

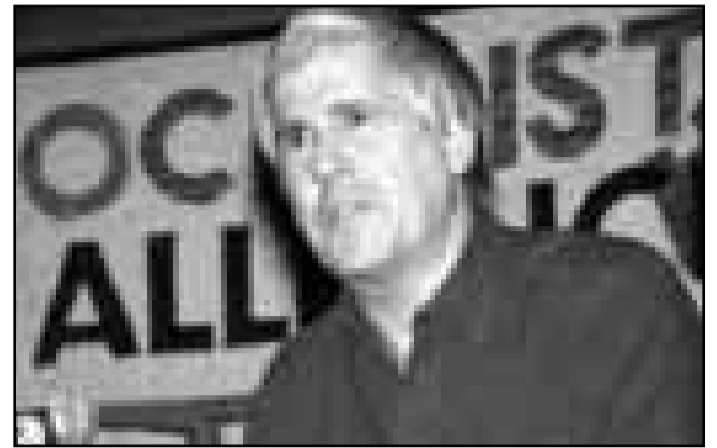
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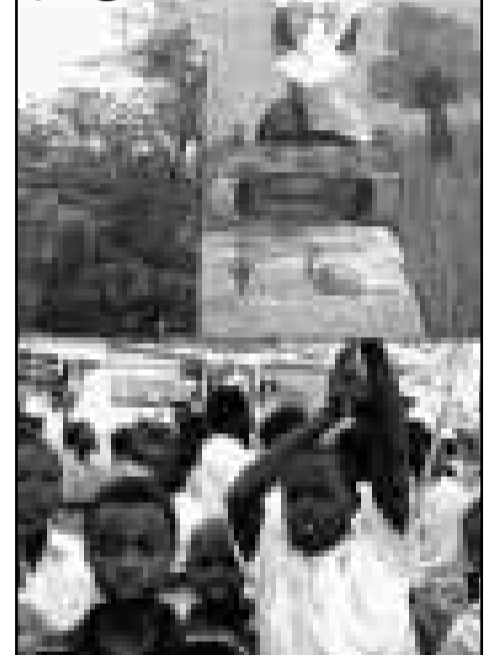
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NO EXCUSES Jail the NIB crooks!

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■ *Jim Lacey, Nigel D'Arcy and Barry Seymour doing the job from the inside*

THE High Court Inspectors Report into National Irish Bank (NIB) proves that the banking industry in Ireland was run by tax cheats.

Not only was NIB stealing from its own customers by robbing their accounts through the improper hiking up of fees and interest charges, but it was also robbing PAYE workers by the widespread use of bogus offshore accounts.

While the Chief Executive of the bank made hundreds of thousands including over £700,000 in a pay-off when he left the company in '91, he was fully aware that the bank was creating bogus accounts.

The competition among bankers for "hot" money was apparently cut-throat.

"In the culture of the time," the High Court inspectors said, "closing an account because it was bogus would not have been accepted as a good reason for losing the deposit." But the Irish Ruling class and Fianna Fail wanted to keep this all under wraps.

Former Minister for Finance, Charlie McCreevy, told RTE in an interview in January 1998 that 'the sum uncovered are very small in the context of the level of tax paid each year' and that 'it is an insult to the vast majority of taxpayers to say that tax evasion is widespread'.

He went on to say that people were 'going off half-cocked and making ridiculous and outlandish allegations both against the Revenue Commissioners and against others'.

The report shows how the Irish rich were able to stash millions away from the eyes of the Revenue Commissioners by using the NIB bogus accounts.

The report made negative comments against 19 individuals, including two former chief executives, Mr Jim Lacey who was a big FF supporter as well as Fianna Fail's Ms Beverley Flynn TD.

■ **Turn to page two for full report**

The NIB scandal exposes... How the banks rip us off

By **DAVID LYNCH**

THE National Irish Bank (NIB) report has outlined how the institution illegally overcharged customers while at the same time promoting and facilitating tax evasion during the 80s and 90s.

