

Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism

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100 people a day left on trolleys in casualty

Wards closing down due to lack of money

DON'T LET FIANNA FAUL DESTROY OUR HEALTH SERVICE

Socialist Worker can reveal a strictly confidential report to the board of Dublin's Beaumont Hospital.

It shows a massive financial crisis that leaves the hospital facing a projected deficit of € 26m this year.

According to the report this means wards will have to be closed this year.

This is the reality of the health service behind the repeated PR stunts of the government

According to the leaked report, there has been a significant policy change by the Department of Health in funding for the health services.

Supplementary funding will no longer be granted during the year for PRSI and pension costs.

Costs

This means all costs have to come out of the existing budget. As the report says, "This will result in these costs having to be funded by the hospital out of existing resources and will therefore require a curtailment of expenditure and services to accommodate the hospital's obligations."—in other words health cuts.

Furthermore, a letter of allocation issued by the Department of Health states that there is a policy change in relation to the future funding of pay awards.

"Only costs arising under National Programmes, benchmarking and major unanticipated awards specifically agreed by Government will be funded."

This means no pay increases without benchmarking.

The government has run down the health service to breaking point.

Every day there are over 100 patients left on trolleys in accident and emergency departments.

There are even cases of hospitals turning away ambulances.

Accident and Emergency staff are set to take strike action as we go to press.

They need everyone's full support to save what is left of the Health Service.

(Full report page 11).

Cheering warders watched prisoner being beaten

A PRISONER told a court that a big crowd of prison officers in Mountjoy cheered during a beating that left him in hospital for a month.

An officer smashed Colm Fogarty's jaw, causing the bone to pierce the inside of his mouth.

The injuries were recorded in a prison medical report as a nose-bleed.

Fogarty told Dublin Circuit Criminal Court last week that he was suffering severe withdrawal symptoms from heroin when he was assaulted and dragged from his cell by prison officers.

"I had severe diarrhoea, cold sweats and vomiting . . . I was not able to eat . . . All of a sudden the door burst in," he said. "A lot of prison officers were there in riot gear. I felt kicks around the legs, the side, one on the hip."

"When I came down the stairs, I got a couple of

kicks from behind . . . Other officers lashed out with kicks, punches . . . They had me in a position where I could not see who was doing the kicking.

"They seemed to be cheering . . . saying 'Go on, ye knacker' and 'Go on, ye dirtbag' . . . There was a big crowd of officers."

Fogarty told the court he was thrown into a van where one officer repeatedly punched him in the temple, while another parted his legs and punched him in the testicles.

Prison supervisor Finbar Burke received the

medical log with the victim's injuries recorded as a "nosebleed" in the registration book in the medical unit. Burke told the jury that he did not know who made the entry.

Cover-up

Burke admitted that he considered covering up what happened but realised that this would be impossible due to the seriousness of Fogarty's injuries.

Burke denied ordering Fogarty's blood to be wiped up immediately to

hide the evidence.

He agreed that Garvey was the officer who kicked the prisoner in the face, but he confirmed that he did not give any names in his report to the governor the next day.

Burke said it was "shunned" in prison to inform on a colleague.

After he named Garvey, he received threatening phone calls to his home, forcing him to move his family and to seek a transfer, the court heard.

Garvey denies the charges. The trial continues.

Haemophiliacs to sue Martin

HIV-INFECTED haemophiliacs are suing Health Minister Micheál Martin over compensation.

The minister will be served with a legal writ every week between now and the General Election by haemophilia sufferers who contracted HIV from contaminated blood products.

The Irish Haemophilia Society said the latest action follows the continued failure by Martin to adequately compensate infected haemo-

philiacs — 64 have already died.

Haemophiliacs and their relatives were extremely angry at the minister's failure to meet a commitment given two weeks ago that he would produce plans to legislate on the issue.

Promised

All those infected or their next-of-kin will issue proceedings if the minister doesn't honour his commitment.

Victims were first promised action in February 1999. In July 2000, Martin committed to introducing legislation during the autumn of that year.

More than 100 haemophiliacs infected with HIV have been left waiting three years to be properly compensated.

★ THE Dail, which sat for just 16 days since the beginning of the year, has shut down for another week so TDs can go to the Cheltenham festival.

Officially the reason why no legislative business will be conducted is to allow Government Ministers celebrate St Patrick's Day overseas at our expense of course.

★ IRELAND has the lowest tax take in the European Union, data published by the OECD has shown.

The Revenue Commissioners take in just 32 percent of GDP in taxes, compared with an EU average of 42 percent.

Employers' social security contributions in Ireland are also at the bottom of the table — half the EU average, at 8 percent of the total tax take.

By comparison, employers in France contribute 25 percent of revenues as social security payments for their staff, in Spain the contribution is 24 percent; in Italy, 20 percent; in Germany and Belgium, 19 percent; in Austria, 17 percent; with British employers contributing 10 percent.

★ THE POPE is to make the fascist founder of a secretive fundamentalist religious organisation a saint.

The pope is a great fan of Josemaria Escriva and has long championed his organisation, Opus Dei.

Escriva founded his secretive and militaristic order in 1928. He was a leading supporter of Franco's fascist regime in Spain from the 1930s onwards.

Wladimir Feltzmann, a former Opus Dei member, says that Escriva was keen on the Nazis.

He used to say that Hitler and Franco had saved Christianity.

Opus Dei has 80,000 members, many in key business and financial positions.

SPORTS CAMPUS IRELAND:

Is Ahern behind the Waterworld scam?

THE BIZARRE story of how a paper company in the Virgin Islands got a contract to run Waterworld in Abbotstown leads straight to the top of Fianna Fail.

The original proposal to grant the contract went to Bertie Ahern before reaching cabinet.

Disaster

Ahern took a memo to cabinet 15 months ago seeking the award of a multi-million euro National Aquatic Centre contract to the company at the centre of the scandal.

Campus Stadium Ireland, the private company in charge of the project which is part of the disastrous Public Private Partnerships,

is headed by Paddy Teahon. Teahon used to be Ahern's closest ally in the civil service before he was appointed to run Sports Campus Ireland by Ahern.

The proposed grant of the contract was endorsed on December 19, 2000, at the last cabinet meeting before the Christmas recess. Building began five months later.

The cost is likely to be in the region of €9 million.

Dublin Waterworld, the company intended to run the aquatic centre, was formed a few weeks after getting the contract!

The government has so far commissioned two reports on the deal but neither has answered two simple questions:

Why award the contract to a dodgy offshore company that didn't formally exist and why did Ahern want this to happen?

★ THE UNITED Nations is sponsoring a Conference on Financing for Development in Mexico this month. It has been packaged as heralding a new international financial structure, quite different to the old style International Monetary Fund "structural adjustment plans".

Call us sceptical, but when we hear that the official United Nations special envoy to the conference is Michel Camdessus we doubt it. Camdessus recently retired from another job—managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

Through the 1990s he was the chief figure in imposing the savage austerity of structural adjustment plans across the world.

★ THE GULF state of Bahrain is to hold parliamentary elections for the first time in 27 years. But don't get the idea that this is a new wind of democracy sweeping through the oil-rich pro-Western Gulf states.

Bahrain's rulers have come up with a little scam. Property owners from the five neighbouring states of Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates will get a vote to help ensure "stability".

Globalise Resistance evacuate Dublin



Globalise Resistance Ministry of Disasters members help a confused Gardai as some 250 people carried out an evacuation of Dublin (inset) in protest at Sellafield

Joe Jacob up to his neck in Wicklow waste

IT'S NOT just nuclear waste that is keeping Joe Jacob up at night.

The landowner at the centre of the country's largest illegal waste dumping operation has claimed that

Minister of State Jacob made representations on his behalf to Wicklow County Council to cut his commercial rates bill several years ago.

The bill was subsequently reduced.

John O'Reilly's land at Whitestown contains 300,000 tonnes of illegally dumped materials, including hospital waste.

Jacob admits he knows

O'Reilly but can't recall whether he made representations to Wicklow County Council on his behalf.

However, O'Reilly said that his rates were halved from £4,500 (€5,710) over £2,000 (€2,540) after his appeal of the council charge and that he had discussed the issue with Jacob at the time in his west Wicklow clinic.

O'Reilly did not know whether the minister of state, then a councillor, had made written or oral representations on his behalf.

According to O'Reilly, his quarry at Whitestown was opened to waste disposal contractors in 1979 and continued to accept domestic and commercial waste without planning permission or an Environmental Protection Agency licence until it was closed by the council late last year.

O'Reilly claimed that his first—and last—customer was the county council, whose officials are currently searching his land to trace the source of the illegally dumped material.

Equal pay will take 50 years!

STARTLING new figures show that Irish women will have to wait nearly 50 years for equal pay with men and will lose more than €250,000 each over the course of their working lives.

The research, released by the ATGWU on International Women's Day, revealed up to 18 percent dif-

ference in pay between men and women which will take 45 years to close on current trends.

After 30 years of equal pay legislation, women's average earnings were still 15.5 percent less than men's.

While 53.7 percent of men had job-related pensions, it was just 38 percent for women.

what we think

BIGOTS BEATEN

Now legislate for choice

BERTIE AHERN, the anti-abortion movement, and the Catholic Church have been beaten—again.

We have rejected the Government's proposed constitutional amendment on abortion.

Fianna Fail threw all their weight behind a Yes vote. But voters in Ahern's constituency of Dublin Central voted against the proposals—by 59 per cent in that case.

Fianna Fail had taken to the streets for the first time in years but stopped canvassing door to door in the week before the vote because they had received too much abuse on the doorsteps.

A No vote will preserve the status quo in relation to abortion in Ireland, from the Supreme Court judgment in the X case which allowed a suicidal rape victim to have an abortion.

A Yes vote would have removed the threat of suicide as grounds for abortion and would have introduced a 12 year jail sentence for abortion.

