

Socialist Worker

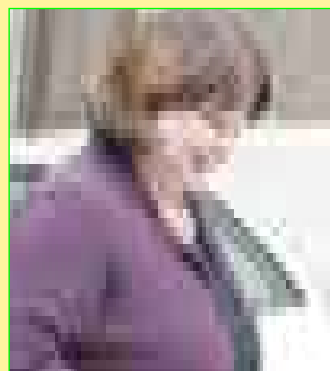
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IRAQ:

'Surge' grows but Bush faces defeat



Hands off Iran

By Kevin Wingfield

Four years after the George W Bush launched the conquest of Iraq, the cost in lives and misery is apparent.

The authoritative medical journal *The Lancet* estimate of 650,000 Iraqis killed as a result of the war is widely known among those opposed to war. But other figures underline the grim reality.

About two million Iraqis have fled the bloodshed in their country since 2003, mainly to Syria and Jordan. An additional 1.7 million are believed to have been displaced within Iraq.

Everyday 5,000 people leave Iraq. In 2007, one in ten Iraqis is expected to leave the country.

The Catholic aid agency Caritas Iraq says that malnutrition rates have risen in Iraq from 19 percent before the US-led invasion to a national average of 28 percent four years later.

Over eleven percent of newborn babies are born underweight in Iraq today, compared with a figure of four percent prior to the invasion and occupation (a figure already boosted in 2003 due to sanctions).

The war has been a disaster for the people of Iraq, but now the US is facing the prospect of a

bitter defeat.

In January, Bush announced a desperate last throw of the dice with a 'surge' of 21,500 troops. But already it is clear that many more are being planned to augment this number. Bush announced in the last few weeks that about 4,700 support troops will join the 21,500 he ordered in January.

And the *Boston Globe* recently reported that U.S. commanders in Iraq have requested another army brigade on top of five already on the way, which will bring the planned expansion of U.S. forces so far to close to 30,000 troops.

These are in addition to the estimated 130,000 US troops already in Iraq.

But the demand for a further army brigade to be sent will entail even more troops, a senior Pentagon official closely involved in the war planning disclosed.

'You cannot put five combat brigades in there and not have more aviation guys, military police, and intelligence units,' he said.

The additional troops designated for the 'surge' are expected to be in Baghdad and western Anbar province by May.

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Make Shannon an Election Issue

THE THINGS THEY SAY

'Evidence of major improvements in health is now mounting up every day. The huge energy [Minister for Health] Mary Harney has put into this job is paying increasing dividends.'

Tánaiste Michael McDowell at the launch of a PD pre-election poster campaign on health.

'It does not mean just because we lived in Clondalkin he was a drug addict or a drug dealer or anything else. He was not—far from it.'

Christine O'Toole whose son was killed in a road accident. It was reported that he was 'known to the gardai'. It subsequently emerged that the car that allegedly hit him was driven by an off duty garda.

'The risk posed to human health by dioxin inhalation from a fire in the waste bunker is deemed to be insignificant.'

A Dublin City Council submission to An Bord Pleanála regarding the possibility of a major accident at the proposed Poolbeg incinerator.

'I'm not naturally affiliated with either the orange or green traditions here and so my home is left-of-centre social politics.'

Hong Kong-born Anna Lo, newly elected Alliance Party member for South Belfast

'My message to those trabajadores y campesinos is, you have a friend in the United States of America. We care about your plight.'

George Bush as he embarked on tour of Latin America, which included visits to Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Guatemala and Mexico.

'No, Mr Bush, you cannot trample and degrade the memory of our ancestors. This is not your ranch in Texas.'

Members of the Mayan tribe prepare a cleansing ceremony at the ancient Guatemalan ruins visited by Bush on his tour of Latin America.

'In over 40 years of study of the region, I have rarely seen a moment where there is as much mistrust of the United States and as strong a rejection of the U.S. posture in the world.'

Arturo Valenzuela, a former Clinton official who heads the Latin America program at Georgetown University.

'We are the antithesis of Bush and we have to be [because] Bush is the empire, the symbol of imperialism, the imperial eagle. We are the shout of rebellion and of freedom.'

Hugo Chavez, beginning his anti-Bush tour.

'When Chávez says he wants to help Haiti, he really means it and he proves it. He does not do like some rich countries which have to humiliate you before giving you anything.'

One of the many supporters in the slums of Haiti who turned out to greet Chavez on his recent visit to the country.

'Certainly, the army didn't care. I didn't even find out that he was injured until he called me himself from a hospital in New Jersey.'

'This is how we treat our soldiers—we give them nothing. They're good enough to go and sacrifice their life and we give them nothing.'

'You need to fix the system.'

Annette McLeod, wife of Cpl Wendell McLeod, who received a head injury in Iraq, gives evidence to a US congressional committee investigating conditions in military hospitals.

'A very simple answer. I am totally and fundamentally opposed to the legalisation of any drugs in any respects.'

Bertie Aherne responds to a question on legalising drugs.

'Following detailed consideration it is the commission's initial view that the advertisement is contrary to Section 10(3) of the Radio and Television Act, 1988, which prohibits advertising directed towards a political end.'

BCI statement demanding the withdrawal of ads for the Trocaire Lenten campaign which highlights gender inequality.

'If I'd a licensed shotgun, I'd blow the head off anyone that came into my house.'

District Court Judge Seán McBride, speaking in Monaghan District Court.

'Where is it written that we should be entitled to a pay rise every year?'

FF TD Jim McDaid says pay should be frozen under social partnership for the next three years.

'This will cause a domino effect on the world economy. There could be more bloodbath to come.'

Lee Cheng Hool of EON Capital, on fears that the slowdown of the U.S. economy and mortgage markets is having an international impact.

'That is something you should retain. It is a very, very powerful instrument in the run-up to the election and immediately following it.'

Caoimhghin O Caolain, SF TD, urging conference delegates not to rule out coalition with Fianna Fail.

'Things are not as rosy as they are presented. There is an erosion of women's rights. The myth that women are doing well is dangerous.'

ICTU's legislation and social affairs officer Esther Lynch.

'Gaelscoil Cholmcille has received many promises—the latest being that we will be in our new school by September 2007—but too many earlier commitments have not been fulfilled. We are determined that this pledge will not go the way of the Bertie bowl and we will be calling on the Taoiseach to personally intervene in this situation in order to bring it to a speedy resolution in time for the new academic year.'

Parent Joe Murray raises the issue. This school in the Taoiseach's constituency is in dire need of a new school building.

'Health board schemes providing free formula milk to low-income mothers in the eastern region should be terminated, as should similar arrangements in refugee accommodation centres: the money saved should be ring-fenced to promote and support breastfeeding.'

Deirdre de Burca of the Green Party.

ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL IN DUN LAOGHAIRE

Speed up progress on the baths



Richard Boyd Barrett, People Before Profit Alliance candidate for Dun Laoghaire

Save Our Seafront (SOS), the group that led the successful campaign to stop an 8-storey private apartment development on the site of Dun Laoghaire baths, has welcomed the recent announcement by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Council that it has chosen an engineering firm to carry out a feasibility study for the re-development of the Baths as a public swimming amenity.

SOS say, however, they are still concerned that progress towards the re-development of the Baths site is too slow.

Richard Boyd Barrett, chairperson of SOS and People Before Profit candidate for Dun Laoghaire explained: 'it is positive step that the Council has committed to restoring the Baths as swimming amenity and have now taken a concrete step in that direction.'

'However, progress is tortuously slow. It is almost two years since we held huge protests against the plans for privatisation of the baths and demanded they be restored as a fully public swimming amenity. It is hard to understand why it has taken this long, just to commission a feasibility study.'

SOS are calling on the Council to set out a clear timetable for the restoration and re-opening of the Baths as a swimming amenity and for commitments from the political parties for full government and council funding for the project.

They are calling for similar commitments on the restoration of Blackrock Baths as public water sports amenity.

Richard Boyd Barrett added: 'the Council need to speed things up. They should set out a clear timetable for the restoration and re-opening of the Baths.'

'We also need absolutely clear commitments from the political parties who all now say they support our

demand for the restoration of the baths, that they will actually deliver the funding for this project from government and council coffers.

'It's very easy for candidates to pose as supporters of our campaign because there is an election coming and they know how popular this issue is. We want more than vague aspira-

tions. We want cast-iron promises that we can hold all candidates to.

'We also want clear commitments from all candidates in the coming election that they and their parties will oppose any plans for high-rise or privatised development of Blackrock Baths. A packed public meeting held by SOS in Blackrock, in the last few

weeks, voted unanimously to oppose any private development of Blackrock baths and called for its restoration as a water sports and swimming amenity.

'We expect all local politicians to represent the public's view on this matter. If there is any attempt to put a privatised or high-rise development on the Blackrock Baths

site, protests as big and as angry as those held over Dun Laoghaire Baths will certainly follow.

'The Council and all politicians should save themselves and the public such bother and agree now to restoring Blackrock Baths as a public water sports amenity.'

Contact Richard Boyd Barrett 087-6329511

CAMPAIGN AGAINST SERVICE CHARGES

DON'T LET THE COUNCIL TAKE AWAY OUR BINS OR OUR SERVICE!

The Campaign Against Service Charges in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown has learnt that the Council may attempt to discontinue wheelee bin collection for householders that are not paying bin taxes.

The threat comes shortly after the decision of the Council to grant a licence to private operators, PANDA, to commence a domestic waste collection service in the county.

The anti-bin tax campaign has begun organising public

meetings across the Dun Laoghaire area to organise resistance to the latest Council threat.

The first of the public meetings was held in Ballybrack where a large attendance of local residents agreed to continue their campaign of non-payment and resist efforts by the Council to halt collection.

Residents plan to throw their waste into the back of the bin lorries if their waste is not collected and organise local demonstrations. Local committees are

also to be re-established in each area.

Richard Boyd Barrett made the point that 'the government are holding off on the re-introduction of water charges because of the election and because so many people are still not paying bin charges.'

'But if they break the campaign of resistance to the bin tax now, water charges will almost certainly follow. We will end up paying over €1000 per year in local charges.'

'There are tens of thousands people

in Dublin still not paying. The council has threatened us with courts and non-collection before but did not go through with it because of protests.'

'If we get organised we can resist the Council's bullyboy tactics.'

'There are also anti-bin tax candidates running in the forthcoming election across Dublin and parts of the country.'

For more info contact Richard Boyd Barrett 087-6329511.

INSIDE THE SYSTEM

Doctors at Beaumont Hospital have had to suspend a living kidney transplant programme just six months after it began due to lack of resources.

Consultant transplant surgeon Dilly Littlewrote to a 22-year-old Dublin woman who was about to donate one of her kidneys to her brother.

'It is with great regret that I wish to inform you that we, as clinicians, have decided to suspend the living related transplant programme.'