The report made negative comments against 19 individuals, including two former chief executives, Mr Jim Lacey and Mr Barry Seymour, as well as Fianna Fail's Ms Beverley Flynn TD.

Lacey was also a big Fianna Fail supporter and his connections with FF helped him get the prestigious directorship of the Irish Aviation Authority after he left NIB in the early 90s.

The report clearly shows that bogus non-resident accounts were in widespread use and improper interest and fees were charged on many accounts.

NIB robbed money from some of their smaller account holders by illegally overcharging them, while facilitating some of their larger account holders to avoid paying tax.

Money not disclosed to Revenue was targeted for CMI



■ **NIB: illegally overcharged customers, promoted tax evasion during the 80s and 90s.**

offshore investments, earning substantial fees for the bank.

While the PAYE workers across the country were carrying the tax bill NIB was facilitating the rich by providing them with bogus off-shore accounts that

would see them avoid DIRT tax and capital gains tax.

Over half the accounts held in the NIB branch in Castlebar (Flynn country) were bogus non-residential ones. This was a pattern reflected across the country

as the bank openly looked for 'hot' money business.

As one journalist has written "The Gordon Gekko-style culture at the bank seeps out of an internal audit report produced by National Irish Bank staff shortly

before Christmas, 1994."

The bank was worried at the time about the shoddy way it was operating its now notorious non-resident account schemes.

In a cynical assessment of NIB's exposure, the auditor said: "The level of non-compliance is too high. This is a risk area and the penalty for non-compliance at the level shown in this report would be very significant."

For them, the chief concern about the bank's sharp practices in the early 1990s was the risk of getting caught.

These revelations come on the back end of numerous revelations of tax impropriety within AIB and just weeks after AIB admitted that they had been systematically overcharging customers for foreign exchange.

The report also implicates KPMG, one of the states largest accountancy firms, who worked as the auditors within NIB in the 80s and 90s.

KPMG turned a blind eye to the bogus accounts and in fact advised the bank on how best to deal with them. The scandal went to the very top of the bank with the Chief Executive Jim Lacey fully aware of the scheme.

Kevin Curran

Mr Kevin Curran, one of three former regional managers whom the inspectors found had failed to discharge their responsibilities in terms of ensuring the bank was DIRT compliant, is currently working on a contract basis in the internal audit area, of Permanent TSB Bank!



Jim Lacey

THE former Chief Executive of NIB is a big supporter of Fianna Fail and is well connected within the party. He currently has many lucrative directorships, including Citco Fund Services. He was the very public face of NIB in the early years of the bank, almost a Michael O'Leary-type figure, brash and confrontational. He made hundreds of thousands while working in NIB and was awarded major bonuses as well.

In 1991 when he left the bank he was paid £750,000 in a pay-off deal. Something that would be worth almost €2 million today.



Bertie Ahern

Ahern was the Minister for Finance when much of the things contained in the NIB report took place.

According to last week's *Sunday Independent* Ahern's staff knew about the scandal 11 years ago! Civil servants working for Ahern knew that millions of pounds in 'hot' money was being diverted by NIB into non-residential accounts, but Ahern's staff did nothing to stop it.

Beverley Cooper Flynn

THE former FF TD, who Ahern campaigned for on the streets of Castlebar before the last election, was up to her neck in the NIB scandal.

According to the report while working for NIB in Mayo, Flynn promoted the banks bogus accounts "as a secure investment for funds which had not been declared to the Revenue Commissioners."

In effect Flynn, a member of one of Fianna Fail's most famous family dynasties, walked the highways and byways of Mayo touting bogus accounts as a way of avoiding tax.

Paul Foot: 1937-2004

By **PAUL O'BRIEN**

PAUL FOOT, who died last month, was a tireless campaigner against injustice and a writer and speaker of extraordinary ability.