Even the backing of the Pope and thousands of Yes leaflets being delivered inside the Referendum Commission booklet couldn't get that through.

But instead of introducing legislation immediately, FF said they will do nothing because the country is divided.

Confusion

Backed by the corporate media they are still trying to create confusion on the issue by claiming the extreme right were behind the No vote.

The idea that it was the far right of the anti abortion movement that won this vote is nonsensical.

The referendum was overwhelmingly defeated in urban centres.

Dublin, Waterford Cork and Galway produced huge No votes.

Every tally pointed to high no votes in working class areas in other constituencies.

Wherever working class people came out and voted they voted against the referendum.

Some have claimed the low turnout was the cause of the No vote but the highest turnout was in the constituencies with the highest No votes and the lowest turnout was in those constituencies that voted Yes.

In 1992, the first time people defeated the government on abortion, the turnout was higher.

On an issue that always brings out the cowardice in politicians, even parties who supported a No vote are now refusing to recognise that this No vote was a vote for choice.

Michael Noonan has said that he wants a "consensus to lead to a new status quo".

While senior Labour figures were defending their dropping of the parties "right to choose" position during the campaign, Labour said it would need long consultation before legislating.

The reality of the thousands of women who go to England for an abortion meant working class people wouldn't let the church and FF roll back the clock.

Thousands of women need abortion rights, not after consultation—but now.

At the count of the votes Fianna Fail didn't turn up and the anti-abortionists burst into tears because they knew they had lost.

They have lost, but we have yet to win full abortion rights in Ireland.

We need to keep the pressure on parties such as Labour and Fine Gael to make sure that they make good on their commitment to bring in legislation—legislation that gives a liberal interpretation of the X case judgement and introduces real access to abortion rights for the women who need it.

Bush threatens Iraq with nuclear strike

GEORGE Bush's latest dangerous insanity is to threaten nuclear war against "rogue states". America has drafted secret plans to wage nuclear war against seven countries as well as building an arsenal of smaller nuclear devices.

A classified Pentagon report says that the US must be ready to use nuclear weapons against China, Russia, Iraq, North Korea, Iran, Libya and Syria and also in an Arab-Israeli conflict.

The report, provided to Congress in January and signed by hawkish US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld, said weapons could be used in three types of situations.

Targets

The first was against targets able to withstand non-nuclear attack, the second in retaliation for attack with nuclear, biological or chemical weapons and the third "in the event of surprising military developments".

Bush is building towards invading Iraq, already US troops are heading to the region. Bush has requested 25,000 troops from Tony Blair.

Bush and Blair crowed about their quick victory in Afghanistan last December. There would just be a "mopping up" operation in the devastated country, we were told. But Taliban fighters brought down two US Chinook helicopters, killing



Celebrating a pro-choice victory

at least seven US troops.

In response the US has again started carpet-bombing Afghanistan, with B-52 bombers dropping barbaric "thermobaric" bombs that ignite in a fireball that acts like a mini nuclear weapon.

Bush increased his military budget to more than \$1 billion a day.

Covering the basic needs of 250 million needy children around the world would cost \$8

billion. He has destroyed Afghanistan and now is prepared to use nuclear weapons to destroy Iraq.

A US attack on Iraq could be less than three months away in May, or may be delayed until October, according to varying reports from the US.

Building a powerful anti-war movement now can have an impact on Bush's plans to spread his brutal war to Iraq and other targets.



Help us raise €20,000!

Socialist Worker Appeal

The **Socialist Worker** appeal is aiming to raise 20,000 euros. This money will be used to help **Socialist Worker** become a weekly paper.

We don't get any financial backing from big business. We rely solely on our readers and supporters to help us build a revolutionary party with its own paper, independent of the establishment media. Our readers and supporters are responding very enthusiastically to the **Socialist Worker** Appeal. So far we have raised over 10,000 euro. We would like to thank all our members and readers who have so generously donated so far.

The **Socialist Worker** Appeal has launched a national raffle. Tickets are available from your **Socialist Worker** paper seller and cost 1 euro each. There are several money prizes and the draw will take place on Easter Monday 1st April.

I want to support **Socialist Worker** Appeal and help keep **Socialist Worker** at the centre of the struggle for a better world. Please find enclosed the following donation form.

€ _____ /£ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Donations in Republic of Ireland should be made payable to:
Socialist Worker, AIB, 37 O'Connell Street, Dublin 1 Account Number: 85173030 Sort Code: 93 11 36
 Donations in Northern Ireland should be made payable to
Socialist Worker, First Trust Bank, High Street, Belfast Account No: 00812073, Sort Code: 93 80 92
 Return slip to: SW Appeal, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

€ 10,000.00

€ 0.00

SWA



news of the world

500,000 Italians protest against Silvio Berlusconi

HALF A million Italians demonstrated in Rome against the right wing government of millionaire businessman Silvio Berlusconi.

The demonstration was organised by the Democratic Left party and its allies in the Olive Tree coalition.

The Democratic Left is a part of the old Communist Party that adopted policies similar to the Labour Party.

Berlusconi defeated the Olive Tree government in May last year after it pushed free market policies for five years in government.

Movement

The demonstration was an attempt to come into contact with the new movement that has grown massively since the Genoa G8 protests last year.

It was called mainly to protest against Berlusconi's interference with magistrates' investigations into his business dealings.

Berlusconi is attempting to portray these inves-

tigations as a "left wing plot" against him.

His government, which includes the fascist National Alliance, has legalised false accounting and made it harder to collect information on overseas financial activities.

But the 500,000 protesters were also marching against the government's anti-immigrant bill and its scrapping of Article 18, which offered workers protection against being sacked.

Corruption

The demonstration came a week after 40,000 people attended a meeting in Milan to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Clean Hands inquiry.

This was the investigation that uncovered the corruption at the heart of Italian politics and led to the collapse of the major parties, the Christian Democrats and Socialist Party.

The main trade union federation, the CGIL, has, after massive pressure from its rank and file, called a general strike against the scrapping of Article 18 for Friday 5 April.

It has also called a demonstration in Rome



Part of the huge protest in Rome

for Saturday 23 March. As soon as the CGIL called the general strike thousands of workers spontaneously walked out of work.

Some 80 percent of the workers in the giant Fiat car plant in Turin struck, and 1,500 of them

marched through the city.

Workers in the other trade union federations, the UIL and the CISL, which have entered into talks with the government, joined the walk-outs, and many of them will join the general strike.

The CGIL is calling on all the rank and file trade union organisations, the grass-roots groups and the anti-capitalist movement to join the struggle.

Despite calling last week's demonstration, the Democratic Left is

still struggling to keep up with the movement.

At a public meeting of 4,000 people in Florence last week Massimo D'Alema, the former centre-left prime minister, was booed and heckled by the whole audience.

India

THE INDIAN government, has stood by while a section of its supporters carried out horrific massacres. Hundreds of people have been killed in communal violence centred on the Gujarat region.

The main victims of the violence are India's minority Muslim population. The violence erupted just days after the ruling Hindu fundamentalist BJP party suffered serious losses in regional elections in the party's heartland of Uttar Pradesh. Predominantly Hindu police have stood by or joined in the horrific attacks on Muslims.

The first deaths took place when a train was fire-bombed. On board were Hindu activists who were returning from a trip to Ayodhya. This is the site where Hindu fundamentalists have vowed to build a temple on the site of a mosque. The Hindus began to abuse local people, who then attacked them.

There is a close network, with overlapping personnel of the World Hindu Council, the fascist RSS and the BJP government. Supporters within the BJP admit that the unleashing of communal violence may be the only way that it can regain the electoral support lost in the recent elections

Victory for Korean strikers

A MAJOR battle against privatisation in South Korea was continuing after rail workers won major concessions and the government threatened a crackdown on striking power workers.

The rail workers' victory, after two days on strike last week, is a significant blow to President Kim Dae-jung's privatisation drive. His energy minister said last week, "The government will not change its policy on privatisation."

One day later he signed an accord with the 25,000-strong Korean Railway Workers' Union that put the sell-off on hold. The state-owned rail company also agreed to cut working hours without loss of pay.

The union is still demanding the reinstatement of sacked union activists. In an effort to regain lost ground, the government is trying to hammer power workers who were on strike against privatisation at the beginning of this week.

Colombia

Rebels keep up resistance despite clamp down

A TOP Colombian general resigned recently, along with several other senior military officers. It was the clearest sign yet that the war launched by the US-backed regime against rebel forces is not going to plan.

The Colombian government plunged the South American country into a new round of bloody fighting last month when it ended peace talks with left wing FARC guerrillas. The regime boasted it would seize back territory it had previously ceded to the FARC forces within 48 hours.

Within hours planes and helicopters, including US-supplied Black Hawks, were bombing targets inside the FARC-controlled zone. Several towns have been hit in the raids, and there have been civilian casualties.

The US and the European Union governments rushed to support the Colombian government, claiming it is a "war on drugs" that is part of

their "war on terrorism". The truth is different.

The Colombian government, its multinational backers, and the US and European Union governments aim to crush resistance to their neo-liberal policies. The Colombian government wants to destroy the guerrilla forces along with their social support after decades of civil war.

Pastrana's government also wants to crush peasants and workers fighting its drive to privatise public services and plunder the country's vast resources of oil, gold and coal. The government has strung out the peace talks with the FARC while preparing for war.

The US has pumped up to \$2 billion in mainly military aid into the country under its Plan Colombia.

The real drug traffickers in Colombia are linked to the government, the armed forces and the right wing paramilitaries who have waged terror across the country.

The wife of the US attaché was caught smuggling cocaine only 18 months ago.

The US government has even admitted that Carlos Castano, head of Colombia's right wing AUC paramilitaries, is one of the biggest drug traffickers.

Since 11 September the Colombian and US governments have claimed Colombia is part of the "war on terror". There is real terror in Colombia. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in Colombia in recent years.

