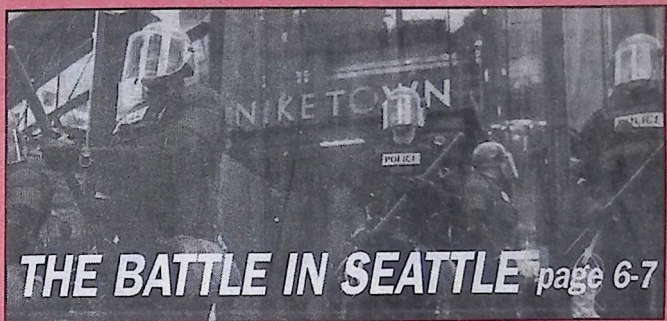


Socialist Worker

inside



For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 50p Solidarity price £1

Yet more tax breaks for the rich...

A BUDGET FOR GREED

★Someone earning £100,000 per year is a least £2,620 better off since the budget.

★The 27p a day increase in Child Benefit will buy a packet of crisps.

MCCREEVY'S BUDGET is a disgrace. Even though the rich have made super-profits from the Celtic Tiger, the budget gives them the biggest tax breaks.

There has been no increase in the PAYE allowance or any significant increases in personal tax allowance for the low paid.

Only a pittance has been given to creating extra child care places. This is despite the fact that Irish parents have the highest childcare costs in the EU.

But taxes on profits, inheritance and sale of building land has been slashed. Even though tax on profits is set to fall to a mere 12.5 percent, the employers PRSI has been cut.

Once again McCreevy is looking after his big business backers.

Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats know which class they serve. They want to satisfy the greed of the fat cats.

They can talk a lot about 'social inclusion' but they know these are only sweet words to lull the union asleep.

Bosses

But this time they have gone too far. The decision of SIPTU to pull out of partnership talks was absolutely right. Even though the union leaders have bent over backwards to try to be partners with the bosses, they could not take any more.

But union members need to

make sure that this is not a once off protest gesture. SIPTU and the other unions should get out of partnership talks for good.

They should start fighting for their members with the same determination that McCreevy fights for his class.

As a first step they should immediately serve a 20% across the board wage claim.

In the last ten years the share of the national economy going to profits has risen by 10 percent while the share going to wages and social security has fallen by ten percent.

If McCreevy is not giving tax cuts, we need substantial pay rises to compensate for the efforts workers put into creating the boom.

As the employers scream about growing labour shortages it is pay back time for workers,



McCreevy thinking of more ways to help the rich

MY MATE, CHARLIE

"IF HE NEEDS money, I would gladly make it available to him." This is what the millionaire Dermot Desmond said about his mate, Charlie Haughey.

Desmond has already given Haughey £125,000. There seems to be no end to the man's generosity. After Desmond was appointed to the board of Aer Lingus, a secret docu-

ment about the helicopter business went to their main rival Celtic Helicopters, owned by Haughey's spoilt son. The document had come 'accidentally' from Desmond's office.

Desmond was also the financier that organised the Telecom scam where the state paid an exorbitant price to himself and Michael Smurfit for buying its Ballsbridge site.

It is not hard to fathom the reason for Desmond's generosity.

Desmond's firm National City Stockbrokers won ten major state contracts between 1987 and 1992 while his four main

rivals won a total of only nine between them. One of his first contracts was to sell off the state's stake in Tara Mines. It is estimated that

he was paid a commission that was three times the going rate.

Desmond was also involved in the sale of Irish

Distillers to Pernod Ricard. He told the boss of Pernod that, "we orchestrated entirely the successful campaign to get a positive

tax opinion from the Revenue Commissioners which involved using personal contacts at the highest level."

"We used up a large proportion of the favour we can call upon from our political contacts - and no doubt we will pay a price on the other side", he added. He is still paying it back

Greed behind privatisation

KPN'S DECISION to pull out of Eircom reveals the greed behind privatisation.

KPN, along with Telia, were involved in a "strategic alliance" with Telecom Eireann before it became Eircom. This alliance was welcomed by both management and unions as an "injection of expertise" into Telecom.

But now KPN have decided to sell their stake just five months after privatisation, having made

Tragically the unions in Eircom have gone along with privatisation in the name of "partnership" even though it has meant worse conditions for staff and the recruitment of a lower paid grade.

They have told their members there is no alternative to increased flexibility.

But call centre workers in British Telecom have shown the alternative by taking strike action against their bullying bosses. Eircom workers should organise to follow suit.

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Airline industry puts profits first

THE EGYPT Air crash threw the world's media into overkill, as they immediately assumed shadowy Muslim bombers were to blame for the tragedy.

Then they heard that the plane's black box had revealed the pilot reciting the shandada, the Muslim profession of faith. Islamic expression plus air crash equals terrorism was a conclusion just too tempting to resist.

However if you search a little further that the racism of the world's media, far more interesting facts emerge.

Crashed

The Boeing 767 that crashed had chilling links with another 767 that crashed in Thailand eight years ago.

The aircraft were built alongside each other ten years ago. The first plane went to EgyptAir and the second to Austrian airline company Lauda Air.

The EgyptAir and Lauda planes were built when the company was struggling to meet record orders.

They both came off Boeing's Seattle production line days before workers went on strike.

A major complaint in the 48 day machinists' strike was that heavy overtime demands left them too tired to do their jobs properly.

Punishing

They were pushed to work punishing hours for seven days a week.

Such factors seem much more relevant than any bomb theory. Radar analysis shows that the plane plunged 17,000 feet before climbing, diving again and then finally breaking apart.

That sounds much more like a mechanical problem than a terrorist explosion.

It's a payoff for the fat cats

Another budget for the rich

BEHIND ALL the controversy about 'individualising' tax rates in the latest budget, one single fact has been missed: **McCreevy has once again cut million off the tax bills of the rich.**

Someone earning £100,000 a year will be £2,620 better off. That is ten times more than a poorly paid worker on £12,000, who will get £260 extra a year.

But that is only the tip of the iceberg of McCreevy's bonanza for greed. Here are a few of the other items.

★ Small firms will now only pay a tax rate of 12.5 percent on their profits.

★ Inheritance tax has been slashed. McCreevy says it is to protect family homes. But how many families have home valued at £300,000?

★ Property speculators will now only have to pay a 20 percent tax rate on windfall profits made from selling residential land.

IF THIS IS PARTNERSHIP, STUFF IT

MCCREEVY'S budget was supposed to lay the basis for a new partnership deal. But workers have received very little.

★ There has been no increase in the PAYE allowance.

★ Child benefit has increased by a mere 27p a day — which will pay a packet of crisps.

★ 10,000 public sector workers are to be moved out of Dublin. This will mean re-location to constituencies of Fianna Fail Ministers.

★ The £4 a week increase in social welfare will be eaten away by increases in local authority rents and new service charges.

★ DANA AND the Bishop of Dublin have attacked McCreevy's budget for being 'anti-family'. They say it is designed to force women out to work.

But Irish women have already joined the labour force in huge numbers. In the past decade, the numbers of women aged between 25 and 44 in the labour force has reached the EU average.

The real problem is that the Irish government does not want to fund crèches.

They want to tinker around with various tax reliefs rather than building crèches in every local authority area.

This year McCreevy has given only £20 million in grants for crèches.

★ Tax on banks and big companies has fallen from 28 percent to 24 percent.

★ Employers PRSI has also been cut even though they will get access to new training funds.

The rich have not been made to show even the slightest restraint - yet low paid workers are being told that their wage increases must be held down to get tiny tax cuts.

Sex information now

ONLY A QUARTER of primary schools have implemented the Relationship and Sexuality education programme.

The main reason is that there has been opposition from a tiny minority of hardened conservatives who hate any talk of sex education.

Yet Rose Tully, the chairwoman of the National Parents Council said that "There is a definite link between lack of informa-

tion on sex and the number of teen pregnancies."

Over 90 percent of Irish primary school are run by parish priests.

They have given the bigots who hate sex education great scope to stop these programmes.

But this will not stop them wringing their hands in horror when many young women have abortions because they were not given basic information on contraception.



Disabled protestors at the Dail before the Budget

US courts prosecute a child as an adult

ON TRIAL FOR HIS LIFE AT 13

AS US police led away 11 year old Nathaniel Abraham from his school in handcuffs, his face was still covered in Halloween paint.

Two year later he is standing trial on a first degree murder charge. The state prosecutor has demanded a life sentence for a boy who wasn't old enough to see the film, Titanic.

Nathaniel Abraham has become one of the



youngest people to stand trial on America. He is so small that his shackled feet do not reach the floor. His lawyer, Geoffrey Feiger, says that Nathaniel often asks him "When do I get to go home?"

But it seems that at the end of the millennium the richest country in the world is still putting little black boys on trial.

Homelessness on the rise

THIS IS THE time of year that those who sleep on the streets of Dublin hate the most.

In 1999, there were 2,900 homeless adults with roughly 900 dependent children living on the streets at any one time.

Forty eight percent of these have been homeless for more than one year. These figures have doubled since 1996.

Focus Ireland says the most common causes of homelessness is fam-

ily breakdown and financial difficulties.

Many of their contacts were in rented accommodation, but with increased rent and no legal rights they faced eviction.

Eviction

But you can be sure that none of the new residents in Dublin's first "Million Pound Estate" in Carrickmines will be too troubled by the plight of the homeless as they tuck into their turkey.

As the millennium dawns This is the new world order



'It is the first use of radiological weapons in the history of mankind ... You don't find a family without cancer or malformations from Basra to Mosul'

Dr Mona Kammas

THESE CHILDREN are suffering from congenital abnormalities because of depleted uranium weapons

GROTESQUE, deformed babies are still being born in Iraq as a direct result of depleted uranium bombs dropped by US and British forces in 1991.

The babies are born with huge black growth on their heads, or with no feet, or with tiny heads or with huge clefts on their backs.

Mona Kama, from Iraq's Committee

of Pollution Impact by Aggressive Bombing, brought these photographs to an international conference in London in July. None of the Irish media have printed them.

