

LISBON DEFEATED

No to cuts in pay and public services

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

THE ESRI and government statistics show Ireland is now officially in recession.

After months of denying that the credit crunch and global financial crisis would hit Ireland hard, economists and bosses are now calling for drastic cuts in public spending.

The rich in Ireland made a fortune out of the Celtic Tiger, €41 billion in capital gains from investments in land, property and equities between 2004 and 2007.

There are 450 people with at least €10 million each and one hundred people with at least €100 million.

The rich account for less than 1 per cent of the population.

In 2007, this 1 per cent had an asset base of €100 billion - more than a third of national non-residential wealth.

It is they who should now be made pay higher taxes to fund our public services instead of cutting back in already threadbare services.

Bosses want to make workers carry the cost of the recession through pay freezes and cuts.

They want to start a new 'race to the bottom' - as Hibernian Insurance is doing by outsourcing jobs to India, despite making €326 million in profit last year.

Unions need to fight to defend every job and stop any cuts in public spending - make government raise taxes on business and the rich to fund the shortfall.

The NO vote to Lisbon was a brilliant example of workers standing up to the bullying of the business elite and demanding a different, a better, social Europe.

Bosses and right wing politicians are trying to claim the Lisbon NO vote as



Trade unionists fighting to defend our services and conditions

Photo: Paula Geraghty

a vote to keep corporate taxes low. In fact the Euro-barometer poll showed the main motivation for voting NO was

to defend workers rights. The recession and financial crisis is exposing the real agenda that was

behind the Lisbon Treaty - the business agenda. EU and Irish bosses need Lisbon to further their exploitation of European workers and workers in the third world.

Phrases such as 'securing Europe's place in the world' is code for further privatisation and militarism in Europe and elsewhere.

They are now trying to scare people who voted NO with threats of forcing Ireland to leave the EU.

All of these threats are based on lies, the world did not fall apart after France voted NO, only the plans of the neo-liberals were derailed.

The fallout from the NO vote also exposes the fake democracy we have under capitalism.

Instead of listening to the people, supposedly the highest authority in democracies, we are told we will have to vote again.

The EU governments only listen to the corporate elites - they don't give most EU citizens a vote, disregard the vote if they lose or make us vote again until we 'get it right'.

Parties like Sinn Fein who want to re-negotiate the treaty are simple giving cover for the right-wing to come back with the same proposals.

Instead we need a radical left that puts forward a different vision for Europe and Ireland.

One based on workers rights and properly funded public services.

A radical left that will also challenge the new right around Libertas, the Catholic right and racist forces.

The Lisbon Treaty should be scrapped.

There should be no re-negotiation and no second referendum.

We now have a chance to put a different plan for Europe on the agenda - a Europe for people not profit.

Eamonn McCann on "How we beat the arms industry"



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Thousands marching against the BNP

UP TO 10,000 people took to the streets of London against the fascist British National Party (BNP).

The demonstration was called by Unite Against Fascism (UAF) and Love Music Hate Racism (LMHR). It came in response to recent gains by the BNP at the May elections, including the Nazi's first London assembly seat.

The march was young and angry, with a large turnout from schools and colleges across the country.

There was a strong trade union presence on the march too, with contingents from the FBU, UCU, PCS, Unite and several other unions.

Protesters gathered near City Hall, home of the London assembly, and marched to a rally at Trafalgar Square accompanied by a float featuring musicians from the LMHR campaign.

Addressing the rally, Weyman Bennett, joint secretary of UAF, pointed

to recent violent attacks on Roma Gypsies and immigrants in Italy as a warning of the dangers of letting fascist parties gain a foothold in the electoral system.

He said the march should be the opening shot in a long campaign to drive the Nazi BNP out of our council chambers, out of the political mainstream, and into the dustbin of history.

Sally Hunt, general secretary of the UCU lecturers' union, warned that the BNP was aiming to relaunch its student wing in universities and colleges later this year.

She pledged that the union would do its utmost to prevent fascists from organising on campus and spreading race hatred among students.

Many protesters were angry at the attitude of the police towards the anti-fascist march. The police refused to let the LMHR float into Trafalgar Square or allow amplified music at the rally.



Protesters march in London against the fascist BNP

200 students protest against closure of language schools

by DAVNET COTTER

A LARGE and lively demonstration of over 200 students who use the Integrate Ireland Language courses marched from Liberty Hall in Dublin to the Department of Education to demand their language schools be saved. Demonstrations were also held in at least five other cities on the same day.

The Department of Education decided to close down the entire network of English language schools specialising in teaching refugees. Over forty experienced specialist language teachers throughout the country are to lose their positions on July 31st 2008.

Integrate Ireland Language and Training (IILT) provides language and integration teaching in centres in Dublin, Galway, Waterford, Sligo, Castlebar, Ballina, Balbriggan, Kilkenny and Mullingar.

IILT students are among the most vulnerable members of our community. Many have been brought to Ireland for their own safety due to civil war, disaster or persecution. UNHCR Placement refugees, newly arrived, will now receive no language or



On the protest

Photo Paula Geraghty

integration training.

IILT is the largest single provider of language and integration training in the state, with over 4000 hours of training delivered each

year. It is an internationally recognised centre of excellence in integration. Recent winner of the AONTAS STAR for excellence and innovation in adult education.

In the last few years we have helped some 3000 newcomers to move towards integration and understanding of their new home. IILT has provided expertise, material and training to all primary and secondary schools in the field of integration and language acquisition.

This decision was made without consultation with staff or our partners in education. No provision has been made to replace IILT. Hundreds of students will be left without support or access to language training.

Mamie Holborow president of SIPTU Education branch spoke at the protest. "The attack on IILT has to be seen in the context of the wider attack and under-funding of all Irish education.

Over 40,000 primary school children have to use sub-standard prefabs as school buildings.

This demonstration today is a demonstration of the new Irish. The government talks about integration but here we have it cutting a basic service that allows people to integrate. Today's demonstration is just the start of a major campaign of protests to stop education cutbacks".

US 'security accords' lay the groundwork for attack on Iran

by SIMON ASSAF

MORE REVELATIONS have emerged about the details of the "status of forces agreement" – the security accords the US is attempting to impose on Iraq.

The accords have been met with widespread opposition in Iraq – with tens of thousands joining demonstrations.

George Bush is demanding the right to decide whether Iraq is "being attacked" by a foreign power, and how to respond. This is a direct threat against Iran and Syria.

Bush classifies Syria as a "state sponsor of terror" that allows resistance fighters to cross over its border with Iraq.

The US accuses Iran of arming and training sections of the Shia Muslim resistance groups.

Under this latest proviso the US could use Iraq to launch an attack on Iran if US soldiers are targeted by "Iranian made weapons".

Socialist Worker and the Independent newspaper published details of the security accords.

The US is demanding 58 permanent military bases as well as hundreds

of military installations. The accords will award foreigners immunity from Iraq's laws and give US troops the right to arrest or kill any Iraqi.

They give the US control over Iraq's airspace and the right to launch wars on "third countries".

The deal will also allow US companies to rip up any reconstruction contract signed with Iraqi companies.

The latest revelations have raised fears that the US is attempting to clear any hurdles to a war on Iran launched from Iraqi soil.

Iran has responded by issuing a stern warning to Iraq's prime minister Nuri al-Maliki. Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei told Maliki, "The dream of the Americans most certainly will never be realised," and advised him against signing the accords.

Bush has informed the US Congress that neither it nor the Iraqi parliament will be given a chance to ratify the treaty.

Mass opposition to the accords has forced the Iraqi government to demand that all US troops should "remain in their bases".

Mass protests shake South Korea

By CJ PARK in Seoul, a member of the All Together socialist group in South Korea

UPTO a million people gathered across South Korea on the 10th June to commemorate the 21st anniversary of the 1987 June Struggle.

The June Struggle was a milestone in the history of democracy in South Korea. It ended the military dictatorship and brought many democratic reforms.

This year, however, people are not just commemorating what happened 21 years ago. Instead many are hoping to bring down the current right wing government of president Lee Myung-bak.

The candlelight protest movement that began in early May started as a campaign against the new government's decision to lift the ban on US beef imports – which are rightly seen as risking mad cow disease and as dangerous to people's health.

The movement has

now grown to become a mass protest for democracy and wider change.

More than 200,000 people gathered in the centre of Seoul to support a 72 hour siege of the City Hall plaza which continued over the long holiday weekend.

Candlelight protests were also held in more than 100 cities nationwide and even in some cities abroad. Protests have been met by riot police.

Amazingly, the president has been in office for just over 100 days.

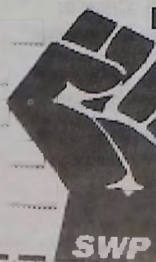
The government's business friendly policies are transferring the heavy burdens of oil and food price rises to the poorest people.

It is marketising state schools, which will encourage competition among students and between schools.

This is the backdrop to the current mass protests in South Korea. The struggle for democracy has been revived.

Socialists

send to
3 Dublin 8



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

WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

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.

DUN LAOGHAIRE

Back on the streets to save the seafront

by HUGH LEWIS

TWO YEARS ago thousands of people joined the Save Our Seafront protests against plans for an 8-storey apartment block on the site of Dun Laoghaire baths.

These protests successfully halted plans to privatise and destroy the public seafront.

On those protests and with a petition of over 14,000 signatures, the public made it clear that we wanted Dun Laoghaire baths restored as a fully public amenity with swimming pools.

Since the council pledged to restore the baths as a public amenity little progress has been made.

The Council has spent almost €200,000 of taxpayer's money on consultants who have taken two years to come up with new plans for the baths.

The two options A and B involve a total reconstruction of the surrounding seafront and incredibly include no swimming pools!

Both propose to knock down the Baths buildings at an estimated cost of €87m and €129 million respectively!

