

PPPs:

Public Private Partnerships or Plundering the Public Purse?



Page 6 & 7

GAMA:



Strikers fight for their entitlements

Page 2

Criminalising dissent: ASBOs and the Criminal Justice Bill

Page 5

SEA change for Derry

Page 12

HARNEY'S PLANS FACE OPPOSITION FROM NURSES

Report from INO Conference Delegate

There was a mood of anger and defiance amongst nurses who attended the three-day Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) conference in Killarney.

The conference opened in the context of the successful month-long 'Enough is Enough' campaign, which won popular support from the public.

The campaign highlighted the appalling state of the A&E departments. It put the government on the spot and shamed the rich of this country who pay the lowest tax rates in Europe into offering charity donations to alleviate the situation.

Just days before conference opened, it was announced that pay increases due in June under the Benchmarking and Sustaining Progress deal might be withheld from INO members for what was deemed 'non co-operation with change' in the development of the role of the healthcare assistant. Nurses are calling for time to consider the issue.

Defiant mood

However, if the government thought that this threat would cow nurses into silence - they are clearly wrong. The mood was defiant.

On the first morning the tone was set with an emergency motion on the issue. Unanimously supported, the motion confers on the Executive Council power to initiate

"Whatever action necessary to secure all pay increases in the same timeframe, and from the same date,



as all other staff in the Irish Health Service".

A second emergency motion was tabled and unanimously passed rejecting the HSE directive to push trolleys into wards and out of the A&E departments.

It vowed to continue the pressure on government by continuing the daily trolley count. The crisis will be reviewed at a special conference in September.

Mary Harney was not given an easy time at her first visit to the INO conference. She left little doubt as to anything changing for the better for nurses.

According to Harney nurses are paid well; we have more nurses in the Health Service than we need; Ireland's reliance on mass recruitment in the Third World is not a problem and as to the solution of the bed capacity crisis - well, the

HSE has yet to publish its programme!

But, Harney did confirm her intention to continue to encourage private sector investment in the Health Service.

By the end she faced heckles and rumbling anger. September is shaping up to be D-Day.

>>Continues page four inside

Historic victory for Respect and the left in Britain

Respect is a new party that involves anti-war activists, socialists, trade unionists and others. It was born in January 2004 out of the massive anti-war movement.

Respect MP George Galloway writes that the fantastic success in London's Bethnal Green & Bow constituency and a strong showing in other areas is only the beginning of Respect's political challenge.

The impact of Respect's victory in Bethnal Green & Bow and their spectacular results elsewhere will only become fully apparent in the weeks and months to come. This is one of the most historic victories in British politics.

Not since 1945 has a party to the left of Labour in England won a seat in parliament. Then it was Phil Piratin, Communist hero of the Jewish



East End. Today it is Respect, standing in his old constituency.

Sixty years ago Piratin's victory came as the Labour Party was cementing its hegemony over the British working class.

Bitter tears

Today it comes as New Labour is shredding those bonds. The meaning of this victory is that those people can no longer be taken for granted.

Blair felt free to seek the votes of Tories on Tory terms, while assuming that Labour's core support would have to back him, because there was nowhere else to go. Now there is somewhere else to go. Respect piled up votes in every ward and within every community.

Respect's support was concentrated on the housing estates left to rot,

their occupants blackmailed by a corrupt council that says no repairs will be made unless tenants vote for their homes to be privatised.

Badge of honour

Respect's vote was particularly strong among the Bengali community and other immigrants.

In Bethnal Green & Bow some 25 percent of the population are living in overcrowded conditions. Among immigrant communities, the figure is 50 percent.

The climate of Islamophobia nurtured by New Labour over the last four years has fuelled a 300 percent increase in the number of young Muslim men stopped and searched.

>>Galloway continues on page 12

Quotes of the fortnight

Fianna Fail deputy Noel O'Flynn, when questioned about heading up a junket to Argentina told an RTE reporter somewhat ominously that his committee on communications, marine and natural resources **"will be inviting the RTE authority and senior management in soon to review your work and to review your annual report, and you are more than welcome to come and ask as many questions as you like"**.

Politicians' anti-social behaviour. On 28th November, 2002 Jim McDaid said: **"Drink driving devastates lives"**.

McDaid, 27th April, 2005: **"I drove while drunk, I'm sorry"**.

"Tony Blair, for all his flaws, remains the best centre-right option there is." - The Economist endorses the British Labour Party leader.

"The reality is that if young people do not get a bit of a rough time from the police, we will never address these issues." - Bertie Ahern, speaking in the Dail on the introduction of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

"There is always a danger I will self combust." - Ryanair's Michael O'Leary. We live in hope....

"Nothing will change for the better if each of us sees every change as a threat to our interests. The challenge is to make change work together." - Mary Harney addresses nurses at the INO conference, and fails to announce any extra funding to tackle the hospital crisis.

"I refrained from publishing the legislation in order to facilitate negotiations with the Prison Officers' Association. However, as the POA membership have rejected the deal negotiated...I must now proceed with outsourcing prisoner escort services in order to achieve the necessary overtime savings." - Justice Minister Michael McDowell begins to implement his privatisation agenda in the Irish prison service.

The US Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction reportedly **"accused civilian contract managers of 'simply washing accounts' to try to make the books balance"** after an audit found that the US could not account \$100 million spent in Iraq.

Some 57 percent of Americans now say that the war in Iraq was **"not worth it"**, according to a new USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll, up from 50 percent in early February.

Turkish workers win concessions from GAMA

Hundreds of Turkish workers employed by GAMA Construction Ireland had been on strike for a month as Socialist Worker went to press. They were paid as little as 2-3 an hour for an 80+ hour week. Strikers faced down management intimidation to fight for their rights. Strikers' representatives now report that GAMA is beginning to offer concessions.

By Turkish Workers' Action Group

At a meeting of the Committee of GAMA employees currently on work stoppage, it was decided to call on GAMA management to come forward with a realistic proposal to resolve the outstanding issues, which include major unpaid overtime and the plight of a category of GAMA employees known as fixed rate workers.

The GAMA workers on strike today said they would be prepared to call a mass meeting of all workers in dispute, if the company made a realistic offer to the fixed rate workers and also a substantial offer in regard to the outstanding overtime for all workers.

The Committee consider it a major achievement that virtually all their wages that were hidden in Finansbank, Holland have now been transferred to their personal accounts.

It is also a major achievement that GAMA is now committing itself to paying trade union rates of pay to all its workers.

The Committee realise that these concessions were won in the wake of the workers hard fight and are determined to continue the fight for justice until GAMA come forward with just and realistic proposals.



GAMA strikers on the MAY DAY parade in Dublin

Photo: Paula Geraghty

Solidarity in Action

The response of passers by to the mass pickets of the Gama strikers has shown the depth of support for their fight.

Cars, lorries, buses and taxis passing the picket line beep their horns.

When Gama cut off the food to the men's accommodation in Ballymun last week, the local Links group and the Women's Resource Centre responded by taking food to the camp.

In UCD, SIPTU members collected €400 at a union meeting.

Ballymun shoppers contributed €85 during a one hour collection on Saturday;

Solidarity public meetings and fundraisers for the workers have been called in Bray, Dun Laoghaire, Dublin City Centre and Ballymun.

In Ballymun the local solidarity group organised a meeting where nearly fifty people locals the rain to hear GAMA strikers and community activists urge support for the strikers.

The meeting agreed to find ways of linking support for the GAMA strikers to residents' grievances against Ballymun Regeneration and the City Council

■ Everybody who can should try and organise such solidarity events.

GAMA makes millions from workers' sweat

Gama is a massive multinational company making huge profits from the exploitation of its workers. In 2003, it made profits of over \$82 million.

Yet when it comes to paying the workers who produce all that profit it refuses to pay a reasonable wage.

Not only is Gama involved in construction projects around the world, but it is a big player as governments privatise power generation.

Gama boast of its participation in Turkey's first major Build Operate Transfer (BOT) projects as both contractor and

investor in the Birecik dam, in power stations and domestic and industrial water supply projects, investing assets of \$2.5 billion.

As a major construction contractor undercutting other bidders on the basis of its exploitative employment practices, Gama Ireland has also benefitted from a cosy relationship with Ballymun Regeneration (BRL), an arm of Dublin City Council.

Not only has BRL awarded Gama plum contracts, it has also facilitated Gama's entry into private development on what was previously public

park land.

DCC recently sold Gama a large tranche of Poppintree

Park for €15 million.

The deal involved Gama "developing" the area with

GAMA AND PRIVATISATION

Gama is in the forefront of the public utilities privatisation and deregulation programme that governments are bringing in.

From Kazakstan to Russia and beyond Gama has key interests in privatised energy facilities. Gama boasts it was the first company to build and operate a private power station in Turkey.

In Ireland its subsidiary Tynagh Energy was given the go-ahead to design, finance, construct, operate and maintain a private power station in East Galway. The €300 million project will buy private gas from its partner RWE (formerly National Power) supplied through Bord Gais pipes and sell the power output both to ESB and on the market via RWE.

270 private apartments and houses on the land. Council officials then sold the deal to the councillors as ensuring that money would be available for much needed sports facilities in the area which is losing much of its green space and park land. Planning permission has been granted to Gama subject to appeal.

BRL and the City Council claimed they had nothing left of their €3.5 billion budget to provide social amenities like playing fields, etc and that the €15 million gained from the sale would be ringfenced for these projects.

Scandal of waste caused by An Post management

An estimated one million euros worth of printed material is to be dumped following an An Post management decision to change the headed notepaper.

At a time when An Post screams poverty about overdue pay increases to workers, An Post chief Donal Curtin has ordered that all SDS material such as headed paper and receipt books to be rendered useless.

Since 5th May, customers who deal with the An Post delivery service will receive only An Post headed material.

According to an An Post source, this will mean that over a million euro worth of SDS material amounting to over 100 pallets lying in an SDS warehouse will be wasted.

One An Post worker told SW: "Curtin says there is no

money and he is 'saving the company' yet here is an example of losses that could be avoided by management. All we are getting are Curtin's plans - we are not hearing any alternative ways of raising money, yet there are lots.

"For example An Post spent two million on spin doctors, some members of the board of directors had their wages raised (30 per cent) and they are doing up their own management suite," he said. "And look at the politicians like Bertie Ahern giving themselves huge pay rises. I am owed €3,000 myself."

He continued: "Curtin was put into An Post to cut it to the bone - if Fianna Fail get in again they will shut the rural post offices. They want to create yellow pack workers, especially where young workers are pushed to the bone.

"Safety of post men is also a big issue," he said, saying An Post wanted to get rid of 1,500 workers while some 650,000 new houses were added to the postal routes in Ireland.

He added: "Every time we agree something they pile on more conditions - it's bullying tactics. They wanted to lock us out late last year and the minister was prepared to back them up.

"An post will be sold off to a syndicate of the golden circle in Ireland. Then it will be sold to a foreign operator for nothing and they will make a killing just like Eircom.

