

IRISH FERRIES PROTEST: NOV 3RD

Assemble 1pm Liberty Hall, March to Dail

Socialist Worker

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IRISH FERRIES: 'Race to the bottom' threatens all workers



Talks aimed at sorting out a compromise in Irish Ferries broke down last weekend. In two weeks time there will be a full Labour Court hearing.

Whatever the recommendation of the Court, Irish Ferries are expected to ignore and reject it. SIPTU's view is that the company will exhaust all procedures and then push ahead to implement their plan regardless of the outcome.

Socialist Worker spoke to Paul Smyth of SIPTU, the official leading the dispute.

"We have been set an impossible task to come up with a plan to match the savings the company will make by outsourcing the workers on the ferries at 3.50 per hour. It's not just the pay rate that is worrying.

These workers from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania will be virtually locked up on board the vessels for three months. The company will do an average of eight sailings a day with a rapid turnaround time so these workers won't get the time to stop off,

whether in Dublin or anywhere else. Their working hours are 12 hours a day with no weekends, bank holidays, overtime or annual leave entitlement.

This is mass exploitation not just at the level of pay but conditions too. Irish and English seafarers work a week on and a week off and get all their conditions and entitlements.

This way of working was recommended by a report commissioned into Irish Ferries known as the Sparks & King report.

They actually recommended that the contracts for outsourcing should be enshrined in Irish law which would have protected their pay and conditions but of course this has been rejected.

In fact we now know that two weeks before the report was issued Irish Ferries had already started to recruit in Eastern Europe under the conditions they decided, ignoring any report or recommendations.

Irish Ferries are clearly gung ho and the only way to stop them is a major dispute that will force

the Irish government to enact legislation that will protect the workers' rights and pay.

Of course this is not the only company to try this on. It's happening on a smaller scale all the time.

The building industry with the likes of Gama is a well known example of the mass exploitation of foreign labour.

But there are other cases like for example in Oxigen (the green bin recycling company)

We had a dispute that lasted 22 weeks to secure union recognition and decent rates etc in Oxigen nearly two years ago and we succeeded.

Another example is the clamping company in Dublin City where most of the jobs were outsourced and again we went on strike there and won union recognition.

It's important to see that these are public services where this is taking place. So our government and local authorities are not exactly squeaky clean in all this.

The next few days are very important.

On Sunday the SIPTU National Executive will respond to a letter from Bertie Ahern's office in regard to the future of social partnership and then put the issue before a special delegate conference.

It is my view that unless the government is prepared to enact legislation to protect workers rights and their pay, social partnership is dead.

I don't see any point in going into another deal with two hands tied behind our backs."

The International Transport Workers Federation is coming to Dublin on November 3rd to join SIPTU and others in a mass demonstration to the Dail.

This protest is crucial. It will start at Liberty Hall at 2pm and march to Leinster House.

Every trade unionist in Ireland should be building for this protest.

More on Irish Ferries, inside page 6&7

EAMONN McCANN COLUMN

Alec Reid's 'Protestants are Nazis' gaffe

The Clonard priest Fr. Alec Reid has taken no end of stick for his remarks at a meeting on IRA decommissioning in south Belfast. He has accepted that he offended Unionists, and has apologised.

Many Nationalist commentators, including Danny Morrison, Fr. Des Wilson and Damien Kiberd have since suggested that Fr. Reid had nothing to apologise for.

In fact, his remarks were more offensive to socialists and anti-Fascists than to Unionists.

What made his outburst offensive was not that he referred to the fact of Catholic oppression but because he defined this oppression as akin to Nazism and then laid the blame for it, not on the sectarian 'Loyal Orders' or Unionist political bosses—much less on British governments—but on the mass of the Protestant people.

Four times, Reid told hecklers and opponents that 'your community' are Nazis, had treated Catholics 'like animals' and so forth.

He clearly and repeatedly laid the blame for discrimination against the Catholic community on the Protestant community.

The implied analysis was that the problem has to do with communal hostility, not with divide-and-rule tactics and a sectarian State sustained and supported by British governments down the years.

No reference to the intensity of the debate on the night or to insults apparently hurled at the Catholic Church by members of the audience can justify this. People who defend Alec Reid on a, "Yes, but" basis speak volumes about their own attitudes.

Orange rule from Stormont was characterised by systematic discrimination against Catholics and contemptuous disregard for human rights.

The civil rights movement was both inevitable and entirely justified. But Orangeism wasn't Nazism and it is an insult to the victims of Nazism to imply that their suffering was on a par with the pain of any section of the North's



Romanian Holocaust victims and (inset) Fr Alec Reid,

people under Stormont. It amounts to denial of the nature of the Holocaust.

Protestant workers in the North, irrespective of how they voted, never denied a Catholic a job or a house or anything else—for the good and simple reason that they didn't have the distribution of these commodities in their gift in the first place.

Reid's defenders have pointed to the oppressive situation in Derry prior to the civil rights movement. But did Protestants of the Fountain, Rosemount, Bishop Street etc. run Derry Corporation as a bastion of bigotry? They did not. They didn't run Derry Corporation.

Over the 50 years of one-party rule, there was scarcely a woman and fewer than dozen workers on the Unionist benches in Derry Guildhall.

It's sometimes said that the ruling group in Derry was drawn from only a third of the citizens.

In fact, about a fifteenth would be more like it. In a perverse way, by suggesting that the majority community had control of the levers of power, Alec Reid exaggerated the degree of democracy in the North.

He was singing counterpoint to the old Unionist tune.

The sleek professionals, larded busi-

nessmen and landed elite who ran the North depended for the survival of their rotten system on persuading the mass of the Protestant people that their interests were served as long as the Catholics were kept down.

In every generation, thousands of Protestants broke from this alliance to make common cause with Catholics seeking a progressive way forward.

This happened mainly, although not exclusively, in the context of the labour movement.

Invariably, Protestants who took this path were denounced by the Unionist bosses as deserters. Not infrequently, too, they encountered hostility from Catholic conservatives urging their own community to stick together and not allow any split along class or other lines to develop.

It is not possible to understand the sectarian history of the North, and particularly of Belfast, without taking these factors into account.

Supporters of Fr. Reid should take a good look at the smirk of bigotry on the face of the junior Paisley when he was asked to comment on the incident.

He understood how neatly Reid's remarks and reaction to them fitted into the twisted perspective of his sectarian party.

QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT

"My father needlessly bled to death. It took him seven hours to pass away...our clothes were bloodstained when we left Monaghan hospital after Dad died. I will never forget it"

Patrick Walsh, son of Patrick Joseph Walsh

"I will challenge anybody to find an expert group across the world who will justify the maintenance of 24 hour surgery and the skills required to provide that at an adequate level to a population of that size. It is not justifiable"

Response of Professor Brendan Drumm, head of the Health Service Executive as the death toll in Monaghan mounts

"The captain came up and asked us if we were all blind. We said most of us were, and he marched us off the plane like criminals."

Beryl Barton, one of nine passengers who were thrown off a Ryanair flight because the flight was 'over its quota of disabled people'.

"I moved to Ireland in 2001 on a work permit. Since then I have had five or six jobs. In my last job I started on €2 an hour. When [my employer] told me that migrant workers are covered by different employment legislation than Irish workers I believed him"

Chef from Romania, one of the case studies quoted in a report published this month by the ICTU

"Public expenditure on pensions in Ireland in the year 2000 was the lowest of the 15 major European countries, at just 4.6%, compared to the average of 10.4% of GDP. Even when projected to the year 2050, allowing for the expected increase in the number of people of pensionable age in Ireland, the estimated cost of maintaining our current state system (with pensions indexed to wages) is still lower for Ireland in 2050 than the average cost for the EU in 2000"

Dr Shane Whelan from the School of Mathematical Sciences at UCD challenges government scare stories of a looming pensions crisis

"I know the scale of the destruction is beyond imagination, but I simply cannot figure out why the army cannot fetch tents to the people when we know they have no shortage of them..why they failed to react is simply not understandable"

Imran Khan criticises the response of the Pakistani government to the recent earthquake

"The people who were observing were the same people as the candidates. The UN sits in Amman and says it's all good, it's free and fair, because they don't want to come here."

Mahmood Othaman, Kurdish member of Iraq's national assembly on the constitutional referendum

INSIDE THE SYSTEM

☠ People with neurological illnesses in the Mid West have to wait for more than a year to see a consultant

☠ Eighteen antiwar grandmothers were arrested and face disorderly conduct charges after they showed up at a military recruiting centre in Times Square and said they wanted to enlist. Police arrested the women, aged 49 to 90, after they sat down in front of the recruiting station to protest against the war in Iraq

☠ A new CBS News poll shows that 59 percent of

Americans want US troops to leave Iraq as soon as possible, even if the country is not completely stable, an increase from 52 percent last month.

