fail TD Ray Burke with Jim Gogarty they each gave Burke a brown envelope. Gogarty's contained the famous £30,000 and Bailey's contained £60,000.

Bailey spreads his wealth: last year he gave £3,000 to Fianna Fail TD Sean Doherty.

Unfortunately Bailey is less keen on paying his taxes.

In September this year he was convicted in the District Court for failing to make any tax returns.

*Socialist Worker* is sure that the fine of £750 will not be too much of a burden.

Michael Norris, another pillar of society, was also fined £1,000 for failing to file his taxes.

Michael Norris is clearly showing the way for his class.

He is the owner of *Business and Finance Magazine*.

# BRING THIS MONSTER TO JUSTICE

**AT THE beginning of November Britain was set to free General Pinochet, the former dictator of Chile, who is wanted by Spain and Sweden for human rights abuses.**

Pinochet came to power in 1973 in Chile in a military coup which overthrew the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende.

According to Amnesty International a quarter of a million Chileans were rounded up after the coup, thousands tortured and thousands more murdered or disappeared.

Since his retirement Pinochet has been a frequent visitor to Britain where he receives private medical treatment and sips tea with his friend Margaret Thatcher.

Now this old right wing warrior who inflicted the poll tax on the British people has rushed to the aid of the butcher Pinochet.



## AIB scandal even bigger

**THE IRISH rich are trying to pretend that the AIB scandal is thing of past. Yet the reality is that the non-residential account scam for the Irish rich is bigger than ever.**

At the time the AIB did a deal with the revenue to avoid paying £86 million in tax there were 53,000 non residential accounts in Ireland.

There are now 22,100 accounts in the country. In his sub-

mission to the Dail the head of the Revenue Commissioners said that there are £17 billion in these accounts. The AIB has £6 billion in these accounts.

This is about a third of all the money in Irish banks, the majority of it is held in branches outside Dublin. It is probable that over ten billion pounds is held in these accounts for the purpose of fraud. This means that at least £120 million has been stolen off the tax payer each year.

## The Wright stuff

**THE POST-MORTEM on LVF leader Billy Wright found traces of cannabis in his blood stream.**

Wright claimed to be a tee-totalling, fundamentalist, born-again Christian.

He insisted that all LVF members keep a bible in their H-Block cells, to remind them of what they were fighting for.

The post-mortem results suggest that instead of 'praise the lord and pass the plate', with Wright it was more a case of 'forget the lord and pass the joint'.

King Rat, like many other bigots preached one thing and did another.

# Tony Blair demands silence over dictator's stay

**BRITISH NEW Labour spin doctor Peter Mandelson said to release Pinochet would be "gut-wrenching".**

But much of the hardware the Chilean army used to trample on human rights in Chile was supplied by Britain.

And the British Labour government of James Callaghan in the 70s continued to sell military hardware to Pinochet.

Now Blair has insisted on no further comments from Labour ministers as he prepares to sanction the freeing of Pinochet.

Socialists demand that Pinochet be made to answer for his brutality so that today's rulers know they cannot expect to get away with rights abuses.

## U.S. backs the thug

**The US called loudly for Pinochet's release. It fears any trial which might bring its role in the coup to light.**

Key US government official and Nobel Peace Prize winner Henry Kissinger said of the overthrown elected government of Allende: "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist because of the irresponsibility of its own people."

He told the CIA: "It is firm and continuing policy that Allende should be overthrown by a coup."

# Throwing money at the multi-nationals

**Trimble, Hume and Adams have all been championing the cause of inward investment to help the North build on the peace process.**

The Industrial Development Board is spending more than £700,000 on an 11-city "investment tour" of the US.

But a damning report shows that the IDB has been throwing money at multi-nationals, who then renege on their jobs commitments.

## Investment

In the nine years from 1988 to 1997, the Board gave £200 million to assist inward investment. The IDB also spent £80 million promoting the North as a prime location for investors. But a report

from the Audit Office shows that the IDB failed to reach its job creation target in five of the nine years surveyed. The report found that the number of jobs created was "significantly less than promised".

Many of the jobs promised were never created and many actual jobs were only for a limited period.

Of 37 projects surveyed between 1988 and 1994, less than half still existed in March 1997. Of these, only four had reached or exceeded job targets.

Of the £15 million deemed to be recoverable from companies who fail to meet their targets, the IDB had only recovered £3.8 million.

The politicians attack unemployed people for "living on handouts" but the IDB is giving huge handouts to multi-nationals who then break their promises of job creation.

## what we think

*As union leaders become addicted to social partnership*

# We need a rank and file network

**THE FARMERS** have marched in their tens of thousands. Students are likely to do the same to demand better grants. Yet where are the trade union leaders?

As discontent with social partnership grows, the ICTU leaders are operating like a fire brigade service for the government.

When Dave McMahon and Willie Rogers were jailed for picketing, the ICTU condemned the wave of unofficial solidarity strikes.

They even claimed that O'Connor's, the firm who committed the two building workers to jail, were not part of the black economy.

### Treachery

This treachery was designed to ensure that ICTU are seen as a 'trustworthy' partner for the employers in a time of crisis.

The same thing is also beginning to happen during factory closures.

Instead of urging workers to take action, SIPTU officials are repeating the line of management and government that 'nothing can be done'.

During the Krupps closure, the local SIPTU official Mike Long even said

he was satisfied with the action of local management, who had all time kept the union informed of the difficulties.

This do-nothing-trade unionism is the price that is being paid for social partnership.

The union leaders value the stability and their access to government ministers more than the demands of their membership.

### Emerge

But already a different type of trade unionism is starting to emerge.

During the strikes in the building industry, nobody stopped to consider the Industrial Relations Act or the ICTU policy of two tier pickets before they took action. The watchword was simply 'solidarity'.

The key thing now is to start pulling together these new struggles into a rank and file movement that will either force the officials to do our bidding or by-pass them.

This is why a Rank and File Solidarity Network was formed from the recent conference of one hundred trade union activists.

The network was active during the building strikes and has now produced its first bulletin. Write to the network at 105 O'Hogan Rd, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10, for more details.



**BUILDING** workers celebrate the victory of the rank and file over the courts

## Gridlock hits Stormont

The Belfast Agreement has moved one step closer to unravelling. The end of October was supposed to see the formation of a shadow executive which would pave the way for a shadow North-South body.

But now the British and Irish governments have agreed to scrap this timetable and are hoping that everything will be in place by February when the actual executive is formed.

Two main issues have contributed to the gridlock among the North's parties.

One is the actual size of the executive. The Unionist Party wants only seven places so that it can reduce Sinn Fein representation to only one seat. The other pro-agreement parties want a ten member executive.

### Executive

The other issue is de-commissioning. Here Trimble is insisting that the IRA start de-commissioning before Sinn Fein gets a seat in the executive.

Yet even if the IRA started to do this, further demands would be raised for more Semtex and guns to be handed in.

The Belfast agreement was supposed to bring politicians from the main parties together in a new deal for peace.

However as we pointed out at the time, there was a huge gap between the aspirations of working class people for peace and the sectarian politicians.

The Unionist Party, for example, are the equivalent of the Tory party in Britain - yet it commands votes from many Protestant workers because it claims that the 'Protestant community are under siege'.

How could it start to dismantle sectarianism without undercutting its own base?

Sinn Fein have retreated from a fight for a 32 county workers republic. Of all the parties they are most desperate to show they have got something from the agreement.

Today Sinn Fein sees themselves as brokers who win multi-national investment for Catholic areas.

How could they issue any appeal to Protestant workers that might undercut sectarianism?

In the end, the politicians will probably cobble together some deal.

But the recent developments have brought out the naked sectarian games that underpin the Belfast Agreement.

Far from looking to the North's politicians 'to work together', it is time for Catholic and Protestant workers to unite against all of them.

## Europe swings to the left

**EUROPE HAS swung to the left.** After recent elections in Germany and Sweden, most EU countries now have social democratic governments.

Only Ireland and Spain are dominated by right wing parties.

In two of the key EU states, Germany and France, the governments are advocating a break with the free market policies that dominated the 1980s.

France's Lionel Jospin wants to turn Europe into 'an area of growth for ten to 15 years' by launching a public investment programme in areas like transport.

In Germany, the key figure in the

government is the Finance Minister Oskar Lafontaine who has promised to shift the tax burden from working families onto the corporate sector.

Now many of Europe's new social democratic governments have begun argue for tax harmonisation on company profits.