"The mainstream media are on the side of the management and the government. I have lost all faith in journalists - if I go to anyone its to the socialists," he said.

One million euro salary for Waterford Crystal directors

Redundancies for workers

Management at Waterford Crystal have announced that they are to make 485 workers redundant and close the plant in Dungarvan.

There is massive anger and bitterness amongst the workers following assurances from local management that the investment needed for the Tank Furnace would be agreed by the board.

Shop stewards are demanding that no part of the company's plans be implemented without agreement with the union and the workforce and union representatives are not accepting the imposition of compulsory redundancies.

Mass meetings of the workers are planned for next week to decide on the best strategy to deal with these threatened redundancies.

ATGWU Chief Shop Steward Jimmy Kelly said "With Crystal Chairman Redmond O'Donohue paid one million euro per year and Chief Executive John Foley last year awarded a 180,000 euro pay rise, bringing his salary up to 672,000 euro, the workers are in no mood for being lectured about proposals for cut backs in jobs and wages".

Bus drivers take unofficial action

Dublin Bus drivers based in Harristown garage staged an unofficial walk-out on Thursday 28th April.

About 40 drivers placed a picket on the Depot in a dispute over the company's withdrawal on the issue of a bus driver's pass for the Westlink toll bridge. The drivers are faced with an annual charge of over €2000 as a result. Management had ignored their concerns and refused to meet with driver representatives.

One driver told SW that "they didn't believe we would do anything, our unions have sat on their hands and they (the company) thought they would just get away with it".

The drivers quickly brought the garage to a standstill with 99% of buses grounded for over four hours, resulting in widespread cancellations of bus services across the city.

The company then engaged in intimidatory tactics: another driver told SW that "one manager began photographing the pickets. A hour later they handed us all personalised letters threatening to sue us under the Industrial relations act".

Eventually two union officials arrived and tried to get the drivers back down. The SIPTU official Willy Noone warned drivers that they were in danger of losing their houses as a direct result of taking action.

Drivers were outraged at the officials' attitude and at a mass meeting inside the garage expressed this anger to them.

The drivers agreed to lift the picket in return for a promised LRC (Labour Relations Court) hearing on the issue. Most remain sceptical about the LRC and angry over the unions handling of the dispute. A driver who organised the protest told SW that "they won't stop us doing this again, we got great support from our colleagues and we will not be intimidated".

Major revolt in Dun Laoghaire over Council plans for Baths

Hundreds of residents from the Dun Laoghaire area will take to the streets on May 15th in the first of a series of protests against council plans to build a huge 8-storey private apartment block and shopping complex on the site of Dun Laoghaire baths.

The protests were organised by the Save Our Seafront (SOS) group following a packed public meeting of over 200 people to discuss the plans. The meeting voted overwhelmingly for an SOS motion to reject the council proposals and begin a major campaign of public protest to stop the development.

SOS and local residents believe the enormous high-rise development will privatise a large section of the publicly owned seafront, destroy public sea-views and the unique coastal vista. The

meeting endorsed the SOS call for the baths to be restored as fully public sea-baths and water amenity of no more than three storeys in height.

The meeting was also supported by the local Socialist Workers Party and Green Party who both agreed to campaign against the council plan. The Green Party had initially welcomed aspects of the plan and local Green TD Ciaran Cuffe speaking at the meeting said that some element of privatisation was the only "realistic" option for the baths.

However, the angry opposition of residents to any element of the development or privatisation resulted in a clear pledge by the Greens to oppose the development in full by the end of the meeting. The Socialist Workers Party who helped set up SOS was clear the council

plan and any privatisation of the seafront must be opposed completely.

The meeting also expressed huge anger at the failure of the council to consult the public on plans for the baths development and the decision of other parties and political representatives to welcome the outrageous plan.

The Council pledged to consult the public after previous plans for a 19-storey office block or 104-bedroom hotel were stopped by big protests. The public consultation never happened and the new plans were drawn up in secret. Councillors were then shown the plans at a closed meeting. Statements endorsing the plans from Barry Andrews TD (Fianna Fail) and Council Cathaoirleach, Cllr Niamh Bhreathnach (Labour Party) followed quickly.

While Fianna Fail, the Fine Gael and the PD's have traditionally backed private developers and support moves towards privatisation of public amenities, there was particular shock at the SOS meeting that a leading member of the Labour Party also welcomed the proposal. Cllr Jane Dillon Byrne, who previously voted for a plan to put 210 exclusive apartments on the nearby Carlisle Pier site, was the only Labour Councillor to attend the meeting. She expressed "concern" at the scale of the Baths plan but was unable to tell the meeting the definitive Labour Party position.

Speakers from the floor also condemned the news that Cllr Bhreathnach was to lead a delegation of 5 councillors and 5 council officials at the taxpayers expense to

Bilbao to study seafront development!

The campaign now intends to pressure local political representatives and parties to vote down the council plans when they come before them in June. It was made clear that a commonly played game where councillors in the affected ward vote against an unpopular proposal while their colleagues in other wards vote them through would not be accepted. The meeting agreed to hold party groups collectively responsible if they voted to back the plans.

The baths plan is an example of the government policy of so-called Public Private Partnership (PPP). According to the spin, PPP is a win-win situation where private enterprise can make profits and provide public facilities at the same time.

The baths plans show that PPP is just a fancy term for the privatisation of public property. Eighty per cent of what previously was a fully public amenity would be privatised.

The ferocious opposition of local residents displayed at the SOS meeting and likely to be seen on the streets over coming weeks suggest the public can see through the PPP lie. As Bob Waddell from the Sandycove & Glasthule Residents Association said:

"How dare the council hand over public property to private enterprise...It looks like, once again, we are going to be fighting the council on the beaches."

Richard Boyd Barrett, convenor of SOS and local SWP rep.

Inner city tenants protest at building company



Since April 2004 we the residents of Golden Lane, Bride Street, and Bride Close, have been living through the demolition and reconstruction of a large apartment block right on door step.

It has been a living hell since. Rhatigan the builders are supposed to start work at 8am but start at 6am. They are

meant to finish at 6pm but that doesn't happen either which means that we have to go to the building site to try and stop them working after 6pm.

Our homes are walking with rats and are filthy dirty from all the work. One of our tenants brought Rhatigan to court because they had

knocked in her back wall and the judge granted this tenant €2,500.

But Rhatigan has appealed it to the high courts while the work is still going on out of hours.

Dublin City Council (our landlord) has done nothing about it for us and they even had the cheek to stand up in the

court and support Rhatigan.

We have had many pickets to stop the torment. We were approached by Dublin City Council workers and asked to end the pickets and the health and safety would be sorted out on Tuesday 3rd of May but we are still waiting. You can be sure this

would not happen out in Dalkey or Donnybrook, it's just that we are from the inner city they think they can treat us whatever way they like.

It's just not acceptable and we are sick and tired of living in this dirt and being walked all over.

Report on trade union activist meeting: The fight back begins here

By NIAL SMYTH (INTO, Dublin North City, Branch Committee, Personal Capacity)

Around 45 activists attended the Trade Union Activist Forum Saturday May 7th. The activists from SIPTU, INTO, IMPACT, ATGWU, IWU, RAR, Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party,

ISN, WSM met to discuss how the trade union left can build a real fight back in our unions and oppose social partnership.

Eddie Conlon (TUI) spoke on social partnership, Owen Mc Cormack (NBRU) on privatisation, Michael O'Brien (SP) on the GAMA dispute and Mick O'Reilly (ATGWU) on union recruitment. A

constructive and positive discussion followed which covered organising within the unions, partnership campaigns and the plight of migrant workers.

The meeting agreed in principle to organise a conference in September and to meet again to continue the discussion. It also agreed to provision-

ally adopt a statement of activists' concerns.

It concludes that the time has come for those who want a new direction in the unions to get organised together.

The statement aims for the forum to meet regularly and provide resources in order to:

Popularise our alternative policies in the unions;

Provide arguments, data and information to activists opposed to social partnership, privatisation and market-driven policies

Organise campaigns for the rejection of any further social partnership agreements and

Provide assistance and co-ordinate solidarity, where possible for work-

ers struggle.

Activists from across the trade union movement should get involved with this forum.

Initiatives such as the forum are important steps to overcome past infighting amongst the left and launch a credible campaign to fight social partnership.

Meanwhile, the workers are facing redundancy and have been offered only the miserly statutory redundancy payment of two weeks wages for each year of service. No villas in Portugal and tax dodges for them after years of hard work on the factory floor. SIPTU officials are hoping that 'Enterprise' Minister Michael Martin will intervene after they meet him this month. Given his record it is unlikely he will do much on the workers' behalf.

New report reveals poverty scandal

by PEADAR O'GRADY

A new report confirms that despite the Celtic Tiger boom, the FF/PD government is providing insufficient support for children, the disabled, the sick and the elderly when compared with other EU countries. Sweden, for example, is shown to spend twice the amount that Ireland does on health and social services.

The report, on "Irish Social Expenditure in a Comparative International Context" was prepared for the Combat Poverty Agency by Dr Virpi Timonen, a lecturer in Social Policy and Ageing at the Department of Social Studies at Trinity College, Dublin.

According to Combat

Poverty, Irish government spending on social services should better reflect its posi-

tion as one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

The organisation cites

universal access to health-care, and quality low cost childcare as issues requiring

most urgent attention.

The report recommends helping people who would like to start work, by offering affordable childcare, training and employment services that are flexible enough to meet the particular needs of different groups such as lone parents and people with disabilities.

The report also calls for getting rid of means testing for social welfare benefits.

It also argues for a review of tax-breaks on private pensions, as these breaks favour the better off.

This favouritism was also highlighted in a report published by The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) in April of this year.

It found that the government spends more on tax-

breaks for private pensions - which benefit the wealthiest third - than it does on social welfare pensions for the remaining two thirds of its elderly citizens.

Reporting on the ESRI's conclusions, the Irish Times (May 5th) stated that "the ESRI found that the risk of pensioners living in poverty increased during the 1990s", and that "pensioner poverty rates are higher in the Republic than in most other OECD (rich) countries."

This information shows that the government could and should double the State pension immediately, and lift elderly former workers, who have worked and cared for others all their lives, out of poverty.

STUDENTS AGAINST POVERTY

Students against Poverty is going from strength to strength. Despite a lack of resources we have managed to fill one 45 seater coach for the protests against the G8 in July.

We have raised over £700 by collecting at events such as the May Day demonstration and our own series of events across Belfast. All of these have ended with large support and turnout. On one day alone we managed to raise £400 by standing protesting

and collecting on the streets.

Our next major event is a fundraiser gig on the 13th of May in St Paul's on the Shaw's Rd. There will be live music and entertainment and all proceeds will go towards Students against Poverty and transport to the G8.

After considerable debate within the group, we have decided to protest in Scotland on a wide range of issues such as war, poverty and age discrimination.

