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BUSH'S 'SURGE' OF DESTRUCTION.



By Peadar O'Grady

The Bush administration's decision to send 21,500 more combat troops to Iraq is designed to escalate the bloody civil war in that country. It will do nothing to deal with the humanitarian crisis in healthcare and public services, nor will it alleviate the suffering of Iraqis.

The US strategy of 'divide and conquer' has meant they have encouraged a sectarian civil war and played one side off against the other to establish their puppet government. This has resulted in the tragic deaths of 655,000 Iraqis, and over 3,000 coalition troops by 2006 alone.

But this is just the tip of a wider calamity of millions of casualties and refugees since the war began in 2003. An immediate withdrawal of US troops from Iraq will help to end the civil war there not worsen it.

The new troops are being deployed mainly in Baghdad and in Anbar province, west of Baghdad. These are the two main centres of resistance to the war of occupation.

Bush's goal is to secure Baghdad for the puppet government of Nouri al Maliki and its Iraqi National Army and their Badr militia allies. His administration also aims to defeat the Sunni insurgency in Anbar.

The plan is to turn mainly Sunni areas of Baghdad into heavily policed enclaves and to retake the mainly Shiite areas, like Sadr city, by attacking the Shiite Mehdi Army militias led by Moqtada al Sadr.

This escalation is a desperate gamble for a Bush administration hoping to reverse its failure to secure a victory in Iraq. There is a huge potential for this to backfire however, by deepening the resistance, spreading the revolt to the south to Basra and encouraging cooperation between the Sunni and Shiite forces in the resistance movement to end the occupation.

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END IRISH COMPLICITY IN BUSH'S WAR
DEMONSTRATE
Fianna Fail Ard Fheis
Saturday 24th March City West Dublin
US Troops out of Shannon

QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT

'No question, 2006 was a lousy year for Iraq.'
President George W. Bush.

'Our past efforts to secure Baghdad failed for two principal reasons: There were not enough Iraqi and American troops to secure neighbourhoods that had been cleared of terrorists and insurgents. And there were too many restrictions on the troops we did have. The challenge playing out across the broader Middle East is more than a military conflict. It is the decisive ideological struggle of our time. On one side are those who believe in freedom and moderation. On the other side are extremists who kill the innocent, and have declared their intention to destroy our way of life.'

George Bush's address to the nation announcing the commitment of 20,000 more troops to Iraq.

'I think this speech given last night by this President represents the most dangerous foreign policy blunder in this country since Vietnam, if it's carried out.'

Senator Chuck Hagel to Condoleezza Rice at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

'If we allow Vietnam to fall, tomorrow we'll be fighting in Hawaii, and next week in San Francisco.'

Lyndon B Johnson, forty years ago, explaining his decision to continually escalate number of troops in Vietnam despite rising casualties and obvious impending defeat.

'I always strongly believed that there was no way a member of a government should finance anything he was doing in that respect. I was Minister for Finance and nobody ever offered me money. Now, I know there were circumstances there, and there was a marriage break-up and what have you.'

'But I still don't think — and I think it's bad for politics and bad for everything — if there's a view out there, you know, that money can be got if you're a minister or a Taoiseach, in relation to what you're doing in normal daily life.'

Former Taoiseach Albert Reynolds on Bertie Ahern.

'The NSA was operating illegally

and this eleventh-hour ploy is clearly an effort to avoid judicial and congressional scrutiny.'

American Civil Liberties Union Executive Director Anthony D. Romero on the White House's announcement that it will seek permission from the courts before wiretapping suspected terrorists.

'We're heading toward socialism, and nothing and no one can prevent it.'
Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

'Never say never. I have huge connections with the US military and if it came to using them I would. There are millions of Irish-Americans out there. We are not going to say "No" to the US military.'

Ulick McEvaddy on possibility of US military using Knock airport as a stopover.

'It is clear from what we've seen that our tax administration system is not customer-focused. As it stands, the language of tax is confusing and intimidating. Equally, tax forms are cumbersome and complex. This need not be the case; were it to continue to be so, we would be failing PAYE taxpayers.'

Irish Taxation Institute CEO Mark Redmond voices concern at €100 million in tax relief that goes unclaimed very year by PAYE workers.

'Are the American people ready for an elected president who was educated in a madrasa as a young boy and has not been forthcoming about his Muslim heritage?'

Conservative *Insight* magazine begins the mudslinging as Barack Obama announces his candidacy for Democratic nomination for presidency.

'McDowell takes firm action to deal with influx of Romanian asylum seekers.'

Headline on press release from the Ministers' Office announcing the application of an EU treaty protocol which will make Romanians ineligible to seek asylum here.

'The introduction of annualised hours and the overtime cutbacks introduced in 2004 are having an adverse effect on the services and facilities for prisoners.'

Inspector of Prisons Justice Dermot Kinlen on conditions in Limerick Prison.

SHELL TO SEA

Gardai launch vicious attack on protestors at gas refinery site



One of the protestors beaten by cops

Photo: John Monaghan

By Brid Smith

On Friday 19 January Shell's cops outside the gates of the intended gas refinery in Bellinaboy seriously assaulted three local protestors. There were about seventy people walking the route to the

refinery early in the morning as they have done since work started there last October.

The cops singled out one local man for harassment and tried to bully him off the road. When others spoke up for the man, a number of cops took the law



into their own hands and seriously assaulted three others.

What is even more sinister about this incident is that three members of the same family were violently attacked by police. It seems Shell's cops are singling out individuals in order to create violence and havoc on the picket line.

Three of the protestors had to have medical attention. One of them has a chipped bone in his vertebrae as a result; not caused by somebody trying to restrain him but by somebody trying to do him damage.

Another protestor could have been killed were it not for his own strength and courage when cops tried to lift him and throw him over a bridge and down at least 15 feet into a river bed.

The Shell to Sea protestors will not give in. They are continuing to peacefully gather each morning along the route to Bellinaboy and voice their objections to this most unwanted project by Shell.

A national demonstration in Dublin on February 24th will register the amount of support for the campaign and the national opposition to the giveaway of our natural resources by Fianna Fail.

The protest is being sponsored by the Amalgamated Transport & General Workers Union.

INSIDE THE SYSTEM

☠ On 15 January (Martin Luther King Day) a press conference was held to formally announce a military 'Appeal for Redress' in connection with the conduct of the Iraq War. Members of active duty military and National Guard, Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), Veterans for Peace (VFP), Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) and the Virginia Antiwar Network (VAWN) were among those who spoke to the public and press. Over 1000 Military Personnel are Calling for withdrawal from Iraq.

☠ An AP-Ipsos poll shows public opposition in the US to a troop surge has reached 71 percent. The President's overall job approval rating is hovering around its lowest mark at just 32 percent.

☠ Latest research indicates that in 2005 15.2 million children were estimated to

have lost at least one parent due to AIDS.

☠ The tolled section of the Dublin-Galway motorway cost €6m more per kilometre to build than a State-built section of the same route.

The motorway from Killock to Kinnegad, which opened in 2005, was built under a public private partnership at a cost of €550m: an average of €14.1m per kilometre.

The 28km section of dual carriageway from Kinnegad to Kilbeggan, built by the construction firm Ascon on behalf of the State and free to motorists, will cost €228m: an average of €8.1m per kilometre.

☠ In Ireland, up to 150 animals and plants face the threat of extinction because of forestry, road building, housing developments and changing farm practices.

The Government is obliged to take action under a UN convention on sustaining biological diversity but Friends of the Irish Environment have criticised the government for failing to take adequate steps to protect peatlands and to promote the planting of native Irish trees.

☠ Britain's biggest weather prediction experiment suggests that roasting hot summers, monsoon-style winter rains and flooding, plus the destruction of much of the nation's ecosystems and wildlife will make Britain almost unrecognisable by 2100.

☠ A leaked document from the HSE revealed that the Government's Cancer Care Strategy cannot be delivered by 2011 as planned.

The document contained complaints that the HSE had not

been consulted before the strategy was announced, and criticised strongly the use of Public Private Partnerships for the provision of health facilities.

☠ Paula Dobriansky, the new US special envoy to the North, is a prominent neo-conservative who has been a strong advocate of the current US policy in Middle East.

☠ According to the US government's Congressional Research Service, the Vietnam War cost the US the equivalent of \$662 billion in today's dollars.

The Los Angeles Times compared this figure with the costs for the War on Terror, which began in 2001, and found that the US will have spent at least \$670 billion by the end of the year: more than on the whole of the Vietnam War.

Bush's 'surge' of destruction

Continued from front page



The US itself is also now seriously divided over what is seen as a failed adventure in Iraq.

In recent polls, two thirds of Americans oppose sending more troops and want a withdrawal of troops.

The November election defeat for Bush's Republican Party was a vote against the war. Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was forced to resign in December and the head of the Army in Iraq, General John Abizaid, resigned in January.

Even at the level of the US ruling class of business and military leaders opinion is sharply divided.

In December a high level committee, the Iraq Study Group, advised in their report that 'staying the course' in Iraq was 'not an option'. They warned that the US occupation was leading to 'chaos' and increasing the influence of Iran. This chaos, they believe, threatens to spill over to produce 'Radicalisation of populations' and 'regime changes' in other pro-US states like Saudi Arabia or Egypt for example.

The Iraq study Group was led by senior establishment figures like former Republican Secretary of State James Baker. Their concern of course is not bringing peace to Iraq but to avoid a repeat of the defeat suffered by the US in Vietnam over 30 year ago.

Former US General, Wesley Clark who led the US Army in Serbia, says that Bush's troop surge 'will put more American troops in harm's way' 'further undercut US forces morale' and increase the influence of Iran in Iraq.

The Iraq Study Group report urges negotiations with Iran and Syria but the Bush administration is instead increasing its military threats. More Aircraft Carriers and Patriot missiles are being deployed in the Persian Gulf in a direct threat to bomb Iran and counter its missile defences.

Meanwhile, armoured 'Humvees' are being sent to the Lebanese Army heightening the dangers of a civil war next door to Syria.

The recent invasion of Somalia by the Ethiopian Army was supported by US forces and threatens a civil war there too.

The Iraq Study Group report raised hopes in the US that the war would come to an end. The decision by Bush and the neocons to escalate the war has both shocked and angered the majority of Americans who oppose the war.

The Democrats have been critical of Bush but shy away from anything that would endanger the interests of US imperialism. Almost all their leaders voted for the war and they oppose an immediate withdrawal. They are B-team of American imperialism.

In 1950 the US produced 50 percent of world output. By 2003 this had fallen to 20 percent. By the middle of the 21st century China could overtake the US as the world's largest economy. As the US becomes relatively economically weaker it is harder to impose its will by economic methods around the world.

This is why there is such pressure on the US establishment to resort to military force to continue its economic domination.

The splits and uncertainty in the US ruling class mean they are less able to suppress public anger and opposition to what their government is doing. For the anti-war movement in the US and around the world this is a great opportunity to remobilise that anger in a mass movement against the war.

In Ireland also there is an opportunity to refocus popular anger against the use of Shannon in the escalation of wars and civil wars feeding US imperialism.

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Socialist Worker CRISIS IN THE A&E SERVICE

Support the Nurses

A new report from the Health Service Executive's (HSE) Accident and Emergency taskforce has used by Mary Harney and the HSE to express satisfaction and complacency about the state of emergency treatment in hospitals.

