

# Socialist Worker

€1.00/£0.70p

NO. 245 | JULY 20-AUGUST 5

WWW.SWP.IE

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# STOP SHELL IN MAYO

## Release the Rossport 5 - Nationalise the Gas



Belmullet came to a standstill as 3,000 protested in July

Photo: Richard Whelan

By **KIERAN ALLEN**

Five Rossport men have been jailed because the Irish state has become a mouthpiece for the oil and gas companies. Micheal O Sighin, Willie Corduff, Phillip McGrath, Vincent McGrath and Brendan Philbin have displayed exemplary courage and determination.

Last week, for example, the top officials of the Irish Farmers Association went behind the back of local campaigners and tried to broker a deal. Word of their manoeuvres emerged at a huge march for the men in Belmullet and the IFA officials were given a hard time by the crowd. But ultimately, it was the decision of the men to sacrifice their freedom to take on Shell which counted.

Their campaign has inspired tens of thousands of people across the country (and indeed the world) who are angry at the way the Irish State has put Shell's profits before these people's rights. Thousands have marched, walked out of work in protest and blockaded Shell and Statoil stations in support of the jailed five. Such fantastic displays of

solidarity, mass civil disobedience and mass protests are what can win this campaign.

In recent weeks the people of Bolivia took over their capital city, shut down the transport networks and overthrew their government in protest at the selling off of Bolivia's natural resources to foreign-owned multinationals.

The Nigerian government hanged nine environmental activists in 1995 for speaking out against exploitation by Shell and the Nigerian government. The tribunal which convicted the men was part of a joint effort by the government and Shell to suppress a growing movement among the Ogoni people to demand their rights and an end to the

destruction of their land by Shell's pipelines. Since then there have been ongoing protests and workers strikes against Shell in Nigeria. Across the world it's the same. Politicians put corporate profits before the lives of ordinary people. It is the resistance of ordinary people like the Bolivians, the Ogoni people and the Rossport Five that can defeat the corporate giants.

Shell is endangering the safety of people to boost their profits. By processing the gas inshore, Shell will save €360 million in capital costs and reduce its operating costs by 40 percent a year. The planning inspector of An Bord Pleannala was not impressed, claiming that, 'the choice of preferred option is primarily based upon the cost difference between it and other off-shore options... rather than on environmental or technical constraints'.

Shell is being driven by the desperate logic of capitalist competition. More than a decade ago, they discovered that their annual rate of return on investment averaged just 7.9 percent. At the time the industry average was

9.3 percent.1

Fearing huge losses in the speculative oil markets, Shell imposed high targets on its different divisions. But like the old command economies of the Soviet Union, this only led local managers to over-state their oil reserves. Since then it has been discovered that it fraudulently overstated about 20 percent of its reserves.

The global oil and gas giant is now desperate and this is why they have responded with a dangerous new method of gas processing. Erris is being used as an experiment zone to pioneer inshore processing.

The company thought that with compliant politicians in their pocket, they could get away with inflicting it on a comparatively isolated community. They reckoned, however without the indomitable spirit of a people who have resisted overlords since the days of Michael Davitt.

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**became a puppet for Shell**

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Families of jailed men speak out

## Iraq not Islam cause of London bombings

### 158,549 troops in Shannon since January

By **Richard Boyd Barrett**

Just like Blair and Bush, the response of the Irish government to the London bombing has been hypocritical and designed to cover up this country's collaboration with the criminal war in Iraq.

Bertie Ahern and Michael McDowell have both made unsubstantiated claims about Al Qaeda activists operating from Ireland. Much of the media have joined in with this

Islamophobic hysteria.

National newspapers and even RTE's Primetime have run major pieces seeking to explain the London bombings in terms of Islam and the Muslim mind.

But there would quite rightly be outrage if every Christian became a terrorist suspect because of the actions of George Bush. Yet this is what is happening to the Muslim community

The hysteria about Muslims has already led to one attack in Athlone.

Over 150,000 US troops have travelled through Shannon between January and June of this year. This represents a doubling of the number of US troops travelling through the airport since the US invasion of Iraq began two years ago. It is also equivalent to the total number of US troops presently in Iraq.

As the horror of the Iraq war continues and threatens to spread into the west it is vital that the anti-war movement in this country redoubles its efforts to end the use of Shannon by the US military.

**■ Peace festival and National protest at Shannon on Sept 24th**

**>>See inside page 6 for more on Shannon and the London Bombings**

# Time for a New Left alliance

By RORY HEARNE

The political radicalisation currently taking place across Europe is beginning to show itself in Ireland. In the south the free-market 'neoliberal' Celtic Tiger has created massive wealth for an elite minority but created poorer public services and an increasing cost of living for the majority while many are still living in poverty.

People are fed up and are starting to fight back. Just look at the outrage over the nursing home scandals, the protest over Shell and the tens of thousands who took part in the recent demonstrations against the war, poverty and environmental destruction caused by the neoliberal policies of the G8 leaders like Bush, Blair and Berlusconi.

Public outrage has resulted in support for Fianna Fáil falling dramatically. Instead of galvanising this wave of opposition and offering a real left alternative, the Labour Party and others are busy making pre-electoral pacts with 'free-market' Fine Gael. The official trade union movement is wedded in "partnership" to the government and bosses.

Those genuinely committed to building social movements need to unite and create a new left alternative. The votes at recent local and by-elections demonstrate this has a real possibility of success.

Important steps in the process of creating a new left are, as Andy Storey (Afri) has noted: "meetings, discussions, participatory practices, trust and openness". The Trade Union forum, anti-capitalist mobilisations and local community campaigns amongst others are opportunities to move this forward. Public 'New left alternative' forums could be another step.

## Vision

It was an alliance of the radical Left parties in France that won a majority of votes to defeat the neoliberal EU constitution in France. In an exciting breakthrough in Germany a new radical left party, the Left Party, is winning 10-15% support in polls, mainly from former members and supporters of the German labour party, the SPD.

In Britain it was the newly formed Respect alliance and George Galloway that most vocally opposed Bush and Blair's war. From Bolivia to France it is the new Left movements that provide a real opposition. Our vision is of a new 'left alternative' that is an alliance (on a local and national level) similar to such new alliances emerging across the world like Respect in the UK and Left Block in Portugal.

It can be much more than the existing left. It must also involve those who are currently unrepresented by mainstream politics such as anti-capitalists, migrants, women and community workers. The new left alternative should actively support campaigns that build the confidence of people in local communities and workplaces and aim to politically represent them.

The recent elections in Northern Ireland confirmed that one of the main outcomes of the Good Friday Agreement has been the institutionalisation of communal politics in Northern Irish society.

The Socialist and Environmental Alliance (SEA) is building an alternative to that communalism and the acceptance of neo-liberalism. When it comes to the airport, the rail link, poverty wages, water charges or the Iraq war, all the main parties are at one in bowing down before big business.

Left unity and vision brought about the mobilisations against the bin tax and the Iraq war. What was missing was a left alternative to represent the thousands who came out to reject those neo-liberal and imperialist policies. We cannot let this happen again.

People want to fight back. The left can break the stranglehold of the right and an ineffective Labour Party. Now is the time to take bold and imaginative steps and apply unity and vision to create a new left alternative in Ireland.

□ Socialist Worker is committed to the creation of a new left. If you or your organisation has views on the creation of a new left please send them in to us and we will print them.

□ Rory Hearne is editor of Socialist Worker

# Harney slashes beds and pushes the elderly into poverty

On July 15th Mary Harney announced she was adding 1000 new private hospital beds by 2010.

Worse still these beds are to be provided by a Public Private Partnership (PPP) in for-profit private hospitals to be built, subsidised by tax-relief, on public hospital sites in Galway, Limerick, Cork and Dublin.

Harney claims this will clear room for public patients in the public hospitals but there is no guarantee this will happen as private patients already exceed their recommended numbers in public hospitals.

What she doesn't mention is that even if the public beds are made available this is still a massive cutback on the 2,579 beds still due under the Health Strategy by 2011.

Dr. Asam Ishtiaq, President of the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO) strongly criticised this privatisation saying: "Our concerns are that development of for-profit private medicine in Ireland may not be in the interests of the health service." International evidence shows for-profit hospitals cost way more and



Mary Harney: provision slashed

offer poorer services than not-for-profit services.

On the 14th of July charges were reintroduced for public patients in nursing homes.

The charges are now legal. Those getting 24 hour nursing care will have their pensions reduced by up to €120 a week leaving them with just €35 per week.

The charges were suspended last December when it emerged they were illegal.

The failure to provide free services to older members of our society is a further reflection of the for-profit ideology that is beginning to dominate in all our health services.

In county Meath workers in a private nursing home have threatened industrial action over Health Service Executive managers failure to register their nursing home.

As in the scandal of Leas Cross nursing home the managers do little to raise standards and would rather see a service close than spend the money to improve it.

More Industrial and Community action is urgently needed to halt the sell-off of our health service to the for-profit vultures.

# Council to take Bin Tax to Supreme Court

By JOAN COLLINS

Two judges in the Circuit Court have deemed the Bin Tax charged for 2001/02 to be illegal.

They ruled that fixed rate charges were invalid as they did not comply with the requirements of the Waste Management Plan for the Dublin region.

Dublin City Council have been given a third bite of the cherry to challenge the issue in the Supreme Court.

They secured this opportunity by arguing that the rulings had huge ramifications for the Council and they guaranteed that the Council would pay all costs.

As one angry member of our campaign said "it's an outrage, the Council have been defeated three times in the Circuit Court on a point of law and they are now using taxpayers money to challenge those decisions, it feels like harri carri".

People have a right to be angry. It's a disgrace that the Council have been given this third opportunity and that

they are using our money to take the case.

But then again the courts will always bend the stick for the State, Government and big business.

The jailing of the Rosport five, the Anti Bin Tax 22, etc. all illustrate this point.

The date for the next case in the Circuit Court is 16th December. It will then go to the Supreme Court.