In the coming period the SOS campaign will once again take to the streets in there thousands with one simple message **JUST GIVE US OUR BATHS!**

Council tries to intimidate bin tax non-payers

by HUGH LEWIS

IN RECENT weeks campaigners against bin charges in parts of Dun Laoghaire and Blackrock have come under sustained pressure and intimidation from the council.

On two occasions several litter wardens donning sunglasses and hi visibility vests have been searching bins for identification and photographing campaigners throwing the rubbish in the trucks.

However these bullyboy tactics were met with great resistance and the angry residents ran the council heavies off the streets.

The Campaign against Service Charges will be organising immediate fundraisers to aid with any possible court appearances and will be encouraging the residents involved to keep their bold will and determination strong.



Demonstrating against Bush in Belfast

Photos Paula Geraghty

1,000 protest Bush in Belfast

By SEAN MITCHELL

ON MONDAY June 16, 1000 protestors gathered at Belfast City hall to protest against the visit of the warmonger George Bush.

The protest was at lunch time and was made up mostly of public sector workers from nearby workplaces.

It had the support of a wide range of organisations including the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NIC), NIPSA, Unison, and the Fire Brigades Union.

Speaker after speaker pointed to George Bush's legacy, that of war and occupation. Others pointed out his inaction after Hurricane Katrina and his failure to tackle climate change.

There was anger directed at those that invited and greeted him, particularly Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness. One speaker, Eamonn McCann asked "what side are you on". He suggested that it was impossible to be both anti war and meet George Bush.

"You are either on the side of the oppressor or the side of the oppressed, you can't have it both ways"

Other speakers pointed that the arrival of Bush signalled the neo liberal intent of the Assembly. They were intending to send out a message that the North was "open for



business".

Demonstrators were urged to get ready to defend jobs and public services.

One message that permeated throughout the event was that

despite the fact that George Bush is an outgoing President, the anti war movement had to redouble its efforts to stop an attack on Iran.

To large applause student speaker Matthew Collins argued, "If a finger is laid against Iran, by the US or Israel, we should see demonstrations, occupations and walk outs from workplaces".

The "No Welcome for Bush" was a fantastic show of resistance to war and neo liberalism.

■ Around 30 artists and members of the Belfast Anti-War Movement embarked upon a long march up Davis Mountain in order to write "No Bush" as a message to the president and those that invited him.

Activists brought their own white sheets and spirits were high as attempts were made to finish the piece before the onset of darkness.

When completed the message was visible to most of Belfast and was picked up by many TV and media outlets.

Neagh Rd-Refurbish this amenity for the children!

by PAUL SHELDRECK

A VICTORY has been won by the residents of Neagh Rd in Terenure.

They have been fighting for the refurbishment of the play area for several

years. This play area has been completely neglected by Dublin City Council over the past 15 to 20 years.

After years of campaigning by the local residents, Dublin City Council(DCC)

have at last begun a consultation process with them and have promised funding to the order of Euro700,000.

This has been a long struggle for much needed amenities for the

children of this locality.

However, the resident's group need to keep up the pressure to make sure that they get the play area they have been promised.

Watch this space!

AFTER LISBON:

Left alternative being built in Galway

By LAURANT PARDON

GALWAY NO to Lisbon campaign achieved a great victory as the constituency of Galway rejected the Lisbon Treaty by a 53.5% No Vote. This was the result of the work of a small committed group of Galway citizens to start organising information meetings to argue for A NO vote.

The group managed to have members actively attending every YES/NO meeting in Galway, we produced local literature, leaflets and posters on the Lisbon Treaty. The distribution was carried out on street stalls,

as well as door-to-door during 6 long weeks of nightly canvassing.

From speaking to voters on the doorstep, it became abundantly clear, that many people did not have any information on the Lisbon Treaty or were sceptical about the articles on military expansion, tax and the loss of the Irish veto in a multitude of areas.

Since the NO Vote, two Socialist meetings have been organised in Galway to prepare a left alternative able to counter the liberal European elite on their next attempt to push their anti-democratic agenda.

A class vote in Kerry

By SEAN MORAGHAN

THAT THE electorate of Kerry rejected the mainstream parties, the union leadership and the media and voted NO to Lisbon.

The vote was 59% NO in Tralee, and 57% NO in South Kerry. There was a strong rejection of the Treaty in Tralee's working class areas, and in rural areas by farmers and fishermen, with farmers clearly rejecting the instructions of the IFA. Voters of the mainstream parties also abandoned their traditional allegiances.

Throughout the campaign the local print media were pushing a Yes vote, with one local paper shrieking that to vote No would be an act of treason!

This campaign introduced People Before Profit to North Kerry. We went on to leaflet every housing estate in Tralee, while members and associates took away PBP leaflets and worked their own towns and villages in

North Kerry. Street stalls were held where people grabbed our leaflets hungry for real information on the treaty. At Listowel in June we leafleted Writer's Week where we encountered only two avowed Yes voters.

At the last ditch, Brian Cowen himself hit the streets of Tralee only to be met that sunny Saturday with a wall of No campaigners. He got a frosty verbal reception from the people he met on his walkabout.

The Yes side in Kerry claimed the No vote was a "don't know" vote. It wasn't. The don't knows mostly stayed at home, the Yeses voted Yes and the NOs voted No. Anger at the government's bullying campaign and at their policies generally, mixed with anger at the state of the economy and loss of local services played a part. Ireland's neutrality was also an issue, as the Yes side dismissed concerns on militarisation people were aware that Irish troops were being deployed on a suspect mission in Chad.

Ballymun residents block road to demand safer streets



by KEVIN WINGFIELD

RESIDENTS OF the Hollytree area of Ballymun have been demanding traffic lights and speed ramps on Balbutcher Lane.

This follows a number of accidents along the busy road which runs through the residential area.

The new housing created by Ballymun Regeneration, the narrow footpaths and the large number of small children make a lethal mixture when mixed with speeding cars on what is now a prime route connecting Ballymun, Finglas, a new shopping

centre and links to the motorway.

The pleas of residents have for more than a year been met with deaf ears from the Council planners.

So over the past month, residents have taken matters into their own hands.

They have organised protest marches and blockades of the road on Friday rush hour evenings.

As one resident explained, "The speeding cars are a deadly threat to our children and if the Council won't sit up and listen we will escalate our actions".

For more details contact Kevin on 086-3074060.

HSE plans further cuts:

Union fights for a decent health service



By HSE WORKER

THE IMPACT Union is holding a work to rule in its battle with the Health Service Executive (HSE) to save not just jobs but to fight privatisation. The union has organised 'complementary actions' that include: public information campaigns; lobbying; demonstrations and protests; and industrial action. Union branches have also been encouraged to organise their own events.

The campaign started on 12 May and will continue until at least September. The plan is to keep the dispute 'visible' to the public and to management. One of the events organised was a series of protest meetings throughout the country at lunchtime on June 11. It was seen as a warning salvo to management of the beginning of a campaign to save jobs and prevent cuts.

There was a good, lively turnout at most venues and lots of support with hooting horns; cheers and people stopping to talk and relate many of their individual horror stories of how the HSE cuts have affected them. Many also stopped to show their support for the workers in their fight to help stop the cuts.

This work to rule means – no overtime work (except emergencies); sticking strictly to job descriptions and not doing any extra duties; not carrying out any work from posts left vacant; no engagement with HSE advisors

or Partnership forums. The HSE response was to say it would impose disciplinary procedures against any employee not carrying out duties requested.

While these protests are being carried out the HSE is planning its further 'slash and burn' tactics'. It appears that within the next few weeks large numbers of contract workers will be let go. They will not be replaced and many full time employees will be asked to take up the slack. This could be the point where a real dispute will erupt.

Meanwhile, HSE are looking to cut payment for all mileage from non-clinical posts. This means there will be no attendance at meetings outside the office; no attendance at seminars and educational; no visits to community organisations or participation on other bodies such as Health Forums.

Use of taxis was cut from mid June and will impact heavily on social work services – no longer able to move family members to safety, transfer children to their new homes; organise family visits etc. It will impact on hospitals who use taxis to transfer patients between hospitals; take patients for MRI scans outside the hospital which is lacking in these facilities; moving urgent files from one place to another to ensure correct and complete treatment for patients and in some cases delivering much needed medicine to individuals or between



Workers from the health sector staging a protest in June

Photos Paula Geraghty

hospitals.

All training will also cease except for health and safety reasons or specific clinical pieces.

The cuts are just beginning. The Union will have to take a more militant stance if it is going to get anywhere. The pri-

vatization juggernaut is on the road and it will take more than one hour lunchtime stoppages to even damage its paint never mind stop it in its tracks. The energy and enthusiasm of those on the stoppages and supporting it is the key. Union activists must build on that.

Liberties Consultation sham hides real agenda to cut social housing in working class area

By ROISIN RYDER

THE DUBLIN inner city area of the Liberties is being 'regenerated', but once again the city council's plans are designed to maximise developer profits.

It was made very clear by the Assistant City Manager Ciaran McNamara that any social development in the Liberties area would be paid for through what he called 'equity release'. When pressed to clarify what this meant he said that public land would have to be sold.

The Liberties Development Action Group (LDAG) was set up after a public meeting called by People before Profit in November. It has set itself up as a watchdog around this consultation. Quite quickly the group realised that the process of consultation was a cover for a very different agenda.

The main theme when all the extras are taken away is about demolishing a series of flat complexes in Pimlico and replacing them with a public park and a mixed housing development. The net loss of public housing will be huge at a time when the waiting list in the Dublin city council catchment area is over 6,000.

The residents of the flat complexes are in shock. They were given only a day's notice of the meeting where this suggestion was put forward. At the beginning people

thought it was a suggestion which could be accepted or rejected. However as the 'consultation' process continues it is quite obvious that DCC and the consultants JTP are intending to ensure that this idea is put into the Local Area Plan. They are suggesting that people who want to stay in their homes are opposed to change.

It was hinted by a representative from DCC that if they did not give up their homes for a park there would be no park at all in the Liberties area!