He came from a privileged background; his father was in turn, governor of Palestine, Cyprus and Jamaica. Foot's experience of life in the colonies left him with a hatred of imperialism, but it was his contact with the realities of working class life in Glasgow in the early 1960s that transformed his life.

He joined the International Socialists (the forerunner of the SWP) in 1962 and during the next forty years "changed neither his hairstyle nor his politics".

His commitment to revolutionary socialism informed and shaped almost every aspect of his life.

The many awards he received honoured his ability as a journalist and his column in the *Daily Mirror* was a beacon of resistance during the difficult years of the Thatcher government.

Paul Foot was a friend and supporter of Irish socialists and republicans. He was a frequent visitor to Ireland from the time of the civil rights movement in the sixties up to the present day.

We sometimes forget the hysteria generated by the British press against the Irish community in Britain in the 1970s and the miscarriages of justice suffered by the Birmingham Six, the Guilford Four, Annie Maguire and many others.

Paul Foot, almost alone, campaigned in the *Daily Mirror*, *Socialist Worker* and *Private Eye* for their release. He spoke on their behalf with an eloquence and conviction that will never be forgotten by those who heard him.

He brought to light the amazing story of how Colin Wallace was used by British Intelligence in Northern Ireland in 1974 to smear the Labour government. Wallace knew the truth about British Intelligence and their involvement in the Dublin/Monaghan bombings.

Earlier this year in *The Guardian*, Foot insisted that the British government hand

over all relevant papers to the Irish government inquiry into the bombings.

He wrote beautifully, using his skill to convey socialist ideas in a language that was both simple and poetic.

Like all great writers he steeped himself in the history and literature of the past - Shakespeare, Byron, Orwell and in particular, Shelley.

He hated the way academics separated poetry from politics.

He always believed that poetry could inspire people.

His book, *Red Shelley*, is a powerful polemic determined to "free Shelley from the academic prison in which he has been trapped for over half a century".

For many of us, Foot opened our eyes to Shelley - the revolutionary, republican, and feminist.

He restored to Shelley the ideas without which his poetry loses its magic, music and its meaning.

His book on the fight for democracy is due out shortly, and will show that Paul Foot was as determined to turn the world upside down in his last years as he was in his youth.

Working people in Ireland and Britain have lost a friend and a comrade and one of the great advocates for socialism in the modern era.

It was a privilege to have known him.



Reports

Lacey received internal audit reports and accordingly had notice of the deficiencies or "irregularities", which existed in the operation of DIRT-exempt non-resident accounts at branches.

But this was not just confined to NIB. The DIRT tax evasion schemes were operated across the banking industry, as highlighted by the famous Public Accounts Committee probe into the scandal in 1999. The competition among bankers for "hot" money was apparently cut-throat. "In the culture of the time," the inspectors said, "closing an account because it was bogus would not have been accepted as a good reason for losing the deposit."

All these scandals prove that over the past two decades the Irish rich have been engaged in a covert and conscious attempt to avoid paying tax in Ireland.

This while at the same time politicians like Charlie Haughey and Bertie Ahern called on ordinary workers to carry the can and provide the money to fund our health service, schools and welfare system.

Marxist Ideas Workshop Central Dublin

(Venue to be announced) 21st August 2004
For more details ring (01) 8722682 or email info@swp.ie

Session 1: Lula and Pat Rabbitte Can we Reform the System?

Lula is the President of Brazil. When he came to power millions hoped he would end poverty and re-distribute the wealth. Bush's supporters denounced him as part of the Latin American 'Axis of Evil' - Lula, Chavez and Castro were going to destroy the American way! Yet today Lula is being hailed as a 'success story' by the financial press and many of his supporters are disillusioned. So can we really reform the system? Do we need a revolution to bring change? And would it all bring a better world? Big questions that have always been asked by activists. This is your chance to join the debate.