'We have been promised resources and funding to set up this programme which will include extra theatre facilities, beds, outpatient facilities and appointment of new staff. Unfortunately, despite repeated efforts this has not yet come to pass and so we do not feel that we can progress with this programme safely at the moment.'

The board of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda has written to the HSE warning that patients are 'exposed to a high level of risk across all departments' due to staffing shortages and infrastructural deficits.

At least 15 per cent of the operations scheduled to take place at Cavan General Hospital since the beginning of the year have had to be cancelled.

Overcrowding in the hospital's accident and emergency department has become so severe that elective surgery is being cancelled on a constant basis. On a number of days in the last month there were close to 40 patients on trolleys in the unit.

According to a survey commissioned by the HSE a staggering one in 20 patients in the Republic's hospitals will leave with a healthcare related infection, while one in 200 runs the risk of becoming very seriously ill as a result of their stay in hospital.

The Government is to introduce electronic fingerprinting for immigrants and asylum seekers arriving into Ireland. The move is part of an overhaul of the system used to process asylum.

The Government's National Action Plan on Social Inclusion pledges to eliminate consistent poverty by 2016, but does not set targets for reducing the number of people at risk of poverty. More than 750,000 people are still at risk of poverty in Ireland today. One quarter of them live in a household headed by a person who has a job.

Almost a fifth of €1.43 million in grant aid announced yesterday

by Minister for Arts John O'Donoghue for festivals around Ireland this summer has been allocated to events in his constituency.

AIB recorded a 60 per cent increase in net profit, to €2.3 billion last year, while total operating income was up 19 per cent, at €4.3 billion.

A recent analysis of records of US veterans deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan who were seen at veteran healthcare facilities between September 2001 and September 2005 reveals that 25 per cent had been diagnosed with mental health problems, and more than half of these patients had two or more distinct conditions.

About one in three were affected by at least one psychosocial diagnosis. Those most at risk were the youngest soldiers and those with the most combat exposure

A new education grouping 'Partners in Education for Change', representing parents, teacher unions and school managers at second level, has been formed at the initiative of the National Parents Council (post-primary).

It intends to make

education an election issue and will highlight underfunding, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate support for special needs, the school discipline crisis, lack of support for newcomer children and inadequate support for information technology in schools.

China's censors are going to step up measures to control and censor the growing number of bloggers using the internet to air their views on politics, life and Chinese society.

China had 137 million internet users at the end of 2006, among whom 20.8 million were bloggers. 40,000 officials are employed to monitor internet use.

Of the 350 candidates already declared to run in the forthcoming election for Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour, Green Party, Progressive Democrats, Sinn Féin and the Socialist Party, only 52 of them are female.

A new study has revealed that almost 18 per cent of children have special educational needs, much higher than estimated. According to INTO general secretary John Carr the report has major implications and could

require the Government to recruit thousands more teachers and provide much better support for special needs pupils.

Local authorities in Dublin are hoping to soon make it a legal requirement that a large proportion of waste collected by private firms in the Dublin area is sent for incineration. The councils are hoping that the proposed incinerator at Poolbeg will get the go ahead despite fierce local opposition.

A report by a team of UN experts calls on Israel to halt excavations near Jerusalem's most sacred Islamic site, al-Haram al-Sharif, and proceed only under international supervision. Israel's archaeological excavations have sparked protests across the Muslim world.

An increase of 40 cent in the price of bus fares sparked riots in central China. 20,000 people took to the streets, attacking police and burning buses. This reflects growing unrest in rural China. The government has stated that the number of 'mass incidents' in the country—a term that includes protests, petitions and demonstrations—was about 23,000 last year.

Iraq: 'Surge' grows but Bush faces defeat

From page one

As Patrick Cockburn wrote recently, 'the great weakness of the US military in Baghdad is that it has no reliable local allies.'

'The surge is not a new strategy but a collection of new tactics that are not going to change the isolation of the US forces in Iraq.'

'Given this lack of support the US is bringing in Kurdish units but the soldiers frequently do not speak Arabic and many are already deserting before leaving Kurdistan.'

The neo-cons imagined that by invading Iraq the US could secure its global dominance for the 21st century.

It would do so because controlling Iraq would entrench the US position as the dominant power in the Middle East.

And this would permit it to deny, or demand conditions for, access to Middle Eastern oil to potential rivals such as the European Union, Japan and China. Iraq has proven oil reserves of 115 billion barrels, with billions more thought to be as yet undiscovered.

Overwhelming force of arms and technology rapidly defeated Saddam's forces, but cannot overcome the opposition of most Iraqis to the US-led occupation.

Support for the armed resistance exist among a clear majority of the Iraqi population. The Washington-based Brookings Institution published the results of a poll that found 61 percent of all Iraqis approved of attacks on US-led forces. Among the Sunni the figure was 92 percent. Among Shia the figure was 62 percent.

Divide and rule

British forces are now withdrawing from the Shia South where they had responsibility: they have been effectively defeated.

Faced with the Iraqi resistance to the occupation, the US tried to regain the initiative by practising divide and rule. A political alliance with the Shia establishment at the top was matched at the bottom with support for sectarian death squads based, for example, in the Iraqi interior ministry.

But the sectarian tit-for-tat killings have now escalated out of control, especially in the Greater Baghdad region.

The devastation of Iraq and inability of the US to pacify the situation has punctured the aura of invincibility surrounding US imperialism. But this

doesn't mean that the US war machine will withdraw peacefully. In fact it is likely to lash out like a wounded animal.

Commentators have pointed out that the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the reliance of the US occupation on the Shia establishment has greatly strengthened Iran's position in the region.

Iran the target?

Fierce arguments are taking place behind closed doors in Washington over whether to risk an all-out assault on Iran, using the pretext of its nuclear programme and alleged material support for insurgents in Iraq, or whether to include Iran and Syria in a regional coalition to pacify that country.

On the one hand, the veteran investigative journalist Seymour Hersh has documented detailed plans, directed by US vice president Dick Cheney, to prepare for an attack on Iran.

These involve working with Saudi Arabia to orchestrate an alliance of Sunni regimes and movements, including radicals sympathetic to Al Qaeda, against Iran, Syria, and Hizbollah. Hersh has claimed that the US is behind Saudi and Iraqi 'black money' finding its way into pro-Al Qaeda jihadists in Lebanon, in order to fight Hezbollah.

On the other hand, the Financial Times claims to have detected a shift to a more "pragmatic" US foreign policy. Recently US officials opened tentative contacts with their Iranian opposite numbers.

Despite the divisions and uncertainties in Washington, the danger of the US spreading the war to Iran remains all too real.

In this finely balanced situation the international anti-war movement has a chance of influencing events.

This means for us in Ireland making the US wars and Irish complicity through the use of Shannon by US troops and rendition flights an election issue.

The Irish Anti War Movement protest at the Sinn Fein ard fheis should be the opening shot in a campaign that will challenge every election candidate to clearly state where they stand on the use of Shannon and what they will do about it if elected.

Kevin Wingfield is a member of the Steering Committee of the Irish Anti War Movement and writes in his personal capacity

Harney to push through private hospitals before the elections



Cork Private Consultants' Clinic in Cork University Hospital

By Peadar O'Grady

Harney's plans to build for-profit private hospitals on public hospital sites will be pushed through before the elections. The Sunday Business Post reported: 'final bids for the "co-located" hospitals are to be lodged on 30 March, with the sites being awarded on 16 April. At that point, the Health Service Executive (HSE) will have entered into a legal commitment with private hospital developers and will be unable to reverse the process, no matter who is in government after the election.'

The eight hospital sites involved are the Mid-Western Regional in Limerick, Waterford Regional Hospital, Cork University Hospital, Sligo General Hospital and St James's, Beaumont, Connolly and Tallaght Hospitals in Dublin.

The Beacon Medical Group is seeking to build six of these for-profit hospitals, which US multinational Triad would operate. Triad is a spin-off of the US multinational Columbia, which had to pay over \$1.7 billion in fines in the biggest case of public fraud in US history.

The other for-profit consortia are the Mount Carmel Medical Group, the Bon Secours Group, The Mater Private Group and Swedish for-profit hospital operator Capio.

Last week in the Dail, when questioned by Labour leader Pat Rabbitte, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern said he was not aware of any contracts being negotiated by the state for the building of the private hospitals. He said: 'a campus hospital, with private and public hospitals, with the proper facilities and co-location, is good for public patients.'

'It means that Joe and Mary Bloggs, who have little other than welfare, or Mr X or Mr Y, who are millionaires or billionaires, can be seen by the same consultant. It happens every day in our hospitals, very successfully.'

Ahern is clearly living on a very different planet from people like Rosie on the Joe Duffy show, whose treatment by our two-tier system meant a delay in cancer treatment that tragically, may well kill her.

The Government's proposed co-location plan is the 'most socially divisive thing that has ever been introduced', according to retired consultant cardiac surgeon Mr Maurice Nelligan. 'What I do know is co-locating hospitals is nonsense.'

The new doctors' group, Doctors Alliance for a Better Health Care System, insists private hospitals provide more costly access to certain types of care, usually planned procedures. They said private hospitals do not provide urgent care, which made up the majority of cases treated in public hospitals.

Opposition parties have all vowed to stop the scheme if elected and have called on the government to wait until after the general election before signing any contracts. They have not said, however, that they will refuse to honour the contracts if Harney proceeds with this grossly undemocratic stunt.

The commitment of this government to tax-fund private for-profit hospitals using

lies and private deals, needs real opposition. None of these plans have a democratic mandate and are not included in the government's Health Strategy, which is supposedly current government policy.

The need for a real opposition offered by a Left Alliance, striking nurses and community campaigns like in Monaghan have never been more vital to the survival of the public health service.

Private Healthcare in the US

'For-profit' healthcare is most entrenched in the US. Costs in for-profit institutions are higher than in not-for-profit centres. Spending on nursing care is lower in for-profit hospitals than equivalent not-for-profit hospitals. Fraud by for-profit companies may cost as much as 10% of spending. Columbia has paid the US government \$1.7 billion in settlements for fraud.

Deaths are higher in for-profit hospitals and dialysis centres than in equivalent not-for-profit centres. For-profit nursing homes and hospices provide less care than equivalent not-for-profit facilities. Health insurance in the US has administrative costs of 19% compared to administrative costs of 1% in the Canadian medicare public health service.

Market rules aren't working in US for-profit health care. Monopolies are common as are duplication and waste. For-profit firms avoid expensive care like old-age medicine or A&E, leaving public services to pick up costs. Some 50 million people, including 10 million children, do not have health insurance in the US.

Government intervenes in Nurses' dispute

The government has opened negotiations with the nurses unions, the INO and PNA, causing them to defer plans for industrial action.