This is bullying tactics. Residents would be re-housed in apartments on Cork St which have been built by private developers and are still empty. This is clearly about boosting profits of private developers and is not about addressing the housing crisis. The LDAG has not received a response to questions about the numbers of social housing units in the area.

Consultants John Thomson (JTP) have railroaded meetings and organised them so that there was little or no time for discussion. Often the most important item of the evening was left to the end when most people had left.

When the LDAG were collecting over 300 petitions to halt and change the consultation process over 80% of people were not even aware of a consultation process.

BATU strike:

Union executive use bosses tactics

By COLM STEPHENS

JUST AT a time when the bosses are using the downturn in the construction industry as an excuse to turn the screw on building workers is the time when the workers need a strong union that sticks to its principles.

Instead BATU, the construction workers union, is doing exactly what they should be fighting against.

Earlier this year it became clear that BATU was in financial difficulties and the reaction of the union leadership was the same as the bosses they are supposed to fight.

The first thing the union proposed was a 10% pay cut for all staff without negotiation – the same rate for all, no matter what grade!

The General Secretary, Paddy O'Shaughnessy, with a

6-figure salary and the lowest paid part-time cleaning staff all would get the same deal.

Then in April O'Shaughnessy proposed compulsory redundancies and the right to implement these proposals himself.

At a meeting of a sub-committee of the union's Executive that lasted a mere 55 minutes he got backing for his proposals.

Despite the looming financial crisis in the union a few weeks previously O'Shaughnessy had confirmed an official who was on probation in a permanent position.

Ignoring the trade union principle of 'last in, first out' O'Shaughnessy passed over the newly appointed official and selected for redundancy two others, Tom Fitzgerald and Rob Kelly who have years of

service to the union.

Ironically Fitzgerald was the person that had trained in the new official who now keeps his job while Fitzgerald is out of work.

For the past seven weeks Fitzgerald, Kelly and other administrative staff have been on strike against the redundancies, the threat wage cuts and of detrimental conditions.

The strike is sanctioned by the union UNITE which represents the workers in BATU.

Incredibly every day since the strike began the BATU General Secretary and other officials have passed the picket and are acting as scab labour doing the work of the strikers.

Like any good anti-union boss the BATU leadership has refused to get assistance from

ICTU in order to resolve the dispute or to attend the Labour Court.

The strikers' demands are

- Lift the redundancies
- Return to work without victimisation
- No imposed changes to pay and conditions
- ☐ Recognition of UNITE to represent the staff at BATU

Tom Fitzgerald commented that picket line was visited every day by rank and file BATU members supporting the strikers.

He added 'We welcome any anyone who can get to Blessington Street and shows of solidarity and support at the picket'

The BATU strikers can be contacted at batustrikers@gmail.com or phone Tom Fitzgerald at 087 2253755 or Rob Kelly at 087 818 2132.

RAYTHEON NINE VERDICT: A victory against the arms trade

By Eamonn McCann



Some of the Raytheon Nine outside the court

THOSE WHO make the bombs are as guilty as those who drop them.

That's the message of the acquittal of the Raytheon 9 last month after a three-week trial at Belfast Crown Court.

Nine members of the Derry Anti-War Coalition were cleared of affray and criminal damage arising from their occupation of Raytheon's Derry premises on August 9th 2006 and destruction of the facility's computer system.

We didn't deny the prosecution's account but maintained that we'd acted to thwart the commission of war crimes by the Israeli Defence Forces.

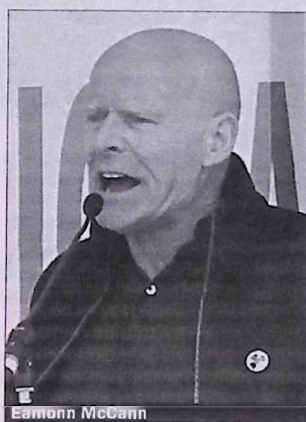
It had been the Israeli bombing of Qana in southern on July 30th 2006 which prompted our action. Television footage of distraught civilians stumbling from the rubble cradling dead babies had made it

plain that a war crime had taken place. Twenty-eight people from two extended families, 16 of them children, sheltering in a basement, had been crushed and choked to death when a "bunker-buster" ploughed down through three storeys to erupt in the earth beneath them. Raytheon is Israel's largest supplier of bunker-busters.

There had been controversy in Derry over Raytheon since 1999, when Nobel Peace Prize winners John Hume and David Trimble had hailed the arms giant's arrival as an installment of a "peace dividend".

The arms factory was reward for having made peace!

SDLP and Sinn Fein councillors claimed they had assurances of no arms-related production in Derry. But by 2006, the DAWC and the Foyle Ethical



Eamonn McCann

Investment Campaign had proven that these assurances were phony. But still, neither party was willing to tell Raytheon to get out. Direct action was the only way forward.

Our defence was that we had a genuine and reasonable belief that war crimes were being committed and that innocent people were in need of protection; that Raytheon, including its Derry plant, was aiding and abetting these crimes; and that our action had had the effect of delaying or hampering the commission of the crimes.

Had we fallen down on any of the steps in this defence, we would have been convicted.

Following our acquittal, we called on local elected representatives at last to say in unequivocal terms that Raytheon isn't

welcome in our city. Neither the SDLP nor Sinn Fein responded.

We called on the Crown Prosecution Service to institute a criminal investigation into the operation of Raytheon across Britain as well as in the North.

We added: "We believe that one day the world will look back on the arms trade as we look back today on the slave trade, and wonder how it came about that such evil could abound in respectable society."

"We took the action we did in the immediate aftermath of the slaughter of innocents in Qana. The people of Qana are our neighbours."

Their children are the children of our neighbours. We trashed Raytheon to help protect our neighbours. This is what this case has been about."

DUP and Sinn Fein – Sweethearts Forever

By GORETTI HORGAN

SO, IS Northern Ireland now the most conservative part of Western Europe? It certainly looks like that.

As the 'mandatory coalition' between the four main parties in the Assembly develops into a voluntary coalition, indeed a love-in, between Sinn Fein and the DUP, it seems 'conservative' is putting it mildly.

The welcoming of War Criminal George W. Bush as a 'man of peace' by Peter Robinson and Martin McGuinness was fitting, really, as the Executive led by this pair owes much to Dubya's economic, socio-religious and political philosophy.

In terms of economics, the Executive is clear: privatise everything that can be privatised; charge for every public service that you can get

away with; suck up to big business, especially by providing them with lots of workers forced into the crappiest of low-paid jobs by welfare-to-work policies; ignore the environment; and let the poor look after themselves.

While the rhetoric of the two main parties differs hugely in relation to socio-religious issues, this seems to have no impact at all on how they operate together.

So, Peter Robinson's refusal to accept that human beings evolved as opposed to being created is not seen as contradicting the "modernisation" agenda that both drone on about. That's only about cutting services....

Sinn Fein used to be the party of the 'equality agenda'. Where's that gone now? It's been silenced, it seems, by the abomination that is Iris Robinson. For anyone who has been living on

another planet, the First Minister's wife, MP for Strangford, and most alarmingly Chair of the Assembly's Health Committee was asked on a BBC programme to comment on a vicious gay-bashing.

She responded that she regarded homosexuality as "an abomination" and said "I have a very lovely psychiatrist who works with me in my offices and his Christian background is that he tries to help homosexuals — trying to turn away from what they are engaged in. I'm happy to put any homosexual in touch with this gentleman."

Despite the Royal College of Psychiatrists refuting Mrs Robinson's claims that being gay is a mental illness, there were only muted calls for her resignation as chair of the Health Committee from any of her Sinn Fein

colleagues.

Similarly, Jeffrey Donaldson was recently speaking on behalf of all four main parties in relation to abortion, claiming that 'no one' in Northern Ireland supports the availability of legal abortion here. Dubya's born-again Christian circles must be proud of what he's done in the North.

And then, there was the DUP vote to support New Labour's determination to smash hard-won civil liberties. In fairness to the SDLP, they remembered their roots in the civil rights movement and both spoke and voted against 42-day detention for suspects. But the DUP's support for measures that make the 'Special Powers' of the old Stormont regime seem quite mild did not cause even a twitch from their partners-in-government, Sinn Fein. This is really

difficult to understand given that most older Sinn Fein members will know first-hand how such powers are used and abused in the "fight against terror".

Sinn Fein supporters in the South used to shout loudly that Fianna Fail could not separate itself from the right-wing policies of its Coalition partner, the PDs. But it's different now that they are in government. None of the parties are responsible for anything unpopular that the Executive does.

Meanwhile, in working class areas both Protestant and Catholic across the North, people are shivering in the houses they cannot afford to heat and wondering how it happened that the parties that are supposed to speak for them have ended up screwing them so completely. It is, indeed, an abomination.

LISBON DEFEATED:

NOW IT'S TIME TO BUILD A UNITED LEFT ALTERNATIVE



Photo: Paula Geraghty

By MARNIE HOLBOROW

THE SIGNIFICANCE of the decisive No vote to the Lisbon Treaty can scarcely be overestimated. The political elite of Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour have been roundly defeated.

The establishment consensus in the form of IBEC and the media have been shown up as blinkered neo-liberals and the Yes campaign - including ICTU - as Eurocrats who have disconnected with the people. This outcome has created a political crisis for our rulers that will have no easy outcome for them, either at home or in Europe.

The no vote - a vote from the working class

The no vote was a vote that gave voice to the working class. The highest 'no' votes were solid working class areas - Dublin South West (65.1%), Dublin North West (63.6%), Dublin South Central (61.%) Dublin Mid West (60.4%).

Elsewhere, the high No votes were linked to the direct effects of free-market globalisation on fishing and farming Donegal North East (64.7%) and Donegal South West (63.4%) or distrust of multinationals, particularly Shell (Mayo 61.7) or rising unemployment (Cork North Central 64%). Traditional vote-catching methods of the conventional parties which rely on clientelism, funeral attendances, pretending to champion local interests while implementing national strategies that often damage them, patronage - all these methods can get politicians elected

when they fight each other. But they do not fully convince voters.