Session 2: Anarchy, Autonomy and Marxism

Black Block, alternative spaces, Zapatistas - is this the new face of revolution. A book by Hardt and Negri argues that workers can no longer be a force for change - we have to look to autonomous movements. But will the revolution really be made on the internet? And who produces the computers anyway? This session looks at the big debates in the anti-capitalist movement between Marxists and autonomists.

editorial

AHERN SACKS McCREEVY AS ...

Fianna Fail lies exposed

FIANNA FAIL have begun fighting amongst themselves after their disastrous showing in the June local elections, losing over 100 seats.

More and more people have seen through the lies.

In the run-up to the 2002 General Election, Bertie Ahern said on national television that Health would be his 'number one priority' if he were voted back into Government.

But the health crisis is now worse than ever.

And Charlie McCreevy assured voters in 2002 that 'no cuts whatsoever are being planned, secretly or otherwise'.

Immediately after that election it became clear that Charlie McCreevy and Co had indeed well prepared plans for cuts.

When challenged, McCreevy arrogantly brushed aside criticism of what he said were simply 'adjustments'. But the stealth taxes and cutbacks were very real and could not be disguised. On June 11 this year, the electorate passed judgement on his attitude.

Former transport minister Mary O'Rourke criticised the privatisation plans of current minister Seamus Brennan, without even a blush, despite the fact that her policies pointed in exactly the same direction.

In panic, some Fianna Fáil backbenchers attempted to blame the PDs for their electoral misfortune.

The PD tail was wagging the Fianna Fáil dog. The right-wing policies of the PDs were dictating Government policy. Dermot Ahern became the first Government Minister to use the word 'neoliberalism', claiming that 'Fianna Fáil rejects the notion that the State should take a back seat and allow unbridled market forces shape our country'.

But as Fintan O'Toole pointed out on Questions and Answers in June:

'You do wonder where people like Dermot Ahern have been for the last seven years... that they're suddenly waking up and discovering to their great horror that they're part of a right-wing government...'

There are few, if any, serious ideological differences between Fianna Fáil and the PDs.

Policies

Both believe in neoliberalism, both have implemented neoliberal policies, and both will continue to do so for so long as they can get away with it.

But after their massive defeat in the Local Elections, Fianna Fáil realise that if they are to have any chance of being re-elected at the next General Election, they must be seen to be a kinder, gentler, more 'caring' party, a party that listens to the people.

So they have decided to make some cosmetic changes. In the cabinet reshuffle in the autumn, Charlie McCreevy is sacked as Finance Minister and kicked off to Europe.

It has been suggested in the media that we may see the Government tackling some of the problems in high-profile areas of the health service, such as Accident & Emergency.

Any improvements in the health service would, of course, be welcome. But for Fianna Fáil such improvements would represent nothing more than a cynical attempt to win back the support of working people.

The Labour Party, meanwhile, has taken advantage of the current debate to launch a pamphlet on economic policy. Titled 'The Fair Economy', it claims

'Another World is Possible'
European Social Forum 2004
www.fse-esf.org

Get to ESF in London 14th-17th October

The third European Social Forum (ESF) will take place from 14-17 October in London. It will be a gathering for everyone opposed to war, racism and corporate power, for all who want global justice and equality, workers' rights and a sustainable society.

ESF 2004 is part of a worldwide movement of social forums. The first two ESFs in Italy and France attracted tens of thousands of participants from across Europe and beyond.

Timetable for ESF 2004

ESF 2004 will open with a large event on Thursday 14 October followed by three days of discussion and debate involving leading activists from around the world, as well as music, drama, film, and exhibitions celebrating the global movement. The ESF will close on Sunday afternoon with an international demonstration through central London.