The government have offered:

- a gradual reduction in the working week for nursing/midwifery grades;
 - a payment of an allowance to nurses who directly supervise social care workers in the intellectual disability sector
 - a confirmation of payment of the 10% cost of living increase, over 27 months, as agreed for all other public servants.
- Liam Doran, General Secretary of the INO

said: 'While these proposals, of themselves, were not acceptable in their current form, they do indicate, for the first time, that the employers are prepared to consider and address these issues.'

'The campaign to date has been an unprecedented success and we have now secured movement from the employers which makes it possible to make further progress on our priority issues.'

'This has only been brought about by the effort of every activist and member and for this I am sincerely grateful.' The nurses' unions are in a strong position:

the government has considerable revenues; the coming election makes the politicians particularly sensitive to pressure and the nurses themselves have shown a great willingness to take action in support of their claims.

It is important that members not let the momentum of the campaign be lost in protracted negotiations.

A deadline must be set for a resumption of action should there be no substantial progress towards the achievement of the main demands of the nurses, which include a 10.6% and a 35 hour week.

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY ELECTION RESULTS

Beyond the sectarian headcount

By Eamonn McCann

The Assembly election showed that tribal politics have become even more dominant in the North.

That's the main conclusion of most commentators from the rise in support for the DUP and Sinn Fein at the expense of the Ulster Unionists and the SDLP. There's truth in this analysis, but it's not the whole truth.

The election, once again, had the character of selecting parties to champion the interests of each community. Thus, the party seen as the most vigorous in advancing 'our side' vis-a-vis 'the other side' was likely to do well.

The British Government also played a big role in promoting the DUP and Sinn Fein. Tony Blair had been explicit that he envisaged Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness as First Minister and Deputy First Minister. The endorsement was something of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

It was notable that the SF leadership was unembarrassed at emerging as the British Government's preferred party on the Nationalist side.

However, the theory that the result simply showed the continuing strength of communal politics is wide of the mark. All the parties had to adapt to economic and social issues which were just as prominent in their voters' minds as issues related to the communal divide.

Following the result, Paisley came out with the following analysis: 'There were two main issues on the doorstep. One was the constitutional issues which remain very important and, secondly, water charges.'

'The government need to recognise that in order for devolution to work successfully and over a long period of time there needs to be the appropriate financial backing. In order to move away from start-stop processes the people of Northern Ireland deserve the financial package to ensure that the bread and butter issues are appropriately dealt with.'

The language was moderate, almost left of centre. It reflected a recognition that DUP voters, like others, wanted peace, resources and the abolition of water charges.



Sean Mitchell who won a creditable 2.3% for People Before Profit, speaking at Marxism 2007 in Dublin a few days after the election
Picture: Paula Geraghty



Eamonn McCann: He gained 5% of the vote in Foyle for Socialist Environmental Alliance

This had become crystal clear during the campaign, when the main parties, Sinn Fein in particular, had to harden their line on water charges so as not to be outflanked by supporters of non-payment. By polling day, Sinn Fein was close to pledging to scrap water charges if an Executive was formed.

The problem all the main parties have with non-payment is that, because water charges affect every household, non-payment cannot be organised on the basis of one community's interests.

The campaign involves mobilising people on a basis that has nothing to do with communal identity. It challenges the dominant pattern of Northern politics.

As a result, the parties now negotiating to form an Executive have to deliver something on water charges, but cannot adopt the only strategy, non-payment, which could force the British Treasury to drop the charges and the privatisation plan which charges are linked to.

This keeps open the possibilities for the Left that were apparent during the election but were not reflected in the results.

The largely middle-class Alliance Party made some progress, including the election of Anna Lo of the Chinese Welfare Association in South Belfast. The seven Alliance MLAs have joined with hospital campaigner Kieran Deeny and the Green Party's Brian Wilson under the banner of 'United Community.'

They have the virtue of being non-sectarian, but the weakness of being firmly committed to market values and a business view of the world.

Instead of opposing water charges outright they have suggested they would make the charges fairer. Hardly the way to build united communities.

At the heart of opposition to the water charges and other working-class campaigns will be an emerging network of socialists and trade unionists.

For these, the 2,045 first preferences for Eamonn McCann, standing for the Socialist Environmental Alliance in Foyle, and 774 for 19-year-old first-timer Sean Mitchell standing for People Before Profit in West Belfast, were highly encouraging.

Sean's success in finishing ahead of long established parties like Alliance and the Workers' Party was widely regarded as the performance of the election.

Sean's success in finishing ahead of long established parties like Alliance and the Workers' Party was widely regarded as the performance of the election.

Blair's Weapons of Mass Destruction

By Paul Carroll

The House of Commons have given its backing to Tony Blair's proposal to renew Britain's Trident nuclear deterrent despite a rebellion in his party ranks.

The motion was passed with the support of the opposition Conservative party by a margin of 409 votes to 161, a majority of 248.

The decision by Blair to seek a renewal of the submarine nuclear system flies in the face of his efforts to stop Iran, and previously North Korea, developing nuclear technology and has caused much debate and anger about the double standards of Blair's decision in the Middle-East.

An editorial from the Saudi Times read: 'Blair insisted that the world was becoming ever more insecure and it would therefore be madness for the British to abandon the nuclear card.'

The madness is surely the inability to recognize that it is the threatening presence of existing nuclear-armed powers that is propelling threatened states like Iran and North Korea into nuclear armament.'

Blair's decision is more

ironic, and possibly illegal, considering that Britain is a signatory of the Non-Proliferation-Treaty (NPT). The NPT states that any nuclear power must ultimately abolish its nuclear weapons.

'Britain does not have the right to question others when they're not complying with their obligations under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,' said Ali Asghar Soltanieh, Iran's envoy to the International Atomic Energy Agency.

It is now possible that Blair's decision may embolden smaller nations such as Iran to produce a nuclear armament and also reignite a nuclear arms race throughout the Middle-East with neighbouring countries seeking parity with the Iranian if they acquire 'the bomb'.

Blair's argument for the renewal of the weapons arsenal was: 'I think it's right we take the decision now to begin work on replacing the Trident nuclear submarines.'

'I think that is essential for our security in an uncertain world. I believe it is important that we recognize that, although it is impossible to predict the future, the one thing... that is certain, is the



unpredictability of it.'

The cost of unpredictability? Between €22 Billion and €29 Billion.

This is money that could be spent improving the lives of the poorest people in the world; ensuring that they have access to a clean water supply; an education and protecting the environment among other positive initiatives for the poorest of the poor and the British population.

As Tony Benn told the 100,000 strong Stop the War and CND march on 24 February, 'we are not prepared to accept the views of the Prime Minister that he wants Britain to build new weapons of mass destruction.'

'Because that is what he wants, more weapons of mass destruction in a world that needs more schools, hospitals, homes for old people.'

The cost of repairing Tony Blair's credibility is incalculable. He has decided that Britain needs the 'ultimate' insurance policy, a policy which does not allow for the reconstruction of properties but a wholly irreparable damage.

Maybe he should visit the peace park in Hiroshima and read script on the monument: 'Please rest in peace. We are not making the same mistake again.'

Paul Carroll is a freelance journalist based in Cork.

Belfast fight for housing

Niall McLoughlin

In recent weeks, residents in the Village area in South Belfast have taken to the roads and the streets in the struggle to get decent housing.

Last week women residents rallied outside City Hall on International Women's Day and then marched the short distance to the Housing Executive buildings where they confronted Housing Executive officers about the low levels of social housing being proposed for regeneration of the area.

This came on the back of a rally and demonstration which blocked the motorway a couple of weeks earlier.

Socialist Worker interviewed Joanne Smith, a Community Worker in the Village area in South Belfast, about the housing crisis.

What initiated the present housing campaign?

'As I understand it, some time ago the Northern Ireland Housing Executive commissioned a survey from local residents about the situation with regards housing.'

'The Village area still has outside toilets in 25% to 30% of houses, houses are damp, in bad state of repair, there are houses lying empty, a real lack of social housing, and so the residents demanded through the survey full scale regeneration of the area.'

'This is a working class suburb in a prime residential location, i.e. a short walk from the city centre. Developers are desperate to get their hands on the land. In contrast many people here are elderly and want regeneration to sort out the difficulties they have with mobility around the house especially stairs.'

'Many of the houses are only two-bedroom which means they are not suitable for families and the houses themselves are generally inadequate. There is also the issue whereby private landlords or developers are given the green light to get access to the properties and then be fast-tracked to develop them for private rental.'

So the struggle is for full regeneration? 'Well, the

government could not have been happy with our demands because after local residents had finished, another survey was done by the Housing Executive which put forward the present proposal, 40 per cent regeneration, of which 12 per cent is going to be allocated to social housing. This was utterly unacceptable and it infuriated the local residents.'

Where to now? 'There is a residents group set up to deal with the campaign for 100 per cent regeneration. So far we have occupied the nearby motorway and organised nearly 100 people outside the Housing executive last week.'

'Our next activity is to link up with the St James Estate (a nationalist estate) and get them to protest against their situation with regards housing at the same time as us.'

'According to the Housing Executive they have not made the final decision as yet so we intend to fight to pressure them as long as we have to until we get a decent regeneration package.'

AGAINST WAR AND NEOLIBERALISM



There were large protests against Bush's visit to Latin America in 18 out of 26 states in Brazil

Bush runs gauntlet in Latin America

The US president's 'friendship tour' backfired badly as a wave of protests gripped the continent

Brazil

DEMONSTRATIONS marking International Women's Day were different this year. They were organised to protest against inequality between men and women, but also to protest against the visit of George Bush.

Tens of thousands demonstrated in the capital Sao Paulo behind banners condemning the US president as an "assassin, terrorist and number one enemy of humanity". Further protests were held outside US consulates, the offices of US multinationals and public squares in 18 out of Brazil's 26 states.

The protests were organised by dozens of social movements, unions and left wing political parties.

Despite Bush's invitation being issued by the government, many rank and file members of President Lula's Workers Party (PT) joined the protest, as did some regional leaders of the PT.

The protests were deeply embarrassing for Lula.

Bush came to Sao Paulo to boost his international popularity. He hoped

to shore up his allies in Latin America who are threatened by the rising popularity of left wing leaders who challenge neoliberalism such as Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia.

Lula trumpeted his attempts to get trade concessions out of the US president, but in reality his job was to give left cover to Bush's "friendship tour".

The PT rose to power on the back of mass struggles and the promise of transforming Brazil. Since taking office in 2002, it has abandoned its radical agenda and implemented unpopular neoliberal policies.

Bush also has other reasons to be interested in Brazil. He hopes to tap Brazil's "alternative fuel", ethanol, which is produced from sugar cane.

Suzanne Pereira dos Santos of the movement of landless workers (MST) said, "Bush and the US go to war to control oil reserves, and now he and his pals are trying to control the production of ethanol. That has to be stopped."

The police in Sao Paulo reacted to the protests by brutally attacking the demonstration with bullets and tear gas.

