

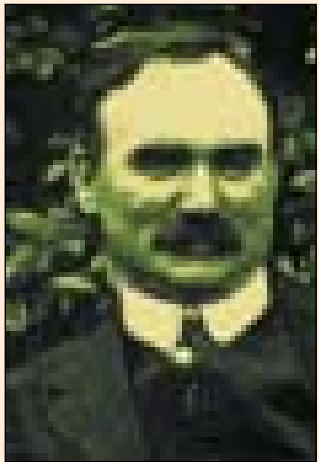
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Defend jobs, pensions and conditions **NO TO PRIVATISATION**

FIGHT THE AER LINGUS SELL-OFF!

Aer Lingus workers have voted by a massive 94% for industrial action to protect their jobs and conditions against any forced change by the privatisation of the company.

The Government wants to float the company on the stock exchange by June. They are very anxious to avoid the privatisation of the country's national airline becoming an election issue.

Recently all the North Dublin Fianna Fail candidates emphasised to the government that they need to move to privatise the company quickly so that it is as far away from a general election as possible.

And opposition TD's are all over the place on the issue.

Olivia Mitchell of Fine Gael boasted how her party has been pressing for the sale of the company since last January. Fine Gael's coalition partner rep, Roisin Shortall, on the other hand has said that if Labour get into power they would not privatise Aer Lingus.

It seems all the politicians are worried about the sell off of this national asset losing them votes.

That is because they know the depth of feeling and determination of the Aer Lingus workers.

The workers have been labelled as dinosaurs, holding up progress etc, but 94% of them have sent a very clear signal on the future of their jobs.

The privatisation of Aer Lingus would mean:

■ **Loss of job security.**

Chief Executive Mannion (formerly



an accountant with United Emirates Airlines, a company who have shown an interest in buying out Aer Lingus) has told the unions there will be no guarantees on job security.

Thousands of real, pensionable and unionised jobs could be lost forever.

■ **The working conditions at Aer Lingus will be drastically affected.**

As one union rep told this paper, "We will be looking at another Irish Ferries story with our jobs being outsourced.

"Already in the cleaning area massive cuts were enforced on the threat of getting workers to compete with other contracts and when workers lost out on their conditions they were still told they hadn't given enough.

"Our jobs would be outsourced like a light, driving our pay and conditions right down to the bottom."

Pensions

A leading Aer Lingus shop steward told Socialist Worker that the pensions issue may well be the banana skin that the government slip on.

In order for them to list the company on the stock exchange within their June deadline, all outstanding issues on pensions and industrial relations will have to be resolved.

But there is a deficiency in the workers pension scheme that may leave the government in trouble.

The company thought that by throwing €200 million at the scheme it would be resolved but it has only just plugged a hole.

The unions are awaiting the outcome of a special pension report by Kevin Finnucane of Coyle Hamilton Wills due back at the end of May.

In no way will the issues be put to bed by June.

The pensions debacle and the

workers opposition may well present this government with a real headache.

If opposition to the privatisation of Aer Lingus is deepened and acted on we could see people power win against the neo-liberal agenda.

Once again workers in France have shown how protests, strikes and mass direct action can defeat the best laid plans of a neo-liberal regime.

The huge demonstrations and solidarity action of French workers and students forced their Government to back down completely on plans to introduce draconian employment laws for youth.

Just like in the 1990's workers in Air France took action, blocking airports and causing mayhem in air travel - forcing the then French Government to back off from privatisation plans.

Following a general meeting just before Easter of over 50 Aer Lingus shop stewards from Cork, Shannon and Dublin, it was planned to hold a general meeting of all 3,300 employees of Aer Lingus on April 27th in Dublin and to invite all the main political parties, including the various party reps on the Joint Oireactas Committee for transport.

According to a key shop steward, "We want the politicians to feel the heat and force them to put their money where their mouths are.

"We are not interested in their share options and stocks but we are determined to protect our jobs and conditions from another Irish Ferries saga. This is just the beginning."

FOLLOWING THE KILLING OF DENIS DONALDSON: PROBLEMS FOR SINN FEIN

By Eamonn McCann

The inevitable sick joke about Denis Donaldson was doing the rounds within a day of his death.

“Donegal Catch dish of the day—Cottage Spy.”

Among Republicans, the quip was relished as much by members of the Provisional Movement as by so-called dissidents.

This highlights the difficulty Gerry Adams and other Sinn Fein leaders face in dealing with the attitudes and gut instincts of many of their own rank and file.

Donaldson was obviously killed by people who had no great concern for the peace process to which the Sinn Fein leadership is committed.

On the face of it, to make light of the killing, to react in a way which suggests that the killers hadn't done anything particularly reprehensible, was to show ambivalence towards the project to which the party is wedded.

Expressions of sorrow for the Donaldson family were doubtless genuine. But so, too, was the sense of satisfaction that a traitor has gotten his just desserts.

In traditional Republican perspective, Donaldson was a soldier who went over to the enemy at time of war, for which the mandatory punishment everywhere is death.

Whoever battered down the door of his Donegal hovel and minced his face with a shotgun was asserting the legitimacy of the armed struggle.

It is for this reason that while SF leaders can deplore his death, they have not denounced his killers in the terms they used about the mur-



Martin McGuinness, Denis Donaldson and Gerry Adams

derers of Robert McCartney—“lowlifes,” “thugs,” etc.—despite knowing from the outset, which they cannot have done about Donaldson's killers, that the men who'd knifed Robert McCartney were members of their own movement.

Donaldson had to be killed for the same reason as each of the dozens of IRA “touts” who faced the ultimate punishment over the course of the armed struggle.

Some are remembered because of the circumstances or the significance of their deaths.

Others were routinely dispatched and soon forgotten, except by members of their own families.

The families of a number of victims are convinced that their loved ones were murdered either in error or in order to protect British agents like Freddie Scappaticci.

In a small number of cases, the IRA has admitted killing the wrong

person.

In all of these cases, Sinn Fein members hold that the killings were carried out in good faith and were justified by the ordinary rules of war.

This belief is rooted in the core Republican idea of the IRA as the legitimate army of the Republic proclaimed on Easter Monday 1916, and of the armed struggle it has waged in defence of the Republic.

This is a view which cannot easi-

ly be reconciled with unequivocal endorsement of the Belfast Agreement of 1998, which leaves Northern Ireland constitutionally within the United Kingdom and makes constitutional change conditional on the support of a Six County majority.

Sinn Fein leaders try to dissolve this contradiction by advertising the Agreement to their rank and file not as a settlement but as a means of undoing the partition settlement of 1922.

Demands for the full implementation of the Agreement are accompanied, sometimes in the same sentence, with pledges to press on without delay to the Republic, sometimes anticipated as being accomplished by the centenary of the Rising in 2016.

But if Sinn Fein endorses the PSNI—as many observers believe will happen before the November deadline for a deal set by the two Governments—they will have become part of the repressive arm of the machinery of a State still constitutionally within the UK.

In that circumstance, it will no longer be possible for the party to maintain the view of the Republic which provided moral justification for the armed struggle and thereby justified the killing of Denis Donaldson. Republicanism has no way out of this contradiction.

It's the movement against capitalism and imperialism in the world, not the crooked path towards power-sharing in a provincial assembly, which offers a revolutionary road into the future.

This is the real choice facing SF supporters who see themselves as socialists.

HOT DESKING IN WORKPLACE 2010

Workplace 2010 is a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) project which aims to sell off most NI Civil Service office buildings to the private sector.

They will then be leased back to the civil service. This amazing windfall to the corporate sector is being pushed in the name of “improving working conditions”!

Without doubt, some civil service buildings are in bad condition. Donald House on the Stormont Estate seems to be held together by bits of glue and string.

But the Workplace 2010 PFI project will only make working conditions worse.

For example, all offices will be open plan and workers will be expected to “hot desk”.

This call centre type of office is great for the boss-

es and drives down building costs but is miserable to work in.

“Hot desking” is a bit like musical chairs, except with desks.

It means having only about half the number of desks needed – on the basis that a lot of people are out of the office at any one time and desks can be shared.

Many lower paid civil servants already have to “hot desk” and all say that whatever money is saved by having a smaller office is lost by the fact that they often cannot do their work because there is no desk for them to work on.

Not only are the buildings being privatised, but so are many of the workers who provide building services – janitors, cleaners, electricians, plumbers etc.

Workplace 2010's

own circular to civil servants, of 22 March 2006, puts the number of jobs likely to be privatised at 1,800.

But the plans for this major sell-off of public assets MUST be fought.

The cost of this one PFI scheme is estimated at £1bn over the next 20 year period. That's £50 million a year rent on buildings that are currently owned by the public.

People in the North, who already face some of the worst poverty in these islands, are being forced to provide guaranteed profits for private sector companies.

Worse, not only will the companies have gained huge profits over twenty years but at the end of the contract, they will still own the buildings!

People Before Profit gains a hearing

GALWAY

Over 60 people packed into the inaugural meeting of “People Before Profit/Davitt League” in Galway.

There was a great platform of speakers: representatives from communities under attack from big business: Shell in Rosport and Greenstar in Kilconnell; NUIG political lecturer Su Ming Khoo; City Councillor Catherine Connolly who is contesting the next general election as an independent; and Eamonn Mc Cann of SEA.

We heard of people's frustration when elected representatives abandon their communities in favour of big business, corruption and greed;

how there is community fightback around the country, how democracy has been eroded, how the alliances for an alternative new left are starting up and working across the 32 counties.