☠ The Reuters News Agency says there is increased detention and accidental shootings of journalists by U.S. troops in Iraq. Reuters said U.S. forces were limiting the ability of independent journalists to operate.

Global Managing Editor David Schlesinger referred to "a long parade of disturbing incidents whereby professional journalists have been killed, wrongfully

detained, and/or illegally abused by U.S. forces in Iraq."

☠ The Department of Health paid more than €14 million to outside consultants since the current FF/PD government came into office in 1997

☠ At a recent hearing in Cork concerning the toxic waste incinerator at Ringaskiddy, the planning inspector presented 14 reasons for objection. He was overruled because incineration is in line with Government policy.

A public/private partnership for the development of a toxic incinerator in Ringsend,

Dublin, has also been given the go-ahead.

These incinerators should be opposed and properly publicly funded recycling demanded instead.

☠ Fourteen children (five of whom born in Ireland) were among 39 refugees disgracefully deported last week.

Grassroots campaigns such as the Dun Laoghaire refugee project, that campaign against the deportation of asylum seekers who arrived as minors, and the Clonakilty campaign against the deportation of a young Nigerian family, should be supported.

Protest/Reports/Struggle

email to swped@eircom.net Phone 01 8722682

HERITAGE

Save Viking Waterford chair berates minister

Dr. Catherine Swift, Chairperson of the Save Viking Waterford Action Group, has criticised Environment Minister, Dick Roche, for failing to appoint his representative to the Strategic Management Committee on the future of the Woodstown Viking Site.

Referring to Minister Roche's previous commitment to establish the committee, Dr Swift had been: "very positive about this development. When it was revealed that Dr Patrick Wallace was to be the National Museum's representative and Eamon McEaney.. the Granary and Waterford City Council(s), it seemed that..we were finally getting somewhere".

However Minister Roche is awaiting a report from the Committee, and his inaction is preventing this.

Masterly at making grand promises and then drowning them in red tape, it would seem here again that the government hopes for public mollification and the eventual death of support.

While this strategy is being perpetrated, the Viking Congress—comprised of the world's most pre-eminent experts—has celebrated the discoveries at Woodstown, and called for excavation of the site, representing a huge endorsement of its international status and making European funding far more likely.

But funding applications are necessary.

Contact Dr. Catherine Swift
086-0679708
save@vikingwaterford.com
www.vikingwaterford.com

BIN TAX

COUNCIL WITHDRAWS COURT THREAT

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council now says it will not pursue householders through the courts for bin tax arrears because of "legal difficulties".

The Dublin anti-bin tax campaign showed in court that the old flat-rate tax was illegal because it gave householders no incentive to recycle.

Dublin City Council is appealing this, but is unlikely to win.

It and Dún Laoghaire may have to refund millions to the householders they bullied into paying.

As said all along during the campaign: if we stand together we can beat both Council bullying and double taxation.

DUN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN

Privatisation of Dun Laoghaire seafront defeated



By Colmán Etchingham

The Save Our Seafront campaign to restore Dún Laoghaire baths as a public amenity won a major victory on Monday, 10 October.

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council bowed to public pressure and abandoned plans for a high-rise block of private apartments as a condition of redeveloping the baths.

Until recently, most councillors accepted unquestioningly the privatisers' view: only large-scale private development for profit could pay for the public utility.

This argument is used elsewhere along Dublin Bay and beyond. The argument runs: that to restore a degraded public amenity, part of the public asset must be sold off for private gain.

But, in this case, the people of Dún Laoghaire said no. Thousands marched at rallies where artists like Christy Moore and Ronnie Drew performed for free.

Thousands more signed petitions.

On the night of the Council meeting, hundreds braved terrible weather to picket the Council offices.

It was noisy, colourful, good-humoured and the message was absolutely clear: no privatisation of the seafront: restore the baths as a public amenity.

Councillors of the controlling Fine Gael-Labour group, who enthusiastically endorsed plans for an eight-storey private apartment block only weeks before and dismissed the protesting public as 'mad' and a 'rabble', were forced into a u-turn.

Fianna Fáil councillors claimed before the meeting that they too would now oppose the plan for private apartments. On the night, however, they manoeuvred to keep that plan on the table, but, happily, they were unsuccessful.

Instead, a sub-committee of the Council will investigate—in consultation with Save Our Seafront—restoring the baths site, without private development.

This is a resounding victory for the people of Dún Laoghaire. It should give heart to other campaigns in the region, and beyond. With determination, intelligence and, above all, mass mobilisation of people, victories are possible.

Richard Boyd Barrett of the Socialist Workers Party, who led the Save Our Seafront campaign, said:

"This is a victory for democracy and people power. Private developers and most councillors wanted to steal a vital public amenity from the people of this area just to make a profit.

"When we started to protest they called us 'mad'. We made them eat their words. We showed that mass protests of ordinary people can take on developers and arrogant politicians and win. We showed that Dún Laoghaire and our public amenities are not for sale.

"Now we must press all parties to provide the money to get the public baths that people want."

For further information contact Richard Boyd Barrett at 087-6329511

HOMELESSNESS

After six week campaign Antoinette Tate is finally housed



By Colmán Etchingham

The six-week campaign of homeless mother-of-three Antoinette Tate ended on Wednesday, 12 October, when Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council agreed to provide her with temporary emergency accommodation of a standard fit for her young family.

Antoinette began her protest, camping outside the Council offices, because what was offered her was unacceptable: a dirty, top-floor flat with no heating, no smoke alarms,

no child-locks on windows, a 9pm curfew, and restrictions on visitors.

What she has now been granted is a refurbished flat, with heating, lockable windows, smoke alarms, and no restrictions on her own or friends' movements. Antoinette is now settling in, in the company of family and friends.

The outcome is not perfect: Antoinette and thousands on the housing list should have stable, secure, publicly owned accommodation. Yet, this is a victory for Antoinette's coura-

geous fight, and for her dedicated supporters and the thousands of people who signed her petition. But why should anyone, in one of the richest countries in the world, have to camp on the street for six weeks to secure such a basic right?

Antoinette said: "I would like to thank Richard Boyd Barrett and the Socialist Workers Party for their tireless efforts on my behalf. What was conceded to me is the least that should be given to all homeless people and those on the housing list".

COLLEGE SHORTS

Sit-in at St James's Hospital

Sixty student nurse members of the Irish Nurses Organisation organised a sit-in protest at St James's Hospital last Friday.

The student nurses turned for their immunisation against Hepatitis B and TB but were told they had to pay a €100 fee.

The students were rightfully enraged by this attempt to rip off the students. Education and training should be free and paid for by taxing the wealthy. More action like this is necessary.

TCD military funding

It has emerged that the US Air Force has been funding research at Trinity College to the tune of €100,000.

The funding is for research into new communication technology that could be applied to future military operations.

While it is not uncommon for universities to accept funding from different companies this is the first time that an Irish university had accepted funding from the US military.

Students at Trinity College were dismayed to learn that the US Airforce have been funding research on campus and will be organising a meeting in opposition to the funding and demanding more transparency as to where funding for research comes from.

UCD Anti-Racism Campaign

The UCD anti-racism campaign confronted Michael McDowell when he paid a visit to the university for a GAA match between UCD and the PSNI.

They protested against McDowell's treatment of refugees and the citizenship referendum.

This was the first outing for the campaign and it has pledged to push for a 'no platform for Fascists' policy in the students union as well as encouraging the unionisation of migrant workers in and around the campus.

Email ucdarc@yahoo.com for more information

The quality of accommodation granted Antoinette must become a benchmark for all in similar circumstances. The newly formed Dún Laoghaire Housing Action Group will campaign vigorously for public authority housing for all who need it. Councils must implement the 20% 'social and affordable' component of housing developments, and generally prioritise housing need over private greed.

For further information contact Christy Potts at 085-1555224

The battle continues between the corporate giant Shell, their partners, Statoil and the Irish government, and the local people of Rosspport.

The Rosspport 5, Philip McGrath, Brendan Philbin, Vincent McGrath, Willie Corduff and Micheál Ó Seighin spoke to Socialist Worker about how their lives have been turned upside down by this development, and how they no longer trust the government.