Even though the Council have been given the opportunity to challenge the issue, the ruling still stands until that case is heard.

It is possible that the 2001/2 charges are not the only ones that are invalid. The same may also be true of the 2003/4 charges.

At the very least there is no legal action that the Council can take until the Supreme Court makes a ruling. Send your bill back.

If your ESB or phone bill were wrong, you would send it back and query the amount.

Meanwhile the Eastwall and Ballybough areas are still organising each week to put

untagged bags in the bin trucks.

The council have attempted to pull more households into their computer system by leaving behind unregistered bins.

The experience has been that if you put your bin out as per normal, it will still be collected each week.

The second quarterly bills have not been issued yet.

There has been no agreement with the unions to date about the new system.

The next bill may be accompanied by a threat of non-collection, but the Campaign is calling on households to hold firm.

Don't pay and if and when the Council attempt non-collection for non-payment we will organise public meetings in response.

□ Contact your local Campaign if you need more info or 087-7757842

□ Joan Collins is an Independent Councillor in Dublin City Council.

# Don't Panic, Don't Pay in South Dublin

By BRID SMITH

Anti-bin tax campaigners in the South Dublin County Council area have been receiving threatening letters from solicitors engaged by the Council to retrieve arrears from non-payers.

In South Dublin the tagging system was introduced over a year ago but the Council are pursuing activists for outstanding charges.

The campaign's advice to all activists is to refuse to pay the arrears.

All of the legal implications of the court cases being pursued in the Dublin City Council area could apply to arrears elsewhere.

None of the councils, including South Dublin, provide incentives for householders to recycle and are therefore in breach of their own criteria.

The campaign appeals to those people who fought long and hard against the charges not to be bullied by the Council and refuse to pay.

They cannot take goods or property from any non-payer without first taking them through the courts.

□ Brid Smith is PRO of the Dublin City Campaign against the Bin Tax. Contact 087 9090166.

## Quotes of the fortnight

**"It is a great money spinner for Shannon and should be welcomed...I don't believe that Shannon is playing a role in US military operations. Ireland is a neutral country and it is a commercial decision to accept the troop business"**

Fine Gael TD Pat Breen responds to the revelations that almost as many troops passed through Shannon in the first six months of this year (a staggering 153,381 soldiers) as passed through in the whole of last year (158,549).

**"We urge the British government to remove people in this country from harms way, as the Spanish government acted to remove its people from harm, by ending the occupation of Iraq and by turning its full attention to the development of a real solution to the wider conflicts in the Middle East."**

**Only then will the innocents here and abroad be able to enjoy a life free of the threat of needless violence."**

Respect MP and anti war campaigner George Galloway on the London bombings

**"They're very well treated down there. They're living in the tropics. They're well fed."**

US Vice president Dick Cheney defends the treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay

**"You would most certainly believe this must have been done by the Nazis, Soviets in their gulags or some mad regime"**

Dick Durbin, Democratic Senator from Illinois gets a little closer to the truth on Guantanamo

**"I think that long after he's gone, people will say Charles Haughey was a wonderful person"**

Bertie Ahern on his old friend  
**"We're paying a million euro or so to consultants to advise us on the various scenarios and the business case for each one of them. Then we'll make a decision on it"**  
Noel Dempsey, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources on the possibility of privatising the ESB

**"We are in jail, as a last resort, to protect ourselves and our families, our neighbours and our area, from potential destruction by gas pipeline rupture. That remains our position, our one and only requirement: no-one can do less."**  
Statement from the Rosport Five

Protest/Events Reports email to swped@eircom.net Phone 01 8722682

# Dun Laoghaire Baths protests have the Council on the run

The Save Our Seafront (SOS) group have won another significant victory in the fight to stop an 8-storey apartment and shopping complex being built on the site of Dun Laoghaire baths.

Following a wave of public protest - including the two largest protests ever to have taken place in Dun Laoghaire - the Council voted at their most recent meeting to defer any decision on the development until October and to look at alternative means of funding the site.

The Council also agreed to write to the government

and local TDs to request central government funding for a fully public amenity.

This is the first time the Council have even considered a redevelopment of the Baths that did not involve some degree of privatisation.

Richard Boyd Barrett, chairperson of SOS and local SWP rep said:

"This is very significant victory indeed. Two months ago almost every councillor indicated support for this disgraceful plan to privatise the baths and seafront.

Under pressure from huge public protests, the councillors have crumbled.

Eleven councillors have now declared against the plan.

Only two have declared for it and the rest are sitting on the fence." SOS are holding another major demonstration and rally on Sunday, 4th September.

The protest is timed to take place just before the Council reconvenes after the Summer break.

Singer Christy Moore has agreed to give a free open-air performance along with other musicians living locally as part of the event.

**Richard Boyd Barrett**

# Community opposes high rise private development

Over 100 people attended a public meeting in the South Inner City on 11th July to oppose planned high-rise housing development in the area known as 'the Tenters'.

The Tenters is made up of housing built by the State between 1922 and 1930 and consists of mainly 2-storey buildings.

The proposal is to develop the old Eircom site in the area for residential use, offering two 8-storey blocks on the street and a number of 4, 5 and 7-storey blocks. No houses are included and there is no mention of any social and affordable housing for families of residents. Judging by their advertisements, the Tenters has become an auctioneer's dream:- '4 mins from

Stephens Green and on the two Luas lines in a mature community"! That brought a laugh as the area contains some of the highest deprivation statistics in the country.

Politicians in attendance had to admit that they had no control over the planning process and would have to put in their objections in the same way as the audience. At €20 per objection, many of audience cannot afford to object. But Fianna Fail's Michael Mulcahy still suggested that the audience club together and hire 'an expert' to make an objection on our behalf.

The closing date for lodging objections with Dublin City Council is 22nd July. A sub-committee has been formed and hopes to co-

ordinate events and information after this date. Individuals agreed to organise group objections from their road.

This area bordering Cork Street has become a developers dream.

As one local resident said "This housing estate was an award winning one when first built. The current development is a wholesale act of vandalism."

The residents are determined to ensure that any housing built is in keeping with the local area, making it a good place for families and newcomers to live in harmony with the 'mature' community so beloved of estate agents.

## Blind and Vision impaired people win audible crossings

Protests outside Dublin City Hall by the Blind and Vision Impaired Action Group during the installation of the new mayor has forced Dublin City Council to reverse its decision to switch off audible crossing signals at traffic lights.

Dublin City Council confirmed to the National Council for the Blind that they have switched the audible signals at all crossings back on. Martin O'Sullivan, a vision impaired person said "The decision of Dublin City Council to turn off these crossing signals was absolutely ludicrous and we welcome the reversal of this decision.

The Director of Traffic needs to understand that discrimination against blind and visually impaired people is no longer acceptable."

We hope that the councillors will pass a motion which will commit Dublin City Council to consulting with blind and vision impaired people before making decisions that could have a negative impact on how they use the city.

For more information or confirmation Contact Martin O'Sullivan 0878289243 martin\_osullivan@vodafone.ie

## IAWM vigil

The Irish Anti War Moment organised a vigil on O'Connell Bridge in solidarity with all of the victims of the 'war on terror' on the Monday following the London bombings.

Our placards read "Solidarity with the London victims. US, UK out of Iraq". We also had a book of condolence, which many passing members of the public signed.

# Power and possibilities of the movement at the G8



Protesters advance towards the fence that surrounded the G8 summit

Picture: Guy Smallman

No record of the experience of the G8 protests would be complete without the tale of the Niddrie campsite.

Edinburgh has no shortage of camps and parking grounds but evidently the local Blairite hacks reasoned that by dumping us miles out in Niddrie (the fourth poorest area in Scotland) they could stir up reaction against the anti-capitalists.

They even went so far as to organise public meetings and petitioning in the local tower blocks against us.

But the organisers of G8 protests and G8 Alternatives canvassed the area to show the locals that just like them, we were normal people from an abnormal world trying to change our

situation for the better.

The most politically invigorating aspect of the G8 experience was the opportunity to mix and discuss issues - local and international, and all of the connections between them - with the locals.

Every night on camp there were political meetings held in a large marquee.

The atmosphere was electric as activists from across the globe met to share their experiences of struggle and renew their commitment to fight on against injustice.

Mani Tanoh from Ghana spoke of the struggle against privatisation in Africa.

Chris Bamberly of the British SWP spoke before 500 people on Revolution in the 21st century.

Then there was the anarchist kitchen and the crusty disco. Muesli for 50p, curry for a quid and the same trance techno beat for hours on end for free.

For a week we all felt that we were living in an island of the future.

We shared everything, we had fun, and we looked after each other.

Most importantly we witnessed and experienced the power and the possibilities of our movement, the one that is changing the world.

See you in Athens. Avanti Popolo.  
**Dave Lordan**

## WATERFORD: Hearts of Oak honour workers and sea

'Hearts of Oak' - organised by the Waterford Council of Trade Unions and run to coincide with the Tall Ships Festival in Waterford in early July - was a huge success.

It honoured the contribution working people made to the seafaring, ship-building and fishing tradition of Waterford.

The programme included a photographic exhibition; a lecture by well-known local historian and author, Bill Irish on the history of ship-building in Waterford; a lecture by American socialist and historian, Jonathan Neale on shipboard life in Nelson's navy; and a concert.

President of WCTU, Tom Creedon said, "The events organised by the Trades Council sought to highlight the huge contribution working people have made to our maritime history and to put the spotlight on those normally forgotten.

For the first time the role of the ship-builder, port-worker, fisherman and sailor was put centre stage and celebrated.

The skills and ingenuity of the ordinary working people, who originally built and manned the tall ships, is testament to the abilities of working class people the world over who are rarely acknowledged"

**Roy Hassey**

## WORKPLACE ACTION AND NEWS

please send reports to [swped@eircom.net](mailto:swped@eircom.net) Phone 01 8722682

# An Post Workers sold out by Labour Court

After months of discussions, meetings and further clarifications, the Labour Court has issued a recommendation in the on-going dispute in An Post.