They want to set standard rates of tax so that individual countries do not undercut each other.

One their main targets is Ireland's corporate tax regime which will have a 12.5 per cent tax rate on company profits. This contrasts with a rate of 35 per cent in Germany.

Already the press is up in arms about this attack on 'Irish freedom'. But why shouldn't profits be

taxed highly so that there is more money to cut hospital waiting lists and reduce overcrowded classrooms.

Disgracefully, Labour and Democratic Left have lined up with the business establishment to defend this reduced rate of taxation in Ireland.

### Leaders

The difference between these parties and their social democratic counterparts in Europe does not arise from personalities of the leaders

Over the last two years, mainland Europe has experienced a wave of mass strikes and huge student demonstrations which have swung

the political mood to the left. But this does not mean that the practice of Europe's new governments will match their rhetoric.

Already the European Central Bank has been warning governments not to break with the spending limits that are associated with the launch of the EURO. Will Jospin and Lafontaine keep their promises and defy the bankers and the financial markets?

Past experience has shown that when social democratic governments are caught between the demands of those who elected them and the pressure of big business, they almost always have capitulated to the bosses.

For now their shift to the left shows the weakness of the politics that lie behind the merger of Labour and Democratic Left.



# news of the world

# Bomber Clinton is at it again!



**US PRESIDENT Bill Clinton was threatening at the beginning of this month to bomb Iraq just as he faced crucial midterm elections.**

The renewed threat of air strikes comes after the US fired 80 cruise missiles at Sudan and Afghanistan in August, killing about 30 people, and follow moves to bomb Iraq in February of this year.

As in those two previous adventures, the New Labour government in Britain signalled its craven support for whatever course of action Clinton decides on.

And once again the US was trying to justify the possible carnage by claiming it is opposed to chemical, biological and nuclear weapons.

## Fooled

No one should be fooled. Clinton and Blair claimed in August that the alShifa medicine factory in the suburbs of the Sudanese capital Khartoum was manufacturing chemical weapons. So they flattened it with cruise missiles.

Western engineers who helped assemble the plant and the German ambassador to Sudan showed definitively that it was simply a pharmaceutical plant which made more than half of Sudan's vital antimalaria drugs. The US said its spies had found traces of a chemical, EMPTA, near the plant which could only be used for manufacturing nerve gas.

It was then forced to admit that it had no reliable agents in Sudan and that chemical analysis of the soil sample was inconclusive.

The international body which monitors the spread of chemical weapons showed that EMPTA could be used in making fertilisers and drugs.

Weeks later even top CIA agents were forced to admit that the alShifa plant was "probably no more than a medicine factory".

If Sudan had no chemical weapons, the US and its allies have thousands of tons



**A VICTIM of America's bombing of Iraq in the Gulf war**

of them. The intelligence magazine, Foreign Report, described a string of accidents which killed four people at Israel's chemical weapons plant in August. A further accident took place in September.

In the same month the Dutch paper NRC Handelsblad revealed that the Israeli plane which crashed into a working class estate in Amsterdam in 1992 was carrying

the raw materials for making deadly sarin gas.

Tons of chemicals were loaded on the plane in Pennsylvania in the US bound for the Israeli Institute for Biological Research near Tel Aviv.

"The amount of the material being transported could only be explained by the conducting of large scale field experiments," says a United Nations chemical weapons expert.

Residents on the Amsterdam estate have suffered the effects of chemical poisoning since the crash.

Defence experts also say that Israel has over 200 nuclear warheads pointed at the capital cities of its Arab neighbours.

It still keeps nuclear scientist Mordechai Vanunu in jail because he blew the whistle on its nuclear weapons programme 12 years ago.

Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, South Korea and Egypt also have chemical weapons. Yet the US does not talk of sanctions or air strikes against these countries. Instead it plies its allies with billions of dollars of military aid and defence contracts.

Another key US ally, Turkey, brought the Middle East to the brink of war two months ago when its generals called for military action against neighbouring Syria.

## Crisis hits Malaysia



**RIOT POLICE** were on the streets of the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur this week to try and head off expected protests at the trial of former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim.

There have been regular protests since Malaysian prime minister Mohamad Mahathir had Ibrahim arrested six weeks ago.

The political crisis is a direct result of the economic slump sweeping the world. The Malaysian economy is set to shrink by 8 percent by the end of the year after two decades of growth.

Ibrahim and Mahathir fell out over economic policy over the summer. Mahathir wanted to weaken Malaysia's links with the world's banks and money markets, Ibrahim wanted to strengthen them.

Mahathir resolved the argument by jailing Ibrahim who then tapped into people's anger at the crisis and lack of democratic rights to pull tens of thousands of supporters onto the streets.

Many demonstrators have gone far beyond the limited goals Ibrahim set for the movement. Dozens of opposition newsletters and discussion groups on the internet have sprung up in the highly authoritarian country.

Malaysian author Rehman Rashid says, "This

story is no longer about Anwar Ibrahim. Malaysians are losing the last shreds of faith in their government, its media and its instruments of authority."

## Indonesian students demonstrate against Habibie's rule

**ABOUT 8,000 students** demonstrated in the Indonesian capital Jakarta last week. The largest demonstration since the fall of General Suharto in May called for the resignation of his successor BJ Habibie.

He has called a special session of the Indonesian parliament, which is stuffed with Suharto's cronies, to draw up guidelines for elections next year.

He is trying to limit the pace of democratic change and also prevent workers' and peasants' fury at the economic crisis gripping the country from spilling over into strikes and protests.

Half of Indonesia's 200 million people have to get by on only one meal a day. Habibie is imposing further austerity measures at the behest of the International Monetary Fund which has lent its government money to bail out the rich. Habibie has also sent more troops to the province of East Timor which Indonesia has occupied since 1975. Strikes are continuing there after a general strike paralysed the capital, Dili, last month.

## Whose weapons?

**THE US has about 30,000 tonnes of chemical weapons stockpiled and enough nuclear warheads to destroy the world many times over.**

It is the only country ever to have used nuclear weapons in war - it incinerated tens of thousands of civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

British foreign secretary Robin Cook threatened to drop nuclear bombs on Baghdad in the middle of the last crisis over Iraq in February of this year.

The west has also led the world in using chemical weapons.

British forces dropped poison gas on rebellious Iraqi peasants in the 1920s. Winston Churchill said, "I am strongly in favour of using poison gas against uncivilised tribes." According to recently released documents Churchill wanted to gas German civilians in the dying months of the Second World War. He said, "We could drench the cities of the Ruhr and others in such a way that most of the population would be requiring constant medical attention."

The US saturated parts of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia with chemical weapons in the 1960s and 1970s. Tens of thousands were killed and children are still born today with terrible deformities from the poison.

Western forces used radioactive shells in the last Gulf War in 1991 which have contaminated large areas of Iraq and Kuwait. Saddam Hussein did use chemical weapons against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians during the 1980s. The US and other western governments knew about it because they supplied him with the weapons. British, French and German companies exported chemicals and military equipment to Iraq throughout the 1980s. The US sent biological agents as late as 1990. They turned a blind eye to the gassing of 4,000 Kurdish civilians in Halabja in 1988 because Saddam Hussein was a key western ally who they backed in his war against Iran.

## Who caused the crisis?

**THE IMMEDIATE cause of the latest crisis over Iraq is the West's continuing sanctions which are crippling the country.**

Iraq was once one of the most prosperous countries in the world.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund, eight years of sanctions have left some 960,000 children, one in three, under the age of five malnourished. A child under five with diarrhoea has a one in 50 chance of dying. In 1990 the figure was one in 600.

The chance of death from pneumonia has risen from one in 60 to one in eight.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians have died from starvation or preventable diseases.

The west bombed water purification and sewage plants in 1991. That has led to epidemics of diseases which were previously unknown in Iraq. They have also prevented vital medicines from entering the country. Deliberately spreading disease and starving civilians of medicine are a form of biological warfare.

None of this has dislodged Saddam's brutal dictatorship. It has simply massacred workers and peasants. The West

promised to lift sanctions if the Iraqi regime co-operated with UN weapons inspectors UNSCOM. But they have been deployed to increase US domination of Iraq and its oil deposits.

Sanctions came close to being lifted twice this year because Iraq was cooperating with the inspectors.

Each time UNSCOM shifted the goal posts. Many inspectors are US experts who have been drafted in from its own chemical weapons industry. The political bias is so great that top inspector Scott Ritter was accused of spying for the Israelis when he resigned from UNSCOM in August.