Battle against Shell continues

By Rory Hearne

Willie Corduff felt very angry for being put in prison “without doing anything”. “We didn’t break the law. Even the prisoners wouldn’t believe us, they used to ask: ‘did ye hit them’. It was hard in there, leaving a home, wife and family behind when they know you had done nothing. Shell or the government don’t care about people.”

The Government and Shell/Statoil left the five men incarcerated in Clover Hill prison for ninety four days. Ninety four days is longer than any corrupt politician has spent behind bars. The Rosspport 5 committed no crime. They bravely stood up against the multinationals and the government.

The danger of the pipeline exploding is of great concern to the residents. The pipe will carry untreated gas at very high pressures. It will run at the foot of a near-by hill where a recent landslide swept away entire bridges. A retired US Navy officer with expertise in explosives told a hearing into the safety of the pipeline that if it were to rupture, the ensuing explosion would kill anyone within a mile radius.

The men talked about their concern for their families and the people they met in prison, and how they feel their fight is also about the resources of Ireland being used for the people. According to Brendan, “It was very sad, society had let those people down. The court fines them and then puts them in prison but where is the sense in that? Where is the justice? Would they not be better off putting them in a hostel to help them rehabilitate than hauling them through prison. Prison is not an answer to their problems.” It opened Philip’s eyes, “to see all the young fellas, their brains melted by drugs, just tossed out of the way.” Philip then jokingly said he loved prison, but the worst part of it was “having to be stuck with Willie (Corduff)”. They all had a good laugh at that. “I always voted Fine Gael”, Philip said, “but not any more, Kenny left us down and prison has changed me”.

“We have stood up for the country. This disgrace had to be highlighted. It was being pushed under the carpet because the government didn’t want it coming out. We were put into prison for protecting ourselves, they said we broke the law but we only broke an injunction that shouldn’t have been there. We never done any harm, we were just trying to protect our families and rather than listening to us they put us into prison for 94 days”. But the people of Ireland protested and campaigned until they were released. The Rosspport Five show that people power can win.

It is easy to see why the people of Rosspport are so angry. The pipeline never went through the normal the planning process and the local Mayo County Council refused to listen to their concerns, and as the men said



The campaign has huge support

“they just rolled over and anything Shell wanted, they got.” Willie Corduff pointed out that the people of Rosspport today are suffering because of Minister Fahey’s decision to allow a multinational take people’s land, but it could be another community tomorrow. The real crime has been the give-away of our natural gas resources to private companies, particularly at a time when gas prices are rising by 25%.

Estimates vary as to how much gas Ray Burke gave away when he granted Enterprise Oil (now the Shell/Statoil consortium) the rights to the Corrib gas field off the Mayo coast. Some companies have suggested that as much as 5 to 7 TCF (trillion cubic feet) lies in the Corrib field but Shell says there is only 1 TCF. The gas is important for Shell because they are desperate for gas reserves given the recent scandal where Shell overestimated their oil and gas reserves. They are also looking for secure locations. Ian McCredie, head of Global Security Services at Shell recently warned in *The Financial Times*: “International terrorism, corruption and local activism are threatening our operations in many countries...the growing risks have forced Royal Dutch Shell to make its own security arrangements in hostile environments”. The Rosspport Five and their families are disgusted that the government handed over the people of Ireland’s resources, when they are so badly needed. Willie believes that it is “a

shame to think the gas gone when we are so short for money in health and education. We have let all of this go for nothing but to turn around and then destroy this beautiful area. Why wouldn’t the government take it on themselves? Why not have it for our own country? Why give the benefit to Shell/Statoil/Norway?”

For the men, this campaign has brought up much wider concerns than just their immediate campaign. It has gone to the heart of our supposed ‘democracy’. Michael O Sheighin said, “The people have been awoken. This can’t stop. There hasn’t been such a change in the assets of this country since the plantation and the landlords. It’s a very dangerous time with Harney and Ahern imitating Thatcher and Reagan. We need to change the mindset of government to the satisfaction of need rather than enriching a small oligarchy. We have allowed our democracy to be sidelined by our subservience to parties of the past. We need more activism to create a real democracy.”

Caitlin Ni Sheighin, wife of Michael agreed, “I’m horrified about the whole thing. The day Micheal was sent to prison, I was so angry. They were all crying in the court but I did not shed a tear. I was thinking about the wasted money on consultants, the greed. We don’t have a democracy when it’s not our gas anymore. We have given away our assets and will buy them back at market value”.

The men, their families and the

Shell to Sea campaign are as determined as ever to continue their campaign to get Shell to refine the gas at sea and for the resources of Ireland to be developed for the people of Ireland. Vincent McGrath added, “We got released because of people power and the pressure on Statoil. The problem hasn’t gone away. We are all prepared to go back in again.” Despite talks of compromise Shell still state the pipeline will go ahead, and High Court judge Mr Justice Finnegan ruled that Shell did not breach the consents. Yet the Five go to court on October 25th to see what punishment they face for breaching Shell’s injunction.

Caitlin thinks that in the Celtic Tiger it’s one law for the large corporations, and one for the ordinary person, “people need to stand up. We sat for too long and took it on the chin. We are supposed to be the second richest country, well you could fool me when I was out visiting Cloverhill jail seeing the young men and listening to people’s stories at the rallies—how they suffered from planning, over a bit of land, over the hospitals; people must start staying no to our county councils and government”.

Justice should be done not just for the five men of Rosspport who had 94 days stolen from them, but for the people of Ireland, the young men condemned to Cloverhill and the old and sick lying on trolleys in hospitals today.

Info at www.shelltosea.com

“I always voted Fine Gael, but not any more, Kenny left us down and prison has changed me”

—Philip McGrath,

Rosspport 5

INTERNATIONAL

Avian flu: a preventable pandemic

By Mike Davis

Avian influenza is the undocumented immigrant from hell that the EU will not be able to turn away from its borders.

The H5N1 virus, like other present and future plagues of globalisation, exposes the biological absurdity and moral vacuity of the concept of "fortress Europe".

Wild birds have brought H5N1 to the gates of Europe, and those same birds will soon carry the seeds of a pandemic to the poor megacities of Africa and South Asia.

If avian flu and urban poverty combust, then it won't matter whether all the chickens in Europe are sleeping indoors or not.

The pandemic, like Sars before it, will be on the next plane to Rome, London or New York.

The majority of the world's flu vaccine capacity and all of its current production of Tamiflu—the antiviral agent that rich countries are desperately stockpiling—are concentrated in Europe.

But these resources are fettered by corporate property rights and narrow national self-interest.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has abandoned hopes of a world vaccine programme because of the unwillingness of the EU and US to make the required commitments.

When Thailand and South Africa raised the question of the generic licensing of Tamiflu at a WHO meeting earlier in the year, France and the US joined forces to squelch the challenge to drug giant Roche's monopoly over manufacture of the drug.

Yet the global surveillance campaign against H5N1 is currently faltering because the same governments refuse to donate the almost trivial amounts of aid requested by poor frontline countries like Vietnam.

The challenge to the left is to mobilise Europe's scientific capabilities on behalf of humanity as a whole.

Neither epidemiological nationalism nor idiot reverence for profits should override the urgency of global solidarity in face of the pandemic danger.

Our survival demands a massive aid programme to support flu surveillance in poor countries, as well as a free, global lifeline of vaccines, antivirals and antibiotics as a human right.

Mike Davis is author of *The Monster at Our Door: The Global Threat of Avian Flu*, available from Bookmarks www.bookmarks.uk.com



The injured were left waiting for help close to the epicentre of the earthquake

(Pic: Kamila Hyat/ IRIN)

Pakistan's poorest feel the aftershock

The survivors of the South Asian earthquake are in a battle for survival while the Musharraf regime does nothing, writes Yuri Prasad

Within a matter of weeks winter will bring snow to the mountains in Kashmir and temperatures will drop below zero.

Without shelter, food or warm clothing thousands of people who have already lost loved ones and friends in the recent earthquake will perish.

The military government of general Musharraf has been unable to respond to the scale of the crisis.

It even suggested that this was a "minor quake" and that there were not many casualties.

It was left to the non-state TV channels, the volunteer aid workers and the charities to expose the truth of the devastation.

But the earthquake has not destabilised Musharraf's regime in the way the flooding of New Orleans destabilised George Bush's hold on power.

The main opposition parties in Pakistan called for national unity—even suspending a day of action against military rule that was planned for 12 October.

But there has been an outpouring of active generosity from ordinary people.

Millions of rupees have been collected but many thousands are also volunteering their time in collection

stations, relief camps and makeshift hospitals.