Over 10,000 post office workers have been denied their pay increases under the national wage agreements for three years.

Workers recently received payment for one of the phases of the national pay deal but are still owed 9½% and approx

€3,000 per worker.

The company pleads inability to pay. The Labour Court has called on the company to pay some of the increases due under the Sustaining Progress partnership deal but the payments will be subject to the delivery of work practice changes in the mail delivery and collection division.

Socialist Worker spoke to one of An Post shop stewards about the Labour Court's recommendation.

"There is a big kick back in our office. There is no way our pay should be linked to productivity deals. The big thing with us is losing our duties.

"Every one would be flexible to do whatever the upline manager decides they do and would have to transfer to whatever office they are told at a moments notice.

"We could be at the mercy of some of the dictators that run this company.

"They want to do away

with sick pay and the company doctor which would be ten steps back ward for us – these things were fought hard for.

"As older workers retire, they want to replace them with casual labour recruited through agencies. And then when they turn over a profit, we are to get our back money.

"They can dress it up anyway they want, but it is still all opening the Harney agenda of privatisation – that is where all this is leading.

"I hope the union comes back to us with the right message. Already the rumour is that the CWU is going to recommend acceptance.

"But what we need is EGM's (emergency general meetings) where the union can see the strong feelings we have about this sell out."

As reported in the last issue of Socialist Worker, there are strike committees already elected and meeting to prepare for strike action.

Activating that organisation and fight is the message the unions should be giving back to the workers.

This Labour Court deal was announced on the same day that it was announced that top politicians and civil servants will be awarded pay increases and the ESB announced a 10% hike in consumer costs. In the Celtic Tiger it is one law for the wealthy and another for workers.

BRID SMITH

## Trade Union Forum: Building rank and file opposition to neo-liberalism

By DENIS REDFERN (CPSU exec. personal capacity)

In Ireland in recent times we have seen the results of an unregulated free market in the jailing of Rosspoint Five to suit the needs of a multinational, the Leas Cross nursing home scandal, the building industry (GAMA workers), the privatisation of Aer Lingus, and the beginnings of performance related pay in the Civil Service.

The key to the fight against neo-liberal policies in Ireland should be the trade union movement. However its current leadership believe that they are partners with the employers.

That's why there have only been press statements from I.C.T.U. in response to the privatisation of Aer

Lingus.

The Trade Union Activists Forum wants to develop a counter weight to this current leadership. Its aim is to bring together activists across the union movement who want to resist partnership and the privatisation, de-regulation and low wages that go with it.

On Saturday July 15th trade union activists came together to hear a French trade unionist talk about how the French referendum result has put the European bosses on the ropes.

They also discussed the building of rank and file opposition to the next partnership agreement.

Contact Trade Union Activists Forum 085 1279165

## Workers' occupation saves jobs in Cork

For over a century Cork people bought their sausages, rashers and black pudding from O'Donovans pork butchers in Princes Street. So successful was this business that a second outlet was opened in the Wilton Shopping Centre.

This second shop is however non-union. Earlier this year the workers were informed by the owners that the Princes St premises was losing money.

This was denied by the union. Later the workers were informed that the shop would finally close by the end of June.

One week before this deadline the owners closed the shop without any notice.

Five of the workers took immediate action and occupied the premises. This action

received great support from the general public, including all the shop's customers. As a result the company agreed to negotiate with the Mandate trade union.

The subsequent deal resulted in the shop remaining open, with a number of staff taking voluntary redundancy.

The other downside is that all future employees will have to work more flexible hours.

While not achieving total victory, the action taken by the five ensured that the business remains open, with the majority of jobs being saved.

This is a lesson for all workers. Direct action such as occupations can achieve results. Socialist Worker salutes the O'Donovans workers for their brave stance.

JOE MOORE, Cork

## Construction workers strike over job losses



John Paul Construction have given one week's notice to 8 direct labourers who have been working on their sites for the past two years and are threatening more job losses.

The firm have been pushing to have agency workers brought in to replace direct labourers. Agency workers are paid less than direct labourers and don't have the same conditions. There are just over 60 direct labourers on their sites.

The same is happening with Piers Construction. Shop stewards have linked up to try and strengthen their side.

Unofficial strikes took place on all sites in Dublin at the beginning of July, culminating in a demonstration at the site in Sandyford Industrial

Estate.

SIPTU subsequently went into negotiation with the company. After the talks, members were led to believe that there would be no laying off of workers for the foreseeable future.

However, this promise has been overturned. The company's intention is to have no direct labourers on their sites.

The union official said workers must accept the deal. But workers feel that they should be able to ballot to take industrial action and fight for their rights.

John Paul Construction and Piers construction are notorious for their shocking record on health and safety issues. Now they are bringing in for-

foreign workers to undermine the pay and conditions of Irish workers. However the workers stressed that they are not against foreign workers. As one striker told Socialist Worker "We are not racist. Whether foreign or Irish, workers should have the same pay and conditions"

The GAMA workers showed how these bosses can be beaten. Foreign workers can be allies. All workers, foreign or Irish, are entitled to have decent wages and conditions.

The workers are intending to continue their fight and intend to hold a protest march in August. Watch this space. Contact 0872183439 for further details. CREA RYDER

## Donegal China/Belleek Group dispute

Workers made redundant after the shutdown of the Donegal Parian China factory in Ballyshannon have stepped up their campaign for adequate compensation. The group has staged a number of impressive pickets at the entrance to Belleek Pottery, Co. Fermanagh, the headquarters of the parent company Belleek Group.

The 54 workers affected were first informed of the closure plan in January and elected 3 delegates to represent them in negotiations with management. The workers sought a redundancy package of 4 weeks pay per year of service, only 2 weeks more than the statutory requirement. However the bosses refused to pay more than the miserly statutory level and told 11 workers, with less than 2 years service, they would receive no compensation at all.

The workforce referred the matter to the Labour Relations Court. A week before the closure of the plant on 31st March, the court decided that the workers should get 1.5 weeks pay on top of the statutory payment. As yet the company has refused to comply with the Court's judgment. Those on the picket stated 'that Belleek Group are ignoring the recommendation despite holding assets in Ballyshannon worth several million euro.' Patrick, a worker, told Socialist Worker that in subsequent talks, the management had patronisingly 'lectured' the workers representatives.

Despite attempts to portray the situation differently, the Ballyshannon group has no grievance against workers employed in the Belleek factory.

The Ballyshannon workers have vowed to continue the struggle until the company acts in accordance with the Court decision and pays the workers the money they are owed.

## FREE THE ROSSPORT FIVE

# How Irish State is a puppet for Shell

By KIERAN ALLEN

**T**his titanic battle, which has brought the anti-capitalist message to a mass audience, began over health and safety.

A consortium led by Shell but also including Statoil and Marathon proposed to build a pipeline complex that will run over 8 kilometres of land.

The complex includes an upstream pipeline which brings the gas from the sea to the terminal; a downstream pipeline which takes the discharge out into the sea; and an 'umbilical cord' containing cleansing acids, power lines and hydraulic fluids to control the mechanical valve system.

Normally, gas is processed out at sea on huge platforms and even the Minister for the Marine and Natural Resources Noel Dempsey has admitted the pipeline is 'unique both in Ireland and Europe'.

The length of the pipeline means it has to run at exceptionally high pressures.

The pipeline will be 70 metres from local houses, passing sometimes through unstable bog. It will also be in the same trench as the umbilical cord, containing materials travelling at even higher pressures.

The gas is still wet, corrosive and has to pass through several 90 degree angles where the risk of a rupture increases.

These plans caused alarm in Pollthomais, Bellanaboy, and Rossport. Pipeline accidents are uncommon but do occur.

In 2004 twenty-one people died in a gas pipeline explosion in Ghislenghien in Belgium and in August 2000, twelve people died in New Mexico when an underground natural gas pipeline ruptured.

## The Puppet State

**B**ertie Ahern was described by Charlie Haughey as the most cunning and devious of them all. He has certainly worked tirelessly behind the scenes to facilitate Shell.

The saga of Ireland's subservience to the energy corporations began in the late 1960s when Marathon Oil was granted a licence that effectively gave it control of the south coast of Ireland for the nominal sum of just €635. It then went on to discover large quantities of natural gas off the Kinsale Head.

After this debacle, Justin Keating the Labour Minister for Industry and Commerce in 1975, introduced more stringent exploration terms, including a tax rate of 50 percent on profits; an automatic 50 percent stake for the state in any commercial wells and royalties of 6 percent.

Due to a slowdown in world-wide exploration and production, this was modified in 1985. However in 1987, a fundamental change occurred when Ray Burke became Minister for Energy.

Burke entered into private negotiations with Marathon executives against the advice of top government officials. In discussions about the price of gas from Kinsale, he told a senior official that he was to give Marathon 'whatever they were asking for'.

More generally, he abolished the requirement that the state have a 50 percent stake in any commercial project and that royalties be received. He also introduced a facility whereby exploration expenses



Part of a Shell To Sea protest in Belmullet in July

Picture Richard Whelan

could be written off against tax.

Subsequently, Ray Burke was branded the recipient of corrupt payments to the tune of £200,000 by the Flood Tribunal. With a Minister with this appalling record, the Irish people had little defence against the oil companies.

However, even more crucial concessions came in 1992 when Bertie Ahern was Minister for Finance. In the Finance Act of that year, the corporation tax rate on oil and gas production was reduced to 25 percent, the lowest in the world.

The companies were also allowed to write off all costs going back for 25 years. (By way of contrast, tax on oil profits in Norway was set at 78 percent.)

The sheer scale of the potential profits and the need to have a friendly relationship with local states, mean that oil and gas companies devote considerable resources to lobbying politicians.

Shell, the principal company involved, spent \$28 million and employed 120 lobbyists between 1998 and 2003 to promote its interests with the US federal government while Marathon has spent €29.1 million.