The Minister for Health 'spun' the report to try to suggest that the majority of people were satisfied with the service. '90% of those that attended said they would go back to the same A&E and I think that is encouraging,' she said.

Of course they would go back to the same A&E; in an emergency people go to their closest hospital. What Mary Harney did not draw attention to, was the finding that more than half of patients were forced to wait over three hours before their first examination. The taskforce recommended that by the end of 2007 patients be discharged from A&E or admitted to a bed within six hours.

The Irish Nurses' Organisation (INO) and the HSE have been disputing how this can be achieved. The nursing union's concern is that rather than invest in the provision of more staff and medical equipment, various manoeuvres by the HSE will hide the extent of the crisis.

The HSE have, for example, talked of introducing 'hospital avoidance' measures in an effort to free up A&E departments. Without serious recourses, this will simply mean moving people around to other underfunded areas of the health service, creating new bottlenecks.

Moreover the HSE are to time the wait at A&E departments not from the moment that the patient arrives, but from when



Some 3,300 people attend emergency departments daily, with around 825 going on to require hospital admission

the decision is made whether to treat the patient or not.

So the HSE's announcement it was looking to introduce a twelve-hour target for people waiting treatment in the first months of 2007 is much emptier of significant improvements to the service than it looks. In any case, a twelve hour wait is a shocking imposition on someone seeking treatment and puts Ireland near the bottom of European services.

The INO and the HSE are also in dispute over the scale of the problem. According to the HSE, since the setting up of the

taskforce 'the number of hospitals that are experiencing difficulties in their A&Es has reduced considerably and is now confined to a relatively small cluster of hospitals.'

Some 3,300 people attend emergency departments daily, with around 825 going on to require hospital admission. According to the HSE showed the total numbers waiting in A&E at the time of their survey was 119.

The INO found that for the same day 266 patients were waiting in A&E units. The followed this up with a detailed

survey of the situation at Mid West Regional Hospital, Limerick.

They found in excess of 36 patients on trolleys, awaiting an in-patient bed, in the A&E Department and the Medical Day Ward at the hospital. The ten bedded overflow unit at the hospital was also full and there were no trolleys available.

INO members are angry that management of the HSE have failed to put in place appropriate initiatives to help alleviate the increasing trolley numbers over the last two years.

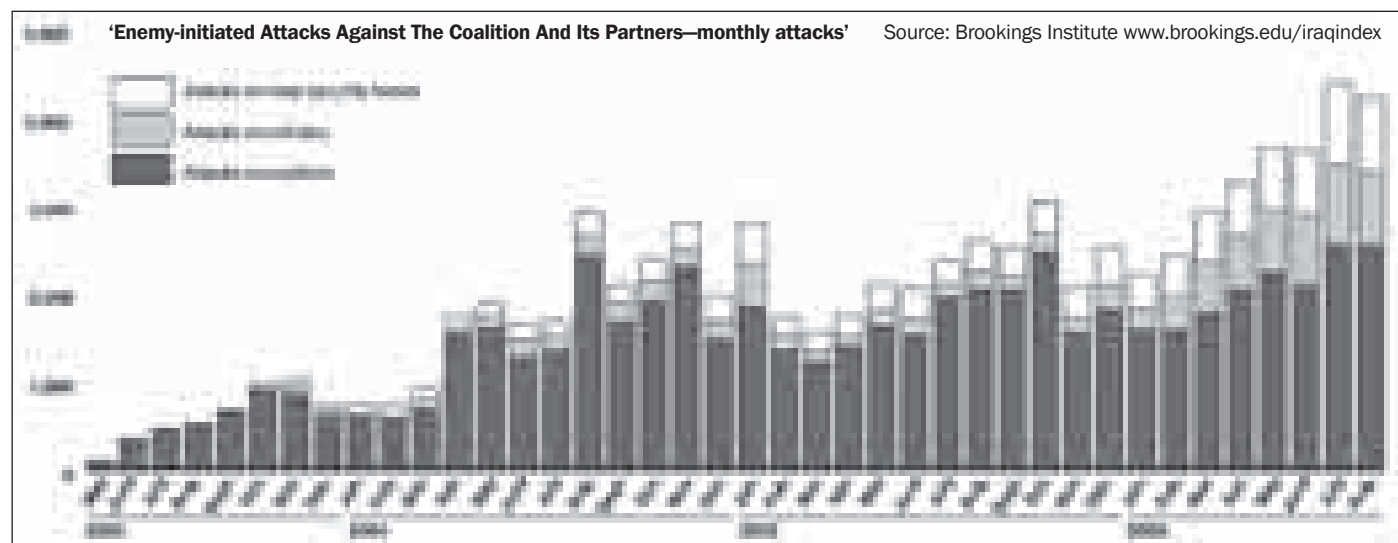
They point to the absence of a chest pain clinic despite funding being available; lack of progress on setting up a minor injuries clinic in the Emergency Department; and the absence of a proactive, robust, team based multidisciplinary approach in the management of this hospital.

INO Industrial Relations Officer, Mary Fogarty said: 'the funding already given to the hospital to develop services a couple of years ago has still not been spent and nurses have now lost all confidence in the ability of hospital management to cope with the demands of the service.'

What the A&E crisis shows is that the nursing unions are absolutely right to pursue better pay and conditions for nurses. A victory for their campaign will ensure skilled staff remain in the service.

As well as meeting the demands of the nurses, the government and the HSE should invest seriously in hospitals, rather than try to put positive PR on a situation causing unnecessary misery to hundreds of patients each day.

US occupation feeds sectarian conflict



Even some of those opposed to the invasion of Iraq believe that the demand for immediate withdrawal of US troops would result in chaos and a sectarian bloodbath.

Although there are a terrible number of sectarian attacks on civilians and a number of instances of ethnic cleansing, dubbing the conflict in Iraq as a civil war is an oversimplification.

Evidence from the right-wing US think-tank, the Brookings Institute, undermines the claim that US troops are helping the situation.

Instead it shows that the occupation that is feeding the poison of sectarianism.

• There are 650,000 internally displaced people in Iraq

• 40% of professional people have left the country since 2003

• The Iraq ministry of Social Affairs estimates unemployment at 48%

• Electricity is available in Baghdad for barely more than 4 hours a day.

• Attacks involving loss of life are principally launched either by US-Coalition forces or those fighting them.

• Monthly attacks by insurgents run at about 4,000 of which two and a half thousand are on Coalition forces and about 800 each on Iraqi forces and civilians.

• On the US side, the most recent figures show US air-strikes running at the rate of 300 a year and 1,000 C-130 sorties a week.

• The majority of Iraqis oppose the

US occupation of their country and 61% of Iraqis approve of attacks on US-led forces.

In other words the violence is for the most part not sectarian but initiated either by those fighting for or against the Coalition occupation.

The majority of Iraqis both oppose the occupation and sectarianism.

Brookings' figure show that outside Kurdish areas, which have long sought independence, at least two-thirds of Iraqis strongly oppose religious and ethnic segregation.

Those who strongly support such separation amount to only 2-7% outside Kurdish areas.

Much of the sectarian violence comes from the government itself.

The Interior Ministry, controlled by the Supreme Council of Islamic Revolution in Iraq, has been implicated in many sectarian attacks with reports of attackers dressed in Iraqi police and army uniforms.

The Iraqi government is kept in power by the US which leans heavily on the SCIRI.

As a spokesperson for the Irish Anti War Movement pointed out in January, 'The US-led occupation is the poison that fuels the violence in Iraq. It cannot play any useful role in promoting peace and reconciliation other than announcing its withdrawal.'

For more detail got to Brookings Institute website: www.brookings.edu/iraqindex

Sinn Fein: The party of law and order?

By Kieran Allan

'Talking left while turning right' is a phrase used in South Africa to describe the ANC government.

It refers to the fact that the Prime Minister Thabo Mbeki still issues a regular weekly bulletin to 'the comrades' even though he implements neo-liberal policies, even to the extent of turning water off from poor people and denying HIV victims proper treatment.

All the more interesting then that the Sinn Fein leadership sought assistance from the ANC government when they wanted to convince their supporters in the debate on policing.

Ronnie Kasrils, the Minister for Intelligence in the ANC government, gave the keynote speech to a meeting of Ulster delegates of Sinn Fein. His left wing credentials seem impeccable: he is a member of the South African Communist Party and a former key leader of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC during the apartheid regime.

Kasrils' theme was simple: just as the ANC had transformed the South African police from a racist 'force' to a police 'service', so too could Sinn Fein transform the PSNI.

There are, however, two main problems with this argument.

First, the situation of Sinn Fein and the ANC is not comparable. The ANC removed an apartheid regime from office while Sinn Fein will be sharing power with Ian Paisley. Paisley has made it perfectly clear that he expects the republicans to repeatedly pledge full support for the police.

Sinn Fein must constantly break the republican taboo on informing. Only by doing so for some years, can republicans be sufficiently 'de-contaminated' to be let near the Ministry of Justice. So passing a resolution supporting the PSNI will not be enough. Republicans will have to take side of the police against protestors, left wingers and dissidents in their own ranks.

Second, even the best case South African scenario that Gerry Adams has chosen for his argument shows how the police have to confront the poor and support the wealthy.

According to Amnesty International, there are 'at least twenty to thirty severe cases of torture a year in police custody South Africa'.

Deaths at the hands of the police are also very high. In the three-year period 1997-2000, 2,174 people lost their lives as a result of police action or in police custody. Of the fatal shootings where the South African police have been involved, 41 percent have been officially deemed to be unlawful.

The vast majority who have suffered at the hands of the SA police are poor black people. In one tragic case in 1999, hundred of squatters who broke apartheid laws and settled in Cape Town in an area they re-named Mandela Park, were attacked by the police with baton, rubber bullets and dogs.

In July 2005, a 700 strong protest of HIV/AIDS sufferers were fired on by the police and ten people had to be treated for gunshot wounds. Human Rights Watch has issued a special report on police treatment of Zimbabwean migrants in the Limpopo region, showing how the police assault and extract money from them.

By contrast the national police commissioner for South Africa, Jackie Selebu, is currently under investigation for being connected to an organised crime boss.



Sinn Fein leaders and PSNI drop by to say hello

If this bears some similarities to the activities of the 'old' RUC or, for that matter, the Gardai, then it probably is because police forces have much in common across the world. There are very deep reasons why police forces cannot be transformed by a change of name or ex-guerrilla fighters joining their ranks.

Under capitalism, the justice system functions to restrain 'the have nots' and legitimise the rule of the privileged.

In both Britain and Ireland, over seventy percent of people who go to jail were unemployed at the time of conviction.

As the corruption scandals demonstrate, wealthy individuals such as Charles Haughey do not go near a prison cell, despite committing robbery on a scale far higher than most petty offenders.

Of course, the law also claims to protect the safety and security of all citizens. As most victims of crime

as well as perpetrators of crime come from the poorer backgrounds, this allows right wing politicians to run law and order campaigns based on protecting personal security.

Yet the reality is that violence perpetuated against individuals is often caused by another family member or by someone known to them. The police, however, notoriously avoid cases of domestic violence.