Uruguay

WHEN GEORGE Bush arrived in Uruguay over 25,000 people converged on the capital, Montevideo, demanding that he go home.

Tens of thousands of workers, students and activists marched to the edge of the "red zone" where the US delegation was staying. They were joined by a second demonstration organised by anarchists and left wing groups.

A speaker from the workers' confederation told the crowd, "You, Mr Bush are not welcome in these lands. You represent the worst things that have happened to our country. You represent an imperialism that has condemned the majority of humanity to suffering and injustice."

An unhappy Bush was forced to tell Uruguayan hosts, "I'm aware of the rejection my presence in this country generates. I hope this rejection is against my government and not against the American people."

In his farewell speech Bush told President Tabare Vazquez, "If Uruguay has a problem just pick up the phone and call me." This vague offer seems to be the only thing Vazquez got from the visit.

Venezuela

PRESIDENT HUGO Chavez reacted to Bush's tour by embarking on a tour of his own.

At the same hour that Bush arrived in Uruguay, tens of thousands gathered in the Argentine capital, Buenos Aires, to hear Chavez denounce Bush as a

"political corpse who came to divide".

The following day, as Bush took his plane to Colombia, Chavez landed in Bolivia. And when Bush hit Guatemala, Chavez was in nearby Nicaragua.

Colombia

ANTI-WAR PROTESTERS turned out in force in the capital, Bogota, coming within 100 metres of Bush's limousine as it cruised through the streets.

The protest was called by Polo Democratico Alternativo, the country's first united centre-left party. Demonstrators shut down the main highway, despite massive intimidation by fully armed soldiers.

Bush hoped his visit to Colombia, which is one of the few US allies left in the region, would be a positive counterpoint to the wave of demonstrations that dogged his tour. But instead his visit galvanised the opposition.

Guatemala

THE PROTESTS have haunted Bush throughout his visit to Latin America. In Guatemala, the last stop on Bush's tour, Mayan tribal leaders performed cleansing ceremonies after Bush visited a sacred site in order to rid the area of his "negative energy".

Reports by Manuel Amaral and Sean Purdy in Brazil, Javier Carles in Uruguay and Paul Haste in Colombia

INTERNATIONAL

Three women still due to be hanged in 'free' Iraq

By Simon Assaf

There are continuing fears over the fate of three Iraqi women condemned to death for supporting the resistance (Bush's regime: lynch law in Iraq, 10 March).

Their execution, set to take place earlier this month, was postponed. There is no news on an appeal.

The Brussels Tribunal, a body that monitors the occupation of Iraq, received information that the women, held in Kadhamiah prison, are still alive.

The tribunal received word on the fate of the women from a visitor to the prison. According to the witness there are 16 children among the hundreds of women held in the notorious Baghdad jail.

Liqa Omar Muhammad, 26, Wassan Talib, 31, and Zainab Fadhil, 25, were convicted of "acts of terrorism" last year in trials widely denounced as unfair.

They had no right to a lawyer in a trial that lasted 25 minutes.

The court provided no evidence to support the allegation that the women took part in attacks on US troops and their Iraqi allies.

The women, who deny they are members of the resistance, were arrested along with male relatives. The fate of these men is unknown.

Despite an outcry, the US-backed Iraqi government has refused to release any details, and has yet to respond to the thousands of letters of protests, including a personal appeal by the Turkish prime minister.

Human rights groups have appointed a lawyer to investigate their case and push for an appeal, but they have been ignored.

The Iraqi Lawyers' Union is calling for continuing international protests.

For updates on the case go to www.brusseltribunal.org

Facing brutality in Zimbabwe

The turmoil in Zimbabwe reached new heights this week as the government unleashed a further wave of repression.

Another 140 activists of Zimbabwe's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) were arrested in Mutare on Monday at the start of an anti-government protest.

They were demonstrating against the murder of MDC activist Gift Tandari by the police in Highfields, Harare, on Sunday and the subsequent arrest and detention of MDC leaders, including Morgan Tsvangirai.

MDC spokesman Pishai Muchauraya spoke from Mutare central prison cells and said that at least ten of those arrested on Monday were students.

They included Gideon Chitanga, the vice president of Zimbabwe National Students' Union, who had been organising class boycotts at Masvingo State University.

The struggle against President Robert Mugabe needs the full solidarity and support of the British trade union and student movement – especially with a general strike planned for 3-4 April.

The solution is not neoliberalism or other measures pushed by George Bush and Tony Blair. It is struggle from below and policies favouring workers and the poor.

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Jitters as the stock market falls



By Paul O'Brien

The fall in the stock market over the last three weeks has knocked over €6 billion off the value of Irish shares.

However, with a total capitalisation of €100 billion the Irish rich have been only marginally inconvenienced.

As usual, the small investor, those with SSIA's or equity-based mortgages have been hit hardest by the collapse in the market.

A typical equity based SSIA lost nearly €600 in the last three weeks.

The market is always volatile and unpredictable, but in the past few years it has always managed to bounce back very quickly from any loss in value and has posted a succession of impressive gains.

The current crisis was caused by an announcement by the Chinese authorities that they intended to tax the profits of investors in stocks and shares.

This led to a fall in the index on the Shanghai Stock Exchange and within hours markets had fallen all over the world. But this was merely the trigger that set off a sell-off across the globe.

The reason for the fall this time is much more fundamental; fears of an economic slowdown in America, a crisis in the American banking system due to spiralling bad-debts in the housing sector, and a fall in the value of the dollar.

Despite the impact of globalisation and the internationalisation of the capitalist system the world economy is still dependent on American output to drive investment and profit.

The American economy is experiencing a slowdown in manufacturing, a surge in inflation, and an increase in personal debt.

Taken together this has led many to conclude that a recession in the American economy is now a real possibility in the near future. If this happens the rest of the world economy will be dragged down in its wake.

This uncertainty is the root cause of the recent fall in the stock market.

Nobody can be sure what will happen in the next period. But we can say with

certainty that the Celtic tiger will not be immune to recession.

Every day the newspapers announce a litany of job losses, now running at about 1000 jobs a week.

High inflation is now a feature of the Irish economy—inflation has been consistently higher than the EU average over the last year.

Add in soaring interest rates and it is not too hard to imagine that the whole house of cards could come tumbling down.

The chances of a property market crash is now more likely than ever according to Dr. John Fitzgerald of the Economic and Social Research Institute.

Moore McDowell, the economic guru of the Progressive Democrats and the Tanaiste's brother has forecast that an economic downturn is 'practically a racing certainty'.

He goes on to suggest that this could be a good election to loose as the next government could be facing 'economic meltdown'.

Despite this prognosis the major political parties are presenting their manifestoes for the next election on the basis of tax cuts and giveaways to the rich as if nothing has changed.

All the parties have done their sums on the basis of the economy and the property market roaring ahead at five or six percent per annum.

A modest fall in house prices would actually be good for buyers and would take a large chunk of inflation out of the Irish economy.

The large players who control the stock market have already taken their profit and will continue to make money even in a falling market.

The rest of us will pay the price in jobs, higher prices, house repossessions, and a diminution in the value of our pensions.

Already many firms are using the excuse of a falling market to indicate they cannot continue to offer final salary pensions to their workers.

Moore McDowell concluded his commentary by saying that 'hair shirts will be the order of the day'.

We must make sure that it is not us that are made to wear them.

THE TRADE

By Niall Smyth

'When they want to wage war hundreds of thousands of men equipped with billions of pounds worth of equipment, with everything human ingenuity can devise to conduct war, can be assembled within weeks in the desert; no cost matters.

'When it comes to the fire-fighters its "can't pay—won't pay"; when it comes to jet fighters its money is no object. That's their morality, the upside down morality of capitalism in this world.'

These were the words of Eamonn McCann, when he spoke at the London 'Stop the War' Demo in 2004.

In his observation, McCann exposed quite plainly one of the starkest contrasts of today's world. Recently released reports, such as one from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, show that despite increases in global poverty and a widening gap between rich and poor, global spending on arms continues to rise.

According to the Institute, World military expenditure in 2005¹ is estimated to have reached \$1,118 billion in current dollars.

This is roughly fifteen times current international aid expenditure and corresponds to 2.5 per cent of world GDP or an average spending of \$173 per capita. World military expenditure in 2005 represents a real terms increase of 3.4 per cent since 2004, and of 34 per cent over the 10-year period 1996-2005.

The United States is responsible for about 80 per cent of the increase in 2005. Its military expenditure accounts for almost half of the world total, at 48 per cent of the world total, distantly followed by the UK, France, Japan and China with 4-5 per cent each.

The rapid increase in the USA's military spending is due to the ongoing costly military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Some of the world's poorest countries have also increased spending. The Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Botswana, and Uganda all doubled their military spending between 1985 and 2000.

Between 2002 and 2003, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan spent more on their military than on health care.

This growth in military budgets has caused a boom for the arms industry with the top 100 arms companies seeing their sales increase by almost 60 per cent from \$157bn in 2000 to \$268bn in 2004.

According to the aid agency Oxfam, the increase in arms spending is set to break the previous records set during the Cold War.

The facts and figures on arms spending can appear quite abstract, however when they are set against the poverty experienced around the world they take on a whole new meaning.

Today over half the world — nearly three billion people — live on less than two dollars a day. The GDP of the poorest 48 nations is less than the wealth of the world's three richest people combined. Less than one per cent of the world's expenditure on arms in 2000 would have put every child in the world into school.

According to UNICEF, 30,000 children die each day due to poverty. In fact, military conflict has become the top cause of world hunger. Africa is particularly affected. Sixty one per cent of African countries affected by food crises are in the grip of civil wars.

In Afghanistan, 2.5 million people don't have enough food to eat and conflict hampers relief efforts.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, show that conflict and economic problems were cited as the main cause of more than 35 percent of food emergencies between 1992 and 2003, compared to around 15 percent in the period from 1986 to 1991.

'Year on year arms spending escalates and year on year conflicts are causing more hunger and suffering. Arms sales do not start conflicts, but they certainly fuel and lengthen them,' said Bernice Romero, Oxfam International's Campaigns Director.

Faced with this reality it seems almost insane that world leaders have not addressed this imbalance in world expenditure.

What leads to their warped vision of the world? Why must 200 children die every hour? Must billions be wasted every day on the real weapons of mass destruction: the fighter jets and missiles of the US and its

THE UPSIDE-DOWN

Who is buying and selling arms? The b



closest allies?

The answer lies in the imperialist exploits of these same countries. Imperialism is not just powerful states dominating backward countries, as is the case with the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is the shape of modern capitalist competition.

In this modern imperialist world global powers like the US use international financial institutions such as the WTO and increasingly its military might to impose its will and remake the world to fit the needs of its own big corporations.

Therefore, as competition for world markets increases, so too does the military aggression of countries like the US and arms expenditure rises. It is this fact that clearly draws together global military spending and the poverty experienced by millions around the globe.