Despite the fact that some of our members cannot make the trip to the G8 summit, they will be joining the Make Poverty History demonstrations which have been planned for the 4th of June in Belfast.

For more information on Students against Poverty, e-mail students_against_poverty@hotmail.com or ring Sean on 07717123462

Sean Mitchell and Conor Donnelly, Students against Poverty

Majority want to give 'non-nationals' the right to stay and work, poll shows

By SARA O'ROURKE

On Sunday May 1st, A Sunday Tribune/Millward Brown IMS national opinion poll revealed both heartening and sobering statistics in relation to attitudes in Ireland towards immigration.

The poll showed that:

■ 80% agree that 'it is good that children in Ireland today are growing up in a multicultural society'.

■ 51% agreed 'that it was great to have non-nationals living in their local community'.

■ 66% showed support 'for allowing non-nationals waiting for residence application decisions in Ireland to stay in the country'.

■ 48% agreed that non-nationals should be allowed to work in Ireland while waiting for their application to be processed.

■ 26% strongly agreed.

■ 11% disagreed with this.

■ 43% of people in the over 65 age-group believe 'non-nationals should receive the same social welfare benefits as everyone else'.

These statistics, while showing that there is more acceptance than many had believed, also show a conflicting attitude.

On the question should the government restrict the number of non-nationals it accepts into the country, 44% agreed, 35% agreed strongly while only 8% disagreed and 6% disagreed strongly.

The word non-national dehumanises the people who do in fact have nationality in a country.

The recent coverage and success of campaigns like the one that brought Kunle back to



Recent protest for migrants' rights

Ireland put a face on an issue.

When we talk of abstractions like non-nationals it is easy to forget that a non-national can be for example a

mother of two children or a boy studying for his leaving cert.

So when we see a statistic where 79% said the govern-

ment should restrict the number of non-nationals it accepts into the country we have to ask why.

Festus Ikeotuonye from The Civil Rights Movement of Ireland (CRMI) in a recent letter talked about the changing Ireland and the anxieties that come with that change. He says that 'the change in Ireland has nothing to do with immigrants. Immigrants are merely the pun in that change not the cause of it'.

He goes on to say that 'the reality is that it is the German cars and mid Atlantic mimicry accents...that these geopolitical trends and drivers including international finance capital are far more powerful in modifying countries than even the unlimited immigration that people fear.'

Harney's plans face opposition from nurses

Delegate report from INO Conference

Full story from front page

Just days before conference opened, it was announced that pay increases due in June under the Benchmarking and Sustaining Progress deal might be withheld from INO members for what is deemed to be

'non co-operation with change' in the development of the role of the healthcare assistant.

While the issue of the healthcare assistant is high on the agenda, what nurses are calling for is time to consider the issue.

The charge is bogus - it is outside the terms of Sustaining Progress anyway

what we are calling for is

time to consider the issue.

The threat is understood by nurses as a retaliatory measure by government for the very successful "Enough is Enough Campaign".

Will the government back down? June will be interesting.

A second emergency motion was tabled and unanimously passed rejecting the HSE directive to push trolleys into wards and out of the A&E

departments.

This, it was argued, is a clear attempt to hide the crisis by piling the pressure on the already overcrowded wards rather than deal with it.

Delegates spoke with anger of closed beds i.e. 152 in the Dublin area alone, 60 in Galway.

The motion called for a properly funded capital development programme to deliver

the additional beds required to eliminate the crisis. It vowed to continue the pressure on government by continuing the daily trolley count.

The crisis will be reviewed at the Special Conference in September next.

By the end Harney faced heckles and rumbling anger. September is shaping up to be D-Day.

End war and poverty: Belfast G8 Mobilisation

The Make Poverty History campaign, while a fantastic initiative, has decided to concentrate on the question of poverty in Africa and the third world and is ignoring the importance of the war in Iraq arguing that it is a distraction from the question of world poverty. MPH has gone so far to exclude the Stop the War Coalition from the campaign.

The question of Blair and Brown's complicity in promoting and implementing policies

which deepen global and local poverty is something the MPH campaigners are also not commenting on.

If these methods and arguments were allowed to go unchallenged it is possible that the anti-capitalist movement would be severely weakened, however the setting up of a wider alliance should go some way to keep the key issues at the forefront of the campaign.

G8 mobilisation has been organised around the following

key points, that the war on Iraq is still the central issue confronting the anti-capitalist movement (the results in the British elections particularly George Galloway's win should prove this beyond a doubt), that racism is fostered by the present drive to continue the occupation of Iraq and by Bush and Blair's neo-liberal policies which deepen poverty at home creating a breeding ground for racist scapegoating.

In Northern Ireland the idea

of not connecting local poverty to global poverty while Brown introduces top-up fees, civil service job cuts and cuts to the education budget seems bizarre.

While Blair commits the country to nuclear power stations, the environment and the need for sustainable development must also be a central theme of protesting against the G8.

G8 Mobilisation will be organising a series of events in

the lead up the protests and will be part of building the Make Poverty History rally in Belfast on June 4th.

■ For more information contact Damien Kavanagh (President of NUS/USI students) on 07834 741071 or Liz Lordan on 07704 575887.

■ For information on Buses call Gordon on 07742 531617

Technology and the disabled

By MARTIN O'SULLIVAN

There has been much fanfare made by various companies who claim to be improving accessibility through technology for people with disabilities. These companies would have us believe that the market place will provide solutions to the problems which they have created. There are now a plethora of products marketed at people with disabilities. These make various claims on how they can improve the lives of those who purchase them.

However the majority of the time the products are over priced and less effective than products available to non-disabled people. They are a solution to problems introduced by the manufacturer of the mainstream products. Many organisations have campaigned for tax rebates for disabled people to allow them to afford products. This has the effect of letting designers of everything from cars to mobile phones externalise the cost of accessibility onto taxpayers. It means that a lot of these companies can increase the price knowing that the disabled person will have to foot the bill. Many people have to hold fundraisers just to purchase simple, necessary products to live as full a life as possible.

Giving tax rebates to disabled people just increases prices and leads to a slower delivery of products. One example of this is the provision of accessible cars. To purchase an accessible car you first have to purchase a non-accessible car, then pay to make it accessible for you. Usually this costs over €1000, which is just a little more than the VAT you get back on the car.

What would make a real difference in the provision of products for people with disabilities is forcing the manufacturers to incorporate accessibility into design. This would have two immediate effects. Firstly, it will increase their awareness of people with disabilities. Secondly, this will increase the employment of people with disabilities, as they will have to be brought in as consultants. The larger affect of this will be to lower the cost of employing a person who has a disability, thus removing the excuse from companies that they can't afford the cost.

Abu Ghraib torture case thrown out of court in the US

By DAVE LYNCH

TWO stories in the past week expose how the war in Iraq continues to have repercussions in the West.

The case against Private Lynndie England was sensationally thrown out of court last week.

England because the infamous face that stared out from the horrific pictures of torture from the Abu Ghraib jail in Iraq.

The world has seen her in a series of photos: grinning behind a pile of naked Iraqi prisoners and holding an Iraqi detainee on a leash at Abu Ghraib jail.

The soldier had pleaded guilty at a court martial under a plea "deal" that would have reduced her sentence to a maximum of 11 years, but most likely much less.

Through this deal there was going to be no evidence that the torture had been given the go-ahead by the military top brass in the US Army.

But that is despite the fact that Pte England has previously said she was ordered to pose for the pictures by officers higher up the chain of command, and that she was told to "soften up" prisoners for interrogations.

But in a move that shocked military legal experts, a judge rejected the plea agreement and declared a mistrial.

He said testimony from Charles Graner, already convicted over his role in the abuse, suggested that Pte



Private Lynndie England and abused prisoners in Abu Ghraib

England did not genuinely believe she was guilty.

This points to a conscious attempt by the US military to prevent the evi-

dence of organised sanctioned torture of Iraqi's being heard in open court.

Supporters say 22-year-old Pte England, who grew up in a West

Virginia trailer park, is a scapegoat.

After leaving school, she joined the US Army reserves to help pay her way through college.

Tony Blair faces court action over Iraq war

In Britain, Tony Blair was given a taste of the huge anger over Iraq as relatives of British soldiers killed in Iraq took the first step to court in a series of actions over the war.

They delivered a letter to Downing Street, demanding an independent public inquiry into the legality of the war and the sending of troops into a conflict on what they say were false pretences.

Mr Blair was given a 14-day deadline to agree to an inquiry before the families make an application for a judicial review under the Human Rights Act.

"Each of our clients' loved ones were killed when they had been told by you that they were fighting a war that was fully justified in international law in order to disarm a country that held weapons of mass destruction,"

said the letter, drawn up by the Birmingham-based Public Interest Lawyers.

The letter was delivered to No. 10 in the name of 10 families, including Reg Keys, whose son, Thomas, a military policeman, was killed in Iraq. Mr Keys stood against Mr Blair in Sedgefield in the election.

Last week, the widow of Coldstream Guardsman Anthony

Wakefield who was killed by a roadside bomb near Amara, south-eastern Iraq, said of Mr Blair: "If he had never sent them over there, Anthony would still be alive."

Rose Gentle, whose 19-year-old son, Gordon, was killed in Basra last June, told the Guardian newspaper that she was determined to take Mr Blair to court for "war crimes".

Criminalising dissent: ASBOs and the Criminal Justice Bill



Hotpress has launched an online petition against the Bill see www.hotpress.com/politics/the-message/. Labour youth, USI, Ogra SF, the SWP and others are campaigning together against it.

The Criminal Justice Bill will be proceeding to the Oireachtas Select Committee on Justice. At that time the minister will publish his proposals to introduce Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

These measures will increase garda powers at a time when they are under scrutiny for alleged abuses of power and misconduct. In certain cases this will effectively make the gardai the prosecutor, judge and jury.

ASBOs

Justice Minister Michael McDowell TD wants to criminalise youth through the introduction of ASBOs.

Anti-social behaviour is defined as "likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress". This definition is so vague it could be applied to almost any activity.



ASBOs: Criminalising young people

ASBOs in Britain have banned behaviour that is not criminal in itself such as playing football or being sarcastic. McDowell's ASBOs will draw more young people into the criminal justice system. Attention should be directed instead at the root causes of "anti-social behaviour" such as under-resourced education, lack of playgrounds, public swimming pools, non-alcoholic venues, youth clubs being an example.

Increasing power for the gardai

New measures in the Criminal

Justice Bill will give greater powers to the gardai.

They will increase detention periods without charge from 12 to 24 hours. The Criminal Justice Bill proposes to give gardai the power to issue search warrants and to issue on-the-spot fines.

The gardai will also have the power to take DNA samples through saliva and gum swabs, information which can be kept for 12 months. McDowell also plans to introduce numerous amendments to the bill at committee stage including the ASBOs and electronic tagging.

As previously with the Public

Order Act, McDowell is claiming to be targeting drunken yobs with this new legislation.