ESF 2004 will take place under the main theme of "Another Europe in Another World" with the programme of discussions, debates and cultural activities focusing on six key themes:

- War and peace
- Democracy and fundamental rights
- Social justice and solidarity: against privatisation (deregulation), for workers, social and women's rights

- Corporate globalisation and global justice
 - Against racism, discrimination and the far right: for equality and diversity
 - Environmental crisis and sustainable society
- Contact 086 1523542

to set out an alternative vision of society 'in contrast to the existing Government's neoliberalism'.

But too many people remember how Labour used the votes people had given it to throw a lifeline to the right wing government of Albert Reynolds. Or how the Rainbow Coalition of which it was part put VAT on children's clothes.

On a number of City Councils, the Labour Party hold a majority of seats with Sinn Fein.

Both parties went to the voters standing against the policies of Fianna Fail on issues like opposing service charges and advocating action on the housing crisis.

If their words were seriously meant Labour would be taking control of the councils together with SF to implement these policies, instead of doing deals with Fianna Fail and Fine Gael.



Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy. To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

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

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

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government. Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction' We want to see an Irish workers republic where all workers gain. Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party. This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc. We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

Join the Socialists!

To join the Socialist Workers Party or for more information: Fill in the form and **Send to:**

ROI: SWP PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, Phone (01) 872 2682

NI: SWP PO Box 143, Mallusk Road, Mallusk, Phone 0774 2531617

Email membership@swp.ie **Web:** www.swp.ie

Name.....

Address.....

Phone.....

Email.....

Eamonn McCann

A FRENCH HOAX AND A PLANE LANDING IN TEL AVIV

LAST MONTH, a 'plane from Paris chartered by the Israeli government landed at Tel Aviv airport carrying 200 Jewish immigrants. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was on hand to greet the new citizens.

Full citizenship is automatically available to all Jewish immigrants to Israel, irrespective of where they've come from or whether they have had any prior association with the country.

On the same day, back in Paris, a woman called Marie Leonie admitted that she'd made up a sensational story which had been dominating French news outlets.

She'd claimed that six "North African looking" men had attacked her in a train at a station in a Paris suburb, overturned her baby carriage, ripped clothes from her body and painted swastikas on her belly.

All the time, she'd said, the men had mouthed vicious, anti-Jewish insults.

The most appalling aspect of the story was that, according to Ms. Leonie, around 20 other passengers in the carriage had stood idly by during the assault.

Anger and guilt spread across France. President Chirac publicly apologised to Ms. Leonie.

Then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon intervened, suggesting that Jews would always be at risk in France and urging every Jewish person in the country to emigrate "without delay" to Israel.

Wisdom

The scenes at Tel Aviv airport seemed to confirm the wisdom of his advice.

Back in Paris, however, Ms. Leonie, a Catholic, was confessing that her story had been totally untrue. Distressed at events in her personal life, she had, for reasons she didn't herself fully understand, made the entire thing up.

The episode could be written off as an embarrassing and ultimately irrelevant black farce. But it illuminated a couple of important political truths which tend usually to remain hidden.

The first is that in France, as in Ireland, anti-semitism, if not rife, is at least a common phenomenon. Were it not, Ms. Leonie's story wouldn't initially have seemed credible to so many.

The second is that in France, as everywhere, Zionism and anti-semitism are not opposing but complementary ideologies.

In proposing that Jews should get out of France fast, Sharon was recommending precisely the course of action favoured by the sort of low-lives who daub swastikas on synagogues.

Zionism and anti-semitism share one key idea—that it's futile for Jews to try to integrate with, or even to live congenially alongside, other peoples; that Jews, to survive, have to build a Jewish State for Jewish people where only Jews count.

The people who pay the price are those upon whose land the Jewish State is being constructed.

One of the 'plane-load of arrivals at Tel Aviv kissed the ground upon which he had never previously set foot, then told CNN that he "loved" Israel, and that he intended now to settle in "Judea".

That is to say on the West Bank, in one of the illegal settlements from which armed Zionists lord it over the people whose land they have stolen and who, under Israeli law, can never aspire to citizenship in the country of their birth.

