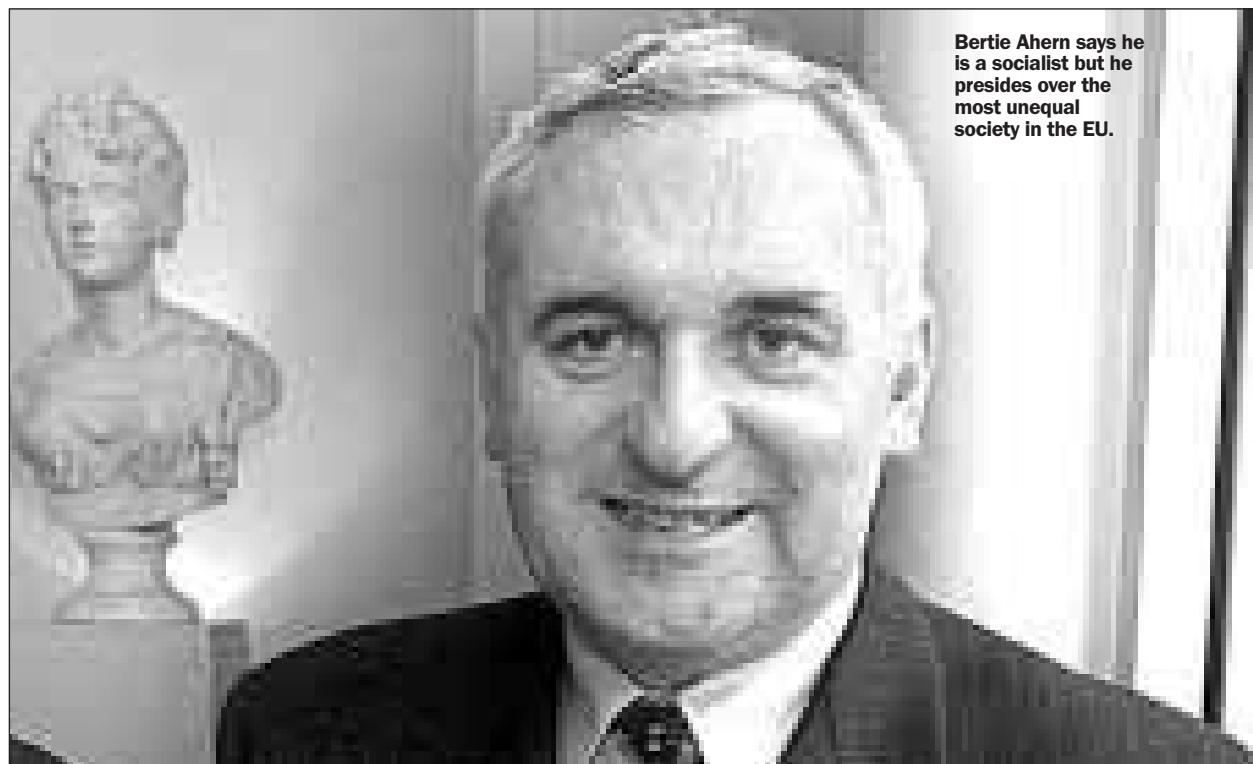


# Socialist Worker

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## BERTIE'S NO SOCIALIST



Bertie Ahern says he is a socialist but he presides over the most unequal society in the EU.

# GET THE REAL THING

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WHAT IS Bertie Ahern playing at?

He says he is a socialist but he presides over the most unequal society in the EU.

Irish workers get less holiday than their counterparts elsewhere; only half are covered by a pension plan; and a third are earning less than €20,000 a year.

If Bertie Ahern is the workers' friend, then turkeys should be celebrating Christmas.

Since the Celtic Tiger era, approximately 10 percent of the national income has been transferred from wage earners, pensioners and social security recipients to those who live off dividends and property.

So how could Ahern claim to be promoting equality?

Ahern is deeply worried that Fianna Fail is losing its working class base. Its vote shrunk by nearly 10 percent at the last local elections, principally in urban manual working class areas.

Ahern knows that some socialist ideas are popular. Thousands agree that 'people should come before profit'. They support the socialists who have fought against bin charges. They are opposed to the privatization of state services.

This is why he is trying to dress himself in new caring rhetoric. He knows that Sinn Fein have made gains by talking left—and he is running to catch up.

It is a familiar tactic. In the 1980s, Charlie Haughey denounced monetarist economics (the term used for neo-liberalism' then) claiming that they would cause 'widespread alienation and social unrest'. He supported calls for social partnership when employers had withdrawn from the arrangements.

He promised that FF would not privatise any semi state industry. And he even set up a Fianna Fail Trade Union Committee to cultivate closer relations with the union leaders.

At one level it was meaningless. We now know that Haughey was receiving €20,000 a week in bribes to cut taxes for the wealthy.

But at another level it has

some effect. The trade union leaders argued that FF could be shifted in a 'progressive' direction and would offer protection against the New Right.

It is vital that no such illusions emerge again.

Fianna Fail is a right wing pro-business party to its very core. It does not shift left—it only plays with different images when it suits.

However, there are already signs that FF's new rhetoric has led to a 2 percent increase in the polls. The main reason, however, for this is that Labour, the Greens and Sinn Fein do not appear as particularly left wing. They are not able to challenge FF's fake caring image—by posing a real alternative of full blooded socialism.

Look at how Labour has driven through an increase in bin charges on Dublin City Council. They forged an alliance with Fine Gael rather than other left parties and independents and now working people pay the price with increased charges.

Sinn Fein, by contrast, is about to enter a coalition arrangement with the arch bigot Ian Paisley.

While this may be interpreted by some as an effort to overcome sectarian division, the reality is that the former arch rivals will implement a neo-liberal agenda. Already Sinn Fein refuses to call for the withholding of water charges in the North.

There are exciting prospects for a real left.

We have entered a period where there are not huge demonstrations—but where nevertheless the audience for socialist ideas is growing.

There is an openness in every area of Irish life to criticism of neo-liberalism.

We need real socialist organization. One that links the struggles against war, privatization and racism to a strategy to change the system itself.

The Socialist Workers Party wants to see unity between socialists—so we create such a strong party.

In the meantime, we urge our supporters to get involved with our party so that we can strengthen the struggle against Ahern and Bush in the coming year.

# Labour betrays anti bin tax campaign

DUBLIN CITY Council has voted to increase the bin charges by a huge 74 per cent.

If the Labour Party had stood with Sinn Fein and the Independents, they could have defeated the budget which contained the charges. Yet the Labour Party joined up with the right wing parties to drive through these charges.

On Monday night November 29th over 250 people protested at the City Hall for the crucial estimates vote. The protest was called by the Dublin Anti Bin Tax Campaign.

The vote of 30 to 15 by the City Councillors was a disgrace.

**It was a historic Labour Party betrayal.**

Labour leader on Dublin City Council Kevin Humphries called for a break of 15 minutes during the council meeting.

This turned into an hour long break in which huge pressure was put on Labour and Fine Gael councillors to vote for the Estimates and a deal was out worked with FF. The vote was taken in a mass of confusion.

The same Kevin Humphries had turned up to a Ringsend meeting against the charges just one week previously.

He refused to tell the meeting how he would vote – despite repeated questioning.

Lord mayor, Michael Conaghan called it as 30 to 15.

When the three councillors in the Independent group stood to demand a roll call vote, not one other councillor stood with them (5 is needed).

A roll call vote would have clarified exactly who voted what way.

The manner in which it was carried suited all the parties



■ Anti bin tax campaigners: The fight goes on

ties concerned, including Sinn Fein.

The last time, no roll call vote taken was when the charges were originally brought in.

It will be the poorer sections of people who will suffer the most from the charges.

Families with babies, sick relatives, incontinent aged people will inevitably have to make more use of the service. Instead of their needs being taken into account, they will now be heavily penalised.

No one should believe assurances that the poor will be looked after by the waiver scheme.

The City Manager recently told unions that he intends

to cut back on the numbers on waivers.

And only this week in Limerick the City Manager was advised by the Attorney General that the waiver scheme should not apply in any case where the service has been privatised.

Labour councillors claimed that they had to bring in the charges or else the council would be abolished.

But they could have used their positions to mobilise tens of thousands of working class people onto the streets to defend local democracy.

They could have argued that the alternative to stealth taxes was to tax the rich.

But this would have

meant breaking from an alliance with Fine Gael – and this is something Pat Rabbitte's New Labour will not do.