However one of the earliest uses of the Public Order Act was against striking Dublin Airport workers.

It was also used to arrest demonstrators on student protests and the Mayday Reclaim the Streets in 2002.

Most were later acquitted but if this latest bill had been law there is no doubt the police would have used it against both strikers and protesters.

Not only does this bill attack our constitutional rights, obstruct justice and encourage an unaccountable police force it has at its root the criminalisation of dissent and disagreement.

A new round of attacks on youth and civil liberties is underway.

■ Please support this campaign.
 ■ Sat 13th 11am-3pm at the GPO - leaflet against the Criminal Justice Bill. Wed, May 18th 7.30pm, Dublin, ASBO and Criminal Justice Bill public meeting. Sat 21st 2pm Temple bar - Busk against the Bill-protest - contact 086 1523542 for details. Called by Campaign against ASBOs and the Criminal Justice Bill

Togo, Africa - Protests in support of opposition

By Melisa Halpin

The recent presidential election results in Togo have been followed by a wave of protests, strikes and riots.

At least 100 have been killed and over 20,000 refugees are currently fleeing a military which is on the rampage against any sign of opposition.

Opposition supporters exploded on to the streets last week after the authorities announced that Faure Gnassingbe, the son of the former dictator, had won with 60 percent of the vote.

His father, Gnassingbe Eyadema died in February after four decades of tyrannical rule. Immediately, the corrupt military, eager to keep their power, tried to install his son as the new dictator.

Popular protests and international sanctions forced their hand and resulted in the elections at the end of April.

Opposition candidate Emmanuel Bob Akitan, officially credited with 38 percent of the vote, said that gross fraud had taken place.

He declared himself the genuine president and called on his supporters to fight on to victory.

They took to the streets of the country's capital, Lome, erecting barricades and engaging in pitch battles with the military. The protests failed to develop into a full scale uprising as the security forces waded in.

In just 36 hours over 100 were killed and the people of Lome were terrorised by soldiers and police determined to quash every sign of resistance.

The brutality of this repression is evidenced by the 20,000 and rising refugees that are fleeing out of Togo into the neighbouring countries of Ghana and Benin.

For the moment, it has had the desired effect.

On May 4, Faure Gnassingbe was sworn in as the new president, although he has been forced to offer an olive branch to his opposition and invite them to form a government of "national reconciliation".

This move is being hailed by the regional power, Nigeria, and both the US and France as a historic step towards democracy. The French government even offered to restore aid to its former colony if the "democratic deficiencies" of the past 40 years are ironed out!

With the opposition fleeing the cities and indeed the country it looks like the new regime is proceeding in a very similar fashion to the old regime.

France will look to opportunities to profiteer out of this situation while it pays lip service to caring about true democracy. The pattern is becoming all too familiar.

PPPs: Public Private Partners or Plundering the Public Purs

It is claimed that "Public Private Partnerships" (PPPs) lead to more efficient and better public services. But the evidence shows that they are boosting profits for the private sector at the expense of workers.

By RORY HEARNE

In recent years the FF/PD government and local authorities have promoted the increased involvement of the private sector in the provision of public services and infrastructure through Public Private Partnerships (PPPs). PPPs now exist in road, waste, rail, health, justice, school and housing sectors.

The government claims that the private sector provides better and more efficient services than the public sector. However, evidence from the Northern Ireland, the UK and from recent PPPs in Ireland demonstrates the wastefulness and negative impacts of private-sector provision on both public sector workers and public service users.

Take for example the Ringsend sewage plant. It was developed by ABA consortium (Ascon, Black & Veatch and Anglia Water) as a PPP with Dublin City Council. The plant emits noxious odours across the southeast of Dublin and is the subject of legal action by the European Commission. The City Council had to invest €1 million of public money in "odour-abatement" measures. But Anglia Water has a 20-year contract to operate the plant and has set up an Irish subsidiary to tender for other sewage treatment plants.

Then there are road tolls. €8 billion will be spent on new national roads up to 2008. €1.2 billion will come from the private sector through PPP projects, all of which will be recouped from tolls, such as the M3 between Clonee and Kells, Co Meath and the Kinnegad-Athlone motorway.

The government promotes PPPs as a milder form of privatisation and right-wing Thatcherite neo-liberalism. Some trade unions have bought into this argument and accepted PPPs as part of the last national pay talks. PPPs are as bad as outright privatisation. Private companies are making huge profits from direct state subsidies and stealth charges like tolls, bin charges and increased electricity bills. It is PAYE workers and working class communities that are paying for the profits for private companies. Take for example the utility group National Toll Roads (NTR) who operate the M50 tolls. NTR made profits of more than €18 million last year.

Turnover at its combined roads, waste and energy business grew by close to 30 per cent in 2004 to €273.6 million from €211 million the previous year. Its share price rose from €17.33 to €22.50 in 2004. Big profits came from its share in the private wind energy business (Airtricity), its Greenstar waste management business (€81.8 million in turnover in 2004) and its road tolls generated €45.5 million in revenue in 2004, compared with €35.6 million the previous year.

PPPs and privatisation are an attack on working people and the poor. They are depriving us of access to affordable and quality public services.

Across the world it's the same. Governments, the EU, the IMF, the World Bank and World Trade Organisation push through right-wing neo-liberal policies for the benefit of the rich and huge corporations. In Latin America mass protest movements have overthrown right-wing neo-liberal governments. Opposition is now emerging in working class communities in Ireland. Over the next three issues Socialist Worker will look at this neo-liberal agenda using PPPs in social housing and local area re-development and the new opposition from working class communities in Dublin in the form of Tenants First and other initiatives.



Call this 'value for money'?

In 1998, Beaumont Hospital entered a PPP agreement with the private sector to build a multi-storey car park. The total cost of construction was €8.6 m and the developer made use of substantial tax breaks.

The Comptroller and Auditor General (November 2002) found that: "The method of financing the project involved the state in considerable tax expenditure. The analysis indicates that public finances were worse off by between €9m and €13m."

In 2000, there was a PPP between the Department of Education and the private sector to design and build five new secondary schools on publicly-owned sites and to maintain and operate the facilities for 25-years. The Department estimated the PPP would save around 6%. But the Comptroller and Auditor General (June 2004) found the projected cost of "The Grouped Schools Project" was going to be 8% - 13% higher than traditional methods. Another winner then! It will cost the Irish taxpayer an extra €30m or more for the PPP option.

PPPs in Social housing

Through the 1980s and 90s, financial support by central government for local authorities was cut. Services were reduced. Social housing areas suffered delayed maintenance and repairs. But, that neglect now has to be paid for by expensive large-scale estate renewal.

In the past, this would have been done directly under Government financing through the Remedial Works Scheme or the Area Renewal Programmes. But now the Department of the Environment refuses to fund social housing renewal costing more than €20 m. Instead, the Government encourages local authorities to enter Public-Private Partnerships.

Under PPPs, the local authority signs a deal with a private developer. The developer draws up plans for estate renewal, takes over the land and buildings, organises finance for the regeneration, builds a certain number of social-housing units and community facilities, then returns them to the local authority. This sounds like a good deal - new social housing at "no cost" to the state. But the developer also builds a far larger number of private dwellings - and the profits from these can be huge.

At a time of acute housing need and lengthening waiting lists for social housing in Dublin, the PPP for the redevelopment of Fatima Mansions resulted in the number of "social housing" units being CUT from 394 to just 150. However, 601 private "owner-occupied" dwellings were built (only 70 of which were so called "affordable" units).

The original Dublin City Council (DCC) Framework Plan for St. Michael's estate in Dublin envisaged a reduction from 346 social housing units to just 80, while 850 owner-occupied dwellings (including 220 "afford-

able") would be built. All this at a time when DCC claims that it has no land for building social housing.

The real cost of PPPs

So, is there any sense in all this? In terms of annual budgets, it does allow the local authority to undertake renewal at no "current cost". But this "bean counting" accountancy approach to running the city is a nonsense. In reality, the PPP is at tremendous real cost because it involves giving away the value of publicly owned land. At today's prices, this can be enormous. It's like paying for your roof repairs by giving away your house!

Social housing estates do need to be renewed. Local-authority neglect has left many in an appalling state. However, the real question is "How does the involvement of a private developer (the PPP partner) make for efficiency in social housing renewal?" After all, the private developer hasn't been needed in the past and the private developer's profitability also has to be paid for by someone. Why do they need to be involved at all and from where do they take their cut? This could come in three possible ways.

The private sector's cut

a) The private sector might be able to create cost efficiencies in the management of renewal compared to in-house management by local authority staff. This argument for PPPs is a sad vote of no confi-

dence in the local authority's own management abilities and runs counter to some of the excellent renovation work already done by Dublin City Council at Bridgefoot Street and Ballybough.

b) Conceivably, the private sector might gain access to cheaper finance than that available to public authorities. But given the public-sector's high credit rating, this is highly unlikely.

c) By cost cutting in terms of the quality of labour and/or materials used. This is quite possible, but gives us great cause for concern over the quality of the final product created under a PPP arrangement.

In fact, it is most likely that the PPP private-sector partner's profitability will have to be paid as an additional cost.

d) In the case of social housing renewal, this is likely to be met by the arrangements underlying the direct transfer of public-sector land to the PPP partner (e.g. Fatima Mansions PPP). This value transfer is an easy way of disguising the real costs of PPPs and concealing the degree to which the private sector is being effectively subsidised. The land is transferred to the private-sector developer at a cost far below its real value.

A good example is the original DCC Framework Plan (2004) for redeveloping the 5.5 hectare St. Michael's estate. The Plan would have involved the site being transferred to the private sector in return for only 80 units of social housing (worth €16 million) and

ships se?

ence shows that they

some community facilities.

The Framework Plan envisaged the developer building 550 units of profit-making private dwellings. If the developer charged €100-130,000 per unit for the embodied land element of each private dwelling, it would represent a give-away to the developer of between €55 and €70 million! Sensibly, the Council threw out this plan by the DCC officials last summer.

Even if DCC had sold the site outright, it could have done far better. The value of the land at St. Michael's estate has since been estimated by DCC itself to be worth at least €80 million!

Cut out the middle man

Although the Framework Plan has been scrapped, it shows the blinkered short-term nature of neo-liberal thinking in local authority circles. Eighty social housing units (plus some community buildings) for land worth €80 million? Some deal. Some public service! Instead, local authorities are promoting right-wing Thatcherite neo-liberal projects such as PPPs for the benefit of private-sector profits. It is the user of the services, the employees forced into pay cuts and more intensive work practices and the PAYE taxpayer who end up paying the price.

The reality is that public finances are in good enough shape to fund regeneration directly and reject the "middle man" developer. Even if the Government was totally broke, interest rates are now so low that it would make far better sense for the state to borrow money more cheaply than private operators and undertake redevelopment directly. This would give greater control over what is built and would retain public ownership of the land for future generations.