Alongside the formal system, the legal system gives considerable discretion to police officers about how to enforce the law. Yet this discretion is heavily influenced by the informal 'cop culture' that develops inside police forces.

This culture encourages officers to routinely target low status and powerless groups as 'police property'. Groups such as travellers, migrants, working class youth 'who give lip' typically fall into these categories.

To ensure that the police serve their rulers without question, they are encouraged to isolate themselves from the wider society by not living in the areas they patrol. When combined with the cop culture that pervades police stations, this means that much police work functions by stereotyping.

For a regular police officer, fraud is far more likely to have been committed by a Nigerian migrant rather than a high class Irish director of a company working in the IFSC.

All of this ensures that the police concentrate within their ranks the most right wing prejudices of society. In a famous study in Britain conducted by Robert Reiner, it was discovered that four out of five police officers vote for right-wing parties. In France, a higher proportion of the police vote for the National Front than the wider population. Machismo and racism pervade their ranks in almost all countries.

So what will change if Sinn Fein supports a 'police service'? Very little in the police, of course; rather the change will occur within Sinn Fein itself.

At a certain point, every political party is put under pressure to support 'law and order'. If they fail, they are branded as dangerous subversives who want to destroy the very fabric of society itself.

The term 'law and order', however, has an interesting origin. It was first coined in 1796 by the arch Irish conservative Edmund Burke, when revolutionary France was attempting to invade Britain and link up with Irish rebels.

Ever since, those who want to defend the existing society have used the phrase as a slogan. They come out with it in order to try to associate any challenge to their rule with an attack on the population as a whole.

Instead of giving in to pressure to uphold 'law and order' and 'support the police', genuine socialists take the side of those oppressed by the police.

Even within the confines of capitalism, the activities of police should be confined by a most rigid adherence to civil liberties. Their action should be held up to public scrutiny; their powers should be limited; and every attempt to remove judgements from juries should be resisted.

Far from socialist supporting the police, they should stand with the people of Rossport who have been beaten by the police; or with the family of Terence Wheelock, who are still demanding justice after his death in police custody.

Encouraging people to join a renamed RUC - which, it has now been revealed, actually ran the loyalist UVF - can only compromise this stance. And we don't have to go as far as South Africa to see why.

The irony is that the current debate inside the republican movement sounds like a strange re-make of a 1930s movie.

After the civil war in Ireland, the Garda Síochána was seen as the heavy arm of the state. 'The embodiment of the Treaty in blue uniforms', was how they were described.

A notorious police unit known as the 'S Branch' harassed republicans with considerable brutality and, on one occasion, a police informer even shot dead a Fianna Fail member.

Senior figures in Fianna Fail including Eamonn De Valera and the ex Chief of Staff of the IRA, Frank Aiken denounced the Gardai and the party refused to supply them with information.

Yet when De Valera took power in 1932 and faced a threat from the Blueshirts, he drafted hundreds of FF members into the police. The modern Special Branch was in fact constituted from the Broy Harriers, named after the new FF supporting police Commissioner, Eamonn Broy.

As Conor Brady, the historian of the police, put it in a recent Irish Times article, 'Fianna Fail entered the Dail in 1926 but it took almost six years before the party normalised its relations with the Gardai.'

It has taken almost eight years since the signing of the Belfast Agreement for Sinn Fein to normalise its relationship with civil policing in Northern Ireland.

If Eamon De Valera's regime did little to promote civil liberties, it hardly seems likely that the delicate hands of Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness will produce a better scenario in Northern Ireland.

O'Loan report reveals collusion with UVF

Evidence of collusion between RUC Special Branch officers and the UVF has been presented recently in the report of Northern Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan.

These officers were involved in more than a dozen murders. This damning report comes on top of a number of similar allegations made by in recent years by ex-members of the RUC and confirms the truth of their revelations.

The Ombudsman's report was mounted in response to the murder

of Raymond McCord by the UVF.

It reveals a close relationship between the RUC Special Branch and Mount Vernon UVF from January 1993 to October 2000. During this time UVF leader Mark Haddock, currently serving ten years for the grievous bodily harm, acted, claims the Ombudsman, as an informer for Special Branch.

This links the RUC to many killings and the DPP is now considering bringing serious charges against those involved,



Nuala O'Loan

for having protected the murders.

Gerry Adams told The Irish Times that the report would act as an argument for republicans to become involved in policing.

This is a symptomatic of how anxious Sinn Fein are to enter the ruling



Mark Haddock

structures of Northern Ireland.

Even five years ago the organisation would have drawn a much more obvious and logical conclusion from the report: that the RUC Special Branch should be abolished.

INTERNATIONAL

Somalia and Ethiopia: a new front in the 'long war'

The recent US attack on Somalia is the latest stage of imperialist intervention in the Horn of Africa, write Ken Olende and Charlie Kimber

To understand the current crisis in the Horn of Africa you have to look at the role of the US and its "war on terror" – or the "long war" as US rulers are coming to call it.

This war is no more about terrorism than previous "humanitarian" interventions were about helping local populations.

There are three important things about Africa for the US. Firstly there are natural resources, notably oil.

Secondly there are wider strategic interests and thirdly the global development of an imperial strategy.

African oil is becoming more significant to the US. By 2015 it is estimated that 25 percent of US oil imports will come from Africa. Already 70 percent of the US-European military command's activity concerns African affairs.

Strategically the US is determined to defend its access to these resources. The main US base in Africa is in Djibouti, a small state on the north coast of Somalia, which guards the entrance to the Red Sea.

It also wants to deny resources to competitors. Specifically this relates to the emergence of China as a major competitor.

This is not an idle worry. China is a central participant in the new scramble for Africa. Like the US, the Chinese government sees Africa as a potential source of both markets and oil.

Africa offers resources that are not already totally controlled by the US and other Western powers. China needs the oil to sustain its rate of economic growth. Africa supplies 25 percent of Chinese oil imports.

Military

This relates directly to the US's grand strategy. In 1950 the US produced 50 percent of world output. By 2003 this had fallen to 20 percent. However the US is responsible for 50 percent of world arms spending.

By the middle of the 21st century China could overtake the US as the world's largest economy. As the US becomes relatively economically weaker it is harder to impose its will by economic methods around the world.

So the US is attempting to use its military power to increase its domination.

With certain variations this strategy to dominate is one put forward by the whole US elite, not just the neocons. Stephen Peter Rosen, one of the theorists behind the Project for the New American Century, has written:

"A political unit that has overwhelming superiority in military power, and uses that power to influence the internal behaviour of other states, is called an empire.

Empire

"Because the United States does not seek to control territory or govern the overseas citizens of the empire, we are an indirect empire, to be sure, but an empire nonetheless.

"If this is correct, our goal is not combating a rival, but maintaining our imperial position, and maintaining imperial order. Planning for imperial wars is different from planning for conventional international wars...

"The maximum amount of force can and should be used as quickly as possible for psychological impact – to demonstrate that the empire cannot be challenged with impunity."

How does this practically impact on Africa? There are already US forces stationed in Senegal, Mali, Gabon, Ghana, Namibia and Angola.

It is the US's strategic interests that decide where there is clamour for Western intervention in Africa. Thus there are constant demands for intervention in Darfur in Sudan and now a second practical intervention in Somalia, while the brutal war in the Democratic Republic of Congo continued with no such demands.

This is why the war in Somalia can-



Students in Addis Ababa protest against fraud in Ethiopia's elections in June 2005. The protest movement was gunned down by the army. Picture: Andrew Heavens

not be understood by looking at the composition of the Union of Islamic Courts or the presence or absence of Al Qaida supporters in Somalia.

Like Israel's invasion of Lebanon last summer, it only makes sense as a proxy war of the US.

In fact there is no evidence that Al Qaida was involved in the defeat of the US intervention force in Somalia in 1993.

The US invasion of Iraq created support for Al Qaida where there was none. Any support there is for Al Qaida in Somalia can be related to the savage US incursion in 1993.

The long war is well named. It will appear either in terms of direct US intervention or wars led by US proxies, until the project is challenged at a wider level.

Ethiopia exploited by imperialism



A US soldier stands guard while equipment is off-loaded from a C-130 Hercules in Gode, Ethiopia

By invading Somalia the Ethiopian government of Meles Zenawi has hitched itself to imperialism, acting as George Bush's proxy in the Horn of Africa.

Yet for 100 years imperialism has brought only bitter poverty and war to Ethiopia's people.

It will be no different this time.

Ethiopia was the last part of Africa to be seized by the colonisers. It had been the site of one of the great empires, Axum, which was a highpoint of world civilisation in the first to the fifth centuries.

Later it declined as a great power, but remained an advanced state.

As part of the carve-up of Africa in the 1880s, Italy was handed the Eritrean port of Massawa by the British in 1885. The colony of Eritrea was established through military conquest.

It was marked by oppression from the start. Ferdinando Martini, the governor of Eritrea, admitted, "We claim to want to end the fratricidal wars in this country, but every day we sign up local people to our own forces and pay them

to butcher other local people."

In 1889 Italy announced that Ethiopia was now its protectorate.

At the Battle of Adowa in 1896 Menelik II's troops defeated the Italian forces and forced the colonialists to retreat to Eritrea.

In October 1935 Italy – now a fascist state under Benito Mussolini – invaded again. The fighting was a chance to try out new and barbaric weaponry later to be used in the Second World War.

Ethiopian forces (and civilians) were destroyed with poison gas and flame throwers, which were outlawed by international treaties.

Ethiopian leader Haile Selassie made passionate appeals to the League of Nations (a forerunner of the United Nations) for support. But he was ignored.

Italian rule was brutal, with Mussolini demanding "ten eyes for every eye" as reprisals for guerrilla attacks. A system of racial laws was introduced which prefigured South African apartheid.

But in some ways even worse was to come when the British "liberated" the country during the Second World War. The British looted Ethiopia, removing entire factories, port facilities and buildings.

Despite this, Haile Selassie, now returned to the throne, worked with Western imperialism. In 1950 he sent troops to fight alongside the US and Britain in Korea, and opposed any sort of radical reform.

The US set up the giant radio listening station at Kagnew which became a central hub of Cold War spying. In return Ethiopia received 60 percent of US military aid to Africa.

A movement called the Dergue under Mengistu Haile Mariam overthrew Haile Selassie in 1974. It used Marxist language, but for a period continued to allow the US presence. In return the US accelerated the supply of arms.

But even the US began to complain



as the Dergue used this weaponry to crush secessionist movements. So Mengistu switched sides in the Cold War, duly collecting a vast new armoury from the Russians.

Despite the firepower, Mengistu could not destroy the national liberation movement in Eritrea. Eventually, in 1991, the combination of the Eritrean resistance and an Ethiopian reform movement under Meles Zenawi drove Mengistu and the Dergue from power.

Ordinary people hoped for a new start free from superpower intervention. But the hopes were dashed. Meles embraced IMF austerity programmes which meant farmers switched from growing food to growing coffee for export – just as commodity prices slumped.

He hurled hundreds of thousands of soldiers into a war with Eritrea, and brutally repressed dissent at home. Demonstrators were shot down in the streets when they protested against fraud in the May 2005 elections.