I wouldn't doubt that suicide bombers were busy being born as the joyous pictures from Tel Aviv were beamed into the teeming camps where Palestinians are corralled.

New health cuts will hit poorest families

THE LATEST rationalisation of health services in the North must be stopped.

If allowed to go through, it will impact severely on the poorest sections of the population.

Using new GP contracts as an excuse, Health and Social Services Boards (H&SSBs) are cutting the number of out-of-hours GP centres. As a result, anyone without a car or the price of a taxi will not be able to access a doctor outside of normal surgery hours.

For example, in the Eastern H&SSB, anyone needing a doctor has a range of options.

There are out-of-hour centres near the Mater on the Crumlin Road; in the grounds of Foster Green hospital on the Saintfield Road; in Wellington Park; at the Lagan Valley hospital; at Downpatrick Health Centre; at

the Newtownards Road in Bangor. In addition, there are a number of individual GP surgeries that provide out-of-hours services.

Closed

The proposed changes will see all the individual GP surgeries out-of-hours services, as well as the Wellington Park and Bangor centres closed.

People in Belfast who now live near a out-of-hours centre will have to travel either to the Crumlin Road or the Saintfield Road. People from Bangor are expected to travel to a new centre at the Ards Community hospital in Newtownards.

There are real question marks about two out-of-hours centres being able to handle all those needing non-acute (non-hospital) medical attention in a city the size of Belfast.

Even if the centres are given enough staff and resources to meet the needs of such a large

population, how are people living on low incomes supposed to get to one of these two centres?

The EHSSB consultation document says that the location of these centres "would enable 95 percent of patients to have access by car to an out-of-hours Centre in less than 15 minutes and 99% in less than thirty minutes."

But research into inequalities in health in Northern Ireland shows that families living in deprived areas suffer already because they are more likely to live further away from their GP's surgery and less likely to have a car to get there.

Similarly, the Western H&SSB proposes to cut its provision in Derry city. At present, there are two out-of-hours GP services, one in Great James St Health Centre, the other in the Waterside Health Centre.

The Board proposes to leave the Cityside without any out-of-hours service at all and locate a single service for the entire city in

the grounds of Altnagelvin Hospital.

For the many people who live in places like Shantallow, which has the highest levels of child poverty in these islands, getting to Altnagelvin is a nightmare without a car. It means at least two bus journeys or a taxi journey which can cost up to £10 for a round trip.

Maths

Wherever you live, do the maths yourself at what the proposed changes would mean.

If you live in, say, Sandy Row or Donegall Pass you can put a sick child in a buggy and walk them to Wellington Park.

But how much would a taxi cost to bring a sick child to the Saintfield Road or Crumlin Road? If you live in Bangor, how much would a taxi cost from Bangor to Newtownards – assuming you could get one?

There is a chance that by the time people across the North find out about these proposed changes, they will already have gone through.

Socialists will be getting on the streets in the coming weeks to raise awareness – and anger – at these proposed cuts.



Hospitals deny emergency contraception

THIRTEEN of the North's 15 Accident and Emergency departments will not prescribe the morning-after pill to all who request it.

A BBC investigation in July found only two hospitals, Antrim and Craigavon, prescribe emergency contraception on request. Downpatrick said they would only prescribe it to under-18s. The Mid-Ulster said some of its doctors would prescribe it but others objected on ethical grounds. All of the other hospitals refused.

The Mater in Belfast is the only hospital exempt under its charter from supplying emergency contraception.

The Department of Health's own recommendations say emergency contraception should be "easily available" and "obtainable when an indi-

vidual requires it".

The morning-after pill can be bought over-the-counter at pharmacies, but it costs £24 – which is more than half the dose a single person gets per week.

Condition

Family planning specialist Dr Olga Elder told the BBC that she could not think of another condition where casualty departments refused treatment.