The US is not interested in ridding the world of weapons of mass destruction. It cares only about projecting its interests across the globe, particularly in the oil rich Middle East.

Workers and peasants in Iraq do have the potential to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

But US rulers backed Saddam Hussein in 1963. General Pinochet in Chile in 1973 and countless other henchmen to prevent ordinary people from challenging big business and fighting for democracy.

# PAY THE NURSES



**Tax the 'greedy bastards'**

**Nurses on both sides of the Irish border are fighting against low pay. They are tired of governments who praise them as 'angels' but want them to live on low wages. Here GORETTI HORGAN and DEIRDRE CRONIN look at how the struggle for nurses' rights knows no border.**



# 'We didn't vow to live in poverty'

**"WHEN I became a nurse people told me it was a vocation but I didn't know that I'd have to take a vow of poverty". This is how one nurse reacted to the Minister for Health's refusal to entertain nurses' pay claims following the publication of the Report of the Commission on**

ernment.

The mood of the conference was very militant. Speakers from the floor expressed their outrage at the Minister's claims that concessions to the nurses would put the proposed tax cuts in the forthcoming budget in jeopardy.

Having been let down by the government once already, many nurses believe that strike action will be necessary this time.

One nurse told *Socialist Worker*: "They might try to buy us off by spreading out the payments, bringing part of them in under a new national agreement and promising that general tax cuts will benefit us. However that would be completely unacceptable. Nurses don't want to go on strike but this time we'll do what's necessary to get what we deserve".

It sums up the feelings of the Republic's 31,000 nurses who work long, unsociable hours in a very stressful environment. The specialised skills and qualifications of many nurses are not recognised and length of service is not properly compensated.

Nurses' anger at the government's emphatic rejection of their right to increases boiled over at the Irish Nurses Organisation special delegate conference where it was unanimously agreed that immediate strike action would ensue if the issue of pay was not dealt with at the current Labour Court talks.

Included among their demands were:

- A long service increment for staff nurses and other grades
- An increased qualifications allowance - to be raised from £347 per year to 10% of the basic salary
- Pay increases for ward sisters and the creation of a new grade of clinical nurse manager.

It was also agreed that an equality case on the issue of early retirement at the age of 55 should be taken against the gov-

## STOP THE CLOSURES AT GALWAY UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

**THE WESTERN Health Board has decided to close two wards and to let 48 temporary nurses go in Galway University Hospital.**

Hospital staff, at the end of last month, protested on the streets of Galway against this decision. This is a cost cutting measure that will place the health of people in the region in serious danger because admissions always increase at this time of the year.

The management ordered the closures to save a few million. Under a recent law brought in under the last Coalition and supported by Flanna Fail, hospitals in Ireland must now operate like the British 'trust' system and stick rigorously to their budgets.

If the government had forced the banks to pay their full taxes, there would be no need for these closures.

But a SIPTU shop steward at the hospital told *Socialist Worker*, "We have seen the situation worsen over the last twenty years. We do our best to deliver the best health care we can but under the present circumstances it is impossible. It is more about accountancy than health care".

Even before the ward closures, the situation at the hospital was at crisis point. A staff nurse in casualty said that many patients are forced to stay on trolleys in corridors for long hours.

"We even had a hundred year old woman who had to spend 17 hours on a trolley recently".

Nurses at the hospital are beginning a work-to-rule and organised a protest picket outside the Western Health Board meeting. They are refusing to co-operate with the closure and have said they will resist the moving of equipment. Unless the decision is reversed the action is set to escalate.

## Northern Ireland's Nurses: 'THEY'RE PAYING US PEANUTS'

**Eighteen months after the election of the Blair government, nurses in the North are angry because their pay has been effectively frozen for the last three years.**

One fifth of nurses now have second jobs, while nine out of ten NHS hospitals say they are finding it hard to recruit specialist nursing staff.

*Socialist Worker* spoke to Ann, a nurse who works on a children's ward in Derry's Altnagelvin Hospital.

"More and more of our time is spent doing non-nursing jobs", she said. "I believe the care we provide for patients is endangered by overwork and understaffing. We are having to do the same work with a quarter fewer nurses than we would have had 5-6 years ago."

Ruth, who works in Antrim Area Hospital, agrees. "Anyone who has left our ward over the past 4-5 years hasn't been replaced. It used to be that a replacement was brought in if someone was on maternity leave. Now, we're expected to cover her work while she's off."

"There used to be seven nurses on a morning shift on my ward, and five on an afternoon shift. Now, it's usually five on the morning shift and four on the afternoon. That's more than a 20 per cent rise in our productivity. If we worked in a factory, that might be a good thing. In nursing, it means patients are not getting the care they need."

Everywhere, nurses say the hospitals are trying to cut costs by using agency nurses and short-term contracts.

"It's very rare that anyone is given a permanent contract anymore", explained Ruth. "A six month contract is the best anyone can hope for and they will make sure to pay you off before you've had the two years worth of contracts that entitles you to redundancy or maternity leave."

## But it is party time for the bosses

**THE LABOUR government says it can only afford to pay the nurses the rise of under three percent.**

But when it comes to the pay of the people at the top, it's party time. Christy Colhoun, chief executive of Antrim's Homefirst Trust, will collect £83,000 this year. That is rise of £17,000 in the last 12 months. John Ferguson of the Ulster Community and Hospitals Trust is on £92,000. His rise amounts to £26,000 since 1997.

Between them, the 19 health trust chiefs will pocket £200,000 more this year than last.

Meanwhile, a nurse at the pinnacle of her profession, on grade G, can expect to earn only £23,300 in total. That is for a ward sister, who will typically be managing the budget, allocating staff and answerable for the care of 30 or more patients.

So far the unions in Northern Ireland have not given a real lead. But rank and file nurses are carefully watching what is happening in the South and in Britain.

"Everyone is waiting for some action in Britain", says Ruth. "Even the work to rule by nurses in Galway has given us a bit of hope that maybe our union leaders will encourage us to something similar. But they seem to think that nurses won't take industrial action. We wouldn't if we were the only hospital, but if it was

## Colleges

# Time to fight for student rights

FOR THE first time in some years a major student demonstration will take place in November. The financial hardship of going to college is being made worse by the accommodation crisis, registration fees and the pitiful level of the grant.

Since the early nineties, the Union of Students of Ireland has been dominated by Fianna Fail supporters. The absence of struggle in the colleges has meant that student leaders were elected on a seemingly 'apolitical' basis. Well organised Fianna Fail Cummins in the colleges used this atmosphere to put up candidates who later turned out to be members of the party.

Some of these student leaders are now promoting right wing policies to try to answer the problems facing students. One proposal being canvassed by a number of them is for fees to be re-introduced.

The argument, which has been picked up from Tony Blair's spin doctors, is that re-introducing fees will stop rich people freeloading their way to college and so leave more money to raise the grant.

This is nonsense. First, as USI used to say, education is a right and not a privilege. It should not matter who your parents are, everyone is entitled to a free third level education. Teenagers should not be subject to the dictates of their parents but should be free to make their own decisions on their education.

Second, when we had to pay fees the rich got some of their money back by drawing up convenants which could be used to reduce their tax bill.

Third, there is a spurious argument that any household who earns more than the £18,308 threshold level for a grant is middle class. Yet if two parents were factory workers they would earn more than this figure. It will be ordinary people who fall outside a means test level who will foot the bill for going to college.

Finally, in Britain the re-introduction of fees has already meant a 20 percent drop in applications to go to college. The biggest drop is from those from families on the lowest incomes.

## Argument

The argument for re-introducing fees assumes that there is a limited cake and students must choose between either decent grants or free education. However we could have free education and decent grants if the rich were made to pay their tax bills. If the AIB paid £87 million it swindled in taxes, several thousand students could get double the grant they now receive.

The main organisation favouring re-introduction of fees is the newly formed Forum for

by **SIMON BASKETTER**

University Students' Unions (FUSU). This is a breakaway student federation which excludes RTC students and only organises universities.

It may come as a surprise to the students of Trinity, UCD, Maynooth, UCC, UCG, and UL that they are linked to this body since none of them were asked to vote on the issue. Instead motions were slipped quietly past student council meetings to send delegates to a 'discussion group' which then made representations to government on behalf of students.

Another policy being canvassed by right wing student leaders is tax breaks for landlords who let to students. It is argued by Fianna Fail supporters that this will help solve the accommodation crisis.