Despite this he remained a friend of the West – backing the US invasion of Iraq, serving on Tony Blair's Commission for Africa and speaking up for neoliberalism across the continent.

Somalia resistance and civil war



Somalia is racked by civil war

The Horn of Africa has been a plaything of the Western powers since the opening of the Suez Canal brought the region to world prominence in 1869. During the imperial scramble for Africa in the 1880s the British claimed the west of modern Somalia and the Italians the south.

Though Somalia was officially incorporated into the Italian and British empires, a war of resistance continued until 1920. The RAF bombed resistance into submission, causing high civilian

casualties.

The Italians took British Somaliland early in the Second World War. It was reconquered by the British, along with Ethiopia. It was the British that established the current borders between the two countries.

Somalia became independent in 1960, uniting ethnically Somali regions that had been controlled by Italy in the east and Britain in the west. This made it probably the least ethnically diverse country in sub-Saharan Africa.

However the new borders trapped Somali people in the Ogaden, now part of Ethiopia, and Kenya.

A coup in 1969 brought Major General Mohammed Siad Barre to power. He talked left, promoting equality and opposition to the influence of the clans. The Soviet Union backed his regime in return for the strategically important naval base near the Red Sea.

This was at a time when socialism was equated with state control and seen primarily as the best way to develop.

While the early years of the regime offered economic gains and improvements in literacy it quickly became known for its lack of tolerance to any opposition.

The experience of Somalia and Ethiopia shows the cynicism of the Cold War. Initially the West backed Ethiopia and the Russians Somalia, but as the Dergue regime in Ethiopia became unstable, US aid began flowing into Somalia.

The US encouraged Somalia's war to annex the ethnically Somali Ogaden region of Ethiopia in 1977. The attack was defeated and the Barre regime became increasingly unpopular at home. Barre maintained power by playing off one clan against another.

The US continued to support Barre right through the 1980s. It was only when he was losing control in 1990 that he was abandoned. The region was no longer seen as so strategically important as the Cold War drew to a close.

Three rebel movements moved against Barre's government. Perhaps 60,000 people died in the ensuing civil war with a further 400,000 becoming refugees.

Barre was overthrown by the United Somali Congress, which rapidly collapsed into warring factions – one led by Muhammad Farah Aidid, who later became a hate figure for the US.

In late 1992 the US intervened directly in Somalia, in a United Nations sanctioned operation, Restore Hope. It used the excuse of a famine, which had devastated large areas of the country, while the civil war hampered distribution of relief supplies.

Though the famine had largely ended, many Somalis welcomed the arriving US troops. They saw the possibility of an end to the chaos that had engulfed the country and the rule by groups of fractious "warlords".

The experience of the next year changed the initial welcome to revulsion. On "Bloody Monday" US troops attacked a meeting of Somali elders attending peace talks with helicopter based missiles and cannons.

At least 54 people were killed. Disgust united Somali factions until the US were driven out in 1993.

Aidid gained enormous esteem for having resisted the US and declared himself president. However no central government was established.

The US has moved to work with various warlords as Somalia became more strategically important again in the developing "war on terror" and also a possible source of oil.

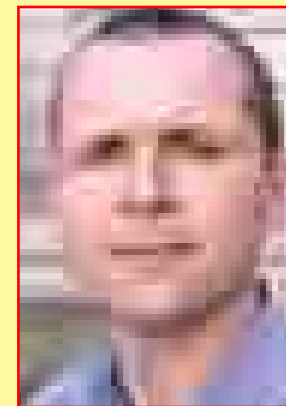
The current transitional government, formed in Kenya in 2004, is not the first, but the fifth. Previous attempts, with varying international sponsors, had been made in 1991, 1993, 1997 and 2000. The one thing they had in common was their lack of influence within Somalia itself.

It is striking that the latest intervention from the "international community" has materialised just when a relatively stable internal government has come into being – around the Union of Islamic Courts.

COMMENT

Coalition and the Left

By Richard Boyd Barrett



People Before Profit Alliance
General Election Candidate
for Dun Laoghaire

With the general election looming, debate is hotting up about the possible combinations of parties that might make up the next government.

Labour Party leader, Pat Rabbitte, has been under pressure on the question of a possible coalition with Fianna Fail, if his favoured coalition with Fine Gael and possibly the Green Party, fails to be elected. There has also been much debate, as to whether Fianna Fail might come to some arrangement with Sinn Féin, if the current Fianna Fail/PD government fails to get re-elected.

It is clear from the ambiguous responses from Pat Rabbitte when questioned about a possible deal with FF, that Labour would be willing to consider a major U-turn on this issue. Equally, the Sinn Féin leadership, while often critical of the current government, are refusing to close the door on a possible deal with Fianna Fail.

The argument for Left parties doing deals with parties of the right is that only by being in government can you hope to get some of your policies implemented. Coalition is the practical option, we are told, while nothing can be achieved in opposition. In fact, history and the experience of coalition suggest something quite different.

It was a Fine Gael and Labour Coalition in the 1980's, with a Labour Minister for Health, Barry Desmond, that oversaw the beginning of major health cuts and hospital bed closures that form the backdrop to the current crisis in the Health service. The same Fine Gael/Labour government attempted to impose VAT on children's shoes, an early example of the sort of vicious stealth taxes on the poor, which are so widespread today.

In 1992, Labour gained a record vote on the basis that it would "Break the Golden Circle" of cronyism and corruption under Fianna Fail, then promptly went into coalition with Fianna Fail. The budgets of Labour Finance Minister, Ruari Quinn in this coalition and then afterwards in the "Rainbow" with Fine Gael and Democratic Left, began the policy of major tax cuts for the wealthy and big business that were then adopted and accelerated by subsequent Fianna Fail/PD governments.

Maybe, the clearest example, of why coalition with right-wing parties will bring no change, can be seen in the policies of Dublin's

four local council's over recent years.

In 2005 Fine Gael and Labour established a coalition arrangement to take control of the four County Councils. Immediately, Labour, who had previously voted against bin charges switched and voted for them. Labour also began to mute its already weak opposition to privatisation and the plans of private developers or roll in behind them altogether.

On the issue of the Shell pipeline through Rosport in Mayo, the Labour Party leadership refused to back the call of local residents to put the gas terminal out to sea and have said nothing about the need to take the Corrib gas field back into public ownership.

Pat Rabbitte has also already ruled out any increase in taxes for big business and the super-wealthy, even though the dramatic cuts in taxes for the super-wealthy are the main reason for the crisis in our public services and the drive towards privatisation.

Rabbitte also recently, backtracked on a resolution from the Labour Party conference, which called for the removal of US troops from Shannon to be a condition of entry into any coalition government.

Even from the point of view of getting votes, it is now increasingly clear from opinion polls that, Labour is failing to increase its support because of its pre-election deal with Fine Gael and the widespread public feeling that is offers no principled alternative to the current government.

It is clear that a huge swathe of the public want a real alternative to policies to those of parties that have consistently favoured the interests of big business and the super-wealthy. This has been expressed in the rising support for Sinn Féin, Greens, Left Independents and Socialists.

Tragically, the Labour Party again and again dashes the hopes for change by putting either Fianna Fail or Fine Gael back in power. Even more tragically, the Greens, Sinn Féin and some of the Independents now appear willing to do the same.

Yet, while coalitions have consistently betrayed the hopes of people looking for change, real change has occurred in this country. It has happened not because of deals between parties but because of protests and movements of People Power.

It was mass protests over corruption in planning and big business; Irish government complicity in the Iraq war; Irish Ferrie and Gama workers; Rosport or local planning which have forced these issues to the top of the agenda.

If Labour, the Greens or Sinn Féin enter into coalition with either Fine Fail or Fine Gael, parties that are in bed with big business, they will inevitably find themselves in conflict with ordinary people in these kinds of battles.

This is why we need a real left alternative inside and outside the Dail that stands full square with the movements from below that are demanding the wealth of the Celtic Tiger be used for the benefit of all.

Victims of the Fashion Industry

By Niall Smyth

Recently Socialist Worker looked at the working conditions of young Irish workers in a popular clothes retailer. Many of these companies use expensive advertising campaigns to claim that their goods are 'fair trade' or that the workers were paid a 'living wage'. Reports show that these campaigns are nothing more than slick PR exercises and the reality is very different.

Recently, there have been a massive publicity campaigns undertaken by some of the world's largest retailers and manufacturers of clothing and other goods in an attempt to counteract bad press over the years over sweatshop labour and exploitation of workers in the developing world.

This trend comes as a direct response to the huge anti-capitalist, anti-globalisation protests, which broke onto the world stage in Seattle in 1999 and ultimately led to the inspiring anti-war response to the attack on Iraq, with millions coming out on the streets across the world.

Industry and business are desperate to tap into this counter-culture and general questioning of the system we live under, by attempting to absorb the language and symbols of these movements.

The most famous example is the Red Label, launched in the wake of the 'Make Poverty History' Campaign and facilitated by Sir Bono, with such noted champions of the oppressed and exploited of this world as Nike, Microsoft, American Express and Apple lining up to get a piece of the action.

Shell in the past ran advertisements around the theme of care for the environment and Nike, hardly a champion of exploited developing world workers, cynically exploited people's goodwill for a promotional opportunity by producing Nike anti-racism arm-bands. In the past six months alone we have had Nestle carry an ad campaign with slogans such as: 'be punctual...

leave work on time' and the 'classic: 'take a break...Fight Capitalism'. The image of Che Guevara was used by the private health insurance company Viva Health's to advertise their wares on television with talk of a 'revolution in healthcare'.

A number of projects selling clothes that are calling themselves 'ethical', 'alternative' or 'fairly produced' sprang up in the wake of the international anti-sweatshop movement. Road Jeans for example, carry a tag that claims that the people involved in the making of the garment were paid a living wage.

If you scratch the surface, however, you find that the standards and processes these initiatives use vary from one to the other. Some criteria set down as 'fair' only deal with the price paid to the producers and don't cover the working conditions of the workers in the factories or their pay.

In many cases companies use clever double-speak and PR spin to cloud the naked exploitation of workers in the developing world, while maintaining an image that claims to champion their cause.

One such example, recently exposed, was the +F50.6 Tunit football boot endorsed by Damien Duff, amongst others. The boots retail at between €180- 400 A report published in the Sunday Tribune on 10 September 2006, showed that workers at the factory in Indonesia, where the boot was produced, were being paid just €2 a day. Workers also claimed they were regularly exposed to verbal and physical abuse by their supervisors.

Duff was forced to defend his decision to endorse the brand of Adidas football boots, telling newspapers, he had 'a good working relationship with Adidas and I am satisfied that they are a responsible company that does business in a fair way.'

But the image of the 'fair' multinational company is undermined by claims that the



11,500 workers at the factory in question are paid just €68 a month, and that these workers rely on overtime to make ends meet.

Many of the sports stores, when challenged, spoke of ceasing to stock the brand. It appears, however, that 'poor sales' of the product not eth-

ics, was their main concern. What is most shocking is the response from Adidas and the management at the factory itself. When workers considered taking strike action they faced threats from the supervisors.

Adidas responded by saying that 'there were rumours that supervisors and management did threaten workers. But it was more in the context of advice, rather than a threat.' On why management locked the factory doors during a demonstration, the response was that the doors were not locked but 'they were just kept closed'.