The depleted uranium bombs have caused a cancer epidemic in Iraq. According to Dr Kama, Iraq was the first country to suffer "the first use of radiological weapons in the history of mankind".

It is estimated that the US dropped 944,000 rounds of depleted uranium

bombs on Iraq in 1991. After the war was over, George Bush proclaimed that there was a 'new world order'. But the new world order turned out to be the same old barbarous order that is dominated by US.

US forces also used depleted uranium weapons against Serbian forces in Kosovo this year.

And they are still continuing a 'silent war' against Iraq. Not only has the country been deprived of food and medical supplies because of sanctions,

but US and British airforce regularly flies 'sortees' to bomb the country.

The only reason it is called a 'silent war' is that the Western media have chosen not to report it.

The twentieth century has been the most bloody century in human history. But far from the bloodshed decreasing it is getting worse.

Today Russian forces are pounding Chechnia with the same ferocity as the US pounded Kosovo.

The reason in both case is the same.

Imperialist powers are determined to grab and dominate as much of the planet as they can.

Today they mask their brutality in the name of 'humanitarian intervention' or 'anti-terrorist campaigns'. But no one should be followed by this.

The sooner the war mongers in the Pentagon and the Kremlin are overthrown, the sooner will the world become a safer place.

Immigration policy a shambles

THE government's policy on immigration is in a shambles with major divisions brewing under the surface.

On one hand, the business interests want a more open policy to deal with the labour shortages. The ESRI, Goodbody Stockbrokers and the Irish Small and Medium Sized Employers have all called for an end to the hypocrisy about keeping out "economic migrants".

They want the equivalent of the "guest worker" system that has existed in Germany.

Here immigrants are only give short stay work permits and are not allowed any rights to citizenship. They could be pushed out of the country in the event of a slow-down in the economy.

At the end of November, the Cabinet seemed to bow to these pressures when it send out letters to all asylum seekers informing them they had a right to work and also announced it was discussing a new immigration policy.

However, even these capitalist inspired proposals are too much for the backwoods men of Fianna Fail like Noel Ahern and Ivor Callely.

They are worried that the party's base has been eroded by the Haughey

scandals and want to be able to play the race card.

They are keeping up the pressure to finger print refugees and to deprive them of social welfare by giving them food vouchers instead.

They also want the mass deportations of "illegal" refugees to begin.

Meanwhile new evidence has emerged about Ireland's racist system of hearing application from asylum seekers.

Peter Finlay a government appointed members of the Appeals Authority on asylum application has denounced how the system is working.

According to Finlay, asylum seekers are not

given free and independent legal advice from the outset.

They are interviewed by retired Gardai with "all the hallmarks of an interview in a Garda station.

But one ingredient is missing: these people are not accused or charged with any offence".

There is no public scrutiny of the process and the "fundamental rights" of asylum seekers are being ignored.

The solution to all this hypocrisy is to allow refugees and "economic migrants" to come and settle in Ireland.

After all that is what millions of Irish people did in other countries in the past.

join the socialists

If you would like to join the SWP then fill in this slip and return it to a *Socialist Worker* seller or send to PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

- I would like to join the SWP
- I would like more information
- I would like to take ___ copies of *Socialist Worker* to sell

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....Union.....Tel:.....



news of the world

US and Russia bring misery to millions

THE WORLD'S most powerful military forces are inflicting enormous suffering in two of the most poverty stricken parts of the world as the 20th century draws to a close.

The effects of NATO's bombing of the Balkans earlier this year continue to devastate Serbia and Kosovo, the very area Western leaders said they were protecting.

And Russia is deepening its war against Chechnya, where people are fighting for independence from Russian rule.

The horrific Russian

offensive in Chechnya mirrors NATO's war in Kosovo and Serbia. Russian generals have unleashed Nato-style aerial bombardment of civilian centres.

Russian forces have shelled and bombed villages, and they recently massacred a column of refugees just outside the capital Grozny.

No one knows how many Chechens have been forced to abandon their homes.

Quarter

Even the Russian immigration service put the number of Chechen refugees at 222,000, a quarter of the population, at the end of November.

The UN put the figure

MORE PEOPLE are facing a winter under canvas in Europe and the Caucasus than at any time since the 1940s.

There are officially:

★ About 130,000 people in tents in earthquake-shattered Turkey.

★ Some 30,000 Chechen refugees in tents and disused railway carriages in neighbouring Ingushetia.

★ There are also 350,000 people sheltering in patched up ruins in Kosovo and tens of thousands more in Serbia, where the United Nations refugee agency says 700,000 Serb refugees have fled from the wars in former Yugoslavia this decade.

at one third of the population.

The killing and bombing has intensified since then.

The Russian government has now announced that its forces will totally destroy Grozny, and has warned every civilian to get out.

The Russian media talks of "surgical strikes" and "cutting edge weapons" in the same way that NATO's spokesman James Shea tried to prettify the effects of Western bombs on Serbian and Kosovan civilians.

The reality is far more brutal. Russian forces recently dropped "fuel air explosive bombs" on Grozny.

These create a sea of fire, which sucks the air out of people's lungs, and a blast which can

kill people in underground bunkers.

The US used these weapons against Iraqi conscripts in the 1991 Gulf War.

Kosovo

The catastrophe continues

KOSOVO IS a catastrophe six months after Nato proclaimed its liberation.

In the Summer Western leaders talked of reconstructing the area.

Some even spoke of an updated version of the Marshall Plan, which brought billions of dollars of aid to western Europe at the end of the Second World War.

About \$1 billion was pledged in foreign aid to Kosovo. So far just £88 million has arrived.

Bill Clinton visited US troops in Kosovo last month.

They live in a purpose built complex which has cinemas, restaurants, clubs and many other amenities.

It is surrounded by Kosovan towns and villages which often lack even running water.

Meanwhile "ethnic cleansing", which Nato said it was going to war to stop, is continuing. NATO's bombs have succeeded only in refocusing the violence away from the Albanian majority and on to the Serb and Roma Gypsy minorities.

Independent journalist



Chechnyan women trying to flee Russian troops

WESTERN LEADERS have decided to let Russia murder in Chechnya in return for them getting free rein to intervene in other states in the region.

It is a grim echo of the Cold War when the world was divided into spheres of influence. The superpowers traded hypocritical insults while brutally intervening in the areas they dominated.

Clinton warned Russian leader Boris Yeltsin last month that the US would delay a new treaty covering arms in Europe if Russia continued to attack Chechnya. That threat has nothing to do with defending Chechen civilians and everything to do with the US wanting to increase its ability to intervene elsewhere in eastern Europe and the former USSR.

The US also wants to rip up a longstanding nuclear weapons treaty with Russia so it can deploy an anti ballistic missile system which will allow it further to dominate the globe.

France

STRIKES AND protests are erupting across France in the run up to Christmas.

The implementation of the new 35 hour week law lies behind many of the disputes. Workers are demanding that bosses pay for the hours cut.

The Socialist Party led coalition government passed the 35 hour law. It was a key part of the manifesto which saw the left swept to office two years ago.

The government has had to deliver under pressure from below.

But it has sought to water down the pledge and the bosses are trying

to cut workers' pay to make up for shorter working hours.

Socialist Party prime minister Lionel Jospin remains popular despite the social discontent. But a corruption scandal is rocking his party and government.

The Socialist Party's second in command, as well as the party's Paris and Marseilles chiefs, have had to step down while allegations of illegal funding are investigated.

The discontent and action that has gripped France has pushed the Communist Party, the Greens and most left wing parties to call a new national day of action for Tuesday, 14th December.

Serbia

"Electricity and heating are the concern. People are having a very hard time."

With those words Denis McNamara, the head of the UN refugee agency in the Balkans, launched a £125 million appeal for Serb refugees in Serbia itself.

But the US is maintaining strict sanctions against Serbia, which are compounding the damage done by Nato bombs during the war.

Destroyed

NATO destroyed every bridge across the Danube River in northern Serbia.

It is refusing aid to rebuild them, claiming the bridges are for military use.

One of the bridges in the city of Novi Sad carried power for the city's heating system. Most homes there now have heating for only a couple of hours a day.

British defence chief Sir Charles Guthrie said in June that Serbia's oil

refining capacity had been "eliminated". The European Union is offering oil deliveries only to towns which come out strongly against Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic.

It is cruel blackmail. There were mass demonstrations against Milosevic before the bombing.

NATO, however, rained bombs on centres of opposition to Milosevic such as Nis and Novi Sad.

The bombs and sanctions strengthened Milosevic.

Now the West is further punishing the people of Serbia for not overthrowing him. Supplies of milk and meat are scarce.

The Serbian Red Cross reports that many hospitals "lack even basic supplies". Luxury goods for the state and business elite do beat the embargo.

But as one unemployed factory worker in Belgrade says "many people are simply too cold, too hungry and too exhausted to take to the streets against Milosevic".

Ditore, have also been attacked.

Independent observers say the Kosovo Liberation Army, which is supposed to have disbanded, is behind much of the ethnic violence.

Kosovo remains the poorest part of Europe while NATO forces sit astride spiralling ethnic violence.

Eamonn McCann

Santa in violation of 'Free Trade' regulations

THE SEATTLE meeting of the World Trade Organisation gave notice that the days of the National Elf Service may be numbered.

As clouds of tear-gas drifted past the double-glazed windows of the hi-tech conference centre, leading members of the WTO identified the North Pole as "an imminent danger to the free market system up with which we cannot put".

"The entire basis of the North Pole economy contradicts the most basic concept of fair trade", said a spokesman.

"For far too long the so-called 'Santa' operation has been exporting junior citizens' leisure accessories across national boundaries in huge quantities every year without the slightest regard to customs regulations or globally-agreed pricing policy", he continued.

"Anybody would know that there's something dodgy going on from the fact that these commodities are distributed worldwide in the dead of night and in such furtive circumstances that many customers are completely ignorant of the sourcing data and appear to have no grasp of the principle that anything worth having must be paid for at a price which allows risk-taking entrepreneurs to recoup their costs and make a decent profit," he explained.