At least in the US, one can track these activities whereas in Ireland lobbying takes a far less open form. Marathon Oil, however, has contributed to Fianna Fail and Enterprise Oil has hosted the Fianna Fail fund raising event at the Galway races.

Yet even without these direct donations, oil companies exercise a considerable influence over the Irish government.

Their control of vast resources, technology and expertise and their close ties to the power of the US state, means that they have leverage over Irish politicians. That, at least, is the only plausible explanation why the Irish state has gone to

extraordinary lengths to look after their interests in Mayo.

The state owned forestry company, Coillte, sold over 400 acres to the consortium, as a site for the oil refinery. Bord Gais, the state owned gas company, is building a special extension to the national grid at a cost of €200 million to get gas from the Corrib field.

The Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, held a special meeting with the President of Shell to encourage the company to re-apply when its first planning application was rejected.

A government Minister also travelled to the area to mobilise support for the project. Special legislation was put in place to impose compulsory acquisition of land for the pipeline and, in effect, the project was split so that planning permission was only required for the refinery rather than the pipeline.

Even more bizarrely, the 'independent' consultancy firm that was hired to do a quantified risk assessment of the pipeline was part owned by Shell.

As if that was not enough, no government agency has yet taken full responsibility for the pipeline. The Health and Safety Authority claim they have no responsibility. Instead, permission for the pipeline and its operation are the sole preserve of the Minister for Marine and Natural Resources under the foreshore and gas Acts. The catch, however, is that the pipeline cannot be regarded as being part of the 'foreshore' because it will run 8 kilometres inland.

Behind all the bureaucratic manoeuvring is a strategy to give the Petroleum Affairs Division (PAD) a free hand. This is a unit inside the Department of Marine

and Natural Resources which has close ties to the energy corporations.

The former Statoil executive, Mike Cunningham, who has joined the campaign for the Rossport Five says that no press release was issued by the PAD until it was first shown to the oil and gas companies.

Behind the scenes, then, Ahern has manoeuvred to hand over Ireland's natural resources to the corporations. If this were Bolivia, he would have been thrown out of office by now. Hopefully the Bolivian spirit is coming to Mayo.

## People Power will win

**T**hree thousand people marched in Belmullet to demand the release of the Rossport Five.

But two Maymen were conspicuous by their absence - Pat Rabbitte, the leader of the Labour Party and Enda Kenny, the leader of Fine Gael.

Both have run a mile from the whole issue. The leaders of the 'alternative' government do not want to upset the corporations. They want to be the B team in the puppet play. The battle to defeat Shell therefore depends of the full use of people power.

Despite all the doomsayers, huge demonstrations have a powerful effect. The demonstrations in Belmullet and Castlebar, for example, have helped to win the whole of Mayo to the campaign. The same needs to be repeated in Dublin and throughout the country.

The stakes are enormously high. Defeating this government will require an escalation to the level of mass civil disobedience. This is our task.

## Shell's rotten record in Nigeria

**Although oil from Ogoniland has provided approximately \$30 billion to the economy of Nigeria, Ogoni villages are impoverished**

**Since Shell began drilling in 1958, pipelines have been built across farmlands and in front of homes. Land is now smothered with oil from leakages**

**The Nigerian Environmental Study Action Team observed increased "discomfort and misery" due to fumes, heat and combustion gases, as well as higher rates of certain diseases like bronchial asthma, other respiratory diseases, gastro-enteritis and cancer**

**Both Shell and the government admit that Shell contributes to the funding of the military in the region. In 1994, the military sent permanent security forces into Ogoniland, occupying the once peaceful land. This Rivers State Internal Security Task Force is suspected in the murders of 2000 people.**

**thousands of people have fled Ogoniland under threat of violence.**

**Ken Saro Wiwa's final words before his execution were: "The struggle continues!"**

**The people of Mayo have taken up the call.**

# Cycle of horror and despair caused by v

## Ahern and McDowell: Bush's poodles

Mc Dowell is also using this hysteria and the London tragedy to further attack the civil liberties of all Irish citizens. He is now planning to introduce compulsory ID cards for everyone.

Just a week after the bombing the Irish government has signed a new treaty to increase co-operation between the US and Irish intelligence services. The treaty will

amongst other things allow the CIA to look into the bank accounts of Irish citizens.

Meanwhile, both politicians and the media have dismissed and remained silent about the obvious connection between the London attacks and the US/UK occupation of Iraq

The stunning hypocrisy of all this is highlighted with the latest figures on the number of US troops travelling through Shannon.

Over 150,000 US troops have travelled through Shannon between

January and June of this year. This represents a doubling of the number of US troops travelling through the airport since the US invasion of Iraq began two years ago. It is also equivalent to the total number of US troops presently in Iraq.

Over 400,000 US troops have travelled through Shannon since the US led war began in 2003 with the numbers increasing dramatically over the last year. This means Ireland is now the single most important country providing logistical support for transporting US

troops to Iraq.

According to the latest figures on casualties the US led war has now cost the lives of 128,000 innocent Iraqi's.

As long as US troops travel through Shannon we are directly implicated in this terrorist war. The US led invasion has inflicted London style atrocities on the people of Iraq everyday for the last two and half years.

Shannon Airport a CIA plane involved in illegal rendition (hostage taking) of alleged terrorist suspects

for transportation to be tortured in places like Guantanamo Bay, Egypt and Jordan.

This makes a mockery of claims that Irish neutrality is intact. After the London and Madrid bombings it also makes Ireland a possible target for attack as long as we continue to facilitate the US war machine.

As the horror of the Iraq war continues and threatens to spread into the west it is vital that the anti-war movement in this country redoubles its efforts to end the use of Shannon by the US military.

# After the London bombings, let us remember

By Salma Yaqoob

The establishment chorus will not succeed in its desperate pretence that bombs in London are not linked to Iraq, writes Salma Yaqoob

Tony Blair would have us believe that the horrific bombings perpetrated against the people of London last week had nothing to do with the foreign policy of his government post 9/11.

Instead, he argues, we are dealing with religious fanatics who are inspired purely by hate of "our" way of life. The fact that over 100,000 people have lost their lives in Iraq and over 20,000 in Afghanistan as a consequence of George Bush and Tony Blair unleashing their war of terror is apparently no indicator as to why people — Muslims, we assume — are planting bombs on our streets.

This delinkage is not shared by the CIA. As John Pilger reports, "Three weeks ago, a classified CIA report revealed that the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq had turned that country into a focal point of terrorism.

"None of the intelligence agencies regarded Iraq as such a flash-point before the invasion, however tyrannical the regime. On the contrary, in 2003 the CIA reported that Iraq 'exported no terrorist threat to his neighbours' and that Saddam Hussein was 'implacably hostile to Al Qaida'."

A diagnosis of the problem as simply one of religious fanaticism and consequent prescription of a simplistic "war on terror" is not only wrong, but counterproductive. It actually adds to the real cause of the disease of terrorism — injustice and double standards.

What we are seeing is political violence, not religious violence. That violence has its roots in a seething anger, built up over decades, at the manner in which US and British foreign policy in the region has helped further cement the structures of oppression and exploitation.

The demands — even of people like Osama bin Laden — are concrete things like removal of US bases from Saudi Arabia and the withdrawal of Western troops from Muslim countries.

So Tony Blair is right on one thing—you can't reduce everything to post 9/11. The people of the Middle East have been angry for much longer than that. They remember the deaths of at least half a million Iraqi children as a result of UN sanctions in the previous decade. They remember the comments about these deaths from then US secretary of state Madeleine Albright — that "the price was worth it".

They remember that in return for non-interference in the Balkans, the Russian government under Yelstin and then Putin was allowed free



Illustration by Tim Sanders

reign to wage its war of terror on the people of Chechnya, levelling Grozny and killing 100,000 Chechens.

They remember the 700,000 Palestinians ethnically cleansed in 1948, scattered to the four corners of the earth, left in rot in refugee camps, subjected to Israeli state sponsored terrorism that receives ever larger military and economic aid packages from the US.

They will have watched with tired cynicism the recent proclamations of current US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that "democracy is on the march", when in fact what is really on the march is the relentless expansion of US control of their lands and resources.

Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar all have US military bases. And all are governed by dictatorial US puppet regimes.

Arabs live in lands cursed by the wealth of oil. Beneath their feet are natural resources that could help rid their lands of poverty and underdevelopment. Yet they are denied access to that wealth. Instead Western

oil companies, backed by Western armies, in collusion with rich Arab elites, act as one to deny them what is naturally theirs.

This contextualisation of the attacks on London is crucial in the political debate now taking place in the aftermath of last week's bombing. Blair is desperate to break people's perception of any linkage. And in that he is joined by the leaders of the Liberal Democrats, the Tories and — to their shame—some so called Muslim leaders.

Yet the very reason that the racist backlash has been contained so far is due to the opposite approach. It is due to the campaigning work of the anti-war movement, the thousands of nameless individuals who staffed stalls, handed out leaflets, organised local meetings and sustained the anti-war argument though a myriad of different gestures.

It is those actions that have shaped the political culture of this country so that there now exists a widespread "good sense" understanding of the lies behind Blair's war.

I firmly believe that it is this

groundswell of anti-war sentiment that is acting as a barrier in the face of a potential racist backlash. So far that barrier has held solid. But we need to continue to strengthen it.

And the best way we can do that is to ensure that at all the commemorative events to the victims of last Thursday's terrible events, there is also an argument — put sensitively but with determination — that we are not only united in grief, we are also united for peace, that the only hope for the future is one that seeks to address the injustices terrorists organisations can breed from.

In the words of former British government adviser David Clarke, "There can be no hope of defeating terrorism until we are ready to take legitimate Arab grievances seriously." A good place to start would be ending the occupation of Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine.