PPPs in social housing involve a massive transfer of real wealth from the public to the private-sector developer. This is little short of public "asset stripping" on a grand scale. No wonder the FF/PD Government is so keen on PPPs! Their party paymasters in the property world must be rubbing their hands with glee at the prospect of more PPPs.

The trade unions and the Labour Party, the traditional defenders of public services and working class rights have accepted PPPs. It has been left up to the tenants in places like St Michael's estate to fight the sell off. As socialists we actively support such community struggles and defend the idea of increasing investment in public services. We utterly oppose the Thatcherite robbery that is neoliberal privatisation. People must come before profits.

ATTACKS ON THE PUBLIC SECTOR:

What kind of partnership is this?

By a not-so-civil servant

WORKERS in the public sector are facing a fresh wave of attacks from the government in the form of threats not to pay wage increases due under the Sustaining Progress and Benchmarking agreements. The Departments of Health, Social Welfare and most recently, Communications, have all threatened to block the increases due to staff on June 1st this year.

In the case of nurses, the Health Service Executive has warned that unless nursing unions agree to the introduction of a new 'yellow-pack' healthcare assistant grade, their 3.5% pay increase due next month will not be paid. It is no coincidence that this latest threat came only weeks after large-scale protest action against the appalling state of the country's A&E units. Mary Harney is sending a clear message to nurses that protests against the steady run-down of our health service will be punished. However, nursing unions have stated that any attempt to block the pay increases will be met with strike action.

Meanwhile, some 800 staff at the Department of Communications have also had their pay increase threatened. Managers say it is because workers haven't filled in their "role profile" forms. A role profile form is basically a job description and a civil servant's "performance" is measured using it.

Performance-related pay

"Role profiles" are a part of the Performance Management & Development System (PMDS). "PMDS" is the latest management mantra across the civil service. In practice, PMDS opens the door to performance-related pay. Staff are to be given a rating from 1 to 5 on their end-of-year reviews. The rating received will determine whether a civil servant is eligible for promotion or an increase on their pay scale (traditionally a means of encouraging



Nurses face sanctions for highlighting A&E overcrowding

staff to remain in the civil service where salaries are lower than in the private sector).

The Department of Finance is seeking to have a "forced distributions rating" used, whereby supervisors have a quota for each rating. This would mean a certain number of staff would always have their annual pay increment blocked.

Laughably, an "upward feedback" system is to be introduced where staff would rate their supervisor! The question: "would you recommend your supervisor for a pay increase or promotion?" is unlikely to be included.

CSO figures disguise poverty pay

Last week new figures from the Central Statistics Office showed that public sector pay is rising twice as fast as national agreement pay rises in the private sector. However, the CSO figures include massive consultant and senior management

salaries with the low pay of junior clerical staff like secretaries. The top 5 managers in my workplace are paid more than the total of 20 clerical staff in my grade or 30 civil service cleaners!

Lumping all public servants together to find the 'average' weekly wage, disguises the poverty wages many civil servants take home because of rotten national pay agreements. Highlighting the overall wage difference between public and private sectors hides the similar low pay in both the public and private sectors. This is designed by the government to divide workers in these sectors from campaigning together against low pay and poor conditions.

What kind of partnership?

In the past year, the Department of Finance has made significant changes to the rights and entitlements of civil servants. While civil service staff recruited before 1st

April 2004 can retire between age 60 and 65, staff recruited after that date cannot retire (on full pension) before they reach 65. Furthermore, those recruited since October 2003 are no longer entitled to the 1 hour bank time.

Since the most recent partnership agreement, workers in An Post have not been paid a cent of the increases due to them. Citing "inability to pay", An Post now owes workers an average 17% increase. While the government throws some €900 million at a badly planned decentralisation drive, it refuses to compensate workers in An Post.

In addition, the Department of Finance has re-issued the 1932 Circular barring many civil servants from participating in political activity. No benchmarking exercise has been carried out to "value" or compensate us for this erosion of our civil rights. The latest "partnership" decision has been to erect potentially hazardous mobile phone masts on the roofs of civil service buildings without informing workers, unions or local communities.

An alternative to partnership

At the end of this year the government will begin working on a new benchmarking review and Sustaining Progress agreement. Union officials will tell us there is no alternative but to watch conditions continue to be eaten away. This time, however, union activists who see through "partnership" need to get organised.

The official leadership of the union movement are not able to reflect workplace anger and now act as if they are a state agency for managing and diverting anger.

To fight low pay and build an alternative to the sham of partnership, activists from across union branches, unions, and different sectors of the economy need to start building rank and file anti-partnership groups. This will be the beginning of sustaining progress on our terms.

For a new paper reflecting the new movements: Support the Socialist Worker financial appeal: please subscribe now

Socialist Worker is your paper. It's the alternative voice, the voice of socialism and struggle.

Whether it's nurses protesting against under-funding, asylum seekers on hunger strike against their deportation, campaigns against the Bin Tax or support

for the Iraqi resistance and opposition to the US use of the Shannon 'Warport', Socialist Worker is giving the real opinions, the real voice of those movements.

The lack of a political alternative both North and South to oppose privatisation, war and

racism has never been more obvious.

Socialist Worker is committed to building such a new alternative left voice, building support for the movements from below, and building toward a world without capitalism, the other world that we believe is possible and more necessary

in 2005 than ever before.

Currently Socialist Worker is a completely voluntary production. We get no advertising finance and it is funded completely by sales.

In order to fulfil the potential that exists in this current period and build support for the

projects outlined above we need a higher quality paper and ultimately much higher sales.

Central to this will be raising the finance to cover a salary for a person to work full-time on the paper.

With this in mind we appeal to you to take out a subscription for

Socialist Worker, donate whatever sum of money (large or small) to the paper fund, and if possible take extra copies of the paper to sell to work colleagues, friends, class-mates etc.

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Socialist Worker

Editorial

Web: www.swp.ie Email: swped@eircom.net Phone: 01 8722682

George Galloway victory an inspiration for new left

The historic results achieved by Respect in the British elections show what is now possible for the radical left. Respect, which the SWP in Britain is part of, never stood in the General Elections before — yet former Labour MP Galloway received 35.9% of the vote and Respect candidates came second in Birmingham Sparkbrook, East Ham and West Ham (Salma Yaqoob 27.5%, Abdul Khaliq Mian 20.7%, Lindsey German 19.5%).

Respect offered a real voice of opposition for those angered over the Iraq war, privatisation of public services and racism but who want to fight for a fairer and more equal society.

This result reflects the increasing willingness of people to consider voting for new forces. However, the overall turnout at 61% was the second lowest since 1918. A trend of low turnouts was also visible in the recent local and by-elections here in Ireland.

Fausto Bertinotti, national secretary of Rifondazione Comunista, said that Galloway's victory: "shows the need for a real left alternative in (the UK), as in all of Europe..and marks the victory of Respect as a political experiment — its original combination of different political projects and the idea of a multicultural society".

Here in Ireland the Labour Party is about to vote at its national conference for a pre-electoral pact with the right-wing Fine Gael (or to leave open the possibility of coalition with either FG or FF after the election). Mick O' Reilly and the ATGWU have called on the Labour Party to declare: "an end to the stranglehold of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael over Irish politics" and to "not enter into coalition as a minority partner in either a FG or FF-led government". Mick O' Reilly is right. Respect shows the possibilities for success of a left coalition combining the traditions of old Labour with the new radical left movements.

Therefore there is a need to construct a new force in Ireland, as Respect has done in Britain that can lead a left opposition to social partnership and have O Reilly's principles at the heart of it. Initiatives such as the Trade union activist forum can begin that process. This is a project all on the radical left in Ireland should be working towards.

Nurses' strike would save lives

Nurse delegates at the recent Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) conference in Killarney heckled Mary Harney. The nurses were incensed when she tried to deny the need for more beds and staff to solve the current crisis in the health service. At the conference nurses reported that hundreds of beds remain unused in closed public wards around the country. But Harney is only interested in opening private hospitals where services can be bought and sold for profit.

Harney's dangerous solution to the A&E crisis is to squeeze trolleys into the overcrowded public wards and use low paid healthcare assistants to replace nurses.

When nurses objected to these plans Harney attacked them and cancelled their 3.5% pay rise due in June. Harney said that nurses were already well paid. A report in *The Village* magazine highlighted that nurses are the worst paid professionals in the entire public service. As a result hospitals have been recruiting as far a field as the Philippines and India they are so desperate for nurses.

The INO voted overwhelmingly to urgently open new beds and to take "whatever action necessary" to ensure nurses are properly paid.

Harney has been more interested recently in selling off the planned second terminal in Dublin Airport than she is in doing her job sorting out the health crisis.

Bertie Ahern has spent €100 million this year on spin-doctors but cannot find the money for the 2,000 real doctors he promised.

Every community, trade union and activist should unite and support a nurses' strike to win decent pay, open beds and stop Harney selling off the health service to the highest bidder.

Memorial to Connolly covered in graffiti after 'Reclaim the Streets'

We were extremely dismayed to see that the memorial to James Connolly was covered in graffiti arising from the 'Reclaim the Streets' protest on May Day.

It is not clear what the political message of the tags and anarchy signs is supposed to convey, but the net effect is that the memorial has been subject to a hostile attack.

This could not be



Daubing graffiti

more inappropriate. In all of Irish history, Connolly, along with Jim Larkin, was the greatest champion of May Day as being a day of internationalism

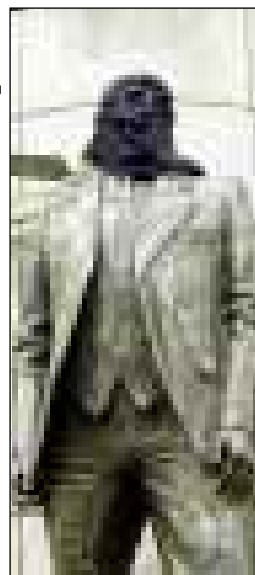
and workers' rights.

He was an outspoken opponent of the Great War and gave his life in 1916 in the hope that 'Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord'.

The trade union movement of Ireland quite rightly continues

to hold James Connolly in great respect, by their ill-considered action, those 'Reclaim the Streets' activists responsible for the graffiti can only have alienated themselves from this potentially supportive constituency.

Conor Kostick, Lorcan Collins, Co-authors of *The Easter Rising* (O'Brien Press). See www.1916rising.com



Connolly's statue masked

COMMENT

Debate: Building an Alternative Left

By ANDY STOREY

The recent debates about the need for an 'alternative left' in Ireland are timely and important. The articles by Connolly, Breathnach and Derwin, and by Hearne (*Socialist Worker*, 26/3-12/4) are good starting points and good contributions to the debate in their own right.

What follows is not intended as a critique, rather a set of questions that any emergent Left alliance (as good a word as any) needs to address. The questions are especially directed towards people who would place themselves in the radical Left camp, and probably have less relevance for Anarchists and others.