Castigating the World Community for having failed so far to impose a Structural Adjustment Programme on the North Pole in line with austerity measures enforced elsewhere, the spokesman suggested that the North Pole government was "effectively subsidising this export trade to the full cost of manufacture. How else to explain the fact that these goods are literally given away?"

"How can American companies which faithfully abide by the laws of capitalism be expected to compete?"

He pointed out that some US companies supplying Happy Meal Tiny Tarzans to Junkgrub Inc. are forced by local restrictive practices to pay workers in Indonesia and the Peoples' Republic of China as much as a dollar a day.

"Law-abiding enterprises are being savagely undercut by the feather-bedded North Pole pixie proletariat", he complained. "It's just not fair".

Attention

The spokesman also drew attention to "huge" hidden subsidies allegedly involved in North Pole health provision. "I saw a photograph of one of their workers and he looked a picture of elf", he said. "That's not natural".

Questioned by reporters as to whether he intended his mad ramblings to be taken seriously, the spokesman replied: "Mad rambling they may be. But if you think they aren't to be taken seriously, I suggest you look at Article 19 of our proposed General Agreement on Services".

This lays down that any public sector operation which opens itself up to schemes like New Labour's Private Finance Initiative thereby comes within the WTO remit.

The noted "Third Way" economist Will Hutton, not a man given to seasonal whimsy, explained in the *Observer* on November 28: "A US multinational could take the NHS to the WTO disputes panel if it refused its permission to buy a PFI-financed hospital".

So Bairbre de Brun should keep an eye on the Royal Victoria. Peace-loving Americans who can afford \$1,000-a-plate dinners may already have eyes on it. Not to mention the North Pole Sanatorium.

Meanwhile, the Xmas ethic of the WTO has also been in evidence in Bromley, Kent, where one of Santa's representations was handed the sack for complaining that the grotto was too hot. Two elves were given the boot for backing him up.

Said elf Hannah: "If an elf does't look after Father Christmas, who will?"

Said elf Sinan: "It wasn't a workshop, it was a sweatshop".

The Sun responded by sending a fake Santa to cross the picket-line and take over the role. Within an hour he was told by a toddler: "Go easy on the ho-ho-ho. You sound mad".

Which proves what the WTO is about to discover—that you can't kid Claus's canny customers.

They know the real Santa. They will have seen throngs of him marching in Seattle, recognisable from their long hair, luxuriant beards and the cool-again '60s anti-capitalist ethic expressed in the traditional slogan, "Ho, Ho, Ho-Chi Minh".

The wealth divide in education: Teachers vote to scrap the 11-plus

by JOHN PRICE,
NASUWT MEMBER,

THE AGM of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) Belfast Association on 23 November passed a motion calling on the NI Federation to campaign to abolish the 11 plus exam.

The 11 plus is part of a selective system which perpetuates class bias. It militates against the poorer section of the community and promotes "survival of the fittest".

The psychological damage of perceived failure at 11 has a traumatic effect upon the lives of children and their parents and teachers.

Division

The 11 plus leads to division in the classroom— children are often separated doing different types of work, which results in an "I'm worthy of this — you're not" attitude.

It skews the primary curriculum by encouraging cramming. The emphasis is placed on what is needed for the test, not on the broad entitlement curriculum it should be.

Mark, a secondary school teacher in East Belfast said, "I was educated under a comprehensive system and now teach under a selective one.

"It is grossly unfair to force



Only one in four of these children will pass their 11-plus

children at the age of 11 to sit an exam which makes three quarters of them fail. "On top of that they are forced into secondary schools which are not as well funded as grammar schools and where the chance of progressing to further education is massively reduced."

Another teacher at the meeting, Cathy said, "The children don't like doing the 11 plus, parents don't like putting their children through it, a substantial amount of teachers are

against selection, so why is it still around?"

The motion calling for the abolition of the 11 plus was passed with only one vote against, at one of the largest AGMs for many years.

The motion included organising and building a demonstration to Stormont against the 11 plus on the Saturday of the week that children are allocated places in post-primary schools.

This will take place in May 2000.

A petition calling for the scrapping of the 11 plus and supporting the NASUWT campaign organised by *Socialist Worker* supporters is currently being circulated in schools. Over 600 signatures were collected on the streets of Belfast on a recent Saturday.

For copies of the petition to circulate in your school phone: (01232) 799204.

WHY WON'T FARREN ABOLISH FEES

THE DEADLINE for the first instalment of fees, £512, or Queen's students is due on December the 9th. Several students have become public non-payers, refusing to pay on the principle of free education.

In an act of defiance towards the four students burnt symbolic fee bills in front of the press. The protest received widespread news coverage with articles in both the Irish News, the Newsletter and the BBC evening news.

The students have also collected over one thousand signatures for the petition in support of the

non-payers. Almost every party in Northern Ireland, orange and green, claim to have a free education policy including the SDLP.

But only a few days after the new ministerial appointments, Sean Farren, the new minister for Further and Higher Education reversed SDLP policy saying in an interview that student fees were unlikely to be scrapped. He claims that "student fees are not an area in which we have absolute autonomy ourselves to change regulations"

This is nonsense. Fees could be scrapped and the grant returned if the government cut spending on security or reduced their own exorbitant salaries.

Letter

The RUC are not heroes

THE NEWS that the RUC has been awarded the George Cross for "bravery" has shocked many thousands of people here in Northern Ireland. The RUC has an absolutely terrible record of human rights violations, sectarianism and brutality.

In giving the RUC this award Peter Mandelson is insulting the memory of the 50 people killed by this force. He ignores the pain of relatives of victims, victims like Julie Livingstone, a 14 year old schoolgirl killed by an RUC plastic bullet while going to the shops for a pint of milk.

Mandelson has also



The RUC have a terrible record of brutality

chosen to ignore the many investigations by human rights organisations into the RUC. The first such investigation was in 1936 by the National Council for Civil Liberties, which criticised the RUC for standing by while Orange marchers attacked a Catholic area. Over recent years the

RUC has been criticised by the UN Committee on Torture, the European Court of Human Rights and Amnesty International.

Just last month the local headlines told the story of how a Catholic grandmother and her daughter in Larne were beaten by a Loyalist mob. When the RUC arrived they refused to take action against the attackers but instead threatened to arrest the daughter.

This is the force that Mandelson is rewarding with the George's Cross, because it is politically expedient to cosy up to the Ulster Unionists. This is adding insult to injury.

SEAN MCVEIGH,
Belfast

South Korea Solidarity with our struggle

WORKERS IN South Korea are still suffering from the economic crisis which devastated the country last year. Three supporters of Socialist Worker's sister paper in South Korea recently spoke to KEVIN OVENDEN.

"The financial crisis in December 1998 led to the intervention of the International Monetary Fund. They insisted on more privatisation and on letting ailing businesses close. That led to a soaring unemployment."

The South Korean president is Kim Dae-jung. He was a dissident under the military dictatorship which ran the country from the early 1960s to the late 1980s.

"Kim Dae-jung is under pressure from the old right wing which hails from the generals' time. They want as little change to the authoritarian state as possible.

But Kim Dae-jung has abandoned his radical past. The government said we all have to share the burden.

Now people see the corruption and the lifestyles of the rich and there is a big backlash."

Since an explosion of workers' struggles in the 1980s the militant trade union federation, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), has had a major influence on politics.

"The KCTU leaders made concessions to the bosses during the International Monetary Fund intervention.

That pushed the rank and file to organise a coup. Factory based leaders got support in the elections and overturned the old leaders.

But when they got into the positions they too disappointed the workers. Workers at Halla heavy industries had a strike for several weeks for recovery of their wages.

They won most of their demands and over 40 percent wanted to stay out for more when the union leaders ended the fight.

That inspired other workers. But at the same time they lacked confidence and faced a political problem. If companies were bankrupt, simple economic demands like higher wages were not enough.

We needed a political answer about nationalising the industry and making the bosses pay."

The desperate need for a left wing political alternative to the big business policies of the

major parties led to the formation of a workers' party, the Democratic Labour Party, in August this year.

"Half the party's founders were officers of the KCTU. So it has strong links to the trade union movement. It is attracting support from workers and already has 8,000 members. One opinion poll this month gave the party 35 percent support."

The South Korean state has clamped down ruthlessly on revolutionary socialists.

"More of our supporters were arrested and imprisoned in the first year of Kim Dae-jung's government than in the last year of the previous president, Kim Young-sam, who was backed by the military.

Kim Dae-jung is proposing to amend the National Security Law, which can be used to imprison people for publishing books and articles which criticise the South Korean state. But he wants to leave the heart of the law intact.

Six of our supporters are still in prison. They include Hong Gyo-sun. He will be sentenced on 2 December for publishing books which are freely available on any campus in Ireland."

"We cannot stress enough how important the international solidarity campaign has been for us.

Resolutions passed by trade unionists here and in other countries, and the names of people like Tony Benn MP and left wing academic Noam Chomsky in the US have made a huge difference.

They boosted people who were in prison and helped them maintain their ideas. They also gave confidence to others on the left.

Kim Dae-jung received a 'democracy award' in the US last year. When campaigners interrupted the ceremony and forced him to admit he jailed people for their ideas, it was deeply embarrassing for the South Korean state.

The struggle is continuing in South Korea. We look to solidarity with workers and the oppressed across the world in our common fight against global capitalism."

Pass resolutions condemning the trial of Hong Gyo-sun and other socialists in South Korea.

Join the Committee to Defend South Korean Socialists and get copies of its factsheet for your college, trade union or community group.

Committee to Defend South Korean Socialists, c/o PO BOX 1648, Dublin 8 Phone 01-8722682 Fax 01-8723838

"Six of our supporters are still in prison for publishing books which are freely available on any campus in Ireland."

The revolt against capitalism

RIGHT ACROSS the world, from Brazil to Bangladesh, from Argentina to Australia, people protested against capitalism, their target being the World Trade Organisation.