But far from making more concessions to landlords, we need action against them for not complying with the existing laws. Last year two thirds of landlords didn't bother to register, despite being legally obliged to do so. The main reason they did not register was to avoid paying tax.

Of those that registered, 5,000 were caught not providing a rent book and two thousand provided substandard dwellings. In some cases there was no running water or a toilet. Giving more tax breaks to these landlords would simply be a reward for exploiting the housing crisis. It would also give them a blank cheque to discriminate against refugees and the unemployed as they could say they wanted students to get more tax relief.

The present crisis is showing up the hollowness of the right wing student leaders. They have no policies beyond looking for more privileges for the wealthy.

The new students demonstrations should be the start of a longer fight in the colleges to break the grip of Fianna Fail on the student unions.

# Jailed building worker

# 'THIS IS WHAT UNIONS ARE ABOUT!'

DAVE MCMAHON, a 23 year old bricklayer from Tallaght has become one of the first people to be imprisoned under the Industrial Relations Act. The act was introduced by Bertie Ahern in 1990 and was directly modeled on the anti-Tory laws in Britain.

Dave was jailed alongside Willie Rogers, a builders labourer who worked alongside him at the O Connor's site in Merrion Road in Dublin.

As one activist from the Building Workers Against the Black Economy told Socialist Worker: "A few blocks down from O'Connor's site is the headquarters of the Allied Irish Bank.

## Involved

"In the week after it was revealed that this bank had directly been involved in fiddling £86 million in taxes, these two building workers were jailed. What more do we need to know about how this country is run. Two ordinary worker were jailed because they wanted PAYE employment - but the bankers who ran a tax scam are walking around free."

The dispute had begun uneventfully.

According to Dave McMahon "We started with O'Connor's in July but were eventually told we



had to work for a sub-contractor. We put up a picket then to secure the right to direct employment and after a few hours it worked.

"Then in September the company tried to lay us off again. A representative of the Construction Industry Federation came on the site while this was going on. We have no doubt that they were behind this attack on us"

Pickets were soon placed on the gates of O'Connor and before long the employer was using the Industrial Relations Act.

"When we got to the court the judge was almost begging us not to go to jail, telling us to give up picketing.

"They put me and Willie in a segregated unit in Mountjoy. The prison wardens were good - a

## Who does ICTU represent?

WHILE THE rank and file workers took solidarity action in protest at the jailing of the building workers, the bureaucrats at the ICTU headquarters Raglan Road watched in horror.

Within hours they were on the media networks, condemning the actions of the workers.

Officially ICTU opposes the Industrial Relations Act and many of its constituent unions have passed militant resolutions against it. But the union bureaucrats like to play a double game.

ICTU officials were involved in consultations with Ahern when he drew up the law. It was part of the trade off for getting social partnership agreements going after 1987.

The ICTU officials also know that the Industrial Relations Act is designed to strengthen their hands against their own rank and file.

It means that union officials can tell their members that strike action is 'against the law' and they will have to express their grievances through respectable channels.

"Who do these yes men think they represent. They never visited us in prison. They never talked to our unions. But they turned up on television to condemn us" said Dave.

For the ICTU trade unionism is all about men in suits having 'consultations' with government Ministers. Employers like O'Connor's have become 'partners' they want to work closely with.

Solicitors for O'Connor's were even able to quote from an ICTU statement claiming that they were not operating in the black economy.

The behavior of the ICTU shows why we need a different sort of trade unionism - one that was represented by the courage of Dave McMahon and Willie Rogers rather than the grey suits of the union bureaucracy.

WORKERS pro couple of them had bricklayers' said D.

As news spread building workers anger swept the site solidarity strikes in Limerick, nearly workers came out.

In Waterford, blocked the main h city for a period. Str in Galway, Cork and

In Dublin hundre workers congregat High Courts. Th around the city bui port and bringing standstill.

## Conten

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Worker speaks out...

# WHAT TRADE UNIONS ARE REALLY



**WORKERS protesting outside the Four Courts (above) and (left) Dave McMahon being carried out of the court**

couple of them had been former bricklayers" said Dave.

As news spread that the two building workers were jailed, anger swept the sites. A wave of solidarity strikes broke out. In Limerick, nearly a thousand workers came out.

In Waterford, bricklayers blocked the main bridge into the city for a period. Strikes broke out in Galway, Cork and Carlow.

In Dublin hundreds of building workers congregated outside the High Courts. They marched around the city building up support and bringing the city to a standstill.

## Contempt

On the Friday before the long building break, Dave McMahon and Willie Rogers decided to purge their contempt in order to allow negotiations to start.

But when they got to the court Judge Peter Kelly told them to apologise for their actions. There was an immediate wave of uproar. "I didn't see why I had to apologise for my actions," recalls Dave. "It should have been the employer, the CIF and the government who were apologising for putting us in jail."

When the hundreds of building workers outside heard this insult, they marched right into the corridor of the Four Courts and charged the doors of the High Court shouting 'Jail the bankers: not the workers'. Shocked barristers and officials stared in amazement and horror.

The mystique which surrounded their daily ceremonies in this upper class institution had been torn apart. The action had an effect on the morale of the jailed workers.

"You could hear all the shouting inside. They took us down to the cells below and you could feel they were really nervous. There

were barristers scurrying around everywhere coming up with all sorts of proposals. One of the suggestions was that I would say 'I regret the insult to the integrity to the court' But I was not offering any apology," said Dave.

In an unprecedented move Justice Peter Kelly was forced to back down and Dave McMahon

and Willie Rogers were released without saying sorry.

In a final act of defiance the workers were carried out the front of the Four Courts. "The guards wanted to take me out the back door of the courts, but a bit like the film 'In the name of the Father' I insisted on going out the front."

## It's war on the sites

"WE ALL look on this as a battle in a long war. Sub-contracting is an evil we want to get rid of. It means you don't get proper social insurance when you are unemployed. You don't get holiday pay or pensions. It is a way for the employers to set up a patronage system where you have to keep your head down."

"And the issue is not just about the building sites. The employers want to bring in contract work throughout manufacturing industry," said Jonathan Phelan who has worked alongside Dave McMahon for many years. "The Industrial Relations Act is a pro-employer law that is designed to keep the workers in second place so they can push through these changes. Fianna Fail who get large donations from companies like Sisks and Cramptons actively defend sub-contracting."

A year ago the rank and file organisation Bricklayers Against the Black Economy, scored a spectacular victory over Crampton's when it forced them to put their staff on direct labour. That victory led to a wave of struggles on the sites with workers often winning after short strikes.

But the employers have launched an offensive to restore sub-contracting. The relatively



small time employer O Connor's is pioneering the offensive - but it has the full backing of the Construction Industry Federation. O Connor's have barely entered into negotiations even after Dave McMahon and Willie Rogers were released.

Now Sisks have sacked key shop stewards and have ensured that the police are on the picket lines pushing lorries through. Their political donations to Fianna Fail are clearly paying off. (See page 11)

The building employers sense that the boom in the construction has reached its peak and have now launched their attack.

Many workers now believe that this new offensive can only be turned back by a national strike which is organised BATU itself.

## what do socialists say?

### Do the farmers need more money?

**IRISH FARMERS** have become the first group to demonstrate against the effects of the global recession. Thousands of farmers marched on the Dail after many experienced a fall in their income due to the recent collapse of the Russian economy.

The City Centre Business Association and the leaders of the ICTU denounced the farmers for bringing 'disruption' to Dublin's city centre.

But the city centre does not exist to serve the interests of shopkeepers. Farmers, students and workers have every right to demonstrate.

The ICTU leaders talk of 'disruption' was only a pathetic attempt to hide their own failure to do anything militant to advance the cause of workers.

The real problem with the demonstration was the way it was hijacked by the big farmers.

Organisations like the Irish Framers Association are dominated by large 'ranchers' who back Fine Gael and Fianna Fail. Whenever there has been a major strike they have attacked workers, claiming that their 'businesses' were in danger.

The big farmers want to use the crisis in agriculture to squeeze more grants and subsidies for themselves. Yet already £940 million is paid out in direct payments to farmers. The bulk of this goes to large farmers.

Over the last twenty years there has been a massive shake up in Irish agriculture and many small farmers have been driven out. In 1981, there were 220,000 farmers in Ireland but today there are just over 130,000.

#### Crisis

The latest crisis will decimate the remaining number of small farmers. Despite the shake-out, a quarter of Irish farms are still under 10 hectares.