Salma Yaqoob in the vice-chair of Respect and chair of Birmingham Stop the War Coalition

www.swp.org.uk

# 7/7 tra A result flawed po

By ABDUL HASEEB

This extract from 'Sahih Muslim', one of the most authentic books in Islam, affirms the virtue of the Romans, or as they are known today, the Europeans

**Mustawrid al-Qurashi reported: I heard Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) saying: The Last Hour would come (when) the Romans would form a majority amongst the people. 'Amr said to him (Mustawrid Qurashi): See what you are saying? He said: I say what I heard from Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him). Thereupon he said: If you say that, it is a fact for they have five qualities. They have (1) the patience to undergo a trial and (2) immediately restore themselves to sanity after trouble and (3) attack again after flight. (4) They (have the quality) of being good to the destitute and the orphans, to the weak and, (5) fifthly, the good quality in them is that they resist the oppression of kings.**

All four praiseworthy qualities mentioned in the above tradition were witnessed on the 7th of July 2005. It is commendable to witness the emergency services very effectively responding to the crisis, and even more admirable to see the British people caught up in the attack, their faces covered with black smoke mixed with their blood, but still managing to smile. It confirms the aforementioned tradition to see London City back on its feet the next day. The zeal amongst the ordinary British population towards the eradication of poverty in the days just before 7/7 also cannot be ignored.

As a Muslim living in Europe during these trying times, how could I forget the fifth and very special quality mentioned in the tradition: 'they resist the oppression of kings'? Muslims the world over, and in particular the Muslims in Britain, are thankful to the British public that demonstrated against the terror on Afghanistan and Iraq, and that protested against the draconian Anti-Terror laws.

The ordinary British public

# World's leading terrorists: Bush & Blair

On Saturday September 24th, the US anti-war movement will be holding major protests in Washington calling on the US government to withdraw from Iraq. Here in Ireland the Irish Anti-war Movement will hold a major demonstration and peace festival at Shannon airport on that same day.

It is vital we mobilise over the coming weeks to ensure a large turnout at Shannon on Sept 24th.

By Richard Boyd Barrett, Chair of the Irish Anti War Movement

## Tragedy: of policies

did not deserve the 7th of July. The Blair government lied and misled the British public over Iraq. The government also locked up innocent people indefinitely in Belmarsh prison without charge or trial. When the detentions were finally declared illegal by the Law Lords, the government placed the so-called terror suspects under control orders. Seven hundred arrests based on questionable intelligence have been made, only half of whom are charged with only about 17 convictions. The case of Babar Ahmad, who has sustained serious injuries while in custody, and is now waiting to be extradited to the US without any evidence has caused outrage

What could be more of an embarrassment for the government than for Charles Clarke to admit that no preventive measures – including the ID cards – can prevent an attack like 7/7? What is distressing, however, is that Charles Clarke still considers these draconian laws and preventive measures ‘helpful’. But this begs the question: In what way can more draconian Anti-Terror laws be ‘helpful’ if they cannot prevent mass destruction of life and property?

This has been a very important episode for the Blair government to take lessons from. Their “war on terror” has made the world a more dangerous place. If they were a responsible government, they would also question the effectiveness of their Anti-Terror laws. These laws, which are targeted in particular at the Muslim community, breed resentment and undermine everyone’s civil rights

If the government truly wants security for its citizens, it is time they took themselves to account.

Our condolences are with all those who have lost their lives on this side and on that. Our hearts are with those who have suffered on this side and on that.

Abdul Haseeb is the administrator in the Islamic Centre on the South Circular Road and is on the steering committee of the Irish Anti War Movement



## Three Songs of the Dead

by Michael Rosen

©Michael Rosen

### FROM IRAQ

We have no mouths  
We evaporated

You don't see the holes in the ground where we were put  
We are the unfound  
We are uncounted

You don't see the homes we made  
We're not even the small print or the bit in brackets.

You see less of us than you see of the dust  
You see less of us than you see of the wind

Because we were somewhere else,  
because we lived far from you,  
because our minutes, hours, days and years did not last as long as yours,  
because you have cameras that point the other way,  
because you talk about other people...

...Of that moment when we went you can't even say you missed it.

### DEAR NEW LABOUR

If you go into other people's countries and bomb them they will bomb you.

You can call them what you like  
You can tell us that our cause is noble

You can tell us that they're evil and we are good  
But the rule remains:  
If you go into other people's countries and bomb them they will bomb you.

You can tell us that you've flushed out the troublemakers  
You can tell us that you've neutralised the flashpoints  
You can tell us that you've sown the seeds of the future

But the rule remains:  
If you go into other people's countries and bomb them they will bomb you.

### FROM THE THREE TRAINS AND THE 30 BUS

Thank you so much for lying when we asked you why.  
Thank you so much for not listening when we said, don't go.  
Thank you so much for ignoring us when we said, don't shoot.  
Thank you so much for carrying on when we said, get out.  
Thank you so much for taking no notice when we said, this'll make things worse.  
Thank you so much for making it impossible for us to go on saying thank you.

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**Socialist Worker****Editorial**Web: [www.swp.ie](http://www.swp.ie) Email: [swped@eircom.net](mailto:swped@eircom.net) Phone: 01 8722682**Islam and Muslims are scapegoats**

In the immediate aftermath of the terrible atrocity of the London bombs Tony Blair is desperately looking to cover up the role of his own bombing campaign in Iraq and Afghanistan. The London bombers killed more than 50 people. The Bush and Blair bombers have killed more than 100,000 people in Iraq alone since March 19th 2003.

Blair has urged a "battle of ideas" against the "evil ideology" of al-Qaeda. Media commentators in Ireland and Britain warn of "terror links with fundamentalist Muslims". The family of suicide bomber Hasib Hussain said "Hasib was a loving and normal young man who gave us no concern, and we are having difficulty taking this in."

But this doesn't fit in with Blair, Ahern and the media's rantings against terrorists, Islamic militants and Al-Qaeda. They are using Islam and Muslims as a scapegoat to avoid people pointing the finger of blame at the real cause of the suicide bombings — Bush and Blair's support for corrupt regimes like Saudi Arabia, Israel, Colombia or Egypt and their wars of mass terror including the war against the Iraqi people since 1991.

Under the guise of fighting terror they are planning to introduce measures that will further curb civil liberties such as restricting the rights of Muslims to practice their faith, ID Cards and even restricting "verbal criticism" of western foreign policy. We have seen it all before on this Island.

The fact is that the only thing that will stop more suicide bombings is to end western imperial interventions in the Middle East and elsewhere. A first step would be to pull the troops out of Iraq.

Despite Ahern's claims to the contrary, Ireland is now one of the most important stop-over points for the US in its war on Iraq. Our challenge is to end Ireland's support for the bombing of Iraq. The anti-war movement must remobilise to defend our civil liberties and to stop US/UK terrorism by ensuring the biggest demonstration on 24th September at Shannon Warport.

**Free the Rosspoint Five: Nationalise the gas**

The jailing of the Rosspoint Five highlights all that is wrong with free-market capitalism. The Irish State is giving away for free the natural resources of this country to the private multinational Shell and its partner in crime Statoil. Shell can now make all the profit it likes, pay no royalties, and only a 25 per cent tax rate.

To maximise profits further Shell decided to refine the gas on land despite the fact that this puts people's lives in danger. International practice is to refine the gas at sea for safety reasons. When the Rosspoint Five and their families objected to the pipeline going through their land the Irish State backed up Shell and put the five of them in Jail.

Such corporate greed, promoted and supported by the state, is visible across the world. Look at Shell and the destruction they have caused in the Ogoni lands in Nigeria. Or Coca-Cola's death squads in Colombia.

Karl Marx described over 150 years ago how the competition between private companies led to an unending need to maximise the rate of profit. Governments' primary aim was to support this need to accumulate through fighting wars and repressing their own people.

But Marx also said that the exploitation caused by this drive for profits created resistance from those affected. It was only this resistance that could stop capitalism destroying people and the planet.

Today mass revolts in Bolivia are fighting to share the wealth of their gas reserves among ordinary Bolivians. Similarly in Ireland we see that it is only the inspiring resistance by the jailed five and the mass protests in their support that can stop the corporate greed of Shell and Statoil.

The Five should be released immediately. The exploration and refining should be taken over by public authorities and operated in the interests of the people of this country — not for the profit of private multinationals.

**COMMENT/OPINION**Send your views to [swped@eircom.net](mailto:swped@eircom.net)**Ardoyne fuelled by politics of the Good Friday Agreement**By **EAMONN McCANN**

There were indications over the Twelfth that the British and Irish Governments don't want the IRA to disband. They would rather see it continue to exist and help stabilise the North under the Agreement.

Two days before the Twelfth, Bertie Ahern was asked on RTE's lunchtime news about the re-imprisonment of Shankill bomber Sean Kelly. Ahern referred to Kelly's 'good work' in 'difficult' situations in the recent past, and to his (well-founded, as it turned out) nervousness about the situation likely to arise in Ardoyne two days later.

Ahern was echoing fears expressed by Sinn Fein leaders that the removal of Kelly from the front line might discourage other ex-prisoners from playing the 'important role' they had recently been filling.

This role had to do with 'policing' young Catholics intent on attacking the PSNI and/or Orange marchers. ('Ex-prisoners' in this context is code-language for the IRA.)

The Blair Government, too, has been increasingly explicit about its wish to see the IRA act as a restraining influence.

Three days after the clashes which marked the Twelfth in Ardoyne and elsewhere, the millionaire ex-Tory MP turned New Labour minister, Shaun Woodward, was fulsome in his praise for Gerry Adams and Gerry Kelly in trying to hold the line around the Ardoyne shops.

On Radio Ulster, Woodward drew particular attention to the positive role played by Martin McGuinness in Dunloy (although Woodward appeared to believe the events had unfolded in Dunloe).

The Republican leaders may be uncomfortable at praise of this sort being heaped on them.

But it's clear that the two Governments are measuring them up



for an envisaged new function.

The fact that the Governments think this an obvious path to go down illustrates a key aspect of the Agreement.

The events in Ardoyne have been widely reported as posing a danger to the Agreement. But they can also be seen as stemming from the Agreement. Or at least from the politics underlying the Agreement.