In Italy, there were teach-ins, film screenings, pickets outside banks and mass leafletting were planned in 59 different cities and towns.

All the major cities in France saw thousands of people join anti-capitalist demonstration.

In London anti-WTO protesters also demonstrated against the government's plans to privatisation of the London

by CHARLIE
KIMBER IN SEATTLE
& SINÉAD KENNEDY

underground

In the run up to Seattle, where the WTO was assembling, there were also protests in Stockholm, Brussels and Geneva - where protesters occupied the WTO headquarters. Along the route placards and slogans combined fury at what capitalism was doing to the world with a call to resistance.

Seattle itself was in ferment when over a hundred thousand people marched against the WTO. The protesters came from every corner of the earth - food security protesters from Korea, freedom fighters from Tibet, lesbian rights activists from the US, young and old, socialists and greens. Union contingents lined up alongside campaign groups.

Planet

Diane Lively, a student from Alabama, had travelled thousands of miles to be there. "I just want to tell the WTO to get their hands off our planet" she told Socialist Worker. "I want people before profit." Mike Ellison, a Seattle health worker and shop steward said "The WTO is about corporations brushing us aside and seizing everything. It rules mean poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and in the US as well."

Protesters packed a series of meetings and rallies over the week. At one meeting hundreds of students started chanting, "We are the future!" with fists raised. "This feels like the 1960s," said one speaker. Thousands took part in a Jubilee 2000 anti-debt human chain around the opening reception for the WTO. Every day there was intense discussion, long meetings, energy, enthusiasm and determination to win change.

Over 2,500 people came to a teach-in on "Globalisation, the WTO and the Alternatives".

"At 6.30 in the morning there were 150 of us queuing hoping to get returned tickets. Only four of us got in." One protester told Socialist Worker.

Inside the meeting thousands listened intently to 40 speakers over a period of ten hours without a break.

The loudest applause was for the speakers who tore into capitalism and called for a total rejection of the WTO's priorities. Hassan Adebayo Sunmonu from the Organisation of African Trade

"MY ALLIES are working people, people who have the courage to stand up against this atrocious system."

Actor DANNY GLOVER at a meeting against the WTO in Seattle

"THE WTO should encourage us. They've made a revolution and it shows we can too. We should fight this idea that the economy and the environment are separate."

STEVE SHRYBMAN, environmental activist in Seattle

"EVERY GROUP in the world with an axe to grind is going to Seattle to demonstrate. I'll have more demonstrations against me than I've had in the whole seven years I've been President."

US President BILL CLINTON

"IT INDICATES the remaining damage that Marxism has done to the thinking of people"

Rudolph Giuliani, Mayor of New York on the anti-WTO protests.



THE WORLD is ours

CORPORATE DONATIONS to WTO host organisations:

\$250,000 — Allied Signal/Honeywell, De Loitte & Touche, Ford, GM, Microsoft, Nextel, Boeing, US West.

\$150,000 — Activate.com, UPS, Weyerhaeuser.

\$75,000 — AT&T, Bank of America, Colombia Resource Group, Eddie Bauer, Hewlett Packard, Seagram, Preston Gates & Ellis.

\$25,000 — Caterpillar, IBM, US Bancorp.

Union Unity was cheered when he said, "Let's tell the WTO that it is labour which creates wealth."

Mounted police, armoured cars and an extra 3,000 officers were deployed to stop the protesters.

It was the first use of tear-gas and rubber bullets in Seattle since the Vietnam War. One eyewitness told how the police "started gassing people

and shooting rubber bullets. They shot rubber bullets from four feet away into the face of a guy next to me".

But in the end the WTO talks broke up in failure. One of the Chinese observers to the talks said "I think this is as significant for the West as Tiananmen Square was for us.

It is unprecedented. Governments will have to respond."

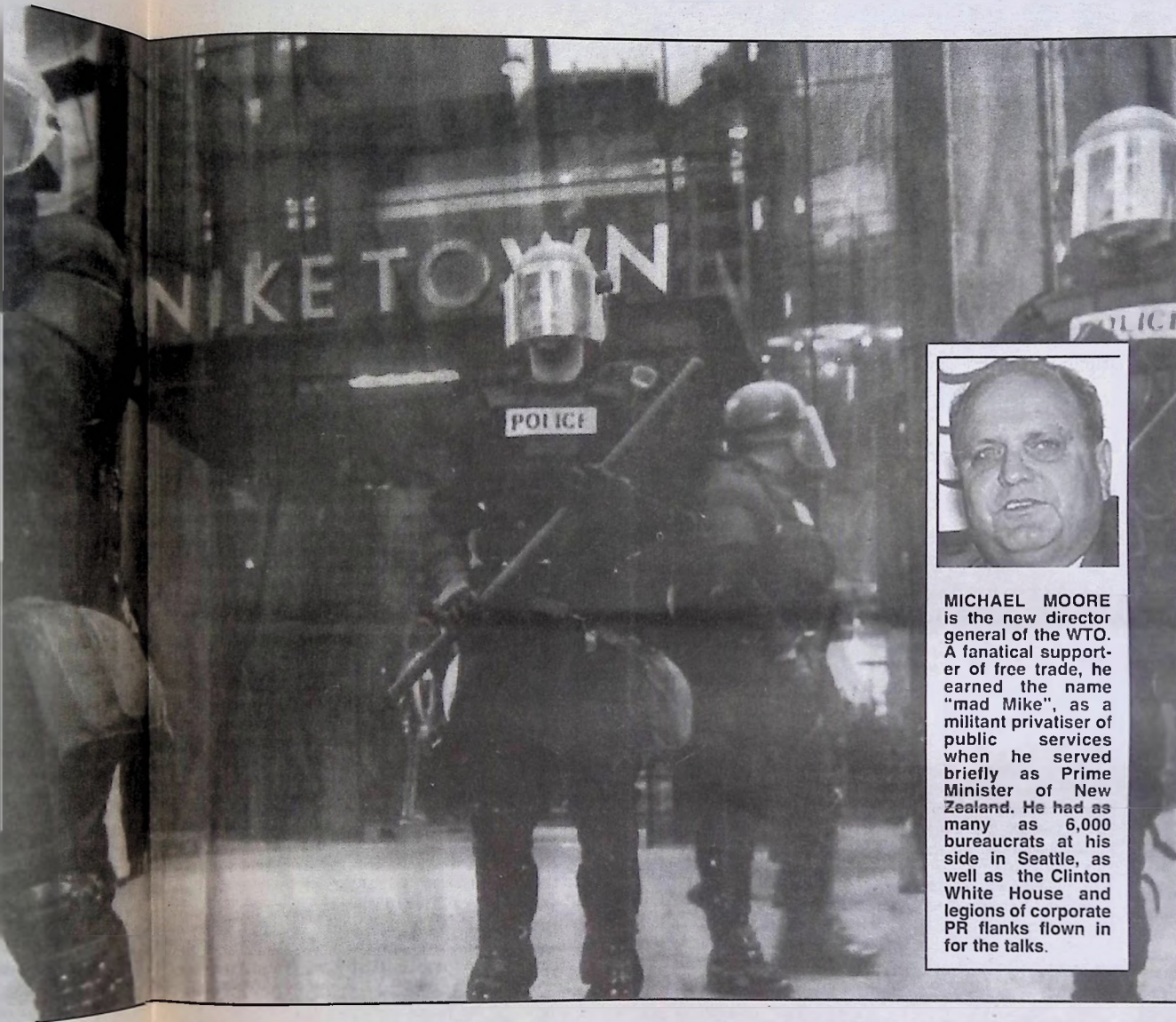
Fig

For millions people around the world the Trade Organisation has become a tool of global corruption with itsism.

Under the "free trade" agreements in Seattle to make it even for global corporations to plunder the

The WTO push through opening up services like education, health to global nations. They enshrine rules companies

... against ... begins



MICHAEL MOORE is the new director general of the WTO. A fanatical supporter of free trade, he earned the name "mad Mike", as a militant privatiser of public services when he served briefly as Prime Minister of New Zealand. He had as many as 6,000 bureaucrats at his side in Seattle, as well as the Clinton White House and legions of corporate PR flacks flown in for the talks.

Fighting the multinationals

For millions of people around the world the World Trade Organisation has become a symbol of everything that is rotten and corrupt with capitalism.

Under the banner of "free trade", governments in Seattle wanted to make it even easier for global corporations to plunder the world.

The WTO wants to push through rules opening up public services like education and health to global multinationals. They want to enshrine rules allowing companies to foist

genetically modified foods on the world. Anyone who challenges this faces punitive sanctions from powerful states like the US and Britain.

All the leading US auto, oil, IT, tobacco and agri-business companies were at the WTO. Many had spent up to \$250,000 to be part of the official "host committee". They were given "privileges" such as meeting trade ministers.

Grown

The influence of multinationals has grown enormously in the last ten years. According to the US economist David Korten, 50 of the world's 100 largest companies exceed the GNP of the world's 100 poorest countries.

UNEQUAL TERMS

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST COMPANIES (\$ BN)

Microsoft \$465.4
General Electric \$436.3
Cisco Systems \$305.8
Intel \$263.7
Wal-Mart Stores \$262.4
BP Amoco \$195.2
Exxon \$192.7
IBM \$187.8

SMALLEST ECONOMIES GNP (\$ BN)

Sao Tome \$0.040
Marshall Islands \$0.095
Kiribati \$0.101
Tonga \$0.167
Samoa \$0.180
Guinea-Bissau \$0.186
Comoros \$0.196
Micronesia \$0.203

tries.

The combined assets of the world's 50 largest banks and financial companies control 60 percent of the world's global capital.

In 1970, there were approximately 7,000 corporations operating internationally, today there are more than 50,000.

But many are waking up

to the power of these corporate monsters. In Europe, growing public concerns about food safety, has grown Monsanto, the genetically modified food company, faces a crisis as its share prices tumble.

This has had an impact back in the US as inquiries have started into how certain scientific experts in the Food

and Drug Agency gave GM food a clean bill of health.

In the US there have been boycotts and protests against Nike and Coca-Cola.