There was a general consensus that it was time for an alternative in Galway to unite campaigns and oppose the neo-liberal policies of current political parties.

Many people enthusiastically left their contact details.

These people are being called into action immediately for the “Reclaim 1916” anti-war commemoration, and then for a Galway PB4P organising meeting on May 3rd.

For more details contact

BRAY:

Fifty people attended the first meeting of Wicklow People before Profit in Bray, the meeting was addressed by Catherine Murphy, Independent T.D., Richard Boyd Barrett Save Our Seaford Campaign; a representative of the SWAP environmental group which campaigns against proposed plans to build on the natural flood plains of the River Dargle in Bray and Carmel McKenna.

Carmel McKenna, a former long standing member of the Labour Party, spoke out strongly against the current direction the party is taking and called for an alternative.

There was a good response from those present and a real interest in getting organised in the county.

CORK:

Forty people attended the first meeting of the Cork People Before Profit alliance which was chaired by a long standing environmental campaigner, Derry Chambers.

The meeting was addressed by Miriam Cotton who spoke on disability issues, Kieran Allen from the Steering Committee of People before Profit and Terence Conway from the Shell to Sea Campaign in Erris.

In the discussion, one speaker told about a long standing campaign he had fought against the banks while others pointed to the need for an alliance to group people who wanted to fight neo-liberalism.

Most people in the room signed up to keep in touch or get involved.

How did Terence Wheelock die in Store St Garda Station?



Terence
Wheelock

Terence Wheelock loved life. He was a bright, lively intelligent young man of twenty years of age who grew up in the Summerhill area of Dublin.

In his last three months when he was lying in a coma in the Mater hospital, over 200 people visited the hospital, hoping he would get better. Tragically, he never made it to his twenty-first birthday.

The events that led to the ending of this young life started on Tuesday 2nd June, 2005 at 12.10pm when Terence along was arrested along with three others under the Road Traffic Act.

They were under suspicion of a stealing a car that had been taken the night before and was parked three doors away from his family home.

The arrest took place amidst the sight of considerable commotion. The arrival of a number of police cars into the densely populated area of the north inner city brought several people out to their doors.

What they witnessed was shocking: Terence Wheelock was roughed up in broad day light by Gardai.

It was not an entirely unusual occurrence. The week before his arrest, Terence Wheelock had another altercation with Garda that led to him going to the Mater with a damaged arm.

This, then, was the way that Terence found himself being transported to Store St Garda station in the middle of the day on 2nd June. What occurred in the next three hours is subject to major dispute.

The Gardai claim that Terence was placed in a cell at 12.25 and that everything was done as it should be.

Unusually, however, they say that

Terence went to sleep in the middle of the day and that they simply checked his cell on five occasions between that time and 2.40 pm.

At 2.40, however, a Garda on duty entered the cell and found him unconscious. It is then claimed that Terence removed concrete from a cell wall and gained access to a piece of metal from which he hung himself.

However, there are some important anomalies in the Garda version of events.

It appears that it took another ten minutes after his sighting at 2.40pm to summon an ambulance.

When the ambulance arrived, the emergency crew were not given access to the cell but to a different part of the police station where they found Terence.

Yet the most basic advice for dealing with such emergency situations is that the patient should not be moved.

The solicitor for the Wheelock family got a court order to preserve the cell for forensic examination. But in breach of that order, the cell was renovated and surgically cleaned of all forensic evidence. Why Gardai would take this step after a serious injury occurred in their station has never been adequately explained.

Terence's mother was notified of the incident by crude call, which informed her that her son had hung himself.

She was then taken on a journey to James hospital, apparently to visit her son. Rather oddly, she was asked by the Garda for directions to that hospital.

Even more strangely, it transpired that Terence had never been sent to James hospital, which is on the west-

ern side the city, but rather to the local hospital on the northside, the Mater. The effect of this unnecessary journey was to disorientate a family member and to lose about one hour of valuable time.

Meanwhile at the Mater hospital, Terence's clothes were being removed and were then taken away by the Gardai. To this day, these clothes have not been returned to the family who want to carry out an independent forensic examination.

It is at this point that a dreadful cover-up appears to be put in place – and the moves do not involve just the local Store St police but rather the highest level of the Department of Justice.

The quality of forensic material is directly related to the time it takes to get at the evidence and the way the evidence is stored.

It is clearly in the direct interest of the Wheelock family to get the forensic examination concluded as soon as possible. But they have met with a wall of official obstruction, being orchestrated by the Dept of Justice.

There have been a number of Coroner Court hearings where the issues of the clothes has come up. During one of them, at the last minute, the state agreed to release the clothes to an independent forensic scientist but wanted the scientist brought over to Ireland.

When the family replied that this would cause them extra expense, the Minister for Justice said he would give them financial assistance with this. But just before the last Coroner's Court on April 6th, McDowell announced that the money would, in effect, not be forthcoming.

This official game playing and obstruction is in itself a shocking way to behave to a family who have lost a loved one. But the question is why is the Irish state behaving in this callous manner.

Why have a grieving family not been able to recover the clothes of their dead son to this very day?

The only logical explanation is that a cover up has been put in place.

Take, for example, the evidence from Terence's body. Extensive bruising was found but there were no marks on his hand. If he is supposed to have ripped out concrete from his cell wall, why were there no such marks?

There is an extensive mark from the left ear to the Adam's apple – but if he had hung himself then such a mark would have gone underneath the whole neck.

There was also severe swelling on the back of the brain, which is consistent with receiving a severe blow. There is also a two and a half inch laceration on the spine and piece of metal in his eye.

How could all this be consistent with a suicide attempt?

Other disturbing questions arise about the custody record.

Normally, when anyone is taken into custody there is supposed to be a record kept about the arresting Gardai.

But in Terence's case, the record appears to have been altered and the names of two ban Garda have been entered. Yet according to witnesses, these were not the Garda who arrested Terence.

The Director of Public Prosecution has decided that no

charges will be brought against any Garda in relation to Terence's death. He had appointed Detective Oliver Hanley from Dun Laoghaire Garda Station to investigate the death.

The Wheelock family, however, are not satisfied with this procedure. Garda Hanley worked for fifteen years in the same Store St station where these events occurred.

They also claim that he was involved in the investigating every death in a Dublin Garda station in recent years – and no charge has ever been brought against a Garda.

The family are instead demanding a fully independent inquiry into the death and have launched a major campaign.

They organised a several hundred strong march through the area and have gathered thousands of petitions on O'Connell St.

They also held a special protest outside the Dail on the occasion of what would be Terence's 21st birthday.

They know that our rulers typically adopt a tactic of brazening out scandals in the hope that official obstruction and tiredness can wear people down so that only a small bitter taste is left – and nothing is done.

The Wheelock family will have none of this.

They have strong roots in Dublin's north inner city and have a sharp and clear understanding of how social class works.

They are fighting for the dignity of their own family – but also for the wider community of the area that puts up with a lot of abuse from rogue elements within the police. They deserve our full support.

INTERNATIONAL

ITALIAN ELECTIONS

Rifondazione Comunista now to face huge tests

By Anna Poian

After long hours of struggling over the results, it has been announced that the Left had the majority of the votes in both the Houses of Parliament.

Mr. Prodi is going to be at the head of the Government—if Berlusconi's claims of gerrymandering is not sustained—but this happened only thanks to a slight difference of votes, caused by the very last votes that were counted: the votes of the Italians living abroad.

These went to the polling stations - probably being more conscious and shameful of having a Prime Minister that comes out with insults to other countries or even to his people every other day.

If Berlusconi had clung onto power, he would have led Italy to an even worse economic situation and damaged living standards more than he had already managed to do during the last years.

Now we will see if the Left coalition, called Unione (Union), will keep its commitments.

Rifondazione Comunista (Prc), with the votes it gained in the Parliament should be strong enough, even if it has borne some costs for joining Unione in the making of the new Government.

Its radical leader Mr. Bertinotti had to accept some kind of restric-



Romano Prodi and Silvio Berlusconi

tions, silently imposed by the main components of the Italian politic (Cdl and Unione itself).

During the election campaign, for example, he turned against the Iraqi resistance, even though he said he is still against the war as he had always been.

Prodi has a strong record in implementing neo-liberal policies and will advocate these as a solution to the difficulties in the Italian economy. The PRC's decision to actually join his government could therefore see them being forced to impose these solutions on their

working class supporters.

Apart from this, which is quite a big loss, Bertinotti's program remains focused not only to the Government. He is also probably looking at how the Italian Left wing can play an important role in the European Left Party. This Italian

Left that is not only communist but has been able in the last years to collaborate with similar parties as well as with different ones.

There is no Left without a communist party, but on the other side the Left can not limit itself to that.

If this has been true for the last decades where Italian Communism tried to develop itself, is even more real today where change is being imposed from outside.

For Rifondazione the relationship with the social movements and then with the people is essential.

The European Left would be in fact the new instrument to aim at a society with the person and its own characteristics are at the centre of it. This can work if there are both strong connections and communications between inside and outside of socialist parties.

"With Marx and beyond" has been one of the PRC's slogans. Rifondazione leader's argues we have to we have to follow the critical thinking of the Sixties. We should not forget Marx but start exactly from there - from a Marxist criticism of the economic system to the realisation of where Capitalism has been taking us nowadays.