Socialist Worker has consistently pointed out that the Agreement is based not on challenging the sectarian nature of Northern politics but on striking a balance between Catholic-Nationalism and Protestant-Unionism.

The Agreement confirms and consolidates the Green-Orange pattern. This makes it more or less inevitable that political debate about the future will be expressed in the competitive mobilisation of the two communities.

The idea that people might mobilise in politics on any basis other than the community they come from isn't admitted even as a possibility within the Agreement.

Looked at in this way, the Twelfth scenes in Ardoyne, Derry and Dunloy

were not the negation of the Agreement but an expression of its essence—including its essential and much-celebrated "ambiguity."

Nationalists and Unionists were sold the Agreement separately, and in contradictory ways. Pro-Agreement Unionists were never required to explain that the deal gave Nationalism equal status with Unionism within Northern Ireland, and that this had obvious implications for power-sharing at all levels, for the structure of the police force, the display of flags and emblems, etc.

It was not spelt out to Nationalists by the SDLP or Sinn Fein that, in exchange for this formal equality within the North, the aspiration to a united Ireland would have to be put on hold until a Six County majority for unity emerged.

These irreconcilable expectations made continued communal confrontation inevitable.

It's against this background that Government and security chiefs in Dublin and London have come to look to the IRA (and they'd like a Loyalist equivalent to emerge) to help hold their 'own' side back.

The socialist alternative involves campaigning on a class basis on issues of policing, the rights of prisoners etc., as well as on issues such as water charges, Iraq etc. which more naturally bring the people at the bottom of the pile together, not drive them apart into communal corrals.

Those who put their faith in the Agreement maintain that this perspective is "unrealistic". But the future which they realistically offer is of continued sectarian division and front-line communal militants of the past now deployed to hold the discontended back.

**G8 Failure on Climate Change**By **PAT FINNEGAN**

Tony Blair and Gordon Brown picked climate change and poverty in Africa as the headline issues for G8 at Gleneagles as far back as last year.

This was largely, as GRIAN has long maintained, because you won't fix one without fixing the other. GRIAN were therefore invited to attend the summit as one of 25 NGO's active in this area for some time.

So what of the outcomes? Well, a G8 summit took place in Scotland all right. But it didn't come up with anything on climate change, as you may or may not have noticed.

Why? Well, probably because, with all the concentration by the public, the media, the rockstars, and, yes, the politicians, on how it would all look on TV, there was very little concentration on the central danger that conventional economic solutions will never get there before climate change does — unless we all catch ourselves on really quickly.

Take malaria for instance. Bono described some "new" money from George Bush for anti-malaria programmes as "the number one achievement of the summit".

He said he was "seriously impressed" by the American President's commitment to Africa. The programme is due to save 600,000 Africans from malaria.

Yet a UK Met Office report predicts an extra 290 million deaths from malaria worldwide by 2080 as a result of mosquitoes spreading into new ranges with climate change.

Yet it was the same George Bush who relentlessly blocked any agreement on action against climate change throughout the summit.

Maybe Bono and Geldof should start reading up a bit on climate change. In the meantime, I'm sure George Bush will happily receive any flowers they care to throw at him.

Accolades from rockstars look good on TV.

And the protests? Well they certainly made good TV.

They also made access to the summit difficult. Not for the politicians, obviously, who have, after all, all the helicopters they want at their disposal.

But the bus bringing NGOs out to the summit that I was on took half a day to get there.

The protester who lay down in front of us surely thought that he was doing his level best.

But when I tried to impress upon him that he was maybe not exactly improving chances of better outcomes from the G8 by helping to prevent NGO's from participating, he declared flatly that, "sorry, no," but he was in "a non-dialogue situation".

Funny, I thought that was almost exactly the case held against the G8.

**PAT FINNEGAN is Co-ordinator of GRIAN ([www.grian.ie](http://www.grian.ie)). Ghrian campaigns on climate change. Email to if you would like to help build GRIAN's capacity to generate simultaneous solutions to climate change and development problems, write to [coord@grian.ie](mailto:coord@grian.ie)**



**W**ho talks of revolution today? The mainstream social democratic left—re-branded as the “centre left”—has long given up talking about socialism, let alone revolution.

These days it is George Bush and his neo-cons who have stolen the word “revolution” to describe the imposition of US style neo-liberal capitalism through the power of the Pentagon.

Even the anti-capitalist movement shies away from the idea of revolution. Not long ago writer and activist Susan George said, “I must confess that I no longer know what ‘overthrowing capitalism’ means at the beginning of the 21st century.”

Yet even though the word “revolution” has fallen into disrepute, the thing itself stubbornly refuses to die.

Neo-liberal capitalism is devastating lives around the world. From time to time, their suffering goads working people to revolt.

When this happens, we get a glimpse of what revolution is really about—both in the forms of self organisation that emerge to wage the struggle and in the political dilemmas the movement confronts.

The most important—and extraordinary—contemporary example is provided by Bolivia, where popular risings have overthrown two presidents in barely 18 months.

Bolivia has suffered particularly brutally at the hands of neo-liberalism. The country’s tin mines were privatised in the 1980s at the behest of the International Monetary Fund. Some 30,000 miners lost their jobs.

Many ex-miners, along with landless peasants, have survived by producing the only crop they could live off—coca. This made them prime targets for the US government’s “war on drugs”.

The final turn of the vice came with the seizure of Bolivia’s huge natural gas reserves by European multinationals such as BP and Repsol.

But the attempt by global capital to swallow Bolivia whole provoked an explosive response.

## Uprising

First in 2000 a mass movement against the privatisation of water drove the US multinational Bechtel out of the Cochabamba region.

Then in October 2003 huge protests against the multinationals’ control of Bolivia’s natural gas converged on the capital, La Paz. President Gonzalo Sanchez de Losada was forced to resign and flee to Miami in a helicopter.

The 2003 uprising proved merely the prelude to what has been called the Second Gas War of May and June 2005. This latest rising focused on mass demands for the nationalisation of the natural gas industry.

Losada’s successor, Carlos Mesa, was forced out last month for opposing even an increase in the tax on gas royalties.

The risings have been marked by a spectacular convergence of a range of different struggles.

The Federation of Neighbourhood Committees of El Alto, the overwhelmingly Indian city that overlooks La Paz on Bolivia’s high plateau, was a key force in organising mass strikes, daily demonstrations and a blockade of the capital.

As in 2003, the coca farmers also played a critical role. But this time the main organisations of the Bolivian working class—the national Workers’ Central and the Regional Central of El Alto—were at the centre of the protests.

The Bolivian risings have thus made visible some of the main features of a revolutionary situation. The working people and the poor have been goaded into rebellion against the dreadful material conditions they suffer.

In fighting they have built and strengthened mass organisations of struggle. Their collective power represents a challenge to the way in which society is normally run—from the top, by and in the interests of the rich and privileged.

This is at the very heart of revolu-



Bolivian workers show the reality of revolution today

(Pic: Sebastian Hacher)

# Revolution lives on in the 21st century

*Alex Callinicos argues that revolution lives on in the 21st century, as shown by Bolivia’s uprising*

**The risings have been marked by a spectacular convergence of a range of different struggles.**

tion as it is understood in the Marxist tradition. Socialism, Marx said, is the self emancipation of the working class. It’s about workers, together with all the oppressed and exploited, freeing themselves through a revolution from below.

But nothing has been resolved in Bolivia. The latest rising was followed by a truce, in which Mesa was replaced by Eduardo Rodriguez, who will serve as interim president until elections are organised later in the year.

The rich white oligarchy that dominates Bolivia hasn’t given up. It is demanding autonomy for the rich eastern lowland region where the natural gas reserves are concentrated.

It can expect the support of the White House and of the multinationals, which are threatening to sue Bolivia if the reserves are nationalised.

The oligarchy and their foreign allies will count heavily on the army and police, who are the last line of defence of the existing order. Some 67 people were killed in ineffective efforts to crush the 2003 rising.

The Scottish autonomist Marxist John Holloway coined the slogan “Change the world without taking power”, which has become very popu-

lar among sections of the Latin American left. But if we ignore the state, this doesn’t mean that the state—and in particular its repressive forces—will ignore us.

## Strategy

One strategy for dealing with the state is to try to take control of it by winning elections. Evo Morales, leader of the coca farmers and the Movement Towards Socialism, represents this option in Bolivia.

Morales came a close second in the 2002 presidential elections and many people think he will win next time. Richard Gott predicted in the Guardian recently that a Morales presidency in Bolivia would be a focus for indigenous movements throughout the Andes region of South America.

It would also be an ally of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Fidel Castro in Cuba in challenging US imperialism, he argued.

Undoubtedly if Morales won it would be a huge fillip for the left in Bolivia and throughout Latin America. But a strategy that makes winning elections the main lever of social change leads nowhere.

Already Morales has come under increasing criticism for his caution. When the mass movement demanded the complete nationalisation of gas reserves, Morales advocated increasing the tax on royalties to 50 percent and opposed Mesa’s resignation.

Jean Friedsky recently reported from Bolivia on the radical website ZNet:

“The feeling among Evo’s theoretical base (poor and indigenous) is that he cares more about international approval and the long term viability of his political party than about the life of the average Bolivian...”

“He started asking for nationalisation in week four and only because he was the last remaining force on the left not demanding it.”

To see elections as the key to change is to believe that the left can win control of the existing state.

Inevitably this leads to what Morales has been doing—tailoring policies to suit what the local ruling class, the multinationals, and international capitalist institutions regard as “realistic”.

But great movements from below up-end all these calculations. One of the slogans of the French events of May-June 1968 was “Be realistic—demand the impossible!”

## Realistic

When the masses take to the streets, the impossible has a funny trick of becoming realistic.

Thus in Bolivia today, nationalising the gas reserves—which would reverse the logic of neo-liberal privatisation—has become a serious option.