The vast majority are victims of the army and the paramilitaries. Every week three trade unionists are assassinated. The death squads kill over 60 people weekly.

Terror

Alongside this terror the government is imposing neo-liberal economic policies. Millions of people have been pushed into poverty by cuts in wages and welfare, and opening the country up to multinationals like BP.

Over two thirds of Colombians are now living below the miserable official poverty line.

In the face of this, and despite the terror and assassinations, workers have continued to fight back.

Workers in the city of Cali occupied and won last month in a fight to stop the privatisation of public utilities such as water and telecoms.

The government bombed rebel positions, and government troops took key towns in the Switzerland-sized area of the country that had been under FARC control. But the guerrillas have hit back.

General Gustavo Porras was in charge of a key part of the army's offensive. He and four of his top officers were forced to resign their positions last week after FARC forces blew up a bridge vital for supplying the main town of San Vicente del Caguan.

Meanwhile BBC correspondent Peter Greste reported from inside the war zone. In San Vicente del Caguan, he said, "The troops are only on the streets during daylight.

"At night they retreat into barracks. The roads to San Vicente are all under guerrilla control.

"The only relatively safe way to travel there is by helicopter, and the

FARC has cut all electricity and phone lines."

The BBC man also adds that the FARC has "a significant core of support" in Colombia. That honest admission stands in stark contrast to the lies peddled by the Colombian and US governments, and by New Labour, whose pet multinational, BP, is the biggest foreign operator in Colombia.

They all say the Colombian government is fighting "terrorism" and waging a "war on drugs". The real terror in Colombia comes from the government and right wing paramilitaries linked to it.

They are responsible for the vast majority of the thousands of deaths in Colombia, as even the US State Department accepts. The US has been urging on the Colombian government's war plans and has pumped in over \$1 billion in mostly military aid under its Plan Colombia.

But the US is also nervous about getting drawn directly into a full scale civil war, and getting bogged down as it did in its war in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s.

Eamonn McCann

What do Sinn Fein stand for?

On RTE's Sunday lunchtime news on February 24th, Gerry Adams declared that Sinn Fein recognises the Irish Army as the only legitimate armed force in the Republic and the Gardai as the only legitimate police force.

In conventional political terms, this was unremarkable, but it represented another major move away from what, as recently as a decade ago, was a core principle of Sinn Fein—that the only legitimate authority in Ireland was the IRA.

Of course, nobody will have been surprised at Adams' statement. Many can scarcely recall the ideological basis on which Sinn Fein has been re-built in modern times. Only "fundamentalists" felt the RTE declaration worthy of debate.

Similarly, there was a remarkably subdued reaction to Adams' statement during his visit to the World Economic Forum in New York in early February that Sinn Fein now accepts the "principle of consent"—that Northern Ireland will remain part of the UK for as long as a majority in the North prefers it.

This has for decades been the linchpin of the Unionist position—as Sinn Feiners scornfully pointed out when the SDLP adopted the "principle of consent" back in the 1970s.

As policy flip-flops go, this one was of Olympic gymnastics standard. But, again, there was little sign of anxiety, much less revolt, in the party's ranks.

One common explanation is that the Sinn Fein grass roots have developed an attitude of such reverence towards Adams etc, that they simply follow their leaders blindly, no matter in what direction they are being led. This implies that the rank and file are gullible fools.

Bewildering

But that view of Republicans stands in bewildering contrast to their depiction in sections of the media — as a fearsome, disciplined, tightly-focused phalanx advancing inexorably towards untrammelled power.

On RTE, Adams was responding to southern Attorney General and PD candidate Michael McDowell, who had warned "all democrats" to be on their guard against Sinn Fein taking over the State.

In similar vein, columnists from the *Sunday Independent* and the *Daily Telegraph* hold that Sinn Fein, from top to bottom, is engaged in a massive conspiracy by devious means to create a "socialist" state in Ireland.

In this perspective, it's not the republican rank and file but everybody apart from republicans who is being naive about Sinn Fein's intentions.

But this makes no sense either. At Stormont, Sinn Fein ministers are enthusiastically helping to run Northern Ireland along centre-right lines, introducing private finance into health and education and backing a budget which cuts social spending in real terms. This is all part of a cunning scheme to speed the creation of a socialist Republic? Hardly.

The explanation of the conundrum is more obvious than either Adams' fundamentalist critics or the *Indo/Telegraph* paranoids suggest. SF and the IRA may constitute "the Republican Movement" but in practice the politics of the movement for the last quarter century can best be described as militantly nationalist.

All nationalist movements, however militant the circumstances of their emergence might have made them, eventually make their peace with the system.

At bottom, this isn't because their leaders are morally deficient or given to "selling out", but because, in the end, nationalist movements put the nation before any single class within the nation, and so desert the working class when its specific interests come into conflict with the perceived "national" interest.

Examples abound, from history and from all over the world. Irish "Republicanism", with its rejection of all existing state authority, reflected the fierce anger which arose in the late 1960s and early '70s against British-backed repression in the North.

But the nationalist movement which resulted was always on course for accommodation with existing state authority. Adams etc. recognised this from an early stage. This is what they mean when they say they are going with the flow of history, and it is why they have met little resistance as they have systematically rid themselves of the supposedly sacred tenets of Republicanism.

Unionists and nationalists unite in free market madness

Privatisation hurts poorest

THE privatisation of Northern Ireland electricity has led to higher prices for home users but lower costs for large businesses.

That is the picture that has emerged from the Assembly's Enterprise, Trade and Industry Committee report on energy costs.

The General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland says that the North's consumers are forking out an astonishing £2 million more *each week* for their light and heating compared to the UK average.

This is equal to £3.10 a week for every household.

The poorer the household, the higher the electricity costs.

Discount

Those with enough money to pay monthly by direct debit get a discount on their bill.

But those who have difficulties paying their bills and have to use meter cards pay more.

While prices have soared for domestic users, big businesses have seen a drop of between 20 and 30 percent in their electricity costs since privatisation.

Part of the reason for this appears to be cross-subsidisation of the costs of electricity to business by the ordinary householder!

Meanwhile, gas bills rose by 8.9 percent in 1999 alone.

The cost of the usual fill of home heating oil went from £88 in 1999 to £230 now and the price of coal has gone up as well—a bag of coal now costs between £9-£12.

These figures explain why people in Northern Ireland pay over 20 percent more for energy than those who live in the Republic or Britain.

Yet one in three households in the North live in



Low paid staff in the Health Service fighting back

homes that are cold, damp and hard to heat, so they have to use more energy, leaving their fuel costs even higher.

Yet for a working class whose bargaining ability is weakened by the division of sectarianism, wage levels are some 20 percent lower than in Britain or the Republic and benefit levels are no higher than Britain.

In other words, a far larger chunk of household income in the North goes on just staying warm

Healthy

Small wonder then that the Consumer Council's report on food poverty found that many households simply do not have enough money to eat a healthy diet.

The Stormont politicians were unanimous in blaming the high energy costs for home users on privatisation.

The report complained

Minorities face rise in racism

ACCORDING TO recent research people from ethnic minorities in the North are now 400 percent more likely to be attacked than four years ago.

The Ulster University report found that 44 percent of people from ethnic minorities have received some form of racial abuse, the figure rises to 65 percent in the Chinese community.

Threatened

A member of the Chinese Welfare Association told *Socialist Worker*, "After the stabbing of the

Chinese student in Dublin many people from the Chinese community feel very threatened. In south Belfast students have come to us because they have been attacked and because of the fear of attack."

Among ethnic minorities 29 percent have experienced criminal damage on their property, ranging from graffiti to the smashing of windows, this figure rises to 52 percent among the Chinese community.

The Islamic centre in south Belfast was attacked twice following September 11th, Ishmael from the Islamic society

at Queens University told *Socialist Worker*, "I felt that after September 11th we really started to come under attack.

"We would blame this on a few extremists who would use the attacks as an excuse to attack us, but the press has a role to play."

"An article in the *Sunday Life* said that an Algerian group was active at the engineering department at Queens and finished with a warning to young people to treat Muslims in south Belfast with caution.

It is no wonder with the media making false allegations that people

to protecting the long-term interests of consumers.

In fact every one of the parties in the Executive gives its backing to the Private Finance Initiative.

In Britain this has been shown to have disastrous consequences for the long-term interests of patients, pupils, travellers and con-

sumers.

Indeed, the only concrete proposal coming out of the Assembly report was to cut not the costs of household electricity but the level of corporation tax paid by big business, in order to give another boost to profits at the expense of workers.

Selloff by stealth

NORTHERN Ireland's public services are being privatised. Schools, hospitals and the railways are all up for grabs under PFI schemes, with private companies set to make billions of pounds in profits.

Construction companies and engineering firms have been bidding for £356 million worth of contracts.

Many have already been awarded and completed—like the new building for the North West Institute or the first PFI school here, Drumglass School in Dungan-

'Super-school'

non.

Education minister Martin McGuinness is giving private firms another £70m in lucra-

tive contracts, including the new £34m Strabane "super-school".

At another PFI project, St Genevieve's School in Belfast, PFI advisers got £623,963 in fees alone, on top of the £14m contract.

Transport offers the biggest cash bonanza for the fat cats.

Contracts

They'll buy new buses and trains worth £230m and rent them back to Translink.

The NHS, too, is being cracked open for big business, with £27m of PFI contracts.

Private companies have supplied Belfast City's new cancer centre, renal dialysis facilities at Belfast City, Daisy Hill and Antrim Area hospitals, and even new ambulances.

In total, ministers from all parties here — unionist or nationalist — have invited or accepted tenders for £356.7m of PFI contracts.

Economy

Are we seeing the end of the recession?

THERE IS a debate going on among establishment economists over the recession that hit the US last year. Many of them claim that it is already over.

Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve board (the US central bank) told a Senate committee last month that economic activity was "beginning to firm".

Like Greenspan, many of those who say the recession is over talked up the speculative boom of the 1990s.

They claimed it represented the emergence of a "new economy" that, thanks to information technology, had escaped the cycle of boom and slump that had afflicted capitalism for the past two centuries.

Now, this talk looks pretty silly. But this doesn't mean that one can just dismiss out of hand the idea that a recovery has begun.

After all, the whole point of saying that economic activity under capitalism is cyclical is to acknowledge that it goes down—and up.

Karl Marx, pointed to this to this cycle, and argued that permanent slumps are impossible.

Quickly

Recessions happen because capitalists' investments grow more quickly than the profits they can make from them.

The rate of return on their investments—what Marx called the general rate of profit—falls until they stop investing and precipitate the economy into slump.

But recessions release forces that start to push the rate of profit back up again. Firms go bankrupt, allowing their more efficient rivals to buy up their plant and equipment cheap.

Unemployment rises, weakening workers' bargaining position, and putting them under pressure to accept lower wages and worse conditions.

The whole cycle of boom and slump then starts up again. The important question, then, is whether or not the US economy has reached this point yet.

It seems doubtful. As the *Financial Times* pointed out recently, far from abolishing the business cycle,

"new technology has instead generated the cyclical extremes".

Euphoria about information technology in the late 1990s encouraged firms to sink huge investments into expanding their productive capacity.

Investment in telecommunications rose between 1997 and 2000 by about 20 percent in the US and 50 percent in Western Europe.

But profits did not rise quickly enough to match. The result was massive over-investment.

According to one estimate, about \$1,000 billion—£690 billion—was wasted in the global telecommunications industry over the past four years.

Over-investment is a classic feature of speculative booms.

So is large-scale swindling, legal and illegal. Enron's accounting scams turn out to be just the tip of the iceberg.

It has emerged that many telecom firms were swapping capacity in an effort to make them look more profitable.

The problem is that it takes time for the effects of this over-investment to be wiped out.

An economist at the International Monetary Fund has predicted that "economic activity would not recover until past investment 'mistakes' had been corrected".

It doesn't look as if that's happened yet.

The business press is full of stories about the crisis of the telecom companies which were set up at the height of the boom.

Boosters

According to the *Financial Times*, "In information technology generally, the legacy of past over-investment is everywhere. Scott McNealy, the chief executive of Sun Microsystems, has said he is having to compete against his own products sold off as bankrupt stock, at as little as 10 percent of list price."

The boosters of US capitalism should consider the plight of Japan.

More than ten years after the collapse of the speculative "bubble economy" of the 1980s the Japanese banks are still loaded down with bad loans.

Output and prices continue to fall.

The depression that grips the world's second biggest economy is a major problem for global capitalism.

But it may also be an awful warning of what lies ahead for the US itself

— ALEX CALLINICOS

INTERVIEW WITH RADICAL JOURNALIST GREG PALAST

It's a brutal world but there is hope

GREG PALAST is a breath of fresh air in the world of journalism. He began as an investigator, working on behalf of trade unions and consumer groups in the US, highlighting the abuse of corporate power and the destruction of people's lives and planet. His work led to the prosecution of nuclear power plant builders for racketeering, and the revelation of how the Exxon Valdez crash was allowed to happen because the shipping company cut costs by turning the radars off! Recently he has been in the public eye for exposing how the Republican Party rigged the election in Florida by taking thousands of black men off the electoral role. Gregory Palast visited Dublin to speak at a number of meetings to discuss his new book, *The Best Democracy Money Can Buy* and spoke to *Socialist Worker*.

SW: What effect did the election of George Bush have on the American Left?



Greg Palast

IT WAS demoralising and discouraging. Nader has been blamed for taking enough votes in Florida to give Bush the election, when in reality, George Bush, Jeb Bush and Katharine Harris stole the election.

Still, there was this horrible guilt on the left that we'd somehow inadvertently allowed this failed oilman into the White House, so it was depressing for a while. But don't forget that until September 11th, Bush was the most unpopular president in American history. Never has a president taken office so mistrusted.

September 11th hypnotised Americans, because it was genuinely frightening. My office was in the World Trade Centre so I know exactly how they feel. So there has been and still is a patriotic rally, but Enron broke that spell, it reminded people that "Hang on, this guy sold our country to the rich".

Enron literally picked their own regulator. They chose the people who were already facing prosecution for ripping off Californians but within 48 hours of getting elected, Bush changed the rules in all sorts of ways, allowing Enron to make a killing in the "free electricity market". Enron's collapse was a wake up call to Americans. It said, "we looked away for a time but now we get on with the real story."

Lets not forget that after the Gulf War, the Bush family arrived in Kuwait to sell pipelines to the Kuwaitis, before the fires had even gone out. Even Norman Schwarzkopf, not exactly a left-winger, objected, saying "This isn't why people died in the Gulf", for Neil and Marvin Bush to arrive in Kuwait City with their funny hats, felt table and three card tricks! So

Bank refused to appear on CNN if I was on the same show. CNN did the courageous thing and literally yanked me off the air!

Most career-journalists in the big media have realised that the way to the top is to keep your head down and cover the press release news and not ask any questions. I gave CBS all the information I uncovered in Florida, which they were quite excited about.

When, after four days they hadn't aired it, I rang the producer, who told me the story didn't stand up. I asked why and was told that "We rang Jeb Bush's office and he said it didn't happen!"

In the election in Florida, what we basically had was a South African situation, where telling black people that their votes didn't count elected Bush.

What happened was Bush used computer databases to knock 57,700 voters off the roles on the basis that they were ex-convicts - who can't vote in Florida.

The majority of these people had committed no crime at all, apart from being black, and black voters are overwhelmingly Democrat voters.

In many cases they simply had a name that was similar to a convicted felon. Plus there were 8,000 people disqualified for crimes committed in Texas, which is completely unconstitutional - and we all know who was governor of that state.

The real crimes were firstly Bush doing this and the second crime was the Democrat Party sitting on their hands, saying "Our election was stolen, but we're not going to scream about it because that would mean screaming on behalf of black people".

There was the vicious racism of the Republican Party that stole the White House and the kow-towing to this racism by the Democrats. If they had been white voters, you can be sure the Democrats wouldn't just have conceded defeat. I actually left the Democrat Party

because of this.

SW: Do you agree that the collapse of Argentina is a powerful deathblow to neo-liberalism as a theory?

YOU AND I might think so, but not according to Wall St or the World Bank.

SW: But surely, even Bush's response to the downturn in America's economy goes against all the neo-liberals have to say about not interfering in the market?

DON'T FORGET that they are exempt from the rules of globalisation. So when Argentina is in a depression, the US is backing the World Bank position that they should cut spending further, which, in capitalist terms is economic suicide.

Whereas in the US, when they felt a small wobble in the economy after September 11, Bush demands from Congress that they spend 50-100 billion dollars just to offset any minor damage.

The reason James Wolfensson hates me is that he doesn't want me talking about the secret documents, with his signature on them, which were basically the IMF's decision on what was going to happen in Argentina.

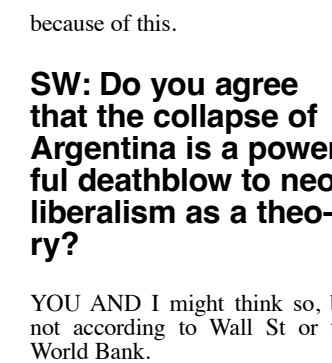
It amounted to an economic coup d'etat, where the country is ground down to meet interest payments, which they knew would cause what they called "social unrest", what we call a riot and that it would have to be met with, in their words, "resolve", what we would call tanks on the street.

Thirty five people died in December protesting the IMF conditions and people had died before that but nothing was reported about it because it didn't come near the Intercontinental Hotel where all the reporters hang out in Buenos Aires.

There had been people dying from starvation in the hinterland for months, but no one cared about that.

So I think it's a blow to neo-liberalism, but the IMF isn't finished with Argentina by a long shot. The country is an economic corpse, but still they're picking it for anything that can be sold off.

The water company in Buenos Aires was sold to... you guessed it, Enron which immediately stripped all the assets, put in no money and



Part of and Unemployed protest in Argentina

now the water is contaminated and isn't flowing anyway.

Industry has been sold off, the state banks have been sold off, the ports, so now they're down to privatising insane things like the tax collection system.

SW: Medieval!

YEAH, IT is going back to the medieval system of tax farming where you give private operators the right to collect taxes for you. One item in the documents, under a heading called "Improving the conditions of the poor", they call for a reduction in unemployment benefit from \$200 to \$160 a month.

How can this possibly help the poor? It's all about meeting the interest payments.

SW: The people of Argentina have been forced into a revolu-



Part of and Unemployed protest in Argentina

tionary situation, simply in order to survive. What options do they have now?

WELL, just say no! I see real resistance coming out of places like Venezuela, where Hugo Chavez has passed laws giving land to the landless. Any land unused for three years is seized without compensation and given to the landless. He's doubled the royalties on oil corporations - a real sin - when you do that, you go to war with the George Bushes of the world and the financial markets.

Watch this space, Chavez will be either assassinated or overthrown within the next three months, they will not tolerate that dissent.

But we are seeing the same dissent in Argentina where people are creating local committees to keep food supplies operative, they're

refusing to follow it and we're still doing okay - poor people are better off than ever before".

SW: Is the concentration of American military power connected to real worries about the future of American capitalism and its relative decline since the 1970's?

IN SOME ways, American military power doesn't seem as scary as it used to. Maybe I'm getting old, but I went to jail during the Vietnam War, which was about as blatantly imperialist a project as you can get.

Three million Vietnamese were killed. America today works more through its proxy operators. Venezuelan troops will murder Hugo Chavez, not American.