The growth of the trade in death in general, and the immediate war waged by Israel on the Lebanon in particular, formed the context for the inspiring actions taken by the Raytheon Nine in Derry last year.

On Wednesday 9 August 2006, nine

anti-war protestors, including the civil rights activist and campaigning journalist Eamonn McCann, occupied and closed down the offices of Raytheon at Springtown in Derry, during a protest organised by the Derry Anti-War Coalition.

Raytheon are very much part of this global war industry. A US company, Raytheon is the fifth biggest arms manufacturer in the world. They supply guidance systems for many of the missiles and bombs used by US and Israeli forces in the Middle East.

One of the contracts they have worked on is the software for the Airborne Stand-off Radar System (ASTOR), a missile guidance system for the British Ministry of Defence.

Raytheon systems guided the Qana bomb to the bunker where it blasted and crushed at least 51 people, including many children, to death in July 2006. It manufactured the 100 GBU-28 bunker buster bombs urgently flown by the United States to Israel at the height of the destruction of Lebanon by the Israel Defence Force.

Among the many services Raytheon has performed for Israel is supplying electronic

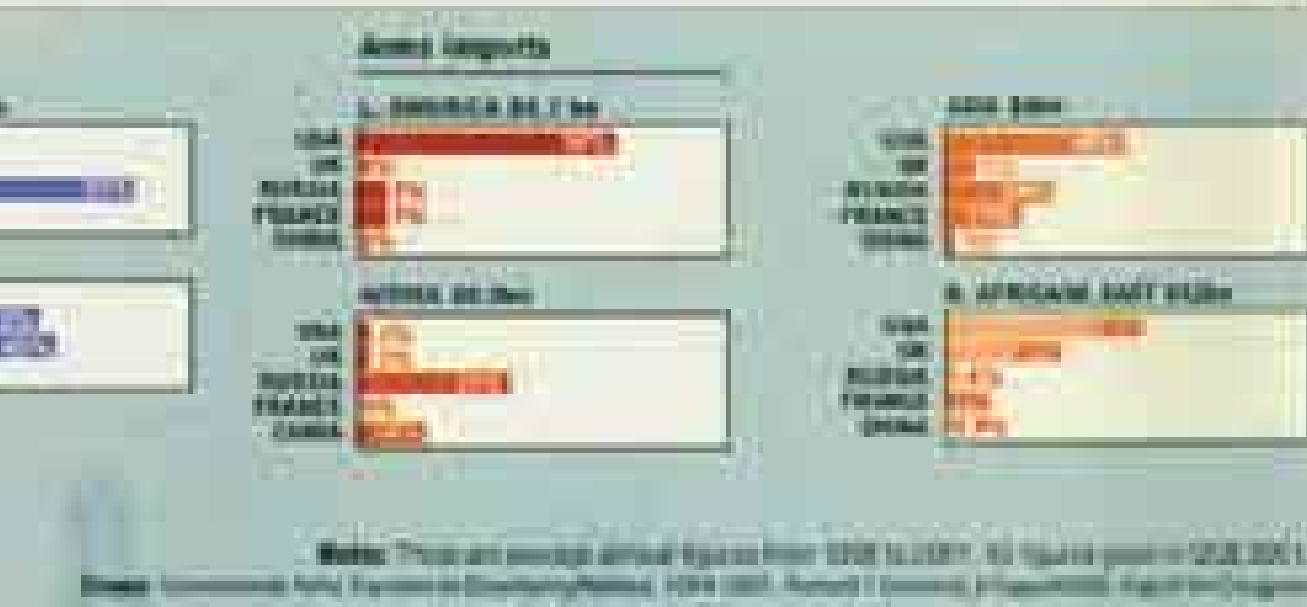
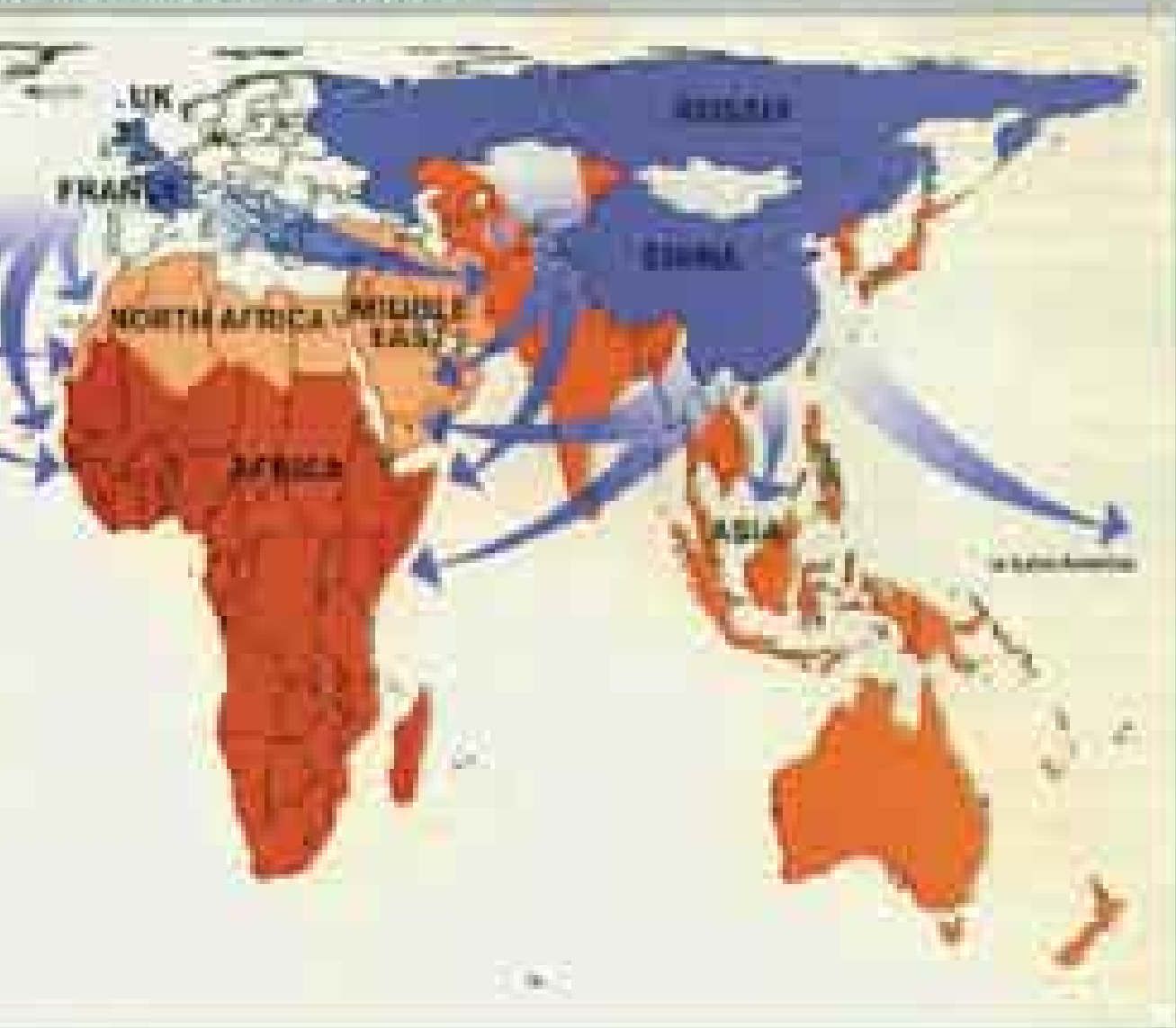
For more news, comment and analysis, visit the Socialist Worker webpage www.swp.ie

E IN DEATH

N MORALITY OF CAPITALISM

ggest exporters by value

Graphic: Amnesty International



equipment for the apartheid wall being built on Palestinian land. The National Lawyers Guild of the US has accused Raytheon of being 'implicated in the commission of war crime'.

Raytheon set up their offices in Derry in 1999. Their arrival was announced by John Hume and David Trimble, shortly after collecting their Nobel Peace Prizes. The protesters were right to want to decommission its Derry factory.

It is Raytheon and the people who brought them to Derry that should be standing trial and not those who took action against them.

As a postcard I once found at a conference in London stated: 'Wouldn't be great if schools and hospitals had all the money they needed at their disposal and arms dealers had to hold jumble sales to fund themselves.' Wouldn't it just!

1 SIPRI findings on global and national military expenditure in the year 2006 will be released on 11 June 2007, the launch-date of SIPRI Yearbook 2007. www.sipri.org

For further reading see: www.raytheon9.org
www.sipri.org; www.oxfam.org

Poverty Statistics for Children

('State of the World's Children' 2005, UNICEF)

- **Number of children in the world: 2.2 billion**
- **Number in poverty: 1 billion (every second child)**
- **Shelter, safe water and health**
- **For the 1.9 billion children from the developing world, there are:**
 - **640 million without adequate shelter (1 in 3)**
 - **400 million with no access to safe water (1 in 5)**
 - **270 million with no access to health services (1 in 7)**
 - **Children out of education**
- worldwide:**
 - **121 million Survival for children**
 - **10.6 million died in 2003 before they reached the age of five**
 - **1.4 million die each year from lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation**
 - **Health of children**
 - **2.2 million children die each year because they are not immunised**
 - **15 million children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS**

Irish Economy: Dark Clouds Are Growing

By Kieran Allen



The cheery stockbroker economists who provide regular soundbites for the news media are predicting yet another successful year for the Irish economy. But their smiles are beginning to look forced.

Firstly, inflation is now running at just under five percent a year. For the majority of workers this means a pay cut as the current increases under the national pay deal amount to a mere three percent.

Remarkably, there has been barely a squeak out of the union leaders even though, in the past, partnership deals indexed wage increases to price rises.

Even more bizarrely, to gain a miserly three percent rise workers must give extra productivity. Public sector workers have to submit 'action plans' and 'progress reports' to shadow Performance Verification Groups indicating what they will give for the tiny increase.

So not only has the link between wages and prices been cut but so too has the link with productivity. Workers must instead show 'continuous improvement' for no extra reward.

The stockbroker economists never mention these effects on the worker. Instead they focus on the dangers inflation poses to 'the competitiveness of the Irish economy'.

In particular, they focus on how Irish employment costs have risen while those in Germany have fallen. The implication is that workers are to blame and should accept even greater wage cuts.

But the recent figures from the Central Statistics Office show precisely why inflation is not caused by Irish workers.

The highest price increases came from 'Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and other fuels' which grew by a staggering 23 percent. These were caused by combination of government policy to privatise utilities and by rising fuel prices. In addition, there is a crazy property market.

The more honest commentators are increasingly speaking about the 'unbalanced' nature of Irish economic growth and for good reason.

The latest phase of the boom has been sustained by low interest rates which allowed for heavy borrowing to create a property bubble. The banks led the charge by acting like drug pushers selling debt.

