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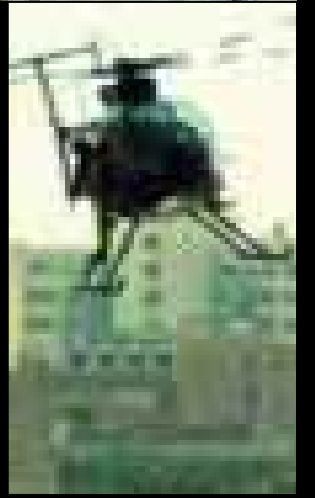
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# IRAQ: THE PRIVATE ARMIES WHO PROFIT FROM BLOOD



The pictures on this page show Blackwater USA American mercenaries on active service in Iraq

Photos: www.iraqfact.com/zPic\_blackwater.html

Just after the respected medical journal, the Lancet, estimated that 650,000 Iraqis had lost their lives since the US and British occupation, new revelations appeared about those who profit from their deaths.

The British NGO, War on Want, has compiled a special report on the 'corporate warriors' who are making a fortune from the war on Iraq.

Thousands of foreign mercenaries are being employed in the first major neo-liberal war of the twenty first century.

There are now 48,000 private soldiers in Iraq and the companies who employ them have received an income of €100 billion since 2004.

According to one US official. 'Each private firm amounts to an individual battalion. Now they are coming together to build the largest security organization in the world'.

The foreign mercenaries are involved in notorious human rights abuses. Two of the Private Military and Security Companies, for example, were involved in torture activities in Abu Ghraib. They were Titan and California Analysis Center Incorporated.

According to Amnesty International, the mercenaries have drawn a prosecution free zone around themselves. Not one single mercenary has faced the court for any of the actions they took in Iraq.

One of the first orders of the first US governor of Iraq, Paul Bremer was to make Private Military and Security Company employees immune from prosecution.

The result is what Amnesty

International calls 'virtually rules free zones sanctioned by American flag and firepower'.

The corporations involved in this sickening profiteering include:

### ■ Blackwater (USA)

Its President Gary Jackson boasts that he is creating 'the largest, most professional private army in the world'.

It has won the contract to train the new Iraqi army and prior to that provided security and helicopters for the Coalition Provisional Authority. Its contract to protect US Ambassador John Negroponte and the CPA supreme Paul Bremmer amounted to €21 million. Blackwater is also involved in the war in Afghanistan.

### ■ DynCorp International (USA)

This mercenary firm employs 25,000 people and has a €50 million contract to train a new Iraqi police

force.

DynCorp first came to fame when it was used in the former Yugoslavia as a back-up to the military. Some of its personnel were implicated in running prostitution rings involving girls as young as twelve and filming the rape of two women. Those involved lost their jobs—but no prosecutions followed.

### ■ Vinnell Corporation (USA)

This mercenary army started out with 5,000 employees during the Vietnam war and then moved on to guarding Saudi oilfields.

It is now a subsidiary of the arms manufacturer Northrup Grumman and has won a \$48 million contract in Iraq.

### ■ Aegis Defence Services (Britain)

This outfit is run by the notorious Tim

Spicer who broke a UN arms embargo to run guns into Sierre Leone to overthrow a government. His aim was to hand control of the country's diamond mines to a Canadian businessman.

Despite this activity, the US government had no problem awarding him a €293m contract in Iraq. His job is to co-ordinate other fifty private mercenary armies that leech off that unfortunate country.

### ■ ArmourGroup (Britain)

This mercenary company has the audacity to list itself on the London Stock Exchange and has a turnover of £233.2 million a year. It runs the police mentoring programme in Basra for the British government.

Iraq was once one of the wealthiest countries in the Middle East but today its population suffer grinding poverty and terror unleashed by sectarian gangs that have shadowy links to US intelligence and the private mercenary armies.

But profiting off this misery are a host of corrupt individuals and corporations. Over €1.2 billion of public funds that was supposed to alleviate suffering has gone missing in what an Iraqi parliamentary inquiry called 'one of the biggest thefts in history'.

Sitting on top of this disgusting mire of blood and filth are the private mercenaries whose directors wear suits and rub shoulders with the US and British political elite.

They should all be thrown out and Iraq be allowed to become a free country.



# Should Sinn Fein support the PSNI?

The centrepiece of the St Andrews Agreement is that Sinn Fein will sign up to policing. The party's position had been flagged well in advance.

There are three arguments, which underpin Sinn Fein acceptance of policing. The first counters the notion that policing should be opposed because it is connected to British rule. Sinn Fein argues that if the Police Force is fully devolved and under the control of the Northern Irish assembly then it will no longer be a British Police Force but rather a Northern Irish Police Service.

The second argument is about the question of what kind of policing is on offer. Sinn Fein argue that they could not accept a 'Police Force' but will accept a 'Police Service' akin to that in South Africa.

Finally Sinn Fein argue that there is a need for policing in Nationalist areas because of an upsurge of general lawlessness with the winding back of the IRA.

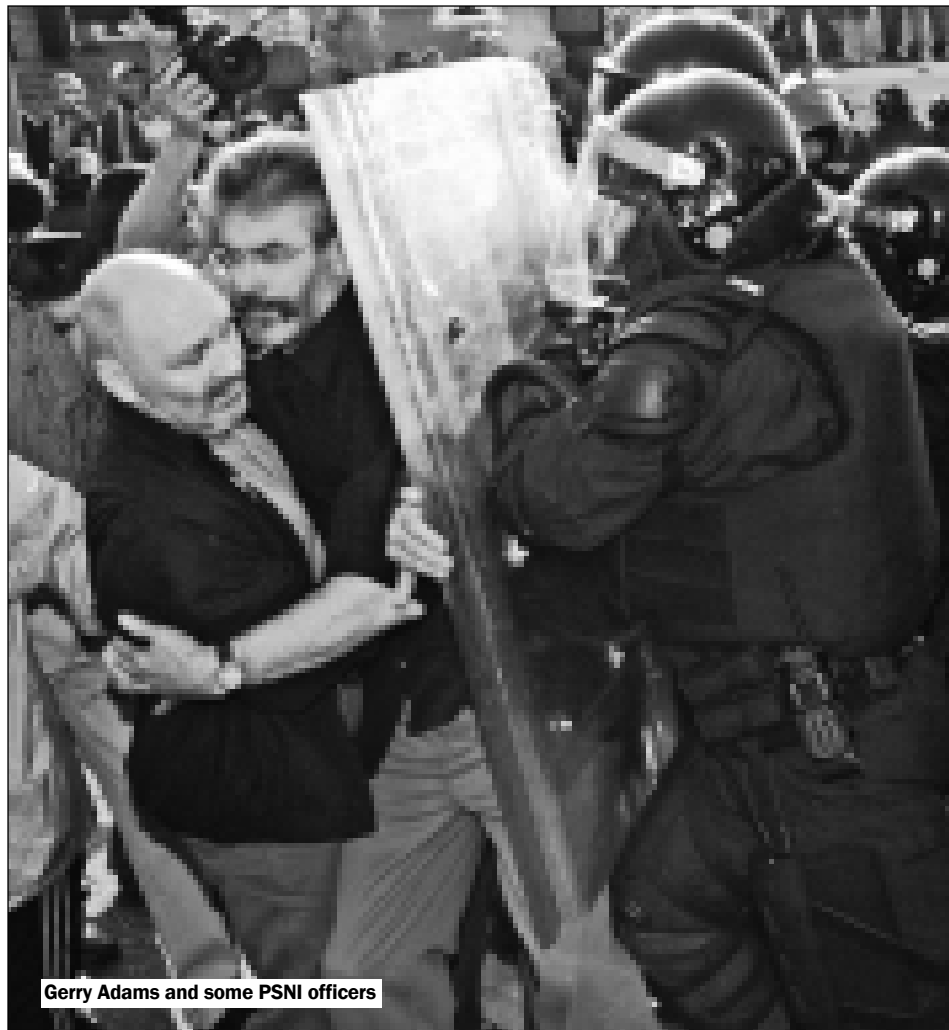
The noticeable thing about the conduct of the debate is that there is no discussion on why policing exists in the first place, other than the connection of the RUC/PSNI to the British state.

## Police as an arm of the state

Regardless of the anomalies of the Northern Irish situation, the police exist to protect the wealth and property of the rich. Under capitalism the police can only function in this way, so there can be no suggestion that a reformed police service will suddenly operate in a different way than that which it is compelled to do.

The Gardai in the Republic, for example, are presently deployed to ensure that Shell asserts its will over the people of North Mayo. No one can seriously suggest that a 'police service' in Northern Ireland would behave any different in a comparable situation.

This social role means that the police



Gerry Adams and some PSNI officers

exhibit higher levels of racism, sexism and homophobia and underlying antagonisms to strikers than found in the general population.

An unwritten policy of separation whereby the police generally mix with other police officers promotes a "canteen culture" which ensures support for fellow officers regardless of their behaviour.

It is therefore not credible to suggest that the Northern Irish Police Force, the

PSNI, will be a gentler cuddlier operation than any other police force around the globe.

The idea that a devolved "Police Service" will operate outside the realms of the British State also seems far-fetched. The PSNI, for example, will be linked to the MI5 in the 'war against terrorism' and no amount of republican involvement will bring adjustment on this central priority.

The notion of the devolved force being

"a civic police service" is also absurd. The South African Police Service has been used to break strikes and anti-privatisation demonstrations. The fact that black officers, supported by an ANC government, beat people off the roads in townships hardly justifies support for this force.

Finally, the idea that crime is so bad in nationalist areas that it is necessary for Sinn Fein to join the police is also wrong.

Contrary to the law and order hype, there has been no massive increase in the crime figures. Moreover repressive measures like ASBO's or more police do not solve the problem. The success rate of the police in terms of dealing with community crimes, for example, is extremely low - at less than 20 per cent on average.