The rulers of the planet have created a fifth column, through combining with the elites locally. The people who were murdered in Bolivia protesting against the privatisation of water supplies were gunned down by Bolivians.

It's the post-Kissenger style of military diplomacy where they activate local armed forces against popular dissent, which is horrific.

It's amazing, you know the rich have a sense of class solidarity which we in the working class are sorely missing!

SW: Do you see any hope for justice in Palestine?

YES, it's about justice. If we really believe in socialism, do we really want more states, Jewish states, Arab states, the United States. I don't believe in any of these states.

We shouldn't promote this endless division based on religion or race, we should promote the commonality of the interests that we as workers have on both sides, be it in Israel, or Northern Ireland or wherever and not get caught up in the puppet show of Arafat vs. Sharon.

I'm interested in looking at the puppeteers, the money behind the politicians who are keeping us apart, encouraging us to cut each others' throats.

It's a brutal world we live in, but if we stay true to our ideals and really work for them, then I think there's hope for us as a species.

WHATS SOCIALISTS SAY

Are workers apathetic?

EVERY TIME a government gets a low turnout for an election or referendum, it scolds the public for their inattention and laziness, or apathy as most commentators call it.

Apathy is a useless word to describe the public reaction to politicians. It literally means "lack of feeling". Most people are far from apathetic towards politicians - more likely that they can't stand them.

How can politicians think that people don't have feelings about the dreadful conditions their elderly relatives endure in hospital, or that we don't have feelings about the rise of racism we see, or the destruction of our planet, and many, many other things?

It's not that people don't feel concern for these issues, it's that they don't believe that the man or woman who comes knocking on their door every five years looking for a vote is going to do anything about them.

This is especially obscene when we remember that the world's three richest CEO's control more wealth than the economies of the world's poorest 48 countries.

Income

These boards are able to get the law changed to suit their purposes - like Goodman in Ireland, or Berwick Mining in Tanzania, which bought the mining rights to a gold seam and evicted 3,000 small-time miners from their land and only source of income.

What use are a politician's promises when they are powerless to stop the flow of capital - and therefore jobs - from the country?

Whenever governments actually attempt reforms that upset the ruling class, they are faced with the threat of bankruptcy, like Mitterrand in France, or an armed coup, like Allende in Chile.

Thousands of people are furious with the system and the way it affects their lives but unless there is an alternative are likely to stay away.

Thousands of people are refusing to pay service charges, fighting in their jobs or campaigning for a better world.

Socialists in an election can pull together these fights, make links, show up the hypocrisy of the politicians and start to mobilise people against the system.

We shouldn't leave elections to the crooks and chancers who occupy the Dail at the minute.

That's why socialists believe in offering people an alternative in the ballot box as well as on the streets.

We shouldn't just vote, but also campaign for socialist candidates and link those campaigns to every fight around them for a better world.

(For details of *Socialist Worker* election candidates turn to page 10).

- PAUL MCCARTHY

RESISTANCE

Ireland's socialist magazine

- Resistance in Palestine
- The Health strategy
- Abortion referendum
- Iraq
- The anti war movement



Zimbabwe

What's at stake in the elections



The Movement for Democratic Change's Morgan Tsvangirai

Mugabe: From a hero to a tyrant

TODAY ROBERT Mugabe is portrayed as a devil by the press here. Much of the media reacted the same way when he was elected president in 1980—the *News of the World* dubbed him “The Black Hitler”. But opinion then shifted.

By the mid-1990s Zimbabwe was the US government's newest African “success story”, as Mugabe put in place economic policies promoted by World Bank and IMF lenders. Zimbabwe's government even won praise from Tory Margaret Thatcher

The first effect of black rule was a big improvement in ordinary people's lives. Between 1980 and 1985 infant and child deaths fell by about a half. Grain supply trebled in what was then termed “the Zimbabwean miracle”.

From the mid-1980s, as the economy faltered, the international bankers and capitalists stepped up pressure for market “reforms”. Mugabe's finance minister Bernard Chidzero (who later chaired the IMF/World Bank

Development Committee) was convinced that the way forward was to work with the international bankers.

Mugabe agreed and the government borrowed massively. Debt payments shot up, and the IMF then pressured Mugabe to cut education spending and food subsidies.

Much worse followed in 1991. The world price of Zimbabwe's main export crops fell sharply, but Mugabe's government continued to repay debt.

Suffering

Michael Camdessus, the IMF's managing director, flew to Harare to announce that a “realistic plan” had been agreed with the country's leaders. ESAP, the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme, was born.

For many Zimbabweans ESAP was soon renamed “Eternal Suffering for African People”.

Mugabe's government agreed to privatisation, cuts and pro-business policies. Health and education charges soared.

Maternal deaths in childbirth rose by 40 percent as women tried to avoid going

to hospital because of the cost. The government abolished the minimum wage and average incomes dropped from £389 a year to £279.

Mugabe attacked students who protested, used vicious laws against strikes, and repressed demonstrations. The West applauded Mugabe. But resistance to

him grew. The trade union movement, which had been firmly tied to the ruling party, began to break away under pressure from below.

In December 1997 and January 1998 around one million workers joined “stayaways” against tax increases. The country's creditors—mainly the World Bank and the IMF—have

kept sucking out more and more of the country's wealth.

Mugabe is the enemy of Zimbabwe's workers, peasants and unemployed.

But it is deeply hypocritical of governments like Britain to criticise him when the market policies they love have wrecked so many millions of Zimbabwean lives.

WHO IS THE OPPOSITION?

THERE ARE two main sources of opposition to Mugabe inside Zimbabwe, and confusingly they are both inside the same party. One group is the white farmers, the big industrialists and the people who look to Western business interests.

The other group is workers and peasants who want to break from IMF-style policies and fight for real change.

Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) includes both groups. It has tried to weld together socialist revolution-

aries and capitalist reactionaries, farm workers and their masters, the white rich and their domestic servants.

The MDC is the product of several years of sharp class struggles since 1995.

The trade unions were central throughout these battles. Workers and peasants demanded that the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions set up an opposition party. Morgan Tsvangirai was the ZCTU general secretary.

The MDC was launched in September 1999 and it was immediately enormous-

ly popular.

The vast majority of its new members were workers, peasants, students and the unemployed.

But its leaders were moving sharply rightwards and increasingly courted the support of businessmen, multinationals and white farmers.

The MDC supports privatisation and a cut in state spending. However, workers and peasants will expect much more than this if Morgan Tsvangirai wins the election.

Across the world there is a familiar pattern—the IMF

AS Socialist Worker went to press Zimbabweans were voting for a president. Robert Mugabe's brutal regime faces a challenge from the Movement for Democratic Change's Morgan Tsvangirai.

The MDC contains good trade unionists and socialists, but is dominated by businessmen and white landowners.

The western corporate media denounce Mugabe and pretend to care for black Zimbabweans, but their real sympathies lie with Zimbabwe's white farmers.

Condemn

They condemn Mugabe's crimes. But they insist on the free market policies that have brought poverty, suffering and repression across Africa.

Certainly Mugabe is a tyrant. He has used violence, imprisonment, torture and murder to hang on to power. But that should not hide the crimes of the rich whites.

White settlers stole land from Zimbabwe's black people by violence and trickery in the 19th century.

They set up a society, which they called Rhodesia, where by the 1960s the white 4 percent of the population had all the rights, all the votes, most of the land and almost all the wealth.

This was a society like apartheid South Africa.

From 1965 to 1980 the struggle against white minority rule in Rhodesia

was led by the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).

It was a mass, popular movement against oppression in Zimbabwe. ZANU kept fighting despite intense repression and the murder of many of its activists.

One of ZANU's leading figures was Robert Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe today. He was in detention from 1964 to 1974.

By 1980 the white regime was in crisis and had to sue for peace. Zimbabwe's black people could at last choose their own government.

Millions of people celebrated the end of a century of oppressive rule by a tiny minority of whites.

Robert Mugabe won a landslide victory in the elections, and there was a feeling of great hope.

But very little changed fundamentally in the country in the next two decades.

After a brief period of reform, Mugabe gave in to the demands of the international bankers.

Today, according to the BBC, “About 4,500 white farmers own 11 million hectares of prime agricultural land.

About one million blacks own 16 million hectares, often in drought prone regions.

Modern

Where they do exist side by side, huge, modern mechanised estates are divided by a mere fence from subsistence farmers living in huts.”

As workers and peasants increasingly rebelled against his rule, Mugabe made several cynical manoeuvres to attack the whites.

But that should not lead to any sympathy with the white farmers.

The key force in Zimbabwe is the working class and the peasants it can pull behind it.

“The election matters, but it is not the key to the future,” says Munyaradzi Gwisai, a member of *Socialist Worker's* sister group in Zimbabwe, the International Socialist Organisation. He told *Socialist Worker*, “There is a boiling feeling for change among big sections of the working class. We will vote for Tsvangirai because it will mean more space for us to operate.

“But the main stress is on building up resistance—through stayaways and protest—and by putting pressure on the union leaders.

“We want to strengthen the anti-capitalist elements in the MDC and build a movement which can fight whoever wins this weekend.”

in my view

Angry voice of American depression

THIS YEAR marks the centenary of the birth of John Steinbeck. He is one of the US's most passionate, poetic and socially conscious writers. His novels often give voice to those denied it, especially in the Depression years before World War Two in the US. His stories are those of the dispossessed.

His characters are often migrants, immigrants, blacks and those pushed to the margins of society by poverty and unemployment. Steinbeck's novels are written with beautiful descriptions and an emotional intensity that have guaranteed their continued relevance and popularity. Some 60 years after the completion of his most read novel, 300,000 copies of *The Grapes of Wrath* are sold in the US alone each year.

Powerful

His work is at its most powerful when it chronicles the injustice and oppression suffered by thousands of US workers during the Depression of the 1930s. In this period nine million workers lost their jobs after the Wall Street Crash and subsequent slump. *The Grapes of Wrath* traces the journey of some of these workers to California. They work and live in desperate conditions in order to survive.