They drew funds from abroad and then lent it out through ever more 'flexible' devices. People on relatively low incomes, for example, can take out 100 percent mortgages over a 40-year period to get a house or an apartment.

The result has been that the ratio of private credit to private income has increased from 48 percent in at the start of the Celtic Tiger in 1995 to 132 percent today.

All of this pushed up property prices to absurd highs and allowed the banks to make enormous profits. The AIB, for example made 2.6 billion in profit last year, though, significantly, some of it came from property sell-offs.

The whole economy has become massively dependent on this property bubble. Property accounts for 24 percent of GDP, compared to an EU average of 12 percent. Property related taxes account for 17 percent of total taxes compared to 4 percent ten years ago.

Yet with interest rates rising and the growing awareness of a property crash in the US, the whole edifice has become increasingly fragile.

As if that was not bad enough, the sudden surge of job losses in industry indicates that there are wider problems.

The race to the bottom that Ireland initiated by cutting taxes on profit has returned to haunt its architects. The old EU states have also cut their corporation tax rates from 38 percent to 30 percent in the last ten years while the new members states have cut theirs from 30 percent to 20 percent.

The winners, of course, are the corporation who now have a choice of going to, say, Latvia or Cyprus rather than Ireland and benefiting from lower wages.

Rather ominously, a number of holding companies run by Pepsi Cola, Bristol Myers Squibb, Cable and Wireless and others have begun to move out of Ireland for other tax shelters.

On top of all that there is every prospect of a new slowdown in the global economy as the cracks in US economy come into full view.

Instead of listening to the cheery messages and heeding advice about 'competitiveness', we would be better off being on our guard and watching so that the rich do not dump the costs of a slowdown onto the very people who created the Celtic Tiger.

International Women's Day

By Sara O'Rourke

The 8th March is celebrated, commemorated and recognised in most of the world as International Women's Day.

On the 8 March 1857, in New York City, women working in the textile factories, known as 'the garment workers' staged a protest. In a period of increasing economic and industrial expansion they were fighting for better wages and against insanely inhumane working conditions.

The police attacked the protestors and the protest had to disperse. Two years later, also in March, these same women formed a union to protect themselves and to begin an organised fight for basic rights in their workplaces.

On the 8 March 1908, 15,000 women marched through New York, again from the sweatshops of the garment industry. They were demonstrating for shorter working hours, better pay, voting rights, union rights and an end to child labour.

One of the slogans was 'bread and roses', bread symbolising economic security and roses an improved quality of life.

Conditions were so bad that the garment factories had been described as 'the vilest and foulest industrial sores of New York'. The factory bosses made the women pay for their own needles and thread and even for the chairs they sat on!

The WTUL (Women's Trade Union League) had pledged to fight these appalling conditions and the year following the demonstration saw an enormous surge in union membership throughout the whole of the garment industry.

In 1909 there was a strike that lasted for 13 weeks, known as 'The Rising of the 20,000'. Clara Leimlich, at 19, was one of the strike leaders. After 11 weeks on strike and a period in hospital following a brutal police attack at a meeting of 3000 women she called for a general strike and the vote to strike was unanimous.

Union offices were set up all over the place, with organisers speaking the many different languages of the diverse community of women workers. Some strikers were as young as ten and these women stood on the picket lines through a freezing winter, being regularly attacked by the police who also launched mass arrests.

So in 1910 at a conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen, German revolutionary Clara Zetkin proposed that the 8 March be celebrated as International Women's day, in the same spirit as May Day and in honour of the New York women workers. In March of the follow-



International Women's Day march in Sydney

ing year, over a million women took to the streets in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Denmark.

A week later on 25 March the tragedy of 'The Triangle Fire' took place in the garment district of New York. More than 140 workers, young immigrant women died in a fire at The Triangle Shirtwaist Company due to a severe lack of safety measures. The WTUL and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union led a wave of protests and over 100,000 marched in the funeral procession.

Six years later the IWD of 1917 was probably the most significant in the 20th

century as the demonstrations calling for 'bread and peace' that took place in Russia sparked a Revolution.

Women's rights were central in the demands of this revolution. As Trotsky said, the revolution 'made a heroic effort to destroy the so-called family hearth: the archaic, stuffy and stagnant institution in which the women of the toiling classes perform galley labour from childhood to death.'

A lot has changed since the days of women having to pay for a chair to sit on while they worked but not everywhere, women in many places continue to be

exploited by the capitalist system, working in sweatshops under appalling conditions.

Inequality is maintained in a world that even in the most advanced countries relies upon women to both work and raise families.

As socialists we have to continue to fight against every manifestation of discrimination against women and for the kinds of services that will take the pressure off working class families: free crèches; longer parental leave; funding for all school needs and a shorter working week.

The fight for women's rights today

By Sara O'Rourke

The contradictions women face have never been more bruising than they are now...

On every side speechless women endure endless hardship, grief and pain in a world system that creates billions of losers for every handful of winners. It's time to get angry again! Germaine Greer

On International Women's Day 2007 the Irish Times carried a picture of a group of TDs with their arms in the air, jubilant looking women dressed in purple, the colour of the suffragette movement.

A telling picture in that it in no way represented the many women of Ireland and the world who are struggling to make ends meet in an increasingly unequal world.

Ironically in Ireland in 2006 women represented just 14% of TDs in Dáil Eireann, a number well below the European average of 23%.

Many of these women TDs were members of the parties such as FF, FG or the PDs whose neo-liberal policies do more to oppress women than liberate them.

Mary O'Rourke of FF and Liz O'Donnell of the PDs, to name but two, belong to the parties in government; a government who wants to see the privatisation of many public sectors, the consequence of which would see women's roles and earnings certainly dis-improving.

The reality is that women's role in pol-

'There is a difference between assertiveness which develops from political awareness and collective struggle, and assertiveness that which is simply about "getting ahead" of everyone else'

itics, in decision-making and in regard to earnings have not improved very much. Wherever women are working they usually earn less than men, sometimes men who are doing the exact same work.

In less industrialised countries women earn as little as half their male counterparts wages.

In 2004 women's income in Ireland was 65.7% of men's incomes. Only 4% of management in Ireland are women.

As more and more women joined the labour force in the 1990s and gained access to education their status in society did change. With increased economic independence however the question of liberation has been pushed to the sidelines.

The economic changes that being in the work force has brought about have been accompanied by changes in attitudes towards sexual behaviour.

The fight to win women's oppression became the fight for equality in a man's world.

In the 1960s the demand was for sexual liberation but over the years it is as if sexism has made a comeback by masquerading as this sexual liberation.

One only has to look at the amount of lap-dancing clubs that have appeared in Dublin as part of the so-called Celtic Tiger boom.

There is this idea that women can overcome inequality if they have confidence and assertiveness enough to compete with men.

Even Naomi Wolf in her book *Fire*



with *Fire* seems to believe that no one will help a woman who does not help herself.

Lindsey German, convenor of The Stop The War Coalition argues that 'there is a difference between assertiveness which develops from political awareness and collective struggle, and assertiveness that which is simply about "getting ahead" of everyone else.'

'The individual attitude puts a bar-

rier between socialists and the majority of women who have little illusion that merely asserting themselves can reverse the disaster afflicting their society.

'In fact it can prevent unity of working class women and working class men by creating the impression that men are in reality the problem'

Here in Ireland we still do not have the right to choose when it comes to the issue of abortion.

As far back as the Russian Revolution in 1917 abortion was recognised as a right for women.

In 2007 we are still fighting for basic rights. As we need to fight for better pay and conditions we also have to fight for improved childcare, access to free and safe contraception and abortion. They are all linked.

Research shows that the lack of an adequate contraception service is to blame for many or most of the unwanted pregnancies ended by Irish women in England.

And while women workers often suffer the worst conditions the fight for women's liberation it is not just a fight for women alone, it has to be linked to the fight to end class society. We have to put it in as central a place as anti-racism.

As socialists we have to fight for a society that puts people before profit, a society where there is no competition and no inequality. Women's liberation is part of the wider struggle against neo-liberalism and Capitalism.

LETTER

Copenhagen is burning.



By Hanna Glans

Some 700 hundred young people have been arrested in riots that spread throughout the city. The cause of the violent conflicts was the demolition of a building, the Ungdomshuset (Youth House).

Ever since 1982 the Ungdomshuset was a focal point for activists as well as a scene for music and radical cultural events. But its history as a left-wing centre stretches back to its foundation in 1897.

Somewhat like Liberty Hall in Dublin, the building was originally constructed by the trade unions to provide an organising centre. So the great demonstration against unemployment in 1918 was planned there.

It was also famous for having hosted the meeting of the Second International that agreed in 1910 to support the call by American women trade union activists for International Women's Day.

Due to the historic importance of the building it survived an attempt to turn it into a supermarket in the 1970s and it eventually ended up in the hands of the city council.

In 1982, the building was assigned to a group of young people and gained its name Ungdomshuset.

In 1999, after renovations, the building was put on the market for sale to the highest bidder. This led to the users putting out a banner: For sale along with 500 autonomist, stone throwing, violent psychopaths from hell!

Undeterred, the building was purchased, eventually ended up in the hands of a Christian sect, Faderhuset. The new owners were unable to use the building as the young squatters maintained their control of it.

At issue then was the right of the property owners against the right of those who had been active in the building to be able to continue to use. A slow legal process saw the decision end up with the Supreme Court and they, naturally, took the side of the property owners.

Activists then called for international support with an open letter stating 'troublemakers of the world, we bid you welcome!'. Many thousands of young activists from around the world did, indeed, enjoy participating in the free-spirited atmosphere of the building.

On 1 March, the building was attacked with extreme violence by the riot police, with tactics that included the use of a military helicopter; covering the building with foam and boom cranes used like siege towers.

This triggered a series of riots throughout the city; with police conducting raids on houses to deport foreign activists, while hundreds more arrived from Sweden, Germany and across Europe.

During these riots the police admitted using a potentially lethal form of teargas, Ferret 40, against the demonstrators.

On 5 March, the house was finally demolished, despite trade unionists favourable to Ungdomshuset turning up to persuade the mask-wearing demolition crew not to begin.

Many of us see this as a step towards the demolition of an even larger 'free space': the alternative lifestyle town of Christiania. For more than thirty years conservatives have been infuriated by the existence of this commune.

The government and the property owners have won a victory against the left, but at such a price, they must be fearful of taking the next step.

Hanna Glans is a freelance writer in Sweden.

THEATRE

Power struggles, state terror and rebellion



Rory Nolan plays Duke of Alba in Rough Magic Production of Don Carlos, Project Upstairs to March 31st

Photo: Pat Redmond

By Colm Stephens

As the leader nears the end he becomes increasingly isolated and falls ever more under the influence of scheming advisors. The people have taken to the streets of the capital and are demanding change.