The Multi-lateral Agreement on Investment, a proposed global agreement by the world's richest 29 countries, was abandoned last year after protests by 600 consumers, environmental and development groups.

Mike Moore, the WTO's director general, also acknowledged that the sheer scale and diversity of the protesters represents something that will be difficult to dismiss as "grumpy, geriatric communists".

The Seattle meeting just sums up the sickness of capitalism, a system in which people and the environment are sacrificed to profit.

That is why people around the world are raging and why they are right to protest.

what do
socialists say?

Marx and the state

PERHAPS THE most startling thing about the protests against the WTO in Seattle is how they have completely by-passed the parliamentary system.

by SINEAD KENNEDY

The heroes of Seattle were people who called for open resistance to capitalism and see the parliamentary system as dominated by parties which are funded by big business.

Marx's attitude to the state was also one of unremitting hostility.

Far from wishing to expand its activities, Marxists have sought to eventually do away with it. In 1844, Marx declared that the most useful thing the State could do for society was to commit suicide.

He celebrated the Paris Commune of 1871 on the basis that it was "a Revolution against the State itself".

Marx's argument about the state was distorted by the Labour Party tradition which held open the possibility the state could be won to more socialist purposes.

Marx defined the state in terms of social relations. The state is an organised body of people with a monopoly of violence.

The state's very existence necessarily involves the loss, by the majority of society, of the power to govern their own lives.

The power of the state equals and parallels the powerlessness of its subjects. The state, which seals

the function of government, 'stands over' the society it robs.

States only come into existence when society is divided on class lines. They are the instruments by which a ruling class holds onto its wealth and privilege.

In our society Marx argued that the state is the 'management committee' for the capitalist class.

This is why vast bulk of the state machinery is unelected and outside the control of the majority of the population.

No one elects the people who run the army, the police, the top of the civil service or the heads of big state companies.

Even the parliamentarians do not know what is happening in key institutions of the state.

Thus even though the Irish

parliament passed a law saying that tax should be charged on interest, the Revenue Commissioners secretly connived with the banks to ensure that not single non-resident account was inspected for over a decade.

When the power of the state is challenged, the thin veil of parliamentary democracy is brushed aside and rule of the robo-cop style police officer is revealed.

This is why the Russian revolutionary Lenin said that at the heart of the state lies "bodies of armed men, prisons, etc".

Rosa Luxemburg argued that those who claimed that it is possible to preserve the existing state machinery in the struggle for socialism are not simply arguing for a different road to socialism they are arguing against socialism itself.

The heart of the socialist idea is self government, in every sphere of life, including production. And the state, in its very essence, is nothing but a series of massive impediments to that self-rule.

However if the state is an expression of class rule, it can only be finally eliminated when social classes themselves are eliminated.

A revolution can deliver an immense blow against the privileges of the corporate elite but it would be foolish to believe that power that comes with wealth which has been accumulated over two centuries disappears overnight.

Even after a revolution the old ruling class will fight a desperate rearguard action.

In order to deal with this the majority of society need to take onto itself the control of violence.

A workers state will be immensely democratic because it has to rely on the mobilisation of the majority to break the power of a privileged minority.

All its officials would be subject to election and re-call if they did not carry out their mandates.

There would be no separation between political decisions and administration carried out by a giant bureaucracy.

In reality, the more the workers state uproots the basis of class rule, the less it resembles a state in any real sense of the word. It would as Marx argued "wither away".

The corporations who rule the world

GEORGE MONBIOT is one of Britain's best known environmental campaigners. He writes a regular column in the Guardian and is writing a book due out next year on "The corporate takeover of Britain". *Socialist Worker* spoke to him.

WHAT IS THE WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION?

THE ORIGINAL idea of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) was to stop powerful countries from bullying weak ones.

The idea was to prevent countries like Britain from raising massive tariffs against, for example, Indian cotton.

The problem is the principles have been perverted and the organisation corrupted, principally by big business and its client governments.

The successor of GATT, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), is really a broker for corporate rule. It is instituting a global regime which allows corporations to override the legitimate concerns of citizens' groups and even democratically elected governments.

CAN YOU GIVE EXAMPLES?

TAKE the US state of Massachusetts. It decided not to trade with companies working in Burma because of the regime there. Britain was among the European Union countries which took Massachusetts to the WTO claiming this was an "unfair barrier to trade".

After the court case lawyers pointed out that had world trade rules of the sort we've got today been in operation during the 1980s then Nelson Mandela could still be in prison. Sanctions against South Africa would have been illegal.

Another case concerns beef hormones. All the European Union countries except Britain decided they would not buy US beef because US beef farmers use six growth hormones. At least one of these hormones has directly carcinogenic effects.

It's a very clear public health issue. Yet the WTO ruled this ban was an unfair barrier to trade. The WTO then allowed the US to impose sanctions worth \$520 million on Europe.

The WTO takes advice from a United Nations body called the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives. It is

stuffed with corporate scientists, some closely connected with companies producing the growth hormones.

At the moment the WTO's remit is limited to certain forms of trade. But the European Union, and particularly Britain, wants every form of trade and commerce brought in, including public procurement.

This would add up to a drive for privatisation of state resources all over the world.

HOW WOULD YOU REPLY TO THE ARGUMENT THAT FREE TRADE IS GOOD FOR EVERYONE AND THAT PROTECTIONISM DAMAGES EVERYONE?

THE FREE traders fail to distinguish between protection and protectionism.

They identify as protectionist regulations that are intended to protect the health of workers, consumers and the environment.

Pulling down these regulatory barriers allows corporations to dump their costs onto society.

By doing this, corporations are exposing people worldwide to a new set of hazards.

The Labour Minister, Clare Short, for example, says that by insisting on high labour standards we are discriminating



GEORGE MONBIOT

against developing countries with low labour standards.

This is nonsense. Take the case involving Cape, a company mining asbestos in South Africa. Workers were exposed to asbestos and thousands have cancers and other diseases.

The WTO threatens to remove such protection as exists.

Clare Short is sacrificing the interests of Third World workers. When she talks about the interests of the developing world she is really talking about the interests of multinational companies operating there and the corrupt governments with whom they work. All over the world, the corporations have been engaged in a long term drive to remove

regulatory barriers.

They pursued that drive through the failed Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which a small ragged group of campaigners managed to prevent from being signed in October 1998. They've pursued it through the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The same agenda has been pursued through the Private Finance Initiative.

We've also seen it advanced by the corporate infiltration of government. Corporate representatives fill the boards of quangos appointed by the government.

WHAT OTHER THREATS DO THE CORPORATIONS BRING?

THE GREATEST threat to food security on earth is the concentration of the food chain in the hands of a few rich and powerful players.

Most famines result, not from an absolute shortage of food, but from the failure of that food to find its way into the hands of those who need it.

Monsanto's attempt, through developing genetically modified organisms, to control the food chain threatened to turn it into the hunger merchant of the third millennium.

It was only through a concerted and worldwide effort of popular protest that Monsanto's plans have been at least set back and possibly terminated.

WHY DO YOU THINK CORPORATIONS BEHAVE THE WAY THEY DO?

THEY HAVE forced up share prices in the past by pursuing what they call efficiencies, sacking large numbers of people.

But they've taken that about as far as they can. They have to find other means of increasing their share value. They have to try and expand the size of their system.

It doesn't take them long, for example, to start eyeing up the 40 percent of the United Kingdom economy in the hands of the state and wanting to grab a share.

That is what has driven the privatisation programmes of the 1980s and early 1990s. It is what is driving the Private Finance Initiative and the Public Procurement chapters of the WTO negotiations.

Britain in particular is determined to use the WTO to open up the state sector all over the world to infiltration by multinational companies.

There is a drive to seize the resources of the state to secure corporate profits.

For the same purposes corporations want to remove regulations which make their operations more expensive.



Faceless Financial Institutions, like these in Hong Kong, rule our lives

Corporations all over the world, and particularly in Britain, have been lobbying hard for the deregulation of environmental and health standards.

WHY DO YOU THINK THE BIG CORPORATIONS OPPOSE TARGETS FOR CUTTING THE GREENHOUSE GASES RESPONSIBLE FOR GLOBAL WARMING?

THEY HAVE invested in technologies which generate a great deal of greenhouse gas emissions.

The internal combustion engine is an ancient Victorian technology which should have no place in the world today. But the corporations have invested a great deal in plant, and motor companies flatly refused to replace it with more advanced technologies.

They are locked into the continued use of the internal combustion engine and large quantities of fossil fuels.

For the same reasons the oil companies want to keep producing oil rather than investing in, say, solar power. That is reinforced by the fact that governments all over the world are so keen to appease corporate power.

WHY DO GOVERNMENTS BEHAVE LIKE THIS?

THE WAY you obtain power is by appeasing those who already possess it.

The more you appease them the more powerful they become and the more you have to appease them.

Governments recognise that corporations are powerful so they grease up to them, and in greasing up to them they make them more powerful, and so have to grease up to them even more.

ARE QUESTIONS OF CLASS RELEVANT IN YOUR VIEW?

YES. WE'VE seen the emergence of a new class of corporate executives detached from the concerns of the rest of society.

This new class, a new corporate aristocracy, is enjoying the sort of power the landed aristocracy enjoyed in the 18th century.

So clearly there is a class dimension. But what is interesting in terms of the protests is that they have cut across the traditional class divides, with protesters drawn from every social class.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF MARX'S ANALYSIS OF SOCIETY?

SOME THINGS I profoundly agree with and some I disagree with.

It is certainly relevant to take a long term historical view of the power of money and of class when confronting the new forces ranged against society.

Marx is certainly one of the thinkers whose work we should make good use of.

ARE YOU OPTIMISTIC OR PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE?

CORPORATE POWER will grow. But I am optimistic about the ability of people's movements to contest and defeat it. Already we've seen some successes. Popular protest is extremely effective.

When we contested the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which was a global charter for corporate rule, we took on the most powerful corporations on earth. We won.