Riaz, a socialist in Karachi, says, "Right from the beginning people ignored what the state would do."

"It did nothing beyond collecting donations.

Here in Karachi a TV presenter called on people to bring relief goods to the airforce museum and within twelve hours more than 32 plane loads had been collected."

"While up to 10,000 volunteers a day donated goods at the museum, the airforce base has 5,000 armed men sitting idle.

"Five miles north of this is another military base where 5,000 troops sit idle.

"Five miles south there are navy bases with over 10,000 men doing nothing."

Pervez is a university professor from Islamabad who volunteered to bring collected goods to Balakot—a town near the epicentre of the earthquake that was home to 30,000 people.

"From under the rubble of collapsed buildings, there is a gut-wrenching smell of decaying corpses that now fills the town," he says.

"If there is a plan to clear the concrete rubble in and around the

town, nobody seems to have a clue.

"Chinook helicopters, diverted from fighting Al Qaida in Afghanistan, weave their way through the mountains—temporarily birds of peace instead of war.

Their visibility makes relief choppers terrific propaganda.

"This is undoubtedly why the Pakistani government refused an Indian offer to send helicopters to Muzaffarabad."

"There is chaos," says Samina, who also volunteered at Balakot.

"There is no project office where the relief organisations can come together and establish a pattern of operation.

"But I saw politicians there shaking hands, along with their camera crews."

In order to survive, the victims of the earthquake need tents, warm clothes, blankets, fuel and epidemic controlling drugs quickly—the question is whether they will get them in time.

For more on the situation in Pakistan go to <http://www.geocities.com/internationalsocialistpakistan>

Left Bloc makes gains in Portugal

by Jorge Duarte Costa, Left Bloc secretariat

The local elections in Portugal were a disaster for the ruling centre left Socialist Party and its allies. They also saw a significant increase in votes for the radical Left Bloc.

The Left Bloc stood candidates in 120 councils, almost twice the number it fielded at the last local elections. Some 85 percent of the population had the opportunity to vote for left candidates.

Overall the party won almost three times more votes than last time—212,000 in 2005 against 80,000 in 2001. It now has 352 local representatives across the country, up from 78 in 2001. In Lisbon the Left Bloc's Sá Fernandes was elected as an opposition deputy mayor.

The Left Bloc has emerged from these local elections as a national organisation, capable of involving thousands of people in its activities. It is recognised as the most effective opposition to the neo-liberal government.

The party is now preparing to contest Portugal's presidential election, which is due to be held in January next year.

Prodi wins primary elections.

By Valentina Benivenga, PRC Italy.

On 15th October, national primary elections were held, for the first time in Italy, by the centre-left coalition ("L'Unione").

Turnout was beyond expectations, with 4 million voters and big queues at the polling stations. Romano Prodi was the clear favourite, but his success overcame the predictions: 75% versus the 15% for his main opponent Fausto Bertinotti (Rifondazione Comunista). Bertinotti's hopes of pulling the coalition to the left by gaining a considerable amount of votes, failed.

People chose to give a clear message to Prodi: get rid of Berlusconi. But Prodi is not Zapatero. He might well be able to bring the coalition to win the next elections, but his neo-liberal politics were already clear during the time of his EU presidency.

The day before the primaries over 10,000 people marched in Rome against the 'Bolkestein directive', which was written by the EU commission led by Prodi. This directive will help the privatisations of public services in the European Union. As Prodi himself stated "The Bolkestein directive is an important step toward the liberalisation of labour".

The demo was not as big as it could have been, due to an actual boycott by the parties of L'Unione, first of all Rifondazione, which was either too busy in campaigning for the elections or too worried to protest against the future leader of the coalition. We can only hope that this was just a temporary defection by the party of the Italian radical Left, and that its role in the coalition will not stop it from being one of the main guides of the working class movement.

End of the road for Social Partnership?

By DENIS REDFERN,
(CPSU Exec. Personal Capacity)

The Partnership consensus, which has defined the relationship between the government, employers and trade union movement for the past 15 years is starting to look worn out.

Over this period the share of national income going to wages and pensions has declined from 71% to 55%.

The much promised social dividend from these agreements has not materialised: hospitals, social housing, public transport etc.

In fact, the only positive thing the proponents of partnership could point too was the lack of privatisation compared with Britain.

But now even this is baseless.

With privatisation of Aer Lingus, franchising of Dublin Bus routes and Public Private Partnership to build schools, we have moved from Thatcherism by stealth to all out neo-liberalism.

Two struggles in particular tell the story of what is happening to Social Partnership. Firstly, in An Post, workers have had a pay freeze for the last 3 years.

Last year, after a successful one-day strike and march, the Communication Workers Union leadership called off further action so as to attend the Labour Court.

What the Labour Court produced was a disgraceful recommendation. The company owed their workers the withheld pay increases, but there is a get out clause: the debt is only to be paid when An Post has returned to full and sustained profitability, tying the workforce to further work changes.

The postal service is a social service and, until it is recognised and funded as such, it will not be profitable.

So the partnership machinery produced next to nothing for the workers and has just encouraged management in aggressive pressurising of these workers, with the Minister responsible for the sector even threatening to de-regulate the postal market.

Now the only option is an all out stoppage to halt this drive towards privatisation.

The other struggle is at Irish Ferries.

There is a move to lay off 500 staff and replace them with agency staff at €3.50 an hour, a move supported by the employers' federation IBEC.

This is an attempt by Irish employers to

implement the spirit of the Bolkestein directive, which will be debated by the EU parliament soon and will mean that the terms and conditions of an employee will not be defined by where the employment is located but by where the employing company is registered.

It will mean, for example, workers in Ireland being employed on Latvian terms and conditions.

This will begin a 'race to the bottom' in all employment conditions across the EU, as workers are played off each other.

In the environment created by this directive the idea of 'social partnership' with the employers will be ridiculous.

SIPTU, the largest union and pillar of partnership, represents the Irish Ferries workers. It has been unable to get any compromise from the management and is under pressure not to enter partnership talks. Other unions have already made the decision on talks:

MANDATE, the bar and retail union, will veto the partnership process and pursue wage claims with individual employers;

IBOA, the bank officials union, has threatened to leave the ICTU if a net wage increase of 10% is not achieved;

Irish Nurses Organisation will not take part in the next benchmarking exercise and instead will log pay claims directly with the health service;

CWU have voted for strike action in An Post and CPSU, the union representing lower grades in the civil/public service, will not enter talks until An Post has paid in full.

Whilst partnership may be on its knees, those at the top of the trade union movement who created and maintained it to the detriment of their members will not let go of it easily.

As they have done in the past, they will negotiate shoddy deals and dampen rank and file confidence and militancy, as this erodes their power and influence.

The new situation presents the opportunity to create rank and file organisations in the unions that can take action independently of the current 'partnership' leadership when necessary.

Irish Ferries: A threat to all workers



By Brid Smith

Irish Ferries is the last remaining Irish shipping company. They no longer want to employ Irish workers because they are too expensive.

But the conditions and pay that they will outsource this work for are reminiscent of the way we worked when we emigrated from this country in the 1920's and '30's.

As one of the reps for the ferries workers said, "There is a view that the company can only make money by treating people in this way. I think if that's the only way the company can survive then it would be better if it closed."

What Irish Ferries bosses are doing is extending the profit margins

they achieved on the Normandy ferry to all their vessels.

They got the taste of how it is done and want more and more. If they are not stopped then the future for all workers is seriously threatened. Other companies will follow suit, in particular other seafaring companies.

Across Europe others will be forced to compete with Irish Ferries in this way. So it is not just the loss of the 500 plus jobs that is at stake. It is thousands of jobs across the EU and beyond.

That is why the International Transport Workers Federation is coming to Dublin on November 3rd to join SIPTU and others in a mass demonstration to the Dáil.

This protest is crucial. It will start at Liberty Hall at 2pm and march to Leinster House. Every trade unionist in Ireland should be building for this protest.

Leaflets and posters are available from SIPTU offices. Every workplace needs to convene special section/branch meetings to discuss how they are going to turn out big numbers on the day. And this needs to be done in every union, not just SIPTU.

The government is obviously posturing and will do nothing if they are let away with it. Now is the time to rally workers' opposition to them and demand they act to protect all our jobs and our futures.

48 Hour week for Dublin Bus

By Thomas O Connor.
Bus Workers Action Group

In another example of how social partnership does not protect worker's conditions Dublin Bus has decreed that a 48hr maximum working week will be introduced "with or without agreement of the Trade unions".