In a recent report, aptly named Fashion Victims, War on Want found, that despite claims to the contrary, workers in Bangladesh are regularly working 80 hours a week for just 5p an hour, in potential death trap factories, to produce the cheap 'George' range of clothing for various UK retail outlets. Primark, Tesco and Asda all claimed

that those workers received a living wage. A living wage is calculated to be a minimum of £22 a month in Bangladesh.

Yet starting wages in the factories researched for War on Want's report were as little as £8 a month, barely a third of the living wage. Even better paid sewing machine operators received only £16 a month, which equates to 5p an hour for the 80 hours they regularly have to work each week. The minimum wage for garment workers in Bangladesh halved in real terms during the 1990s and many complain their pay is too low to cover food, housing and health costs.

Primark, Tesco and Asda also pledged that their suppliers must not be required to work more than 48 hours a week on a regular basis; but workers interviewed for the report can toil up to 96 hours a week. Factory owners have forced staff to work up to 140 hours month overtime, often unpaid, or face dismissal.

These retailers sell the products at low prices because women workers in places such as Bangladesh are being exploited. The argument by those in favour of the economic strategy of the multinationals has it that the cheaper that retailers can source their goods, the more profits are made and this feeds through to better pay and conditions are for its employees all over the world.

One look at how Tesco, however, shows this is not true. Tesco recently netted the largest profits in UK retail history at £2,000 million. Yet to look at all the automated machines popping up in all their stores, resulting in staff cuts you would think the company was impoverished.

The concern of the multinational retailer is not for its staff, nor for those making the goods it sells. Their concern is entirely focused on maximising profit. Their profits are so big because of the exploitation of workers in Brit-

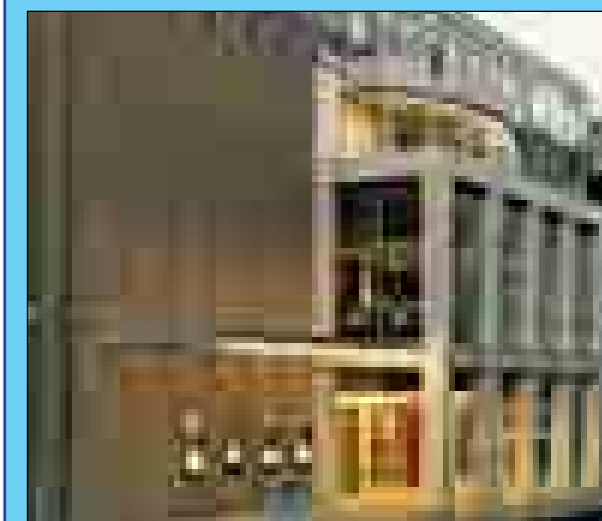
ain, of suppliers forced down to the lowest of margins and the exploitation of workers abroad, like in the sweatshops in Bangladesh.

The fact is, the poverty wages at home in many retail outlets and poverty abroad are connected; there is no separation. The hard pressed worker in any Irish supermarket, deprived of the basic right to sick pay may not be on the edge of starvation, but they share a common bond with the teenage girl in the sweatshop. The fight for better pay and conditions in Irish retail stores is also the fight for better pay and conditions for exploited factory workers of the developing world.

No one should be under any illusion that a new era of 'fair trade' exists in the world of the clothing multinational retailers.

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Sunday Tribune 3 September 2006 & 10 September 2006
War on Want 'Fashion Victims' <http://www.waronwant.org/fashionvictims>

New directions at the Abbey Theatre



Dublin's Abbey Theatre

By Paul O'Brien

The Abbey Theatre appears to have survived the financial and artistic crisis of the last few years.

A process of radical reorganisation has reinvigorated the company artistically and a proposal to move to the theatre to a new site in the Dublin Docklands in 2009 should provide it with the means to play a central role in the cultural life of the country.

As a national theatre the role of the Abbey has always been controversial and contradictory.

The state subsidy is both a blessing and a curse.

The pressure to conform or to reject work that is innovative or critical of its political masters is always present.

A state theatre must have room for the imagination.

The actor and cofounder of Field Day Stephen Rea has been highly critical of the Abbey: 'there was nothing going on in people's heads and a fear of something going on. It's not a building that makes the theatre but the ideas in peoples heads.'

Rea went on to criticise the Abbey for its failure to capitalise on the international profile they achieved with Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*.

The Abbey has also failed in its role as a touring company, to bring the best of the Theatre's productions around the country.

A new board of management is trying to reengage with the theatre community, to introduce new writers, actors and designers.

The Abbey must reassert its independence; it must be adventurous even at the risk of failure, that is what justifies the subvention.

It must try to resist the pressure of global culture and the ongoing commodification of culture.

Declan Kiberd, a member of the board, hopes that it can make room for the immigrant community:

'Will the first Polish-Irish playwright write in Polish or English and will it be produced in Warsaw or in the Abbey?'

The Abbey has been traditionally a writer's theatre and the new director Fiac

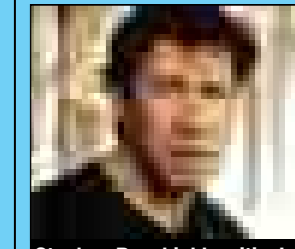
Mac Conghail hopes to commission work that will explore politics and re-engage with Irish society. As part of this process two highly respected writers Sam Shepard and Mark O'Rowe have submitted their new work to the Abbey.

The programme for the first six months of 2007 starts with Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, the definitive drama of politics and power. Arthur Miller's stunning indictment of political paranoia and misused power, *The Crucible*, ensures a continued programme of passionate and political work.

Perhaps the best news is the welcome return of Stephen Rea in the world premiere of American actor-writer Sam Shepard's *Kicking a Dead Horse*.

The Peacock's successful series of new writing and contemporary classic drama continues with Caryl Churchill's exploration of morality, modern science and the nature of familial love in *A Number*.

Despite the optimism there are still major problems in getting critical work produced in Ireland. Thomas Kilroy's *Christ Deliver Us*, which was commissioned by the Abbey Theatre in 2002, still has to find a production in Ireland.



Stephen Rea: highly critical

A proposal by Classic Stage Ireland to produce Kilroy's play - an adaptation of the 1890's classic *Spring Awakening* by the German playwright Franz Wedekind, has been refused funding by the Arts Council.

Christ Deliver Us explores sexual oppression in the orphanages and industrial schools of 1950's Ireland.

The play is not about abuse but is set against the background of Ireland in the 1950's, which Kilroy feels still has currency today. Kilroy, one of Ireland's finest though undervalued writers, deserves better.

An inconvenient history

The Belfast Docks Strike of 1907

The Belfast Docks Strike of 1907 saw Protestant and Catholic workers join together to take on the might of the Belfast Industrialists. At its height, with over 100,000 workers marching through the Shankill and up the Falls Road, the strike showed that a future free from sectarianism was possible.

The early part of the 1900s saw Belfast become one of the jewels in the crown of the British Empire. Some of the largest factories, the largest shipyards and the richest capitalists lived in the northern port city.

Anyone arriving in the city at that time was struck firstly by the largesse of the City Hall, originally set aside as a green space in a city choked by the fogs of pollution from the factories. The site of the 'People's Park' was commandeered by the city's industrialists and the money spent on building the opulent city hall.

This represented the unionist hierarchy who watched over the 'army of white slaves', Belfast's working class. The wealth of the industrialists was matched on the other end of the scale by extreme poverty. Wages were so low that children as young as 9 and 10 years old were forced to work in the mills and factories.

Workers lived in hovels, were paid poorly and entire families of workers without shoes was a common sight. Disease was rampant, with the growth of epidemics like typhoid and T.B. and life expectancy was low.

At the bottom of the labour market were the Dockers and the Coal Heavers. Protestant workers were employed on the cross channel docks where work



Big Jim Larkin addresses workers

was regular, on the deep sea docks where the employment was less regular and workers joined a 'cattle market' to acquire the tokens that would get you access to a days work, were the Catholics. That work consisted of 60-hour weeks, health and safety risks in dan-

gerous and deadly conditions.

The start of the twentieth century, across the world, saw a desire for change. There were major struggles in Germany, Russia and the US. At home, the Tories had suffered a heavy defeat in Britain in the 1906 general election.

James Craig, (future Northern Ireland Prime Minister) was defeated as the Unionist candidate in North Fermanagh by an independent standing for 'the people's cause against the landlords'. Even the Orange Order split in 1902 and the Independent Orange Or-

der was established, producing a manifesto that put the case for unity between Catholics and Protestants.

The labour and trade union movement was developing as a serious force in Belfast. Socialist ideas attracted wider and wider working class audiences. F H Crawford, the future UVF gunrunner, summed up the situation that existed in Belfast:

'We have lost a lot of staunch Unionist workmen in Belfast. They consider themselves betrayed by their leader, Mr Balfour, and have gone for the labour and socialist programmes. This is what we combat locally. The old Unionist enthusiasm is dead amongst the masses here. These are the facts and all in touch with the working men know it.'

The arrival of James Larkin, a Trade Union organiser for the National Union of Dock Labourers (NUDL) in January 1907, saw thousands of unorganised workers become Trade Unionists within a few months.

While the bosses, sensing the air of discontent, began to organise for a confrontation to break the newly emerging union, Larkin began to instil in workers 'a sense of discipline and confidence in how they went about defending themselves.' He argued against sectarian divisions and against the class structure, which condemned those in working class areas to a life of misery.

When the strike erupted in April and continued through May and July, it brought Belfast to a crisis so substantial that troops massed on the streets, firing into crowds of rioters killing local workers and bringing the strike to an inglorious end.

'The strike shows an alternative future is possible': Historian John Gray

The 1907 Docks strike had been neglected in works of modern history until historian John Gray devoted years of research to the subject.

His City in Revolt: James Larkin and the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907 (Blackstaff, 1985) quickly became a classic work of labour history.

This year marks the strike's hundredth anniversary; Socialist Worker spoke to John Gray about the events that year and his research.

Socialist Worker: 'How did you come to write about the strike?'

John Gray: 'In 1969 through to 1971 I was what some might consider an idealist. I thought Protestant and Catholic unity could change the world and I wanted to see that occur overnight. I started searching for information or evidence as to how that might be achieved and initially intended to write a couple of pages on anything I could find which would give weight to that idea.

'When I went for an afternoons reading in the old Shankill Newspaper Library, I was stunned by what I found. The information contained in the newspapers of the time suggested that the 1907 Docks strike brought about such a crisis that society's foundations were being shaken up.'

Socialist Worker: 'What were the key issues which lead to your research?'

John Gray: 'Well, here was a situation where the starving wretches of Belfast's poorest sections were not only taking on the cities industrialists, who quite frankly really did consider themselves firstly beyond reproach and secondly like captains of ships, but that at one point were controlling Belfast's streets.

'This mutiny actually united Protestant and Catholic workers in a

struggle for basic rights. The more I found out the more I could show that there was a history beyond that of sectarianism.'

Socialist Worker: 'Why did the strike erupt?'

John Gray: 'There are a number of reasons, the poverty obviously; workers in Belfast were paid a pittance and the work was dangerous and bloody. The treatment of working class people by employers was a major contributor.