The campaign also illustrated that the conventional parties have far more in common with each other than separates them. There was not a cigarette paper between them in terms of policies on Europe and they became lumped together as a hugely arrogant elite. Input from left forces in some cases, spontaneously in others, working people with magnificent consistency

called a halt to this elitist and militarist Lisbon juggernaut.

Ruling class weakened

Fintan O'Toole was correct to point out that the campaign laid bare how much the political class had been discredited.

The lid was finally lifted on the Ahern corruption saga and now having prominent Fianna Failers' faces - Ivor Callely for

example - recommending a Yes became a joke. What O'Toole failed to see, however, was the scale of the crisis and how much the hanger-on Labour party would be tarred by the same brush.

One of the reasons that the Irish ruling class was open to defeat was the unfolding economic situation that they daily denied. They massively underestimated every aspect of the Irish slow-down - the weakness in residential construction, the

significant spillover effect from the collapse in the housing market, the dangers of an appreciating Euro the fall-out from the international financial crisis in terms of the credit squeeze, and the rocketing price of petrol. GNP is effectively contracting for the first time since 1983 and yet the Government think-tanks and commentators - ESRI *et al* - are still talking about to this being a rational adjustment of the market!

After the NO vote: What now?

THE STAKES are very high after the overwhelming victory of the vote. The Yes side will do everything in their power to reverse their defeat. They never imagined, in their arrogance that they could be so roundly ignored. Now they want to turn the tables on those who dared to say no.

They are desperately attempting to reframe the debate. Do we want to be at the heart of Europe or marginalised? A two-tier Europe with Ireland lagging behind?

We are told that at some point we will have to agree to Lisbon in some form, or the 26 other member states will forge ahead with Ireland out

of the union or in a reduced, semi-detached relationship to the rest.

The Yes side have short memories. The consensus from all sides, before the vote was that legally if Ireland said No, then the document would fall. Now it appears that it is about finding a way out of what the electorate decided and putting the stakes even higher "you vote yes or else you are out of the EU".

Minister Willie O'Dea, in his wisdom, now says that the government has "to consult widely with the electorate" about the way forward. A democratic mandate, it appears, counts for nothing. As one audience member on Questions

and Answers put it "What part of No do you not understand?"

Working class people, women and young people all voted NO for striking similar reasons. Despite the political establishment spin, immigration hardly figured and abortion not very much. The main reasons for the NO vote were: complexity of the treaty, militarisation, less say in EU structures, workers' rights. This was a clear cut message to our political rulers.

Sinn Fein, along with Libertas, raised the question of renegotiation of the treaty. They focused on the question of the commissioner. But in working class areas the demand for 27 Charlie McCreavys instead of

15 wasn't an issue.

Playing around with the legal language of the treaty will still leave the overall agenda intact.

Some of the suggested Sinn Fein amendments - such as in the Common Defence and Security Policy the replacement of "shall" by "may" regarding the progressive improvement of military capabilities (Article 28A. 3) - still leaves untouched the drive to militarise the EU.

Including a protocol on services of general interest and renaming these as "vital" and "public" while not changing the objective of the EU as a "undistorted market" will be of little benefit.

This is tantamount to

handing to the EU elite, under the guise of "Irish concessions" essentially what they want. Perhaps Sin Fein's enthusiasm for the detail of the amendments has more to do with their desire to advise the government as a pretense to being a government partner.

Instead of re-negotiation we should link up with socialist organisations across Europe. In France the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, a central force in the French NO vote, sees the Irish vote as "a clear encouragement and a call to everyone to take up the fight against a new treaty and mobilise for a Europe of solidarity, democracy and in the interests of working people."

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This was the backcloth to which they brought vacuous comments about Lisbon being good for Ireland. Everytime aspects of the treaty were properly debated the no camp gained ground.

The no vote – political composition

Since the result, the right has tried to belittle the no vote by saying that it was a loony backward vote, or that it was infiltrated by sinister pro-American elements (quite a turn around for those who tend to adore the White House). In fact the no vote represented a mix, it is true, but not as they claim.

Firstly the COIR contingent was far less significant than its incarnations in previous decades, even if it was robustly funded. When people were asked to state their reasons for voting NO, abortion was only an issue for a tiny minority (just 5% according to the Irish Times poll a week before the election). One aspect of the No vote, besides it being working class was that it was young and strongly female. COIR were given profile by a corporate media which sought to frame opposition to the treaty as inward and backward looking. But Ireland has long moved on from the great sex debate of the 1980s and 1990s.

The real problem is that the so-called liberals who attacked COIR did not themselves ever have the courage to even implement the Supreme Court judgement the on the X case – namely to grant women the right o have abortion in Ireland. Their failure to sort out the famous 'substantive issue' gives a minor salience to forces like COIR – but they can hardly be described as having a major impact on the NO campaign.

Secondly, clearly Ganley and Libertas did have an impact. €1.3 million for posters, banners flown from aircraft over Croke Park, strong media access, all these provided a forceful counterbalance to the YES media bias. Ganley is a right wing populist akin to others of his hue emerging in Europe. A super-rich businessman who would figure high on Naomi Klein's list of shock capitalism doctrinaires. He is Chairman and Chief Executive of Rivada a Galway-based company which supplies phone and IT communications, has made a lot of money out of disaster scenarios such as Hurricane Katrina. He has not ruled out making Libertas a permanent political fixture, perhaps looking to Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* as a model. No doubt he will go on to head up some kind of populist political formation to intervene in the Euro elections next year. However there are some quite considerable differences with the rightward situation of Italy.

Ireland has no significant fascist and far right found in Italy- National Alliance and Northern League - that have so dictated the right-wing policies of Berlusconi. As a result, Ganley has not yet played the immigrant card as has been done in Italy. Furthermore, on his first outing, he has stressed the democracy and sovereignty arguments probably aware that these have more of a resonance in the mood in Ireland today.

The main party to oppose Lisbon was Sinn Fein. At the start of the campaign, they clearly tackled left and stressed issue like Laval, workers rights and militarism. But as the their campaign went on, their narrower nationalist framework meant that they stressed the loss of an Irish Commissioner as their number one reason for rejecting the treaty.

They were careful to organise a press conference which stressed how the Lisbon treaty was "bad for business". Sinn Fein also joined Ganley in promoting the idea of a re-negotiation of the Treaty rather than saying it should be scrapped. Indeed they even offered to advise Cowen on how such a re-negotiation might take place.

The defeat of Lisbon will give a certain fillip to Sinn Fein after their last disastrous electoral performance. But it will not solve the contradictory pressures inside the party. Those contradiction are summed up in the way Sinn Fein opposed EU militarism – and then watched as one of its leaders, Martin McGuinness welcomed George Bush to Belfast.

The left and the new left

Although the media did their best to ignore the issue, the far Left played a key role in defeating the treaty on the ground.

The SWP, for example, organised scores of meetings on the subject, developed an impressive website Voteno. ie, produced its own pamphlet and organised canvassing groups at local level. The People Before Profit Alliance produced 10,000 posters, more than 1000,000 leaflets and achieved national prominence during the campaign. One Europhile MEP Andrew Duff even claimed that the treaty was defeated through combination of the IRA and the SWP! We would not go that far – but we would suggest that the left in its various guises – PBP, Joe Higgins, the UNITE trade union – all played a key role.

At this means that there is a unique opening for the left just now. Socialists have to be very clear that the left can have a huge impact on the shape of the movement to come. But the recent experiences in Europe show that the left can build it or they can blow it.

The outcome of the fantastic victory in the French referendum was blown on the chill winds of sectarianism. Far left parties like Lutte Ouvriere rejected unity of the left in favour of going on as they always had done – alone – but this time even their rigid determination could not withstand the vacuum created by a failure to build a united left presidential candidate.

On the other hand movementists like Jose Bouve had their own brand of sectarianism which refused to appeal beyond their own struggle. The result was a Sarkozy victory and a demoralised left.

We need to be very clear that the absolute priority in this window of opportunity is to strengthen the left forces in Ireland.

When figures of the left – Patricia McKenna, Richard Boyd Barrett, Joe Higgins, Roger Cole - appear on national media as the opposition, when the Galway left forges ahead on its own against the treaty, when the strength of campaigns, whether on fishing or energy feeds, into strong votes where hitherto the left has been weak, then we know that the potential of the left has registered with people. In this situation the building of a larger, bigger radical left is an urgent task. The Socialist Workers Party has been arguing for some time that this potential was there. We helped initiate, alongside others, the People Before Profit Alliance to begin building a united radical left. The NO victory means the space for a united radical left is bigger, but it will not last forever. Now is the time to come together in the project for a new larger, radical left in Ireland.

Who or what is Libertas?



Libertas leader multimillionaire military contractor Declan Ganley

By PEADAR O'GRADY

THE NO vote in the Lisbon Treaty referendum was a clear working class vote against the policies of the government and business elites in Ireland and across Europe.

Despite this, media attention is being lavished on the 'Libertas' campaign led by multimillionaire military contractor Declan Ganley.

Clearly it suits the establishment to portray the vote as being about keeping corporate tax low and the 'danger' of introducing safe and legal abortion services in Ireland rather than militarisation, democracy, workers' rights and public services.

But who are Libertas and how should the left respond to them? At present it appears to be a handful of businessmen and an academic with no real membership but a sackful of money.

Libertas as a political project was first proposed by Ganley in an article he wrote for the right wing US think-tank, the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), in 2003.

In this article, Ganley, commenting on the campaign for an EU Constitution (the forerunner of the Lisbon Treaty) says:

"Europeans who until now have kept their views to themselves should mobilize to stop this tide.

They must overcome groupings and parties based on legacy national organizations to form a new organization and articulate a clear and achievable vision for Europe's future.