As markets in Russia have collapsed, the large meat companies which are dominated by the Goodman groups have pushed down the prices offered to farmers for beef and lamb.

Many small farmers can no longer re-stock or buy the inputs needed to continue their farm.

Yet neither the Goodman group nor the supermarket chains have cut the price of meat in the shops. Instead they have used the crisis to push up their profits.

Socialists have every sympathy with the small farmers whose lives are being devastated by the anarchy of the market.

Of course, the Irish state should intervene to do something about the fall in their income. However instead of transferring more resources from the PAYE sector, the rich farmers should be taxed to subsidise the income of the poorest.

When John Bruton was in office, inheritance tax on large farms was slashed to help his rancher friends. If these taxes were restored, there would be money to subsidise the incomes

**As markets in Russia have collapsed, the large meat companies which are dominated by the Goodman groups have pushed down the prices offered to farmers for beef and lamb**

of the small farmers.

Similarly, the Goodman companies have gained massively from grants and straight fraud. If these companies were nationalised, not only would profiteering from the crisis cease but there would also be extra income to distribute.

The tragedy is that many small farmers have turned their back on these radical measures, hoping that an alliance with the larger farmers will serve their interests. Conservative ideas which have been fostered around the mystique of land ownership have cemented an all-class farmer movement.

But today the madness that surrounds the capitalist organisation of agriculture is becoming ever more visible.

At the moment, a staggering 48 per cent of Irish farmers' income comes from direct subsidies. Farmers are paid to 'set aside' land or to store beef in huge intervention sheds.

The Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) was developed by the EU partially because production of food could not be trusted to the market and partially as a political subsidy to farmers to keep them voting for right wing parties.

Yet instead of subsidies being used to lower the price of food, they are used to keep prices for working class consumers high.

Today the Common Agriculture Policy is being cut back.

Irish agriculture will now face a new round of devastation because farming has been so heavily geared towards placing produces like beef and milk into intervention.

The solution to the coming crisis in Irish agriculture can no longer be found in free market policies.

This is why socialists want to nationalise the big farms and encourage co-operative farming among small farmers.

Only when food is produced for human need and not profit will there be decent lives for thousands who want to work the land.

by KIERAN ALLEN

In the midst of market madness...

# COULD SOCIALIST PLANNING WORK?

**IRELAND IS** experiencing the first wave of the global recession. Five hundred jobs have gone in Krupps, and eight hundred more are threatened in Fruit of the Loom. Farmers are demonstrating on the streets over falling incomes

The turmoil on the currency markets and the stock exchanges over the past few weeks has shown the failure of the market. It has caused economic collapse in Asia, Russia and now South America.

Russia which was once a super-power and sent astronauts into space, now has 15 million people suffering from malnutrition.

*We are in the midst of an economic crisis, possibly on the scale of the 1930's.*

However there is an alternative which can overcome this chaos and crisis.

Instead of production being based on competition for profit, it could be democratically planned to meet people's needs.

The defenders of capitalism claim that the modern economy is far too complex to plan. Ever since the first classical economist Adam Smith, they have argued that the market must be left to its own devices. Smith argued that behind the anarchy of the market, an 'invisible hand' promoted rational distribution of scarce resources.

**Y**et the fact is that the ruling class is already talking about a form of international planning to stave off the imminent collapse of capitalism. The leaders of the seven leading capitalist countries recently met to discuss how this could be achieved.

However because they are in constant competition with one another they are always at each others throats and can offer no solutions.

Even the Financial Times newspaper — an internal bulletin for the world's top capitalist concerns — is arguing for governmental intervention.

*Recently the world banks spent £2 billion to save the US hedge fund Long Term Capital Management from collapse. CBS, the biggest bank in Europe immediately wrote off its contribution of £4,060 million.*

If millions of pounds can be found to bail out bankers, why can't money be found to save workers' jobs?

In Japan, the government is to nationalise one of the country's biggest banks because they fear that if it collapses the whole Japanese banking system will go down the tube. Yet at the same time the Irish government claims it can't nationalise companies like Fruit of the Loom, when they are threatened



**PLANNING and exploitation in a modern capitalist office**

with closure.

Increasingly the argument that there should be no interference in the market is falling apart. Even arch-speculator George Soros thinks financial markets require some control and planning. As the Financial Times put it, "His message is: 'Stop me before I kill again!'"

These elements of planning are all being suggested for one reason and that is to defend profits. Capitalists want state intervention now to defend their interests.

However the capitalist system does not just resort to planning in times of economic crisis, many aspects of the system are already planned.

**T**he level of investment required under capitalism today forces companies to undertake detailed and meticulous planning. The heads of big companies and multinational corporations sit down and plan their investment decisions years, if not decades, in advance.

If we take the case of supermarkets for example. A supermarket company like Tesco, which has an annual turnover of about £1.73 billion a year, would have to estimate how many potatoes they need to buy or how much milk, or how much washing powder. This can only be done through careful and meticulous planning.

Every time you buy something in a

supermarket, it is scanned.

This not only brings up the price but it sends the information to a central computer. Each time a product is sold it triggers a re-order in the store until it reaches a full carton quantity at which time an order is sent to a semi-automated warehouse. Tesco, for example, purchase 90 per cent of their stock two weeks in advance.

*Supermarkets also use computerised shelf merchandising management systems to calculate the dimensions of large numbers of products. By simply keying into the system the size of individual products as well as the space available for display, the computer will display the amount of product that can be fitted on the shelf.*

Huge supermarket chains like Tesco show an extraordinary ability to plan many complex items. They would not dare leave matters to the 'invisible hand' of the market.

Multi-nationals like Tesco routinely organise on scales greater than a mere national economy.

Under socialism, this sectional ability of capitalism to plan will be our starting point.

However what is wrong with planning under capitalism is that it is motivated solely by profit not by human need. The planning that does take place operates within a system that based on competition.

The planning involved in the shelf stacking system, for example is mostly about how to place the most profitable products at eye level and cross-merchandising - putting washing powder and fabric softeners together.

The planning inside multi-national firms takes place under conditions of competition between firms. There is no overall co-ordination. So Ford plans how it will compete with Renault, while Nike wants to outsell Adidas.

**D**efenders of the free market tell us that getting rid of competition would reduce choice. However for most people choice is limited, it depends on income. The market allows those on low pay to choose only between cheap low quality alternatives.

Even for the better paid, choice is dictated by the domination of retail managers by a few enormous corporation.

There is a choice between Bachelors baked beans and Heinz, but there is no real difference between them.

*Under socialism there would be co-ordination between different areas of production. The level of complexity involved in organising the economy would be reduced.*

For example instead of having Tesco, Dunnes Stores and Superquinn all competing with one another, there would be one set of supermarkets providing what people really need.

These would be run democratically through workers councils who would co-operate with workers councils in the industries that produce the goods.

The basis of every decision would be human need not profit.

Every group of workers would elect recallable delegates who would meet centrally to co-ordinate large production decisions on a regional, national and international basis.

Through these meetings, workers could determine the economic priorities and decide whether their decisions had been right or wrong.

Over time these work councils would build up a picture of what was needed and where.

These councils would not be made up of "leaders" like we have today, from different class backgrounds, out of touch with ordinary people, with separate interests of their own. They would be ordinary workers like you and me, trying to do their best for everyone.

*It would not be like the old USSR. The Soviet Union was not organised to meet human needs. It was run on the basis of the dictates of the bureaucrats who were in military competition with the West, and who wanted to maintain their own privileged positions.*

Nor is this sort of planning utopian. These sort of committees have been thrown up in almost every great social upheaval in the last 100 years.

Socialism would allow human need to come before profit, the interests of the majority would come before the interests of a rich minority.

The nature of work itself would be transformed. Work would be a place of co-operation and workers control. Such a system can only be achieved by overthrowing the existing ruling class and seizing control of the massive wealth that exists for ourselves.



## TALK RADIO

Talking loud  
but saying  
nothing

THE IDEA of a radio show which allows listeners to ring in and air their views would appear to be a good example of democratic broadcasting.

But this fails to take account of the populist and barely hidden right wing agendas of the talk radio shows which have been sprouting up.

Chris Barry and his rival Adrian Kennedy have shows on the two big Dublin based local radio stations.

**For research purposes I recently endured listening to these two characters - and they are characters as they don't use their real names.**

Various topics were discussed like teenagers who want to get hair dyed and their noses pierced or Dubs versus culchies. You would think this would lead to the harmless bland argument, the sort of thing that arises in any pub.