Now is the time to beat corporate power. If we leave it any longer we won't succeed. If we are going to hit them we've got to hit them now.

in my view

Santa's sweatshops

MARKETING OF TOYS is a big business. This years craze, Pokeman, runs like this: little characters, all different, are trained to fight in a jovial sort of way.

To play the computer game properly you need to buy two computer consoles which cost around £50 each. Then the successful spin off cartoon has produced related toys, games, books and anything else you can think of to cream in more profit from the brand.

But the hype about the latest gimmick is of no concern to the workers who make the toys.

Delfina Rodriguez is a middle-aged woman with seven children. Rodriguez assembled Mattel toys on the night shift at the Mabamex factory, a Mattel firm in Tijuana, Mexico, until September 9. That evening, she came to work carrying pamphlets from a workers' rights meeting that was held the previous day.

Upon entering the plant, her purse was searched and she was taken into a room by a security guard. She and two other workers say they were coercively interrogated, accused of passing out subversive materials, detained against their will until the next morning and prevented from going to the bathroom or making phone calls to their families.

In the end, according to the women, plant manager of human resources Gabriel Macias told them they would have to quit their jobs or go to prison. They were released only after agreeing to resign.

Humiliated

"Not going to the bathroom, not being able to speak to anyone but those interrogating us, threatening us.... We feel humiliated.... They treated us worse than criminals," Rodriguez recalls.

Mattel spokesman Glenn Bozarth denies all, claiming that the workers were never held against their will and were rightfully dismissed for "distributing political materials" within the factory, which is "a violation of Mexican law".

There are countless others abused or short-changed — sometimes even killed — working in toy factories in Indonesia, Thailand and China. This is where the toy companies produce the bulk of their trademark brands.

Those at the top fare well. In 1995, Mattel's Chief Executive Officer, John Amerman, raked in \$7 million and held an additional \$23 million in stock options — easily more than the combined annual salary of the 11,000 Mattel workers producing Barbie dolls in China.

Consider Indonesia, where Mattel employs thousands of workers at a factory in Bekasi that produces Barbie dolls.

The workers earn the bare minimum wage of \$2.25 per day. It would take these workers about a month to earn enough to buy Mattel's Calvin Klein Barbie, and twenty-eight years to make the same wage that Amerman gets in a day.

In Vietnam, teenage girls are forced to work 10 hours a day, seven days a week, earning as little as 3p an hour in the Keyhinge factory making the promotional toys, many of which are Disney characters, for McDonald's Happy Meals.

Hospitalised

After working a 70-hour week, some of the teenage women take home a salary of only £3. In February, this year 200 workers fell ill, 25 collapsed and three were hospitalised as a result of chemical exposure.

In China, toy workers sewing Disney characters to clothing work 16 hour days, seven days a week. Workers are forced to pay the management "deposits" and "entrance fees" just to be able to work. At one factory, workers lose their deposit if they do not stay at the factory for at least two years. At another workers must pay a monthly "tool deposit."

Behind the glitter, the toy industry is a showcase for the injustices at the heart of the system.

By the way, after strike action in the Mexican factory Delfina Rodriguez and her colleagues were reinstated. The plant unionised and now the workers are fighting for a compensation payment from Mattel. Happy Christmas after all.

SIMON BASKETTER

Technology

Millennium bug will hit the world's poor

by DAVE MCDONAGH

THE NEWSPAPER USA Today recently reported that, "Corporate America is exhibiting nervous ticks and twitches as the Year 2000 nears.

"For almost two years, companies made mostly rosy predictions about their ability to handle the Y2K computer glitch.

"But now, some of the nation's largest corporations are expressing reservations in quarterly Y2K status reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission."

Nuclear

This is no laughing matter. Among the locations that could be affected are chemical plants and nuclear power stations.

By August 30 percent of US chemical companies had yet to report back on their progress towards Y2K compliance.

Dangerous chemicals are stored in over 100,000 locations in California alone.

Six US nuclear power plants expected to fix the problem in only the last two months of 1999—three plants were leaving it until the last two weeks!

In Ireland the Y2K problem could have a serious effect on a health service already in crisis.

A report by leading software consultant Patrick O'Beirne in the November issue of Irish Computer revealed inaccurate reporting of Y2K compliance in the Department of Health.

The result could be a malfunction in the sophisticated medical machinery.

The effect of the Millennium Bug on poorer countries could be catastrophic.

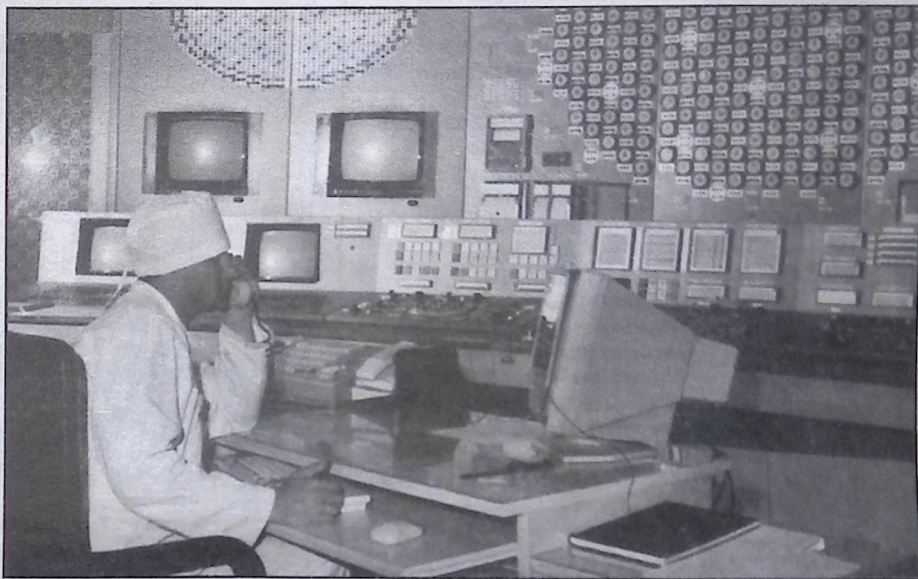
Several African and East European countries could be without a telephone system on 1 January 2000.

As late as October up to 40 percent of electricity supplies in south China were not compliant and half of Chinese state enterprises had software problems.

Deutsche Bank chief economist Ed Yardeni even said that the Millennium Bug meant there was "a 70 percent chance of a recession."

"The most likely of the five scenarios, in my opinion, is a downturn which should be quite severe during the first six months of 2000."

Greedy for profit led to the Y2K problem in the first place. Companies reduced their computing costs for



Is this Lithuanian Nuclear Power Plant Y2K compliant?

decades by storing the year as two digits instead of four.

Capitalism operates so blindly that no plans were made to deal with the problem until the millennium began to approach.

Now the cut throat competition between capitalists is adding to the danger.

Companies spend as little

as possible on fixing the problem. They will hide the results of their own tests from their competitors.

Pressure

An article in the January issue of *Computer Weekly* reported that workers were being put under pressure to

keep their mouths shut.

"Many companies fear the effect such information could have on their reputations and share prices."

Only a system based on greed and the anarchy of the market could push millions to the brink of disaster for the sake of two digits.

Dickens

Chronicles of injustice

The world he describes is the chaotic underbelly of urban life, at one of the high points of British capitalism.

CHRISTMAS IS COMING and television is falling into its usual predictable routine. In among movies where dogs solve crime, ads for ridiculously expensive toys and variety shows, will be an adaptation of one or more novels by Charles Dickens.

Dickens is a favourite at Christmas, as his stories, however bleak, usually end in a resolution, where bad-dies get sent to Newgate and good children find their kind uncle in the country.

Despite the fact that his books have been reduced to numerous cute cartoons, Dickens remains one of the great social writers of the

nineteenth century.

He highlights the lot of the poor in London or provincial towns, something which many other writers at the time shied away from.

The world he describes is the chaotic underbelly of urban life, at one of the high points of British capitalism.

Sympathy

There is a genuine sympathy with the plight of his downtrodden characters.

The question of why millions of people live like this is constantly raised. At times there are even moments where he almost answers these questions.

Usually, however, the ills of society are ascribed to the unchristian behaviour of the

rich or, worse, to the immorality and laziness of the poor themselves.

Dickens was caught between his real social conscience, and the conclusions of his religious morality.

This led him to oppose the liberation of slaves in America, and favour the execution of Chartist rioters in England.

This political background will be despised by socialists but does not detract from the fact that his descriptive novels remain one of the best records of the life of the victims of nineteenth century capitalism in London.

by PAUL McCARTHY



Workers create all the wealth in capitalist society. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM

The present system cannot be reformed out of existence. Parliament cannot be used to end the system.

The courts army and police are there to defend the interests of the capitalist class not to run society in a neutral fashion.

To destroy capitalism, workers need to smash the state and create a workers' state based on workers' councils.

FOR REAL SOCIALISM, EAST AND WEST:

The SWP welcomed the break-up of the USSR and the end of the East European dictatorships. These states were not socialist but were run by a state-capitalist class.

We are against the domination of the globe by imperialist powers and we oppose their wars. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We stand for: free contraception and free, legalised abortion and the right to divorce; the complete separation of church and state, an end to church control over schools and hospitals; an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians; an end to racism and anti-traveller bigotry.

We argue for working class unity in the fight against oppression.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH:

Northern Ireland is a sectarian state, propped up by the British Army. Catholic workers are systematically discriminated against by the state. The division between Catholic and Protestant workers weakens the whole working class.

Workers' unity can only be won and maintained in a fight to smash both the Northern and Southern states.

We stand for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Violence will only end when workers unite in the fight for a workers' republic.

FOR A FIGHTING TRADE UNION MOVEMENT:

Trade unions exist to defend workers' interests. But the union leaders' role is to negotiate with capitalism—not to end it.

We support the leaders when they fight but oppose them when they betray workers. We stand for independent rank and file action.

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.

The SWP aims to build such a party in Ireland.

SWP Branch meetings

ATHLONE:

Contact 01- 872 2682 for details

BRAY:

Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in the Mayfair Hotel

BELFAST CENTRAL:

Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in the Garrick Bar, Chichester St.