In the next few weeks, local anti bin tax campaigns need to organise mass meetings in their communities.

They need to spell the depths of the historic betrayal but they also need to discuss a strategy for facing down the threats of disruption to this service.

They need to look to how mass direct action can halt this unjust double tax.

## DUN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN PROTESTS PLANNED

DUN LAOGHAIRE Rathdown Council are introducing a Pay By Weight system from Jan 1st 2005. Letters threatening non-collection and court action have been sent out to thousands of householders in the last few weeks.

As the first local authority in Dublin to introduce bin charges, campaigners in this area are facing very heavy arrears of up to 1200 euro. But at recent packed public meetings of the campaign local communities vowed to continue to fight the council.

They have organised for a huge protest to take place outside the town hall in Dun Laoghaire on Monday 13

December at 7pm to send a message to the newly elected councillors that they will continue a campaign of civil disobedience and non-payment.

Like the people of Dublin City, the people of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown are facing massive increases in charges with the introduction of Pay By Weight.

And to add insult to injury the Council recently closed down the only remaining Bring Centre in the town of Dun Laoghaire.

The nearest location for re-cycling is in Ballyogan which is completely inaccessible to thousands of workers and their families.

## Money from waste

MONICA LEECH earned €303,000 from a government contract to run the 'Waste against Waste' publicity campaign when Martin Cullen was Minister for the Environment.

Cullen has many ties with the business world in Waterford and received higher amount of political donations of anyone in the Dail.

Ms Leech is involved in the Chamber of Commerce circuit in the town and recently organised a fund raiser for Cullen. Over 200 guests paid €250 a head to build up Cullen's election coffers.

By pure co-incidence, Ms Leech, also sat on the interview panel that awarded a €4.7 million electronic voting publicity contract to so called 'friends of Fianna Fail'

She was a member of the tendering group which granted the contract to a consortium headed by former Fianna Fail general secretary Martin Macken and former Taoiseach advisor Jackie Gallagher.

Electronic voting turned out to be a wasteful fiasco.

## Mary Kelly sentenced over anti war protest

ANTI-WAR campaigner, Mary Kelly, received a two year suspended sentence for disabling a US war plane with an axe.

She was also given an additional one year suspended sentence for entering Shannon airport illegally.

The strength of anti-war feeling meant that the state did not have the confidence to send

her to jail.

Instead they gave her suspended sentence and she now joins nearly thirty other people who have been banned from the vicinity of Shannon airport.

The suspended sentence is an of course outrage and an insult to the thousands who joined anti-war protests.

Mary Kelly had

every right to stop a US plane taking part in a war that led to the murder of thousands of Iraqi's

The Irish government should have been in the dock—not Mary Kelly.

They have broken their own laws that require them to search foreign aircraft to ensure they are not carrying munitions.



Mary Kelly

Photo: Redjade



## COWEN'S BUDGET 2004

# Caring and sharing for the rich

By RORY HEARNE

RTE presenter Sharon Ni Bheolan put it to Mary Harney at the nine o'clock news on Budget Day - "Isn't this a socialist budget? Isn't this an about turn for the government?"

Swallowing the government's spin RTE once again showed their lack of analysis and criticism.

Harney's answer was initially truthful, stating that "yes the perceptions, nuances and language are different but the programme is still the same".

She then put forward the myth the government are desperately trying to get people to believe, "this government has always put the marginalized at the centre of our agenda."

Through the unprecedented wealth created in this country standards of living have improved immeasurably for the vast majority".

Behind the spin of Ahern, Cowen and Harney is the reality that for the majority of people, the crumbs we are thrown from the Celtic Tiger are taken back from us in bin charges, A & E charges, bus fares, ESB bills etc while the wealthy feast from tax-breaks, tax loop-holes, a 12.5% corporation tax rate and Capital Gains Tax of 20%.

This budget did nothing to address the carers allowance (there are at least 150,000 carers with no payment or support), childcare expenses, social housing, the health crisis and over-crowded class-rooms.

Unfortunately the so-called opposition in the form of the Labour Party and Fine Gael which are decrying the stealth taxes are the very ones who just voted for the Bin Charges in Dublin City Council. Labour seem eager to show Fianna Fail that the government are not the only ones who break election promises.

Real socialists campaign against stealth taxes and for taxing the rich in order to put substantial investment in housing, health and other public services that will meet the needs of people. It was never more clear that an alternative is urgently needed.

## Bertie's Socialist Budget: Leaving the rich alone to amass their wealth

This budget did nothing to address the fundamental inequalities that lie at the heart of Celtic Tiger Ireland.

The bottom 10% of income earners have only 3.4% of all disposable income while the top 10% have 25%.

Ireland has the highest proportion of low paid full-time workers in the OECD (over 50% earn less than the average industrial wage).

## Corporation tax rate of 12.5% - NO CHANGE

Companies and wealthy individuals benefiting from tax reliefs and incentives costing over €10.7 bn per year e.g. Tax relief on heritage donations, relief on petrol used on private aircraft, on urban renewal schemes, landlords relief and film investment - NO CHANGE

## ...while the low paid suffer...

While those on the minimum wage of €273 have been taken out of the tax bracket, they will fall into it again next April when the minimum wage increases.

Mandate union's General Secretary Designate, Mr John



Brian Cowen

Douglas, warned that "any benefit from the €230 increase in tax credits would be of little long term value as it will be eroded by stealth taxes, such as the increases in service charges, charges for visits to accident and emergency wards, bus and rail fares, and gas and electricity prices.

"It also needs to be borne in mind that while Ireland is the 12th most prosperous country in the world, a growing number of the country's workforce are living below the poverty line, and this Budget has still only done a little to help."

## Health hidden from view in the budget as Harney plans privatisation

Health measures in the Budget will do nothing to alleviate the chronic problems including hospital waiting lists, access to medical cards, and nursing shortages.

The Irish Nurses Organisation

(INO), also said it was disappointed and frustrated at the failure of the Budget to address the shortage of nurses and midwives.

## Medical Cards - the facts -

70,000 card holders have lost eligibility since 2002. The 200,000 new cards don't cover the cost of prescription drugs or overnight stays in hospitals.

The increases in a number of social welfare payments in the Budget has not been accompanied by any reciprocal change in the threshold for entitlement to a medical card.

This will mean that many people in receipt of social welfare benefit will find the increases they receive disqualify them from a medical card.

## The A&E Crisis - the facts -

Scandalously, the budget left in place the increase to €55 for an A&E visit

and gave no extra resources to hospitals for improvements in A&E.

Mary Harney, however, proudly announced the construction of Ireland's first private hospital that will provide (and profit from) emergency care.

The company operating the Hospital are Triad Hospitals Inc. which has 250 hospitals in the US and a turnover in excess of €4.2bn.

Mary Harney has given the private company their first venture opportunity outside the US signalling clearly that she is more concerned for the profit opportunities of private companies than the hundreds of patients lying in trolleys in public hospitals across the country.

## Class room overcrowding - NO CHANGE

Under the programme for government FF and the PD said that they would ensure that children under nine

would not be in a class of over twenty pupils.

In order for the Department to implement such a policy they would need an extra 2,622 teachers. No extra allocation has been given to the teacher training colleges to provide such numbers.

Perhaps the Department is planning to use their friends in the private Hibernia college to help them out, just like Harney is doing with her friends in the private health industry.

There was nothing in the Budget on school buildings, nothing on improving access to education for the less well off, nothing on funding for repair and maintenance of classrooms.

The Department's plans under a new system of resources for special needs mean that schools in disadvantaged areas will lose! The estimates allocation of €67m to special education is now to be divided between both secondary and primary level.

The qualifying period for the Back to Education Allowance was reduced from 15 to 12 months. This still leaves the qualifying period double what it was before the Government introduced its Savage 16 welfare cuts last year.

## Housing

Threshold insists that a minimum of 10,000 units must be provided to make any serious inroads into the housing waiting lists (over 48,000 families are on the list).

The reality is that 85% of households on housing waiting lists have incomes of under €15,000 a year and are depending on this government to alleviate their situation.

Yet the government announced no new social housing initiatives. Their existing Part V initiative in place since 2002 has yielded a mere 350 units of social housing!

## Quotes on the Budget

### Aisling Hayden, Threshold said:

"All the talk in the world about the quality of life in Ireland won't put a roof over the heads of people in need"

**Christian Aid** said "The Budget broke the Government's latest promise on overseas aid.

"The aid agency said that the Government's overseas aid budget will not reach 0.5 per cent of GNP in 2007, as promised by the Minister of Finance when he made his Estimates speech less than two weeks ago".