The PRC will remain then with its communist strong identity but it will face huge tests in really sticking to this philosophy.

Peru: The next step left in Latin America?

By Mike Gonzalez

When Washington looks at Latin America these days, the alarm bells must be ringing. In Bolivia, a vibrant mass movement brought Evo Morales to the presidency in December.

The movement's demands were simple—the nationalisation of the nation's oil and gas, and the calling of an assembly to rewrite the constitution. Morales has promised both, though there are worrying ambiguities in many of his statements.

In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez remains in power and his popular base of support seems to be developing its own forms of organisation, such as the new UNT trade union federation.

In Ecuador, where presidential elections take place in October this year, the alliance of indigenous organisations, trade unions and social movements which has brought down three presidents in the last six years, is active again.

When Lucio Gutierrez assumed the presidency three and a half years ago, it was because he had promised to confront global capital and the neo-liberal policies that had impoverished millions.

When he turned against the mass movement that carried him into the presidential palace, that movement took to the streets again, driving him from office last April.



Ollanta Humala

In Brazil, president Lula—the candidate of the Workers Party elected in 2002—has become increasingly discredited. Once in office he rapidly turned against his natural supporters, refusing demands from trade unionists and the landless workers' movement. But he did not hesitate to negotiate with the institutions of global capitalism.

More recent allegations of corruption have exposed his willingness to forge alliances with business and its political representatives in order to stay in power.

The growth of the new P-Sol Freedom and Socialism party is testimony to growing popular disillusionment.

That is the context in which Peru went to the polls to elect a new president. There were three candidates. Lourdes Flores is the candidate of the right. If elected she will continue to support neo-liberal strategies.

Alan Garcia, a former president and representative of the populist party APRA, would also do little to challenge the status quo. When he was president in the 1980s, he was an enthusiastic advocate of the capitalist market—as well as becoming embroiled in a major corruption scandal.

It is the third candidate on whom attention is focused. Ollanta Humala came from nowhere to win the first round of the presidential elections. With votes still being counted, he was expected to poll over 30 percent as Socialist Worker went to press.

He will face a run-off, scheduled for 7 May, against whichever candidate finishes second.

Humala's Peruvian Nationalist Party has won support from important sections of the poor.

It is particularly popular among indigenous people—those descended from the original inhabitants of the region.

In fact, it is his brother Antaro who is better known, having led a failed indigenous rising in 2005. Antaro worked in the past with the MIR, a guerrilla organisation with roots in some of the indigenous communities in the 1970s. Ollanta, however, has a

much more obscure past.

A military officer, he too led a short-lived military uprising in 2001. Dismissed from the army, he was reinstated in 2003 and was sent as a military attaché to France and Korea before returning to Peru.

On the election trail, Ollanta managed to present himself as the voice of the poor, the indigenous and the working class. His party slogan, "Love Peru", however, gives little sense that he has a real political perspective to offer.

His speeches are nationalistic, recalling military victories over Chile in the past and issuing vague promises that he will restore human rights.

Yet here his own record is very murky. Ollanta was almost certainly involved in the violent repression of the Shining Path guerrillas in the 1990s, and has not rejected the present government's call for amnesty for the military officers involved in repression under the disgraced former president Alberto Fujimori.

In a sense, Ollanta stands in a long Latin American tradition of strong leaders who are happy to act in the name of the people, but who are much less happy to act under their control.

Ollanta is not Evo Morales. He does not have the Bolivian president's history of leading or participating in struggles, nor is he the representative of organised social forces.

But Ollanta has successfully pre-

sented himself to a population suffering the impact of globalisation as a people's champion.

He symbolises the level of popular anger with the current Peruvian government, which has enthusiastically implemented neo-liberal policies. But so did Gutierrez, the fugitive president of Ecuador, who betrayed his supporters at the first opportunity.

If Ollanta wins the second round of the presidential election there will be no popular movement to hold him to his promises—or take its own independent action to fulfil them.

And without that organised movement that can hold him to account, Peru's own history suggests he will end up going his own way in pursuit of power.

On the other hand, his election will express the levels of discontent among working people and will lay down a gauntlet for the left.

The Peruvian left, which in the late 1980s did achieve some impressive election results, is today divided and fragmented. Its two presidential candidates had little impact on last Saturday's poll.

Ollanta is benefiting from the anger of the masses—but he is also a symptom of the failure of the left to channel that action into a project to build a new and different kind of society.

Mike Gonzalez is the author of *Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution*, and *A Rebel's Guide to Marx*.

COMMENT

Alex Callinicos

Immigration and the US ruling class

The mass protests by immigrants in the US tell us something about the country.

An estimated two million people have marched in 140 different cities in America to stop the criminalisation of undocumented migrants. The National Day of Action took many forms including a consumer boycott by immigrants and labour stoppages.

Something big is happening in the US.

These protests were provoked by legislation being debated by Congress, which is designed to control illegal immigration into the US—estimated at 500,000 a year. The Republican right in the house of representatives, facing a tough election in November, want to use the anti-immigrant vote to shore up their vote. They pushed through a bill that would tighten border controls and impose harsh fines on those employing illegal immigrants.

Democrats and moderate Republicans in the Senate are instead proposing an amnesty that would allow “illegals”—some 12 million in number—to gain residence and citizenship rights after paying a fine and enduring a long waiting period. Congress is now stalemated.

In a way, this debate is irrelevant, given the powerful flows that bind together the US and its Latin American neighbours in a single political economy. I got an insight into this when I attended a conference on globalisation and empire in Mexico City a few months ago.

The issue that most engaged the Mexican participants was migration. One participant described how, since the North American Free Trade Agreement opened up Mexican farmers to competition from US agribusiness, an enormous exodus has developed from rural Mexico.

Whole villages, their livelihoods destroyed, are heading north in search of jobs. No wonder US border controls are buckling under the pressure. But migrant labour is in great demand from US capitalism.

The Financial Times had a fascinating piece last week about Dalton, Georgia. The population of this southern town grew from 22,000 in 1990 to 28,000 in 2000. In the same period the racial mix has changed from 83 percent white to 40 percent Hispanic.

The migrants have come to work in Dalton’s carpet mills, which are responsible for one third of global carpet output. This picture is not an isolated one. One paper at the Mexico City conference traced the impact Mexican farm workers are having in Valle Cruci, in rural North Carolina.

Given the US economy’s dependence on migrant labour, it’s not surprising that significant sections of big business want to ease immigration laws.

But it would be too simple to present the division within the US ruling class as one that counterposes the interests of capital in scrapping immigration controls to irrational bigots who want to tighten them—though there are plenty of the latter.

Recently the New York Times cited a senior executive, coincidentally enough at a Dalton carpet firm, who “did not find many of the provisions of the Senate bill practical, particularly those that would have required long-time immigrants to learn English and pay fines...”

“Many employers, too, oppose any provision that would penalise them for hiring illegal workers, knowingly or not. Some expressed concern about the provision that would have granted citizenship to immigrants who had been in the United States for at least five years, saying it might have encouraged them to quit or be less productive.

“The illegals are probably better workers than the legal ones,” said Mike Gonya, who farms 2,800 acres of wheat and vegetables near Fremont, Ohio. “The legal ones know the system. They know legal recourse. The illegal ones will bust their butts.”

In other words, the interests of capital are best served by controls that are weak enough to allow immigrants in, but strong enough to keep illegal workers vulnerable and therefore easy to exploit. Divide and rule is the watchword of capitalism.

From that perspective, the current debate in Washington is dangerous because it is galvanising the 40 million strong Hispanic population of the US into political action. Having wreaked disaster on Iraq, the Republican right may have woken a sleeping giant in its own backyard.

INTERNATIONAL

What next for France?



Students take the lead in protests against the CPE labour law

The French struggle against the youth employment law shows there is an alternative to social partnership style trade unionism.

However, this is not the end of the story. The “equal opportunities law” scandalously remains. It legislates for apprentices to work at the age of 14, and for night work from the age of 15—a real return to the 19th century.

It also includes compulsory

military service for young people identified as “repeated delinquents”. The small business version of the CPE, the CNE, which contains the same loophole that allows employers to sack workers without reason in businesses with less than 20 employees, is untouched. Villepin declared that he intends keeping these laws.

In reply, the student coordination has called for continuing the movement to obtain full sat-

isfaction.

The CGT trade union leader, Bernard Thibault, has already announced that the battle against the CNE must start. He has fixed the traditional May Day demonstrations as the first major test.

FO, another union federation, has also warned that the CNE is unacceptable.

The main student union, UNEF, has called on students to continue the fight, and,

although often outflanked on the ground by the coordinating committee, their spokesperson, Bruno Julliard, has become a national figure.

Other student organisations, under pressure with the approach of the end of year exams, have called on students to lift the pickets on the universities. But even after the government retreat, 30 out of 84 universities were still partially or totally blocked.

A CRISIS FOR LEFT AND RIGHT

The left has come out of the movement stronger, but most people in a Libération newspaper opinion poll don’t see much difference between the Socialist Party (SP) programme and the Tories.

The right are massively unpopular.

Both president Chirac and prime minister Villepin have only 25 percent approval ratings.

Discredited by their manoeuvres it is difficult to see any future for them, and Villepin may not last much longer as prime minister.

His right wing rival, Sarkozy comes out in a strong position, but among young people he is detested.

Sections of people are looking for a political alternative to neo-liberalism, and in the coming months there is a fantastic opportunity

to see political debate developing in the universities.