Rather than try to define itself in contradistinction to the United States, this new Europe must be an equal partner and influence for the worldwide extension of justice and liberty.

Such a political party—I will for the sake of discussion call it 'Libertas' – will need to challenge the engrained composition of the convention in local and regional elections, as well as running candidates at member-state and EU levels. The old structures need shaking up."

So as far back as 2003 Ganley was planning a political organisation with plans to contest elections with the stated purpose of opposing any trend away from a close EU alliance with the United States.

The word Libertas itself refers to the Roman Goddess of liberty most famously portrayed in the American 'Statue of Liberty'.

The American ruling class has traditionally been concerned that any moves by the EU towards more integration could threaten the US military dominance of the EU through NATO and the ability of the US to influence EU foreign policy.

One view in the US ruling class prefers 'bilateral' (one-to-one) agreements with individual EU states and is concerned that a more integrated EU would resist US influence and make more independent decisions not in US interests.

Those in the EU who also favour this approach are known as 'Atlanticists'.

Outside of this broad perspective though little is known about the politics of Libertas.

In their 'mission statement' they talk of: "our shared values of peace, democracy, individual liberty and free markets".

They assert the rights of citizens: "to pursue their welfare and happiness and that of future generations by participating in the open market for goods, services and labour".

This would place them in pretty much the same political stable as the Progressive Democrats, neoliberal promoters of unregulated 'free markets' intent on licensing the buying and selling of everything including public services, low taxes for the rich and minimal rights for workers.

The founding members of Libertas are Declan Ganley and Chris Coughlan.

Ganley is President of Rivada Networks, a telecommunications contractor to the US military and has a former US army general and two admirals on his board of directors.

Ganley made his money initially buying up aluminium and forestry from former soviet state monopolies in Russia in the early 90s, trading through Riga in Latvia and later selling state privatisation vouchers in Albania.

Explaining his involvement in Albania in 1997, following a civil war in which 2000 people died, Ganley cited his hero, Baron Rothschild, when he said: "When there's blood on the streets, invest!" Rothschild was a nineteenth century speculator and banker who used state contracts during the Napoleonic wars and an extensive private communications network to amass a huge fortune.

Ganley too has clearly acquired a lot of experience in 'shock capitalism' winning massive privatisation contracts from corrupt state monopolies in crisis situations.

Another founder is Chris Coughlan, a Hewlett Packard Executive and incumbent President of the business organisation the Chamber of Commerce Ireland.

Coughlan has served as adviser to the

'Information Society Commission' in the Dept of the Taoiseach as also has Ganley according to Rivada's website.

Prominent also is Professor Roger Downer, a University of Limerick (UL) academic who organises the 'Forum on Public Safety in Europe and North America' "in association with Rivada Networks" which is held annually in UL (with a Libertas home address).

During the Lisbon campaign they were joined by Ulick McEvaddy, the well-known businessman friend of Mary Harney and Charlie McCreevey. McEvaddy is an aerospace contractor to the US military.

In summary therefore Libertas represents a fledgling project to build a neoliberal, right wing political grouping around a core of right wing businessmen and academics.

They resemble in some ways the Progressive Democrats in Ireland or Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* in Italy, but with political ambitions across the EU including a stronger alliance with the US.

They may seek to build new political parties across the EU and to make alliances with existing right-wing groups including fascist parties.

Pat Leahy reported in the Sunday Business Post that during the Lisbon campaign Ganley had travelled to Austria and met with an anti-Lisbon group with links to neo-nazis like Jorg Haider.

Building on the victory of the No vote will mean building a left alternative to not just the existing parties but also to new right wing neoliberal formations such as Libertas.

Now is the time for the Left in Ireland to build such an alternative and smash the rise of Libertas and their allies.

Education, secularism and the hijab

By MARNIE HOLBOROW

GOREY COMMUNITY School, Co Wexford, has become the focus of debate about the headscarf – a debate that has already divided other EU countries.

Parents of a girl in the school requested that she be allowed to wear the hijab or headscarf. Nicolas Sweetman, Principal of the school, called for an official policy from the Department of Education. The Department is asking the ominously named Integration Minister – Conor Lenihan – to consider the matter in the context of Intercultural Education Strategy.

Fine Gael spokesperson on education, Brian Hayes, was quick to lay down the law.

“Parents are entitled to send their children to religious schools”, Hayes opined, “but those who opted for State education should expect that there won’t be any huge, demonstrable evidence of religiosity”.

One wonders in what country Hayes has been living.

Labour Education spokesperson Ruairi Quinn, trotted out what has become a now familiar Euro-secularism. Quinn has apparently learnt the lessons from the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands and feels that more effort must be made to “integrate” newcomers.

The headscarf should not be worn in State schools he believes. “I personally think that it is divisive” that it is “not an intrinsic part of the Islamic faith” and “contains an element of male domination over females.”

Secularism

In France this view ended up, in 2004, with a law banning religious symbols, including Muslim headscarves, from schools.

Defence of the secular republic was the main argument given. The fact that this was selectively applied and imposed by a state that many Muslims saw as intolerant and racist only served to further alienate many immigrants in urban areas. The eruptions of the riots in Paris in October 2005 was one expression of their frustration.

In Ireland, the argument about defending religion-free state education beggars belief. As INTO activist Deirdre Cronin has pointed out the Catholic Church insistence on retaining control stopped schools being properly funded by the state and this made inequality in education worse*.

Irish educational institutions still feel the effects of the power of the Catholic Church. Ruairi Quinn should remember that it was his colleague, Niamh Bhreathnach as Minister for Education that presided over the Catholic church continuing to have an influence on the “religious ethos” of the teachers. More recently, the requirement of producing baptismal certs as a means of schools excluding immigrant children shows up how much power the church still has.

Rather than calling for a selective ban on students wearing religious symbols, we should be calling for religion to withdraw from the running of schools and a complete separation of church and state. It is far too easy for so called “secular socialists” to pick on immigrant children who are Muslim. It is shameful to see the



Labour Party play the immigrant card rather than take on the issue that really concerns teachers and parents – a properly funded fully state-provided education.

Islamophobia

The hijab has to be seen in a wider context. Since 9/11 Muslims have been painted as the enemy within. Barak Obama’s election team did not want headscarfed Muslim women on a platform with him as the “issue was too sensitive”.

He later had to apologise but his initial reaction shows how much islamophobia has become part of the ideology of “the war on terror”.

Official Europe has joined the bandwagon and now routinely targets Muslims in general and Muslim girls and women in particular. The Dutch Government have banned Muslim women from wearing the *burqa* – the full facial veil – in public places. Some German states ban teachers in public schools from wearing headscarves. Italy has banned face-coverings, resurrecting old laws passed to combat domestic terrorism, while citing new security fears. The issue of Muslim women’s dress also surfaced in the UK, where the now Lord Chancellor Jack Straw said in 2006 that women should not

be veiled with the all-over *niqab*, specially not in his constituency clinics.

Ireland appears now to be following the Europe’s islamoscaremongering. It comes just as the economy takes a nose-dive and when state resources are being cut back – both of which have often provided the backcloth for racial tensions. It is particularly ironic that the Dept of Education is considering the issue just when they have pulled the funding on Integrate Ireland Language Teaching, which aims to help non-native speakers of English in education.

Wearing the veil

Many of the studies on the situation of Muslim women in France and Britain indicate that wearing the veil is not as simple as being a sign of submission.

It can be a badge of identity or a reaction to the rise of brash sexism which dictates how women should look. Anissa Majeed a Muslim woman living in Dublin since she was 16, in an interview with the Irish Times, claims that wearing the hijab gives her a stronger voice. Wearing the veil for her cannot be separated from the fact the “the hijab in the West has become an anathema:

a simple piece of cloth has come to symbolize the oppression and restriction of individual freedom”. She claims that women in the West themselves are not free from all sorts of oppression, from their bodies being used to sell things to “the total objectification of the female body in modern society”.

Her point is well made. Some Muslim women, it is true, may wear the veil because their families have told them to but this is far less the case than many claim. A study on the wearing of the veil in Britain by Saied Ameli and Azzu Merali shows that the majority of young Muslim women who wear the veil are doing it for religious and political reasons. They urge for a halt in the crude stereotyping of Muslim women and warn against legislation which will be “disproportionately used against the very minorities that it ought to protect”.