**The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland (ICAI)** said the Budget was "particularly conservative" in fiscal terms."

We welcome the fact that the Minister has been able to deploy additional resources in the areas of income tax relief and additional social spending without penalising enterprise and business"

### Brian Cowen, Minister for Finance

"We must continue to compete to attract foreign direct investment. Economic development is crucial to our future well being."

The Budget "frees those on the minimum wage from income tax and seeks to reinforce the equity of the tax system".

## COMMENT

# EU Constitution enshrines neo-liberalism

By **BRENDAN YOUNG**Democracy and Public Service  
dapse@eircom.net

SINCE THE Treaty of Rome was signed in 1958, the central aim of those driving European integration has been the establishment of a common market across the countries of Europe.

This was first established in manufactured goods; then financial services; and now the EU constitution contains a framework to allow trade in all public services, including health and education.

This trade in public services – requiring full or part privatisation – would not only be within the EU but also be open to international bidders through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

The aim of the GATS is to open all services to international competition. Regulations are seen as barriers to free trade which must be removed.

Public subsidies must be extended to all service operators or eliminated. Once GATS deals are made, there is no way out.

Opening health and education to trade in the GATS would bring in transnational companies to provide them instead of the state.

These companies either part-fund a service in return for advertising, cherry-pick the profitable parts, restrict the service, increase charges, or lower wages.

Their priority is to make a profit, not the quality or the access to a service.

The new EU Constitution would make it easier for the European Commission to make GATS deals in Health, Education and Cultural & Audio-visual services.

This is because the new Common Commercial Policy in the Constitution would establish Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) as the usual way decisions are made by the Council of Ministers on international trade agreements in **all** public services.

The unrestricted power of veto that Member States have at present on trade agreements in health, education, cultural & audio-visual services would go.

Under the new Common Commercial Policy, unanimous agreement in the Council of Ministers would only be necessary when a deal on health or education could be shown to 'risk seriously disturbing the national organisation of such services and prejudicing the responsibility of Member States to deliver them'.

What this means is not defined, so it would be the European Commission that decides what it means.

The Commission, and Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson, want more liberalization in the GATS.

A State that wanted to keep its services out of the GATS would have to challenge the Commission – for the right to say no – in the European Court of Justice, and might lose.

So unless a GATS deal could be shown to threaten the break-up of a nation-wide service, QMV would apply. 15 of the 25 states, representing 65% of the EU population, could outvote the rest.

This is all made worse by the continued secrecy of EU trade talks. The Article 133 Committee, which draws up the EU list of 'offers' for the GATS, meets behind closed doors. No detailed information is published until after the final deal has been voted on by the Council of Ministers.

By this time it is too late to seriously challenge a deal. So neither citizens nor TDs know what the government is doing.

Putting a neo-liberal framework for public services into EU constitutional law is a bad idea – future governments cannot easily change it.

Anybody who supports high quality public services being available to all, whatever their income, should campaign to oppose this attack on democracy and neo-liberal drive of the EU Constitution.

## AFTER CITIZENSHIP REFERENDUM:

# Racism on the rise



SINCE MAY 2001 the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), an organisation funded by the government, has published six-monthly reports of incidents related to racism in Ireland.

The most recent report, which covers May to October 2004 shows a doubling of the level of reported racist incidents relating to travellers, refugees and asylum seekers and migrants in the last six months.

This disturbing report shows that since the referendum on citizenship, there has been a sharp increase in racist attacks.

Between May 2001 and April 2004 there has been an average of 40 racist incidents reported to the NCCRI (aside from the May-October 2002 period with 67 incidents) but the last six months have seen an almost doubling of that number to 70 incidents.

The incidents range from racist abuse and harassment to serious assaults.

A South African national had an argument with her work colleague in a Dublin city centre canteen and was subjected to racial verbal abuse.

Later on she saw an offensive note pinned to the staff notice board that she knew was meant for her.

The next day she was laid off.

An Iraqi Muslim suffered damage to her property which she considered to be an Islamophobic attack as the culprit had scraped the words "Paki shit" onto her car.

A Pakistani woman and her child were at home when people tried to break into her apartment. She fled to the street.

The two men who tried to gain entry to her apartment followed her and hurled racist comments and threats at her.

One of the men struck her in the face. The woman fears for her life and the life of her child.

A couple of nights after the referendum a Zimbabwean woman was walking along the street when a group of males shouted at her and asked her if she was starting to pack her bags for home.

West Dublin had become so unsafe for immigrants due to intimidation and attacks that the Northern Area Health Board had to intervene and relocate families that were experiencing attacks or

harassment on a daily basis.

The report notes that there is a significant under-reporting of incidents. This is not surprising given the often racist attitude of Gardai.

For example, the report highlights the case of a Nigerian man who went to a Dublin police station to apply for inclusion on the register of electors.

He claims that he was subjected to racist verbal abuse and humiliated by one of the Garda present and the officer retained his GNIB card.

## ORGANISE TO RESPOND

**SINCE THE referendum some anti-racist campaigners and immigrants have despaired that the Irish have become a nation of irreversible racists.**

**Yet this report clearly shows that the rise in racism is a response to politicians' scape-goating immigrants and spreading racist myths at election time.**

**Anger is rising among those on social housing queues, hospital trolleys, and low wages and so on.**

**Many government TDs and parts of the media are pointing the blame at immigrants.**

**Yet immigrants are here to stay. In fact another 20,000 immigrants are needed to fill jobs in the health and service industry in Ireland over the next few years.**

**Anti-racists need to respond by pointing out that the chronic under**

**funding of public services by the government and the profit-taking by private companies are the causes of over crowded hospitals and low wages.**

**Anti-racists also need to respond to racist attacks and graffiti etc by organising public protests/meetings/ paintings locally to show that the majority of people in your area are anti-racist.**

**The recently launched Civil Right Movement of Ireland represents a vital opportunity to launch a united campaign to put racists on the back-foot and force the government to stop deportations and address the work permit issue.**

■ To view the NCCRI report-  
[www.nccri.com/publications.html](http://www.nccri.com/publications.html)  
■ To contact the Civil Rights Movement of Ireland contact 086 3152597

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# Ukraine: Democracy or rule by Oligarchs

SINCE THE break up of the USSR in 1991 the Ukraine has been dominated by a tiny but fabulously wealthy political and economic elite, known as oligarchs.

Many came to prominence in the old regime as members of the ruling Communist Party.

They used their power to enrich themselves when the old state-run industries were opened up to the market. Most have been accused of corruption and involvement with criminal gangs.

**Leonid Kuchma**, the outgoing president was part of the old Communist Party elite before 1991, holding key managerial positions. He went on to become prime minister of the Ukraine in 1992 and president in 1994. He has been accused of involvement in the murder of journalist Georgiy Gongadze.

**Viktor Yanukovich**, the prime minister of the Ukraine since 2002, was initially declared the winner in the recent presidential battle.

His political base is in the Russian-dominated east of the country, especially the key industrial city of Donbas, and he is seen as the pro-Moscow candidate for the presidency. He is closely linked to the powerful "Donetsky clan", which includes Rinat Akhmetov, Ukraine's richest oligarch.

He is widely believed to be involved in corruption and organised crime.

The opposition's Presidential candidate was **Viktor Yushchenko**. He is another former prime minister - also under Kuchma.

Most of his support came from the Ukrainian-speaking west of the country and he is seen as the pro-Washington and pro-EU candidate in the presidential election.

He is a former head of the Ukrainian state bank where he survived a corruption scandal.

His key ally is deputy prime minister **Yulia Tymoshenko**—a billionaire who managed to accumulate her fortune incredibly rapidly through a series of shady deals in the energy industry.

She is said to own 20 per cent of Ukraine's gross national product. In 2001 she spent a month in prison on corruption charges.

Yushchenko and his allies have also defended papers that have published anti-Semitic articles.

Protestors in Kiev



## Anger at election result

AS SOON as the election result was declared, anger exploded onto the streets of the Ukraine.

Most of the protesters in the capital, Kiev, believe the election was unfair and want to see Yushchenko in power.

**DAVE CROUCH** attended the demonstrations and spoke to *Socialist Worker* from Kiev about the movement and the challenges it faces.

'IN KIEV, the square was a sea of orange pro-Yushchenko flags. The slogans are: "There's loads of us and we're invincible!", "the gang must go". There was a good mood. People were smiling and happy.