His response is to send a surge of troops under his most brutal of generals to the small country which his forces have occupied for years to increase the terror there against those, of the 'wrong' religion, who are fighting for their freedom.

No, not a play about Bush's already lame duck presidency and the war in Iraq but a political

thriller written by a German at the end of the eighteenth century about the sixteenth century power struggle between Phillip II of Spain and his son Don Carlos.

The issue that divides them (besides their personal differences) is the Spanish occupation of Flanders.

Rough Magic's production of Friedrich Schiller's *Don Carlos* in a modern (2004) version by Mike Poulton resonates immediately with today's audience.

It seems that the machinations of imperial despots and the power struggles within their courts remain constant throughout the ages.

The play has been shortened

in this new version (to three hours!) and the language has been modernised but it never jars and you never believe that you have left the claustrophobic sixteenth century Spanish court.

The play is staged in the round at the Project Art Centre: so that I felt that I was in the same room as the characters.

At one stage I nearly got from my seat to help one of the characters when she was thrown to the floor at my feet!

The closeness of the audience also allows the actors speak at natural levels and still be perfectly understood.

The set is subtle and works wonderfully well and the pro-

duction is without gimmicks although there are a few modern innovations.

But these add to the drama and are well justified.

Despite the chilling appearance of the Grand Inquisitor at the end, this is a hopeful play.

It is the call for democracy, freedom and humanity that rings in your ears as you leave the theatre.

Rough Magic's production of Schiller's *Don Carlos* in a version by Mike Poulton runs at the Project Arts Centre, Dublin until 31 March.

Colm Stephens lectures at Trinity College Dublin.

Love Poetry Hate Racism

Love Poetry Hate Racism International Weekend of the celebration of diversity through poetry April 20 - 22

A few weeks ago we, the Belfast Poets Touring Group, initiated a call for an international day of the celebration of diversity through poetry.

We asked people to put on a poetry event on that day and in tandem with cities all around the world and be part of an event which would play a part in combating racism.

We now have nearly 30 cities on board and that has meant that we have had to extend the event to an entire weekend. That means that many more people can get involved than we initially expected.

What we are asking people to do is to put on an event in your locality (not as some have thought come to Belfast).

We want this to be whatever you think appropriate, a poetry reading, slam event, open mic

night it really doesn't matter.

It could even be just a group of people who love poetry reading their favourite poems, just as long as the event is entitled Love Poetry Hate Racism then we can include it on the lists of international events.

The reasoning behind the calling of this event is

that Belfast in particular and Northern Ireland in general has been described as 'the race hate capital of Europe,' and it is true that many racist attacks and racist acts have taken place here.

But what is also true is that there has been a widespread campaign against racism and that has taken root in many

communities.

We believe as poets we should be part of the offensive against the racists given that poetry is practised worldwide and that at its heart is the self-expression of people wherever they come from.

We also recognise that poetry crosses all manner of boundaries, from language to cultural differences to find common cause.

When we were touring Australia we performed alongside poets from many different countries and cultural backgrounds and learnt from all of them.

We have been affected in the way we approach our writing through that experience.

If you would like to be part of this event please let us know all the necessary details as soon as possible.

For more information, general queries or advice please do not hesitate to contact us:

gordonfrombelfastpoets@yahoo.co.uk or lovepoetryhateracism@hotmail.co.uk

HEALTH SERVICE

Patients and supporters launch campaign to save St Luke's cancer Hospital Rathgar



Rory Hearne (second from left), People Before Profit candidate in Dublin South East with other campaigners for St Lukes

In 2005 Mary Harney and the Fianna Fail/PD Government (including local TD Michael McDowell) decided to shut St Luke's cancer hospital in Rathgar and transfer its radiotherapy services to St James's by 2011.

More than 20,000 patients are treated in St Luke's annually. St James's is already overcrowded with operations cancelled very recently. Patients of St Luke's and the People Before Profit Alliance Dublin South East have therefore launched a public campaign to save the hospital.

Rory Hearne, People Before Profit Alliance Candidate for Dublin South East said: 'St Luke's will be transferred as part of a Public Private Partnership which means big developers and speculators are set to make millions from the 18.5 acre St Luke's site.'

'Hume St. Hospital was recently closed and sold to a developer for €30 million.'

'It is a disgrace they are closing St Luke's. It is the centre for excellence for cancer treatment in Ireland and should get more investment rather than being shut. This is about profit for developers not the health needs of patients.'

'The patients have already handed Mary Harney 2000 petitions but they feel their concerns have not been heard.'

'The government has billions of a surplus. Why isn't St Luke's upgraded to deal with radiotherapy treatment waiting lists?'

Why build a new hospital for cancer patients when one already exists?

'The government should scrap their plans to close St Lukes.'

Over €21 million has been raised by Friends of St Luke's for the hospital. This is a huge investment that the Minister for Health will destroy when this deal is signed.

Harney says she is following the advice of experts but how many of these experts have been to St Luke's and seen the

level of care that is there?

Over one third of Irish people will develop cancer at some point in their lives.

Cancer care is vital to health and should have its own dedicated treatment centres. St Lukes is that centre and should be retained.

There was no consultation with the patients or staff over its closure.

PPP has shown to fail in the UK and be more expensive to the tax payer.

Joe Gilfoyle a patient

in St Luke's is appealing to the public to support the campaign:

'I am a cancer sufferer and the treatment I got at St Luke's was second to none. I am not concerned about myself anymore as I have what I have and will just have to get on with life.'

'But I have grandchildren. These grandchildren and future generations are now my main concern. I would like them to be able to avail of the wonderful services that I receive at

St Lukes were they ever to need it.'

'What the people of Ireland and future generations have here is a hospital of excellence. We cannot stand by and allow some half cooked politicians take it away from us.'

'The people of Ireland have let too much be taken from them over the years. Do not let this happen with St Luke's Hospital. We deserve better. I plead with you to get involved in the campaign to save this wonderful hospital.'

'Sign the petition, come to the protest on 4 April at the Dail at 12 noon and I ask you not to vote for government party candidates under present circumstances regarding their stance on St Luke's'

The PPP deal has still not been signed and can be reversed.

A public meeting has been organised at Madisons Bar Rathmines Rd at 7.30pm on Wednesday 28 March to launch the campaign in Dublin.

The campaign is calling for a protest at the Dail on 4 April.

They are also targeting Michael McDowell and will be holding a protest at his constituency office on Saturday 31 March 2pm. They appeal to everyone concerned with the health system to support these protests.

Contact Rory Hearne at 086 1523542 or Joe Gilfoyle at 0877937201 for info Download the St Luke's petition at www.roryhearne.org.

MENTAL HEALTH

Amnesty International is continuing its campaign to challenge the appalling state of Irish mental health services.

In 2003, Amnesty International's Irish Section began its campaign on mental health in Ireland, believing that 'mental health services here are inadequate, uneven in their availability throughout the country, and under-resourced in staff, money and therapies.'

In January 2006, the Irish Government committed itself to a new blueprint for mental health with a policy document: A Vision for Change. Promised improvements have not, to date materialised.

The Irish College of Psychiatry estimates that 83 percent of psychiatric consultants have no access to a psychotherapist, 76



Amnesty International mental health campaign

percent have no access to a family therapist and 33 percent have no access to an occupational therapist.

One major problem is the bottleneck in training courses for psychologists, particularly in the area of clinical psychology. One trainee told Socialist Worker, 'there

are huge numbers of people wanting to take these courses, roughly ten times as many as obtain them.

'The HSE up until now has failed to commit itself to fully funding the places that are available through the universities.'

See <http://www.amnesty.ie/amnesty/live/irish/action/>

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Unfair dismissal

By John Kavanagh

In the Republic of Ireland the legislation covering unfair dismissal are the 'Unfair Dismissals Acts 1977-2001'. The Acts apply to employees over 16 years of age with at least 12 months continuous service.

The Acts do not apply to close relatives of the employer who live and work in the same private house or farm, members of the Defence Forces or Gardai, officers of vocational educational committees, the chief executive officer of the Health Service Executive, a County manager, a City manager or FAS apprentices who have been dismissed within one month of the end of their apprenticeship.

Dismissals are unfair under the Acts where it can be shown that they resulted wholly or mainly from any of the following:

- The employee's trade union membership or activities
- Religious or political opinions
- Race, colour or sexual orientation
- The age of the employee
- An employee's membership of the travelling community
- Legal proceedings against an employer where the employee is a party or a witness
- Unfair selection for redundancy
- The employee's entitlements, future entitlements, exercise or proposed exercise of rights under the National Minimum Wage Act 2000
- Any matters connected with pregnancy, giving birth or breastfeeding
- The exercise or proposed exercise by an employee of a right under the Maternity Protection Act, 1994 and 2004 to any form of protective leave or natal care absence
- The exercise or proposed exercise by an employee of the right to parental leave, force majeure leave under the Parental Leave Act, 1998 and 2006 or carer's leave under the Carer's Leave Act, 2001
- The exercise or contemplated exercise by an adopting parent of the right under the Adoptive Leave Act, 1995 & 2005 to adoptive leave or additional adoptive leave.

It is important to note that workers claiming unfair dismissal for trade union membership or activity or in relation to pregnancy, breastfeeding, maternity,

Parental Leave or Carer's Leave **do not** have to have twelve months continuous service to bring a claim for unfair dismissal under these headings.

An employer who has dismissed an employee must, if asked, give him/her in writing, within 14 days, the reasons for his/her dismissal. In general the Act provides that every dismissal is presumed to be unfair unless the employer can show substantial grounds for justification.

Substantial grounds for justification include but are not restricted to: incompetence, misconduct and redundancy. It should be noted, however, that if the dismissal was for trade union membership or activity the presumption that the dismissal was unfair does not apply and the burden of proof lies with the dismissed employee.

The lock-out of an employee is regarded as a dismissal and will be deemed to be an unfair dismissal if, after the lock-out, that employee is not re-instated and one or more other employees are.

Dismissal of an employee for taking part in a strike or other industrial action is regarded as unfair if, one or more employees of the same employer who took part in the strike or industrial action were not also dismissed.

If a worker considers s/he has been unfairly dismissed, s/he can submit a claim for redress to a Rights Commissioner or to the Employment Appeals Tribunal. Claims must be made in writing and within six months of the date of dismissal. Because of the detail and the quasi-legal procedures involved, claims are best made through your Trade Union.

If a worker has been found to have been unfairly dismissed they can be awarded either, re-instatement, re-engagement or financial compensation.

For full information on unfair dismissal the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment produce a very detailed and comprehensive booklet available free of charge at <http://www.entemp.ie/employment/rights/unfairdismissals.htm>

Alternatively contact your local shop steward or your full-time Trade Union official.

The same subject in the context of Northern Ireland will be covered in the next issue of Socialist Worker.