'Apart from the refusal to pay decent wages, one example springs to mind that shows the contempt employers had for in particular the dockers. Wages were often paid in pubs on the basis that an employer would be bought drinks, which simply rubbed salt into the very real wounds carried by workers.

'To that already volatile cocktail, you can add the arrival of a supremely talented union agitator and organiser, James Larkin, which had an electrifying effect.

'I have suggested that Larkin's arrival and the ideas that he stood for was akin to Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* in the late 1700's which was considered to be "the Koran of Belfast" and which was read by everyone.

'Larkin's combination of the struggle for social justice, vociferous confidence in working class organisation and struggle and anti-sectarianism combined with his magnificent oratory meant that he and the union he lead very quickly became a force to be reckoned with in Belfast.'

Socialist Worker: 'What were the key moments in the dispute?'

John Gray: 'The 1907 docks strike was much more than a dispute, it was a crisis, actually in a very short space of time became a deep crisis and possibly in different circumstances could have been to a prelude to considerable social change.

'In some ways it can be seen as a



John Gray

very Irish story in the regard that it was a very sudden event, punctuated by electric moments, heroism, bravery, and ultimately failure, but even that doesn't best describe the situation. It was a struggle which unearthed the class nature of society and the way in which different social classes are forced to respond to crisis.

'In early 1907 there was a short sharp dispute in Kelly's workshops when the workforce walked out and held firm against intimidation and the introduction of blackleg labour.

'The employers could already see that a confrontation was looming and began to prepare accordingly.

'In May, a group of Dockers at the Belfast Steamship company whose main shareholder was a man called Gallagher, who at that time was a probably a household name, a self made millionaire through his tobacco interests, decided to walk of the job rather than work with non-union labour. Gallagher's company locked the men out and from that point a major confrontation ensued.

'The strike had everything, pickets fighting the police, blackleg carters being attacked in the streets, the police mutinying after one of their men was sacked for refusing to sit on

a cart to get it through the pickets, giant rallies at customs house square attended by Catholic and Protestant workers.

'The marching season that year saw great disturbances but not sectarian disturbances, class disturbances. The largest rally and march for working class unity saw over 100,000 people march through Sandy Row, the Shankill and the Falls, and was so huge that when it got to the city centre it had to be addressed at four different platforms. This shocked "respectable Belfast" to its core and when the police mutinied it was clear that the situation was very serious indeed.'

Socialist Worker: 'It is suggested that the strike was ultimately defeated by sectarianism. Was this the case?'

John Gray: 'The strike was defeated for a number of reasons, partly because the British leadership of the Trade Union movement refused to back the strike financially and therefore workers were crippled by poverty making the strike hard to maintain.

'They also sought to negotiate an end to the strike rather than fight for a victory.

'The bosses refused to negotiate and held firm, which meant that without financial help the war of attrition was wearing down workers resilience. But the crucial blow came with the intervention of the state forces.

'Thousands of troops were sent to Belfast, 9 battleships were stationed at Bangor, crack regiments set up camp in the Ormeau Park and then took to the streets. The shooting of rioters in the Falls Road was the beginning of the end for the strike.

'Sectarianism came into play, and the unionist bosses fought hard to make it come into play but considering how strong it had been it was testament to the resolve and the spirit of Belfast workers that they held firm against sectarian divisions for so long.'

Socialist Worker: 'You have said that the strike had been written out of history. This year marks the centenary. Is the commemoration of this event significant?'

John Gray: 'Absolutely, it's vital and we have the documentary produced late last year which was shown on TV which generated a lot of interest. But more importantly, we need to look at what this strike represents.

'We celebrate and commemorate all manner of events in Ireland. Many of them have an ecumenical slant attached to them or forced upon them. The Belfast 1907 Docks strike doesn't fit neatly into that method of looking at history.

'It was the coming together of the poorest sections of society to fight for basic human rights and to fight against the employers who exploited their labour.

'The abyss between the unskilled and even the skilled workers and those in Belfast today who have reaped the benefits from the so-called new prosperity is still as wide as it was then.

'People need to remember that in 1907 it was the year of prosperity in Belfast. Today, just as in that year whole swathes of society were being passed by, locked into poorly paid jobs in terrible conditions. The gap between rich and poor was the widest in Britain then and it is still the case today.

'We need to learn from that dispute that workers can unite across the sectarian divide, that Trade Union organisation based on struggle matters and that often when people decide to fight they expose the nature of the society in which they live and in the case of the 1907 Docks strike, show that an alternative future is possible.'

The documentary 'A tale of Two Cities' by Hotshot Films was shown on BBC TV late last year, see www.hotshotfilms.com. See also, John Gray, *City in Revolt: James Larkin and the Belfast Dock Strike of 1907* (Blackstaff, 1985).

YOUR THOUGHTS ON...

Le Pen's fascists on the run in 'Second Life'



By Keks Klata,
Political Officer, Second Life Liberation Army

Class struggle spread from the real world to hyperspace last week, as a popular online universe called Second Life was gripped with running battles between anti-fascist protesters and the French far right.

Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National appalled many Second Life users when it opened an office in the virtual world's Porcupine district.

Anti-fascists quickly organised and protesters from the French group AntiFN and from the Second Life Left Unity group descended on the FN. Wearing anti-fascist t-shirts and brandishing placards they loudly demanded that the fascists be banned from the Second Life 'metaverse'.

As the FN raked protesters with gunfire, some responded with bombs, flares and rockets: one inspired protester launched a 'pig grenade'. By the morning after the battle, the anti-fascists had won a limited victory: the FN abandoned its Porcupine office, only to set up again in the district of Axel, where protests are continuing.

It is not at all surprising that an online game like Second Life should witness scenes of escalating political conflict. Over recent months the number of subscribers to this three-dimensional universe has soared from several hundred thousand to a staggering 2.7 million. And real contradictions are mounting.

On the one hand, an economic boom in Second Life has seen several residents make significant sums of real money. Land can be bought and sold.

German businesswoman Ailin Graef was lauded in the bosses' financial papers last year when her Second Life character (or 'avatar') Anshe Cheung reportedly made a million dollars through land speculation in the game.

As residents can build objects in Second Life and nominally retain intellectual property rights in them, land and commodities can be bought and sold for 'Linden Dollars', which are exchangeable for real-world currency.

It's a petit-bourgeois dream: a free market economy in which millions of small producers are not alienated from the means of production, own their own tools, and in which there is no proletariat in the strict sense.

On the other hand, the claims of Second life owners Linden Labs that the virtual world is 'owned and controlled by its residents' are being exposed as utterly false. In reality Linden Labs exercises complete control and there are no democratic institutions across SL.

Residents' influence is restricted to the content they generate – including buildings, games, clothing and other products – and their activity in the market. They do not elect a government; there is no parliament; there is not even a formal consultative body that could negotiate on the residents' behalf.

In-world producers are anxious about what this really means for their small businesses; others watch nervously as large real world capitalists like Reebok and Reuters set up in Second Life. All are concerned about what might happen if Linden labs sold out to Yahoo, Microsoft, News Corp or – God forbid – Disney.

That's why the Second Life Liberation Army has launched a struggle for a democratic revolution in Second Life. After commencing guerrilla actions against real world capitalists at the opening of the Reebok and American Apparel Stores (remember, Second Life residents have the right to bear arms, and no-one can get hurt!), the SLLA is now aiming to launch a mass campaign for democratic rights.

The anti-FN action shows clearly how a combination of mass mobilisation and simulated guerrilla warfare can achieve results in a virtual world.

EVENT

REVIEWS
Big Brother's racism and bullying

By Lorcan Collins

It has been a fairly exciting two weeks for couch potatoes, armchair psychologists and Celebrity Big Brother addicts with brutal scenes of bullying and allegations of racism.

It would appear that Jade "Kebab" Goody who is famous for once being a contestant on Big Brother led a campaign of harassment against Shilpa Shetty who is a famous Bollywood actress.

Tagging on to the tail of Jade is fellow celebrity and model Danielle Lloyd. She was Miss Great Britain in 2006 but was stripped, if you'll excuse the pun, of her title for appearing in Playboy and for dating one of the Miss Great Britain 2006 judges, footballer Teddy Sheringham, which may have, but I'm not saying so, influenced his voting decision.

The third member of the Jade Gang is Jo O'Meara, former singer and all round entertainer with chart-toppers and one of the all time great bands of the late nineties S Club 7. The S, I discovered, long after everyone else, stands for Shite.

Now, Jade you see, had a couple of members of her family in the house. Her mother, who is famous for being Jade's mother and her boyfriend who is a celebrity because, you've guessed it, he is Jade's boyfriend.

This automatically put her in a leadership position especially as having been a former contestant she knew the ropes. Jade's mother, Jackey, was very intolerant of Shilpa and seemed to be incapable of pronouncing her name. She referred to her as 'The Princess' and 'The Indian' and was very hostile towards her.

Jackey was evicted from the house barefoot and with her t-shirt pulled up around her neck because she was wearing cream on her back because her skin was covered in carpet burn. Classy, eh?

Then the bullying began in earnest, spurred on by Jack, who had referred to Shilpa with crude and facile language.

Throughout the ordeal Shilpa verged on emotional meltdown but most of the time managed to keep her calm. The bullying was constant. Sometimes it manifested itself in full-blown screaming and more often Shilpa was a constant object of derision, with the three girls picking her apart behind her back.

At one stage Jade referred to her as 'Shilpa Poppadom', which got her in hot water with Big Brother. In another row Jade roared 'you need elocution lessons. You need a day in the slums. Go to those people who look up to you and be real. You fucking fake.'

The gas thing is that Shilpa's command



Big Brother contestant Jade

of English is vastly superior to Jade's and considering the amount of plastic surgery that Goody has undertaken it beggars belief that she would have the gall to accuse anyone else of being fake.

Danielle, who is a friend of Jade's in the real world, reckoned that Shilpa wanted 'to be white' and called her 'a dog'. One day Shilpa roasted a chicken and Danielle commented that 'they eat with their hands in India, don't they. Or is that China?' She went on to say 'You don't know where those hands have been.'

Throughout the week one could easily have fallen under the impression that the other housemates had fallen into some celebrity black hole, as they appeared to be unaware of Shilpa's ordeal.

Where was Dirk, her A-Team knight in shining armour who had said earlier that he would marry Shilpa and had spent many flirtatious moments with her? Did he fashion an Armoured Vehicle complete with anti-racist machine gun and anti-bullying ballistic missiles?

No, he sat in the garden smoking a cigar. How about Germaine Jackson? Did he swoop in singing a cover of his brother's classic Ebony and Ivory thus ensuring racial harmony in the house? No, he just smiled and mentioned something about God and needing to put more gel in his hair.

You see that's how bullying carries on in offices and in schools and on factory

floors. People are afraid to confront it for fear that the bullying will then be directed at them.

What I'd be concerned about is that this behavior was carried out by people fully aware that all their words and actions were being filmed.

So who were the winners and losers during this whole debacle? Well, Jade is out of the house and will need to work very hard on her public image. She's doing well already and has claimed that there was 'no bag of chips on my shoulder about Shilpa'.

Shockingly, she's hoping to sign up for some 'electrocution' lessons. Danielle's stock is down to say the least: she's reputedly been dropped from a couple of modeling contracts and if I was Teddy I'd seriously consider my relationship.