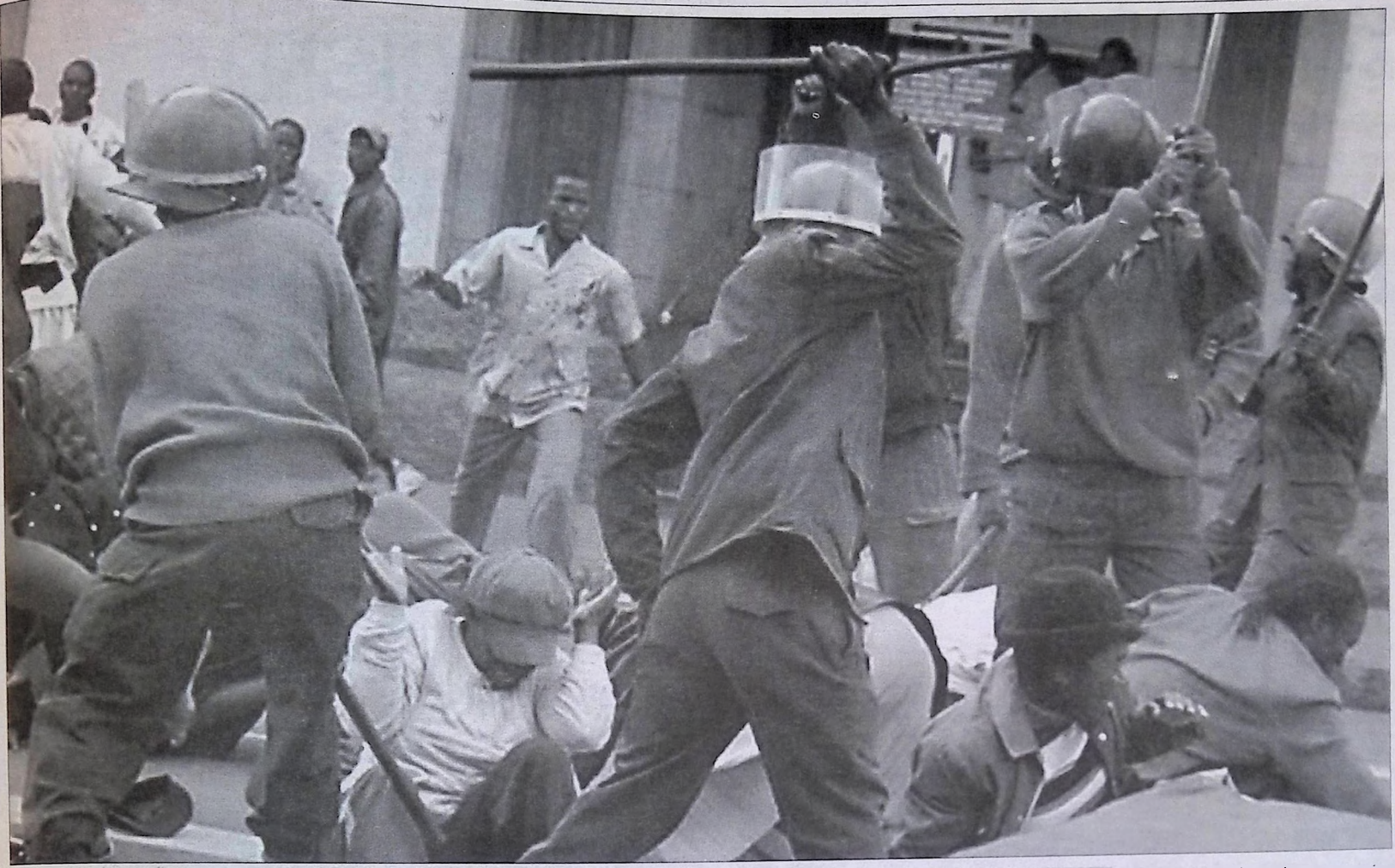
While any form of coercion towards women is to be rejected, western societies cannot selectively pick on aspects of Islam in this respect and ignore the widespread putting down of women that exists in the West. To do so amounts to an updated version of the white man’s burden idea, with the same colonial superiority. It also stops in its tracks any real discussion about

liberation for all women – discussions that are taking place within the Muslim community but not in the crude terms of the western powers.

The British study shows that many Muslim women see the ban on the hijab as an extension of terrorism laws and see both based on prejudice and misconceptions about Muslims that need to be challenged. Most of the women surveyed articulated fears of being labeled a terrorist and wrongful arrest and recorded a significant increase in anti Muslim policies since 9/11.*

As schools and the government raise these issues in Ireland, we should take note of the bitterness that blanket bans have brought in the UK and in France. At a recent meeting of the Irish Anti War Movement, a position was taken that anti-war activists had to oppose any ban on the hijab, reject all forms islamophobia and it expressed solidarity with the Muslim community in Gorey. We should support this call and, like the Lisbon Treaty, say no to this aspect of fortress Europe too.

*Deirdre Cronin, *Class and Education in the Celtic Tiger*, SWP Publications, Dublin 2001.
* Saied R Ameli and Arzu Merali, *British Muslims’ Expectations of the Government: Hijab, Meaning, Identity, Otherization and Politics: British Muslim women, Islamic Human Rights Commission, London 2006*



THE SITUATION in Zimbabwe continued to deteriorate as Socialist Worker went to press.

The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai had sought refuge in the Dutch embassy, while the government crackdown on opposition supporters continued.

This followed the opposition's withdrawal from the presidential run off election, due to take place on Friday of this week, in the face of intimidation from Robert Mugabe's governing Zanu-PF party.

More than 80 MDC activists have been killed during the campaign. There have been arbitrary arrests of civic leaders such as the two weeks' detention of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union president and secretary general.

Fourteen Woza (Women of Zimbabwe Arise) leaders were detained for nearly a month for protesting the delay in releasing the election results. Two of their leaders are still in detention. Church, student and NGO leaders and teachers have also been arrested and harassed.

NGOs have effectively been closed down by the regime and humanitarian NGOs, providing food relief, drugs and support to AIDS/HIV patients, have been particularly hit.

But the MDC is bearing the brunt of the attacks. Tsvangirai has been repeatedly arrested, his rallies banned and campaign buses and vehicles impounded. The MDC is totally blacked-out from the state control-

CRISIS IN ZIMBABABWE

led media, while people are being forced to remove satellite dishes to prevent them from viewing media independent of the state.

Detained MDC secretary general Tendai Biti faces treason charges, carrying the death penalty.

In the face of the crisis, some in the Western media have called for military intervention. Such intervention is extremely unlikely as military leaders are aware that Western troops would face mass hostility—not just from people in Zimbabwe but from all surrounding countries.

As Britain is the former colonial power, any British troops would be viewed as imperial invaders. Mugabe has had some success in ridiculing the MDC for its links with the West.

Zimbabweans are suffering terrible hardship, not just from repression, but also from economic collapse and hyper-

inflation. But they do not see Western intervention as a solution.

People are only too aware that it was Western-imposed structural adjustment programmes that began the country's economic crisis in the 1990s.

No African Union or regional Southern African Development Community (SADC) negotiators would consider military intervention. Their preferred solution is the establishment of a government of national unity (GNU), which would include Mugabe, his supporters and the MDC.

They point to Kenya, where violence has subsided following the election crisis in the new year, after the appointment of a government with both the sitting president and the opposition. But such a government entrenches the worst features of the previous situation.

It also disarms any mass action that could challenge the corruption at the

top.

As the International Socialist Organisation (ISO)—Socialist Worker's sister organisation in Zimbabwe—says, "the very origins of the MDC lie in the massive protests of the late 1990s against poverty induced by the Mugabe regime's acceptance of capitalist neoliberal structural adjustment programmes. A new and powerful aspect of the MDC's campaign in the March elections was emphasis on such bread and butter issues of the ordinary people."

It is a tragedy that the general strike it called in April against the fixing of the election results collapsed within a day.

The workers of Zimbabwe are still enormously powerful and mass action would be the most effective way to challenge Mugabe.

However the movement faces a real problem of direction. It is no small thing

to go out on strike against a repressive regime in a time of economic crisis. The leadership offered by the MDC was at best vacillating, and often non-existent.

Since the MDC was founded it has steadily moved away from its trade union roots to embrace neoliberalism. It is hardly a surprise that workers do not see the party as a reliable leadership.

Repression has been stepped up since the failure of the strike. But Zanu-PF has not had everything its own way. Groups of opposition supporters have fought them on the street in areas like Epworth, Bikita, Zaka and Chimanimani. But these were isolated actions, with no central leadership.

The ISO comment that, "the alternative is a regrouped united front of civic society and the opposition to launch a serious and determined programme of civil disobedience and mass action supported by regional and international solidarity from working peoples and progressive movements."

"Any struggle against the regime that fails to do this will be outflanked on its left by this crafty regime, which has shown, most powerfully around the land question, strong capacity to cynically manipulate the poor's concerns to remain in power and demonise the opposition as a stooge of the West and the business class.

"Without such a united front and a pro-poor, pro-working people and anti-capitalist ideology we shall not prevail against this regime."

Is the Irish army backing Chad's dictator?

By Sara O'Rourke

IN THE week following the No vote in the Lisbon Treaty, a vote against militarisation, the 400 Irish troops in Chad have made the news on a number of occasions as the situation there deteriorates.

In less than a month the Irish troops have faced a security situation much worse than anything encountered during three years on a UN mission in Liberia.

It is believed by military personnel that there will be a fresh attempt to take N'Djamena again and this would mean rebels will be travelling from Darfur via

Goz Beida where the Irish are stationed.

The rebel groups travel in large groups, with 2,500 attacking the capital N'Djamena in February.

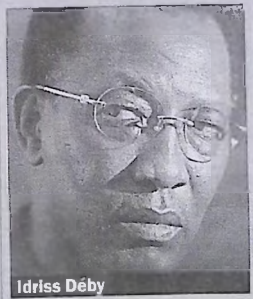
If Irish troops were to directly encounter even a fraction of the rebel forces it is clear they would sustain heavy losses as they are outnumbered and ill-equipped.

The Ranger Wing who are the best trained and best equipped of Ireland's forces have returned home and many are questioning this move. Also being questioned is the air-support we had been promised by the French. French Mirage F1

fighter jets conduct daily surveillance flights across Chad but despite these patrols the rebels on the move in the region have not been spotted as they approached the refugee camps even though they travel in convoys of large vehicles.

One wonders what motives the France has in letting rebels get so close to EUfor troops.

In recent days Irish troops have actually been fired upon and appear to be caught in the middle of a diplomatic tangle, criticised by President of Chad Idriss Déby who claims they failed to stop rebels from Sudan from attacking refugees



Idriss Déby

in the town of Ade and by the UNHCR for failing to protect their staff from a rebel attack in Goz Beida.

The Irish forces have a UN mandate to protect refugees, IDPs and humanitarian staff.

Where this mission is problematic is that there is a peace enforcement mandate which gives them the power to fire on the people attacking the people they are being asked to protect.

Even the Irish Times acknowledges that the difficulty of the Irish involvement in EUfor is that it is a cover for the French who want the current dictatorship of Déby to remain in power. When the rebels attacked N'Djamena in February French soldiers fought alongside the Chadian army.

Who then can take them seriously as peacekeepers in

a EUfor mission?

The rebels have stated that they will respect EUfor as long as it remains neutral between them and the Chadian army.