But really to entrench this alternative social logic, in which the economy would be run on the basis of democratic decisions about what the mass of people need, would require a revolution.

It would mean going beyond what the risings in Bolivia have achieved so far, which is removing obnoxious politicians and driving the political system into crisis.

The mass organisations of the workers and the poor would have to develop into real organs of popular power that could begin to take over running society—to become the basis of a new state directly controlled by the exploited and oppressed majority.

These emerging organs of popular power would, of course, run up against the existing state.

The movement would have to find ways of dividing the forces of repression—of winning over rank and file soldiers and police officers.

The more the movement splits and disorganises the repressive state apparatuses, the easier it would be for the new popular power to sweep them aside and take control of society.

This may seem like fantasy, but it is what nearly happened in Portugal during the revolution of 1974-5, as Socialist Worker’s recent interviews with veterans of that country’s revolution showed.

Revolution itself isn’t a fantasy. It is put on the agenda by mass revolts against neo-liberalism, of which the most spectacular to date are the two uprisings in Bolivia.

The higher the level of resistance, the more the movements to which it gives rise are confronted with the classic dilemma of reform or revolution—of taking over the existing state or seeking to overthrow it from below.

One of the greatest difficulties our movements face is the way in which many activists’ political imagination has shrunk as a result of the defeats suffered by the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s.

It is this that encourages even figures as closely identified with the great movements of today as Evo Morales to narrow their political horizons to negotiating a somewhat better deal within the present system.

We have to win the new generation of activists emerging from these movements to understanding that revolution isn’t just possible.

In a world dominated by poverty, war and environmental destruction, it’s essential.

www.swp.org.uk

## REVIEWS

# The Very Good Years

**Book Review by Tim Saunders, July 2005**

'Regrets, I've had a few...' though reading this little gem of a book is not one of them. How great it is to read that 'Ol' Blue Eyes' Frank Sinatra was not just a right wing Mafioso crooner, but that he was, in his early years, a red!

In this new biography Martin Smith pays tribute to Frank Sinatra's contribution to modern music. As he says in the introduction, 'It's worth remembering that before the Beatles and before Elvis Presley, there was Frank Sinatra.' He weaves a fascinating picture of Frank Sinatra's life, the pressures he was subjected to and the changes in American society in the second half of the 20th century.

Sinatra was born into hard times, the son of Italian immigrants, in Hoboken, New Jersey. But mass immigration and industrial expansion were transforming American society. Sinatra's father's bar in 'Little Italy' prospered in the years of Prohibition. It was in the family 'speakeasy' that the adolescent Sinatra first sang in public.

Sinatra grew up in an atmosphere of racial intimidation and bigotry, frequently taunted as a 'wop' or 'dago'.

It was this and his mother's influence - she was a local Democratic activist - that gave him a burning hatred of racism which stayed with him in later years.

Martin gives an excellent account of the rise of Sinatra as a performer and how his rising popularity coincided with the development of youth culture. In the pre-war years many children started work at the age of 12 or 13. By the Second World War the leaving age had risen to 15 or 16, and more working class people were going to college.

This, combined with more spending power, saw the emergence of teen idols of which Frank was one of the first. He made his solo debut in December 1942, and by 1947 was America's biggest selling artist.

The 1930s and 1940s were a time of both terror and hope - the terror of fascism and the hope of a better world brought about through struggle.

The cause of the Spanish Republic became a rallying cry for progressives throughout the world, as did the mass strike in France. Sinatra's politics took a sharp turn to the left, and he became, as Martin puts it, 'a champion of the poor and the oppressed'. In the US there was an 'alarming growth of spontaneous rebellion' and

*Tim Saunders discovers the radical Sinatra*



The young Frank Sinatra in the 1940s

President Roosevelt was forced to introduce the 'New Deal'.

Wages and prices were fixed, unemployed workers put to work on massive building projects, and it even became easier to join a union.

These were exciting times and, as Martin explains, 'Sinatra was a child of this movement: many of those involved in the Cultural Front influenced Sinatra's artistic and political ideas.

Sinatra may have arrived late to the scene but his political and musical contributions also helped shape this movement.'

There is a good account of the many times Sinatra spoke out against racism and injustice. The beauty of this book is that it is full of those 'well, I never knew that!' type of moments. Like the time when he took on a school hall full of 5,000 angry students and parents protesting against racial integration in Gary, Indiana. 'No other major recording star of the period laid his

reputation on the line in such a fashion.'

After the Second World War the US left was in retreat. The McCarthy witch-hunts crushed the CPUSA and Sinatra, like many others, was isolated. Though still opposing racism, he was moving to the political centre.

By the early 1960s he was immensely rich, and leader of the so called 'Rat Pack' - a group of wildly hedonistic celebrities. These were the 'dream come true' years for Sinatra.

He was even close to the gleaming new president, John F Kennedy. But as Sinatra's talent appeared to be declining his connections with the mob and radical past started to be a problem. Kennedy did not want to be seen with a red and a mobster.

It is impossible to define the point at which the man who said in 1946 that 'America's biggest thorn is poverty... every kid should have

his quart of milk a day', then became the man who in 1970 said, 'Reagan is an outstanding candidate... a very honest guy who believes in what he does.'

There is in fact a gradual disintegration; circumstances change; the pressures of stardom and the ebb and flow of class struggle all have an impact.

Martin describes this process with compassion and insight. He celebrates the artist's triumphs and explains his failings.

He doesn't shrink from the mistakes Sinatra makes - his weaknesses, his connections to the Mafia and the consequences they had on his life, politics and career. But at the same time he recognises the greatest of Frank Sinatra and the impact he had on millions of people around the world. This is a must read book for the summer.

**Frank Sinatra: When Ol' Blue Eyes was a Red**, Martin Smith, Bookmarks £5.99

## Theatre:

Powerful play about Chile's 'disappeared'

Tejas Verdes by Fermin Cabal 6th-23rd July

This play is based on real events and real people. Colorina was a young woman interred at Tejas Verdes, the hotel and beach resort turned torture camp in Pinochet's Chile. In Fermin Cabal's powerful play, Colorina's story of how she became one of Chile's 3000 'disappeared' during the Pinochet repression, is told from five quiet, firm, frightening perspectives by five women. The play has a powerful calm.

Directed by: Roisin McBrinn [www.project.ie](http://www.project.ie)

## DVD:

Hoping For Palestine

On the 16th of October last year Primal Scream, Spiritualized, Nick Cave & the bad seeds and Steve Mason from the Beta Band came together and performed to a sell-out crowd at London's Brixton Academy, in what was probably the biggest benefit gig for Palestinians ever held in Britain.

The Hoping Foundation (The charity who organised the event) has now released a DVD of the concert. The Hoping Foundation which was founded in 2002, aims to support projects for Palestinian children in refugee camps in the Occupied Territories, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.

Primal Scream's front man Bobby Gillespie explained in "The Guardian" why he got involved: "The truth is that most people can see what is taking place on the ground in the Middle East.

And they can see who needs our support. Everyone knows who is under the boot and who's got the mouthful of broken glass. "The Palestinians are a prisoner nation, refugees and exiles treated like ghosts.

Now we want them to feel our solidarity," he wrote.

He referred to the long tradition of British musicians' involvement in political causes.

"John Lennon used his name and money to oppose the Vietnam War and support the workers on strike. If Lennon were still on this earth, he'd be doing Palestine. In fact he'd be rocking the Brixton Academy tomorrow night."

By KAREN MCCORMACK

## JOURNAL:

# ISJ: Inspiration and ideas for the radical left

The latest issue of the International Socialist Journal (ISJ), a quarterly journal produced by the SWP in Britain, is a vital read for anyone involved in struggle against war, privatisation or any other issue.

Chris Harman and Jim Wolfreys analyse the French referendum victory and outline the lessons for the left.

"The 'no' vote in the French and

Dutch referendums. The loss of a million votes by New Labour in Britain's election.

The defeat of Germany's social democrats in the state election in the Ruhr.

One simple fact emerges from them all. Europe's rulers are failing to find a popular constituency for neo-liberal policies at the centre of their agenda" argues Harman. He concludes that

"Respect (and new left alliances) provides the left with the opportunity to avoid two mistakes made in Europe in the last decade.

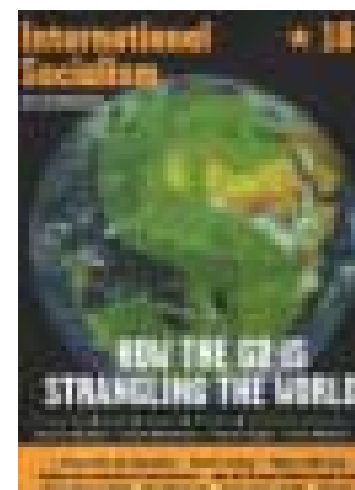
One is sticking to a sectarian ghetto with little impact on the large numbers of people who are radicalised every time new protests erupt.

The other is simply dissolving itself into wider movements and so

losing its capacity to argue against those who would divert the mood of resistance into the creation of new neo-liberal governments with a vague left colouring".

Other articles include "Aid, Governance and exploitation, The Strangling of Africa, Sartre's Century, Latin America's new 'left' governments and more.

Available from 01 8722682 or [www.bookmarks.uk.com](http://www.bookmarks.uk.com)



# Water Wars in Bolivia: Eyewitness report

Muireann de Barra and Aisling Crudden are two independent filmmakers making a documentary about Bolivia's "water wars" in Cochabamba and El Alto. Having recently attended the G8 Alternative Summit in Edinburgh Muireann reflects here on the experience and on lessons learned during their visit to Bolivia earlier this year.

As one of the 18 countries eligible for debt relief announced at the G8 summit in Gleneagles last week, we should be ever more concerned for the future social and economic stability of Bolivia.

The conditions tied to this debt relief will demand increased market liberalisation and privatisation of public services such as health, education, water and sanitation services. Bolivians know all too well what this will mean — reduced access to services for the poor in favour of the profit-seeking ambitions of multinational corporations.