'Protesters went to demonstrations armed with flowers to give to the police.

The political elite has been talking up the possibility of violence, but those on the streets have taken it on themselves to avoid violence. So the protesters tried to win over Yanukovich's supporters.

'The feeling in the east and south of the Ukraine was very different from the mood in Kiev and in the west of the country.

On the previous Saturday, I was in the Donbas mining area in the east of the country. There was a mass

meeting of around 150,000 people - although there was none of the carnival feeling that you find in Kiev.

'The people there were violently opposed to what was happening in the west. They called the people on the streets supporting Yushchenko terrorists and fascists.

**Yushchenko is part of the oligarchy that benefited while the people were driven into poverty. So why do people support him?**

WHEN YOU talk to Yushchenko supporters there's a kind of leap of faith on their part—they say that he's got clean hands and is going to sort everything out.

I asked several people what they thought about Yushchenko being an oligarch.

A rail worker from Lvov and his wife in the coal industry replied, "Look around you, can you see any oligarchs?"

I met a pensioner who had spent her life in the forestry industry. Her pension was around €20 a month.

She told me, "I was born under Stalin and I know what corrupt leadership looks like. I'm not being paid to be here, I just want to see this regime kicked out."

**Some commentators say that people are being duped by Yushchenko—and that the US is the power behind his campaign.**

IT'S TRUE that the US is putting money into groups like the Pora youth group. But this doesn't fully explain the movement. The seeds have to fall on fertile ground.

If you ask people on the protests they tell you "we're the Ukrainian nation, there are no Americans here".

People say they just want better living standards. Average wages in the Ukraine are about \$130 a month. This is at a time when a kilo of meat costs \$5. Many people have to do two jobs and rely on the black market to survive.

Prices are going up and privatisation means that people's bills are rising. The leadership of the country around outgoing president Kuchma have divided up the country's wealth in the most cynical manner. Kuchma's son in law has won privatisation deals purely on the basis of nepotism.

The people in power today were mafia gangs having shooting matches on the streets in the mid 1990s. People are disgusted with it.

I've talked to a group of oil workers. They work in Lvov in the west of the country on a massive oil pipeline project involving 2,600 people. They are taking it in turns to come to the Kiev demonstrations in groups, using their own money and staying in people's flats.

They are genuinely in favour of Yushchenko and they believe he can get rid of the corruption. They hate Yanukovich. For them the issue of US involvement is irrelevant.

Everyone I've spoken to said similar things. They rant about Yanukovich's corruption, law breaking and bribery, and the censorship in the media.

The oil workers from Lvov also talk about how their region has been de-industrialised over the last 15 years. They say they want more jobs and better pay, they want industry to be restored.

So there is real disgust with the existing government—but no real understanding of what Yushchenko represents.

Yushchenko will be happy with some grubby compromise—as long as his big business backers get a bigger slice of the cake. The crowd will only be satisfied if Kuchma and his allies are all kicked out.

# IRAQ: 'THIS IS HOW WE LIVE'

Socialist Worker's correspondent **SASEEN KAWZALLY** spoke to three Iraqis with different views on the occupation and the resistance.

**T**HE DESTRUCTION of Fallujah raised many questions for Iraqis—questions voiced by three friends aged 24 to 30. The three men are traders who were trapped in Syria as the US laid siege to Fallujah.

The government of Iyad Allawi is refusing to allow men of fighting age to re-enter the country. The three have joined the growing band of Iraqi refugees in Syria.

Wathiq is a Shia Muslim from Baghdad's Sadr City district. He is a supporter of radical Shia cleric Moqtada Al Sadr.

'Iraqis are tired—tired after long years of war with Iran, then war over Kuwait, then the sanctions, then invasion and occupation.'

We see the solution in a national Iraqi government, and hopefully it will be an honest one—not one installed by the US. But we fear that a government under occupation will not be democratic or honest, and this is one reason why many people support the resistance.

Wathiq says the government of interim Iraqi prime minister Iyad Allawi is full of the old faces:

'All the figures of the old regime are back, the Mukhabarat (secret police), former Baathist generals and officials. This government is almost the same as the former regime.'

**'It is now 'haram', or forbidden, to eat fish from that river. You know why? Because of the numbers of the bodies the Americans dump in the river.'**

'Everything that used to happen during the old regime happens now.'

Wathiq warns that followers of Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who is a more moderate figure than Al Sadr, are running out of patience:

'Ali Sistani said that after the elections, if there is no solution, he will call for resistance.'

All three friends say the treatment handed out by the occupation forces has angered many Iraqis.

Wathiq, a lifelong opponent of the Baathist regime, explains how despite the horrors of the life under Saddam many ordinary Iraqis feel less secure than before the invasion:

'During Saddam's rule we never had curfews—now there is a curfew between 10pm and 5am. Now in Iraq there are arrests, killing in the streets. The police pick up people from the street and hand them over to the US.'

'The Americans are very provocative. They want to irritate people. For example, you have to keep your distance from US convoys or they shoot you. If a US vehicle breaks down they surround it with civilian cars, using the passengers as human shields.'

'Once they stopped everyone just to remove a small picture of Al Sadr from a telephone pole. They even deployed snipers. They do this to provoke people. Is this little picture so harmful that so many people's lives have to be put in danger?'

'When the Americans shoot at a car by mistake they don't say sorry. They say it was full of fighters, even if there was a family travelling in the car,' he adds.

**S**ALAM IS a Kurd living in Baghdad. He is a Shia and supports Ali Sistani. Salam says he is prepared to wait for the elections which are scheduled for January. If they are free and fair he says he will be satisfied. He insists that, even though he does not like the occupation, he does

not support the resistance.

Salam once offered his services as an interpreter for the Americans. But then he and five friends were arrested in a sweep in the first days of the occupation. They were incarcerated at Baghdad airport and accused of being Fedayeen—Saddam's partisans:

'They stopped us because we had arms in the car. They held us at Baghdad airport, then we were transferred to the Safwan prison camp near British-controlled Basra.'

'We were held for one week at the airport, but the US soldiers did not beat us. No one touched us. There were about 900 of us in the camp.'

Salam was held for 35 days in the Safwan camp, and tells of the beatings meted out by British troops.

'You could always tell if someone was picked up by British soldiers, because they would have been beaten,' Salam says. 'I saw how the people there were beaten.'

'There were a lot of Syrians with us in the camp. They were young, I feared for them. They were with the resistance, but the soldiers treated them like common criminals and accused them of being thieves to stir up tensions.'

'There is a difference between the Americans and the British,' Wathiq added. 'If the British arrest someone, he will be beaten.'

'But you want the truth, right?' Salam says. 'The Americans didn't beat us, but they did steal our money. They said they would hold on to our money for our own safety, and would give it back to us when we were released.'

'But when they released us they told us to get our money from the Red Cross, and the Red Cross denied they had our money.'

Ahmed, a Sunni Muslim, is a member of the resistance. He describes himself as a Mujahadeen, a holy warrior.



**A**HMED SAYS US troops regularly steal from Iraqis when they raid their houses or stop them at checkpoints:

'When Americans search houses they steal whatever they can, even an ashtray if they like it. The rich people fear the Americans will steal their money and gold. Mobile phones get stolen from cars. Now we take everything with us when the soldiers search our cars.'



Recent pictures from Mosul under the heel of US occupation  
Photos: <http://dahjamaaliraq.com>

But, Ahmed says, there are some soldiers who are honest: 'In one case I heard of, a US officer searched all his soldiers after they raided a house.'

'He lined up his soldiers and searched them one by one. This is probably the only honest officer in the entire US army.'

But for Ahmed the real fear is not robbery but execution. He says there is a terror campaign in Mosul, and the Tigris River is full of bodies:

'It is now 'haram', or forbidden,

to eat fish from that river. You know why? Because of the numbers of the bodies the Americans dump in the river.'

'I saw it with my eyes, I swear to god, I saw it with my eyes. If you ask any Iraqi now, they all know what Americans are doing with the bodies.'

Ahmed also accuses the US of planting bombs in cities to terrorise civilians. He claims they are the 'dark forces' behind sectarian murders:

'I saw an incident where a car was stopped by Iraqi police. The men in the car were dressed in traditional clothes and had beards. The police found grenades in the car and demanded the men explain what they were doing. But they could not understand a word being spoken to them.'

'So the policeman became angry and slapped one of the men. The man's beard fell off! They turned out to be American spies. This is why many of us say that the Americans are behind many of the explosions in Baghdad.'