There is, as Rory Hearne has argued, a 'new opposition' apparent in events such as the enormous anti-war marches of 15th February 2003. But the bottom line is that even those enormous numbers failed to stop the war — the only spanner thrown in the war machine in Ireland came about as a result of direct, non-violent action, not mass mobilisation.

Perhaps a mobilisation is never wasted — important energies and ideas are always released, with who knows what consequences in the future? But there is no denying the profoundly disempowering effect — for many — of the war's having proceeded anyway. Numerous people have come to the conclusion that there is simply no point in protesting. We can disagree with the sentiment but we should not ignore its existence.

Upsurge in votes

Similar issues arise regarding the claimed upsurge in votes for independent and socialist candidates in recent elections. This is true to some extent, but (a) it is probably, in part, a simple protest vote devoid of any necessary commitment to left-wing politics, (b) it is overshadowed by the numbers not voting at all and (c) can those elected effect meaningful change?

This is not intended to be a counsel of despair, but we do need to be realistic about where we stand. There are signs of hope — the scale of the anti-war marches and the support for left-leaning politicians need to be contextualised, not dismissed — but I doubt that we are on the brink of a revolutionary breakthrough any time soon. New spaces are certainly being opened up (not least through Labour and other parties moving ever further to the right and abandoning their traditional constituencies) but filling them with a viable, left-wing political project is going to be



GAMA strikers on the march

tricky.

So, what to do? The points made in the earlier articles — the need for meetings, discussions, participatory practices, trust and openness — are all valid. But are they enough to gain critical mass, and thus help counteract a generalised sense of helplessness and cynicism? To do so there is a need to make an imaginative connection with a large swathe of popular opinion, to convince significant numbers of people that change is indeed possible and victories realisable. The battle has to be won in people's minds before it can be won in practice.

Language and presentation

And this is where language and presentation assume particular importance. The medium may not be as important as the message, but it is important nonetheless. Communication needs to be urgent and accessible. Personally, I have no problem with phrases such as "imperialist wars and global capitalism", but I would query their mobilising capability outside our own circles. I don't think it is pandering to populism to simply express opposition to war (we can analyse it as imperialist, but we don't need to call it that) and to corporate greed (a less precise analytical term than global capitalism, but one with greater popular resonance).

Analogous issues arise regarding ways of working. Standard political meetings where the 'usual suspects' deliver traditional speeches are all very well, but we

need to work out new ways of connecting with mass audiences, including, I would argue, the use of theatre and music — so-called 'Third World' movements have important lessons to teach us in that regard. Even the European Social Forum in London last October — a meeting point for much of the 'new' anti-capitalist movement — generally stuck with the tired, speaker-heavy platform approach.

One of the commonest complaints about the anti-war protests, well supported as they were, was the sheer number of speakers, oftentimes repeating each other. If nothing else, if a Left alliance is to work, participating organisations might need to set aside their desires to be represented and speak at each and every event. For most current meetings of the Left, the vast bulk of the public, if they ever showed up, would be bored senseless and/or totally confused at the arcane (to outsiders) points being argued over by different Left organisations.

This is not a plea for New Labour-style sheen and spin. It is a plea for a willingness to be imaginative and genuinely concerned to reach out to an audience beyond those who already more or less agree with us. Its is a plea to place less emphasis on having the correct 'line' and more on capturing the essential spirit of the issues at hand. If we can do that, we stand a chance of connecting not only with the 'new opposition' but also with the currently demoralised and apathetic.

Andy Storey teaches in the Centre for Development Studies in UCD

CELEBRATIONS OF VE DAY AND THE END OF WW2: 60 years on, who will be dancing in the streets?



Behind the headlines, big upheavals shook Europe

Conor Kostick takes a look at the revolutionary events in Greece and Bulgaria around the end of the Second World War to see what happened to the hopes of ordinary people in a new era and what was behind the world leaders' celebrations on the May 9th

Sixty years ago, on 8 May 1945, the Second World War officially came to an end in Europe. But the celebrations for Victory in Europe (VE) Day at the time were as ambiguous as the war itself. Europe stood at a crossroads. On the one hand there was widespread relief at the end of the mass slaughter and the threat of fascism. On the other hand there was a fundamental conflict of interest between soldiers and workers and the ruling classes as to the shape of the world to come.

All over Europe millions of people felt the time had come to create a better society. In some countries this took the form of a revolutionary upsurge. The logic of driving Nazi's and collaborators from their position was leading to the appearance of new democratic forms of organisation. In those parts of Europe where resistance bands had been at work for some time they began taking things into their own hands. Committees were set up to control workplaces and administer localities. Even in Germany, where workers' organisations had been obliterated by twelve years of fascism, the arriving soldiers found, 'local Left committees running factories and municipalities which the owners and masters had deserted, via spontaneously created shop committees and councils.'

Revolutionary optimism

The highest points of this revolutionary optimism were in Greece

and Bulgaria. When Germany withdrew from Greece, the Communist Party, through its organisation the National Liberation Front (EAM) had two million supporters out of a population of seven million and effectively controlled most of the country. But British troops entered promptly and ordered the EAM to disarm, shooting protesters and bombing working class districts in Athens.

The ability of the EAM to fight back was hampered by the Churchill-Stalin deal in which Russia and Britain gave each other a free hand in their respective spheres of influence. Pressure from Moscow led to the EAM searching for compromise from opponents who were determined to crush them. Churchill said at the time that he 'was very much obliged to Marshal Stalin for not having taken too great an interest in Greek affairs.'

After a vicious civil war Britain successfully weakened and isolated the Greek Communist Party and was able to withdraw in 1949.

Bulgaria

A similar picture could be seen in Bulgaria. There the defeat of the Axis powers resulted in the disintegration of the army. Soldiers councils were set up, officers demoted, red flags hoisted and saluting abolished.

The Russian army supported a Fatherland Front government led by General Kimon Georgiev, who

had been responsible for two right wing coups in the past. In 1923 Georgiev was one of the leaders of a coup in which tens of thousands of workers and peasants had been massacred.

He was the direct organiser of another coup in 1934 that introduced a government which dissolved the trade unions and persecuted Communists, Socialists and peasant organisations. A safe pair of hands for Stalin. Under Georgiev's direction the wave of radicalism after the war was suppressed.

Even where the enthusiasm for change did not lead to revolutionary actions, it nevertheless saw a dramatic shift as conservative parties across Europe were defeated in post-war elections, and social democratic parties came to power in Britain, France, Belgium, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, or entered coalition governments such as in Italy and Holland.

Celebrations

This was a kick in the teeth for figures such as Churchill who had posed as the great war leader of his nation. It reflected a deep-rooted rejection of the Tories. The pressure for a new era of improvements for working class living standards was so strong that one MP said, 'if you do not give them reform they will give you revolution.' The post war Attlee government nationalised mining and the railways and created the National Health Service. Seen from the per-

spective of Blair and New Labour these are extraordinary radical measures, but in the circumstances of post-war Britain it would have been difficult to have offered less to an expectant working class.

The hope of ordinary people that they were on the verge of a new era after their years of sacrifice were, however, in vain.

The true pattern of world events was revealed on 6 August 1945. On that day Hiroshima experienced the horror of a nuclear explosion. 78,150 people were killed immediately; tens of thousands more would subsequently die of radiation related sickness. Nearly 200,000 people were made homeless. Three days later 23,000 more people were instantly killed by a nuclear strike on Nagasaki.

The Second World War had not stopped conflict. It had simply redrawn the boundaries. The new era that was ushered in was not one of internationalism, anti-fascism and peace, but of a nuclear arms race.

This is why socialists do not join with Bush, Putin and the other 50 heads of state that gathered in Moscow on May 9th in celebrating VE Day. These political leaders are not celebrating the defeat of fascism but patting each other on the back for being the world's most dominant powers for the last sixty years.

Conor Kostick is author of *Revolution in Ireland and other titles*. He is currently in the Dept. of Medieval History, Trinity College.

THE EU CONSTITUTION French 'Non' Campaign gains momentum

By SINEAD NI BHRÓIN

The mainstream media's reporting of the upcoming French referendum on the EU Constitution has been sparse and heavily weighed towards the Vote Yes Campaign.

Paul Gillespie's Irish Times article of April 30th was a good example of this. Gillespie claimed that the support for the French No Vote is being driven by a fear amongst French workers over job losses as a result of EU enlargement.

French workers are rightly concerned about the high levels of unemployment in their country. It is not enlargement they blame however, but the neo-liberal policies that have been implemented by their government.

They know that these very policies would be enshrined by a ratification of the EU constitution. Gillespie should be reminded of French workers' struggles against such policies.

In 1995 millions of civil servants and railway workers took to the streets against the Jupe plan and engaged in strikes against neo-liberal cuts and privatisation.

Bernard Cassen of ATTAC France highlights the neo-liberal 'profit before people' backbone of the EU constitution treaty in an excellent article entitled 'NO is not a disaster'.

He points out that in the 202 pages of the main text (483 pages in total) there are 176 instances of the word 'bank' and its derivatives. The word 'market' appears 88 times, 'trade' 38, 'competition' 29, 'capital' 23 and 'commodity' 11.

By supporting the No Campaign, and voting No in the referendum, French workers are aware they are rejecting EU leaders' neo-liberal project, which will bind all EU workers to the neo-liberal policies they are struggling against.

For example French workers right to employment within their own constitution will be replaced in the EU constitution with a 'right to engage in work'. Their current right to healthcare and services will now be 'a right to access these services' without the services themselves being guaranteed.

Given the current high level of unemployment in France, the 2003 attack by the right wing Chirac/Raffarin government on pensions and the continuing attack on social services, such as healthcare and education, it is obvious why the No Campaign is growing in support among French workers.

The No camp now consists of the bulk of Frances' social and political left, PCF, LCR, increasing numbers within the Socialist Party (who took a Yes position late last year after an internal ballot with around 60% in favour, which is now causing internal polarisation within the organisation), many well known academics, the PT, Frances main trade union CGT and thousands of activists and non political party individuals.

A recent LCR rally in Paris drew 1,800 attendees, which in itself is proof not only of support for the campaign but also of the engagement in political struggle of the French left.

Chirac's hysterical cry that a No vote would be a catastrophe for Europe really means it would be a catastrophe for his career and the right wing neo-liberal agenda in Europe, both of which will be untenable should the French Vote No campaign succeed.

The Irish Campaign Against the EU Constitution (CAEUC) needs to take inspiration from our French comrades.

Their activity and determination, through a united left alternative to beat the neo-liberals and their market-driven vision of Europe is proof that Another Europe is Possible.

Sinead Ni Bhróin is active with CAEUC and is a member of the SWP



Chirac

REVIEWS

JOURNAL Ideas that matter – International Socialism 106

Ideas matter; though we can all rejoice that Tony Blair and New Labour were given a good kicking by the British electorate on the 5th of May, we need to understand the politics and the processes that lie behind the disillusionment of so many people with New Labour.