Crime is therefore more likely to be reduced by alleviating poverty and developing community services. Instead of closing schools, leisure centres and youth facilities these could be expanded. The government should be told to produce schemes to employ young people in developing their skills in areas of high levels of social deprivation.

This will not solve all problems - but it will do more than the hypocritical rhetoric of law and order.

The task of genuine socialists is to monitor the police - to hold up their record to the scrutiny of civil liberties and to stand up for people whom they victimise. Genuine socialists do not take responsibility for the actions of the police - and certainly do not encourage their supporters to join them.

The real reason why the establishment wants Sinn Fein to join the PSNI may have been let out of the bag with the recent interview of a Catholic PSNI officer

"Sinn Féin will be invaluable to the PSNI because it has so much information on republicans. No-one should be surprised that it will pass that on. Historically, former republicans have proved themselves more than capable of hunting down old comrades. Just look at de Valera."

## People Before Profit Alliance Conference

The People Before Profit Alliance/ Davitt League is organising a conference aimed at bringing together individuals, groups, political organisations, campaigns, and unions who want to create an Ireland and a world based on what people need rather than the needs of corporations.

The conference will discuss issues such as war, globalisation, privatisation of public services and the creation of alternatives.

The People Before Profit Alliance was established in October 2005 and its aim is to reverse neo-liberal policies, which place wealth creation for the few over the welfare of communities in Ireland. The Alliance represents a different form of politics.

It sees 'people power' and the mobilisation of citizens in workplaces, communities and on the streets as the key to bringing change in society. PBPA is standing candidates in the general election.

We believe a radical alternative to the establishment political parties is necessary; one that represents working people and all those currently alienated by the consensus politics that prioritises the needs of corporations, developers, and the wealthy elite over the needs of workers, local communities and ordinary people.

Friday November 24th/Saturday November 25th Central Dublin

Details Phone 086-1523542

Friday Nov. 24th: 6pm

### Education & Privatisation for Profit - the dangers for public education

Prof. Kathleen Lynch (UCD), Niall Smyth (Campaign for Commercial Free Education), Dr. David Carey, Froebel College, Blackrock, Coordinator of Special Education and Programme Development at the Froebel College of Education

### War, globalisation and Ireland

7.30pm  
Dr Abdullah Sayed (Irish-

Lebanese Community), Richard Boyd Barrett (Chair, Irish Anti War Movement & PBPA Candidate Dun Laoghaire), Ailbhe Smyth (UCD), Eamonn McCann (Journalist & Raytheon 9)

### Saturday November 25th: Privatisation & neoliberalism: the future for our public services?

10.30am  
Catherine Murphy (Indp TD), Catherine Connolly (Cllr. Galway), Kieran Allen (UCD)

### People power and strategies of resistance

12pm  
Vincent Mcgrath (Rosspoint 5), Frances Corr (Combined Residents Against Incineration), Rory Hearn (People Before Profit Alliance)

### People before profit: time for a new left alternative

2.30pm  
Joan Collins (Indp Cllr), Carmel Mckenna (People Before Profit Alliance Candidate Wicklow), Richard Boyd Barrett, Catherine Connolly

## DAYSCHOOL on POLITICAL ISLAM

2pm to 6.30 Saturday Nov 18th  
McClelland Room Central Hotel  
Exchequer St. Dublin 2

Tickets €2 unwaged €5 waged

### 2.00-3.15 Marxism, Islam and the Enlightenment

Introduced by: **Neil Davidson**

### 3.30-4.45 Hezbollah, Hamas and anti-imperialism

Introduced by **Barbara Muldoon**

### 5.00-6.15 The left and Islam

Introduced by **Marnie Holborow**

### 6.15 Summary Melisa Halpin

In the "war on terror", Islamophobia has become the new racism. Muslims in the west are branded as terrorists and targeted by states as the enemy within. The film director Oliver Stone claimed that the world faces a twin extremism, the neo-cons and Islamic fundamentalists. Many on the left see islamism as being as dangerous as Bush.

What attitude do socialists have to religion? Is Islam particularly conservative and "unenlightened"? Why does resistance to US imperialism often go under the banner of Islam? Why does the left sometimes side with those attacking muslims?

This socialist day school aims to address some of these issues. The Scottish Marxist, Neil Davidson, who has written recent articles on Islam and the West, will be introducing a session on Marxism and religion as it relates to Islam today. There will be plenty of opportunity to participate and ask questions.

### Organised by Socialist Workers Party

See [www.swp.ie](http://www.swp.ie) for more details and suggested articles to read on the subject.  
More information from 087 9889244

# From Niger Delta to North Mayo: STANDING UP TO SHELL

Since October 3rd when work restarted on the proposed refinery for the Corrib Gas project at Bellinaboy, local people and supporters have protested every working day to register their objection to the building of the gas refinery.

The protests have been peaceful but determined. Protesters have been greeted on dark mornings by a sea of luminous police jackets. Up to 200 police at any time are located in the Belmullet area to protect the interests of Shell Oil.

Protesters have been fantastic in their determination and commitment. They have put up with abuse and aggression from the police and from some of the local scab employers who are profiting from the Shell project in Erris.

One of the leading members of the campaign Maura Harrington, was violently pushed to the ground and suffered head injuries as a result. Maura was then subjected to press vilification and criticism. The police denied they pushed her despite the factual recording of the event by RTE camera crew. Maura still suffers from the physical repercussions of that incident.

Numerous people have been arrested although no one has been charged. In one day three young fishermen were arrested and held in Belmullet Garda Station. When the father of one of them arrived to enquire about his son, he was also arrested. It was no coincidence that the night before the Erris Inshore Fishermen Association voted unanimously to back the Shell to Sea Campaign in Bellinaboy.

Patrick and Martin O'Donnell are local fishermen who are involved in the protests and have been face to face with two Gardai whose lives they saved nine years ago when the Gardai were involved in a sea rescue operation that got into difficulties. Without the intervention and help of these local fishermen the Gardai most certainly would have drowned. Today they face each other on the picket line and the two gardai have not as much as given a friendly glance of recognition to the



Huge protest in Dublin last year

O'Donnells. In fact one of them, has given a witness statement against Patrick O'Donnell after he was arrested in Belmullet Garda station when visiting his son.

Martin O'Donnell told Socialist Worker, "It says an awful lot about the role of the police. They will do anything they are told to do and have no principles or humanity about them. It is hard to believe we saved their lives and they are here protecting Shell who are threatening our lives by building this refinery on our land."

The state has thrown enormous amounts of resources into protecting Shell's interests in Mayo. After only

two weeks of protests the Department of Justice estimated it spent three quarters of a million euro on keeping extra Gardai in the area and that did not include wages or overtime.

The Corrib gas field off the west coast of Ireland is worth billions and there are many more fields of natural gas and even oil in Irish waters. The global price of oil and gas is increasing all the time but this won't be of any benefit to Ireland as Shell will sell to the highest bidders on the international market. The deal done to allow Shell into Mayo should be scrapped and the whole business renegotiated.

## FRIENDS IN THE RIGHT PLACES

Roadbridge is the main contractor in the construction of the Corrib gas pipeline.

The company is owned by Limerick based millionaire Patrick Mulcairn. They have won a string of state contracts in the last few years including the Monasterevin bypass and the Limerick tunnel.

They are involved in road building and golf course construction. The company whose workers daily force their way through local picket lines at Bellinaboy, have made an operating profit for the last year of €29.2 million, up 22% on the previous year.

So it is not just multinational companies that are gaining from this massive show of strength from the Gardai and the state but home grown billionaires with friends in the right places.

Mulcairn and Galway FF politician Frank Fahy are said to be "great personal friends".

## Now is the time to spread the flame of revolt

Over 100 people protested in a small Connemara town on Sunday 22 October in support of the protesters at Bellinaboy.

In Cork, Clare, Galway, Derry, Dublin and Waterford there have been protests at Shell stations and offices involving dozens of activists with huge support from local people.

Vincent McGrath, one of the Rossport Five prisoners, has just returned from a solidarity visit to Germany.

The international solidarity has been flowing into the people fighting back in Mayo. Comparisons with Shell in Nigeria have not been lost.

This month ten years ago the Nigerian Government hung Ken Sara Wiwo and eight of his comrades for their part in opposing Shell's plunder of the Niger Delta.

That is why anybody who visits the Rossport area is struck by the links made with the struggle of the people of Nigeria against Shell.

Their environment and economy was destroyed by Shell's operation in the area. In a similar struggle to that of the people of Mayo, the Government in Nigeria threw all their energies into protecting the multi national oil company

rather than their own people.

Maura Harrington, a leading campaigner in Mayo told Socialist Worker, "Shell's cops (the Gardai) at Bellinaboy are constantly spouting the line to us that it was not Shell but the Nigerian Government that killed Ken Saro Wiwa.

"Now where did the cops on the beat get that from? Obviously they are being groomed and want to believe that they are not protecting Ken's killers.

"What happened in the Niger Delta and what is happening in Mayo is of course directly linked to Shell."

On 10th November, the tenth anniversary of Ken Sara Wiwa's murder, there is a mass day of action planned for Bellinaboy. Shell to Sea campaigners in Dublin and Galway will return once again to Mayo in a show of strength and solidarity with the local people.

We need to get as many as possible on buses to the West for this important day of action.

But we also need to broaden the campaign from the gates at Bellinaboy to every town and city in the country. There is a tremendous amount of good will and solidarity with the

campaign in Mayo. The imprisonment of the five men from Rossport showed that solidarity last year. It has not gone away despite the best efforts of the government and the media.

Vincent McGrath of the Rossport Five has proposed that there are demonstrations organised across Mayo, "Starting with Belmullet to bring out all the support there is around the county for the campaign.

"It is not just about this campaign. And that is the message we have to get across to people all over Ireland. If they get away with this, other campaigns

may hang up their hats.