'The soldiers would seal off a certain area for a whole day. They would take their time planting explosives, and later one of their spies would blow it up when there were civilians around.'

'Seventy five percent of explosions targeting civilians are planted by the Americans. They killed [Shia religious leader] Mohammad Al Hakim in Najaf. They wanted to start a civil war.'

All three men agree that there are attempts to whip up sectarian and

ethnic tensions between Sunni, Shia and Kurd. But Wathiq insists the dangers are overblown, and local religious leaders are quick to clamp down on sectarianism:

'There is cooperation between the Muslim leaders to prevent civil war. In Latifiyah, a Sunni town en route to the Shia holy cities of Najaf and Kerbala, Iraqi collaborators killed some Shias to create tension with the Sunnis. But the incidents were dealt with immediately by the mosques to prevent any escalation.'

Ahmed joined the resistance during the April uprising. He says the fighters in the northern city of Mosul are a mix of Islamic and secular nationalist groups. Mosul, Iraq's third city, is divided between Arabs and Kurds, and has strong left wing traditions:

'Let's not mix the terms. The word 'resistance' has a national meaning. The 'jihad' is for Allah, and for me I'm doing it for Allah. But many resistance fighters are not strict Muslims, and do not pray.'

'But they are fighting the occupation, and they face death doing that. If you go on a mission you only have a one in four chance of coming home. The secular resistance and Islamic resistance cooperate because our objective is the same—we have the same goal.'

Ahmed says that the destruction of Fallujah has left a deep impact on the fighters in Mosul. Fear of massive aerial bombardment has led to a change in strategy:

'If Mosul became like Fallujah, and all the people start fighting, the Americans will call in the air force

and destroy the city. Many of us feel that guerrilla attacks are better than a city-wide insurrection.'

Wathiq feels that the resistance is not strong enough to confront the Americans. He says the standoff in Najaf last September exposed the lack of training of Al Sadr's militia, the Mahdi Army.

But ominously for the US and the British, he says there are preparations for a new uprising:

'People in the south are doing some research on the American weaponry, the way the US army works, and developing their capabilities. We are preparing for 'zero hour'. We were infiltrated during the battle for Najaf. We will be better prepared next time.'

Salam says, 'The majority of Iraq are Shia Muslims, and the majority follow Ali Sistani.'

'We are a silent majority, but we are both against the occupation and against the resistance, for now.'

But he adds that many of Ali Sistani's followers have been given permission to take up arms while others collect money.

He, like many Iraqis from the long-oppressed communities, is waiting for the elections: 'I know for sure the Americans will leave [after the elections].'

But he warns, 'We Iraqis can kick anyone out. The Americans know that, and they know they must leave. We are patient, but in the end we will not accept the occupation.'

■ The names of the three Iraqis have been changed. The interviews took place in Syria.

## CHINA

# Worker's struggle making the ruling classes nervous



By **Kim Yong-wook**, All Together

IN CHINA today the condition of the working classes is striking. Every hour 15 workers are killed by industrial accidents. More than 120 million "peasant workers[migrant workers]" are 'getting up earlier than roosters, and working harder than oxen, but eating less than what pigs eat.'

However, strikes are illegal and the ACFTU, the official labour union in China, is a state labour union that pays no interest to the lives of workers. In 2002 they even awarded 21 bosses with the model workers award!

But we are seeing more and more of workers going on strikes. Most of the strikes have taken place during the closures of 190,000 state own companies.

Less than two months ago 6,000 textile workers in Tianwang textile factory in Shaanxi province that was recently privatized went on strike. They maintained the strike for almost 7 weeks.

One day a police vehicle armed with water canon attempted to infiltrate into the factory but failed when other workers who were not participating in the strike and family members ran out to stop the police. In the end, the strike ended with more than 20 workers arrested but the company had to meet many of the workers demands.

A sign of an important change is the fact that the number of strikes in the Pearl River Delta region, which enjoyed an unprecedented boom with 15-20% growth rate every year, is increasing.

The region is currently suffering from a temporary labour shortage due to the extremely low wages, a major factor deterring surplus labour in rural areas from migrating.

In Shenzhen, 3,000 workers at Computime went on strike on October 7. A worker cried out, "I came here to make money to build my family a house but I haven't got paid for the last 8 months."

In Guangzhou, TV assembly workers at Shanlin Technology work 14 hours a day in order to meet increased demand but their wages remain the same. They were getting 600 yuan a month when a meal costs 12 yuan. They won a victory through a strike in mid October demanding a wage increase.

In fact, the number of labour disputes and rural unrests has steadily increased in the last few years. A magazine *Outlook* reported that the number of demonstrations increased more than ten fold from 8,700 in 1993 to 58,000 in 2003. That is 160 demonstrations per day on average.

Seeing such incidents, some sections of the ruling class are fearful that the Tiananmen Square protest, that shook the ruling system of the Chinese Communist Party in 1989, might be replayed. In fact, the levels of distrust of the government, of escalation of industrial actions, and of uncertainty about economic prospects are similar to the time of the protest in 1989.

A rumour has it that think tanks in Beijing are calculating the odds of the new Tiananmen Square protest, repeating through computer simulations the sequence of possible events.

Clearly, Chinese society has changed since 1989. The Chinese ruling class has gotten stronger in 25 years of economic growth.

Nevertheless, the consciousness of the workers has also changed. News of strikes is quickly disseminated through the Internet, emails, and cell phones.

History does not simply repeat itself. However, the condition is maturing for, in the words of a former Chinese ruler Mao Tze-dung, "one spark can set a whole field on fire".



# Do Bin Charges help the environment?

By **DECLAN GALLAGHER**

**I**T WAS in 1999 that the Dublin anti-bin tax campaigns convened to oppose double taxation, but the campaign had been bubbling quietly elsewhere for sometime before that.

In Cork there has been an anti-service charges campaign since 1983, first to tackle the water charges and then to combat the bin charges. Activists from the *Householders Against Service Charges*, dumped their rubbish outside the Cork town hall, leading to the jailing of 7 of the participants.

This, however, brought the legality of non-collection into question and the Supreme Court subsequently decided that it was illegal to punish non-payers by refusing to collect their rubbish.

Ever since it was founded, the anti-bin charges campaign has been faced with repression and black propaganda. Over twenty protestors have been jailed – while the government insists that its sole motivation is getting a ‘clean environment’.

Yet the real agenda behind bin charges is privatisation. In counties Kerry, Mayo, Sligo, Donegal and Galway bin charges been enforced for some time.

Private companies have also been operating there since the late 1980's. In Galway county alone there are 135 private operators, in Galway city 122, in Mayo 118, in Roscommon 110 and in Sligo 106 private operators, which charge a minimum of €260 per year.

The refuse collectors market is initially a niche market made up of hundreds of little companies.

Many of the local authorities make it incredibly easy to become a private operator.

All you need to do is print out the application from your local



**Environmental pollution is serious, but will taxes help? Below Bin Tax protestors**

authorities website, fill it in, then get your advert tendering your services into the local newspaper, pay your €254 (as is the fee in Galway Co. Council) and send in your application with a copy of the newspaper advert, a map specifying your route, wait 2 weeks and off you go.

**E**VENTUALLY, HOWEVER, big business dominates the sector by forming alliances with local firms or just buying them out.

The biggest companies which operate across Europe are Onyx and Sita—and they have already begun to make their appearance in Ireland.

Almost all council refuse trucks in the four local authorities in Dublin have the logo for a company called Manvik.

This is not the name of a refuse company but in fact the manufacturer's name—meaning that local authorities await the move to hand over all refuse collection to private companies.

This is essentially at heart of why you shouldn't pay the bin tax.

When the Waste Management Bill was first introduced, the government claimed that they wanted to clean up Ireland and introduce an

environmentally friendly method to dispose of refuse.

However since then they have shut down Irish Glass Bottle in Ringsend in Dublin.4,

This was the only plant of its kind in the 26 counties which used recycled glass.

Now instead of glass being recycled, it is sold to Ardagh Glass who eventually ship it out to China to be dumped in landfills.

The same government that claims it wants to clean up Ireland is pushing through an incinerator building programme—despite the fact that considerable evidence exists to show that they put cancer causing dioxins into the atmosphere.

**D**ESPITE THEIR ‘green colours’ when attacking bin charges protestors, the government has failed to comply with the Kyoto Treaty. Greenhouse gas emissions are currently double those set by the Kyoto protocol.