BELFAST SOUTH:

Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Queens Students Union

Dec. 15th: Is there an alternative to the Free Market?

CORK:

Meets every Wednesday at 7.00pm in The Hairy Lemon

Dec. 13th: Marxism and History

DERRY:

Meets every Thursday at 8.15pm in Badgers Bar upstairs, Orchard St.

DUNDALK:

Contact 01 - 872 2682 for details

DUN LAOGHAIRE:

Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in the Christian Institute

Dec 14th: Engels and the Origins of Women's Oppression

DUBLIN ARTANE / COOLOCK:

Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in Artane / Beaumont Recreational Centre opp. Artane Castle

DUBLIN NORTH CENTRAL:

Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Conways, Parnell St.

Dec 15th: Globalisation: Explaining the Crisis

DUBLIN NORTH WEST:

Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in the O'Mahony's Pub Phibsboro (near Crossguss Pub).

Dec 15th: Engels and the Origins of Women's Oppression

DUBLIN RATHMINES:

Meets every Wednesday at 8.00pm in O'Connell's Pub, Richmond St.

Dec. 15th: The Roots of Racism

DUBLIN RIALTO:

Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm St. Andrews Community Centre, SCR, Rialto.

Dec. 14th: The Marxist Theory of Economic Crisis

Dec. 21st: The Politics of Art

DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL: Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Trinity Inn, Pearse St.

DUBLIN TALLAGHT:

Meets every Monday at 8.30pm in Jobstown Community Centre

Dec. 14th The Lessons of Seattle

ENNISKILLEN:

Contact 01 - 872 2682 for details

GALWAY:

Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Currans Hotel, Eyre Square (beside Cuba)

Dec. 16th: Is there an alternative to the market?

LIMERICK:

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Dec 15th: The Role of a Revolutionary Paper

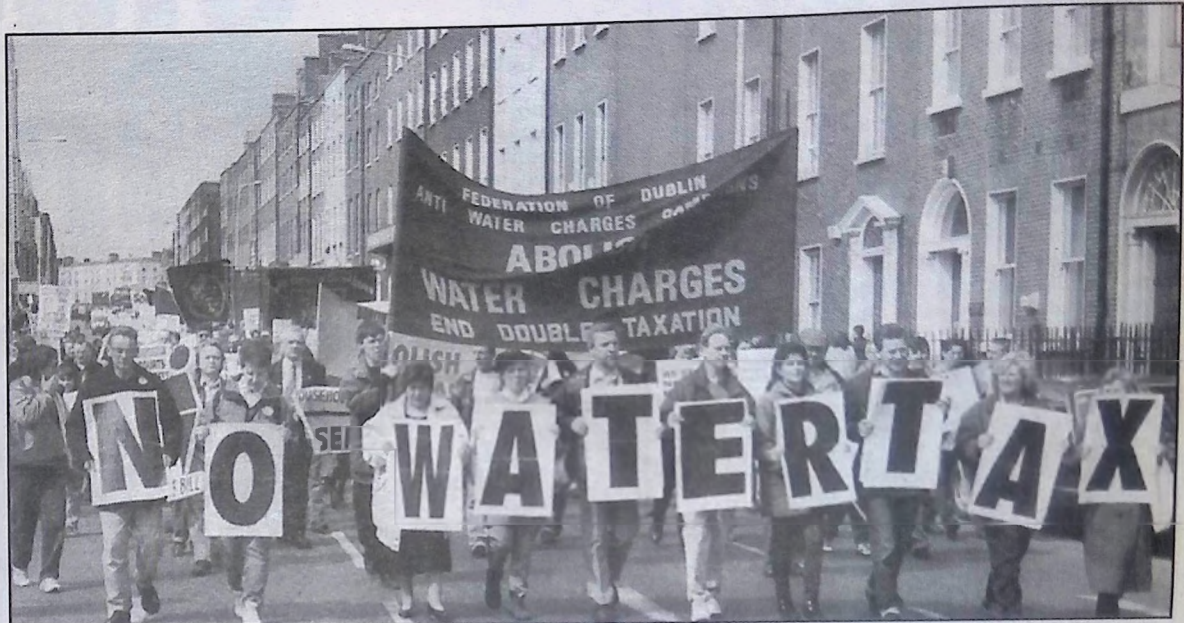
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news/reports/politics/industry/unions

National campaign against service charges

NO WAY - WE WON'T PAY



HOW THE water charges were defeated the last time

LOCAL AUTHORITIES around the country are increasing service charges dramatically in the run up to Christmas.

While the government gives small tax breaks in the budget, it is taking them back with increased service charges at local level.

In Cork, refuse charges are set to rise £90 to £140. A spokesperson for the Farranree Residents Association said, 'This is outrageous. Corporation rents have already been rising and now they want us to pay an extra £50 a year.'

Service

Dun Laoghaire and Rathdown Council are set to introduce a service charge of £150 for the first time.

There will be no full exemptions. Even pensioners and the unemployed will have to pay £75.

Donal McCary, secretary of the newly formed Campaign against Service Charges, said, 'This is a disgrace. Working people already pay the bulk of taxes in this country. Instead of charging us, they should be going after the Ansbacher account holders.'

HOW THE SERVICE CHARGES CAN BE BEATEN

The local authority had hoped to push through service charges near Christmas and get away with little opposition.

But already campaigning groups have sprung into existence pledged to resist them.

In Waterford, 40 people picketed the Corporation when they were voting on the charges. A

'There is more to these charges than meets the eye. I believe that they are the first step towards privatisation. The council want to hike up the charges so that there will profits ready for the fat cats who eventually try to take over refuse collection.'

'Dun Laoghaire have already brought in Anglian Water in for laying water pipes. This company has been roundly condemned in Britain for making a fortune out of supplying water.'

In Bray, Fianna Fail councillors have gone one step further.

They introduced a £150 refuse charge on top of the existing service charge of £85. The charge is supposed to pay for a newly pri-

vatized refuse service.

One local authority workers explained to *Socialist Worker*, 'Local papers reported that the councillors were strongly opposed to privatisation but when it came to the vote they came out in favour.'

Privatisation in this case means the creation of a monopoly as there is no other waste disposal operator in the Wicklow area.

They will start with a charge of £150 but like all monopolies, the charge will increase over the years. In Waterford, the corporation is bringing a wheellie bin system and they are going to charge £2 per lift.

The charges only went

through because two Labour party councillors, including the Mayor Pat Hayes and Seamus Ryan, voted for the charges.

They are involved in a pact with Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats and saw their alliance with these right wing parties as more important than the voters who put them into office.

But anger on the streets of Waterford is huge.

'We are not putting up with double taxation. When people like Dermot Desmond say that a £25,000 donation to Haughey is insignificant, it is clear they are taxing the wrong people' one campaigner said.

IT'S DOUBLE TAXATION ON WORKERS

The sudden push towards service charges has occurred because the FF/PD government is cutting back on funding local authorities.

The Celtic Tiger is run on a philosophy that the rich should hardly pay any tax. Profits are due to be taxed at a mere 12.5 percent in the next few years. The most recent budget has again slashed inheritance tax on the rich.

The result is that PAYE workers pick up most of the tax bill—and now they are being asked to pay for services that should already

have been paid for.

Sometimes the refuse charges are justified with a claim that it is part of the 'polluter must pay' principle. But the main polluters in our society are not working class people who put out refuse. They are the corporations and big farmers who put profit ahead of the environment.

Socialists are for a proper waste management plan. But the best way of doing that is to force the big companies to bear the cost of providing re-cycling facilities. Putting a double tax on PAYE workers will do little to cut back on pollution when nothing is done about corporate greed.

week later a meeting of the Combined Residents Association was called to establish a broad based campaign.

In Bray, a major public meeting of the group Bray Against Privatisation heard speakers from SWP, Labour and the Green Party denounce the charges.

Meetings have also been held in Rathallagh, Loughlinstown, Ballinteer and Dun Laoghaire in opposition to the charges.

Many of those involved had

fought against water charges and know that the charges can be beaten. The key is a mass non-payment campaign that is linked to the organised strength of workers.

Every one of the affected areas needs:

■ An organising campaign that goes door to door to sign up hundreds of people to a pledge to non-payment. People should be asked to pay a basic subscription to the campaign to cover legal,

and publicity expenses.

■ Local authority workers need to press the unions to resist these charges. The charges are the first step towards privatising services. Tragically, SIPTU has so far stood aside while the refuse service has been privatised in several counties. But opposition to this policy is now growing. The union should be told to stand up for their members and drop all the talk about being a partner of the bosses.

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University College Cork

SOCIALISTS DENIED FREE SPEECH IN UCC

EVERY LEFT wing society in UCC has been banned until 2002 by a small committee known as the Societies Guild.

Those banned include the Socialist Worker Students Society, the Socialist Party, Sinn Fein, and the Socialist Society.

They are not allowed to hold any meetings to express their views.

They are not even allowed to put up posters to protest against this ban.

One hundred students who, for example, joined the Socialist Worker Student Society are being denied their political rights.

The reason given for the ban is that these societies were involved in protesting against David Irving, a Nazi organiser who has attempted to establish a fascist party in Ireland.

Nonsense

But this is nonsense. Members of other societies such as Amnesty International, One World, the Celtic Society and the Hispanic Society were also at the protests but they were not banned.

Moreover the bans on the socialists began before the Irving protests.

The Socialist Worker Student Society was banned from holding a meeting the week before Irving arrived

because it had speakers from the Anti-Nazi League on its platform.

A left wing Kurdish student has also been prevented from setting up a Kurdish society by the same Societies Guild - long before Irving arrived.

The truth is that the Societies Guild has many members and supporters of right wing parties such as Fine Gael and they are trying to stop their political opponents organising in UCC.

Another reason being given for the ban is that socialists are violent.

The *College Examiner* claimed that 12 arrests were made at the Irving protest. In fact only one arrest was made, and that man, who is not from UCC, was released within a few hours.