"They get away with this, then they can build whatever incinerator they want, they can erect whatever masts they want, they can push through water charges, anything they want – because it will always be used against all of us.

"They beat the people in Mayo so they can do it again. There is an awful lot at stake in this campaign. It is about democracy and what that means to all of us. We have to campaign to bring this issue all the way to Dublin and all the way to the general election."

**DAY OF  
ACTION**

**GET TO BALLINABOY NOVEMBER 10TH  
JOIN THE EARLY MORNING PICKETS**

# Where does Derry City Council really stand on Raytheon?

*The direct action of the Raytheon Nine has pushed the issue of Raytheon's presence in Derry back on the agenda in Derry.*

*The council now has to decide whether to stand by the clear resolutions it passed in January and April 2004, declaring that Raytheon would no longer be welcome in the city if it*

*were shown that it was engaged locally in arms production.*

*It has now been revealed not only that Raytheon is manufacturing military equipment in Derry, but that the company has been conspiring to ignore or evade the council's decisions.*

*So far, neither of the two*

*main local parties, the SDLP and Sinn Fein, has indicated that it will stand by the pledges clearly given just a little more than two years ago.*

*In a statement to local Derry media, the Derry Anti-War Coalition drew attention to these issues.*

*We re-print their statement in full.*

## Raytheon has treated Derry's elected representatives with contempt



**When Derry protestors occupied Raytheon**

The arms company, which has been operating in Derry since 1999, has seriously misled city councillors about the nature of production at its Springtown plant. It has also snubbed councillors by trying to by-pass them and deal privately with unelected officials.

Representatives of the two largest parties on the council, the SDLP and Sinn Fein, have repeatedly said that Raytheon gave them explicit assurances that there would be no arms-related production at the Derry plant. The two parties have explained that it was on the basis of these assurances that they welcomed Raytheon to the north west. It is now clear that Raytheon wasn't telling the truth.

Two former workers for the company revealed in a local newspaper in 2004 that they had worked in the Springtown plant on the Airborne Stand-Off Radar (ASTOR) system—now in service with NATO in Afghanistan. This year, it has

been officially confirmed that Raytheon in Derry is working for the British Ministry of Defence on JETTS—the Joint Effects Tactical Targeting System. Raytheon describes the purpose of JETTS as to increase “lethality” and to enhance the British Army's “critical war-fighting functionality.”

Documents released under the Freedom of Information Act reveal that, in 2004 and 2005, Raytheon's Derry management was discussing with [State investment body] Invest NI how to get around or ignore the council's opposition to war-related production and go ahead with work on JETTS. It is clear from the documents—now available on the DAWC website—that neither Raytheon nor Invest NI took the council or its decisions seriously.

The nightly images from Lebanon and Palestine of slaughter perpetrated by hi-tech bombs and missiles, many of them made by and

guided by Raytheon, were the main factor which led the Derry Anti War Coalition to undertake direct action at the Raytheon plant in August. The fact that, meanwhile, Raytheon and government bodies were paying no heed to council votes to oppose war production in our city was another factor.

There is now huge pressure from the business class on city councillors to back off from their pledges. They are accused of endangering jobs if they stand by their principles. This is the argument of supporters of war production everywhere. It is a form of blackmail.

In fact, arms spending is one of the main reasons for the under-funding of socially-useful job-creation schemes. The MoD estimates that the production of JETTS will require an investment of more than £300 million of tax-payers' money. How many nurses, speech therapists, social economy projects

could be financed from this?

Would Invest NI care to tell the public how much money has been given to Raytheon in Derry through direct grants, tax breaks, rates holidays and training allowances, so that we can calculate how many alternative local jobs could have been created which didn't involve enhancing the war-fighting capacity of occupation armies?

The Derry Anti-War Coalition appeals to city councillors to resist the pressures being put on them.

We believe that there will be massive support locally and far beyond for Derry City councillors in standing by their opposition to war production and telling Raytheon now that it is not welcome here.

**On behalf of the Derry Anti War Coalition,**  
**Eileen Webster**  
**Dermie McClenaghan**  
**Jimmy Kelly**

## HAIN'S PLAN: CLOSE THE SCHOOLS

Catholic school managers in the North are carrying out a closure programme on behalf of the New Labour regime at the Northern Ireland Office.

Gerry Lundy, head of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS), declared last month that “There is an inevitability that some schools may cease to exist.”

He was speaking at the launch of the CCMS's “strategic review” of primary provision, for which it has received a grant of £350,000 from the Northern Ireland Office. The money has been specifically earmarked for projects designed to speed up “rationalisation” and eliminate “surplus” school places. Every Catholic primary and nursery school in the North will be included in the review.

The State sector is following the same agenda. The CCMS was held up as an example to the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) at its October meeting.

The BELB's own plans for rationalising school places out of existence have been delayed by the resignation of all political representatives—under pressure from constituents to oppose cut-backs.

The plan to slash education costs by cutting school places was announced in September last year by Peter Hain. He wants cuts of £120 million by 2008.

Handing the CCMS 350k to wield the axe on its “own” sector probably seems a neat deal to the NIO.

Frank Bunting of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), representing the bulk of teachers in CCMS schools, complained that there had been “zero consultation” with his members.

But the views of private companies jockeying for a share of the action when school facilities were privatised were eagerly sought by PWC and clearly reflected in its paper.

Unison, which organises thousands of ancillary workers, commented at the time: “It should be a matter of concern to all seeking transparent and accountable public policy formation that those who may profit...are allowed to shape policy from the ground floor up, while representatives of society and those who deliver services are excluded.”

Confirming that it's commercial and not educational interests which are shaping the future of the North's schools, SIB chief executive David Gavaghan last year told “The Private Finance Initiative Journal” that “a lot of partners” were involved in “encouraging investment in education” in the North.

Mr. Gavaghan singled out three from whom there had been “a very strong response”—Amey, Bilfinger Berger and Hochtief.

Amey is owned by the Spanish construction company Ferrovial, which also holds contracts for maintaining London Underground and owns a number of airports, including Belfast City. Bilfinger Berger is a Mannheim-based construction company now involved in a wide range of activities worldwide, including the maintenance of offshore oil and gas platforms. Hochtief became a partner in schools development when it acquired the PFI operations of the notorious Jarvis firm for a pound—the price reflecting Jarvis's total lack of credibility following its role in the Potters Bar train disaster.

The CCMS is thus reflecting the priorities of New Labour at the NIO when it rejects partnership with teachers in its strategic review. The “reform” of education is not about education at all, whether in the State or Catholic sector. It's about implementing New Labour's neo-liberal agenda.

Hain defends the closures by referring to falling numbers. The option of seeing this as an opportunity to reduce class sizes—making it easier to integrate children with special needs—didn't occur to the NIO.

The need for united union action, involving teaching and non-teaching unions, to defend jobs and educational provision and standards couldn't be clearer.

## INTERNATIONAL

# Bolivia: Between Left and Right

**O**n May 1st 2006, the Bolivian government led by Evo Morales announced the nationalisation of the country's oil and gas reserves.

In Cochabamba crowds cheered as a banner was hung over the local refinery with the words, 'Nationalised: Property of Bolivia.' The simple gesture of sending troops into the refineries controlled by transnational corporations inspired millions across the world.

Five months later, however, the Morales government is in retreat. New contracts have been signed with France's Total and the US company, Vintage, to exploit natural resources. They have been forced to pay over \$120 million a year in revenues to the Bolivian state – which is far more than Ireland will get from the Corrib field. But the Morales government has not taken control of these natural resources from the corporations and it is even having difficulties inspecting their financial records.

The reality is that the revolt in Bolivia is faltering because of efforts to confine it to parliamentary channels.

Evo Morales was elected in June 2005 after a tumultuous period of struggle that began with the water war in Cochabamba in 2000. For the next five years there were near continuous mobilisations of road blocks, streets battles, and strikes which led to the overthrow of the neo-liberal presidents Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada in 2003 and Carlos Mesa in 2005.

The revolt grew out of many fractures in Bolivian society. Cocaleros who had grown coca for centuries had had enough of the US inspired 'war on drugs' which had destroyed their livelihoods. The indigenous population had grown tired of domination by a political elite of European origin. Miners in Bolivian tin mines brought their traditional militancy to the movement as they demanded nationalisation. But holding it altogether was the abject failure of neo-liberal policies which had decimated the country.

Evo Morales rose with this huge movement but his party Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) argued that the revolt had to be channelled into safer parliamentary structures rather than overthrowing the government through a general strike.

Once in power, Morales faced an enormous problem. His rhetoric, which reflected the social movements that raised him to power, terrified the rich and they set out to undermine him. But Morales has failed to respond by calling for a mass mobilisation of people power to break their sabotage.

## On the retreat

**T**he growing confidence of the Right and the weakness of Morales has been demonstrated in three major battles.

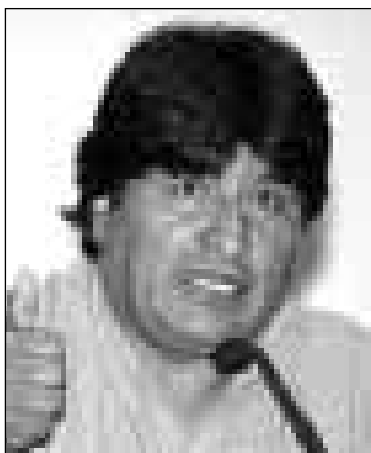
■ The social movements had called for a Constituent Assembly to re-structure the Bolivian state and, at first, Morales agreed.

The assembly was to be composed of the many social movements and was to re-write the constitution of Bolivia so that it no longer gave domination to an elite of European origin.

But Morales has since failed to



Above: Social movements gave Morales (below) the base but the right wing could still organise a coup



**Morales' rhetoric, which reflected the social movements that raised him to power, terrified the rich and they set out to undermine him. But Morales has failed to respond by calling for a mass mobilisation of people power to break their sabotage**

give direct representation to the social movements and has allowed the Right to gain a veto power within the assembly. The right wing are organised around a new party, PODEMOS, and control four states, known as the 'media-luna'. They are now openly talking of about secession.