In it, employee relations' manager Joe Kenny states that new working arrangements will "not require any radical changes to work practices in the short term", only affecting a "minority of staff".

Apparently, management were stunned by the abrupt end to the labour relations process, and having "no further alternative" will

implement the organisation of working time directive on "health and safety grounds" because it is "the law of the land".

Reality is vividly different and in stark contrast to the picture painted by Mr Kenny. It is false to say that only the 10% of workers who do excessive overtime will be affected.

According to the draft changes, employees can work a weekly average of 48hrs over a 17-week period. This translates to zero overtime, and these changes will impact on all workers, not just a minority.

It is estimated that staff joining during the last five years represent approximately 50% of the workforce; and earning

potential has emerged most often as the reason for their joining. Many must service huge mortgages, and many existing staff have re-mortgaged their houses, all on the strength of overtime.

Some families face ruin if such changes are enacted. These changes find legislative support in the 1961 and 1963 road traffic acts; and health, safety and the law of the land are cited as justifications.

But why has it taken 44 and 42 years respectively for this to become an issue? And the law of the land? An EU directive that has not even been transposed into Irish law.

Bus drivers are not greedy; the basic wage in

Dublin Bus is poor, €556 gross per week, necessitating extra hours to bring earnings to a level that enables survival. All drivers' want is the opportunity to earn a decent wage.

The NBRU will meet with Dublin Bus on the matter, and consult the branch next week. Hopefully it will not be another raw deal for workers.

And there is hope, as these changes cannot be enacted without union consent; and if it takes strike action to protect our families and livelihoods, then our unions must go that far. We must defend ourselves against these sinister management proposals.

POSTAL WORKERS UNDER ATTACK

By Brid Smith

The magnificent 90% yes vote for industrial action in An Post has been met with a vicious attack by management, government and elements of the media.

Within minutes of the results being announced, Noel Dempsey, communications minister, threatened workers with the privatisation of the company.

And, as one post office worker said to this paper, "The whole business smells of a rotten agenda to sell off the company and make mega bucks for certain members of management. We have seen this movie before—remember the Telecom debacle—and it is definitely looking like they aim to repeat the exercise with the post office, our jobs and our lives."

But this is nothing new to postal workers. In the lead up to the ballot, Bertie Ahern warned workers to think "long and hard" before they voted for a strike.

Each worker got a company letter urging them to think "long and hard" before they voted for a strike, as the consequences could be disastrous.

So government and the bosses share the one agenda.

Nobody should be surprised by this. But the speedy and ferocious assault on the CWU members is outrageous. Every worker in the country needs to know the facts and should not be taken in by spin and lies coming from the mouths of politicians, bosses and the mainstream media.

Over 9,000 post office workers and pensioners have not received the basic partnership wage increases for the last three years. They have been systematically denied this by An Post, because the company is pleading "poverty". If this is the case how can they pay massive increases and bonuses to their CEOs? How can they spend thousands of euros on publicity and botched public meetings for workers?

The truth is that An Post management have had a gun to the heads of these workers for years. They want a massive 'productivity' deal in return for cost of living increases.

The LRC recommendation is also a disgrace.

How can a so-called mediation body endorse the daylight robbery of the pay of so many workers? It recommended tying the cost of living increases to a deal that would give carte blanche to management on 'productivity'.

The CWU leadership is absolutely correct to refuse to link this pay increase to any deal on productivity. Its members are due this money (on average €1,500 per worker) with no strings attached.

The real deal in the Post Office is that, for over two years now, management have systematically run the company down.

They placed an embargo on recruitment and where workers left the company, retired or died, none were replaced.



The reality of working in An Post

Socialist Worker spoke to a leading CWU shop steward in Dublin, who explained what it is like to work in An Post today.

"The workload is crazy. Most days we come in early to be able to get home on time. There's no jobs being replaced and they throw the overtime at us when the mail backs up. And then they criticise us for too much overtime. But we don't want the overtime.

I am no economist but I know this much, if there's forty hours' work to be done in a week, it would be cheaper to pay for it at flat rate than pay for it at overtime rates. All they need to do is give people jobs. There are seven full-time vacancies in the small office I work in. In Cork Mail Centre there are 40 full-time vacancies.

There are massive staff shortages. In the DMC in Dublin they are 10 to 15 workers down on any given shift. It's not rocket science. Give people jobs and do away with the overtime.

Our workload has increased because of new houses and apartments shooting up everywhere and a huge increase in the number of package posting and business junk mail.

The days when this could be called a good job are gone. And

they wanted us to buy a pig in a poke with the LRC. They wanted no replacements or overtime pay for people on sick leave, to do away with time off in lieu of overtime, sick pay, the company doctor and, like Ryanair, to pay for our own uniform.

It's like they want us to lie down and wipe their feet on us as they come in in the morning. Another thing they want is to get rid of Duty Holding.

You would come in in the morning and management would tell you where and when you would work. If they didn't want you in the morning they could tell you to work that night. They could send you off to any location at a minute's notice. In every way they want complete flexibility, with our place of work, our shifts and all work practices.

But this money is ours and they won't pay us. We have no choice but to take this action and you can see why we're so angry.

If we went on a work-to-rule this place would grind to a screeching halt. If we just stopped doing overtime, didn't bring in our cars to move the massive amount of mail around and didn't rush around doing our work, the mail would back up like mad.

And we will do whatever it takes

to get what we are owed and we're not taking the bullying from management or Dempsey.

This vote is an angry vote. Last year we had a brilliant one-day strike and national march. But nothing changed. The company was even so petty as to hold off docking the strike day's pay until Christmas week—the week you need it most. Just for spite. But that hasn't stopped us. We are just not taking anymore."

The CWU has stood up for its members. Nearly a year has gone by since the national protest and even if the pace of change is slow, once again the workers have given their union leadership a very clear mandate for action.

But any talk of another one-day strike will be met with a massive reaction from the rank and file. Much more is needed to face down the arrogance of the government and management. A strategy of one-day action will achieve nothing. It would not even boost morale and unity as it did last year.

If the rank and file members of the union don't get the leadership they demand, they need to start to organise themselves. They will need to call their own mass meetings and take action that will deliver the goods.

An Post workers Picket Fianna Fail Ard Fheis

Over 600 postal workers from the Munster area held a protest outside the Fianna Fail Ard-Fheis in Killarney.

The protest was part of the lead up to industrial action supported by over 90% of An Post employees.

The mass rally outside the Ard-Fheis was addressed by local CWU Branch Secretary, Mick Murphy.

Mick put the blame firmly where it belongs at senior management in the company, who are fully responsible for the recent run down in the quality of the postal service and at the Minister for Communications, Noel Dempsey. "Minister Dempsey is refusing to pay both postal workers and pensioners cost of living increases due to them. These increases were negotiated by the Government with the Unions.

This situation is a disgrace and will not be tolerated any longer by us".

This protest was the opening shot in a battle that will not cease until An Post pays its workers the pay increases that they are owed.

Joe Moore, CWU

Tell the union leaders: We've had enough of 'Partnership'

Our trade unions have been locked into partnership deals for over twenty years now.

But what sort of partnership is this when post office workers are made to look like they are the

problem because they want to be paid and when Irish Ferry workers are being dumped to make way for the Race to the Bottom of cheap labour from Eastern Europe.

These disputes are linked. Partnership is dead and should be buried.

That is why the protest outside the ICTU meeting planned for the 24th of October is very signifi-

cant. This has never happened before and the post office workers are right to be angry.

The CWU will not endorse partnership again.

But the whole of the trade

union movement needs a wake up call and needs to show the leadership it wants a fight back that will frighten the daylight out of the bosses and this rotten government.

Socialist Worker

Editorial

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Rory Carroll's Release

It was fantastic to see Rory Carroll released after being kidnapped in Iraq last week.

Reports in recent weeks have given the impression that following the elections and the new constitution things are beginning to improve in Iraq.

However the kidnapping brought the truth home. According to journalist Robert Fisk, "Iraq is now hell - a disaster.

Nothing of the reporting I see generally, really conveys the absolute agony and distress of Iraq. The last time I travelled to Najaf, the road was littered with burned-out American vehicles, smashed police vehicles, abandoned checkpoints and armed men.

That's Iraq today - it's in a state of anarchy, and many areas of Baghdad are in fact now in insurgent hands. This is a war the like of which I have never reported before.

And it is getting much worse, not better - don't believe what Blair is telling you. It is very sad to have to say that I don't know if we can go on reporting in Iraq."