Got an Industrial Relations question for John Kavanagh? Send it to editor@swp.ie

Have you got a story for Socialist Worker? Send it to editor@swp.ie Tel (01) 872 2682 or PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

PUBLIC LENDING RIGHTS

The Irish Writers' Union has welcomed the announcement that due to legal proceedings taken by the European Parliament, the Irish Government will introduce a Public Lending Rights Scheme (PLR). Chairperson Conor

Kostick explained. 'PLR is a scheme whereby writers are given a small payment each time their book is borrowed from a library.'

'The majority of writers in Ireland earn an average of less than €200 a week. The IWU estimate

that only some 50 Irish writers can earn a living from their writing alone.

'PLR therefore offers a valuable support to authors, especially in an age where trends in publishing means bookshops, notably the multi-national

chains, concentrate on limited numbers of bestsellers.

'Libraries have a much richer backlist, including many out-of-print books.'

'A small payment to the author when these are borrowed will be a useful supplement to the

income of many writers in Ireland.

'Furthermore, if, as is the case in the existing PLR schemes across Europe, there is a cap on payments to any one author, then PLR payments will disproportionately favour the lower income author.'

ESB

ENERGY BILLS SOAR

A new report published by the ATGWU has revealed how Government energy policy over the last seven years has led to massively increased prices.

Brendan Ogle, regional organiser of the union summarised the issue.

'Electricity prices are increasing faster in Ireland than anywhere else in Europe.

'Back in 2000, Ireland had the third cheapest electricity prices in the EU. Today, we have one of the highest.

'There are attempts to blame an inefficient ESB. But ESB costs have risen by half that of prices. Some attempt to blame the workforce but labour costs make up only 16% or all ESB costs.

'So why the extravagant and unnecessary price rises in electricity? It's quite simple. Prices are not determined by 'market forces'.

They are determined by bureaucratic edict, set by a Government appointee working to the Government's agenda.'

The main finding of the report is that the government Regulator has artificially increased electricity prices 'to entice private companies to enter the market.'

This contention is borne out by the recent energy White Paper, which was welcomed by Chambers Ireland Chief Executive, John Dunne, as a move to 'open up the Irish Energy market to greater competition.'

Brid Smith, People Before Profit Candidate for Dublin South Central and member of the Dublin District Committee of the ATGWU said that the findings were a disgrace. 'On the one hand the government are telling us we need competition to bring down prices, but as a matter of fact they have been forcing up prices in order achieve privatisation.

'The privatisation of electricity, which is an essential service, is crazy. You only have to look at the experience of California and other states, where there have been several blackouts, to see the chaos that the market brings.

'That's why People Before Profit are standing in this election: to defend public services from the neo-liberal parties, who effectively plan to rob the people of national assets.'

INTO

Class size meetings bring out over 2,000 people on one night



500 people attended a meeting in the Regency Hotel in Drumcondra.

Class Size meetings organised by the INTO as part of a campaign to highlight large class sizes in primary schools in the past few weeks have drawn massive crowds.

On 5 March a number of meetings took place in various locations across Ireland.

In Cork over 1,200 people packed out a room in the Rochestown Park Hotel and were addressed by INTO General Secretary John Carr, who said that 'it will be wrong if we don't do everything in our power to change this.'

There were 600 people in attendance in Letterkenny and over 200 in Newbridge, Co. Kildare. In Dublin on the same night, over 500 people attended a meeting in

the Regency Hotel in Drumcondra.

The meeting saw various politicians from almost all the political parties address the meeting. All gave quite vague commitments to reduce class sizes if their party were in power after the next elections.

Fianna Fail were not represented by any government TD, instead opting to send a sitting councillor to address the meeting.

Teacher and parent alike spoke passionately from the floor and the anger was palpable. A newly qualified teacher working in the inner city spoke of the difficulty of trying to cope with a class of over 30, day in, day out.

A parent participant in the overall presentation quite rightly

pointed to the robbery of billions by big business and corrupt politicians through off-shore accounts and tax evasion as being connected to the under funding of education and the large class sizes. Despite this and many more strong contributions, the response from the political representatives still remained quite weak.

The meetings have been very successful in highlighting the issue of large class sizes in Ireland. If the INTO are to successfully win a reduction in class sizes, however, they will have to turn up the pressure in the weeks ahead and move beyond simple lobbying of public representatives to more active forms of campaigning.

For further details see: www.into.ie

AER LINGUS

Aer Lingus workers have, for the moment, beaten back an attempt by management to introduce new contracts.

Following the intervention of the Labour Court meetings took place in Dublin, Cork and Shannon between SIPTU officials, shop stewards, craft unions and Aer Lingus representatives.

It remains to be seen whether the company will then attempt to press ahead with the new work practices.

SIPTU official Mick Halpenny talked to Socialist Worker about the dispute.

'The fundamental problem is that in the run up to privatisation, which this union consistently opposed, the staff were given assurances that protected their conditions of work.

A few months after that, however, they find themselves having to defend the very conditions that were supposed to be protected in the first place.'

Management's proposals threatened to erode hard-fought conditions of work and to introduce much less favourable terms for new staff.

'We don't see a difference between new and old. We want to protect to the maximum the conditions of both existing and new staff. SIPTU are absolutely opposed to the introduction of new, lesser, rates and conditions at Aer Lingus.'

The temporary reprieve was won by a ballot for strike action.

'The fact that we in SIPTU were willing to stand up and be counted forced the intervention of the Labour Court. Secondly, it got us the finding from the Labour Court, which

we expected, that the company was in clear breach of the agreement.

'From 19 Jan, working closely with the shop stewards, we pursued a twin track approach: processing issues through the normal mechanisms and also balloting the members ready for industrial in the event that the company pushed the boat out.

'In the event, with the company holding off, action has not yet been needed. But that ballot result is still there in the background for if the company come back at us.'

STUDENTS

GOOD RESULT FOR THE LEFT IN QUEENS UNIVERSITY

The Socialist Worker Student Society recently stood in the elections for the SU executive in Queens University.

The socialists polled well, offering a political alternative for students.

Running with the slogan 'Welfare Not Warfare' the candidates argued that the government should put more money towards education instead of squandering it on war in the Middle East.

Sabrina Sullivan, the SWSS candidate for VP Welfare received almost 20% of the vote, amounting to nearly 400 first preference votes.

Michael Collins, candidate for president received 281 first preference votes while Michael Black, standing for deputy President polled in at 334 votes.

'This is an important

breakthrough for student politics and hopefully we can build on it in the weeks and months ahead', commented a SWSS member from Queens.

Recently, SWSS members passed a motion in the student council for a demonstration to be held against student top-up fees.

The top-up fees introduced by the Labour government force students to pay £3000 per year for tuition.

Michael Collins, from QUB said, 'all of the political parties in N. Ireland say that they are against top up fees.

'So we have encouraged the SU to build a demonstration that coincides with the opening of the assembly.

'We want to put pressure on the politicians to act.'

TRINITY STUDENTS COKE BOYCOTT VOTE

By Pete Hession

Trinity Students have voted in a landslide victory for the boycott of Coca-Cola products to express solidarity with trade unionists in Colombia and protest at the murder of Coke workers.

Since the successful No-to-coke campaign in 2004, the Trinity Student Union controlled shops have ceased to sell all Coca-Cola products.

Over 2,000 students voted in support of the boycott: the largest number ever to vote against the corporate giant.

This referendum represents the third time that students in Trinity have voted against selling Coke products, by taking a stand to denounce corporate violence in favor of human rights.

The unprecedented margin of success in the referendum also indicated the growing responsiveness of students to issues of this nature. 62.9% voted against a return of Coke at the polls last month. Since 2004, over 34 colleges around the world together with several trade unions have now joined this campaign, a further sign of its growing momentum and increasingly powerful international support.

Although this positive result for

Trinity students has upheld the boycott instigated three years ago, College authorities still continue to permit coke products to be sold in the various private shops and cafes based in and around the university campus, a fact Trinity students now feel ready to challenge.

The victory has built strong awareness and enthusiastic support for such campaigns against seemingly impenetrable corporate giants who continue to behave with flagrant disregard for fundamental human rights.

The energy, vibrancy and strength behind this positive result represent the victory of decent human concern over the arguments of pervasive individualism so common in Ireland today.

A clear and unequivocal message has been communicated once again by students of Trinity collage that apathy, complacency and cynicism cannot, and will not be regarded as their defining features.

Marking the coming fortieth anniversary of the birth pangs of student unrest in Trinity and other universities ignited during 1967, the defeat of coke serves to disprove those who lament the death of students as a positive force in Irish society.

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.....



DON'T PAY THE WATER CHARGES



The campaign to defeat the water charges has moved rapidly over the past few weeks with meetings being held all over Northern Ireland from the various groups which constitute the campaign.

The impetus from the elections, where all reports are that the key issue was water charges, and the fact that the bills are only a few weeks away, have combined to drive the campaign forward.

The key argument that people already pay for water has been won. This makes the government's case to drive through the charges very difficult and increasingly it looks impossible.

All of a sudden the political parties are talking about suspending the charges for another year. This change has primarily been brought about by the level of working class anger against the imposition of the charges.

While suspension would clearly be a victory for the movement we must demand that the charges are scrapped completely. We know the money is there within the rates to pay for and upgrade the service, so why suspension when we could what we need is abolition.

There can be no let up in the campaign until our goals are achieved.

On the back of the very noticeable shift in working class areas, Communities against Water Taxes has held public meetings in Strabane and the surrounding area, Derry, Limavady, Dungiven, has other meetings organised in Lisburn and, on the back of Sean Mitchell's election result, held meetings throughout the constituency of west Belfast.

Preparatory work has been done for meetings in East Belfast and North Belfast as well as many areas outside of the major cities.

The recent meetings in the Village and St James, one a mainly Protestant Loyalist area and one a mainly Catholic Republican area, showed that not only that big lively meetings could be built, but that links between the communities can be strengthened.

Both meetings had nearly 80 people attending, and both were angry, spirited and resilient. In the meeting in the Village a local politician, Ulster Unionist Bob Stoker, stated publicly that he would not be paying and that he would support people

who did not pay.

In the meeting in St James, a Sinn Fein MLA was publicly rebuked for refusing to support non-payment. The campaign must now be accelerated so that as many towns or estates have a water charges group set up. This is vital because there are still concerns being raised at every meeting that the government has the potential to beat us through the courts and the legal system.

The facts are simple. In refusing to pay we are not committing a criminal offence. The government can threaten us all they like but they have to get the money from us. They cannot turn off the water and the fines and charges to go to court are small.

If everyone refuses to pay the courts will be unable to deal with us. If we fight we can win. They have no right to force us to pay twice.

The next major part of the campaign beyond building community meetings is the Coalition against Water Charges rally in Belfast on the 31 March. Other rallies are being organised in Derry and Strabane.