By not intervening in the recent attacks the Irish troops have remained neutral. However with pressure on them from both UNHCR, Déby and no doubt the French, who want EUfor to intervene against the rebels to protect a dictatorship, it is only a matter of time before Irish soldiers get pulled into fighting against rebels to protect one of the most corrupt regimes in Africa and with it French imperial interests in the region.

UN offers no solution for food crisis of world's poorest

by SADIE ROBINSON

WORLD LEADERS gathered in Rome in June for the World Food Summit organised by the United Nations's Food and Agricultural Organisation in response to the deepening crisis caused by rising food prices.

The summit's closing declaration stated that it aimed to cut "the number of undernourished people to half their present level no later than 2015".

Not only is this not ambitious enough, it gives no sense of how it could be achieved.

The declaration is frustratingly vague. It says the UN will "implement policies aimed at eradicating poverty and inequality" and will "endeavour to prevent and be prepared for natural disasters and man-made emergencies". But exactly how these things will be achieved is unclear.

One concrete measure was the promise of an extra \$2.7 billion in emergency food aid. This aid may help some of the most desperate people in the short term. But the amount is a drop in the ocean.

To put it in perspective, the US spent \$529 billion on military operations in 2006. While the UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon admitted at the summit that up to \$20 billion a year would be needed to deal with the food crisis.

Food aid in itself will not solve the problem. It can even make things worse as aid is often used as a tool to impose neoliberal policies on countries, making problems worse rather than dealing with them.

The summit largely focused on how to increase food production in poorer countries, particularly in Africa.

The idea that the poor need "our help" to "rebuild" agriculture became a common theme in the media throughout the summit. Declining food production was the implicit explanation for the current crisis.

It is true that in some poorer countries food production has declined. But what the assorted politicians and experts attending the summit failed to discuss were the reasons for this – the context of global capitalism and the neoliberal policies deliberately pushed onto poorer countries by richer ones.

As free trade and the market spreads – or is imposed – around the world, poorer farmers become increasingly tied into the global food industry.

They are at an immediate disadvantage as they are pitted against heavily subsidised farmers in richer countries.

Poor farmers are also unable to afford the machinery, pesticides, fertilisers and irrigation systems that industrial scale farming corporations can access.

Neoliberal policies work to push smaller farmers out of production. As they are unable to compete in a global market they move to cities in search of alternative work.

Production shifts to cash crops for export as the only way to make profits from agriculture, rather than food for domestic consumption. This undermines food security and makes the poor more and more dependent on the global market.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) "structural adjustment programmes"



UN won't help him

(SAPs) are often behind this process. SAPs involve countries being given loans in return for adopting neoliberal policies such as reducing restrictions on trade and cutting government spending – including on subsidies for agriculture.

The World Bank itself admits that countries in Africa that are following IMF structural adjustment programmes have slower growth in agricultural production than countries that are not.

None of this means that there is not enough food produced to avoid famine and hunger. Worldwide production has consistently expanded and record global crops are expected this year in almost every area of agriculture.

The UN declaration itself points out today there is an average of 15 percent more food per person than that global population had 20 years ago – despite an increase in population of 1.5 billion.

The problems of declining production in some countries may pose problems for the future and need to be addressed. But the summit doesn't do this.

The structural reasons for declining production – trade liberalisation, lack of subsidies, poverty and inequality – remain.

What's more, changes in agriculture and land use are just one long term factor behind the food price rises. There are many other factors that the summit ignored.

Biofuels divert land and crops to the production of fuel and are widely recognised to be a key factor behind the current sharp price rises. A row over biofuels at the summit did make headlines, only for delegates to back away from tackling the problem.

Financial speculation is another factor behind the recent hikes in the cost of food. Following the collapse of the housing bubble after the subprime mortgage crisis in the US, speculators have shifted to commodities including food as a safer investment option. The rising price of oil and the weak dollar are other factors.

But the summit failed to agree any measures to tackle these issues. The "solutions" chosen are those that do not threaten the profits and power of global agribusinesses.

So GM foods, with the potential to make huge profits for companies like Monsanto, are increasingly pushed as a solution to the food crisis. But GM foods have not solved hunger – they have increased inequality.

The food crisis has arisen out of the way that food is organised and produced under capitalism. Any genuine solution has to involve challenging the division of the world into rich and poor – not pushing measures that entrench it.

Could fascism take power today?



Mussolini and Hitler

by ALEX CALLINICOS

HOW BIG a threat is fascism today? For many, even on the left, it belongs to the first half of the 20th century, the "age of the dictators". It has nothing to do with the era of neoliberalism, globalisation, and the internet.

Fascism certainly was a product of the most severe crisis in the history of capitalism. The impact of the Great Depression on German society brought the Nazis to power under Adolf Hitler in January 1933.

But the economic crisis of the 1930s was merely the sharpest point of a much more protracted social fracture. One right wing historian, Ernst Nolte, called the period between 1914 and 1945 "The European Civil War".

The cumulative impact of world war and economic crisis shattered the structures of capitalist society, producing a sharp polarisation between left and right. It also broke up the traditional political frameworks that had served to contain social tensions. Finally, the experience of war on an unprecedented scale let loose large numbers of men who were embittered, radicalised, and habituated to extreme violence.

The early fascist movements that emerged at the end of the First World War in 1918 welded some of these men into paramilitary formations. Nolte dubbed their politics "revolutionary reaction". Although

the fascists sought to crush the revolutionary threat posed by the working class, they promised their own "revolution".

What these movements sought to achieve was utopian – a society in which "national" capital and labour were reconciled and the small producer dominated. This ideology displaced the social discontents of the European Civil War onto outsiders – "Jewish finance capital".

From the point of view of the ruling class, this ideology could be directed against the organised working class.

So, in Italy in the early 1920s and in Germany a decade later, big capital and the state grudgingly and reluctantly turned to the fascists. Only they had disciplined mass movements capable of systematically smashing and atomising the organised working class.

If we compare the conditions prevailing between 1914 and 1945 with those today, there are plainly big differences. Capitalism, especially in the advanced economies, has experienced in the last generation slow growth punctuated by speculative booms. The result has been stagnating living standards, not the mass deprivation experienced during the world wars and the Great Depression.

Capitalist political structures are also in many ways much stronger today. The German Weimar Republic (1919-33) was permanently destabilised by the existence of powerful "anti-system" parties –

Communists on the extreme left, the Nazis on the extreme right. The French Third Republic was also undermined by almost as powerful pressures.

Nothing comparable is to be found in the contemporary advanced capitalist world. But this is no reason for complacency. It's clear that global economic structures are coming under increasing pressure thanks to neoliberal deregulation and more intense international competition.

Moreover, the capitalist political system is superficially strong but is being progressively hollowed out. A toxic combination of mass disillusionment with mainstream parties that no longer represent them and the incitement that consumerism gives to individuals to focus on their own lives is eroding the legitimacy of liberal democracy.

What's happened in Italy in the past 15 years is a warning. The collapse of a party system discredited by scandal has opened the doors of government to a billionaire political adventurer allied to extremely nasty forces from the far right.

Serious Nazi parties like the BNP and the Front National in France are far from taking power. But they are building up the popular support and disciplined activists that they hope can make them contenders in a more serious crisis.

That's why it's so important to mobilise against them now, before the threat becomes too great.

IMMORTAL TECHNIQUE:

Radical rapper takes on the 'American Dream'

Dominic Kavakeb profiles US rapper and activist Immortal Technique, while Anindya Bhattacharyya reports from a lively discussion session with the artist.

"IMPERIALISM IS sponsored by corporations - that's why Halliburton gets paid to rebuild nations," is a line typical of Immortal Technique, the New York based MC who combines the anger of the early hip-hop era with hard hitting political lyrics that set him apart from most rappers today.

Few MCs can claim to use the war in Iraq, Islamophobia and the occupation of Palestine as material to rap about.

But Immortal Technique - real name Felipe Coronel - has never been one to shy away from controversial issues. He is not just a rapper; he's a political activist.

He was born in a military hospital in Peru but moved with his family to Harlem, New York when he was two years old. His experiences there of poverty and racism inspired him to pick up a microphone and "bring the truth in the form of hip-hop".

Immortal Technique soon claimed fame across the New York "battle" scene, where hip-hop MCs compete with one another.

Throughout this time he fought against record labels that wanted to make money from his musical talent - but only at the expense of his controversial lyrics.

His track "The Message Or The Money" talks of the pressures he and other MCs face to trade lyrical independence for corporate recognition.

Technique released his first album, *Revolutionary Volume 1*, on his own without being signed to a label. He won a huge following in the underground scene.

The follow-up, *Revolutionary Volume 2*, contains some of the sharpest music created in the US in recent years.