It was claimed that being Irish helped Carroll's release. Would it have helped him if the people of Iraq knew about the Irish government's support for the US war machine by facilitating the transport of US military and illegal prisoners through Irish Airports?

Fianna Fail start to fight back

The government is trying to fight back after the hammering it received in recent months over rip-offs, health scandals and other issues.

Firstly, they are arguing that their policies have created the fantastically wealthy Celtic Tiger where everybody's conditions have improved but if the Fine Gael/Labour opposition is elected they will destroy all that by raising taxes.

They also argue that the opposition is not revealing its policies because they are the same as those of the existing government.

But the reality is the wealth of the Celtic Tiger although created by workers has only been used to enrich a golden circle elite. There is no Celtic tiger for the public patients dying in our hospitals or for workers at An Post, Dublin Bus and Irish Ferries.

There should be an increase in taxes-on the wealthy - to pay for health and worker's wages. But the opposition wont argue for that. They hope Fianna Fail will trip themselves up between now and the next election and then they can go in and continue the same old policies as Fianna Fail was doing.

The government's other strategy is to recapture the republican ground lost to Sinn Fein (bringing Sinn Fein and Fianna Fail closer together).

After the next election Sinn Fein could be in a position to hold the balance of power. They haven't ruled out coalition with Fianna Fail.

The spineless and opportunist politics of Enda Kenny and Pat Rabbitte demonstrate the importance of building a real opposition from below that will unite campaigns, the genuine left and those who are fighting back against our neo-liberal government.

Successful beginning for People before profit Alliance



By Rory Hearne

The protest movements that have swept across Ireland in recent years need to come together.

They need to forge a common voice that can give political expression to the very necessary and urgent challenge that can and must be issued to the neo liberal agenda - the sell off and privatisation of public assets such as land and housing, environmental degradation, the erosion of our neutrality and attacks on immigrants.

That was the clear view expressed by all participants at the inaugural meeting of the People Before Profit Alliance/Davitt League.

Speaker after speaker spoke of the need to set aside differences in the interests of building unity across the multitude of campaigns, political activists, community groups and trade unionists that have mobilised across the city and country.

The meeting was an impressive demonstration of the diversity of movements and campaigns that have come together and that are now seeking to realise their collective resources and strength within a larger united forum.

Those who attended included trade union activists, disability campaigners, community workers, community activists, socialists, Shell to Sea campaigners, anti-war activists, housing campaigners and bin tax activists.

Rural and urban activists were united in a collective sense of struggle.

Maura Harrington (active in the Shell to Sea campaign in Mayo) opened the meeting by stating that "the aim of the League is the proper development of our own natural resources for all the people of Ireland and to fund areas such as hospitals where they are badly needed."

She continued by saying that "the Rosspoint campaign is a watershed.

"Those who are working in



Co-chair: Maura Harrington active in the Shell to Sea campaign

the Shell to Sea campaign now realise that its time to move beyond the fractious infighting on the left."

Irish Ferries

Paul Smyth, a union official for SIPTU, spoke about the scandalous treatment of workers at Irish Ferries and the threat of 'a race to the bottom' that the behaviour of Irish Ferries poses for all workers.

The meeting unanimously supported a resolution to build maximum support for the day of action against Irish Ferries on 3rd November.

The need to unite activists within the trade union movement who wish to support and build campaigning unions was also emphasised.

Representing the ATGWU, Des Bonass said "Fianna Fail put profit before people.

"They want to privatise Aer Lingus, An Post, health and education. They are the enemy.

"The left has spent too much time fighting between itself rather than recognising the real enemy.

"We need to work together rather than working against each other."

The meeting voted

unanimously to form the People Before Profit/Davitt League alliance.

All-Ireland basis

The alliance aims to operate on an all-island basis and will actively support ongoing campaigns such as the Rosspoint 5 and Irish Ferries. It was agreed to build local groups of the alliance.

The meeting elected a steering committee that undertook to engage other interested individuals and parties in the coming weeks.

The alliance will also broaden its remit to address the many important issues raised during the meeting - homelessness, housing, land ownership, the myth of a low tax economy, the future of social partnership, women's rights, the mistreatment of immigrant women in domestic service, mental health, the reality behind the recycling rhetoric, etc.

The need for this alliance was endorsed throughout the night by campaigners such as Ed Moran from the Shell to Sea Campaign who said "our country is being sold off to the highest bidder.

A lot of people are extremely worried and it's happening at such a pace that people don't know how to respond.

Changes are being brought in by individual companies and supported by the establishment."

The point was made from the floor that the entire political establishment are lining up to make deals to form the next government.

Neither Sinn Fein nor the Greens have ruled out making coalition deals.

The alliance agreed that it was not interested in electing people who will either join coalition governments or enter into electoral arrangements with the dominant right wing parties.

This was a good beginning in creating the unity that is needed to build the social movements that can defeat neo-liberalism.

MARXISM TODAY: THEORY AND COMMENT

COMMENT

Alex Callinicos

Zapatistas looking to take power?

One of the disasters that have afflicted different parts of the world in recent months, was Hurricane Stan, which swept southern Mexico and Central America nearly three weeks ago.

Flooding and mudslides killed over 1,000 people—about the same number that died in Hurricane Katrina, though of course that got vastly more publicity. Among the worst affected were the coastal regions of the Mexican state of Chiapas.

Chiapas is best known as the site of the Zapatista rebellion, which broke out on 1 January 1994, the day that the North American Free Trade Agreement came into force. Named after the greatest hero of the Mexican Revolution, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) is a coalition of indigenous people and ex-Maoist activists with connections with the radical wing of the Catholic church.

While they weren't able to break the power of the Mexican state, they captured the imagination of a world growing sick of free-market capitalism. This was particularly thanks to the panache and wit of the EZLN's best-known leader, the perpetually ski-masked Subcommandante Marcos.

National and international support allowed the Zapatistas to keep the Mexican army at bay. In 2001 they mounted a countrywide "march for indigenous dignity" to demand a law granting indigenous people autonomy.

The bill was blocked in the Mexican congress. So the EZLN withdrew to their mountain strongholds in Chiapas. But this didn't mean their influence vanished. I was able to see this for myself when I took part in a conference on "Empire and Resistances" at the Metropolitan Autonomous University in Mexico City at the beginning of October.

Autonomy

The idea of autonomy—in other words, that the best way to fight capitalism is to carve out a space where you can survive—dominated the conference. This is summed up by the slogan, "Change the world without taking power", coined by John Holloway, who lives in Mexico and who spoke at the conference.

The problem with this is that, if you ignore capitalism and the state, this doesn't mean that they will ignore you. Interestingly, the Zapatistas seem themselves to be acknowledging this in a document called "The Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Forest" that they issued this summer.

What has brought things into focus is the fact that there is a presidential election next year.

Tipped to win is Andrés Manuel López Obrador, of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD). He is the ex-mayor of Mexico City, running on a pro-free market platform similar to that of Lula in Brazil and the other centre-left leaders now ruling much of Latin America.

Maybe because of López Obrador's candidacy, the Zapatistas have moved into national politics. Indeed, the Mexican Trotskyists to whom I spoke argued that the Sixth Lacandon Declaration amounted to a break with the tacit alliance the EZLN had hitherto had with the PRD as the most left wing of the established parties.

Certainly the declaration is more radical than previous Zapatista documents.

It denounces not merely neo-liberalism, but also capitalism itself. It also praises struggles taking place elsewhere in Latin America, and also those of "social Europe".

The declaration pledges the EZLN to "forge new relationships of mutual respect and support with persons and organisations who are resisting and struggling against neo-liberalism and for humanity".

It also promises "to build, or rebuild, another way of doing politics", based on "a national programme of struggle, but a programme which will be clearly of the left, or anti-capitalist, or anti-neoliberal, or for justice, democracy and liberty for the Mexican people".

The Zapatistas' "other campaign", which will not field a presidential candidate, starts in the new year with a national speaking tour by Marcos. It looks as if they are beginning to recognise that changing the world must involve confronting political power.

1905 revolution When midnight struck in Moscow

Pete Glatter looks at the conclusion to the great uprising in Russia 100 years ago

By December 1905, Russia was gearing itself up for a full-scale counter-revolution.

For 51 days, the Soviet (council) of Workers' Deputies in the then Russian capital St Petersburg had been an alternative power to the tsar, Russia's absolute monarch.

The soviet had led the biggest general strike to that point in history. It had prevented a racist massacre.

Its November strike had put a temporary stop to repression in the armed forces, among the peasantry and in Russian-ruled Poland.