Jo, well she's probably just going back to obscurity where she feels most contented I'd imagine.

But one clear winner is Shilpa, the victim who is (as I write) the 4/9 favourite to win the show (Danielle and Jo are 80/1). But of course the really big winners and Endemol and Channel Four who received record complaints, record viewing figures and record expensive text votes. It's no wonder they did not intervene too early.

Lorcan Collins is an author, historian and freelance journalist.

A despicable episode in Irish history

By Paul O'Brien

In James Joyce's Ulysses, the schoolteacher Mr Deasy remarks that the reason there is no discrimination against Jews in Ireland was 'because she never let them in'.

This strict immigration control was not the case, however, with Nazi party members in the 1930s, several of whom were welcomed into the country and given important positions in the Irish civil service and the semi-state sector.

The Fianna Fail government appointed Nazi party members to management positions in the ESB, Bord na Mona, the National Museum and the Irish Army.

The anti-Semitic views that dominated the Department of Foreign Affairs during that period resulted in the shameful refusal by the Irish government to accept Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi persecution.

The Department advised the government that the alien nature of Jews would upset the social and cultural harmony of the country.

Not even an intervention by the Vatican could persuade the government to secure the entry of a number of Jewish doctors who had converted to Catholicism.

Even more extraordinary is the revelation by Cathal O'Shannon in the recent Hidden History programme on RTE that the Irish Government had given refuge to fleeing Nazis and their collaborators after the war.

In the two-part documentary O'Shannon reckons that between 100 and 200 hundred Nazis passed through or took up residence in Ireland after the war.

Some had evaded prison, even death sentences, for the crimes they committed. Andrija Artukovic, a mass murderer, responsible for the genocide of thousands of Jews, Serbs and Roma in Croatia, found



Cathal O'Shannon

refuge here and lived out the rest of his life undisturbed in Dublin.

He was allowed to come here despite the fact that the government were aware of his crimes.

The then Taoiseach Eamon de Valera advised one Nazi to use a pseudonym, as it would then be easier to deny his presence here.

Religion was important too. Many of the Nazis were Catholics, fleeing retribution for their crimes from the newly communist states of Eastern Europe. They were

helped to escape by the Catholic Church in Ireland, Poland and France who were extremely anti-communist. The Church was prepared to overlook the crimes of the Nazis in the war against communism.

The contrast with the attitude to Jewish refugees returning from the concentration camps remains stark.

No sympathy was shown to the homeless Jews and who were refused entry. What we did was inexcusable. Cathal O'Shannon has highlighted a despicable episode in Irish history that needed exposure.

DUBLIN SOUTH EAST

Poolbeg: Another land rip-off?

By Rory Hearne



People Before Profit Alliance General Election Candidate for Dublin South East

The problems around the Irish Glass Bottle Site and the Fabrizia development stem from the lack of accountability in planning and politics, corruption and profit. The tribunals showed the extent of corruption that existed in the 1980s.

I do not believe that corruption has disappeared. The relationship between developers, builders and politicians is still too close. What sort of sick society is this where developers can use tax and land title loopholes to allow them get their hands on state land and sell it for millions in profit?

Why did the workers from IGB have to lose their jobs? It was so millions in profit could be made from selling the land.

We do not know what has happened in relation to ownership of the Irish Glass Bottle site and how the AIB were able to sell land that was marked for sports use to Liam Carroll. We do not know if Dublin City Council officials knew what was happening or if they were involved.

Questions have to be asked about how appropriate is it that a State development agency, the DDDA, is in a partnership with the developer Mr. Bernard McNamara. How do the state and a developer have the same interests? The state should be trying to extract the maximum possible benefit for the public from developers in terms of social and affordable housing, community gain and facilities.

If McNamara does not fulfil the DDDA's requirements on provision of social and affordable housing will the DDDA risk losing their money and pull out of the deal even

though it will go against their own terms?

Who decided that taxpayers money would be used to help McNamara purchase the IGB site?

Bernard McNamara is a former Fianna Fail councillor; is supposed to be in receipt of €46 million in annual rent from the state and owns Superquinn, the Shelbourne Hotel and the Lifestyle sports shops. A key Fianna Fail fundraising event is the Galway Races, where they make millions from Irelands rich and powerful. McNamara was in attendance at the Fianna Fail tent at the Galway Races last year.

We might know more about the relationships between property developers and politicians and dodgy deals if Frank Connolly's Centre for Public Inquiry was still up and running. Michael McDowell, however, was influential in getting it shut with his personal attacks on Frank Connolly.

Perhaps the inquiry was finding out too much critical information about government decisions like its support for Shell in Mayo. The centre was investigating property transactions in Dublin's Docklands when it was shut. We might know a lot more about the IGB scandal if it was still open.

There are also questions on issues of tax avoidance that accompanied the IGB deal. It appears that for tax reasons the sale of the site will be done by transferring shares in a company. This could avoid the 9% investment property stamp duty and instead only have to pay a 1% share duty.

This deal would save the consortium €32million (8% of €412million). Two thousand first time buyers will pay over €70million in stamp duty this year, so if this information is accurate the IGB deal alone could avoid paying half of what first time buyers will contribute in the entire year in stamp duty.

This all shows that corruption has a consequence. That is, the loss of sports facilities for young people, local jobs in the glass factory, recycling facilities and the provision of social and affordable housing.

But there is an alternative. The state could have asserted its right to the

ownership of the land and developed it in full consultation and participation of the community. In this way the community would have decided what would be the best type of development for the community, if any development should happen at all.

Instead, first time buyers paying crazy amounts for apartments and housing will provide huge profits for the developers. The sea front and environment will be seriously impacted upon.

I believe if any development is to go ahead it should be family friendly, low rise and environmentally appropriate. Of course that will require decisions to be made by politicians and planners that go against what their developer friends want.

In the upcoming election we have an opportunity to get politicians and a system much more accountable to the people. But people also have to stand up and campaign to ensure the area is developed according to what the people want, not the developers.

Campaigning will have to continue beyond the elections along the same lines as we have done with the incinerator, and has been done in Dun Laoghaire over the baths.

Contact Rory at 086 1523542 www.myspace.com/roryhearne

BIN TAX:

Keep up the non-payment



Rory Hearn and other campaigners fighting the bin tax

By Rory Hearn

Many people came out last week to help throw rubbish in the bin truck in the New Houses area of Ringsend.

This shows the campaign is going strong. We met council reps

before Christmas and demanded the brown bins be taken back and the weekly service returned.

We did get the brown bins taken back but the council is refusing to return the weekly service. We are working to spread

the campaign back throughout Ringsend.

Across the city tens of thousands of people still refuse to pay. That's why the council haven't been able to bring in water charges.

The council also plans to privatise the bin

service.

That will mean even higher charges and no waivers.

The election is coming up. We are calling for a vote for candidates who support non-payment and are against the bin tax.

DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL

Harney drops the axe on health care again



By Brid Smith, People Before Profit Alliance in Ballyfermot (Candidate for Dublin South Central)

Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children in Crumlin is being closed unnecessarily. Mary Harney says it should move all of its services to the Mater.

Unplanned private for-profit hospitals like the Hermitage clinic in Lucan are being built without regard for the health needs of people who live

in the area. It will provide a restricted level of services at high cost.

Public Hospitals in the Irish Health Service are short more than 3000 beds and community Clinics are underfunded. Crumlin Hospital should be kept open. Whether the Mater or Tallaght Hospitals are chosen as the new site for 3rd level Paediatric services, Crumlin Hospital should be maintained as a 2nd level paediatric unit and the Hospital's services expanded to include at least adult A&E, Medical and Surgical services.

St James' and Tallaght Hospitals are already overcrowded with long waiting lists. Closing Crumlin Hospital in these circumstances would be criminal.

All candidates in the general election should be asked to support Crumlin Hospital by demanding an urgent plan to expand its

UNNECESSARY DELAYS AT SENIOR CITIZENS COMPLEX

A state-of-the-art complex built to house 32 senior citizens on the Ballyfermot Road has been delayed from opening for the sixth month running.

Last September residents of the old Cornamona estate were waiting anxiously to move into their new accommodation beside the church. They have viewed their new dwellings and are very impressed and happy with them.

But they are still not in them.

In September they were told there would be a month's delay until October before the building was ready, again another months delay in October, November, December and January.

Now they have just

been informed that the completion of the building is delayed yet again for another month.

According to Brid Smith, 'a number of the residents contacted me in confidence and are both dismayed and anxious about this move. The delays are unacceptable. When public money has been spent on such an important development why can the builders not be forced to get the job done?'

'Six months is a long time in the life of a pensioner and this delay was suffered all over the Christmas period. Many of the residents practically have their bags packed since September with extra bedclothes, linen, some furniture and clothes already stored

away.

'It would appear that the people who are involved in the move are not so high on the priority of the Council as to warrant treating this as an emergency situation at this stage.

'Some of the residents are very distressed about the situation and are beginning to doubt if they will ever see their new homes. I believe that their voices should be heard by the Council who must insist that the builders fulfil their contract without any further delay and at whatever extra cost that brings on the builders themselves. Our senior citizens may not have a strong lobby group but they deserve better treatment.'

Public Meeting

Where is OUR Democracy?

It's time for a real alternative

Speakers:

Michael No. Dwyer
 Raymond No. Walsh
 Dr. Andrew McManis
 Paddy Lynch
 Rory Hearn

8pm. Free drinks in the bar. 100% Free Will Contribution

SAVE TARA CAMPAIGN

Dr. M. Ní Bhrolcháin of SaveTara has written to the Minister and the Taoiseach pointing out that the works being undertaken on behalf of the National Roads Authority / Meath County Council along the section of the proposed route of the M3 motorway in the Gabhra Valley, near to the Hill of Tara, in Co. Meath are in violation of the assurances previously given by the Minister.

'Rath Lugh is an important national monument in its own right but, as an

integral part of Tara, its significance is even greater. It stands as a sentry over the Gabhra Valley guarding the northern and north-western approaches to the Hill and overlooks other nearby recorded archaeological monuments, namely a barrow and souterrain.

'It is extremely likely that other monuments that are not visible on the surface are also found within its immediate vicinity. Photographs show the



destruction at the base of Rath Lugh: the stratified archaeological sediments can be seen in the photo.

'If there were archaeological supervision such

works would have been brought to a halt at the first sight of potential archaeological features.

Heavy machinery, whether supervised or not, should not have been used or permitted in this area.

'Why is it necessary to commence such work under cover of darkness?'

This remains a mystery to all except, of course, those who sanctioned the work in the first instance.

Health and Safety concerns aside, it is unlikely that someone will see freshly disturbed archaeological features in the dark.'

Save Tara is asking the NRA / MCC to halt all work immediately along this section of the M3 as The PPP has not yet been signed.

We ask that an enquiry be held into why such work was authorised and who was responsible for approving it.

To support the campaign see <http://www.savetara.com>

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The Minimum Wage

By John Kavanagh

There exists in Law both in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland a statutory minimum wage.

In the Republic of Ireland the National Minimum Wage is €8.30 per hour with effect from 1 January 2007 for an experienced adult worker.

An experienced adult worker is an employee who has any work experience in any two years since turning age 18.