The national caucus of the referendum committees next month could provide one focus for this.

There is a significant minority of young people, politicised by the movement, attracted by a mixture of radical, anarchist, and revolutionary ideas.

They are looking for an alternative to the system.

All of the left wing parties opposed the CPE and mobilised for the protests, but the 2007 presidential and general elections were never far away.

Thus, the main SP candidate, Ségolène Royal, was completely out of step with the movement.

The supposed synthesis between the different currents

inside the SP is being put to a stern test, and a split is possible if Royal were to become its official candidate.

Despite this, it is likely that the SP will benefit largely from the movement.

Marie-George Buffet’s Communist Party adopted a harder stance but is caught between its traditional alliance with the Socialists and the hopes of its members and supporters who want radical change.

Without doubt, the political party which has best responded to the movement is the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) whose spokesperson, Olivier Besancenot has gained enormously in popularity.

Polls put him ahead of the Communists in the presidential elections.

This is a nightmare for the

CP leadership, but it will also put the LCR to the test.

Tens of thousands of young people have organised the biggest youth movement since 1968, so what the LCR does could now play a crucial role in the future of left politics.

There is a historic opportunity for the LCR to play a leading role in the emergence of a new left that opposes neo-liberalism which could act as a fighting pole of political attraction.

Not every worker struck this time round, but many did and the confidence coming from this first victory will be crucial in the future.

Villepin, Chirac and Sarkozy tried to say that it is the government who decides not the demonstrators.

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Was James Connolly right to enter the GPO in Easter 1916?

By Kieran Allen

Soon after Connolly's death, the playwright Sean O'Casey wrote a history of the Irish Citizen Army. O'Casey had been secretary of the ICA but he was also deeply cynical of any involvement in the fight for independence. He wrote:

Jim Connolly had stepped from the narrow byway of Irish socialism onto the broad and crowded highway of Irish nationalism... The high creed of Irish nationalism became his daily rosary, while the higher creed of international humanity that had so long bubbled from his eloquent lips was silent forever and Irish labour lost a leader.

This description of Connolly's last years has left behind a myth which right wing forces have used since.

It was more than convenient for priests and Fianna Failers to pretend that Connolly had ceased to be a socialist and had 'returned' to the mainstream of Irish nationalism. That way they could safely pay tribute to his martyrdom while ignoring his Marxist message.

On the other side of the border, the same story could be used to warn of the danger of Irish socialism slipping into Fenianism. One of his biographers, Arthur Morgan, claimed that Connolly had

deserted socialism to join a rebellion that 'had the ring of a militarised state about it'

Sean O'Casey's claim that Connolly had deserted socialism arose from the classical mistake of separating workers economic struggles from the political struggle against Empire. His approach is similar to those who oppose neo-liberalism today but who are distinctly unenthusiastic about the fight against US imperialism because Islamic movements play an important role.

This approach, either then or now, fails to see that imperialism arises out of capitalist competition and that its defeat helps workers everywhere. Connolly's willingness to fight the largest empire of his day is to be commended—but the tragedy was that he fought in conditions of terrible isolation and was forced to do so on republican terms. It is not possible to understand why he entered the GPO without reference to the imperialist war.

A war to defend empire

WW1 broke out on August 4, 1914 and unleashed such an outbreak of savagery that it is rightly known as the first 'total war'. The Second International – the grouping which linked socialist parties together – had long known it was coming and was pledged to resist. In 1912, it warned its affiliates that if it broke out, they 'were to utilise the economic and political crisis created by war to rouse the masses and thereby hasten the

downfall of capitalist rule'

The tragedy was that few socialist parties stuck to this pledge. Reformist currents had grown inside the movement and had already developed ties to 'their' respective states.

Connolly saw these betrayals at first hand when he attended the first Independent Labour Party branch meeting in Belfast after the outbreak of war. There he found that Tom Johnson, the future leader of the Irish Labour Party, favoured a victory for the Allies as being 'better for the growth of liberty and democratic ideals.' The other members voted to suspend all public meetings in Belfast lest they lead to violent opposition.

Connolly had to stage street meetings against the war under the name of a fictitious organisation: the Belfast Section of the Irish Citizen Army. The Irish Worker reported Connolly's candid remark that, 'like all other parties his own was divided in opinion [on the war].. For that reason he made it clear that his opinions were personal and did not bind others who spoke from the platform'.

Despite the utter cowardice of his comrades,



Connolly held on to an internationalist spirit. He wrote, 'To me the socialist of another country is a fellow patriot as the capitalist of my own is a natural enemy.' He reserved his special contempt for those who argued that they had done all they could to prevent war but once it had been declared they had to defend their country.

What then becomes of all our resolutions, all our protests of fraternisation; all our threats of general strikes; all our carefully built machinery of

internationalism; all our hope for the future? Were they all as sound and fury, signifying nothing?

When the German artilleryman, a socialist serving in the German army of invasion, sends a shell into the ranks of the French army, blowing off their heads, tearing out their bowels and mangling the limbs of dozens of socialist comrades in that force, will the fact that he, before leaving for the front, 'demonstrated' against war be of any value to the widows and orphans made by the shell he sent upon its mission of murder?

Revolution: The only answer to war

Connolly did not regard the war as the result of 'mistaken' policies or caused by a particularly evil politicians in London or Berlin. Nor did he think it could be stopped by pleas for moderation.

His greatness was that he believed that only a revolution could stop the war. This is because war arose out of capitalism and was a form of competition by other means. As long as that system existed, there was a danger of war.

We have held and do hold that war is a relic of barbarism only possible because we are governed by a ruling class with barbaric ideas; we have held and do hold that the working class of all countries cannot hope to escape the horrors of war until in all countries the barbarous ruling class is thrown from power.

From the very start, he set out to combat the lies and jingoism of the pro-war media.

To counter the stories about 'poor little Belgium', he quoted from Roger Casement and a host of missionaries to expose the outrages that the Belgium king committed in the Congo. He continually attacked John Redmond and the Home Rule party for acting as recruiting sergeants for an empire that sent millions of young men to their deaths.

Sometimes Connolly got it wrong. His isolation, his anger at the betrayal of the international socialist movement, his desire to prod the republicans into a rising led him to use nationalist arguments on occasions. For example, he called on workers to honour St Patrick, the Irish apostle who was an 'emblem to typify that spiritual conception for which the Irish race laboured in vain'.

Sometimes Connolly also contrasted Britain with the more 'peaceful methods' of the German empire. But although some have tried to exaggerate his 'pro-German' stance, they rather miss the point. Connolly saw his main battle with his own empire and his softness on Germany only helped to sharpen the arguments against the war mongers at home.



Heavy repression followed the Rising

He had no sympathy for the German Kaiser, noting that 'German military bullies, like all tyrannies among civilised people need fear nothing so much as native [German] democracy'.

But for all Connolly's rhetorical weakness on occasion, his greatness lay in the fact that he recognised that the solution to war was summed up in one word: revolution.

'The signal for war' he wrote 'ought to have been the signal of rebellion... when the bugle sounded the first note of actual war, their notes should have been taken as the tocsin for social revolution.'

Claims that he ceased being a socialist are absurd. In June 1915, for example, he wrote about resolutions passed on a labour day rally that

'they did not go far enough. They asked the government to re-build the slums but there was more spent every day on the continent than would re-build Ireland. All governments were doing this and would continue to do this until the workers took over the world into their own hands and ran it for the benefit of those alone who did the world's

work – the workers'

Hindsight fully justifies Connolly's vision. WW1 was ended by, not one, but two revolutions – the Russian Revolution of October 1917 brought that country out of war while the German Revolution in November 1918 brought the horror to a final close.

A Torch to a European Conflagration

Initially, Connolly hoped to start such a revolution with a general strike. He wanted industries throughout the continent to be paralysed and followed by 'the erecting of socialist barricades and acts of rioting by socialist soldiers and sailors, as happened in Russia in 1905'.

It is a tribute to his utter commitment to revolution that he did not fall prey to demoralisation when this strike did not happen. Rather he sought another route – striking a blow in Ireland, by whatever means necessary. In doing so he linked the cause of Irish freedom to the wider international battle against imperialism.

At no point, did he think in narrow nationalist terms. Rather he recognised that Ireland could play a particularly crucial role as it lay closest to the heart of greatest empire of the day. A blow struck there would be a hundred times more effective than elsewhere and would give encouragement to struggles of colonial people all over the world. Ireland was tiny country but it was also like a knife pointed at the heart of empire.

Connolly hoped that a revolution in Ireland would set off a chain reaction:

Starting thus, Ireland may yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord.

These then were Connolly's motives for not only joining the 1916 Rising but becoming its main instigator. He was so appalled by the horror of war and the 'carnival of reaction' that partition would bring that he was determined to strike a blow. However in the absence of a socialist party and in the context of a defeated working class, he could only do that on republican terms. He would have preferred it to be different and even after he sealed his pact with the Irish Republican Brotherhood, he still remonstrated that if labour had not been attacked by so many 'fervent advanced patriots'

it would now be in our power at a word to crumple up and demoralise every offensive of the enemy against the champions of Irish freedom. Had we been able to carry out all our plans, as such an Irish organisation of Labour alone could carry them out, we could at a word have created all the conditions necessary to the striking of a successful blow whenever the military arm of Ireland wished to move.