Steinbeck's novel revealed the harshness of life for these migrants, alongside the enduring poverty and racism suffered by black people and immigrants from Mexico. Tom Joad, the novel's central character, begins a long migration from Oklahoma to the orchards and farms of California. He fights all the way to ensure his family's survival.

Steinbeck fills characters such as Tom with dignity and a desire to maintain decency, despite the brutality and desperation of many around them whose lives and hope have been destroyed. *Of Mice and Men* is a personal favourite and a brilliant introduction to Steinbeck for all kinds of readers. It tells the story of George and Lennie.

These two itinerant workers desire to escape the endless grind of moving from ranch to ranch in the lush Salinas Valley.

George and Lennie, with their few possessions, are always only one meal away from hunger. The two men want to fulfil their own version of the American Dream.

Land

They want to own a little piece of land and live from the fruits of their own labour. This dream seems tantalisingly achievable when they meet Candy. Candy is an old disabled worker who promises to add what little savings he has to the money that George and Lennie can earn in a month.

In *Dubious Battle* is Steinbeck's most directly political novel. Its central character is Jim Nolan. He joins the Communist Party to fight for a better world, so sickened is he by the destruction of his own family and those around him. Together with an experienced Communist organiser, Mac, Nolan sets out to foment and win a strike of apple pickers.

The apple pickers' pay has been cut by the growers without warning. The strike brings out hope, courage and leadership among the men. Steinbeck beautifully portrays the growing political confidence and strengthening of beliefs in socialism that Nolan develops.

Despite the novel's tragic ending and the author's ambiguous portrayal of the Communists, the inspiration it provides is never fully extinguished. Regrettably, later in life Steinbeck drifted to the right, and even supported the US war in Vietnam.

However, the compassion for humanity remains in his later works. Steinbeck's passion for all of us to live fulfilled lives is well worth remembering and celebrating.

by MOIRA NOLAN

Interview

The music of a movement

MANU CHAO is a hugely popular musician across Europe and Latin America. He is also heavily involved in the anti-capitalist movement.

Manu spoke to Socialist Worker.

MANY PEOPLE here heard of you for the first time during the Genoa protests against the G8 last July. Why were you there?

BECAUSE I want a better world. I mixed with a lot of people who maybe don't think the same, but we all agree that things cannot go on like this.

We are not living in democracy. We are living in a dictatorship of money. I want a better future for my child.

I think if we let them do what they want, it's collective suicide. Fifteen days before the protests began we played a festival in Genoa. Half the price of the tickets went to the Genoa Social Forum, which organised the demonstrations, to build the Clandestino bar.

This bar gave water, apples and basic necessities to the demonstrators.

We played in Genoa the night before the protest began. All the money from this show went to pay for lawyers to deal with any problems.

WHAT DO you think of the anti-capitalist movement since Genoa?

AFTER GENOA it was a difficult period for the movement because people didn't know how to react.

More people, especially youngsters, think the only solution is violence. Others want to discuss other ways.

Nobody was finding one direction to go in all together. The urgency is to say no to what's happening so we have to be all together.

That's my politics. But I think now that it's stabilising and getting better. The next protest is against the European Union council summit in Barcelona in mid-March. We're trying to play there.

In Barcelona there was the same problem

with different groups wanting different protests. We don't have to be all together behind the same flag. But all the flags must be marching together because they're very powerful in front.

The best weapon is the mass of people. The only leader is the mass. It is the only leader they cannot defeat.

Every time the rulers of the world meet, the movement will be around. As much as possible I will try to be there. Barcelona is my home town. If I am not there in person, all that I am talking is shit.

YOU HAVE travelled in many parts of the world. What are your different experiences of the movement?

THE MOVEMENT in the north of the world is more intellectual. We are fighting for a better world—not for tomorrow, but for the future.

In South America people don't protest because of political ideas, but because every protester will die if they don't protest.

In my last tour in South America we were in Ecuador just after all the communities had taken the parliament.

The Indians had walked to Quito, the capital, because they were starving—they couldn't survive.

In Bolivia it was the same with the water that the government had privatised. It is the same in Argentina now. In South America the protests are about surviving.

DO YOU gain musical and political inspiration from these struggles?

I GAIN musical inspiration because that's my job. I get political and social inspiration because everywhere I go things are not going OK.

If everything was going OK I would not do political things—I would just make music. But you have to react.

Everywhere you go, even more in the Third World, this world is so horrible. You cannot hide yourself—there's a phrase on my record, "A resignation is a permanent suicide."

There's too much misery that could easily be stopped and is not.

You always confront a social problem everywhere you go. What is



Manu Chao

hopeful is that people everywhere you go do not believe in politicians any more.

I don't believe George Bush is the perfect man to rule the biggest country in the world.

He is very dangerous. He doesn't respect anything like social or environmental prob-

lems. It all comes from the craziness of the economy.

I like the page of *Socialist Worker* that says Bush is a madman planning to kill again in Iraq.

WHERE DO you think musicians fit into the movement?

MUSICIANS HAVE a responsibility because

they can have access to the microphone. We have access to the media—whether that is official or independent media.

That is a big chance—a lot of people cannot do it. The musician has to earn money and show another way out.

The only revolution I believe in is the revolution in the neighbourhood.

It is the only place where we can change things.

At the level of the state we can demonstrate as much as we like, but unless it is really massive we cannot change anything.

But in the neighbourhoods we can change minds and bring different cultures together. I believe in that.

WHEN YOU'RE travelling do you try to make contact with the different struggles?

AT FIRST we used to be interested and go to see what happened. But now people come to us.

When we are in a town people come and say, "Hey Manu, there's a strike—can you come?"

There are so many problems and strikes that I cannot say yes to everybody.

If you go to Argentina the schedule is impossible.

You have to choose. It's terrible.

film

Less than the sum of its parts

THE mathematician John Nash—played by Russell Crowe in the new Ron Howard film *A Beautiful Mind*—was sort of a socialist.

Sort of... He won the Nobel Prize for Economic Science in 1994 for a "game theory".

In it he proved mathematically that collective action is a far superior method of problem solving than individuals working by themselves.

This is exactly how socialists see the world and the society we would like to see, where the co-operation and making economic decisions in everyone's interest replaces the capitalist mantra that "greed is good".

But you wouldn't really get this from the film which is quite good, but sentimental.

Howard, who previously directed *Apollo 13* and *Ransom* does an OK job.

The issue of Nash's struggle with mental illness (he was a paranoid schizophrenic) is handled with sensitivity.

The triangle of his genius, mental problems and good old fashioned love vie for his mind.

Ed Harris pops up as a shadowy military spook just to throw some more fuel on his already fragile psyche.

The highlight of the film is its acting.

Crowe makes this film. He is brilliant.

Ed Harris and Jennifer Connolly also put in good performances.

Crowe and Connolly are

worth their Oscar nominations (the film has been nominated for eight, including best picture and best director), but much of this is hype.

A Beautiful Mind is a Hollywood blockbuster. His story is told in near legendary format.

The cringe making sentimentality threatens to ruin the impressive performances and the storyline.

For example, Crowe writes on windows so the sun can illuminate his face as he scribbles advanced algebra. I find it hard to believe he didn't use a pen and paper.

Worth seeing, but in the silly season running up to the Oscars, try to avoid the hysteria that is already around the film.

—HUGH O'CONNOR



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 here.

Socialist Worker selects election candidates

Bringing the fightback into the ballot box

Richard Boyd Barrett

(Dun Laoghaire)

RICHARD, Chairperson of the Campaign Against Service Charges, has been a key figure in leading the fight against privatisation and the hated bin-tax in Dun Laoghaire and nationally. He is on the steering committee of the Irish Anti-War Movement and campaigned against the defeated Nice Treaty. Richard is campaigning for:

★**Investment in public transport**

The number 8 bus service to Dalkey was recently axed and there are delays on the DART almost every day. Poor public transport means traffic chaos and more pollution. All this is because the government refuses to properly fund public transport. We need:

- A huge increase in funding and subsidies for public transport.
- Lower fares to encourage people to get out of their cars.
- No privatisation
- Decent pay for public transport workers.

★**Dun Laoghaire and Blackrock baths have been run down so that private developers can grab them.**

There are plans to build more luxury apartments on the Carlisle Pier. The public are pushed out so big business can make huge profits. The baths and pier should be developed as public amenities for young people and families. Richard was a key organiser of the Save Our Baths carnival last year.



Bríd Smith

(Dublin South Central)

Bríd Smith is an active member of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union and lives in Lower Ballyfermot. She is the spokesperson for the Campaign Against the Bin Tax in Dublin and has organised campaigns in Ballyfermot, Drimmagh, Crumlin, Rialto and Inchicore. Bríd has also been centrally involved in building protests against the councillors who voted in this double tax.



As a longtime socialist Bríd has been active in many campaigns including the Housing Action Campaign which resisted evictions in Landsdowne Valley in Drimmagh. Bríd is opposing all efforts to stir up racism in the area and will continue to campaign for full rights for asylum seekers and immigrants in Ireland.

Ritchie Brown

(Dublin North)

Ritchie Browne, a shop steward in FLS Aerospace, has been selected by the Socialist Workers Party as its candidate in the Dublin North Central constituency. He has been a key member of the anti-bin tax campaign in his area and is pledged to continue opposition to this double tax. Ritchie Browne stands for:

A FIGHT FOR DECENT JOBS: Thousands of jobs have been lost in North Dublin. Companies like Gateway made a fortune out of the boom and then slashed their workforce rather than see a reduction in their profits. Socialists oppose the privatisation of Aer Lingus and will encourage resistance to redundancies. They should face severe sanctions unless they ensure that their workforce are fully trained and are offered alternative jobs.