The new issue of International Socialism (No. 106) in an extended section looks behind the immediate issues to provide detailed insights into the shape of Britain after eight years of Blair and New Labour. What has happened to industry, the working class, the school system and the urban landscape? How badly damaged is Labour's base? Can the various movements provide a political framework for the working-class struggles the may emerge in the future?

World Social Forum

Over 150,000 people attended the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in Brazil. Mike Gonzalez reports back on the twofold challenge facing the left: to build the movement in all its breath and diversity, as activists and organisers on the one hand, and to raise within the movement the larger political questions on which the revolutionary socialist tradition can offer a body of understanding, experience and ideas.

Chavez

As part of his report Mike interviewed Roland Denis, a leading revolutionary in Venezuela. He was briefly a member of the Chavez government (in 2002) as Vice-Minister of Planning, but resigned after ten months, together with the Minister, in protest at the lack of grass roots involvement in the planning process.

An organiser and activist since the 1980s, he was a founder member of the 13 April Movement, which expresses some of the contradictions and tensions at the heart of the Bolivarian Revolution. Coincidentally, the conversation took place while Hugo Chavez was still addressing a crowd of some 18,000 at a local sports stadium.

Guevara

His rapturous reception was very different from the more hostile and critical way in which Lula, Brazil's president, had been received in the same stadium four days earlier.

For some of those attending the forum Chavez appeared to represent the more radical alternative to Lula's compromises with the world market. With his long experience in the movement, Roland was in an unrivalled position to discuss the truth or otherwise of that view. Also of interest is the critique provided by the Argentinean socialist, Fernando Lizarrago, of Mike Gonzalez's much-acclaimed book on Che Guevara.

1913 Lockout

Nearer home, Kieran Allen reviews John Newsinger's, *Rebel City*, the story of the great labour battles in Dublin between 1911 and 1913. Newsinger defends James Larkin from the attacks by modern Trade Union leaders who dismiss Larkin's brand of class struggle as out of date in the era of social partnership.

But, as Kieran Allen points out, if Newsinger is strong in his defense of Larkinism, he is weak on the connection between this militant syndicalist tradition and the fight against imperialism. Nevertheless, Newsinger's account of the great lock-out in 1913 is informed by a real engagement with the Marxist tradition and worth reading.



International Socialism 106
IMPERIALISM'S NEW ESCAPE:
LEBANON, IRAQ, EGYPT

€8

BRITAIN AFTER
EIGHT YEARS OF BLAIR

Alex Callinicos debates John Holloway on the question of power ★ Inside the Bolivarian revolution ★ Reviews: City in Revolt ★ Tracy Emin ★ The Scottish revolution and more... To order: info@swp.ie or phone (01) 872 2682

Tackling the Crusade head-on

Kingdom Of Heaven

Reviewed by **Conor Kostick**

The Crusades have always had a lot to offer as the subject matter for a Hollywood epic: great battles; journeys; adventures. But at the same time they have had one great drawback – the politically embarrassing fact that they were expeditions that were set in motion by the pope and directed against Muslims.

Ridley Scott has directed this summer's blockbuster, and his approach to dealing with the potentially explosive issue of religious warfare is not to duck it but to tackle it head on.

Jerusalem

Kingdom of Heaven is set during the last days of the leper king Baldwin IV and the fall of Jerusalem (1187) to the army of Saladin, the powerful leader of the Muslim forces. It tells the story through the eyes of a newcomer to Jerusalem, Balian of Ibelin (Orlando Bloom). As you would expect from the director of *Gladiator*, the film has immense battle scenes, full of historically accurate detail. To make the siege scenes authentic, for example, they built full size working catapults, the medieval trebuchet. Ridley Scott has also had his liberal political moments, and this is one of them.

Conflict

Inside the Christian Kingdom of Jerusalem are hawks and doves. By violating peace agreements with Saladin, the powerful leader of the Muslim forces, and outmanoeuvring their Christian opponents, the war faction precipitate the decisive conflict that they are looking for. There is no mistaking the argument here that narrow-minded Christian religious bigots are responsible for the carnage of war and the creation of thousands of refugees. The hero of the film, Balian, is deeply alienated by the religious



The last days of the leper king Baldwin IV and the fall of Jerusalem

hypocrisy and lack of tolerance displayed by the leaders of the war faction. In his own lordship Balian works among people of all denominations to successfully improve the land and offer the prospect of peaceful progress for all.

Humane

On the other side we see that Saladin too has Islamic extremists within his camp, in particular those advocating no quarter to the citizens of Jerusalem. But in victory Saladin is shown to be tolerant and humane. As he walks through the palace in the captured city he is careful to right a fallen cross. To a large extent this benign portrayal of Saladin is historically justified. In marked contrast to the capture of Jerusalem by the First Crusade, 15 July 1099, when nearly every non-Christian citizen was slaughtered, the surrender of Jerusalem in 1187 to the Muslims was not accompanied by any killings. Indeed Saladin

allowed the Christians to pay a ransom rather than experience captivity. He and his officers were amazed when the Patriarch of the City paid 10 dinars for his personal ransom and left the city with his gold and silver, rather than pay for the release of other Christian captives. This venal Patriarch is featured in the film.

Dignity

The portrayal of Muslims in this film is carefully thought out to ensure that they are not stereotyped as the mysterious and irrational enemy. From Saladin down to the rank and file soldier of the army, they are shot in such a way as to emphasise the dignity of every personality. The viewer is not necessarily encouraged to see the Christian knight as representative of the forces of all that is good. In this Ridley Scott is helped by the choice of Syrian actor Ghassan Massoud for Saladin, creating a sombre and thoughtful Muslim leader.

Adventure

A smaller point but nonetheless strongly made in the film, is that the ordinary person has as much right to life and a say in affairs as the knightly class. There is a powerful moment in the defence of Jerusalem when Balian has the arms bearing population kneel and knights them all. In a key speech to the besieged citizens Balian emphasises that they are not fighting for religion or relics but for each other and their families.

This is a great adventure film in the spirit of *Gladiator* and *The Lord of the Rings*, but those who believe that war can be justified by religion will not enjoy the political message and the atheistic treatment of religion. Should the film prove to be a hit in the US, this would be an encouraging sign, as its political spirit is hostile to Bush, and its cinematic spirit hostile to Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*.

Conor Kostick

1916 EASTER RISING

Commemoration unveiled to Joseph O'Rahilly



The O'Reilly

On April 29th, almost exactly 89 years from his death, a commemoration took place to mark the unveiling of a new monument to Michael Joseph O'Rahilly.

Founders

The story of The O'Rahilly is well known, he was one of the founders and leading members of the Irish Volunteers who was not in favour of participation in the planned Irish Republican Brotherhood / Irish Citizen Army uprising intended for Easter Sunday 1916.

In fact The O'Rahilly had actively driven around the major centres of Ireland to demobilise those who were preparing to act, only to return to Dublin on the Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, to find that the rebellion was underway despite the opposition of Eoin MacNeill, president of the Irish Volunteers.

His attitude on learning of the insurrection was expressed in the words attributed to him by Yeats: 'Because I helped wind the clock, I come to hear it strike.'

Garrison

The O'Rahilly served in the GPO garrison and Saturday 29 April volunteered to lead a party in search of a route out of the GPO to Williams and Woods, a factory on Great Britain Street (now Parnell St)

A machine-gun at the intersection of Great Britain Street and Moore Street caught him along with most of his party, and although he was able to find cover in Sackville Lane (now O'Rahilly Parade) he was trapped and died slowly from blood loss. Even nineteen hours after receiving his wounds, after the surren-



Shane Cullen

der had taken place, he clung to life. But the ambulance driver who found The O'Rahilly still breathing was ordered by his senior officer to leave the body until later, saying 'the more of them who die naturally the fewer we will have to shoot.'

Message

During the hours he lay wounded, The O'Rahilly wrote a message to his wife on the back

of a letter he had received in the GPO from his son. Artist Shane Cullen's piece to commemorate the death of The O'Rahilly contains these last words in a limestone and bronze sculpture. The text reads: 'Written after I was shot. Darling Nancy I was shot leading a rush up Moore Street and took refuge in a doorway. While I was there I heard the men pointing out where I was and made a bolt for the laneway I am in now.'

'I got more than one bullet I think. Tons and tons of love dearie to you and the boys and to Nell and Anna. It was a good fight anyhow. Please deliver this to Nannie O'Rahilly, 40 Herbert Park, Dublin. Goodbye Darling.'

Present at the commemoration were relatives of The O'Rahilly and his closest friends, including former Taoiseach Garrett Fitzgerald. Blathnaid Uí Rathaille, The O'Rahilly's daughter-in-law and oldest surviving relative, formally unveiled the new sculpture.

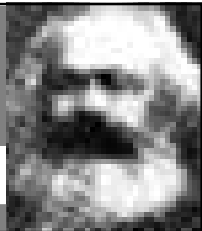
Lorcan Collins, Conor Kostick, Shane MacThomáis, tour guides, 1916 – The Easter Rising Walking Tour.

EVENTS

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MARXISM TODAY

By KIERAN ALLEN



Does the free market work?

OUR world is dominated by large corporations but the great inequalities they bring are justified through a defence of the 'free market'.

Neo-liberals assume that we are isolated individuals who make 'rational choices' about scarce goods. Rationality is guaranteed when goods and services have a price. When goods are scarce, prices rise and this send out a signal to investors that profits can be made in particular goods and services. When these become plentiful, prices drop and investment should move to other areas. This mechanism is known as 'the invisible hand' and it is supposed to allocate scarce resources efficiently.

The theory is patently wrong - for how otherwise could one explain why 20,000 people die every day because the market does not supply them with food and medicine? The dogma of the market fundamentalists is built on a number of false assumptions.

False assumptions

First, it sees the individual customer as the defining feature of human life. However, human beings are not isolated atoms without collective interests. Even under capitalism, workplaces would not run if we simply functioned as self interested individuals. In every job, people do work that goes way beyond their contract. They spontaneously co-operate, share, cover for each other - show commitment that goes beyond individual self interest. If we competed against each other all the time, hospitals would not run; factories would be chaotic; offices would be unintelligible.

Second, the pricing mechanism does not work in the way economists claim. There can be time delays between price signals going out - and actual production coming on stream. If there is a scarcity of food, the price of food should rise and this should encourage more farmers to grow particular crops. However, it may take several months for such crops to ripen - by which time many may have starved!

Moreover, how can there be 'efficiency' when some costs are loaded onto society at large rather than on to the individual producers. Tobacco or car companies may compete vigorously and reduce their 'costs' to the bare minimum. Yet the real costs of their particular products also include hospital treatments for cancer patients and crash victims. These 'external' costs however are not borne by the companies - but are loaded onto society.

Third, if market mechanisms naturally reach equilibrium, there would be no business cycle but the reality is that the boom-slump pattern has returned to global capitalism.