## Spleen

However the airheads on the airwaves have a different approach. Every caller was encouraged to vent their spleen, swear and oppose the previous opinion no matter how sensible it was.

The real danger arises when a topic like refugees is brought up. Then the real colours of these shows, which have their origin in the anti-PC, anti-liberal talk radio of the US, comes out.

In the US, hosts like Rush Limbaugh, Bob Grant and Howard Stern, spew out their venom every day against welfare recipients, blacks, immigrants or single mothers.

Stern, who was recently the subject of an atrocious film, was the original 'Schlock Jock' who used toilet humour to up his ratings. When he had a female guest he invariably asked her to take off her top. This form of stupid sexism was picked up by the over-rated and over-paid Chris Evans in Britain.

Another New York jock, Bob Grant openly declared himself a racist and attacked Haitian boat people as 'sub-human scum'. He described welfare mothers as 'maggots multiplying on a hot day'. He told one caller who was worried about crime to 'get a gun and do something about it'.

Rush Limbaugh who is one of the most popular of schlock jocks is backed by Roger Ailes, the media campaigner for Ronald Reagan and George

by SHAY  
RYAN

Bush. Even Bill Clinton accused him of fuelling the right wing paranoia that preceded the Oklahoma bombing.

Limbaugh draws on the oldest strains of American thought - Prairie populism, a dash of 'common sense' and lots of xenophobia. He talks of 'femi-nazis' 'commie-libs' and 'environment wackos'.

Other US talk show hosts include Gordon Liddy who served a prison sentence for his part in the Watergate scandal and Oliver North who organised a drug racket to fund the right wing Contra rebels in Nicaragua. After he failed to get elected to the US Senate, despite a £20 million dollar campaign, he put his lying skills to good use on a £200,000 a year job as a talk show host. When asked why he had joined the media he previously despised, he replied 'Balance'.

These are the role models for the new wave of Irish talk show hosts.

The Irish right wing have long been obsessed with controlling radio programmes and using them to whip up political movements.

**Throughout the country, the fundamentalist Catholic right have tried hard to win influence in local radios. They remember how the late Fr Michael Cleary used his show on a Dublin radio station to help create the Youth Defence movement.**

Chris Barry and Adrian Kennedy come from the more secular end of the right wing spectrum - but their outlook is just as nasty. Their views fit in well with the owners of the radio stations who would like to deflect frustrations in Irish society onto the poor rather than the fat cats.

In comparison with the US we have been relatively spared the outright venom up to now. However as unrest grows with the inequalities in the Celtic Tiger, we are bound to hear more of the right wing vitriol.

As Elvis Costello sang back in 1978, 'Radio is in the hands of such a lot of fools trying to anaesthetise the way you feel'.

## music

'I ain't a communist  
necessarily — but I've  
been in the red all my life'

WOODY GUTHRIE

THE LIFE and songs of Woody Guthrie have been an inspiration for generations of socialists.

Guthrie was an outsider from his youth. He wrote songs which reflected the experience of the poor who migrated from the depression that ravaged Oklahoma to California.

Decrying the "okies", as the migrant farmers were called, poverty, he wrote that their "soup was so thin even a politician could see through it".

In *Do Re Mi* he lambastes the cops who attacked convoys of poor on their way to what they believed was a better life.

After a black student wrote to him complaining about some traditional songs, he dropped any casual racism from his act.

## Strike Meeting

In later years he toured with Leadbelly and Sonny Terry, (both black).

When the trio once played to a strike meeting which they discovered was segregated, they insisted the workers be joined for the benefit.

Guthrie then spent the evening singing improvised anti-racist tunes.

In *Pretty Boy Floyd* he shows his strength as a political song writer. In words that could apply to any tax scandal today he sings:

"Now as through this world I ramble  
I've seen lots of funny men /  
Some will rob you with a six

gun And some with a fountain pen."

Guthrie's politics shine throughout his songs. Even when dying from a degenerative brain disease, he could pen a reply to the McCarthyite witch-hunts,

"I ain't necessarily a communist - but I've been in the red all my life", which ran:

"He asked, 'Will you carry a gun for your country?'  
I ans-wered the FBI, 'Yay!  
I will point a gun for my country.  
But I won't guarantee which way!"

When Irving Berlin wrote *God Bless America*, a furious Guthrie produced "This Land is Your Land" as a reply.

One verse, which is often left out, is a fitting tribute:

*Was a great high wall there that tried to stop me  
Was a great big sign there says 'Private property'  
But on the other side it didn't say nothing*

*That side was made for you and me.*

Now the biography of Guthrie by Joe Klein has been re-issued.

It is sometimes a little patronising to the left, but it brings the story of Woody Guthrie alive and offers many insights into the history of the American labour movement.

Read it and listen to Guthrie's, *Dust Bowl Ballads* and *Struggle* albums and be inspired.

**Woody Guthrie: A Life by Joe Klein and Struggle and Dust Bowl Ballads by Woody Guthrie both on Folkway records.**

—SIMON BASKETTER

## drama

## Check out Chekhov

ONE OF the main productions at this year's Dublin Theatre Festival was Chekhov's 'Uncle Vanya'.

Anton Chekhov was born in 1860 and spent his early years in Southern Russia where his father had a prosperous grocery business. He later portrayed this middle class domestic life as tyrannous and exploitative, especially for women, in his famous play, *The Three Sisters*.

## Occupation

Chekhov qualified as a doctor and despite his literary achievements, he continued to view medicine as his main occupation. As a doctor who laboured among the peasants he witnessed

the poverty and inequality plaguing Russian society. He developed an affinity with those who suffered most under the autocracy and his only work of non-fiction was a study of the lives of convicts sent to Siberia.

Despite all this Chekhov never aligned himself with the revolutionary movement. At the time he was writing all the major Russian cities were experiencing a social

upheaval which accompanied rapid industrialisation. The abolition of serfdom in 1861 cleared the way for large numbers of former peasants to become workers.

Chekhov believed that it was possible to divorce social criticism from politics. He viewed great art as 'a defence against politics'. He claimed that culture was 'a classless sphere' that was open to all regardless of their

material circumstances. He argued that Russia needed cultural rather than political change.

Yet despite his rejection of politics, his highest achievement in drama was the creation of situations which can only be seen as political. The *Cherry Orchard*, for example, is an enactment of the tensions in Russian society between 1880 and 1905, as an old order of hereditary landlords sought to protect their positions against the forces of modernisation.

An interesting aspect of Chekhov plays is the portrayal of one time serfs, whose exploitation continues despite achieving 'freedom'. Chekhov's dramas present such figures as pathetic imitators of their masters who have internalised their own inferiority. His plays are marked by a claustrophobic hopelessness.

He died in 1904, the year before the 1905 revolution when the Russian working class emerged as a force for real change. The tragedy of this great artist is that he never saw this power.

—KATE MARTIN

## film

## Same old stereotypes

**DIVORCING JACK** is a comic farce, set in a newly independent Northern Ireland in 1999.

The charismatic Michael Brinn, modelled on Tony Blair is about to unite "both sides" and become the new Prime Minister.

Meanwhile hard-drinking journalist Dan Starkey finds himself on the run from the RUC, the UVF and the IRA.

The film is based on the novel of the same name by Colin Bateman. Starkey is loosely based on Bateman himself—a satirical columnist from a unionist background.

*Divorcing Jack* is witty and entertaining film, but Starkey's cynicism dominates throughout. He believes bigotry is endemic in

the North and that "extremists on both sides" will always regain the upper hand.

Even worse, Starkey views working class Catholics as work-shy scroungers who keep the paramilitaries in business.

Bateman may have intended to challenge bigotry but his stereotypes of Catholic workers would make Ian Paisley smile.

The film remains faithful to the novel except for one important detail. In the novel, the state has been manipulating an IRA feud to suit its own ends, this angle is missing from the film. This important omission leaves us with the bleak scenario of "two tribes" locked in an age-old religious battle.