A PROPER FREE HEALTH SERVICE: The staff at Beaumont hospital do a brilliant job – but they are understaffed and under-resourced. We need a children's unit at the hospital to cater for local needs.

AGAINST RACISM: The racists who murdered a young Chinese man in this area are no better than the UDA thugs who have attacked Catholic homes in Northern Ireland. Just like the UDA, they draw comfort from racist remarks which have been made by respectable politicians.



In the coming general election, the main right-wing parties – Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the PDs will face opposition from Labour, Sinn Fein and the Greens.

Labour will go into coalition with the right wing, Sinn Fein would enter a coalition if given the chance and the Green Party has yet to decide whether or not it would form a coalition government.

The politicians who come knocking on your door will promise the earth, but regardless of who forms the next government, we will suffer after the election from attacks on services and wages:

Privatisation: All the main parties are pushing Public Private Partnerships, the latest code word for handing public services over to private sector wreckers.

Service Charges: All the main parties have voted in some form or other for the refuse charges – a double tax on workers instead of taxing wealth.

The Socialist Workers Party is standing a number of candidates to offer an alternative to the politics of conservatism and coalition.

We are standing in six constituencies on a clear platform of opposition. Under no circumstances will we help prop up a government of the bosses.

We will use our campaign to encourage a fightback at a local and national level.

If elected, all our candidates will take the average industrial wage and donate the rest of their TD's salary to grassroots campaigns. To help the election campaign ring (01) 8722682.

Jimmy Kelly

(Waterford)

JIMMY, a resident of Carrigeen Park in Waterford City, is a shop steward in Waterford Crystal and a member of the executive committee of the ATGWU. Jimmy is a leading trade unionist both in Waterford and nationally.

He has taken a prominent part in local action for example, campaigning against water charges and organising solidarity with workers around Ireland and in Britain. He has consistently stood up against racism and helped organise a demonstration against deportation in Tramore. The issues at the centre of Jimmy's campaign are:

★**HEALTH SERVICE**

Jimmy says, "We should salute the efforts of those working in the Health Service who are working with insufficient resources. We must resist moves to introduce the privatisation of the health service." Jimmy is calling for a Radiotherapy Unit and 500 new beds for Waterford Regional Hospital.

★**REJECT RACISM:** There has been a rise in low level racism on the streets here in Ireland, which is fuelled by the totally inadequate policies of this Government. Jimmy will call for an end to direct provision and demand instead the right to work for asylum seekers who should be embraced for the talents, skills and diversity they bring.



Catherine Kennedy

(Wicklow)

Catherine Kennedy, a well known community activist from Oldcourt in Bray, is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for Wicklow. She is prominent in the campaign for a full time fire service and supported the council workers strike against waste privatisation in Bray two years ago.

The fire service in County Wicklow is a disgrace. In Bray alone eight people have died in a decade in fire tragedies and many more have been injured. Seven of those who died came from one working class estate, Oldcourt. Bray is a rapidly growing town of thirty-five thousand people with only a part time fire service. Speedy intervention can save lives.

For a public inquiry into Waste Corruption. No to Privatisation. Millions of pounds have been made by private waste operators through illegal dumping. Catherine will campaign for a full public inquiry into illegal dumping and for the jailing of all those found responsible.



Shay Ryan

(Dublin South East)

Shay Ryan is originally from South Lotts Road, Ringsend and now lives in Ranelagh. He is a care worker with the Irish Wheelchair Association at the Mount St. Day Centre. He is the Dublin South East representative for the campaign against the Bin Tax and is also active in the fight against incineration.

Shay says, "There are hundreds of people on the housing lists across the South East Constituency. Yet large parts of Ringsend and Pearse St have been taken over by private property developers who build luxury apartments and skyscraper office blocks. If elected I will demand:

- Compulsory Purchase of building land to build local authority houses
- No sell-off of public facilities. Rent Controls – Real Tenant Rights.
- Re-open the three hospitals in this constituency.
- The recent floods show the reality of global warming for Dublin. The people of Ringsend and Irishtown deserve full compensation."



SWP activist meetings - all welcome

- **ATHLONE:** Contact 01-872 2682 for details
- **BRAY:** Meets every Thursday at the Mayfair Hotel at 8.00pm
- **BELFAST CENTRAL:** Meets Tuesdays at 8pm in White's Tavern
- **BELFAST SOUTH:** Meets 7pm Tuesdays in Peter Froggatt Centre, Queen's
- **BELFAST WEST:** ring for details
- **BELFAST QUEENS UNIVERSITY:** Wednesdays 4pm, Peter Froggatt Centre
- **CLONAKILTY:** Phone (01) 8722682 afor details
- **CORK:** Meets Mondays at 8pm in Telecom Eireann Club, MacCurtain St
- **DERRY:** Wednesdays at 8pm in Foyle Friend Centre, 32 Great James St.
- **DROGHEDA:** Meets Wednesdays 8:00pm Contact Kevin at for details
- **DUNDALK:** Meets Wednesdays 8pm phone 01-8722682 for details
- **DUN LAOGHAIRE:** Meets every Thursday at 8pm in the Christian Institute
- **DUBLIN ARTANE / FAIRVIEW:** Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in Artane / Beaumont Recreational Centre (opp. Artane Castle)
- **DUBLIN BALLYFERMOT:** Meets Tues 8:30pm in Ruby Finigans Pub
- **DUBLIN CABRA:** Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Aughrim St Parish Hall, 13 Prussia St
- **DUBLIN CENTRAL:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Conways Pub, Parnell St
- **DUBLIN DUNDRUM:** Meets Tuesdays contact for details
- **DUBLIN FINGLAS/BALLYMUN:** Phone Kevin on for details
- **DUBLIN RATHMINES:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm downstairs J O'Connell's (Pub) Sth. Richmond Street Dublin 2.
- **DUBLIN RIALTO:** Meets every Wednesday at 8:30pm St. Andrews Community Centre, SCR
- **DUBLIN SOUTH CITY:** Meets at 8.30pm every Tuesday upstairs Bowes (pub) Fleet Street Dublin 2
- **DUBLIN TALLAGHT:** Meets every Tuesday at 8pm in Jobstown Community Centre
- **DUBLIN DCU:** Meets 2 pm Thursdays in CGO2
- **DUBLIN TCD:** Meets Wednesdays at 1pm contact for details
- **DUBLIN UCD:** meets Wednesdays 1pm contact for details
- **ENNISKILLEN:** Phone 01 - 872 2682 for details
- **GALWAY:** Meets every Wednesday in Currans Hotel, Eyre Square (beside Cuba) 8.30pm
- **LIMERICK:** Phone 01 - 872 2682 for details
- **LEIXLIP/MAYNOOTH:** contact for details
- **SLIGO:** Phone for details
- **TRALEE:** Phone for details
- **WATERFORD:** Meets every Thursday at 8pm in the ATGWU Hall, Keizer St.

Campaign Against the Bin Tax

We won't pay double tax!

SEVENTY FIVE delegates from all over Dublin city attended a conference last Saturday 9th March to organise a mass campaign of non-payment of the bin charges.

The Dublin Campaign Against the Bin Tax was formally launched and the meeting was addressed by anti-bin tax groups from all over Ireland.

The Dublin campaign is demanding the abolition of the unjust bin charges. According to Brid Smith from Ballyfermot, spokesperson for the campaign, "These charges are an unjust form of double taxation on PAYE workers who already shoulder the bulk of taxation in this country."

A mass non-payment campaign is organised in nearly all working estates and has led to over 50% of householders refusing to pay any of their bin charges. 25% have part-paid the charges and another 25% have received waivers."

Joe Higgins, TD for the

Socialist Party told the conference of a successful high court injunction in the Fingal area to force the council to collect household rubbish even where residents have not paid.

According to Joe Higgins, "Over 2,000 letters of protest have already been received by Fingal Council in response to the attempt to impose bin taxes."

"We need to turn up the heat on the political parties in the run-up to the general election and get them to commit to the abolition of bin charges."

Thousands of householders from all over Dublin joined the campaign which will be defending any residents taken to the courts for refusal to pay the charges.

The campaign will also mount major protests outside any court that attempts to charge residents for non-payment.

The conference was addressed by delegates from anti-bin tax campaigns in Drogheda, Cork and Waterford. Aine Suttle from Gal-

way explained to the delegates how the governments proposals to build nine incinerators all over Ireland would create massive environmental problems and urged the campaign to link up with anti-incineration groups which are trying to stop the building of incinerators.

Condemned

The closure of the Irish Glass Bottle Company in Ringsend in Dublin was condemned and the conference called on the Government to nationalise the only glass recycling plant in the country.

According to Shay Ryan whose is a candidate in South Dublin for the Socialist Workers Party, "This shows the lip service being paid to re-cycling."

"If we are serious about cleaning up the environment then we need to save this plant in Ringsend and the jobs that go with it."

Aine Suttle explained how "Galway has begun to seriously clean up its act. In

just eight months we have managed to reduce the problem of dumping by recycling just over 65% of total domestic waste.

"This is a major achievement and shows how a commitment to recycling is the way forward and the building of incinerators."

Over 12 candidates in nearly every Dublin Constituency were endorsed by the conference as anti-bin tax candidates and are committed to holding a joint press conference to announce plans to oppose the tax, including a national demonstration on Dail Eireann.

Contact Brid Smith, PRO of the Campaign Against the Bin Tax at 087-9090166 or (01) 6237657

Teachers

Teachers defy government intimidation

THE ASTI withdrawal from supervision and substitution duties has remained solid. The decision to allow outside staff into schools without interference by ASTI members has meant that schools have not closed because of lack of cover.

It is important to point out that other unionised staff in schools (like IMPACT school secretaries), despite being approached in many cases, have refused to take on this work.

The government and media have tried to present the failure of the ASTI to accept a €34 per hour offer as an example of inflexibility and greed on the part of secondary teachers.