Recessions arise from the unplanned nature of capitalism. Each capitalist seeks to reduce costs to defeat their rivals and they focus in particular on 'labour costs'. But this, in turn, leads to a reduction in consumer spending and a shrinking of the market for their goods.

Boom and bust

Another route into recession comes from the way prices rise in boom. When an economy is full throttle, the price of labour, raw materials and energy rises because no one planned in advance to take on more apprentices or ensure there were adequate supplies of raw material and energy. At a certain point, the unexpected price rises drive some companies into bankruptcy- causing a knock on effect.

Fourthly, the neo-liberals paint a picture of the market that is completely at variance with reality. Theoretically, companies are supposed to function as 'price takers' on the market because the overall size of the market dwarves each individual competitor and none can dominate it. Yet this is patently false. In modern capitalism, a few global corporations dominate different sectors of the economy. They form world wide oligopolies which carve the market up between them. The large corporations often seek to entrap customers by setting technical standards which cut out rivals; they bribe state officials; they spend vast sums on advertising to blot out their rivals. Far from competing on the basis of price, they grow closer to their nation's state to gain advantage over their global rivals.

May 26th : Giuliano Giuliani to Speak for G8 Mobilise in Dublin

Giuliano Giuliani is a leading Italian Trade Unionist whose son Carlo was murdered by the Italian Police during the protests against the G8 in Genoa. Since Genoa Giuliani and his wife Haidi have become stalwarts of the international anti-globalisation movement, speaking at countless events and protests as well as campaigning for justice for their son. He will speak at a meeting in the ATGWU Hall, Dublin to mobilise for the G 8 protests and June 30th MPH rally alongside Andy Storey (Development Studies, UCD) and a representative from Make Poverty History **7.30pm on Thursday 26th May in The ATGWU hall on Middle Abbey Street, Dublin.**

G8 events

Sat May 28th 2.30pm **Another World is Possible protest at stock exchange, Temple Bar Dublin**

Sat 4th of June **Make Poverty History demonstration, Belfast**

Thur June 30th 6.30pm **Drop the debt: Make Poverty History rally, Spire, O Connell St. Music, speakers, street**

theatre www.makepovertyhistory.ie

Scotland G8 events:

11am Saturday, 2 July- **"Make Poverty History" Massive Demonstration in Edinburgh. Sunday, 3 July- "Ideas to Change the World" Alternatives Summit in Edinburgh. Monday, 4 July- Faslane Nuclear Base Blockade, Faslane. Tuesday, 5 July- "Close Dungavel, No-one is Illegal!". Dungavel Detention Centre Mass Protest**

12noon Wednesday, 6 July- **"Another World is Necessary" An Irish mobilization network called G8 Mobilise (supported by IAWM, Sinn Fein, SWP, SP, Labour youth and others) is organizing Irish buses to the G8 protests- contact G8 Mobilize at 0872703564 or mobiliseireland@hotmail.com www.freewebs.com/mobiliseireland**

Book place on bus:

Short trip. Leaving Friday morning, July 1st Back in Ireland late on Sunday 3rd July. Price @ €100
Long trip. Leaving Friday morning, July 1st, Return to Ireland following Thursday 7th

July. 160 euro.
For Dublin buses ring Dave on 087 270 3564 Buses from Northern Ireland- Contact Gordon at 00447742531617 or e-mail

Education for Socialists

Every Saturday in Lings Chinese Restaurant, 18 Great Denmark St at 4pm.

Sunday 15th **May Day school on making poverty history The Teacher's Club @1.30pm.**

Campaign against ASBOs and the Criminal Justice Bill events

Sat 13th May 11am-3pm at the GPO **leaflet against the Criminal Justice Bill.**

Wed, 18th 7.30pm, Dublin, **ASBO and Criminal Justice Bill public meeting.**

Sat 21st 2pm Temple bar **Busk against the Bill-protest** Contact 086 1523542 for details. Called by Campaign against ASBOs and the Criminal Justice Bill

Dublin Gay Theatre Festival

3-13th May <http://www.dublingaytheatrefestival.com/>

Ireland & the EU Constitution Conference

28th & 29th May: **A two day conference on the content and implications of the proposed EU Constitution. Organised by Sinn Féin & the European United Left/Nordic Green Left. Venue: Irish Film Centre, Eustace St, Dublin**

Saturday 28th 9am-2pm. **Speakers: 4 MEPs make the case against the Constitution**
Sunday 29th 10.45: **Civil Society Against the Constitution**
Sunday 29th 12.30: **Another Europe is Possible**

Thur, May 12, **The debate on the EU Constitution in France Public Meeting with Jacques Roillet, member of NO Campaign in Lille and Harry Browne, 8.00 pm, The Teachers Club, Parnell Sq, Dublin.**
Contact: Campaign Against EU Constitution euconstitution@eircom.net

FOR MIGRANT WORKERS' RIGHTS, NO TO DEPORTATIONS, REGULARISATION NOT DISCRIMINATION

Public Forum Speakers:

Mick'O Reilly (ATGWU), GAMA worker, Patrick Maphoso (Migrant worker's campaign), Fred and Peter (asylum seekers on protest against deportations), Owen McCormack (Busworkers Action Group and SWP)

Wed. May 11th, 7.30 pm
ATGWU Hall, 55, Middle Abbey St
Hosted by Civil Rights Movement Ireland, contact 086 1523542 for details

Out Now

New pamphlet by Dr Peadar O'Grady



€3 from SW Books, PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

To get a copy of this pamphlet or get involved in the campaign phone 087-9879489

WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.

A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.

Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

working class.

We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

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.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to **SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8**

Name.....

Address.....

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Socialist Worker

SEA change in Derry

Respectable vote for Socialist Environmental (SEA) candidates

The work that goes into an election campaign is such that revolutionaries can sometimes wonder why they are standing. Given the polarised nature of elections in the North, this can be even more so.

But the recent election campaign of the Socialist Environmental Alliance (SEA) in Derry shows why it makes sense for socialists to contest elections.

Undoubtedly, some of the issues raised, and some of the links made in the course of the campaign, would not have happened were it not for the election.

Postal workers

Halfway through the election campaign, the SEA was contacted by postal workers at Derry's sorting office.

They had discovered they were to be paid half the Belfast rate for delivering election literature.

Almost immediately, Royal Mail management said they would bring in casual workers to deliver the literature.

At the request of the workers, the SEA removed its election literature from the Sorting Office.

Eamonn McCann said "As a party that stands for workers' rights, we cannot allow our literature to be delivered by workers who are not being paid a fair rate and who are being used to undermine the postal workers' efforts to end the unfairness"

Had other parties responded like the SEA, the workers could have won. Royal Mail would have had no choice but to end the discrimination against Derry postal workers.

Instead, other parties dragged their feet. Sinn Fein's Mitchell McLaughlin called on "both sides" to resolve the issue.

This gave management time to



The SEA immediately called a picket on the Courthouse to protest at police brutality

contract out the work. The other parties then had little choice but to withdraw their literature but too late for the workers to win.

According to local Council candidate Oisín Kehoe "not having our literature delivered gave us a mountain to climb. But the response of trade unionists, and other activists, who turned up to help meant we were able to deliver to most house-

holds in the city."

Police brutality

The other issue raised during the election is police brutality. The SEA was contacted and shown a videotape of a vicious incident in the Violet St area of the Waterside. This showed a number of young people being assaulted by PSNI

officers, who had broken their way into a (Protestant) home and terrorised the inhabitants.

Some of the young people involved were charged with "assaulting police officers" which is designed to get them to withdraw any charges against the police.

The SEA immediately called a picket on the Courthouse for the morning the young people were to

appear in court. We called for the PSNI officers involved to be suspended immediately and all charges against the young people dropped.

The press were invited to the picket and then brought to the SEA office where the video was shown.

Copies of the video were distributed to media outlets and to solicitors for the young people. We argued that the video shows the way policing change is usually discussed isn't good enough.

SEA candidate Davy McAuley went on TV arguing that changing the religious composition of the police would not change the reality of policing.

Rather, he said, "policing is a class issue; the PSNI would not have gone into a wealthy area and behaved like they did in Violet Street. Gardai in the South, the Met or NYPD, all police are there to protect wealth and privilege. Everywhere, they treat working class people, especially young people, the same."

The picket at the court-house reflected this reality. It included people from the Fountain and the Bogside, as well as from Protestant and Catholic parts of the Waterside.

■ A video showing part of what happened on Violet Street can now be viewed on the SEA website, at www.socialistenvironmentalalliance.org.

■ As we go to press, the Council count has not started and the only results available are for Westminster. Despite the squeeze between Sinn Fein and the SDLP to become the sole authentic voice of Nationalism in the North, Eamonn McCann managed to win 3.6% of the poll - 1,650 votes.

Galloway writes on the historic victory for Respect in Britain

The response from Hazel Blears, home office minister in the last parliament, was to say Muslims should get used to being targeted by the police.

Then there is Blair's decision to go to war against Iraq. Blair received strong support from loyal (former) MP Oona King, against the wishes of the vast majority of her constituents. Consequently, she lost her seat to George Galloway and Respect.

There was only one reason why she felt she could back the war in Iraq. King thought that whatever she did, however she voted in parliament, she would be re-elected.

Smear campaign

The result in Bethnal Green & Bow buried that complacency. It should also bury the slur that people who have solidly backed Labour in the past, as most

immigrants have, suddenly become communalist when they feel the sting of betrayal and vote for an alternative.

People who have read about the various fabrications that took place around the election campaign have more reasons not to believe a single thing New Labour says.

There is also the conduct of the vote itself. Respect uncovered "ghost" voters on the electoral register, people turning up to vote to find that a postal vote has already been cast in their name without their knowledge, malpractice that would disgrace a banana republic.

This is one thing Respect intends to clear away at the council elections in May 2006. The campaign to take control of the London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham begins immediately.

Abdul Khaliq Mian and

Lindsay German have already shaken up the New Labour councillors in Newham by taking one in five of the votes in a borough where all but one of the councillors is New Labour.

Oliur Rahman, the first councillor elected under the Respect banner, has done the same in Poplar & Canning Town.

Impact

The impact of Respect's breakthrough is not confined to east London. Salma Yaqoob's breathtaking vote in Birmingham, just 3,000 votes short of taking the seat, shows Respect has the capacity to become a major force.

In the Stop the War movement, from which Respect emerged, they worked with many people of goodwill from the Labour Party, from other progressive parties, such as the SWP, the Green Party and people of no party at all.



Ray of hope

Finally, Respect's victory on Thursday has an international dimension too. The news was flashed around the world. Within minutes Respect members received voicemail and text messages of congratulation from Fallujah, Baghdad, Lebanon and many other places that have so much reason to detest what Blair has done.

Respect has dealt Blair a mortal blow. He'd rather have lost another dozen seats to the Tories than just one to Respect.

Respect's election victory is unambiguously a victory for the anti-war movement and for the real Labour people whom Blair has tried to silence.

It has altered the political landscape and created new possibilities for the left and for progressive people.