What happens to waste after it has been taken away by private companies?

Take, for example, the case of Greenstar or Noble, the Co. Louth based refuse company. They are the owners of the green bins and only recycle 50% of all rubbish con-

tained in them. They bale the rest and transport it to Scotland for dumping.

Oxigen is responsible for green bin collection in Dublin—but it has been prosecuted by the Environmental Protection Agency for non-compliance with environmental standards.

On each of three on-site visits over the space of three months, the company was found to be in breach of regulations. They failed to keep proper records and were ‘using facilities not agreed by the EPA’.

Once profit becomes the motive behind waste disposal, companies inevitably break the law. Landfill charges are very high in Ireland—so a huge industry of illegal dumping has developed.

It is estimated that between 500,000 and 700,000 tonnes of waste is disposed of illegally—that is a staggering 10 percent of all waste in the country.

Over 100 illegal sites have been found in Wicklow. One illegal site in Cookstown, Northern Ireland, contained the waste from 13 local authorities in the South.

Fines on the waste companies are normally less than €10,000—but they can make a profit of €3,000 just by dumping 25 tonnes illegally.

**T**HE BIN charges have, in fact, little to do with re-cycling. The National Waste Data Base for 2001, shows that 92.6 percent of all paper waste went to landfill—even though this is the easiest to re-cycle.

Bin tax is not therefore a strategy for waste management, but rather a new stealth tax.

As the Environmental Protection Agency pointed out in its 1998 waste management report only a small percentage of waste comes from the householder. Most waste is created by farming, construction and industry. Yet state repression and propaganda is directed at householders who do not pay.

If the government were serious about waste, they could adopt a variety of different strategies.

In Sweden there is a system where you bring back all your tetra-paks, and plastic wrappings and put them into a machine, which then clocks up so many euros worth which you can use to pay your shopping with.

Another solution to the waste management would be to get rid of tetra-pak, plastics and other unnecessary food and product wrappings and go back to glass bottles and recyclable materials.

Yet another approach which would be similar to one found in Sweden would be to continue the black and green bin system but have the big business companies pay householders.

In the US city of Seattle, recycling will become mandatory under new rules which the City Council passed unanimously.

These require Seattle residents to recycle paper, cardboard, glass and plastic bottles, and aluminium and tin cans, starting Jan. 1, 2005.

If these recyclable materials are found in garbage cans and trash bins, the containers will be tagged as part of a year-long education campaign.

Beginning in 2006, residential customers will be warned if the materials are found in trash receptacles. If banned materials are found three times, the city will refuse to collect the garbage until such items are removed.

Individually, these solutions do not fully solve the problem—but they show that other authorities were interested in waste reduction—not collecting stealth taxes.

In Ireland, bin charges arose from an economic strategy to cut taxes on big business and to shift over to indirect taxes.

Ireland has the lowest tax take in the EU—and the government's strategy is to turn public services into commodities which can be sold off to private companies.

This, rather than concern for the environment, is what lies behind bin charges.



## Take the Troubles and wrap a story round them

Socialist Worker talks to the British award-winning writer of teen fiction, **ALAN GIBBONS**.

IN MY new book, *The Defender*, the main character, a 14 year old boy called Ian, comes home to find two menacing characters waiting for his dad.

He runs away from the house and calls his dad, who tells him his secret.

In the past Ian's dad, Kenny Kincaid, used to be involved with Loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, and he stole some money from them. Now they've tracked him down.

The book is a thriller, which looks through flashbacks at how the Troubles started. I think that what you have to do is take an issue and wrap the story around it.

A lot of young people aren't really aware of the Troubles now.

The book is more about what happened to the soldiers after the Troubles, after the war. But the Troubles are still a shadow over British life and politics.

I write fiction, which means that I want to tell a good story. I don't expect my readers to have any previous knowledge of Ireland or its history. I want to unpeel the history.

I started teaching when I was in my thirties, and that's really when I started storytelling. Necessity is the mother of invention, and all that.

And I found that the best discipline was a good story. An anecdote that has some humour—that was the best way to work with kids.

Teen writing is very healthy at the moment. It deals with issues. There are a lot of new writers who really have their finger on the pulse. Our peers are breaking new ground.

His *Dark Materials* by Phillip Pullman was incredibly important because it wasn't just fantasy—it looked at how the world is now.

Now these books get an adult readership as well. I think some adults read novels that are aimed at children because a lot of adult writing has moved away from narrative.

J K Rowling wasn't the first person to write these crossover books which appeal to both adults and children.

The *Harry Potter* books definitely made the reading of teen novels more acceptable, but I think they reflected rather than caused the trend.

Lots of children's writers are also campaigners, and I think that really changed the landscape of what's being written.

Having political ideas in your writing is incredibly unpopular in some circles. There's this idea that teenagers aren't interested in issues—that the novels written for teenagers should just be stories.

As far as I'm concerned that's wrong for two reasons.

Firstly all literature deals with ideas. If you write without dealing with the issues of today that affect these kids then all you're doing is upholding the status quo.

Secondly, kids today are hugely political—they are concerned about the environment about the war.

Just look at all the school walkouts at the start of the war on Iraq. These were not the actions of people who were not interested in what's happening in the world around them.

Just because kids aren't necessarily interested in official politics doesn't mean they're not aware of the realities around them.

There's an openness, a new politicisation, and that's something we should respect.

You have to respect the people that read your books. As far as I'm concerned a book isn't finished until it's been read.

■ *The Defender* by Alan Gibbons is available from Bookmarks from [www.bookmarks.uk.com](http://www.bookmarks.uk.com)



# Eminem hits right target – at last

EMINEM'S NEW album "Encore" went straight in at number one on mainstream pop charts within days of release. The rapper who George Bush described as "the greatest threat to America since polio" has achieved a popularity few rappers, few popstars, could even dream of.

A few years ago Eminem was a white rapper with an unquestionable ability to rhyme but with a talent often used to pour scorn and abuse on women. Now he is an artist with 50 million record sales, a couple of Grammy's, a critically acclaimed film based on his life and world-wide fame.

He has been called homophobic, - gay and lesbian groups often protesting against his concerts-, sexist and misogynist, as well as racist and an artist who incites his listeners to violence.

Does the new album give us more of the same or has Eminem taken a step forward?

Eminem has written objectionable lyrics. His claim that most of his lyrics are comical and not meant to be taken seriously, or that he is simply trying to wind people up is a poor defense for offensive material.

From a poor background in Detroit, from a broken home and with few prospects, his alienation and anger was often directed against people who were even more oppressed than he was. The latest controversy - the release of racist lyrics written in the early nineties - is proof that his targets

were often way off the mark. Homophobia certainly permeated Eminem's writing particularly in the *Marshall Mathers* CD released in 2000.

He has argued, however, that his performance with Elton John on the Grammy's was proof that he was not homophobic. He has also made various conciliatory statements which show, at the very least, that he is aware there is a problem with some of his lyrics.

The new album *Encore* is not without its irritations but with the inclusion of *Mosh* - effectively Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* put to music - there is something

happening here.

Firstly, one of the appeals of the album is a real sense of dialogue with the listener, and with the critics of previous albums. "Evil Deeds", a song about his upbringing and how he feels his early life was shaped moves in to "Never Enough", which suggests that Eminem feels he has done enough to prove his critics wrong.

Then, in "Yellow Brick Road" he apologises for the racist lyrics, released recently by *Source* magazine, and finally "Like Toy Soldiers," suggests that the rivalry between fellow rappers, often leading to violence, needs to end.

The highlight of the Album, *Mosh*, Eminem's intervention in the US election, not only shows the impact of the anti-war movement on the artist, but that on this occasion Eminem's venting all his anger in the right direction.

Musically, *Mosh* sounds like a funeral march put to a driving beat. Lyrically it begins with another swipe at critics for taking his cartoon violence literally, shifting to put forward his successes over the past few years and then a brutal assault on Bush (and later Kerry). The imagery is clear, and concise, in Eminem's view we have to join together and fight.

Lenin's **State and Revolution** is one of the most subversive books ever written. It tackles the prevailing idea that the state stands above society and represents the common good.

It roots its argument for revolution in the fact that even a parliamentary democracy is a form of concentrated class rule. When the elections are over, there is quite simply 'one law for the rich and another for the rest'. We live in a society where there is a 'dictatorship of the bourgeoisie', according to Lenin.