This has become a familiar trend in recent years following the privatisation of many of Bolivia's municipal water services in 1997.

This captured global attention when a "water war" was launched in April 2000 in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba.

The water war saw the expulsion of the multinational corporation Bechtel and the return of water services to public control.

This success spearheaded Bolivia's social movements' resistance to neo-liberal policies which have continued to gain momentum over the past 5 years.

We have recently seen Bolivia's broad based social movements mobilise once again with their demand for the nationalisation of gas and oil reserves which brought the country to the brink of civil war following the resignation of President Carlos Mesa in June.

The common thread in the social movements' mobilisations has been a call to reclaim the country's natural resources from private control and return them to public hands.

The increased liberalisation of markets through proposed trade agreements such as the FTAA (Free Trade Agreement of the Americas) has met broad resistance from Bolivia's poor and working classes who oppose further exploitation of resources by multinational corporations.

Even the poorest and most isolated indigenous Aymara and Quechua campesinos (poor farmers) understand



Confrontation in Cochabamba

the dynamics and motivations of profit-oriented multinationals and international financial institutions such as the World Trade Organisation and recognise that — despite Bolivia's relatively young democracy — what is happening in their country is a continuation of century-old colonisation.

Earlier this year, the second chapter in Bolivia's water wars began to unfold. In January and March the citizens of El Alto ("Altenos") — Bolivia's poorest city — demanded the termination of the city's private water contract with French global water giant Suez.

Fearing scenes similar to those of Cochabamba's water war when the government declared a state of siege on the city resulting in the death of a teenager, President Carlos Mesa conceded to the Altenos demands and cancelled the 30-year concession with Suez.

Since this time, President Carlos Mesa resigned amidst nation-wide protests and the private water company Suez — as the main shareholder in the private consortium — has threatened the Bolivian government with a multi-million dollar lawsuit it can scarcely afford.

Suez is a billion-dollar corporation which has faced similar resistance for abuses of water services in South Africa, Argentina, Uruguay, North

America, Philippines and Costa Rica.

Having pushed the initial water privatisation deal in 1997, the World Bank is seen to have a clear conflict of interests since it holds an 8% share in the water consortium and will conduct the arbitration proceedings through its legal arm and clearinghouse for international trade disputes — the ISCID.

In April this year, this reporter travelled with fellow filmmaker Aisling Crudden to Bolivia to witness and document the failures of Suez in serving the needs of El Alto's 800,000 strong population.

One of the key issues highlighted in the 2005 water war was that 200,000 people were excluded from the concession area defined in the 1997 contract and were therefore being left without any water service provisions whatsoever!

The second key issue was that people were being charged a staggering \$445 for the initial water and sanitation connection fee — the equivalent of half a years salary for the majority of the population living on \$1 per day and therefore excluded indirectly from the service.

When we attended the G8 Alternative Summit in Edinburgh recently, we were pleased to hear so many references to the recent struggles and achievements of Bolivia's social

movements.

While many of the speakers focused on struggles in African countries and the links between war and poverty, it was encouraging to hear people such as socialist MP George Galloway (London, Respect) and Trevor Ngwane (South Africa Anti-Privatisation Forum) cite Bolivia's social movements as an inspiration in their growing resistance to foreign multinational investment and exploitation of the country's natural resources.

Now, El Alto's citizens wait for the outcome of their struggle. Their water war was hailed as a victory by the social movements earlier this year but now they are faced with the challenge posed by a multinational corporation which appears willing to pack its bags — but not before it squeezes more money from a country and a people already crippled by debt and poverty.

For more on news from El Alto see [www.narconews.org](http://www.narconews.org) and [www.zmag.net](http://www.zmag.net) and [www.democracyctr.org](http://www.democracyctr.org)

The radio version of the water war documentary will be broadcast on Dublin community radio station Near Fm 101.6fm in September 2005.

It is produced and directed by Muireann de Barra ([muirmaid@yahoo.com](mailto:muirmaid@yahoo.com))

## SHANNON PEACE FESTIVAL

Saturday September 24th 2005

Music, speeches and more. Troops out of Iraq. End Ireland's complicity. Troops out of Shannon. Protest in solidarity with US anti-war movement national weekend of action for US troops home now. Renew our demand for US Military OUT of Iraq & Shannon.

Organised by Irish Anti War Movement [www.irishantiwar.org](http://www.irishantiwar.org)

## Send Shell to Sea Demonstration Dublin July 23rd

Organise pickets of Shell and Statoil stations See [www.swp.org.uk](http://www.swp.org.uk) for other Shell events

## REPORT BACK MEETING and VIDEO SCREENING OF IRISH DELEGATION TO COLOMBIA

MON 25TH JULY 8PM TEACHERS CLUB PARNELL SQ DUBLIN ALL WELCOME

Contact Augustine at [augustineodonoghue@hotmail.com](mailto:augustineodonoghue@hotmail.com) for info.

### 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.....

Email.....

Phone.....



# Socialist Worker

## G8 SUMMIT: THE PEOPLE ROARED BUT THE G8 WHISPERED



Over 300,000 create sea of white at Make Poverty History protest in Edinburgh; 20,000 march in Dublin; 10,000 march to Gleneagles.

**Interview with EAMON STACK, co-ordinator of Make Poverty History Rally in Dublin on June 30th.**

It's clear that there is still a very long road to go to Make Poverty History. The outcome from the G8 leaders was very disappointing.

Their response was a whisper. It failed to cancel the debts of all impoverished countries and the response on the issue of trade was abysmal.

These debts are being repaid at the cost of people's welfare and even their lives.

The proposed debt deal in the G8 statement, first announced in June, will cancel the debts of only 18 countries to three of their creditors – the IMF, World Bank and African Development Bank.

Moreover, these countries will

not receive the full financial benefits from the deal.

A further 20 countries could possibly benefit but they would first have to fulfil a heavy burden of conditions which can aggravate rather than reduce poverty e.g. privatisation, trade liberalisation and cutting government budgets.

The debt deal will not make poverty history – it covers only about 5% of the world's impoverished people. 20,000 people marched in Dublin, 250,000 marched in Edinburgh and millions attended the Live 8 concerts around the world.

In spite of this the G8 have failed to act effectively and millions will continue to live in poverty.

I was disappointed at the

response of Bono and Geldof (Bob Geldof spoke of a "great day" and added that he gave the G8 summit "10 out of 10 on aid, eight out of 10 on debt").

The Live 8 leadership failed to wait for the analysis of development NGOs before making an assessment of the G8 outcome.

Knee jerk positive or negative reactions are not helpful. These are very complex issues that need to be evaluated by the development agencies.

But our campaign has mobilised huge numbers and successfully put the issue of poverty on the agenda of the G8 and focussed the ultimate responsibility for poverty onto the leaders of the world.

Public awareness was hugely

increased by the campaign. Even the G8 realise that now everyone knows they are using spin.

An incredible energy was generated that won't dissipate now. We are moving forward in the campaign.

On Sept 9th there will be an all-night sit-in outside Aherne's offices in Merrion Square to continue pressuring the Irish government to honour its aid promise of 2000.

It is a long road to "make poverty history" and we aren't stopping here.

We are all full of energy and delighted with the outcome of awareness raised.

It must go on. As long as a hungry child is starving unnecessarily we will continue.

### Voices on the G8 failure

Many of the organisations that have been involved with the Make Poverty History campaign are disappointed with the G8's communiqué.

JOHN HILARY, director of policy and campaigns at War on Want, said, "Bob Geldof may be content with crumbs from the table of his rich political friends. But we did not come to Gleneagles as beggars. We came to demand justice for the world's poor."

LIDY NACPIL, international coordinator of Jubilee South, said: "The conditionalities attached to debt cancellation will exacerbate poverty rather than end it."

BEN YOUNG of Jubilee Scotland said: "This deal will leave millions in poverty. The hundreds of thousands of people mobilised on these issues are being cheated by the G8 leaders." "The people have roared but the G8 has whispered," said KUMI NAIDOO chair of the Global Call to Action against Poverty. "The promise to deliver by 2010 is like waiting 5 years before responding to the tsunami," he added.

The Global Call to Action against Poverty will continue to pile on the pressure of all of our demands, including debt cancellation and challenging the structures of injustice, in the run-up to the Millennium Development Summit in September and the WTO meeting in December.

The White House denies having made any aid commitment at the G-8 summit.

## Truth behind the lies: No new aid will be given by the USA

In a meeting with the press, Faryad Shirzad, the US "Sherpa" (main assistant to Bush at the G-8 summit) announced that no new aid contributions will be made by the United States as a result of the meeting in Gleneagles.

**Question:** I believe there was an agreement on Africa aid to go up to \$50 billion — was it \$50 million? — Or does the administration support that, because I know in the past the President didn't want a specific number agreed to.  
**Mr. Shirzad:** It's a good question.

The question had to do with that there was a \$50 billion aid commitment to Africa.

What the document reflected was a ... what the leaders' text reflected was that the individual G8 countries, as well as the European Union, had together committed to increase aid by \$25 billion in a year to Africa.

So there wasn't a new commitment reflected in the text, but it was an articulation of previous commitments that were already made. What the text also said, though, was that the OECD, (the

Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) has separately, on their own, estimated that development assistance for the world, from all sources, will go up by \$50 billion by 2010.

**Question:** So there's no promise of new money from the U.S. in that statement.

**Mr. Shirzad:** No, I think what that portion of the leaders' text was supposed to highlight is that while the leaders came to Gleneagles to press the issue of

Africa, there's also a broader development challenge that they reflected in their leaders' text, and that is the challenge that the OECD has, in their estimation, said they expect development assistance will increase by \$50 billion.

So it's not a commitment, but it's a reflection of an outside estimate that's been made on that issue.

■ For info see [www.waronwant.org.uk](http://www.waronwant.org.uk)  
[www.actionaid.org.uk](http://www.actionaid.org.uk)  
[www.makepovertyhistory.ie](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ie)