■ The US has increased pressure to renew the war on drugs and has pushed Bolivia into a new agreement on military co-operation.

One result was the deployment of the Bolivian army in Parque Carrasco in September against local peasants.

The army units, which had been trained by US forces, murdered two cocaleros in the pitched battles which broke out.

■ In Huanuni, a tragic incident occurred as miners associated with the co-operative movement stormed the workplaces of state employees.

The co-operative miners are largely self-employed and this sector has grown since the mines were privatised.

The unionised miners fought back and several people were killed in the clashes.

The roots of the problem, however, stemmed from the failure of the Morales government to carry through a programme of nationalisation that could have created new jobs for those who were self-employed.

These conflicts have led to greater talk about the possibility of a right wing military coup. The old political elite has already used the Supreme Court to further weaken the constituent assembly.

Local leaders of the 'media luna' districts have visited Washington and have been encouraged to keep up their de-stabilising tactics.

The newspapers also reported that top officials in the Bolivian police approached army officers to

propose a coup – but elements close to the government turned it down.

But if the forces of counter-revolution are growing so too is the anger and potential of mass movements. Miners and thousands of indigenous peasants have blocked highways to press for nationalisation. Their union, the COB, has declared for an indefinite general strike and has elected a Trotskyist as one of its main leaders.

As in all major upheavals, the potential for revolution and counter-revolution exists. Over the next period, political intervention will be crucial.

## The debate on the Bolivian Left

**A** number of different currents contend for leadership of the Bolivian left.

The dominant grouping is the left wing nationalist movement MAS. Its strategy is articulated by the radical sociologist and current Vice President of Bolivia, Alvaro Garcia Linero.

He describes MAS as a 'centre-left' party that is trying to build a strong state around 'three economic-productive platforms': community based, family based, and the 'modern industrial' economies.

This will represent a special form of 'Andean capitalism' where the modern-industrial sector transfers resources to the other two. He rules out socialism at this stage because Bolivia is too underdeveloped.

In reality, however, this means that the foreign multi-nationals continue to make large profits – so that only a small part of their surplus is transferred to the poor.

The difficulty of Linero's strategy was exposed when, uncharacteristically, he asked people to arm themselves to put down any right wing coup – and then later apolo-

gised for his statement. It indicated how the Morales government vacillates as it tries to navigate between the large corporations and the power of the mass movement.

Morales is facing growing criticism from his left. One current is influenced by autonomist ideas which claim that the problem is political parties. Quite rightly, they criticise the concessions that Morales has made but they fail to focus on the question of state power. Instead, they talk about how social movements can be re-energised in order to bypass the state.

However this strategy proved a failure in Argentina. After the collapse of its economy, a huge movement of popular assemblies arose. But a rejection of all politics meant that the constant mobilisations eventually fizzled out.

The great irony was that movements which once claimed they could bypass the state eventually ended up supporting a left sounding Peronist, Kirchner.

Finally, there are more classic Marxist currents active in the miners union who argue that the revolutionary process must continue to a point where workers take state power.

This is an important analysis but the problem is that mining plays less of a role in Bolivia than it previously did because of the waves of privatisation.

These currents have to move beyond syndicalism in order reach out to many in the indigenous movement.

Unlike Venezuela, which is cushioned by huge reserves of oil, the contradictions within the Bolivian struggle are far more acute. Whether they will be resolved by a movement that takes power or on the other hand, whether the Right launches a new assault will be determined in the coming period.

# IRAQ: THE EMPIRE FACES DEFEAT

By Kevin Wingfield

**R**ichard Haass, the chief of policy planning operations in the State Department during George Bush's first term, commented in October: "The Iraq situation is not winnable in any real sense of the word 'winnable.'"

His comments arose as the US suffered a major defeat after the failure of Operation Together Forward which was designed to quell resistance in Baghdad. It began with the redeployment of 12,000 U.S. troops three months ago but in late October, Major Gen. William Caldwell announced that the strategy had failed.

Instead attacks on U.S. forces have increased by 22 percent. U.S. troop deaths in October were among the highest since the invasion. Then, the southern city of Amarah, which British troops had transferred to Iraqi security forces two months ago, was taken by 800 fighters from Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al Sadr's Mehdi Army.

Amarah is the scene for increasing rivalry between two rival Shi'ite factions in Iraq—Sadr's Mehdi Army which is immensely popular with the Shia poor and the Badr Organization, the armed wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, on which the US occupation has been heavily dependent and which has power in the country's police and security forces.

Starting with the drive two years ago to suppress the Sunni resistance in the western part of the country, the U.S. has relied on Shi'ite political parties and on U.S.-backed and -trained Shi'ite security forces to impose order on Iraq. The first U.S. siege of Falluja, in April 2004, failed after Sunni-led Iraqi forces refused orders to suppress the resistance, and instead joined it.

Since then, the U.S. has been careful to use Kurdish and Shi'ite troops against Sunnis, and, when possible, Sunni troops to confront Shi'ite forces. This helped to set in motion the sectarian conflict that grips Iraq today.

U.S. officials claim that withdrawal would lead to a civil war, but the truth is that the U.S. presence is driving the violence and conflict in Iraq.

But despite the rise in sectarianism, the resistance is tremendously popular. Over 90% of Iraqis want the Americans to leave their country. Nearly 50% of Iraqis believe that it is justifiable to shoot American troops and nearly 70% of attacks are on occupation forces.

And this resistance is hurting. Author Andrew Bacevich, notes:

"The once crack Third Infantry Division, preparing for its third Iraq tour, has two of its four brigades without tanks or other heavy equipment.

"The Army's chief of staff complains that army depots are clogged with 600 battle-damaged and worn-out Abrams tanks and 1,000 Bradley Fighting Vehicles awaiting repair.

"The army lacks the money to fix them — this despite the fact that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have now cost an estimated \$500 billion".

Bush is now blaming Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's government for failing to suppress the resistance. Maliki has no power and he governs nothing beyond the walls of the Green Zone.

Iraq's puppet government has, in theory, 264,000 soldiers and police under its command. But as one commentator noted: "In practice they obey the orders of their communal leaders in so far as they obey any-



body."

## THE RETURN OF THE VIETNAM SYNDROME

**R**ight wing commentator Thomas Friedman, in an op-ed piece for the New York Times openly described the current situation as similar to the Tet offensive during the Vietnam war. When asked to comment, Bush said "Mmmmm. He could be right. There's certainly a stepped up level of violence. And we're heading into an election."

The Tet Offensive in 1968 saw guerrillas from the Vietnam National Liberation Front fight their way into the capital, Saigon. Although the offensive was a military failure, the sight of NLF forces fighting in the US's bastion, destroyed the myth of American invincibility and undermined popular support for the war in the US. Soon voices in the US ruling class were calling for an end to war and, although the fighting continued for another seven years, the writing was on the wall for the US.

Faced with the Tet Offensive, the anti war movement was revitalized helping to split the US ruling class. US politicians, strategists and pundits split into two camps: those claiming an escalated troop deployment and the spreading of the war to Laos and Cambodia would be the last push necessary to win, and those demanding the opening of negotiations with Hanoi to find a fig-leaf for withdrawal.

Nonetheless, the wounded beast still remained dangerous, and in 1970 bombing of Cambodia and land invasion was undertaken provoking outrage in the US and around the world. Another million deaths was inflicted on the inhabitants of the region before the war was finally ended.

The comparisons with today are ominous. With up to 3,000 US deaths, two-thirds of the US population now oppose Bush's handling of the war. And splits have opened up in US ruling circles.



Top: US troops face increasing opposition from the Iraqi resistance: Above left: Panic as Saigon finally fell to the NLF; Above right: Muqtada Al Sadr

James Baker, who has been a close associate of Ronald Reagan, the elder Bush and George W Bush recently set up the Iraq Study Group taking in politicians from the Democratic and Republican parties.

Convened at Bush's request, the group is preparing a report on alternative strategies. Though the report is due to be released after the November 7 congressional elections, leaks to the media give an indication that powerful voices are thinking the unthinkable.

## THE OPTIONS FOR THE US

**A**mong the options being floated are:

### ■ A staged withdrawal of troops from Iraq.

This would be an admission of imperial defeat on a scale greater even than the Vietnam retreat and has provoked fierce opposition from Dick Cheney, who said as recently as October 19, 2006 that the only

answer in Iraq is total victory. Bush reiterated the same phrase the following day, insisting that he will stay the bloody course already embarked on.

### ■ Partitioning Iraq into three ethno-religious regions.

This would not only involve wrenching ethnic cleansing to create the enclaves, but provoke wider regional instability, with Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia drawn into the fighting.

What's more, polls show that 78 percent of Iraqis, including a majority of Shi'ites, oppose segregating Iraq along ethnic and sectarian lines.

### ■ Opening talks with Syria and Iran to take the strain and allow a withdrawal of US troops.

However bizarre a prospect nothing is impossible. Despite the current demonisation of these two governments, in the past the Syrian regime with US and Israeli support, occupied Lebanon to crush the Left and the Palestinians.

The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran received US

largesse in a secret deal which involved the arming the Nicaraguan Contras despite a Congressional ban.

### ■ The installation of a "Saddam Mark II" strongman dictator.

Formally the abandonment of any pretence at "creating democracy", casting aside US stooge Nouri al-Maliki. This is linked to US ambassador's demand that the Mehdi Army be crushed.

But in the past few months most of the Shia districts in Baghdad — and Shia are the majority in the capital — have come under the control of the Mehdi Army, the militia of the nationalist cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.

The Resistance to war and occupation and the anti war movement has provoked political crisis in the US, the UK and their allies, which threatens to derail Bush's imperial project for creating pro-American plaintiff regimes across the Middle East and beyond.