The portrayal of socialists as violent is absurd. Socialists oppose the arms trade and have protested against many of the horrible wars that have occurred in recent years.

We are against joining the Partnership for Peace because it brings Ireland closer to NATO's war machine.

The whole incident shows up the hypocrisy of those who advocate free speech for Nazis.

While media commentators like Kevin Myers rushed to print to defend the right of a Nazi to insult the memory of the Holocaust, not a word has appeared in the mainstream press about the ban on free speech for socialists.

Socialists have always stood for the maximum amount of free speech. Often it as socialists who stood up against censorship

on abortion information. SWSS was banned in UCC for giving out this information in the past.

But we make an excep-

tion for Nazis for the simple reason that their whole activity is based on violence and intimidation of minorities.

■ Send messages of protest to the Societies Guild c/o Student Union, UCC, Cork.

Building workers



On December 2nd, hundreds of building workers stopped work and took part in a series of protests around Dublin. Protesting against the deaths and accidents on the sites the workers blocked O'Connell Bridge and the airport

McNamaras

PICKETS ARE still in place at McNamara's sites around Dublin. The three main sites which are affected are the Trinity College site, the National Gallery site, Dail Eireann extension.

The fight is part of the bricklayer's campaign for direct employment. McNamara insist on using a sub-contracting firm, Kilburn Developments rather than hiring direct labour.

Behind the strike lies a concerted attempt by key sections of the political

establishment to break the bricklayers union, BATU.

BATU has given a tremendous example to all building workers about standing up for their rights.

The owner of McNamara's is a close associate of Bertie Ahern. Many are now asking how this firm which developed very quickly has won so many contracts for state funded sites.

As well as the sites which are currently picketed, McNamara's also had the contract for building

an extension of Beaumont Hospital and also the Telecom site in City West.

When protesters surrounded Bertie Ahern in Trinity College recently, he even said, "Why are you lot after my friend McNamara".

Kilburn Developments have also taken BATU to the courts and are also trying to pursue named officers of the union.

On this Xmas, trade unionists everywhere should remember the fight being put up by the bricklayers.

Housing

No evictions at Christmas

"IT'S DEVASTATING. Our nerves are gone. To think that myself and my child might be out on the streets in the bitter cold at Christmas - while Quinn is sitting back in his comfortable home."

A young mother, together with her four year old daughter, has been threatened with eviction on December 13th by a millionaire property owner.

Tommy Quinn is the owner of Lansdowne Apartments, off the Drimnagh Road, and many other properties in Dublin. For months he has been running down the property and trying to get the existing tenants to leave - either to develop or sell off the property. Now, just two weeks before Christmas, he has moved to have the Sheriff throw people out of their homes.

The eviction notices have been served to two young

families and a woman living alone. All the other residents in the apartments have been given notice to quit.

But the thirteen residents remaining in the Apartments are determined to make a stand. They formed themselves into a branch of the Housing Action Campaign.

Resident and Secretary of the group Bernice Sweeney said: "I am absolutely disgusted that they can make people homeless just before Christmas. We've just had a budget that is supposed to have made us all better off. But ordinary people don't even have the right to a home."

"We are totally determined to resist these evictions. I am prepared to barricade myself in if necessary."

"How is it that landlords have the right to throw people onto the street? In the year 2000 landlords are still doing what they did in the time of the famine."

The Housing Action Campaign is calling for a big turn out on December 13th to start round the clock pickets.

Cork swimming pools

OVER TWO hundred people gathered outside City Hall in Cork city recently to protest at the threatened closure of two swimming pools in Douglas and Churchfield.

Cork Corporation have once again shown where their priorities lie in relation to Community Services.

They plan to close the two pools despite the fact that they had both been designated for upgrading under a recently announced £45 million redevelopment plan for the city's swimming pools over the next three

years.

They protestors succeeded in forcing the council to back down for the time being.

Workers at the Churchfield pool have said they will go on strike if the Council try to close the pool.

Devastated

One worker told *Socialist Worker*, "This area of Churchfield has been devastated by unemployment and poverty. The swimming pool is all they have."

"There is supposed to be partnership between us and management but we have never been asked for our ideas about making the pool more attractive."

ISSUES FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Performance related pay — no way

THE GOVERNMENT and the employers organisation IBEC want to end the system of relativity payments in the public sector and introduce Performance Related Pay (PRP).

Here EDDIE CONLON, an executive member of the Teachers Union of Ireland explains why trade unionists should oppose this.

There are two major problems with PRP.

Firstly it undermines the ability of unions to negotiate a rate for the job.

A situation can arise where the same individuals doing the same job get different pay. In the Department of Health in Britain it is possible for senior civil servants to earn any one of 22 dif-

ferent amounts depending on which part of the department they work in.

PRP also encourages competition between individuals and/or groups of workers.

It undermines the solidarity which makes unions effective.

The other major problem is how to measure performance. This is a particular difficulty in the public services where even the Fitzpatrick Report, which advocated PRP admitted there is an "absence of adequate measures of output and productivity". So how would you measure the output of teachers or nurses?

A major study commissioned by two British teacher unions and published in 1992 found that:

★ that there was no agreed indicator which represented a realistic measure of school performance.

★ a narrow range of indicators runs the risk of obscuring more than they reveal. Above average scores could hide the fact that some students were

under-achieving

★ school outcomes are not just the result of teacher performance but depend on factors such as pupils, parents and catchment areas which are outside the control of teachers

★ individual PRP would force teachers to focus on what is counted rather than what counts - leading to the neglect of the needs of particular children

The report concluded that PRP would not improve the quality of education. It would divide a profession that is built on co-operative teamwork and collaboration. The way to improve education is to increase resources and give proper pay to teachers.

Another study by the Labour Research Department also found much evidence of its negative effects in Britain. These include:

■ Discrimination in PRP awards against women and racial minorities.

Management bias in assessing women translates into less pay.

■ Age discrimination.

In one company, General Accident, those between 21 and 25 received higher increases. After this increases fell sharply with age.

■ Demotivation of staff.

Many surveys have shown that workers do not think PRP is fair. The expectations raised by positive performance review is not always translated into a significant pay increase.

In some organisations quotas

are operated so that the numbers eligible for higher pay awards are limited. In others a limit is put on the money available for PRP.

■ Increased stress.

A study of PRP by the British Institute of Personal Management claims that "the hidden emphasis in some organisations on weeding out poor performers may lead to the creation of a more stressful and competitive work environment".

Surveys of BT staff show that

higher PRP ratings were awarded for long hours which in turn led to higher levels of stress.

■ Pensions do not keep pace with pay.

Up to now public service pensioners have benefited from annual pay increases. Because PRP payments are linked to group or individual performance increases are not passed on to pensioners.

Far from arguing, as the nurses did, that better services come from paying people properly and ploughing more resources into meeting people's needs, many union leaders have bought into the argument that market criteria must be imported into the public services to make them operate more efficiently.

Workers should reject this as it will lead to worse public services, more work and an undermining of unions.

Workers should insist that relativities are protected and the right of unions to negotiate a rate for the job is defended.

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Socialist Worker

inside



THE BATTLE IN SEATTLE page 6-7

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Northern Ireland's new Executive

IT IS TIME FOR CLASS POLITICS

THE NEW Stormont Assembly is finally up and running. The smiles around the cabinet table at its first meeting raised hopes that a new era of politics had begun.

The no-men of Unionism around Ian Paisley were revealed for the mean-spirited dinosaurs that they are. Refusing even to sit with Sinn Fein in the new executive.

The new cabinet carries enormous hopes that this is the beginning of the end of sectarian politics and that 'real' politics will come to the fore.



Firefighters marching against poverty in Belfast

Will Executive deliver?

UNFORTUNATELY, the new executive is unlikely to do any of these things.

Even before the new executive had held its first meeting, the Further and Higher Education Minister, the SDLP's Sean Farren, announced that "student fees are unlikely to be scrapped". This is despite the SDLP having a policy of free education.

Both Martin McGuinness and Bairbre de Brun have said they will not make any 'knee-jerk' decisions on the pressing issues of the 11 plus and hospital closures, but instead will wait for reports. There will be powerful forces, not least the Catholic hierarchy who will want to keep the 11 plus and grammar schools.

More ominously, the economic policies of the major parties are almost entirely geared to attracting private inward investment. The new Economy Minister, Reg Empey says he wants "an enterprise culture."

The new Executive should immediately:

SCRAP THE 11 PLUS

THIS YEAR 108,000 children in Northern Ireland sat the 11 plus. 75 per cent, of them will be told next year that they have failed.

Martin McGuinness, the new education minister, failed the 11 plus himself and says that he is opposed to it. It would cost nothing to scrap it now.

STOP HOSPITAL CLOSURES

THE THREAT of closure has been hanging over rural hospitals for the last 2 years.

There are plans to amalgamate staff and most services into the big 6 in the major centres. The new health minister, Sinn Fein's Bairbre De Brun, should immediately announce that no local hospitals would be closed.

INCREASE PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

PENSIONERS are due to receive a miserly 75p increase this year.

The level of benefits is the main reason why a third of families in the North live on less than £150 a week.

ABOLISH FEES RESTORE THE GRANT

STUDENT fees now affect a full 50 per cent of students from Northern Ireland. A new report shows that the University of Ulster has one of the highest intakes of working class students and also one of the highest drop-out rates at 17 per cent. One of the main causes is financial hardship.

Argues

A report from the SDLP on Implementing the Good Friday Agreement argues that "There is a need for economic restructuring, involving expansion of the private sector and shrinking the public sector."

The report even admits that these policies are likely to be unpopular, referring to the "possibility of political and economic disruption during the process of public-to-private restructuring."

The real problem is that all the parties want to lower taxes on big business so that they can compete with the 12.5 percent tax rate in the Celtic Tiger.

But you cannot cut the tax on big business and keep hospitals open. You must do one or the other.

The politicians in Stormont should be told that we don't want any excuses. They should stand up to big business and deliver on the reforms that working class people need.

NO EXCUSES: STAND UP TO BIG BUSINESS