But now the Petersburg workers were exhausted. The militant Putilov plant had only worked 43 days in the whole year. A wearing lock-out ended their struggle.

The soviet leaders were arrested on 3 December. Military units began to criss-cross the country, torturing and executing militants without trial. But the Moscow workers were comparatively fresh.

Moscow was a city of low paid textile workers, who had generally been much less militant than the skilled metal workers who dominated St Petersburg.

But now there was an upswing of struggle among the textile workers. To use a military analogy, the reserves were coming into battle after the front line had begun to fall back.

Revolt among the peasants and in the armed forces was also rising to a climax. If the authorities could be defeated in Moscow, then there was every chance that the movement in St Petersburg would revive.

Where these two great cities led, the Russian people would follow.

The revolutionary Bolshevik party, which led the Moscow soviet, was right to go for an uprising. Their socialist allies were right to go with them.

The question was whether the uprising would take place in time. The Bolsheviks themselves were slow to react to a mutiny in the city garrison.

They allowed it to fizzle out before the main uprising began. Even so, the Moscow soviet took control of most of the city on the very first day.

But the kind of practical



Socialist leader Lenin

preparations for an uprising, which Lenin, the exiled Bolshevik leader, had been pushing for all year, had not been made.

The Bolsheviks championed the idea of a mass uprising to overthrow Tsarism. But that was in theory. The local leaders had not yet caught up with the reality.

Crucial days were lost while they campaigned for the uprising instead of getting one under way. The railway line from St Petersburg was left open.

As soon as the authorities there felt secure, they were able to reinforce Moscow from their massive garrison.

The Moscow masses were

much more decisive than their leaders. They tried to win over the troops.

In one incident, two working girls with a red flag ran out of a crowd crying, "Kill us. We will not surrender the flag alive."

Disconcerted, the Cossack troops galloped away amid cheering.

According to Lenin, the fact that the struggle developed from a strike to an uprising "over the heads of the organisations" was "the greatest historic gain the Russian revolution achieved in December 1905.

"Like all preceding gains it was purchased at the price of enormous sacrifices."

It was not that organisations were not needed. It was that the pressure of mass action could overcome their conservatism.

But the failure to take the offensive doomed the uprising. Hundreds of armed fighters, supported by the people, carried on a stubborn resistance.

But they were no match for the overwhelming forces ranged against them. Cannon reduced the entire district of Presnya to rubble.

In the bitterness of defeat, some socialists argued that "we should never have taken up arms".

But the Bolsheviks looked forward to correcting their mistakes.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 began exactly where the 1905 revolution ended. In 1905, it took eight months of mass struggle before the first soviet appeared.

The first soviet of 1917 was formed after four days. The unfinished last act of 1905, the overthrow of the monarchy, was accomplished in 1917 at the end of the first week.

Eight months later, the soviets took power, led by the Bolsheviks. They and many of their supporters had learned the lessons of 1905.

Pete Glatter is the editor of the current special issue of the journal *Revolutionary History* on the 1905 revolution, which is based on Russian accounts never before translated into English.

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Turning sand into blood

*A review of Robert Fisk's new book *The Great War for Civilisation; The conquest of the Middle East**



By Rory Hearne

Why do countries go to war when it causes such blood and suffering? That question, 'why?', is in every page of Robert Fisk's fantastic new book, *The Great War for Civilisation, The Conquest of the Middle East*.

The book reveals, again and again, the horror of war, the hypocrisy of our governments, and the reality of this Twenty First Century 'New World Order' where war rages across the Middle East.

At a time when news reporting is increasingly devoid of any critics of western foreign policy—something most visible during the invasion of Iraq in 2003, when 'embedded' reporters held guns and rode along with US tanks and military—Fisk is a heroic voice that does not allow us forget the real horror of war. In the book, he explains his belief that journalism should "monitor the centres of power" and "challenge authority—all authority—especially so when governments and politicians take us to war, when they have decided that they will kill and others will die".

The book is full of the blood and stench of wars that have torn apart the entire Middle-East. Treating the Armenian genocide—referred to as the 'first holocaust'—the Iran-Iraq War, the occupation of Palestine, and the Egypt-Israel war, as well as US attacks on Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan (occupied by both Russia and the US), he destroys the logic and need for war by painfully relating its results as witnessed with his own eyes. He describes in vivid detail—so vivid at times it's difficult to read or comprehend—his visits to the hospitals, the bombed villages, the prisons, the torture rooms, and the burned out schools. He relates the stories of each victim, their pain, and the inconsolable grief of their families. This is in

Fisk interviewed Osama Bin Laden in 1997 who said, "The Americans must leave Saudi Arabia, must leave the Gulf. The evils of the Middle East arose from America's attempt to take over the region and from its support for Israel."

such contrast to the way the US in Iraq refuses to even count those who are killed by their bombs and bullets.

Fisk admirably points out that a lot of the answers to the questions asking why countries engage in war, lie in an 'arrogance of power', with the United States as the centre of world arrogance. "After the Allied victory in 1918, the victors divided up the lands of their former enemies. In the space of just 17 months, they created the borders of Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia and most of the Middle East. I have spent my entire career—in Belfast, and Sarajevo, in Beirut, and Baghdad—watching the people within those borders burn."

"America invaded Iraq not for Saddam Hussein's mythical 'weapons of mass destruction' which had long ago been destroyed," he writes, "but to change the map of the Middle East, much as father's generation had done more than 80 years earlier."

Following the recent London bombings, Blair issued weasel words that echoed those of George Bush after 9/11, when he said that there was no link between the attacks and western foreign policy in the Middle East; it was, of course, all down to the evil of Al Qaeda. However, Fisk's entire book demonstrates the hollowness of Bush and Blair's lies. He interviewed Osama Bin Laden in 1997, who showed that the reasons for their hatred of the West was not simply down to 'evil'. In that interview Osama said "American behaviour against Muslims, its support of Jews in Palestine and of the massacres of Muslims in Palestine and Lebanon-of Sabra and Shatila and Qana (where up to 1,700 Palestinian refugees were massacred by Israel's Lebanese Phalangist militia allies in 1982). The Americans must leave Saudi Arabia, must leave the Gulf. The evils of the Middle East arose from America's attempt to take over the region and from its support for Israel."

In the immediate aftermath of September 11th, Fisk again attempted to explain why the attack had taken place, but he was attacked by pro-Israeli's and neo-cons in the US, who tried to silence anyone not parroting the White house line. At the time, Fisk wrote, "This is not the war of democracy versus terror that the world will be asked to believe. It is also about American missiles smashing into Palestinian homes and US helicopters firing into a Lebanese Ambulance in 1996 and American Shells crashing into a village called Quana and about a Lebanese militia—paid and uniformed by America's ally Israel—hacking and raping and murdering their way through refugee camps."

Fisk is scathing in his criticism of western governments who down through the centuries have supported dictators and then tossed them aside and gone to war against their people when it suited their imperial interests. Afghanistan was invaded in 2001 to liberate the people from the fundamentalist Taliban regime. Yet in 1996 the US opened diplomatic relations with the Taliban while the Californian Asian Oil Company was negotiating with them to get rights for a pipeline to carry gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan through Afghanistan. The mass killings under Saddam were ignored by the West in the 1970s and 80s when Saddam was their 'strong man' in the Gulf and the US gave him export credits, chemicals and helicopters, the French gave him jets, the Germans, gas, and British military hardware poured into Iraq for fifteen years. Iraq was already using gas to kill thousands of Iranian soldiers when Donald Rumsfeld made his notorious 1983 visit to Baghdad to shake Saddam's hand. Human rights and democracy were nowhere to be seen when access to markets and oil was required.

Similarly, Fisk writes that our own Charles Haughey made no mention of

human rights abuses during his week-long visit to Iraq as a guest of Saddam. Ahern is following in the footsteps of Haughey, as prisoners of the US are allowed to pass through Shannon Warport on their way to possible torture in other jurisdictions.

The last two chapters detail the horrific results of the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the rise of the resistance movement that has forced the US military into the tiny Green Zone. Fisk believes that "The Americans must leave Iraq and they will leave Iraq, but they can't leave Iraq and that is the equation that turns sand to blood. At some point, they will have to talk to the insurgents."

Fisk could have explained in more detail the deeper causes of war and how we can try to stop it, for example by explaining the link between war and neo-liberal globalisation, the profit needs of corporations, and imperialism.