Postal workers

POSTAL WORKERS across the UK are starting a national campaign against privatisation with a

Nurses

Action to save the health service

AS WE go to press, casualty nurses in the INO are balloting for industrial action.

The strike call is in protest at chronic congestion in casualty units that is putting patients' lives at risk and is causing huge stress to nurses.

Admissions are being left in casualty wards because there are no beds available on wards. In turn, this leaves incoming emergency patients on trolleys and chairs. St. James' Hospital regularly has thirty patients per night without a bed.

This situation is made worse by a lack of staff and

medical facilities.

The INO is calling on the Department of Health to reduce, or where necessary cancel, "elective" or non-emergency admissions.

This would result in longer waiting lists which doesn't look good for the Department. And it would look bad for Fianna Fail, in an election year coming after the launch of the much-hyped Strategy Statement.

In the long term, the only solution is a major investment of funds into buildings, facilities and wages to attract people into the profession.

The INO has been warning the government of the crisis in casualty units for

two years and the situation has deteriorated over that period.

The crisis is impacting throughout the hospitals, from casualty to theatre, yet only casualty nurses are being balloted for action.

A nurse in St. James' believes there is a mood among other nursing staff to support the casualty staff, if only they were asked.

"If the rolling action goes ahead and the pressure increases, things could get really interesting."

"It could escalate into all-out action and I think the public would support that. After all, it's their health service on the line."

Ardagh Glass closure

'This is nothing but greed'

THE ANNOUNCEMENT that Ardagh Glass is to close its plant in Ringsend is a disaster for 350 workers and their families. The plant, better known under its old name of Irish Glass Bottles, is a major employer in the area.

The company is trying to blame workers' refusal to accept drastic changes in work practices. In fact workers were in talks with the company but the company then pulled the plug by announcing the closure.

According to a shop steward, "We are utterly disgusted at the announcement. The newspapers knew before the workers who may lose their jobs."

"This decision was announced in the middle of negotiations between the com-

pany and the union.

"During those negotiations they never indicated what might happen if the negotiations failed."

"This indicates that the company never had any intention of seriously talking and had already taken the decision to close the plant earlier in the year."

"There is no reasonable excuse for the company's decision to close the plant."

This is nothing but greed on the part of the company. The Ardagh group, which took over the plant from Irish Glass Bottle, is profitable. They are sacrificing the livelihoods of 350 people just so they can increase the profits of the group as a whole.

Since taking over the plant Ardagh had begun running it down. The plant has little to no maintenance, machines have been allowed by management to fall into disrepair.

Ardagh Glass recycles glass bottles from bottle banks all over the country. Its closure will be a major blow the amount of recycling in the country.

The glass produced in the plant is needed more than ever. Every year millions of tonnes of plastic bottles that cannot be recycled have to be dumped in landfill.

If the government were serious about encouraging recycling they would force drinks companies to use recyclable glass. The Irish government now has an opportunity to save 350 jobs and show their commitment to re-cycling and waste prevention.

Instead of backing a plant that helps the environment they are intent on building a dangerous waste incinerator in Ringsend.

United action by the unions can force the government to nationalise the glass plant.

Residents

The money the residents are looking for the new centre is supposed to come from John O'Donoghue's Department for Justice, Equality and Law reform and Bobby Molloy's and Noel Dempsey's Department of the Environment.

The residents also believe Michael Martin's

Dun Laoghaire residents protest

RESIDENTS of Mounthown, Fitzgerald Park and Meadowslands in Dun Laoghaire held a series of protests to demand government funding for a planned new resource centre in the area.

The existing resource centre is due to be demolished as part of the housing regeneration project and the government is supposed to provide funding for a new centre.

The residents have commissioned plans for a state of the art community resource centre which would provide important services to the community such as a crèche, pre-school, study support and home work study, youth

activities, adult education, staying school programme, outreach, an estate forum and drop in centre.

However, the government refuses to release the money demanding that the residents scale down the cost of their plans.

Quite rightly, the residents are refusing to do this. The old Mounthown complex was an area of high deprivation, which the residents fought for years to have re-developed.

Now that redevelopment is underway they want to ensure that the new housing is not left without proper services as so often happens in areas where public housing is built.

According to Marian White one of the spokespeople for the residents,

"The government just held a referendum where they went on about the right to life."

"But the right to life does not end at birth."

"Our children haven't been given equal rights. They have to suffer Dickensian, sub-standard conditions in the existing resource centre and only the goodwill of the community keeps it going."

In Education Department should also contribute because of the substantial contribution the resource centre will make to the education of young people in the area.

The residents decided to mount protests after lobbying the government Departments and local FF TD's.

They held protests outside Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown Co. Council offices, the Department of the Environment and the Dail.

The residents are very angry that a government that seems to have plenty of money for its own pet projects but none for things that people really need.

"How can Minister McDavid give a huge contract to a shelf company for Campus Ireland, yet our centre which is

auditable and has charity status is not given the money it needs?"

"We are only looking for a small piece of the pie. We are looking for what is ours."

Richard Boyd Barrett, general election candidate for the Socialist Workers Party in Dun Laoghaire also pledged his full support for the residents' campaign.

"This government only seems to care about the wealthy and big business."

"They give them millions in tax breaks and subsidies but desperately needed local and public services are ignored or cut."

"The Mounthown residents are right to take to the streets to fight for their centre. It's the only way we will get the services we need."

productivity, for example their implementation of new subjects and new curricula, their reluctance to concede this is understandable.

The non-pensionability aspect of the deal is of significance to every trade unionist in the country.

It is clear that the government is moving in the direction of once-off lump sum pay increases and the report of the benchmarking body will very likely see awards of this type being encouraged. If ASTI members manage to resist it will make it easier to resist the onslaught.

In terms of the ASTI stance on benchmarking there is a growing feeling amongst many that they will be vindicated. A document prepared by five members of the executive outlining 13 pitfalls of benchmarking

will be discussed at a CEC meeting after the ASTI congress.

The leadership of the union originally tried to keep it off the agenda but have been forced to reverse the decision.

Right wing economist Moore McDowell has recently said that he believes, having examined budgetary projections on teachers pay, that no more than a 10% increase has been allowed for.

While the TUI and INTO are tied into benchmarking it will hard for the leadership to sell a lousy deal to the membership. With the anti benchmarking activist Paddy Healy recently elected TUI vice president, the government could be facing a more united teaching profession next time round.

remaining workers could be working for privatised companies who will try to cut our wages, increase our working hours and introduce even greater flexibility.

The Blair government is worried about resistance to privatisation. The government-appointed post regulator told the *Financial Times*, "I don't think we are going to stand absolutely rigid if we are presented with good reasons for changing our minds".

But the signs are that at best the privatisation plans will be introduced over a longer period, not dumped completely. That is not enough.

As the chief executive of one of the private firms looking to take over the post said: "If the timing was pushed back it would be an irritant, but it would not be the end of the world. We are in a marathon, not a sprint."

A strike against post office privatisation would be very popular. A survey conducted by the GMB found that 88 percent of the public are against privatisation.

If postal workers fight, the issue could become a deep political crisis for the government.

Socialist Worker

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For a Workers' Republic and International S

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Stop Israel's war on the innocent

JUSTICE FOR PALESTINIANS



Family members pray around the body of Nida al-Aza, a 15-year-old Palestinian girl shot and killed on Saturday in the Azza refugee camp in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, during her funeral in Bethlehem Sunday, March 10, 2002. According to Palestinian witnesses, al-Aza was shot by a single bullet while standing in front of her home during a lull in fighting.

CHILDREN RIPPED apart by tank shells as they play. Women shot dead by army snipers in their own homes. Houses smashed to rubble by F-16 fighter jets. A doctor deliberately shot dead in his own ambulance as he rushes to help the injured.

This is the reality of Ariel Sharon's massacre of Palestinian civilians. It is the reality that the media try to ignore.

They concentrate on reporting only the Israeli casualties.

For every Israeli killed in the intifada, four Palestinians have died. And the Palestinians have been suffering at the hands of Israel for 50 years. The Israelis and the Palestinians are not two tribes at war. The Palestinians are resisting the occupation of their own country. Sharon has declared war on all Palestinian men, women and children. Israel ignored the possibility of a peace plan for the region. With tanks and Apache helicopters, it steamed into the Batala and Jenin refugee camps.

The UN reported 30 Palestinians killed in the Batala camp alone, including three girls under ten, and hundreds injured. The refugee camps are at the heart of the Palestinian struggle. They are filthy, poverty-stricken slums. In Batala 20,000 people are crammed into just one square mile.

They were driven out of their homes in 1948 when Israeli militants used violence and terror to grab 77 percent of Palestine. Four fifths of the Arab population were driven out of

Palestine.

They were forced into exile in surrounding countries. Today, more than 50 years later, millions of Palestinians are still living in exile.

More Palestinians came under Israeli occupation in 1967. Armed to the teeth by the US, Israel seized Gaza, the West Bank and the Golan Heights.

Israel has since built thousands of militarised settlements, even in areas where the Palestinians are supposed to have some control. Funerals of murdered relatives and friends, the experience of military aggression, and crushing poverty are the everyday reality for the Palestinians.

Might

Life is so appalling that more and more of them are prepared to risk their lives in the desperate struggle against Israel's military might. Sharon wants the Palestinians to "suffer heavy losses". He wants to crush Palestinian resistance. Sharon's popularity is plummeting inside Israel. His only answer is to step up the repression, and draw more and more people into the cycle of killing and revenge.

In the days following the Batala attack Israeli forces murdered another 40 Palestinians.

Without justice for Palestine there is no possible solution to the crisis. Everyone who wants peace and an end to all the killing should demand as an absolute minimum the return of all the Occupied Territories, that the US stops arming Israel, and that the Palestinians are given the full right of return to the areas where they were driven from.