Kevin Wingfield is on the Steering Committee of the Irish Anti War Movement. He writes in a personal capacity [www.irishantiwar.org](http://www.irishantiwar.org)

When justifying the war in Afghanistan, Tony Blair talked of it being a war against those who “stopped Afghan girls going to school, made women wear the burqa and beat them in the streets of Kabul”.

But the notion of the enlightened West bringing civilisation and liberation to oppressed women is nothing new.

The idea of liberating women from backward, uncivilised societies was promoted by the British ruling class to justify the British Empire.

Throughout the Victorian period, the British ruling class equated “civilisation” with a Victorian morals and ways of life.

The colonialists could then proclaim that they were “civilising” countries that did not adopt such morals. This sounded much nicer than grabbing land and resources and oppressing the colonised population.

The history of the British occupation of Egypt shows not only how claims about liberating women were used to justify imperialism, but also how Western notions of Islam were developed to suit the needs of Western rulers.

The position of women in Islam has always formed part of Western interpretations of Islamic societies.

Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries this was derived from old stories told by Crusaders and travellers, who only had limited access to male views of the meanings of Islamic practice.

These interpretations were then generalised from a few examples to define Islam as a totality.

However, the issue of women within the Western interpretation of Islam only took centre stage as Europeans established themselves as colonial powers in Muslim countries.

The British consul general Lord Cromer led the British occupation of Egypt in 1882. According to Cromer, Islamic societies were inferior to the West. Native Egyptians lacked rationality and the capacity for logic, and needed to be “persuaded or forced” into adopting Western ways of life.

The worst aspect of Islamic societies, according to Cromer, was their treatment of women. He saw the oppression of women as being at the heart of Islam’s “backwardness”, and the veil in particular as the key obstacle to “civilising” the society.

But the policies of Cromer and the British administration show the shallowness of their claims to support women’s rights in Egypt.

Access to higher education was blocked, and fees for primary education increased.

This policy disproportionately affected girls’ education, and was pursued in spite of a popular demand for education for boys and girls.

### Significance

Cromer believed that education should be curbed as it could foster nationalist sentiment. He also opposed the training of female doctors and argued that a woman’s place was in the home.

When the first young woman in Egypt obtained a secondary school certificate, it was of such significance that it was reported in the newspapers.

But Nabawiyya Musa had achieved this in spite of the obstacles put in the way by Douglas Dunlop, the British adviser to the ministry of education. He had refused to let her sit the examination because she was female.

The imperialists insisted that colonised women be oppressed the Western way, which is something Cromer knew a lot about. This great warrior for women’s rights came home to Britain and founded the Men’s League for Opposing Women’s Suffrage.

Feminism that threatened the power of white ruling class men was opposed, while “colonial feminism” that could strengthen their power was embraced.

There were a variety of responses to colonial ideas from the colonised, largely shaped by class.

In Egypt, the ruling and middle classes saw a potential for advancement by being aligned with the British. So some actively promoted the “Western” way of life.



# THE EMPIRE AND WOMEN'S LIBERATION

*The notion of saving oppressed women has been a recurring theme throughout both the war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq. Here Sadie Robinson challenges one of the oldest justifications for imperial rule.*

In 1899, Qasim Amin’s controversial *The Liberation of Woman* was published in Egypt. It was completely bound up with the British colonial presence in Egypt.

The book called for the banning of the veil. It was sycophantic in praising the colonising powers, while repeating colonialist stereotypes of Islam. Native Egyptians were described as “savages”, lazy and stupid.

The key to changing this was the same for Amin and the colonialists - to alter the behaviour and customs of Egyptian women.

Ironically for a book supposedly championing women, Amin’s book is heavily sexist.

It claims that Egyptian women did not “know how to use a toothbrush” and “the ignorant woman does not understand inner feelings”.

Muslim marriages are described as being inferior and based on ignorance - again this is seen as the fault of women.

Amin’s suggested reforms made his attitude to women clear.

He wanted women to have primary education only - enough to fulfil their

housewifely duties of managing the budget and raising children.

There was a mixed response to the publication of the book. This was one of the first times that colonial ideas had been expressed from within the colonised population. The pro-British press celebrated the book.

But Egyptian newspapers such as *Al-Liwa* were critical, disagreeing with “the rush to imitate the West in everything”.

*Al-Liwa* opposed a proposed ban on the veil, not because the veil was seen as an immutable facet of Islam, but because the paper disagreed with having a colonial power imposing national culture.

Resistance to colonial oppression has therefore sometimes led to an even stronger defence of customs such as veiling.

As Franz Fanon put it when looking at the resistance to French imperialism in Algeria, the veil was defended because “the occupier was bent on unveiling Algeria”. The West had made the veil into a symbol of resistance.

There are other examples of the British ruling class claiming concern for

Portraits of Egyptian women—including peasants, factory girls, entertainers, city ladies and bedouins—taken between the 1880s and 1920s

Pictures: Arab Image Foundation  
<http://fai.cyberia.net.lb>

women’s rights in order to justify imperial and colonial adventures.

In India, although the rights and status of women in many areas were greater than much of Europe, the British viewed Indian women as passive victims, backward and subordinate.

### Morality

William Bentinck, the British governor-general of India, was just one of many British imperialists who took up the issue of sati (or suttee) - the practice of widows burning themselves on their husband’s funeral pyre.

In 1829 he wrote *On Ritual Murder in India* in which he highlighted the issue of sati, arguing that he wanted to end such practices by bringing “a purer morality” and “a more just conception of the will of god” to the Indians.

Presiding over the systematic robbery of India and the bloody repression that went with it, Bentinck argued, “The first and primary object of my heart is the benefit of the Hindus.”

Of course sati is undoubtedly an oppressive practice, but the British campaign against it was used, as the writer Suvendrini Perera has pointed out, “as a moral justification to the British to impose their rule on India”.

Incidences of early motherhood resulting from child marriages were also used by the British to demonstrate India’s “depraved” gender relations.

Before British rule, India was widely regarded in Europe as a superior society. This changed when Britain needed to start to justify its conquest of India.

Indian men were portrayed as effeminate and inferior to British men - strengthening the idea that India was not fit for self-rule.

Britain presided over widespread impoverishment and famine in India, and consciously developed a policy of divide and rule to maintain power. The notion that any of this benefited Indian women is distasteful to say the least.

In Ireland similar ideas were used. Irish women were seen as being “under threat” from “brutal, violent and animalistic” Irish men. This is different to the portrayal of Indian men, but the implications for colonised women were the same - they were a defenceless and weak group who needed the enlightened British to rescue and protect them.

Imperialist powers have repeatedly captured the language of women’s rights and used it to justify imperialism, while simultaneously blocking any reforms that could help liberate women.

Western rulers talk about the need for Muslim women to unveil so that they can be liberated. But when women demand concrete reforms that would mean real improvements in their lives, such as health funding, housing and education, they are denied.

Women’s rights have been set back by the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraqi novelist Haifa Zangana has pointed out the hypocrisy of Bush and Blair’s claims to liberate women: “Iraqi women were long the most liberated in the Middle East. Occupation has largely confined them to their homes.”

“A typical Iraqi woman’s day begins with the struggle to get the basics: electricity, petrol or a cylinder of gas, water, food and medication. It ends with a sigh of relief at surviving death threats and violent attacks. For most women, simply to venture on to the street is to risk being attacked or kidnapped for profit or revenge.”

In this context, she argues, most Iraqi women rightly view the rhetoric of women’s rights with scepticism. “In Iraq, ‘women’s rights’ is an absurd discourse chewing on meaningless words.”

“No wonder that the US-funded NGOs, which preach Western-style women’s rights and democracy, are regarded as vehicles for foreign manipulation and are despised and boycotted.”

Real liberation for women cannot be imposed by bombs, war or imperialism. It can only be brought about by struggle. When imperialist powers talk the language of liberating women it is never women who benefit. It is the imperialists.

# How do we stop Global Warming?

*The publication of the Stern report in Britain has convinced many about the alarming consequences of global warming. But it offers little by way of solution. Here **Conor Kostick** looks the radical alternative proposed by **George Monbiot** in his recent book, *Heat*.*

Ice cores extracted from the Antarctic show that levels of carbon dioxide have been rising faster in the last hundred years than in the previous 20,000 years, with the steepest part of the curve the last fifty years.

The level of carbon dioxide in the planet's atmosphere now is greater than at any time in the last 650,000 years. With this increase, comes an increasing planetary temperature.

Even small rises in temperature mean great hardship. The UK's Met Office estimates that a rise of 2.1 degrees will expose 2.3 to 3 billion people to the risk of water shortages.

Droughts will become longer in certain areas dependent on glacial melt water; while in wet areas of the world extreme weather will greatly increase poverty and food insecurity.

## Can this prospect be avoided?

In his new book, *Heat*, George Monbiot has asked himself this question, setting himself a rigorous timetable.

To make it likely that the planet will not warm disastrously, rich nations need to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 90 percent by 2030.

Working back from this target, Monbiot examines every avenue by which such a goal could be achieved and makes a very convincing case that, theoretically, it could be met.

The strength of Monbiot's approach is that he avoids wishful thinking and takes nothing for granted. Where evidence exists for a certain technology that has been established in reputable scientific journals he accepts it, where there is uncertainty and contradictory reports, he says so.

This means that Monbiot rejects some of the green solutions that are commonly thought to be the answer to global warming, particularly when advocated by those with a commercial interest in the area.

Local wind turbines, for example that at Sainsbury's 'most environmentally responsible supermarket' in London, probably only generate a microscopic amount of the energy the store uses.

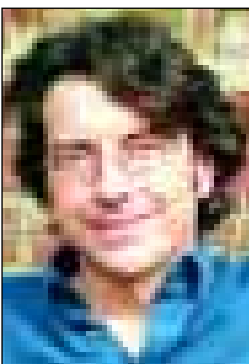
## Don't penalise the individual

When the Greens in Ireland endorsed bin charges they adopted a policy that increased taxes on the working class, without introducing on a national scale the kind of facilities really necessary to address recycling. Workers got the stick, but no carrot.