On the eve of the 1916 rising Connolly struck a note of warning for the Irish Citizen Army. 'In the event of victory, hold onto your rifles, as those with whom we are fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are for economic as well as political liberty.'



Dublin's GPO heavily damaged after the shelling from the British army during the 1916 Rising

The Left and the 1916 Rising

The clearest support for the 1916 rebellion came from the revolutionary left, in particular the Russian revolutionary Lenin, who wrote that, *To imagine that social revolution is conceivable without revolts of small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletariat and semi-proletarian masses against oppression by landowners, the church, and the monarchy, against national oppression, etc - to imagine all this is to repudiate revolution.*

So one army lines up in one place and says 'We are for socialism' and another, somewhere else says 'we are for imperialism' and that will be a social revolution. Only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic view could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a putsch.

Lenin's support for the 1916 rebellion arose from a more general opposition to a narrow, formalistic and sectarian form of politics. The sectarian withholds support from genuine struggles unless these have first embraced the right socialist programme. While sounding tremendously left wing, this attitude, in fact, implies a form of passivity - often before a dominant imperialist ideology.

Lenin's point was that unless revolutionaries sided with people who fought empire - even if they held 'prejudices and reactionary fantasies' they could never hope to shape events and create a space for a distinct socialist message. His support for the 1916 Rising was not conditional on it having a semi-left wing message - the radicalism of the Proclamation being quite limited.

Rather, it was that in a country oppressed

by empire people had every right to win their freedom and socialists should support them in that fight.

However, even if the revolutionary left defends the 1916 rebellion as a blow against imperialism, questions can still be raised about Connolly's specific tactics. With the great advantage of hindsight, it is clear that the way Connolly approached the rebellion made it easier to disguise his distinct socialist message. Despite being the leader of the militant ITGWU he did not campaign among the broader membership—beyond the ICA—for support. Instead he embraced the conspiratorial tactics of the IRB of promoting insurrection by means of behind-the-scenes manoeuvres. More oddly, during the Rising itself he never issued a specific socialist proclamation which indicated publicly that he wanted both 'economic as well as political liberty'.

However, there is a context to all of this. The ITGWU, the industrial union he had placed such importance on, was barely recovering from a tremendous defeat. Most of socialist movement he had spent his life in was torn apart because it would not stand up to imperialism. And the immediate future seemed to offer a long bloody war followed by a reactionary settlement of the Irish question. Given all this, the most admirable thing about James Connolly was that he decided to act.

We can honour his name by building something he never had - a large, determined revolutionary socialist party that is independent from republicanism. Socialists and republicans will certainly fight together sometimes - but only the socialists will take the struggle forward to a contest with the system itself.

Out Now
New Pamphlet from Kieran Allen

JAMES CONNOLLY: REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST



"Today far more opportunities [than in the past] have opened up for socialists—and with that more questions. Principally how do comparatively small numbers of revolutionaries connect with vast numbers who believe that capitalism has become 'extreme' and out of control. In revisiting some of the material I was surprised at just how contemporary Connolly's writing is for those who are striving for 21st century socialism. Above all else Connolly was, as the pamphlet I hope demonstrates, a revolutionary socialist. That singular fact is source of a deep embarrassment for the political elite of the Celtic Tiger. Long may it remain so."

—Kieran Allen

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FRENCH STUDENTS take to the streets and occupy their colleges. The police attack with batons and tear gas. It's no surprise that people ask, is it 1968 all over again?

To answer the question, it's important to be clear what did happen in 1968. Even tolerably well-informed journalists tell us that 1968 in France was the year of "student riots". It's a monstrous distortion of the truth.

Yes, there were massive student demonstrations and occupations in France. But these also occurred in dozens of other countries, including Britain. What was unique about France was the general strike that took place.

It lasted three weeks and involved up to ten million workers—the biggest general strike in history up till then.

Everywhere workers proved the basic truth of Marxism—that the labour of workers produces the goods and services that society needs to survive, and without their labour society cannot function.

All production was paralysed. If the electric lights stayed on, it was only thanks to the power workers, who from time to time cut supplies as a reminder of their power.

Factories were occupied by trade union committees. In some places managers were locked in their offices and not allowed to go to the toilet without permission from the strikers. Workers brought in record players to teach the bosses to sing the Internationale.

In Nantes, western France, the whole town was administered by a trade union committee. It controlled prices to prevent profiteering, and negotiated food supplies with local farmers. The unions controlled petrol supplies and set up road blocks around the town.

It was a stunning demonstration of the power of the working class, and a revelation to the generation that had grown up after 1945.

The much parroted conventional wisdom from tame intellectuals was that capitalism had solved all its problems and that class war was dead. Even many on the left swallowed that line.

A few weeks of action by working people exposed this as a lie. Despite all the attempts to trivialise the memory of 1968, the experience still sends a shiver down the spines of our rulers.

One of the wonderful things about the 1968 events was their unexpectedness. The idea that workers had lost their revolutionary potential, bought off with full employment and consumerism, was widespread. Apathy, we were told, would block any mass struggle.

The Economist, which generally has a perceptive eye for ruling class interests, published a survey of French society in May 1968. It pointed out that French living standards had overtaken those in Britain, and noted that French trade unions were "pathetically weak".

A British socialist visiting Paris in April 1968 was told by French student activists that they were envious of the big demonstrations against the Vietnam war that had taken place in Britain. In March just 30,000 had demonstrated outside the US embassy in London. Within weeks there would be over a million marching on the streets of Paris.

Expansion

The student movement triggered off the events. Discontent had been fermenting in France's universities for some months. There was growing opposition to the US war in Vietnam.

Students had their own grievances closer to home. French president General Charles de Gaulle's regime wanted to modernise France with rapid expansion of higher education, but it wanted to do so on the cheap.

Colleges, libraries and lecture halls were massively overcrowded. Students were subjected to antiquated regulations—male and female students were barred from visiting each others' rooms in student hostels. "Free circulation" became a rallying cry.

The authorities responded by closing down the Sobonne university in Paris. But when police tried to drive students off the streets with batons and



French workers and students united in 1968

A YEAR TO REMEMBER

The revolt in France has revived memories of 1968. Ian Birchall looks at the inspiration of that year

tear gas they stood their ground.

A building worker showed them how to operate a pneumatic drill to dig up the cobbles with which the streets were paved and how to construct barricades. All night long the students resisted.

It was this resistance that made the crucial difference. The demands of the students were pretty unimportant. Probably few French factory workers felt that "more sex for students" was a major question of social justice.

But they did see that the government was forced to retreat—the university was reopened—by the students' courage and determination. Resistance could win—that was the message the students sent to French workers.

The trade union bureaucracies, France had three union federations, tried to defuse the situation by calling a one-day strike and regain their control.

But the enormous demonstration in Paris the following Monday had exactly the opposite effect—raising the self-confidence of millions of workers.

The following day in an aircraft factory in Nantes there was a union meeting.

There were three revolutionaries in the branch, who for years had demanded militant action and been ignored. This time they were listened to. An indefinite occupation of the factory began.

Though it got little press coverage,

this became an inspiration.

Within a week factories and workplaces throughout France were occupied.

Could it happen again today? Short term prediction in politics is foolish, but in many ways the potential for a generalised social struggle is much greater today than it was in 1968.

In 1968 the deep discontents that eventually rose to the surface were largely dispersed and suppressed.

In the last year we have seen first the no vote in the referendum on the European constitution, then last autumn's widespread rioting, and the current opposition to the new proposals on employment law.

In 1968 there was virtually full employment. Now unemployment has been at 10 percent for many years.

Workers and students are well aware that right wing politicians like Sarkozy and Villepin are primarily interested in becoming presidential candidates, not in solving the real problems of French society.

Immigrant workers played an important part in the events of 1968, but they faced serious repression and the danger of deportation.

Now there is a vast wave of anger among youth of North African origin, who face unemployment and police violence. They also see a large section

of the so-called left treating them with contempt, refusing to give respect to the religious practices of their community, especially the right of school students to wear the hijab.

In 1968 most of the French left still saw Russia as the model of what they understood by socialism. Among the small minority who rejected this, many simply replaced Russia with Mao's China. Now large numbers of young people have been inspired by the ideas of the anti-capitalist movement.

Class power

Whatever happens in the next few weeks, the anger will not lessen. Revolt will continue and it will find new forms.

In the end the 1968 movement was defeated, but not because the ruling class was too strong. At the end of May de Gaulle fled Paris to consult with army chiefs in Germany. When he tried to call a referendum he faced the brute reality of class power—no printshop in France would print ballot papers.

What saved the old order was the French Communist Party (PCF), which was on paper committed to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

The PCF had five million voters, and controlled the largest trade union federation, the CGT. It had thousands of committed working class activists.

It was devotedly loyal to Russia, and equally devoted to its own possibilities of parliamentary success.

The PCF was determined that student revolutionaries should not be allowed to have any influence on its working class following. For years sellers of left wing non-Communist papers outside factories had been the victims of PCF violence.

When the student movement erupted it faced vicious opposition from the PCF press. Student revolutionaries were denounced as the children of the rich who wanted to prevent working class students revising for their examinations. Often they were slandered as agents of the right wing.

When the wave of factory occupations spread, the CGT could not stop them. Instead it took control of the movement and did its best to demobilise it from within.

In most cases factories were occupied by trade union activists. Other workers, who should have been mobilised for the struggle, the seven million out of ten million strikers who were not unionised, were sent home to watch the pro-government television.