He also refers throughout the book to the west as 'us'. It is 'us' who have invaded Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and other countries. But western governments' military adventures did not take place with our consent, nor with the consent of the millions who marched around the world on February 15th 2003. The people in the west do not support these wars, and it is important to differentiate between the actions of western governments and their populations; particularly in the US, where for example 300,000 marched in New York two weeks ago calling for the troops to be withdrawn from Iraq.

Often you hear people saying, 'well, we marched against the war and what's the point in going on about it?' But each page of Fisk's book gives purpose to the protests, the letters and the anti-war movement. George Orwell once said, "In times of universal deceit, telling the truth will be a revolutionary act". In George Bush's New World (dis)Order, deceit is everywhere. There are too few revolutionaries like Fisk.

EVENTS

Global Justice Conference Belfast

A successful conference was attended by almost 150 people in Belfast last weekend.

The conference, organised by Global Justice in conjunction with green party activists, green action, lecturers against war and trade union activists was an attempt to bring the spirit of Edinburgh back to Belfast a place where some have said there is no sentiment for the movement.

The Global Justice conference showed that despite the sectarian ugliness of the last summer there is a mood for anti-capitalist politics. Issues covered included Palestine, Climate Change, War and fighting racism.

The conference agreed to mobilise for the December 3rd rally on climate change and build the December 10th international anti-war conference.

Events:

PUBLIC MEETING:

Climate Change: How to stop global warming

On Thursday 27th October Jonathan Neale, an activist in the "Campaign against Climate Change", will outline some ideas that could offset the worst effects of Climate Change at a Public Meeting in ATGWU Hall, Middle Abbey St.

This is followed by a meeting in Galway on Friday 28th (see display)

The Campaign against Climate Change is calling for international demonstrations on December 3rd to coincide with the UN organised Meeting of the Parties (to the Kyoto Protocol).

Peace conference in London

The Stop the War Coalition in Britain is calling on peace campaigners, trade unionists, progressive activists, community organisations and political parties to send delegates to the International Peace Conference on 10 December in Central London
Go to www.stopwar.org.uk for more details



How to stop Global Warming

Speaker **Jonathan Neale**
(Climate Campaigner)

Dublin: Thurs 27th October ATGWU Hall,
55 Middle Abbey St., 7.30pm

Galway: Friday 28th October Brennan's Yard Hotel,
New Dock Rd, Galway - 8pm

www.swp.ie

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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.

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Socialist Worker

MONAGHAN HOSPITAL: CASUALTY OF PROFIT BEFORE PEOPLE

By Peadar McMahon

What happened to poor Pat Joe Walshe was scandalous. Pat died of a bleeding ulcer in Monaghan Hospital which could have been treated with emergency surgery and intensive care not available in Monaghan due to cuts in services.

Staff could not find a bed in another hospital to transfer Mr Walshe. It is now reported that there was an Intensive Care bed in Cavan and perhaps three in Drogheda.

Why then was Mr Walshe transferred from Drogheda to Monaghan in the first place? What protocols were in place and why were the hands of the medical staff in the hospital tied behind their backs? The promised investigation will, hopefully, discover where the truth lies, though this will be little consolation to the Walshe family and should not be delayed for 8 weeks.

Hanly Report

The Hanly Report forms the background to this tragedy. Closing local Public Hospitals was a key part of this plan.

Monaghan seemed a good place for the pilot scheme, but from word go the North Eastern Health Board faced public protests and had to change their tactics. Services would now be removed by stealth, by engineering the situation whereby outside agencies like the Royal College of Surgeons could be blamed.

In this way the politicians could be protected and shielded from public anger and vested interests could have a more influential say in the provision of health care.

By not replacing staff and failing to invest in the fabric of the building at Monaghan General Hospital and by refusing to provide the necessary resources the Health Board was able to call in outside agencies, who declared services unsustainable.

They started by removing paediatrics and as a result mothers lost confidence in the maternity unit there, which reduced annual births from 700-plus to just fewer than 400.

They then reduced the number of obstetricians to one and called in the insurance company to deem the unit unsafe. They closed it down “temporarily” but it was never to return. They then removed gynaecology and orthopaedics,



A vigorous campaign has been sustained demanding the restoration of services to Monaghan Hospital

which reduced the volume of surgery and went on to call in the College of Anaesthesia to withdraw accreditation for junior doctor anaesthetists.

All of this meant that by July 2002 the hospital had to be taken ‘OFF CALL’ for emergencies, as there was not sufficient anaesthetic staff to cover. Then, after a number of deaths in ambulances as they raced to a distant hospital, the HSE put the hospital back on Emergency Medical Call but ordered the hospital not to perform emergency surgery—elective surgery ‘9 to 5’ only.

Since then every week a number of surgical patients have had to be transferred to another hospital—Cavan, Dundalk, Drogheda, Dublin and, in one case, Enniskillen. In almost all cases it has been extremely difficult for the staff in Monaghan to get another hospital to accept patients. Numerous times the patient was near death when the bed was acquired. It was only a matter of time till a death resulted.

In December 2001 the Consultant staff in Monaghan General Hospital became aware that moves were in train to downgrade services there. They held two public meetings but were then reminded by the Health Board that their contracts forbade them from making public statements.

Activists called a public meeting

in the Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan, in May 2002, which was attended by over 2,500 people who elected a committee and took the name: ‘County Monaghan Community Alliance’ Various organisations and Community Development Groups are involved and every area of the county is represented.

The County Monaghan Community Alliance predicted a disaster. The Government was told, the Department was told and the Health Board was told but no one listened—we were “scaremongering”.

Why have services been withdrawn from Monaghan?

There are a number of reasons given. One is ‘economical’—it is not ‘viable’ to have these services there. It is a great society when bureaucrats can put a price on a human’s life. Prof. Drumm says no one can justify five acute hospitals in the North East. Why then was a fifth hospital opened in Galway in 2004? The ‘Galway Clinic’ is a for-profit hospital and was funded with €20 million of taxpayers’ money!

The smaller hospitals can, when required, stabilise critically ill patients and then transfer to the major centre for specialised treatment and care. A range of specialist consultants can be based in dif-

ferent hospital locations, but serving the region (including Northern Ireland) for elective procedures.

Another reason given is ‘patient safety’. This can be questioned in relation to Mr. Walshe—it is certainly not safe now. The Minister and HSE continually state that the Royal College of Surgeons recommended that Monaghan should not perform Emergency Surgery even though this was when the hospital was ‘OFF CALL’ and lacking in anaesthetic personnel.

The HSE keeps promising us that the hospital will continue to provide emergency medicine (heart attacks, strokes, asthmatic or diabetic attacks etc). Medical experts, including the Medical Advisor to the NEHB, have stated that emergency medicine cannot be sustained without emergency surgery.

Many times, when a patient is admitted for medical reasons, an emergency surgical problem can develop. To have to organise a transfer of this patient to another hospital could be fatal, as death can occur before it is achieved. This is not safe.

What needs to be done?

Monaghan must be put back on Emergency Surgical Call as called for in a public statement by 12 Consultants and 25 GPs.

Many other hospitals around

the country, with fewer staff and less resources, are still allowed these services with no safety issues. What is wrong with Monaghan? Are our lives or votes worth less than those in other areas?

The basic problem is that Government policy for Health Care delivery is now based on the Hanly principles and promoting private for-profit hospitals. If the downgrading of Monaghan Hospital can be achieved then many other small hospitals like in Portlaoise, Ennis, Nenagh, Ballinasloe, Mallow and others around the country will suffer a similar fate.

Those living close to the major centres will also suffer, as their hospital will be so full of those from other areas that they will have to wait in long queues and on trolleys. Monaghan people are speaking from experience—you are next!

We must change the policy or change the Government. The present Minister tries to persuade us that when she gets all these Private hospitals built that our problems are over. Let’s not be fooled—the problems will only increase. Many of those who can afford Private Health Insurance now will not be able to afford the new high premia needed to cover the costs of the Private hospitals.

This will increase the number of public patients and since there is no investment in the public system the Minister has promised that public patients will be treated in the Private facilities, so our taxes will fund far away private hospitals instead of local public ones.

International experience is very clearly telling us that the Public Private Partnership (PPP) model in health has been more expensive and of poorer quality wherever it has been introduced.

Monaghan Community Alliance will continue to oppose these policies in every way possible as it is our lives that are at stake and future generations will judge us harshly if we stand idly by. We are more enthusiastic in fighting the battle now than we were even at the start and we are determined to continue to do whatever is necessary to stop this madness. The whole of Ireland must take the same stand or they too will begin counting their needless deaths.

Peadar McMahon is Chairman of the County Monaghan Community Alliance