The fact that glass recycling shut down in Ireland at the same time as bin taxes have consistently risen tells us that in practice the policy is more about generating revenue from the pockets of working class families than protecting the environment.

Monbiot, by contrast, is well aware that simply introducing harsh restraints, such as to force individual homes to cut their carbon emissions, will lead to a disproportionate attack on the poor, and, what's more, will not address the depth of the problem.

To take one of his many examples, household temperatures in the UK rose



Above: George Monbiot, whose latest book is *Heat*

from an average of 15.5 degrees in 1991 to 19 degrees in 2002. To return to the 1991 levels, argues Monbiot, is not at all desirable, as it will inevitably lead to more deaths among the elderly.

Yet the loss of energy in heating homes has to be addressed, as over 30 percent of the energy consumed in the UK is by households.

The answer, proposes Monbiot, is to put in place regulations on builders and landlords that mean that the very least houses are built to Scandinavian standards, where homes consume about a quarter of the energy that they do here.

Even more could be done. Germany has seen the development of the 'passivhaus', a house that manages an average indoor temperature of 21.4 degrees in winter, without any heating system. It does so by the use of airtight materials and avoidance of thermal bridges (that conduct heat out), except where, for ventilation, cold air passes through a heat exchange system.

The point is that no family wants to see heat pouring through their houses, no more than they want to increase the

amount of carbon in the atmosphere. It is the failure of building regulation, and the consistent violation of what regulations there are, which has created heat-leaking houses.

## Public transport, not car dependency

Similarly, when he turns his attention to transport, Monbiot argues there is no point simply urging people as consumers to prefer public transport. Public transport has to be made effective. And it can be. Monbiot champions the idea of Alan Storkey, that in the UK, bus hubs should be put on Motorway junctions and a lane of the motorway set aside for their use. Light rail links, such as the LUAS would also be needed to connect the bus hubs to the city centres, saving the slow crawl into town that is the bane of most bus journals.

Right now, as Monbiot bitingly observes, coach travel is tedious and cramped, it is the poor persons' method of transport. But if you were cruising past slow moving cars, with plenty of

legroom and full facilities to work or read or watch a film, it would be extremely attractive. The carbon savings would be huge; the carbon dioxide emissions per passenger of a car are 36.6 kg, of a coach, 4.3 kg (based on forty passengers and a distance equivalent to London to Manchester).

When traffic on the M25 motorway moves at 60 miles per hour, the motorway can safely contain only 18 thousand people in 11 thousand cars. If they were travelling in coaches the motorway could take 260,000 people. As well as drastically curtailing carbon emissions, there would be no congestion.

## Do we need to reduce energy?

When Monbiot turns to even larger questions that you really see the potential to revolutionise our environment.

At the level of individual nations renewable energy sources cannot replace fossil fuels and at the same time meet the demand of the modern economy.

Unlike so many environmentalists Monbiot does not, therefore, conclude that it will be necessary to dramatically lower the world's consumption of energy (although that would be possible given the implementation of some of his other policies, such as for housing).

New technology with regard to high voltage direct current (DC) lines makes it feasible to efficiently move energy long distances without a substantial energy loss.

Already such a line, 1,700 km long, exists in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

This means that, for example, solar panels, which are a relatively expensive form of energy on people's roofs, could become a practical source of vast amounts of energy from deserts.

If only 0.23 percent of the world's major deserts were covered in cells of existing standards of efficiency (and they are improving all the time), we could generate 216 times the amount of electricity being used today.

Similarly, wind power becomes much more efficient at long distances from land, with the new DC cables it would be theoretically possible to supply half to all of the electricity needs of a large country like the UK from large offshore windfarms.

The question then becomes, who will initiate such schemes? Monbiot has not written a book about political revolt and government; he has written a very convincing book about the measures that need to be taken in order to save the planet.

The reader is left to draw their own conclusions about how to ensure these policies are implemented in time.

*Heat* is an optimistic book. It shows that it is not, yet, too late to save our world and at the same time allow the developing world to catch up with the West.

But, action must be taken soon. Environmental initiatives have to be imaginative and they have break through an enormously conservative commercial interests. By implication therefore, *Heat* is also a cry for revolution.



## COMMENT

Dave Lordan

**Slam hits you between the ears**

Anyone can express themselves in Slam

For those out of the know, Slam is an open mike poetry competition where the competitors are judged according to a points system by their audience.

It grew out of the hip hop and rap scenes in the US. Slams most often take place in coffee houses and bars and feature a large cast of slammers performing pieces on many different themes and in a range of styles.

After setting out from the USA in the 1990s, the Slam Poetry wave broke against Ireland's western shore a couple of years ago. Successful, well attended, and well run slams are now regularly run in Galway and Limerick. More are sure to spring up in the near future.

Some balk at the element of competition involved in judging slam. But audience judging is just a street level version of literary criticism. Just as there is a range of tastes within literary academies different slam audiences have widely varying likes and dislikes.

So it is never easy to predict who will win out on the night, adding an exciting element of chance to the competition.

It also means that everyone who attends a slam reading can take part in the event. In slam the audience is as integral and active a part of the occasion as the poets.

Others have complained crankily that slam poetry is of poor quality compared to the high art one finds between the covers of the slim and sleek volumes in the book stores. Slam, they nark, gives poetry a bad name, lowering the tone of an art form whose limits must be strictly defined and jealously guarded by a self-elected literary elite.

The quality of slams is uneven. There is sometimes an unhealthy element of personal confession which might be better suited to the Gerry Springer show. There are some slammers, as there are many mainstream writers, whose egos tower over their talents. But these are the hazards of democracy.

Slam is the literary version of the internet- anyone can take part, anyone can express themselves in Slam, and, as on the internet, cliché and crap sit alongside a leaven of real quality work. Most performers are in between the good and the banal. But everyone who takes part regularly improves, some rapidly.

Perhaps comparing the mainstream of page poetry with slam is really mixing our mangoes up with our mackerel. For slam is not poetry. Or I should say not just poetry. It is a hybrid form mixing elements of Rap, Hip-Hop, stand up comedy, dramatic monologue, storytelling, and plain old showing off with poetry.

The best performers I've seen- the likes of Michael Kearney, John Walsh, Trish Casey, Brendan Murphy, Steve Murray, Elaine Feeney, Hugh Doyle, Kevin Higgins, Mags Kearney and Neil Murphy to name just a few- work with all of these elements and can hold an audiences attention like few other performers of any kind that I've witnessed

Partaking in Slam forces page poets to take seriously the question of performance and performers to sharpen their literary quills. If anything it will breath some much needed demotic energy into the often dry and distant poetry of the mainstream.

The main thing is that the format of Slam encourages the maximum of people to take part. To use an anti-capitalist buzzword, it is participatory art. It is accessible to all, performers and audience. Much slam might be difficult to write and to deliver but it's rarely difficult to understand.

Most importantly, from an anti-capitalist perspective, slam is one of the last remaining public creative spaces where untrammelled expression, unchained speech, is the order of the night.

If you're looking for a stimulating night out and you've got something to say about the state of things and need to be listened to for once, then I urge you to head along to your nearest slam. All you will need is your voice and the courage to use it.

## REVIEWS

**'Films are seeing the return of the repressed'**

*Director Serge Le Péron spoke to Jim Wolfreys about his new film I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed*

The socialist Mehdi Ben Barka was a leading figure in the national liberation movement which won Morocco independence from France in 1956. While in exile in the 1960s he continued to play a role in the anti-colonial movement internationally.

In 1965 he was abducted after the CIA and the Moroccan and French secret services set a trap for him that also drew in the film director Georges Franju and the writer Marguerite Duras. Ben Barka was never seen alive again.

An excellent new film, *I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed*, examines the mystery of his disappearance. I asked the film's director, Serge Le Péron why he had chosen to make it now.

"What sparked it off was when the co-writer of the film, Frédérique Moreau, told me about a discussion she'd had with the film director Georges Franju.

"He'd talked about a traumatic time he'd been through in the 1960s after which he'd given up drinking and had been unable to work. I was very affected by the idea that cinema was at the heart of this trap and I wanted to make a film about it.

"In political terms it seemed important to remind people that there was a time when the Third World, and its leaders, were engaged in a universal political project that was progressive and secular, and that these leaders were all assassinated by the CIA - Patrice Lumumba, Ben Barka, Salvador Allende.

"These people were on the left and they were fighters, political figures with a collective vision of the world."

The film focuses on the role of the Tricontinentale, a federation of national liberation movements and newly independent states brought together by Ben Barka.

Le Péron was keen to emphasise its role because, "At certain points in history there are people who are able to federate diverse elements and so politically, at the

Charles Berling as Georges Figon in *I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed*

time, that was obviously what made Ben Barka precious as far as we were concerned, and dangerous for the US.

"So making him disappear was a sound calculation by the Americans in the short term because the Tricontinentale collapsed."

The colonial question has been the subject of a number of French films recently. For Le Péron this was, "the return of the repressed.

"With a few marginal exceptions there have been no films on the Algerian question until recently. Now there's a very strong return to all these issues. That's partly down to the passage of time and because there is a need to understand the historical background to the question of integration.

"But there's also something else, which is that French cinema has always been very inventive, but it's never been an especially politically committed cinema. There have been film-makers who have been politically committed, but not necessarily in their work."

The way the story is filmed gives it a very claustrophobic air. Wasn't there a risk that audiences would be left with the idea that we can't do anything against the power of the state?

Le Péron said, "Filming Paris coldly, like a trap, was an aesthetic and a political choice. But does that mean there's no hope?"

"The film came out in France last November, in the middle of the riots in the banlieues (France's impoverished suburbs). Almost every evening I went into the ban-

lieues to talk about the film.