When de Gaulle called a general election, the PCF supported him and encouraged a return to work. In the elections the right triumphed.

By showing willingness to stick to the rules of the parliamentary game the PCF made it clear that they were reliable election allies for the Socialist Party. Today the PCF have neither the will nor the activists to draw lines between students, workers and youth from the suburbs.

Reformism is still alive and well. The leaders of the Socialist Party and the trade unions will undoubtedly do their best to ensure that a mass movement based on the activity of working people and the oppressed does not emerge.

In the short term they may succeed. In the long term we can win. History does not repeat itself, but the inspiration derived from history can help prepare future victories.

It is not just France's future that is at stake. One of the most tenacious lies propagated by the media is that the events of 1968 are an expression of something uniquely French.

We should remember the words of Robert Escarpit in *Le Monde* just after the end of the strike:

"A Frenchman travelling abroad feels himself treated a bit like a convalescent from a pernicious fever. And how did the rash of barricades break out? What was the temperature at five o'clock in the evening on 29 May?"

"But there is one question that is hardly ever asked, perhaps because they are afraid to hear the answer. But at heart everyone would like to know, hopefully or fearfully, whether the sickness is infectious."

'1968 was a stunning declaration of the power of the working class'

REVIEWS

Beckett: poet of pessimism or a herald of resistance?

The centenary of Samuel Beckett's birth prompts a reassessment of his work from Sinead Kennedy

The work of the Irish playwright and novelist Samuel Beckett has long prompted a profound sense of unease among left wing literary critics, even among those sympathetic to his work.

Beckett is charged with the celebration of nihilism, despair and pessimism. His work is seen to represent the antithesis of any progressive political engagement.

Georg Lukács, the Marxist literary critic and theorist, accused Beckett of portraying "the utmost pathological human degradation". The experimental writer Bertolt Brecht also despised Beckett's artistic vision, at one point planning to write a counterattack to the play *Waiting for Godot*.

Sean O'Casey, the left wing Irish dramatist, wrote of Beckett's work, "there is no hazard of hope, no desire for it, nothing in it but a lust for despair"—and declared that he would have nothing to do with him.

Another left wing writer, Dennis Potter, identified the instincts in Beckett's work with the moral deformities that created the concentration camps and gulags: "Is this the art which is the response to the despair and pity of our age, or is it made of the kind of futility which helped such desecrations of the spirit, such filth of ideologies come into being?"

Essential disquiet

I want to argue that taking such a view is to profoundly misunderstand both Beckett the man and his work.

Yes, his characters are buried in sand, up to their necks in urns, they are disembodied voices and they crawl through the mud in limbo.

But in doing so, they articulate the sorrow, brutality and despair that was the essential disquiet of being human in the 20th century.

The great Beckettian actor Billie Whitelaw said, "There is nothing to understand in Beckett beyond what you see or feel. If you come out of the theatre not having felt anything, you can't understand."

This is where Beckett's incomparable literary power lies. His work articulates a feeling as opposed to an idea, the feeling of thinking and being alive.

That he did it with warmth, profound sadness, fluent silence and shattering, spluttering humour—creating some of the most moving moments that you will ever experience in a theatre—is testimony to his greatness as a writer.

Beckett was transformed as a writer by the Second World War and the Holocaust. He was an active member of the French Resistance, for which he was awarded the Croix de Guerre.

After the liberation of France, he worked in an Irish run hospital at Saint-Lô in Normandy, a town so devastated by Allied bombing during 1944 that it earned the title of "Capital of Ruins". Working there Beckett experienced human suffering and despair in all its violence and actuality. It can be no biographical coincidence that he found his voice as a writer after the war.

In *Waiting for Godot* (1952), Beckett's most famous play, Vladimir and Estragon, two tramp-like old men, attempt to pass the time while they wait for the arrival of Godot, a mysterious figure who never turns up.

The play deliberately confounds the conventional expectations of an audience, whose first response is often sim-



Samuel Beckett photographed in 1984 by his friend John Minihan. An exhibition of Minihan's photographs is on show until the end of April at the National Photographic Archive, Meeting House Square Temple Bar, Dublin 2. Admission is free.

ilar to that of the characters themselves—"Nothing happens, nobody comes, nobody goes, it's awful!"

In the course of the play, the characters experience boredom, violence, friendship, profound longing and crushing uncertainty. They are unable to remember the previous day's events and they are unsure whether they should leave or remain waiting. As they wait, they contemplate suicide, but so powerless are they that they are unable to even terminate their own existence.

In *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett articulates the modern human condition—humans are divided from themselves as they endure the random cruelty of existence, which they are unable to understand, yet are condemned to live.

Within this world, human thought is both our companion and our tormentor. Considering that Beckett wrote *Godot* in the aftermath of the Holocaust, when human beings inflicted unimaginable cruelty on one another, the stoicism of the characters stands as a testimony to the ability of human

beings to endure:

VLADIMIR: We have to come back tomorrow.

ESTRAGON: What for?

VLADIMIR: To wait for Godot.

Beckett's plays may appear to create austere, remote, painterly environments, but they are all based on very concrete situations. *Endgame* (1957), for instance, invites the audience to consider the question of human morality, through a master/slave narrative.

Hamm, a man blind and unable to walk, is attended by Clov. Clov's sole function is to fulfil Hamm's every desire, while Hamm is tormented by the notion of human responsibility.

He is a character who finds cruelty easier to dispense than mercy. He works his way through the play trying to tell the story of how he was asked to save a child from starvation.

Unsurprisingly for a post-Holocaust writer, death stalks Beckett's work. For him, death represents an end to an emotional dialogue with oneself.

In *Catastrophe* (1982), written in response to the persecution of the Czech writer Václav Havel, the play's protagonist appears on stage in grey pyjamas with a whitened face. It is impossible not to recall the image of concentration camp inmate, while the reference to Havel indicts the entire system of Stalinism.

Beckett's work is metaphorical in both form and content. It is resistant, indeed hostile, to any form of literalism, including political literalism, and opposes any crude demand for optimism.

But to resist attaching the label of "political artist" to Beckett is not to say he was not shaped by the political reali-

ties of his time.

When asked during the Spanish Civil War to contribute to a set of statements on the conflict by writers, Beckett's reply was typically laconic—it came on a card on which was simply printed "UPTHEREPUBLIC".

This was an unambiguous declaration of support—and a playful joke on himself as an Irish Protestant.

Beckett told his biographer James Knowlson how difficult it was for him that the aesthetic forms that he worked in did not allow him to respond more directly to politics.

Politics of the body

But he was never politically ambiguous. He refused to allow his work to be performed in apartheid South Africa. He gave money to Amnesty International and Index on Censorship, and gave all the Polish royalties from his work to his Polish translator, who used it to fund underground publications and helped imprisoned writers.

In many ways, Beckett is a deeply political writer, but his politics are that of the body. In all his writings the body is broken, disembodied, imprisoned, isolated, absent.

Yet his characters continue to speak, defying the silence that surrounds them. In Beckett, even the dead have voices.

Beckett may have been described as a European existentialist who created hymns to "nothingness". What he was was an Irish pagan who celebrated the human spirit of endurance and resistance.

Sinead Kennedy teaches at Dublin City University

WHAT'S ON

Centenary Shadows: Photographs of Samuel Beckett by John Minihan

National Photographic Archive, Meeting House Square Temple Bar, Dublin 2

Until end of April
Admission Free

An exhibition of photographs of Beckett taken by his friend, the Irish photographer John Minihan. Minihan and Beckett were friends, and John photographed him on several occasions in the 1980's.

Minihan's portraits of Beckett are world famous. The photographs are particularly interesting as the writer was a reluctant subject.

The portraits on show will include the well-known portrait of Beckett in Café Francais, Paris in December 1985.

Also featuring in the exhibition are images recorded by Minihan during various productions of Beckett's plays such as *Beckett directing Waiting for Godot*, performed at the Riverside Studios in London in 1984.

Documentary & Drama on RTÉ Television

Throughout April and May
RTÉ Television

RTÉ is showing a variety of programmes, both newly commissioned and from our archives.

From Jack MacGowran's 1966 performance in *Beginning to End* to the 'Beckett on Film' series in 2001, plays and poetry, with contributions from Billie Whitelaw, Jack MacGowran, and Patrick Magee.
www.rte.ie/beckett

A Samuel Beckett Audio Visual Library

Heraldic Museum, National Library of Ireland, 2 Kildare Street, Dublin 2
Until the end of April
Admission free

A selection of recordings including historic performances from Ireland, the UK, France, and the USA will be available on twelve individual viewing and listening stations.

Alongside historic television and radio recordings from the RTÉ Archives, the Library will feature... Krapp's Last Tape, with Jack MacGowran as Krapp under Alan Schneider's direction (1970); Beckett's own screenplay, *Film* featuring Buster Keaton (1964); *Rockaby* and *The Making of Rockaby* with Beckett and Billie Whitelaw; *Dis Joe* [Eh Joe] directed by Michel Mitrani (1968); and many other recordings.



A scene from the film *Happy Days*

Protest/Reports/Struggle

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WATERFORD

Campaigners win first round in planning battle

By Roy Hassey

A campaign to prevent the construction of a shopping centre, which would rip the heart out of an historical area in Waterford's city centre, has achieved its first success in the refusal of planning permission for the development.