Lenin has been demonised as a tyrant who paved the way for Stalin. But even the most cursory reading of *State and Revolution* shows he wanted a much more profound form of democracy.

This abridged edition aims to make the arguments of **State and Revolution** even more accessible to modern activists.

€4.00 plus 60 c postage from SW Books PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

## STATE AND REVOLUTION



V.I. Lenin

Translated and with an Introduction by  
Dimitri Petras



## LETTERS

# Civil Rights Movement formed

ON MONDAY 22nd November the Civil Rights Movement of Ireland met for the third time.

The meeting was dedicated to formal issues and to the adoption of its proposed proclamation.

It was shadowed by hour-long personal testimonies of racist or racism-related incidents by nearly all representatives of Ireland's minority communities—not in the North but right here amongst us in the South—which points of a rather deplorable feature of the Celtic Tiger. However constructive steps have been taken and the organisation has produced a powerful proclamation and programme.

The Civil Rights Movement of Ireland is an association of representatives of a large spectrum of organisations and individuals, concerned



■ **Anti Racist demonstration a few years ago**

about the legal implications of a multi-cultural Ireland and their effect on the people that constitute her multi-ethnic population.

The range of affiliates

and participants in its meetings extends from members of the Labour Party, the Socialist Worker's Party and minority communities such

as the Russian Orthodox Church and Mahdi's APIC. A manifestation in Dublin is planned for December.

**DOMINICA LODZ,**  
Dublin

## No facilities for disabled

THE SKYCOURT Shopping Centre in Shannon opened a new section recently, with multi-storey car park ... without a single place for people with Disabilities.

The old car park has closed and the accessible parking spaces are now in a staff-car park for Shannon Development. For an average of 25 minutes, some 15 people with disabilities drove around the Shopping Centre's brand new Multi-storey car park.

They couldn't park and had to pay for the privilege of getting nowhere, pretty damn slow. I bet they'll soon even give you a fine for having to park across two spaces, because they do not give you enough room to get out into a wheelchair!

**DAMON MATTHEW WISE,**  
Clare

## WHY THEY WANT TO WRECK AN POST

**AS AN employee of An Post, I have a number of issues and concerns, which need to be addressed.**

Firstly, how come An Post can suddenly go from a €1 million profit to losses of €40 million overnight? Also, how come independent research commissioned by the Communications Workers Union (CWU) shows that the SDS operation is actually profitable in stark contrast to An Post management's figures. Is there a hidden agenda here?

Namely to run An Post into the ground and to get rid of the so-called loss making areas so that An Post can then be flogged off to the private sector cheaply like what happened in Eircom and in the UK?

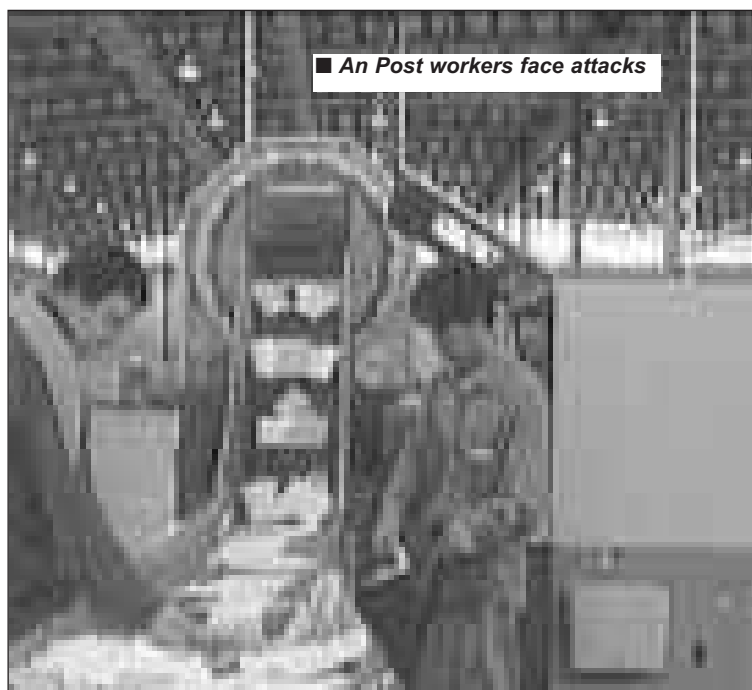
With the resultant decline in the quality of service.

Why doesn't this government recognise that An Post is providing a social service like CIE? Large parts of the postal network are never going to meet the strict criteria of profitability - such as rural post offices and door-to-door deliveries in rural areas.

Why doesn't the government implement the findings of the Flynn Report of 2000, which recognised that An Post has a Public Service Obligation (PSO) .

Why are An Post workers being punished for the failings and shortcomings of our shareholder the government?

We haven't received our last 2 pay rises due under the Sustaining Progress pay agreement which means that we are currently being denied 5% owed to us! If this government really wanted to they could both



■ **An Post workers face attacks**

pay us our 5% due to us and ensure the survival of our postal service by recognising that An Post has both a Public Service

Obligation (PSO) and a Universal Service Obligation (USO).

**PAUL KINSELLA,**  
Santry, Dublin 9

## GREENS AND THE WAR

**WITH REFERENCE to the report on the recent Tralee Antiwar Group public meeting, Patricia McKenna of the Green Party and former MEP, made some important points, which included:**

1. That "the 9/11 Patriot Act will not end ". While condemning hostage taking she observed that only Western armed forces are allowed to use force.
2. While she obviously opposes George Bush, in regard to the recent US elections she stated that independent candidate Ralph Nader was closest to her own political position.
3. In regard to the Green Party entering a future coalition government, Patricia McKenna stressed that, from her own point of view, the immediate demilitarization of Shannon Airport would be one of her main pre-conditions.

**KIERAN McNULTY,**  
Tralee

## Mistreatment of ex-prisoners

Dear Sir/Madam,

**I AM an ex prisoner and it has been nearly ten years since my conviction. Since then I have completed a BA and at present, I am in the final year of a LLB. I have only one conviction on record and no instances of cautions, warnings etc.**

Yet now as I prepare for a re entry to the workplace a dilemma presents itself. No provision exists in the Irish legal system by which past criminal records can be expunged. My requests to various government departments for information have gone unanswered.

I accept that I committed a crime and as a rational being should accept responsibility. Yet it seems that my release from prison was conditional.

I presumed that once I had served my prison sentence that my punishment would end. However it now seems, that no matter my intentions or actions, that an ex prisoner is condemned to a half-life upon release. Free but not an equal in Irish society.

I write to you in frustration and bewilderment. I can lie about my convictions and take a "chance".

However, that would be repeating the mistakes of the past. An ancillary problem is allowing such personal information into the public domain via job applications etc.

I understand that there is little you can do personally but surely, there are many more individuals like myself.

If the situation was highlighted in the press, it might perhaps result in some positive progress. Thank you for taking time to read this and I would be grateful for any assistance shown.

Yours truly,  
**DAVE ENGLISH**

**news from the struggle – news from the struggle – news from the struggle**  
 send reports to **Socialist Worker** phone (01) 8722682 email socialistworker@swp.ie

# Strike at Irish Ferries

WORKERS AT Irish Ferries decided to take strike action at the end of November over a plan by their company to let workers go.

Up to 150 crew of the Normandy are due to lose their jobs as the company seeks to 'outsource' their jobs.

It is a blatant example of a wealthy company seeking to replace permanent jobs with low cost crews.

Many of the new crews will be recruited from Eastern Europe and will be put on wages and conditions which are far less than those which

prevail at the moment.

If the company drives through these changes on the Rosslare - Fishguard route, it will seek to repeat the tactic elsewhere

The 24 hour strike action was called by SIPTU.

# WHERE DO SINN FEIN STAND ON WATER CHARGES?

The best way to stop water charges is a mass campaign of non-payment. It was to be expected that the DUP and SDLP would not support a campaign of civil disobedience, but Sinn Fein's position has shocked many.

Their stance was spelt out by several speakers, including Mitchell McLaughlin, at a meeting in Derry's Galliagh area. The first sign that SF does not back the non-payment campaign came when Communities Against the Water Tax activists put CAWT leaflets on chairs.

A Sinn Fein councillor said "you can't give those out, we're not for a non-payment campaign". Speaker after speaker from the floor said they would not pay. But Sinn

Fein speakers argued against non-payment, calling instead for 'fairer ways' of paying to be found.

Mitchell McLaughlin told the meeting that the Assembly would soon be restored and "unelected Ministers" would no longer be in charge. "By all means, have your demonstrations and protests", he told the meeting but argued against a non-payment campaign until 'all other avenues' have failed.