"As it was about Ben Barka there were a lot of families there from North Africa, and particularly Morocco. For them the film was about a time when to be called Ben Barka was a heroic and positive thing. Today the everyday racism of French society means a name like that is more associated with Bin Laden.

"The school students there were impressed to find out that Ben Barka was a prestigious figure for people like Marguerite Duras, who they study in school. It's a symbolic, rather than a directly political thing, but I think this is important. It recalls a period when the Third World carried many of the hopes for humanity."

*I Saw Ben Barka Get Killed*, currently on general release, is reviewed in this month's Socialist Review, [www.socialistreview.org.uk](http://www.socialistreview.org.uk)

## MUSIC

**Three albums you should add to your collection**

**Food and Liquor**  
Lupe Fiasco |

**A Life in the Day of B19: Tales of the Tower Block**  
Soweto Kinch

**Mujeres**  
Estrella Morente

There are two things you need to know about Lupe Fiasco and his new album *Food and Liquor*.

Firstly he is being touted around as the next big thing in hip hop. And secondly he describes himself as a "Muslim and a Marxist".

That should be enough for anyone who reads this paper to sit up and give Lupe and his album a hearing.

Clearly influenced by Kanye West with whom he has collaborated, Lupe's lyrical dexterity is combined with a series of wonderful samples

taking in everything from old school hip hop and Latin Jazz to soul music.

But what makes Lupe stand head and shoulders above most of his contemporaries is his rejection of sexism and the glorification of the so called "gangster life style".

Just as important, tracks like *American Terrorist* and *Hurt Me Soul* are some of the most beautiful and sophisticated attacks on George Bush, racism and exploitation available on CD.

Put simply this is a gem of an album.

Soweto Kinch's second album is set in the Birmingham district of B19 - better known to many readers of this paper as Lozells.

The album, a mixture of jazz, spoken word and rap follows the story of three young men. Marcus is a part time student and crook, Adrian is a

30 something bus driver trying to keep his family together, and "S" is a wannabe sax player, alone with his art.

Soweto's passionate, sympathetic and angry portrayal of life in Lozells is a million miles away from the community sensationalised in the press as being torn apart by race riots a few months ago.

This album is an ambitious project which fuses hip hop and jazz and succeeds where so



Estrella Morente

many have fallen.

You may think that you do not know the music of Estrella Morente. But if you have seen the recent Pedro Almodóvar film *Volver*, you would have seen Penelope Cruz mime along to her wonderful voice.

Estrella's new album *Mujeres* or *Women*, is a tribute to a group of inspirational female cantaoaras, singers and actresses.

Her music is firmly rooted in the passionate and intense flamenco tradition. But like so much of the music coming out of Spain today, it stands at a musical crossroads - sometimes looking towards the beautiful Tango music of Argentina at other times traditional Gypsy music but always with one eye on North Africa (Zambra).

This album is dedicated to working women everywhere - I can't think of a finer tribute.  
Martin Smith

**Protest/Reports/Struggle**  
 email to [info@swp.ie](mailto:info@swp.ie) Phone 01 8722682

# O'LEARY WANTS TO BUTCHER JOBS: DEBACLE AT AER LINGUS

Ryanair boss Michael O Leary has threatened to slash 1,000 jobs at Aer Lingus if he takes it over.

He wants to take revenge on a unionised workforce and increase profits for his transnational backers. Ryanair is 90 percent owned by financiers who are mainly drawn from the US.

O Leary's take-over bid was known to the government in advance. They were warned about the prospect by their own civil servants and deliberately offered shares at a low price to make it easier for companies like Ryanair to mount a take over bid.

For the past decade the Irish state systematically held back on investment in semi-state companies in order to force them down the privatisation route. Aer Lingus provides a classic case of this tactic.

Since 2001, the company added over 50 new routes and funded its shorthall replacement fleet from its own resources. Against all odds, its pre-tax profits jumped to €82.6 million in 2005 and the number of passengers it carried increased to eight million.

Its senior management, however, argued that it needed a further €2 billion to expand principally on the North Atlantic route which they expect will open up after



Civil servants warned about possible Ryanair bid for Aer Lingus before the sell-off

2007. The company is highly profitable having accumulated profit of €340 million in the past four years but clearly did not have the resources to raise €2 billion by itself.

The management may either be right or wrong about the new possibilities but the key point is that the Irish state refused to invest in the company it owns. Transport Minister Martin Cullen asserted that 'investment could not and should not come from the government'.

Why, should this be the case? The Irish state

already invests in companies – but only those it does not own. The National Pensions Reserve Fund is a multi billion investment fund designed to generate income for future pensions. Its fund managers scour the world for investment opportunities and have invested 80 percent of its total in companies listed on stock exchanges.

It has reputedly even invested €27 million in airlines all over the world, including Aer Lingus's rivals, British Airways and Ryanair.

Why, therefore was one agency of the state – the Aer Lingus management – looking for more funds – while another, NPRF, not only refused to oblige but instead backed its rivals?

Politicians respond to this type of question by claiming the EU ties their hands. Under EU competition rules that limit state subsidies, they claim they are not supposed to invest in companies like Aer Lingus.

But even within the limited neo-liberal structures of the EU, there was nothing to stop the

Irish state investing in a profitable state company like Aer Lingus as long as it adhered to the 'market investor principle' – that it was not operating any less rationally than a prudent investor.

The Irish state, however, was pursuing the investment strike in order to force Aer Lingus into the ownership of large global corporations.

Despite the crocodile tears, it deliberately paved the way for a Ryanair take-over that would create a private aviation monopoly in Ireland.

## A failed union strategy

The prospect of an O Leary takeover sent shock waves throughout the union movement.

At a 500 strong gathering of SIPTU trade unionists in Dublin, there was thunderous applause when delegates called for an Irish Ferries style mobilisation of 'people power' to force the government to re-nationalise Aer Lingus.

But the union leaders' response was deadpan.

They supported a call from SIPTU's aviation branch to mobilise members to protest outside Bertie Ahern's office in Drumcondra – but then did very little to build it.

As a result only about 150 workers turned up to the protest – when there should have been thousands.

For the Labour Party leadership of SIPTU this was taken as confirmation of the 'natural apathy' of workers. In reality, the strategy pursued by the union has knocked the confidence out of the membership.

To its credit SIPTU opposed the privatisation of Aer Lingus from the start – unlike IMPACT which took a disgraceful neutral position.

But the SIPTU then leaders artificially separated out two questions – the conditions for their members in any privatised firm and what they deemed to be 'political opposition to privatisation itself.'

They argued that SIPTU could not take industrial action over the decision of an elected government and could only raise issues concerning members' conditions.

The result was that they verbally opposed privatisation while doing nothing about it.

Worse, it was later revealed that the union had signed off on a €170 million supplementary pension fund even though they possessed information from an actuarial report which questioned it.

The result of this inactivity was a spread of cynicism which left many workers wondering whether the only realistic option was a windfall from the privatisation process.

There was nothing natural about this reaction – it was the logical result of a social partnership agenda where the unions can talk left and then pursue a do nothing policy.

## FINGAL ICTU DAYCARE CENTRE

### Why is Labour Councillor involved in closing creche?



Part of Fingal ICTU creche protest in October

Photo: Frank Scalzo

Parents, children, staff and supporters of the campaign to stop the closure of the Fingal ICTU Community Creche demonstrated outside the Dublin North West Area meeting of the Dublin City Council in October. Over forty people

attended the protest which included drums and whistles and lively chanting.

The protest was called after the Board of Management, which includes Labour Councillor Mary Murphy and representatives from

the INOU and the Women's Council, announced the creche is to close in December. Full and part time staff stand to lose their jobs and CE schemes are at risk if the closure goes ahead.

The Board has written

to parents complaining that the creche is taking up too much management time. "They say they are looking for new management, but refuse to guarantee us a place in any new set-up. We do not accept this," a Finglas mother

commented.

Another of the mothers told Socialist Worker, "We tackled Mary Murphy in particular.

"The Labour Party says it is concerned to put child care at the top of the agenda. But she is vice chair of the Board of Management and is pushing this closure. She was upset that we named her on our placards. But she was not half as upset as we are if our creche is closed.

"She said her decision was 'not political' but we told her that the Labour Party is happy to tell people it is fighting for child-care, when she, as a Labour Councillor, is involved in closing our creche."

As one of the few affordable community-run crèches in the disadvantaged area of Finglas, where the waiting list runs into hundreds, the need is for more crèches not the closure of this excellent community resource. Campaigners plan to step up the action with petitions and more demonstrations.

For details of the campaign and to help out contact 086-3074060

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## ANTI BIN TAX CAMPAIGN

# Campaign against the Bin Tax is on the move

In many working class areas around Dublin the campaign against the bin tax has been re-invigorated in response to non-collection of bins by the city council.

Activists along with residents are out to meet the trucks in the estates and throw rubbish into bin trucks to ensure that estates are kept clean and that the non-payment of bin taxes is maintained.

The Dublin co-ordinating group met recently to decide on a number of initiatives across the city. Delegates from Ballyfermot, Drimnagh, Crumlin, Inchicore, Ringsend, Cabra, Ballymun and Edenmore agreed to organise a day of action across the city on Saturday 18th November. This will include local protests in all areas.

Already in Drimnagh (at Davitt Road depot) and in Ballyfermot (at the Civic Centre) there are protests each Saturday between 11 and 1130am when local people bring rubbish back to council depots and distribute leaflets to cars as they picket the council buildings.

These protests are very well supported and are helping to build up the



Bin Tax protest in Ballyfermot

campaign in the areas. Brid Smith who organises the campaign in Ballyfermot told Socialist Worker "The protests are getting a remarkable amount of support from passing traffic and from all local people. This is clearly still an issue that strikes a chord with working class people because it goes to the heart of the rip off we are faced with daily in our working lives."