KRM Construction Partnership proposed demolishing an entire street in the city centre to make way for 'The Brewery Shopping Centre', a development which would include 20,000 square metres of shopping space, 800 car parking spaces, a 110 bedroom hotel, a sports bar with bowling alley and 29 apartments.

The development would have been entirely out of scale with anything else in the city centre and would create huge traffic problems in the John Street and Castle Street areas.

The proposal also encompassed demolishing several houses that have existed for generations, and building on one of the few open spaces in the city centre, Wyse Park.

The refusal of planning permission followed the formation of the Alliance for Sustainable Inner City

Development at a public meeting of 60 people in Waterford.

The Alliance immediately organised a campaign to inform local residents of KRM's plans and organised systematic objections to the city council.

The Alliance also formulated an alternative vision where the property could be used as a dividend for the local residents with community centres, social housing, medical centres etc; and the architecture and unique features of the area would be protected and developed for their tourist value.

Many families have lived on New Street for decades and do not wish to be forced out by property developers. Wyse Park was also gifted to Waterford City by the Quaker Community at the start of the last century on the proviso that it would always be used as a public space.

Despite the initial refusal of planning permission, it is expected that KRM will re-apply and Waterford City Council is planning to facilitate their application by re-zoning New Street and Wyse Park for commercial use.

OBITUARY

Tribute to John De Courcy Ireland

John De Courcy Ireland



N.I. PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKE

Pensions struggle set to continue

Around 50,000 public sector workers took part in the official one-day strike across Northern Ireland on 28th March in a protest against changes to pension plans, part of the 1.5 million workers right across the UK in the largest strike action seen since 1979's winter of discontent.

Belfast was brought to a standstill as transport was cancelled, schools closed and picket lines set up around various public sector offices.

A lively and spirited rally at Transport House heard how the government had introduced new measures to allow the ultra rich to shift money into pension schemes to minimise tax while attacking pension rights of those on the lowest wages.

Mick O Reilly from the TGWU caught the mood of those on strike when he argued that there could be no backing down in the face of the attacks.

The government is doing two things. Firstly it is arguing that there is a pensions crisis and that it will not be able to afford to pay pensions in the future, - therefore people have to work five years longer to get a pension.

Secondly it is going on the offensive against public sector pensions arguing that they are too generous.

But there is no crisis, actually all the projections suggest that treasury can easily afford pensions with the projected costs rising marginally over the next fifty years. The bigger problem is pensioner poverty.

That is the real crisis, with nearly two million pensioners not receiving their just entitlements. The link between pensions and average earning needs to be restored. This measure alone would give pensioners over £30 a week more to live on.

Secondly the idea that public sector workers are doing well out of their pension entitlements is nonsense, if anything all pensions public and private sector have to be raised.

After the successful day of action which included rallies in Belfast and Derry, the unions involved in the struggle against Gordon Brown's attacks on pensions (NIPSA, SIPTU, Unison, ATGWU, TSSA, TGWU and Amicus) have announced Wednesday April 26th as the next day of action for Northern Ireland.

By Richard Boyd Barrett

Aged 94, maritime historian, anti-war activist and Socialist Workers Party member John De Courcy Ireland died on April 4th after a long illness.

John De Courcy Ireland's death is great personal loss for his family but also a great loss for the many important causes he championed throughout his life. John was an incredibly inspiring and energetic anti-war activist, advocate on maritime issues and campaigner for social justice throughout his life. He remained hugely active right up until illness made it impossible to continue.

John was a founding member of CND in Ireland and a lifelong campaigner against war and nuclear weapons. In recent years, despite his age and frailty, John spoke on numerous platforms for the Irish Anti-War Movement, speaking out against the US led wars in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq. John was particularly overjoyed at the huge outpouring of anti-war sentiment and protest against the Iraq war in 2003 though he was horrified by the war itself and Ireland's involvement in it as a result of the use of Shannon by US troops.

A measure of John's commitment to the anti-war cause was that even aged over ninety he would walk on foot to the DART in Dalkey and travel into the city centre to participate and speak at anti-war protests before returning home in the same way. I remember after one march, on a particularly cold and miserable day, having to put immense pressure on him to

accept the taxi fare to get home, before he finally and reluctantly accepted.

John spoke at the launch meeting of the Save Our Seafront (SOS) group in Dun Laoghaire, which was established, to campaign against privatised development of Dun Laoghaire Baths, the Carlisle Pier, Dun Laoghaire Harbour and other seafront sites. He spoke at dozens of meetings and protests calling for the restoration of the baths as a public amenity. He also campaigned with SOS against plans to build private apartments on the Carlisle Pier in Dun Laoghaire harbour calling instead for the Maritime Institute, museum and other harbour related amenities to be located there.

John's spent many years at sea and believed passionately that the sea and the seafront belonged to everyone and must never be turned into private or exclusive property. He said regularly when he spoke at SOS public meetings that, "the sea united people and belonged to all."

He raised concerns and protested constantly against the system of "flags of convenience" in maritime and shipping affairs, which he believed had severely damaged Irish merchant shipping and allowed for the exploitation of workers at sea. His concerns were prophetic of the issues at the centre of the Irish Ferries dispute and precursor of many contemporary critiques of corporate globalisation.

John was honoured across the world for his work and writing on maritime affairs, receiving awards for his research in countries as

diverse as Argentina, Yugoslavia and France. His internationalism bespoke itself in his mastery of foreign languages—he was fluent in French, Italian, Chinese, Arabic and Serbo-Croat. John was author of a number of important books on Maritime affairs including, *The History of Dun Laoghaire Harbour*, *The Admiral from Mayo*, *Ireland's Sea Fisheries*, and *Ireland and the Irish in Maritime History*.

The failure of any Irish government to honour John's unparalleled contribution to Irish Maritime affairs is a matter of lasting shame that, it seems, can only be explained by establishment hostility to his unflinching socialism. Even at this late stage the Irish government should finally honour John De Courcy Ireland. This could best be done by re-locating the Irish Maritime Institute and Museum on the Carlisle Pier in Dun Laoghaire Harbour and naming it after its greatest champion. This, of course, would mean abandoning current plans to privatise the pier, something that John campaigned passionately against.

A key inspiration in John's life was the great trade unionist, James Larkin who he befriended as a young man. John was inspired throughout his life by Larkin's commitment to social justice and the socialist movement. Like Larkin, John's commitment to the ideas of socialism never wavered. John was involved with many organisations on the left throughout his life. At various times he was a member of the Communist Party, Labour Party, Sinn Fein, the Workers Party, Democratic

Socialist Party and Democratic Left. He boasted he was probably the only person to be expelled from the Labour Party and Sinn Fein, both in the North and South. Unlike so many of the current leaders of the Labour Party however, John's journey through the left was not motivated by opportunism or a movement to the right but by principle and a refusal to betray the core values of socialism.

John, joined the Socialist Workers Party in 1998, particularly because of its central involvement in the anti-war movement and became an active member of the Dun Laoghaire branch. He marvelled at the SWP's annual Marxism event, commenting how much he wished such a festival of socialist ideas had existed in his younger days as an activist.

John was also one the most passionate and eloquent public speakers the left in this country ever produced. He could speak at a moments notice and without the assistance of notes on an immensely wide variety of subjects, historical, political and maritime. He never failed to inspire and move his audience.

Besides his tremendous activism, intellect and political commitment, John was one of the kindest and most gentle human beings. All who knew John and campaigned with him in Dun Laoghaire, in the anti-war movement and in so many other campaigns of which he was a part, will sorely miss him.

On behalf of the Socialist Workers Party I want to pass on our deepest sympathy to John's family and friends.

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ENVIRONMENT

New alliance to protect Dublin Bay

A new alliance of community, environmental and campaign groups based around the greater Dublin Bay region was established at a recent conference in Dun Laoghaire

Over eighty people and 15 different organisations attended the all-day conference hosted by the Save Our Seafront group that campaigned successfully last year against plans to put an 8 storey apartment and shopping complex on the site of Dun Laoghaire baths.

The conference was addressed by a wide range of resident and community.

The alliance will promote co-operation and mutual support for local campaigns around the bay. It will oppose the sale or hand-over of seafront to private developers through public private partnership (PPP) or any other mechanism.

Richard Boyd Barrett

of Save Our Seafront and one of the conference organisers said:

"This new alliance is a very exciting and important development. Over the last few years we have seen a huge growth of resistance by communities across the bay against unsuitable, unwanted, privatised and environmentally damaging development.

"But most of the time we find ourselves on the defensive and fighting these developments on a piece-meal basis. This alliance will allow us to support one another in our individual battles but also to campaign for the protection and development of the bay as a public and environmental amenity that is accessible to all. We want the seafront to be viewed as a precious amenity not an opportunity to make profit."

For more info: Richard Boyd Barrett 087-6329511

FINGAL

Stop this landfill site

An 8 million tonne landfill site has been proposed by Fingal County Council to cater for the waste of the greater Dublin Region.

It is expected the landfill facility of 120 to 150 acres at Tooman/Nevitt will operate over a 15-20 year period. The Nevitt Landfill Action Group has been set up to resist the council's plans.

The Nevitt Landfill Action Group is concerned that the Balbriggan drinking water supply will be affected due to the flow direction of aquifers under the proposed landfill site.

The council moved the landfill to the south of the area being objected to in recognition of this danger.

They said it was to avoid a water zone of contribution to the Bog of the Ring reservoir. But the Action Group is arguing that the landfill still poses a danger.