When the charges are introduced, it will be too late to organise a campaign of non-payment. Is Sinn Fein worried one of its Ministers will be implementing the 'fairer' water charges they want?

# Save our swimming pool!



AROUND 150 people marched to save Ballymun public swimming pool at the beginning of December.

Ballymun Regeneration will shortly be closing the pool to be replaced by a privately run "leisure pool" which will not cater for youth clubs, schools and other groups.

The protestors marched to the Ballymun Civic Offices to hand in a letter of protest and to demand the amenity for local people be kept open.

Paddy Haughey from the Plough Youth Club told the protestors that the people of Ballymun have been lied to for too long.

Campaign co-ordinator Kevin Wingfield announced that the campaign will be stepping up and organising more public meetings and protests in the New Year.

You can Contact Ballymun Save Our Swimming Pool Campaign on 086-3074060

Photo: Frank Scalzo

# QUEEN'S BOYCOTT OF COKE

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY has become the latest university where students have taken a stance against Coca Cola.

The Students' Union recently passed the following resolution. 'This council support the Colombian trade unions call for a worldwide boycott of Coca-Cola, until Coca-Cola apologise to, and compensates the

families of the Coca-Cola employees who were murdered, because they were members of the trade union employed by Coca-Cola in its bottling plant in Colombia. Moreover, the Coca-Cola Boycott will only be removed when Coca-Cola recognise the human rights of workers in Colombia to belong to a

trade union of their own choice free from the threat of murder/terror.

The council have placed the boycott of all Coca-cola products into immediate effect, furthermore; all profits made by the students union from the sale of Coca-Cola products will be donated to the Colombian trade union Sintraemcali to help fund their fight for justice for the employees of Coca-Cola, and for all workers in Colombia.

# Ballymun residents oppose racism

THREE BANGLADESHI residents of Ballymun's Gateway estate were viciously attacked by a local gang in a racist assault in November.

In the previous week a number of Chinese residents had left the area following harassment.

Local residents responded quickly. A meeting was called in the living room of a neighbour of the Bangladeshi students to which 17 neighbours came.

They decided that they would not stand by while members of the Ballymun

community, wherever they were born or whatever their skin colour, were subjected to racist attacks.

They organised a march to the Civic Offices in Ballymun with banners that read "Ballymun says no to racism" and handed in a letter to the

Dublin City Council officials deploring the attacks and demanding that public lighting be improved in the area.

As a result the Council agreed to put in place emergency public lighting.

A follow-up meeting was organised.

# Opposition to high rise in Dublin 8

By Sinead Ni Bhroin

THE DUBLIN 8 area is becoming unrecognisable, as developments of high-rise apartments begin to line Cork Street and the artery roads off it.

To date not one social housing unit has been provided from the new developments.

Now a proposed development of the Player Wills/Bailey Gibson 11-acre site by NABCo, a registered housing charity, fronting the project, is seen by many local

people as yet another example of developers putting their profits before the needs of the community.

A meagre 170 social & affordable housing units are included in the 11-acre site, which encompasses a 28 storey & 4 x 14 storey blocks of 1 to 3 bedroom apartments, with an unbelievable 2,252 car parking spaces being incorporated.

The development will bring an extra 3,000 people into the area yet no research has been undertaken as to how school places for children will be made available or indeed additional public transport needs

will be addressed.

The people of Dublin 8 don't need another high-rise block of flats, a Cappuccino Bar, or extortionately expensive crèches.

What we need is sustainable development that fits in with the existing community. A number of residents have come together to fight the proposed NABCo development and have called themselves the Fair Players Action Group.

The group is calling a demonstration for Monday December 6th, between 1 & 2pm outside Dublin City Council's Woodquay office.

## Join the Socialists!

To join the Socialist Workers Party or for more information:

Fill in the form and **Send to:**

**ROI:** SWP PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, Phone (01) 872 2682

**NI:** SWP PO Box 143, Mallusk Road, Mallusk, Phone 0774 2531617

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## DUP and Sinn Fein in government?

# NOW LET THE CLASS WAR COMMENCE!

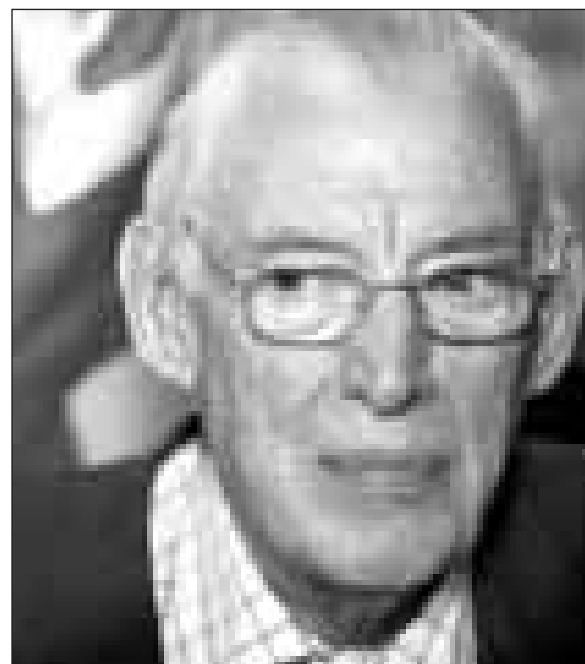
A 'DEAL' to restore devolution to the North is still in the balance. The view of most observers is that it is no longer a question of if but of when. The DUP may try to delay but no-one doubts the deal will be done.

Many working people in the North want to see a return of the Assembly, if only to stop New Labour from privatising everything that moves and introducing draconian water charges. But while the world's media marvel at the 'two extremes' entering government together, on the economic front, there is little to divide the two parties.

Both talk about issues like poverty but when previously in government, they did nothing to change things – except by making things worse. Both DUP and Sinn Fein Ministers were responsible for privatisation of public services and there is no sign of their attitudes changing.

For example, Council workers in Derry say there is not a cigarette paper between Sinn Fein and the DUP when it comes to attacks on Council workers' wages and conditions. Both parties unite to portray the workers off sick due to the stress of their jobs as 'malingerers' and to impose swinging pay cuts for workers in the city's leisure centres.

The idea of a £1bn injection of additional cash as a 'peace dividend' is welcome. However, the



Both DUP and Sinn Fein were responsible for privatisation of public services and there is no sign of their attitudes changing.

list of funding demands to New Labour has come mainly from the business sector, with whom Sinn Fein held talks before coming up with their list.

A visit to Sinn Fein's website provides very useful information on what Sinn Fein sees as the priorities for the economy of the island.

Three times in the course of November, McLaughlin issued statements about the need for the ESB and NIE to work more closely together in the development of "the single all-Ireland energy mar-

ket". Mr McLaughlin said: "Sinn Féin believe that a single all-Ireland energy market has the potential to deliver real gains for small and medium enterprises and industry as well as being an important element in the battle to eradicate fuel poverty". But the 'single energy market' is linked to de-regulation and competition.

Why isn't Sinn Fein warning about the black-outs and higher electricity charges that have come when giant corporations take over our electricity supply?

Despite an assertion that "Sinn Fein are no fan of the free market philosophy", McLaughlin buys into the core neo-liberal lie that competition is the key to providing cheaper services.

"Obviously ESB are in a position to offer potential customers in the north a very good deal and are aggressively looking to expand its number of customers.

The concern at NIE is...that they are unable to compete on price". Mitchell McLaughlin's naïve view of the effect of the

market on life and prices in the South is accompanied by the kind of adoration of economic growth that would more normally be associated with the Progressive Democrats than with a supposedly 'left-wing' party.

On 25th November, he welcomed a business survey that indicated "good growth in the value of exports and that the rest of Ireland is now the most important export market for the 6 county economy ...Sinn Fein believe that greater co-operation, harmonisation and strategic interventions by the business and economic agencies across the island can build on this positive growth".

There isn't a Chamber of Commerce across the island which wouldn't agree.

The real issue is whether big business will pay their taxes. Instead of even talking about 'incentives' for business in the North to match their counterparts in the South, we should be demanding that they pay for proper public services throughout the island. Both Sinn Fein and the DUP says they are against water charges – and that is when they are outside government.

But both argue against a campaign of non-payment. Yet this is the only way to defeat this double tax.

Sinn Fein and the DUP may be joining together in an unhappy marriage. But socialists will be organising against both when they