This year there is a proposal in the pre-budget

estimates to increase the bin charges by 5% - that increase will apply to the standing charge which is €80 per year regardless of whether you use your bin or not and the pay-by-use charge which is currently at €5 per lift.

Since 2000 the bin charges have sharply increased in cost by a staggering 365% and this pattern is set to continue. The campaign is producing a Dublin-wide newsletter to inform all communities of

what actions are taking place across the city and to build for the biggest possible demonstration outside the City Council meeting on Monday 27th

November at 6.15pm outside City Hall in Parliament Street.

The Councillors will be voting on a budget for the city that will include an increased bin tax. It is vital that we show our continued and strengthening opposition to this double tax and force the councillors to take a clear position on where they stand on this issue.

There is also a proposal to charge each household an extra €2 per lift for a third bin - a brown bin - to be used for organic waste from the garden and the kitchen. It is planned to collect this bin each fortnight.

But already there is growing opposition to the use of the brown bin. In the Ringsend area where there is a pilot scheme on the use of brown bins most residents are boycotting its use and are instead joining with anti bin tax activists and throwing their own rubbish in the trucks.

**PROTEST AT DOUBLE TAX**  
**Monday 27th November**  
**6.15pm City Hall, Dame St**

## PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT ALLIANCE

# Galway resists dock land sell-off

The People Before Profit Alliance in Galway are campaigning against attempts to sell off land near the docks.

A Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) proposal for the docks was presented to the city councillors on 9th October 2006 and agreement sought to allow SDZ designation immediately.

Councillor Catherine Connolly objected vigorously to the proposals. She insisted that the presentation to the elected members must be only the first step in a full public consultation process.

While redevelopment could be a wonderful vision for Galway, it is in serious danger of becoming a nightmare for the ordinary citizens if it only benefits the golden circle. It is essential that no planning application be lodged until the people of Galway, including the fishermen who are an integral part of the docklands, have their say.

The next step must allow everyone to share in the vision being put forward. Lip service has been paid to the needs of the citizens of Galway in the current plans.

The area around the docks should be used to provide real amenities for the city: such as a music school,

rollerblade/iceskating rink, and public swimming pool; premises to house the various voluntary organizations in Galway, and social housing is essential.

Cllr. Catherine Connolly pointed out that as it stands the proposed development of the existing 32 acres as retail and residential development will do nothing to fulfil these needs, but will deepen the crisis of housing affordability in Galway.

The proposal to designate the docks as a SDZ is to facilitate a "sell off" of the land to the highest bidder and this will have huge implications for city centre property prices.

The Galway City Community Forum also called for a public conference on the docks redevelopment. However the Forum's request that the Community Development Board organise and fund the conference received no backing except from chairperson Councillor Colette Connolly, not even from Mayor Niall O'Brolchain.

The Galway People Before Profit alliance firmly agrees that the city docklands area belongs to the people of Galway and it is vital that the public have their say on any redevelopment for the area.

## SHELL TO SEA

# Mayo activist speaks in Tralee

By Sean Moraghan, Kerry Shell to Sea.

Mayo Shell to Sea member, John Monaghan, spoke to a public meeting which had almost forty people in attendance and was organised by Kerry Shell to Sea at the Grand Hotel, Tralee on Tuesday, October 24th.

He lives 70 metres from the pipe and he is a neighbour and relative of most of the Rossport Five. He gave an intimate description of what the fight against the controversial pipeline and refinery meant to him, his family and his community on a daily basis.

"The democratic process has failed for the people of Rossport", he said. "They rolled out the black carpet for Shell, built a special road for them, while we've been looking at potholes."

Local government has rolled over completely for Shell, and the community has received no support either from Mayo County Council or from most of the local TDs.

He stressed that the Shell project has been shown repeatedly to have little support either in the local area or in the county as a whole. 700 locals

have signed a petition against it, and a TG4 poll showed that 65% of the county wanted the project moved offshore.

The only support for the scheme comes from those businesses in outlying areas who have vested interests in the project. John gave a vivid account of early morning peaceful blockades and provocation from the Gardaí.

The police have bruised many, arrested some and taunted and insulted all. He concluded: "They're mangling the democratic process, and we're not having it."

Other speakers included Phillip Ikurusi, Niger Delta activist. He

listed off Shell production locations around the world, and both their repeated pollution of the environment and their manipulation of governments on the one hand, and regular local protest and confrontation on the other. 'Is Shell credible', he asked. 'No: they are only out for profit and leave the environment a mess.'

Kieran McNulty of Tralee of Kerry Shell to Sea, also stressed the economic rip-off that is taking, with all the waters off the Irish west coast now under the effective ownership of foreign multinational oil corporations such as Shell and Exxon Mobil. He reminded the audience

that what is happening today in Mayo could happen tomorrow in Kerry. Exxon Mobil have found oil and gas off the Kerry coast and they may well want to refine it somewhere inland.

If Shell succeed in the Mayo it will be well noted by Exxon Mobil and Kerry will soon have its own corporate and environmental nightmare.

Only public ownership of our natural resources can protect our environment, ensure the highest health and safety standards are upheld and the equal distribution of the of the profits occurring.

For further details e.mail: [kerryshelltosea@yahoo.ie](mailto:kerryshelltosea@yahoo.ie) or Ph:0876716009.

## 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.

No to privatisation, No to war:  
 Yes to people power  
 People Before Profit Alliance/Davitt League

Public Conference

Friday November 24th and Saturday November 25th  
 Dublin City Centre

**Saturday 25th November**  
**11am**

**Neoliberalism, privatisation and Public services**

Catherine Murphy, Indp TD

Kieran Allen (PBPA)

Catherine Connolly (Cllr Galway)

**1.30pm**

**People power and strategies for resistance**

Vincent McGrath (Rossport 5)

Rory Hearne (PBPA)

**3pm**

**People Before Profit: time for a real left alternative**

Joan Collins (Indp Cllr)

Carmel McKenna (PBPA)

## Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to

SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

Phone.....



# Socialist Worker

## Bonus of €32,000 a year for Brendan Drumm

# NURSES DESERVE A PAY RISE!

Nurses from all over Ireland will come to the Helix in Dublin City University on November 22nd to support their claims for better pay

Over the past few years, a quiet but determined wave of anger has been grown as they put up with more stressful conditions.

Nurses were appalled when politicians like Bertie Ahern and Mary Harney tried to undermine the public support they enjoy by implying that they do not work hard enough.

When they sought pay rises, they were told by the Health Service Executive that they could not be granted because of knock on effects on other workers.

But the management grades in the HSE have no problem awarding themselves higher pay. The number of managers earning more than €75,000 has doubled since the HSE was set up.

Its CEO, Brendan Drumm, has even received a €32,000 bonus – on top of his salary of €400,000 a year. His three special advisors get between



Nurses set to step up fight

€162,012 and €202,500 for working a mere 135 days a year.

They even get €1,500 a day after that – even though a nurse only gets €14 extra for Saturday work.

The nurses originally made the claims for improvements in their pay levels on 7 December 2005 but they are still waiting to hear what the Labour Court says.

Five months after their case was actually heard, they learnt of further delays because the HSE had not even replied to a letter seeking clarification on their claim.

The delay in responding is a testimony to how the HSE treats its staff.

The HSE is a public management agency which is dominated by a neo-liberal outlook. It has been involved in sponsoring conferences on private health care and is completely in support of Mary Harney's plans to open private hospitals on the ground so public hospitals.

It wants to weaken trade unionism in the health sector so that a US style system of privatised medicine can grow.

For this reason alone it is vital that all trade unionists support the nurses in their claims.

## What the nurses are demanding

The nurses have made a number of important claims for better treatment. They include:

### A Reduction in the working week from 35 hours to 39.

Nurses work longer hours than many other grades because their meal breaks are not counted for pay purposes.

The Labour Court itself recognised that this was wrong as far back as 1980 when it noted that 'the stressful environment warrants' a reduction in hours.

Nurses want to achieve a similar level of working hours to many lab technicians and clerical staff.

### A 10.6% pay rise to bring them into line with social care grades.

Social care grades won major pay rises when they threatened industri-

al action in 2002.

They quite rightly argued that their work demanded more professional qualifications and they should be paid accordingly.

But nurses equally have become more 'professionalised' but their starting salary is €3,000 below the social care grades and remain below them for 20 years of service.

### A Dublin Weighting Allowance

Dublin is among the twenty most expensive cities in the world.

The Economist Intelligence Unit even put it eleven places ahead of New York.

The nurses are the first group to fight for a special weighting allowance for living in the capital and they are entirely justified.

An Irish Nurses Organisation survey showed that it cost €638 to

rent a two bed room flat in Dublin compared to €375 in other cities. Mortgages and childcare are also much more expensive.

If nurses win their claim it will have a major effect on improving the health service.

At the moment, thousands of nurses are emigrating or leaving the profession because they feel undervalued.

In the last six years, for example 6,000 registered nurses have left.

This is a huge loss to Irish society as the state subsidises their training by about €80,000 a year.

The nurses unions are not part of social partnership agreements and so have every right to pursue industrial action to win their claim.

If they do so, they will receive huge support throughout the country.

## WHY DOES BUSINESS ELITE RUN THE HSE?

The board of the HSE was chosen by Mary Harney and it opposes the nurses claims. Harney ensured that it was dominated by corporate executives who have little sympathy with trade unionism.

### The HSE board includes:

- Liam Downey, the former chief executive of Becton Dickson, a medical technology company and a member of the National Executive of IBEC. I
- Joe Macri, the Managing Director of Microsoft Ireland and also a member of the National Executive of IBEC;
- Eugene McCague, a partner with the solicitors firm Arthur Cox and council member of Dublin Chamber of Commerce,
- Donal de Buitler, a former General Manager with AIB;
- Professor John Murray, President of the Marketing Institute of Ireland
- Niamh Brennan, a member of Directors and wife of Justice Minister Michael McDowell.