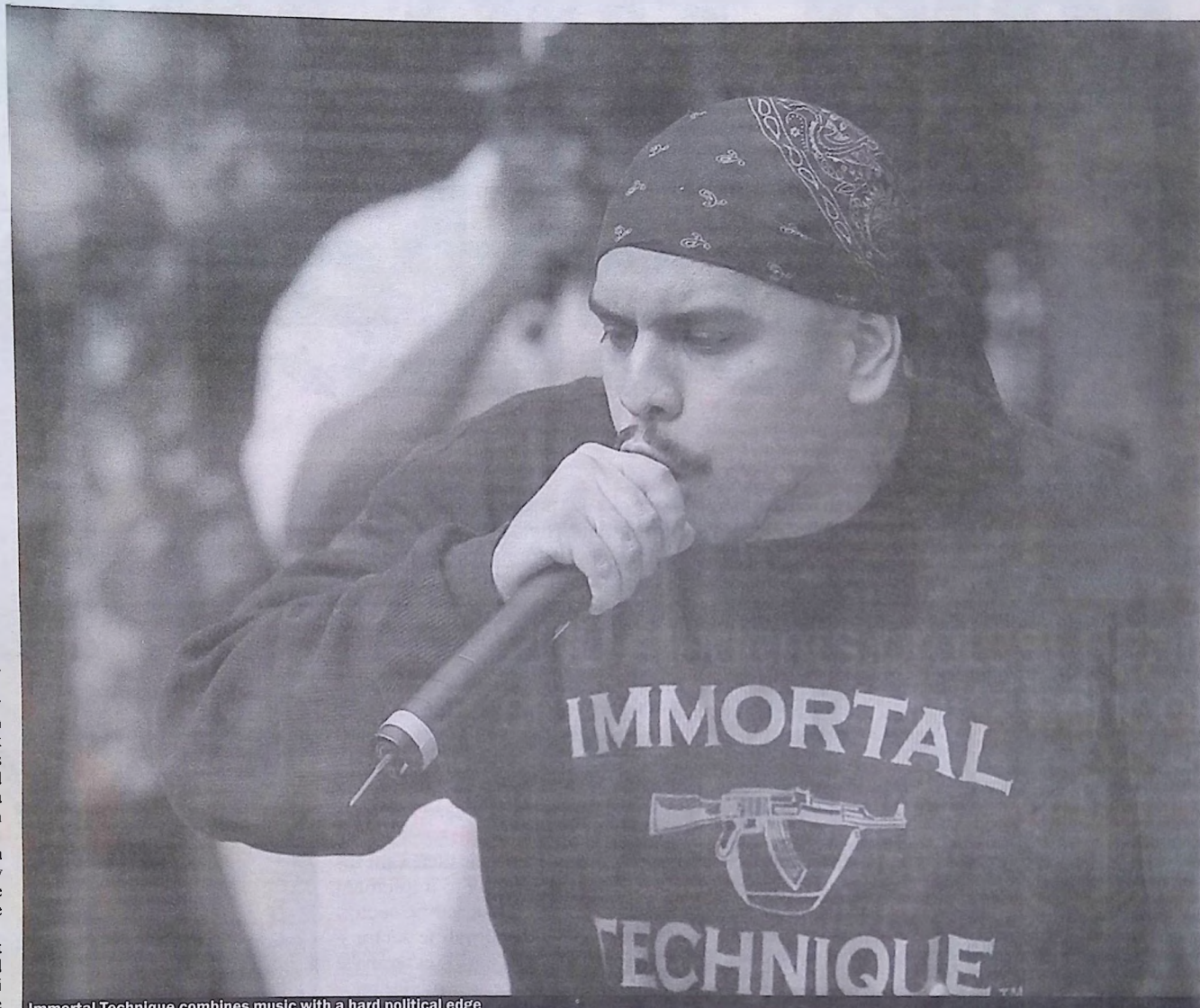
Lyrics such as "trapped in a ghetto region like a Palestinian kid, where nobody gives a fuck whether you die or you live" are constant throughout the album, which finally helped him break through to a wider audience.

Immortal Technique's new album, *The 3rd World*, is released later this month. Get hold of this album whether or not you have heard of his work. You can be safe in the knowledge that your money won't be going to greedy corporations and that you'll be treated to some of the best political music around today.

Immortal Technique visited Britain last week to promote the album and play a one-off gig alongside British hip-hop artists Skinnyman and Triple Darkness.

Rather than hold a conventional press conference, he hosted a two-hour question and answer session in central London.

The event, advertised through



Immortal Technique combines music with a hard political edge



Technique's new album

internet bulletin boards and by word of mouth, was packed out with around 200 fans, students, journalists and activists.

The first questions were mostly about how Immortal Technique combines his work as a hip-hop artist with his socialist political stance.

"Hip-hop was created with the duality of not only speaking about things revolutionarily, but also being party music," he replied.

"It wasn't that black and Latino people in the 1980s were enjoying what they were living through - it's more that they wanted to speak about what they thought could be possible. They imagined certain riches, or imagined themselves in a better place.

"So they had these rhymes where people would talk about the kind of money they would make - and they had the more revolutionary aspect, the militant flow.

"And these things crossed each other - it wasn't that this person just rhymes about this, or this person's a party MC, or this one a political rapper. A rapper had to be a complete artist."

But the influence of the music corporations soon transformed this early hip-hop scene, he added. "At some point, when corporations got involved in the marketing of hip-hop, they snatched one aspect out of it.

"They said, 'We like it when you dance and sing, but we don't like it when you talk about everything else. We don't like it when you talk about Africa or Palestine'."

This is why Immortal Technique insists on the importance of the political content of his work. It's also why he has chosen largely to reach out to an audience directly through the internet.

"The technology right now allows for people who cannot afford that million-dollar studio to get their message heard. As long as you have a room and a mike, you can come up with something similar in quality to what people are doing.

"Now you can circumvent the corporations by saying I'm gonna make my own music and I'll promote it through the internet, through the street, through mixtapes."

The questions soon moved on to directly address political issues, touching on everything from biofuels to the nature of revolution and the prospects for an alternative political system.

Someone asked Immortal Technique what he thought of Hugo Chavez, the left wing president of Venezuela. "A lot of revolutions in Latin America were characterised as Communist during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s when they were really just democratic," he responded.

"People wanted a similar social system to what they had in Britain and France where the government offers more services. Hugo Chavez taps into that spirit. I don't agree with everything that he's done, but he's a great figure for people who want to speak their mind.

"In terms of how his policies are going to echo throughout time, it's really a question of what institutions he can create in Latin America, institutions that can protect civil rights and offer people services."

Other audience members asked Immortal Technique what he thought of Barack Obama's bid for the US presidency and whether this could change US policy in the Middle East.

"I'm not dismissive of Obama," he replied. "I just understand that we've made billions of dollars of investments in Iraq. We've essentially bought that country.

"Obama's opponent John McCain said we'd be there for a hundred years. People mocked him for being an old geezer, for being out of touch - which are both true - but it's not that he was necessarily wrong."

He also cautioned against thinking a black president will fundamentally change things. "I've learned this the hard way. In Latin America we said as soon as we have an indigenous person as president, everything would

change. But it didn't necessarily change.

"There are presidents that are black in Africa and there are Muslim rulers in the Middle East. Does that mean there's less oppression there? No!"

Despite his scepticism, Immortal Technique said he voted for Obama in the primaries, mainly because of his more liberal stance on immigration.

But he warned, "Just because I voted for him doesn't mean I'll endorse him as a candidate and run around with Obama posters!"

He added that contrary to common belief the class system is alive and well in the US.

"I would say there is an American economic aristocracy - people who come from privileged families and influence. So that sort of system exists inside the US and has existed since its conception. And it's tied into racism, which was created to justify classes and slavery.

"The greatest enemies of democracy have always been the ruling class. Do you think Bush or Obama is going to hold and tell the king of Jordan or Saudi Arabia to hold an election?"

"That will never happen unless the people themselves rise up and reclaim that power. That is the way we truly start to facilitate revolution."

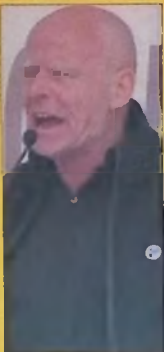
The 3rd World by Immortal Technique is released on 24 June on Viper Records.

Join the fight for better pay

- **Inflation over 4%**
- **Food prices up 6%:**
- **Butter up 35%**
- **Eggs up 32%**
- **Milk up 14%**
- **Tea up 13%**
- **Bread up 12%.**
- **Gas up 28%**
- **Oil up 20%**
- **Electricity up 14% (and a further 15% in the autumn)**

Inside:

Eamonn McCann on "How we beat the arms industry"



Page 4

THE NEWS that 800,000 council workers in Unison across Britain and the North have voted for industrial action for better pay shows the mood for a fight is here.

People are aware that they are simply unable to match the spiralling cost of living (see table).

The strike by oil tanker drivers across Britain have smashed Gordon Browns imposed pay limit of 2.5%.

Their action won a 14% increase over 2 years.

This is extremely significant for workers across Northern Ireland who face similar calls to tighten our belts.

The council workers strike should be turned into a major focus of discontent for the union movement.

Campaigns need to be launched across the public sector for better pay and joint action should be called.

The tanker drivers have shown the course that leads to victory.

Most wage deals in the North follow mechanisms in place across the water – this means the Assembly can claim it has nothing to do with the misery that the wage freeze will have on people here.

In reality their silence means they are happy to implement the cuts in the public sector.

Across the public sector – thousands of job losses are in the pipeline after restructuring.

By winning the fight for better pay we will be in a much stronger position to defend our jobs.



The tanker drivers fought and won

Cost of living soars: Make the Assembly act

By GORETTI HORGAN

RAPIDLY RISING food and oil prices across the world are hitting the poorest hardest.

The picture is no different in Ireland, North or South. In the North, the cost of electricity is set to rise by up to a third.

The average weekly food bill has risen by 20%, gas prices went up 28% in April and the cost of petrol and heating oil is rocketing so quickly it is hard to keep track

Out of a population of 1.7 million, one in 20 NI households lives on less than

£100 per week and one in four on less than £200 a week.

Yet the Consumer Council has estimated that outgoings for the average house have gone up by £60 a week in the last three months.

The figures just don't add up – or they add up to hunger and cold for many families.

This is why we need to support all groups of workers who are fighting for improved pay.

In NI, more than a quarter of the workforce earns poverty wages of less than £6.50 an hour and around 30% of the

population survive solely on benefits.

These low-income households spend a larger proportion of their income on food than do better-off ones, so they are going to be especially badly hit.

Benefit level increases of 2.28% and a 3.8% rise in the minimum wage will go nowhere near meeting the massive increases seen in the cost of gas, oil and food.

Assembly politicians are great at moaning about how there is nothing they can do about the price of food or oil.

They're right.

There is very little they can do about these. But almost every conversation about the rising cost of living includes people worrying about having to find an average £350 a year, for some a lot more, for water charges.

If the DUP and Sinn Féin care at all about the people who elected them, then they will announce as soon as possible that they are not going to impose another burden on already struggling families, but keep their election promises not to bring in water charges.