Employees who are in their first year of employment since turning 18 are entitled to €6.64 per hour and employees who are in their second year of employment since turning 18 are entitled to €7.47 per hour both effective from 1 January 2007.

Employees who are under 18 years of age are entitled to €5.81 per hour with effect from 1 January 2007.

The Minimum Wage Act applies to all employees in the Republic of Ireland except in the following circumstances:

Close relatives of the employer such as: father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister.

Any employee under going structured training, such as an apprenticeship (other than hairdressing apprenticeships).

Complaints regarding breaches of the National Minimum Wage Act 2000 can be made in confidence to the Employment Rights section, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Davitt House Adelaide Rd. Dublin 2.

The Department's Inspectors, who have powers to enter places of work and examine records, do not reveal without the consent of

the person making the complaint, whether the inspection is a routine one or is a result of a complaint. Complaints regarding minimum wage may also be referred to a Rights Commissioner.

The minimum wage in Northern Ireland is the same as the rest of the UK and is a legal right which covers almost all workers above compulsory school leaving age. There are different minimum wage rates for different groups of workers as follows:

The main rate for workers aged 22 and over is £5.35 an hour effective from 1 October 2006.

The development rate for 18-21 year olds is £4.45 an hour and the development rate for 16-17 year olds is £3.30 an hour.

16 and 17 year old apprentices are exempt from the young workers rate.

In Northern Ireland: a person is no longer of compulsory school age after the 30 June of the school year in which their 16th birthday occurs.

The National Minimum Wage Helpline is 0845 6000 678. This is the number to ring if you think you are being underpaid and wish to make a complaint.

All complaints about underpayment of the National Minimum Wage are treated in the strictest confidence and callers may remain anonymous if they wish to do so.

However in reality the best and most effective way of finding out what exactly your rights are, how to enforce them, how and where to process complaints in relation to your employment and how to protect yourself in work is by joining a Trade Union.

Got an industrial relations question for John Kavanagh? Send it to editor@swp.ie

ABOLITION 1807-2007

A Bicentenary conference to mark the abolition of the slave trade will be held in St Patrick's College College, Drumcondra, Dublin 9, on 9 and 10 February 2007.

The conference includes workshops and lectures on historic and contemporary issues of slavery by the Africa Centre, Amnesty International (Irish Section), Trócaire, Anti-Slavery International and St. Patrick's College. It is funded by Irish Aid.

See <http://services.spd.dcu.ie/chre/Events.htm>

IRISH ANTI WAR MOVEMENT

Stepping the action up a gear

The 'surge' by George Bush in Iraq has promoted a renewed surge of protest around the world. In Ireland the Anti-War Movement has called for renewed protests.

In a press statement they pointed out that 'despite the fact that Bush claims that a US withdrawal would result in chaos in the region, even the pro war Brookings Institute has produced evidence that the US occupation is the problem not the solution.'

'The US administration and unfortunately most of the media have suggested that the conflict consists mostly of sectarian attacks on civilians. Although the Bremer constitution established a sectarian basis to the government, and appalling loss of life has occurred in sectarian attacks, the true picture is more hopeful.'

'Recent figures published by Brookings show monthly attacks running at about 4,000 of which two and a half thousand are on Coalition forces and about 800 each on Iraqi forces and civilians.'

'The majority of Iraqis oppose the US occupation of their country. Indeed according to the Brookings Institute 61% of Iraqis approve of attacks on US-led forces.'

The IAWM further argued that 'the US-led occupation is the poison that fuels the violence in Iraq. It cannot play any useful role in promoting peace and reconciliation other than announcing its

withdrawal.

'For these reasons the Irish Anti War Movement calls for an immediate withdrawal of US/UK troops from Iraq.'

'We further call for an end to Irish government collaboration in this war. The IAWM and its allies will be campaigning vigorously over the next few months to make Shannon an Election Issue.'

The IAWM plans a major National Demonstration on the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis on March 24 at Citywest, Dublin.'

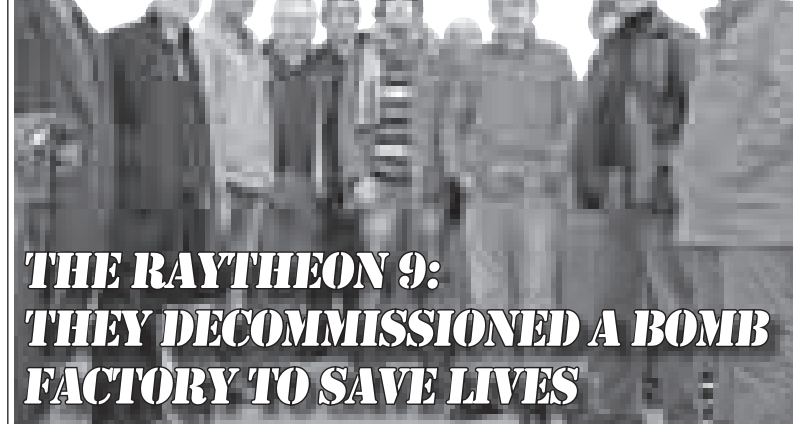
Kevin Wingfield, Steering Committee member of the IAWM added, 'I believe the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis on 24 March in Dublin provides an opportunity for all those opposed to the use of Shannon Airport by the US Military to make their voice heard.'

Join the Irish Anti-War Movement at <http://irishantiwar.org/index.adp>

Caoimhe Butterly is touring Ireland with a talk accompanied by slides depicting how people are trying to rebuild their lives after Israel's war on Lebanon. Seminar in TCD on women in Iraq Friday, 26 January, 12.30 to 2pm, IIS Seminar Room C6.002, TCD
AWI meeting in Belfast at 7pm on Monday 29 January, Room 307, The Peter Froggatt Centre (PFC), Queen's University of Belfast.

RAYTHEON NINE

ON TRIAL FOR RESISTING BUSH'S WAR



THE RAYTHEON 9: THEY DECOMMISSIONED A BOMB FACTORY TO SAVE LIVES

PLUS: SHOWING OF BACK FROM BEIRUT

Film produced by Derry Anti War Coalition including Raytheon 9 members on a delegation to Lebanon during November of 2006

Followed by discussion with:

Ciaran Gallagher (Raytheon 9)
Dr Abdullah Sayegh (Lebanese community in Ireland)

Thursday 8th February, 7.30pm sharp
ATGWU Hall, Middle Abbey St

Organised by the Irish Anti War Movement

www.irishantiwar.org

For details of the Raytheon Nine tour in cities and colleges visit ww.irishantiwar.org

Marxism 2007: A festival of Resistance

A weekend political festival organised by the Socialist Workers Party March 9,10,11 in the ATGWU Union Hall, 55-57 Middle Abbey St, Dublin 1

A weekend of socialist politics, art and culture in the heart of Dublin. Debates on everything from Global Warming to the Left movements in Latin America to the new US offensive in the Middle East.

Tickets: €20/€10/€5 from (01) 872 2682 or buy online at www.swp.ie

Highlights include:

★ Director John Boorman and others discuss Cinema and

social change

★ David McWilliams and Kieran Allen debate Class and the Celtic Tiger: How is Ireland changing?

★ Frank Connolly and Maura Harrington discuss the corruption of the Irish elite in With a little help from my friends - Corruption and the Irish ruling class

★ Duncan Stewart, Eamon Ryan TD, Richard Douthwaite and Owen McCormack ask An inconvenient question: Can Capitalism stop Global Warming?

★ Richard Boyd Barrett, Haifa Zangana and a speaker from Palestine ask are we seeing a re-run of Vietnam with The US's gamble for power in Iraq

★ Bernadette McAliskey looks at the politics of

Northern Ireland since the Peace Process in Northern Ireland: From peace to privatisation
★ John Rees, Cllr Catherine Connolly and others will discuss the rise of the new left in Ireland and internationally
★ Shane Cullen, Jessie Jones and Brian Maguire discuss Art, politics and activism

The weekend will also see many cultural spaces and events.
★ Saturday evening has Poetry and Resistance night and a Soul Club.
★ A Slow Food Café will be available all weekend at the conference together with an Art and Culture Space that will have film screenings, theatre of the oppressed and impromptu discussions.



WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

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

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

REVOLUTION

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

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

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

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

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

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

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

working class.

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

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

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

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

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

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

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

Join the Socialists

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

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

Phone.....



SWP

NON-PAYMENT CAN STOP THE WATER CHARGES

By Eamonn McCann

The most common objection to the non-payment of water charges campaign is that people might be left in the lurch when and if they are taken to court.

Many recall the anti-internment rent and rates strike of the 1970s. Back then, thousands who took a non-payment stance were abandoned by the very people—mainly the SDLP—who had published leaflets and newspaper adverts assuring them that ‘no arrears will be payable.’

Trade Unions Against Water Charges—the group which is posting leaflets to every household in the North urging non-payment—is well aware of widespread concern about a possible repeat of this experience.

It's with that in mind that the unions have taken the best legal advice available and are in the process of making arrangements to ensure that all who join in non-payment have proper backing and representation.

The Repayment of Debt Act, under which rent and rates strikers were pursued in the 1970s, has been repealed. This doesn't mean that the Water Company—or, to be accurate, Crystal Alliance, the private debt-collection agency employed by the Water Company—won't come after non-payers. It does mean that they won't be able to do it as easily as in the '70s.



The fact that the Water Company will remain in Government hands for two or three years won't change its status as a private company.

Under the Northern Ireland Office's plans the water service will be handed over to a Government-owned company on 1 April, the same day as charges come in. The unions' legal advice is clear-cut: this company will NOT be able to issue 'deduct at source' orders to anybody. Nor will the debt collectors they have hired to do their dirty work.

What the Water Company and their squad of enforcers will have to do is take each non-payer individually to the Small Claims Court and seek an order against them. Then, if the individual defies the order and still doesn't pay, the company will have to go back to the courts and seek an enforcement order (the legal

advice is available in full on www.waterchargesnonpayment.com).

The Small Claims Courts operate on the same basis as Employment Tribunals in that you don't need a lawyer to argue your case. Any citizen can be represented by a friend or by a trade union or community activist.

Trade Unions Against Water Charges aims to have a network in place across the North to take on this task. The intention is to ensure that nobody is left unrepresented, and that every individual case is fought all the way through.

If this is achieved, the potential will have been created to clog up the court system to an extent that will make the enforcement of pay-

ment impossible.

The fact that the Water Company will remain in Government hands for two or three years won't change its status as a private company. From 1 April, it will be incorporated under company law and will operate in the marketplace like any other firm.

Thus, it won't be representatives of the State, who will be sending out bills and then trying to make us pay.

It will be a private company working for another private company. They will have no right whatsoever to threaten anybody with anything.

In the Irish News, columnist Newton Emerson suggested

that if any of the enforcers come to our doors demanding payment, we should call the police.

Not everybody will be comfortable calling the police. Some might want to call a trusted member of the community instead. Or just send the chancers away with a clip on the ear.

The situation now is very different from the circumstances around the rent and rates strike more than 30 years ago.

Non-payment can stop water charges. Nobody has come forward with any alternative strategy for stopping the charges. So, let's do it. Isn't it about time somebody put manners on the perma-tanned twerp, Peter Hain?