There is sufficient water contained within the Nevitt site to sustain the production of a water bottling plant. Because of the campaign group's research, principally of underground aquifers, the council has been forced to cut the current landfill surface area by 30 per cent.

The campaign also succeeded in altering the landfill boundary, due to the discovery of a significant archaeological find at the south east of the site, possible an early Christian ecclesiastical settlement.

A whopping €3 million has been paid to consultants by Fingal County Council in relation to the landfill site selection process, according to figures released by the local

authority recently. The council will spend €50 million to build the dump.

The dump will be run on a for-profit basis under a Public Private Partnership.

A public meeting is being held in Balbriggan entitled: 'Waste and Incineration; are we being dumped on?'

The meeting will have speakers from local campaigns where people can get detailed information on the issue with regard to campaigns in three different locations.

The speakers will include Declan White from the Nevitt Dump Action Group, Aine Walshe from the Duleek Anti-incinerator Group and Paul Mulville from the Donabate Anti-Sewage group.

The meeting will be held in the Combined Clubs and Community Centre in Balbriggan on the 19th of April at 8pm.

A follow up meeting will also be held in Swords on 25th April at 7pm in the Pensioners Club.

ARTANE

Stardust Campaign keeps up the pickets



Picketing the Butterly-owned Maxol station has led to an almost total boycott

The Stardust campaign is gathering momentum. It has been picketing the Silver Swan pub in Artane since 14th February when an attempt to open it on the 25th anniversary of the disaster.

The Silver Swan is owned by the Butterly family – the original owners of the Stardust and bizarrely, the Silver Swan was the name of the original pub located beside the Stardust night club.

Nightly pickets have also been staged on a nearby Maxol station which is also owned by the Butterly family and this has led to an almost total boycott. Management have responded by asking customers to sign a statement saying that "they felt obstructed in getting in to the filling station".

The Gardaí have asked Stardust campaigners, Antoinette Keegan and Jimmy Dunne, to come the local Garda station to talk to them about the picket, claiming that they had been watching the picket and had seen people standing still at the entrance. The families found this most upsetting because while they

were questioned about a picket, Eamon Butterly never seems to have been questioned about the fire.

In response to the protests, Patrick Butterly and Sons have tried to transfer the licence for the Silver Swan to Jason Gamble. The campaign succeeded in preventing the interim transfer of names of Patrick Butterly and Sons Ltd to Jason Gamble, for nearly a month and this delay halted the opening of the pub. However on the 29th of March the interim transfer of names was granted by Judge Collins.

She stated that under the law, in the case of an interim transfer of names, she could only consider, objections made by the Gardaí. The Gardaí, however, had no objections to make.

However Judge Collins also stated that when the licence came up for renewal in September that Eamon Butterly would have to appear in court to listen to the objections of the families.

While all the activity has been going on around the pub, Patrick Butterly and Sons Ltd were planning

a major development in the area. This development would have led to massive profits and prevented a memorial being erected to the 48 young people who lost their lives. In an extremely insensitive move, the Butterly's planned to build a car park for a private medical centre on the site of the Stardust. Unbelievably, it was planned to put 48 car parking spaces in the car park.

The campaign lodged objections with Dublin City council to the proposed development and Dublin city council saw fit to reject the plans on the grounds that the address on the application was wrong.

This is a major set back for the company and a victory for people power.

You can Support the picket @ The Silver Swan (opposite Artane castle) Join the picket when you can, and stay for what ever length of time you can. Monday to Friday 6 – 8pm Saturday 2pm to 6pm Sunday 2pm to 6:00pm This picket is subject to change if the pub actually manages to unlock its doors.

TRALEE

Residents oppose unfair parking charges

By Kieran McNulty

Residents of St. John's Park, Tralee are campaigning to halt the imposition of a charge by the UDC for parking their cars outside their homes.

The charge will be initially €6 per annum but residents fear it may be the thin end of the wedge and could be greatly increased in years to come as a way of balancing the council budget.

In recent years the UDC has increased bin charges for the same reason including financing the Jenny Johnson project.

The residents are also angered by the fact that if the charge is implemented they will no longer have a guaranteed parking space outside their homes as the council will be installing parking meters.

Independent Cllr. Tommy Foley is a local resident and was one of only two councillors on the twelve member UDC to vote against the motion to impose parking charges.

The other councillor who opposed the motion was Karen Tobin, a member of the Labour Party.

Of those in favour of the motion, two were members of the Labour Party, two were members of Sinn Fein, one was an independent (ex-Labour Party) and the other five were Fianna Fail and Fine Gael.

The imposition of this unjust charge is clearly a class issue which all those who claim to be on the left should automatically oppose without question.

In the past the residents of St. John's Park successfully campaigned against the imposition of parking charges and are hopeful that their current campaign will also reverse the councils decision.

The residents will be meeting within the next fortnight to plan the next stage of their campaign.

For further information you can contact

GALWAY ALLIANCE AGAINST WAR

Black shamrock for George W Bush

By Dette Mclouglin

The Galway Alliance Against War (GAAW) has sent the US President one of the anti-war black

shamrock badges. In an accompanying letter the Galway peace group wrote: 'Please find enclosed a black shamrock, which the peace movement in

Ireland has produced to commemorate the 100,000 + dead caused by an illegal and unjust war waged by you on the people of Iraq... 'We would like to remind you that the

majority of the people of Ireland are opposed to your bloody war for oil and oppose the use of Shannon airport by you and your army.' We haven't received a thank-you letter- yet.

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

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.....
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Socialist Worker

A message from the French strike movement



'WE HAVE WON AND SO CAN YOU'

By Nick Barrett

After two and a half months of struggle the mass movement of students, high school students and workers has forced the French government to abandon its youth employment scheme (CPE).

The scheme would have allowed employers to sack young people in the first two years of their employment. It was supposed to give employers more 'flexibility' and make them more 'competitive'.

But the protestors said it treated them like the 'Kleenex generation' – to be used and thrown away when the employers wanted.

French prime minister Dominique de Villepin announced the withdrawal of the scheme in what is a crushing defeat for the right. The student organisations and the unions are the winners.

Despite the government's attempts to divide and repress the mobilisation on the streets, the movement went from strength to strength.

Danièle Obono, a student activist at the Sorbonne university in Paris, told Socialist Worker, "We've shown that when we struggle hard, when we're united and radical, it is worth it because

we can win.

"Our biggest achievement so far is to have shown, not just to workers in France but across Europe, that mobilising can have a massive impact and can create a political crisis for neo-liberalism.

"This is the first mass movement that has achieved a victory in France for a long time. Now we have to fight other battles."

The mobilisations widened the split between France's two main right wing politicians—Villepin and Nicolas Sarkozy—rivals for next year's presidential elections, with Sarkozy trying to put himself across as the politician ready to compromise.

Even former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing—architect of the liberal European constitution project defeated in last year's referendum—called for the withdrawal of the scheme.

The bosses, faced with the student pickets of railways and roads and worried about the danger of the development of a mass strike movement among workers, pushed president Jacques Chirac and Villepin to back down.

A national student coordinating committee led the movement. It was built on a system of delegates elected

university by university, school by school. It met every weekend to decide on the way to build the movement and carry it forward.

The CPE was a direct attack on workers' basic rights. This meant the unions opposed it from the start.

Being able to sack someone without legal justification during a two year period was also a direct threat to the future trade union bases in the workplace. The government and Villepin's refusal to negotiate meant that only the withdrawal of the CPE was acceptable.

The withdrawal of the CPE follows the referendum victory against the European constitution last year and has left the government groggy. For the next few months it is on thin ice, the slightest neo-liberal counter reform could spark off a reaction in one sector or another.

WE DEFEATED THEM ON THE STREETS

Basile Pot, a signals worker at the Gare de L'Est in Paris, spoke to Christophe Chataigné about the impact of the movement's victory against the CPE

"We have to understand the victory against the CPE not as the end, but as

the beginning. It opens a door that was shut since the defeat of the movement against pension reforms in 2003.

Now we're getting our heads out of the water. It started with the victory of the no vote on the European constitution, which was also presented to us as something that couldn't be avoided, that it was the way globalisation works and that no one could change that.

But the no vote showed that we could beat the powerful with the ballot box.

Now with the CPE we've shown that we can also defeat them in the streets.

When you look around the world, you can see that the same reforms are pushed everywhere. Germany is thinking about introducing a law similar to the CPE and you have the pension reforms in Britain and in Mexico.

I think that our victory will trouble the European ruling class.

The French ruling class was already worried after the no vote and is now even more worried with the CPE defeat.

But the victory over the CPE isn't the end of neo-liberal reforms. What it has shown is that we can win when we have a significant movement—in the case of France, a movement that has united workers and students in a man-

ner never seen before.

From this point of view, we're not in May 1968 any more. The simple fact is that the majority of students also work while at university, so it makes the link with workers much easier.

The French government is now paralysed until the next presidential elections. I can't really see how it would have the guts to push through new job reforms or even privatisation schemes. The government now realises that people can react.

It is true that it took an enormous mobilisation—eight weeks of strikes in universities, general assemblies involving thousands of students, two general strikes as well as the first demonstrations against the CNE in October last year—just to get rid of the CPE.

But the degree of confrontation is so high that we needed this kind of response. It also means that we are now in a better situation to respond to other neo-liberal reforms.'

More coverage and analysis on page 5