—DAVE MCDONAGH



**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.

# Marxism 98

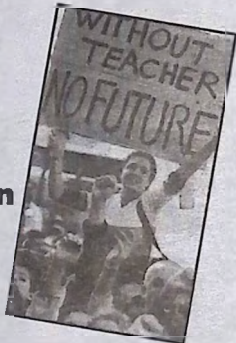
## A world in crisis

### Revolutionary ideas in action

Friday 13th — Sunday 15th November 1 Parnell Square, Dublin 1

**Marxism '98, the foremost conference of left wing ideas in Ireland, takes place on November 13th, 14th and 15th November.**

**For nearly a decade, the Marxism weekends have built up a solid reputation for good discussion. Labour TDs, Arthur Scargill, and many Marxist academics have spoken at its meetings. With nearly 300 people registered already, Marxism '98 is set to be the biggest ever.**



**The event has tapped into a new mood where many are looking for answers to the growing chaos in the world economy. As the Celtic Tiger increases inequality, there is a desire for a socialist organisation that can tackle the corruption and greed of the wealthy. Marxism '98 will be packed full of the revolutionary ideas that can make this possible.**

HIGHLIGHTS of a packed weekend include on Friday evening a rally with Kieran Allen the editor of *Socialist Worker*, Eamonn McCann author of *War and Irish Town* and Pat Stack from the SWP in Britain speaking on **Global recession: Will there be a 1930's style slump?** (8pm) Hot Press journalist Simon Basketter discusses **Freud** (6.30pm) and Denis Redfern looks at turmoil in latin america in: **From Che to the Zapatistas** (8pm)



Saturday, the first full day of the conference, starts with the author of **Revolution in Ireland 1919-1921**, Conor Kostick, discussing the ideas of his book (10am). At the same time Rob Jennings looks at Darwin's dangerous ideas. With the continued crisis in the Middle East, Richard Boyd Barrett speaks on **American Imperialism and**

**Islamic fundamentalism** (11.45am). Eamonn McCann draws lessons for today **From Paris to Derry—the revolt of 1968** (3.45pm) Pat Stack asks **Do all revolutions end in tyranny?**

**And The Marxist theory of history is explained by former Professor of History from the University of Ulster Brian Manning** (both at 7pm) On Sunday Marnie Holborow speaks on **Has feminism failed to liberate women?** (10.30am)

SIPTU research officer Paul Sweeney and busworker Owen McCormack debate whether workers should support partnership?



Davey Carlin and Shay Ryan look at **The fight against racism today.** (both at noon) The author of the Revolutionary ideas of Karl Marx, Alex Callinicos, asks **Can socialist planning work?** (2.15pm) Colm Bryce asks **From Michael Collins to Gerry Adams—Are republicans joining the**



**establishment?** and Willie Cumming offers a **Marxist analysis of The Holocaust** (both at 3.45pm). The conference finishes with a final rally: **The fight for socialism now with Kieran Allen, Anna Hudson and Pat Stack**

Tickets for Marxism 98 cost £8 and £5 (students and unwaged). There is a free creche and accommodation available. SW Books will have a bookstall with the largest selection of socialist books in Ireland at the event. For tickets send this form to Marxism 98, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

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- SWP Branch meetings - all welcome**
- ATHLONE:** Contact (01) 872 2682 for details
  - BELFAST CENTRAL:** Meets every Tuesday at 8.00pm in the Garrick Bar, Chichester St
  - BELFAST EAST:** Phone for details
  - BELFAST SOUTH:** Meets every Thursday at 8.00pm Renshaws, University Avenue
  - BELFAST QUEENS UNIVERSITY:** Thursday 1.00pm Mature Students Room
  - CORK:** Meets every Thursday at 8.00pm in Dennehy's pub,
  - Cornmarket
  - DERRY:** Meets every Monday at 8.00pm in Sandinos
  - DUBLIN ARTANE /COOLOCK:** Meets every Tuesday at 8.30 in Artane/Beaumont Recreational Centre opp Artane Castle
  - MAYNOOTH:** Meets every Wednesday at 6.30pm in Classhall D, Arts Block Maynooth College
  - DUBLIN TALLAGHT:** Meets every Tuesday at 8.00pm in Jobstown Community Centre
  - DUBLIN NORTH WEST:** Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in the Snug, Dorset St
  - DUN LAOGHAIRE:** Meets every Tuesday at 8pm in the Christian Institute
  - DUBLIN RATHMINES:** Meets every Wednesday at DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL:
  - Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Trinity Inn, Pearse St
  - DUBLIN UCD:** Meets every Thursday 5pm. Ring (01)8722682 for venue.
  - GALWAY:** Meets every Tuesday in UCG room AC213 8.30-9.30
  - SLIGO:** Contact (01)8722682 for details
  - WATERFORD:** Meets every Thursday in at 8.00pm ATGWU Hall, Keizer St

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## Dublin Bus

# Bus drivers reject deal

**DUBLIN BUS drivers have again voted down a Viability Plan, this time by a margin of 55 per cent to 45 per cent. The plan would have cut the wages of new drivers and allowed the contracting out of school services.**

Virtually the same plan was rejected last July, despite having been recommended by both NBRU and SIPTU. After that rejection the Labour Court intervened and recommended exactly the same plan but added £500 to a lump sum and reduced new recruits' pay scales from 8 to 6 years.

### Officially

This time neither union officially recommended the deal but instead they made it clear that rejection would have "dire consequences" for the company. In the days before the vote Dublin Bus tried to intimidate and bully drivers.

Management even produced a video which was shown in all garages, telling drivers that rejection of the deal would lead to garage closures and the loss of routes to private operators. This message was also sent out in letters to staff on the day of the vote.

Disgracefully, NBRU's Peter Bunting reiterated the same threats in a union newsletter.

Opposition to the deal was

again organised by the rank and file group, Busworkers Action Group.

They produced and distributed leaflets to refute the company's claims. The deal's rejection is a great example of workers standing up to company's threats and the union's cowardice.

Now Mary O'Rourke's special advisor to CIE, John Behan, has offered to broker a third deal which they hope will be voted on before Christmas. Behan was the government's chief hatchet

man in Aer Lingus and according to a Sunday Times report he has already drawn up plans to break up and privatise CIE. It is likely that the third deal will see an increased lump sum offered to drivers but still insist on contracting services out and lower wages for new drivers.

But why should workers be forced to keep on voting until they say YES? Workers should insist that their union officials accept the result of these ballots and put in a substantial pay claim.

## NBRU conference

**The National Rail and Busworkers Union conference took place soon after the vote on the viability plan.**

Disgracefully the NBRU leadership invited the Minister O'Rourke to address the conference.

The NBRU leaders use to claim they were more militant than SIPTU - but those days are over.

O'Rourke had previously told the union that government funding for Dublin Bus was conditional on workers accepting the viability plan. But at the NBRU conference she did a U-turn and announced that she would fund the purchase of 100 buses to counteract Dublin's traffic problems.

Her statement proved that the government and the company were lying in the run up to the workers ballot. It shows how wrong the union leaders were to pass on these threats to the members. If

they had taken the same stance as the Busworkers Action Group they could have forced more investment out of this right wing government.

O'Rourke however claimed she was funding the purchase of the buses because the union leaders assured her a 'deal' would be accepted 'soon'. But what right have these officials to promise something workers have twice voted against?

At the conference the general secretary of the NBRU Peter Bunting threatened strike action over the government's plans to force CIE to sell off land in order to finance investment in the company. Company-owned property in Dublin's Temple Bar and Bachelor's Walk was sold for a pittance in the past to speculators who made millions on the deal.

But if the union can stand up to the sale of company property, maybe they could also fight plans to reduce the wages of new employees.

## Krupps

# We need a fight to save jobs

**WORKERS IN the Krupps plant in Limerick have become one of the first victims of the recession that is sweeping the global economy.**

Three months ago the factory was on a double shift, seven days a week. New machines had been bought in and some workers were encouraged to take out expensive mortgages.

But the chaos behind the free market has put an end to all that.

The collapse of the Russian economy and the fall in the prices of Asian products has devastated the company's plans for expansion.

They have responded by making workers pay rather than letting go of their profits.

As well as the Limerick closure, 2,600 jobs have

gone in France and 500 have gone in Germany.

Since 1991 when Moulinex took over the plant, workers have made many sacrifices. The workforce was cut from 1,400 to 500. In December 1997 a three stage recovery plan was accepted by the workers and wage increases kept down.

But all this sacrifice was to no avail. The management saved themselves money - and made sure their profits stayed high.

Now the union leaders are once again telling workers that nothing can be done.

One SIPTU official has even praised the local management.

But workers should think about protecting their interests rather than those of the company.

They could take action to ensure that Moulinex do not move the expensive new equipment out of the plant.

They could occupy the

plant and campaign for the government to nationalise it.

No one should any longer accept the idea that governments cannot 'interfere' in the economy. In Japan, the government is nationalising a major bank to prevent the worst excesses of the recession.

If governments can nationalise businesses to protect the interests of the wealthy, then they can also

take this measures to protect workers.

After all, if a government could bail out the AIB, ten years ago, why shouldn't it do something to protect the livelihood of workers.

The equipment that Krupps make are needed by hundreds of thousands of people.

It is only a mad economic system that lets these workplaces close

## Roads protest

**ENVIRONMENTAL activists recently won a significant victory in North Kerry.**

The county council were planning to build a £9 million dual carriage-way to link the Cork/Killarney and Limerick Roads.

This would have resulted in the destruction of part of Ballyseedy wood, one of the oldest oak forests in Ireland.

Several houses would also have been destroyed and the monument to the Ballyseedy massacre would also have been relocated.

The Ballyseedy Action Committee launched a campaign of petitions, demonstrations and legal action. It eventually got the EU to refuse funding for the project. Now the EU have requested that a new plan be drawn up.

## Botanic Gardens

# Lockout causes growing anger

Sixteen gardeners at the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin have been suspended from their jobs. Management removed the gardeners from the payroll after they rejected attempts to impose additional duties on them for no extra pay.

They were told they had to carry out assessments of students as part of a new modular system. They had done some of this work before but the new arrangement meant an increased workload. They were effectively being asked to tutor students on craft gardeners pay.

Despite offering to do the work with upgrading, which would actually save taxpayers money, management remained opposed to any solution or negotiations. They have refused to talk to the workers until they agree to return to work. These gardens are all highly trained craft gardeners and the work they do is highly skilled.

As one worker told *Socialist Worker*, the gardeners have never being on strike before. Between them they have 320 years service to the Gardens. They have always been committed to the work they do.

In fact one of the gardeners recently went to South America, at his own expense to collect samples of rare orchids for the garden. As a result the



**STRIKERS at the Botanic Gardens**

gardeners have one of the finest collections of orchids in Europe.

The gardens provide an important amenity for working class people. The Gardens should not be held to ransom by the dictates of the market. Management and the government are trying to turn the Botanic gardens into a profitable third level institution.

There is money available to build new lecture halls, refurbish offices, yet no money can be found to pay the garden-

ers on who skills the whole institution depends. General operatives inside are coming under pressure to do some of their work, like watering the plants, which the gardeners need to supervise. They should support their colleagues and refuse to help management out.

SIPTU should be calling on its members not to visit the Gardens during the dispute and most importantly to organise collections to boost the £57 strike pay.

## BATU

# Stewards victimised

**BUILDING workers have been picketing three Sisk sites in Dublin against the victimisation of two BATU shop stewards.**

BATU and Sisk had a written agreement that if work ran out on a site, the bricklayers would be transferred to another site.

But the two stewards in question were let go from the site at Quarryvale, Clondalkin and were not given work elsewhere.

"They were sacked for being shop stewards", one BATU member told *Socialist Worker*. "Others were brought back or

given work on other sites but these two were just let go."

BATU members responded by placing pickets on Sisk sites at Quarryvale, Wheatfield Prison and Croke Park.

### Pickets

The law has been used against the pickets, just like it was when two building workers were jailed in the O'Connors' dispute.

Seven Gardai were sent to the Croke Park site on the second day to prevent seven pickets from stopping truck deliveries.

The guards claimed they were neutral and were "only responding to

a call". Despite this, they tried to entice one truck driver to pass the picket-line but he refused.

The sacking of shop stewards in Sisks is a new escalation in the war between the bricklayers and the building bosses.

It also calls for a shift in tactics in order to beat the employers back.

Up to now BATU has not sanctioned any of the actions and unofficial strikes that have brought results.

But BATU can no longer stand aside when its own shop stewards are victimised.

It should be calling a national strike throughout Sisks to show that victimisation will not be tolerated.

## Education

**NINE SCHOOLS are taking one day's strike action after the Halloween break to protest at the lack of resources in primary education.**

All the schools involved urgently need extra teachers to cope with increased pupil numbers and five of the schools, all located in Waterford, need access to a remedial teacher.

Of all the OECD countries, only Turkey, Mexico and Korea have worse pupil-teacher ratios than Irish primary schools. According to one teacher who spoke to *Socialist*

*Worker*: "There are up to 44 pupils in some classes in Dublin at the moment while one school in Westmeath has 38 pupils in a 3rd/4th multi-class situation".

"The consequences for some pupils are very serious; the teacher may not be in a position to give the children who need extra help the attention they deserve and they inevitably fall behind".

Another teacher in Dublin's inner city works in a school where 70 per cent of the children's parents are unemployed. The majority of children are two years behind their middle class counterparts in their reading attainment.

She is very critical of the

Department of Education "These children are in need of all the support that is available yet there are nearly thirty pupils in each of our infant classes.

The Department knows that reducing the pupil teacher

ratio to 15:1 would make a huge difference to these kids yet they refuse to do it. It's very frustrating for teachers to have to stand back and watch this happen, that's why teachers have resorted to strike action."

## PRESSURE FOR PAY RISES

**THE DUBLIN North City Branch of the INTO recently voted through a motion demanding a 15 per cent pay rise and threatening whatever action is necessary in pursuit of this claim.**

According to one of those who supported the motion "Worker's deserve to reap some of the benefits of the Celtic Tiger. With house prices soaring, we need to fight for decent pay increases. We're urging other branches to pass similar motions over the coming weeks."

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 ★ DOUBLE THE GRANT  
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# TIME FOR STUDENTS TO REVOLT



## National Day of Action to Stop the fees

STUDENTS across Britain and Northern Ireland will be marching to protest at the Labour government's introduction of fees and the phasing out of student grants next year.

The marches have been called by student activist groups, under the banner

United for Free Education, and has been backed by over 40 individual student unions.

It has not been backed by the National Union of Students, which has refused to call any action claiming that students are apathetic. In Queen's University, the student union executive argued that they need a period of quiet lobbying of the assembly

members.

This is ridiculous. It is time to break from the petty sectarian squabbling that defines student politics in some colleges and unite around opposition to the fees.

**Join the Rally and March**  
 1pm Wednesday 18th November,  
 Main Gates, Queens University.

STUDENTS NORTH and South are facing worse conditions than ever before. The cost of going to college is increasing far more rapidly than the grants.

In the North the new student fees are forcing working class students out of college. Applications for university places have already fallen this year as many feel they cannot afford the fees.

In the South the tiny maintenance grants are disappearing in rent payments. The grant was increased by a mere 77p - which is the cost "a can of coke and a bag of Tayto". Already the government is already trying to reintroduce fees through the back door through increased registration fees. In 1996 the registration fee was £150, this year it is £260.

The maximum grant amounts to only £45.90 a week for the 36 weeks of college. The accommodation crisis in the Celtic Tiger means that it barely covers the cost of renting a bedsit.

Thousands of students are forced to work to subsidise poverty grants. The current USI Poverty Survey says that more than 43 per cent of students work part time and the majority of these students said that this had a detrimental effect on their studies.

Once again wealth is becoming the key to getting an education.

### RUN DOWN AND OVERCROWDED

Colleges are run down and overcrowded. Library facilities are totally inadequate, while classes of five or six hundred are no longer uncommon in first year.

The story is very different for those who run the Universities. Queens University Vice Chancellor, George Bain is sacking 107 lecturers and has increased the rent in student halls.

Bain himself earns £105,000 a year even though he sat on a commission which proposed that the minimum wage be set at £3.60 an hour.

Capitalism today wants an educated workforce yet it doesn't want to pay for it. It wants to turn the colleges into education factories that turn out graduates as cheaply and as quickly as possible.

Right across Europe, students are taking to the streets in the new wave of student revolts. Irish students also need to get militant. The political establishment on both sides of the border should be told to tax the rich, abolish the fees and double the student grants.

### GET ORGANISED: GET POLITICAL

WE LIVE in a world that is run for profit and greed. 225 people own more wealth than the poorest 47 per cent of the world's population - 2.5 billion people.

Yet this tiny class of billionaires are bringing devastation to the planet. Their endless desire for more profit has produced chaos on the financial markets.

Now the global economy is currently facing an economic collapse which some predict could be on the same scale of the 1930's.

In parts of the world the economic chaos has fed directly into revolution. Direct action by thousands of students in Indonesia has toppled the brutal dictator Suharto.

Radical students in Ireland need to link up with militant workers like the building workers who defied the law to picket their sites

If we want some changes, we are going to have to get organised around socialist politics.

### JOIN THE SOCIALISTS

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 NOV 18TH**

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