"Logically, since all the patients who want to use this treatment are women, you have to wonder if this is an infringement of their human rights," she added.

The Dept. of Health says that emergency contraception can be accessed through family planning clinics, young people's

sexual health clinics and GP surgeries.

The reality is that cuts mean there can be waiting lists of up to three months for an appointment at a family planning clinic. There are few sexual health clinics outside of Belfast and not all GPs are willing to prescribe it because of their personal beliefs.

A University of Ulster report revealed that two thirds of GPs in the Western Board area will not provide the morning after pill on 'moral' grounds.

It is ridiculous that the health of women should be at the mercy of fundamentalists in this way. People in the North pay the same taxes as people in Britain. We should have the same access to health care on the NHS.

FRAME UP

THE FAMILY and legal team of Derry man Seamus Doherty, who is on remand in Maghaberry Prison on explosives charges, has called for a public inquiry into the workings of the Forensic Science laboratory.

Doherty is being held on the basis of DNA evidence which the prosecution allege links him to a bomb found on the Omear Road outside Newry.

However, two other men charged with the same offence were later released when it emerged that British soldiers interfered with forensic evidence and that the PSNI had asked forensic scientists to change their statements to protect an informant.

Campaigners for Mr. Doherty have claimed that the evidence against the Derry man was planted and demanded his immediate release.

Seamus Doherty's family also revealed that, in an apparent new turn of events, the PSNI now admit visiting the Brandywell man's flat – something they previously denied.

The family allege that this visit was used by the police to collect a DNA sample that could be used to "frame" Mr. Doherty.

Venezuela Recall Referendum:



Can Chávez survive?

By RORY HEARNE

SINCE Hugo Chávez was with elected in 1998 as President of Venezuela he has faced a series of attempts by the right-wing opposition to remove him from power.

Chávez was a former lieutenant-colonel and leader of a failed coup in February 1992.

He was elected with a mandate for radical political reform and in 1999 his government replaced the 1961 constitution with a left-leaning state-centred charter.

He has embarked on a series of poverty and education programmes for the poor while at the same time implementing neo-liberal reforms and committing to debt re-payments to keep the international markets content.

His bolivarian revolution is too left-leaning and popular amongst the poor and illiterate (who make up the vast majority of the Venezuela's population) for the right-wing opposition and their supporters in the Bush regime.

Since his election the Venezuelan opposition (upper and middle classes, private media channels, oil barons etc) embarked on a destabilisation campaign against the Chávez government.

This has involved the attempted coup in April 2002, the 'National Strike' later that year and into 2003 and now the recall referendum that will be held on August 15th. Both the coup and the strike (which was effectively a bosses' lock-out) were defeated by the workers and the poor rallying to the defence of Chávez and the Bolivarian 'revolution'.

Chávez also faced intervention in recent years from the United States and its puppet government in Colombia. In March 2003 Colombia's army raided across the Venezuelan border. In May of this year, another plot involving Colombian paramilitaries was discovered by Venezuela.

Colombia has just purchased 46 tanks from Spain and these will be deployed as part of a new Brigade, especially created to 'patrol the border' with Venezuela. The US actively supported the coup against Chávez in 2002 and



recent evidence points to US government financing of Venezuelan opposition groups through the National Endowment for Democracy.

Bush also demanded that for the recall referendum the government must "welcome observers, they must encourage observers, and they must not interfere with the process, so that the people of Venezuela have a chance to express their opinion without fear of reprisal". We assume Bush made this statement about ensuring the legitimacy of elections with tongue-in-cheek.

Trigger

The recall referendum where Venezuelans will vote on whether or not to recall President Hugo Chávez, will take place on August 15.

In order to trigger a fresh presidential election (what the right hope to achieve), the referendum will have to produce more votes against Mr Chávez than he obtained in the 2000 presidential election (3.8m).

Surveys indicate that 50% would vote against recalling President Chávez,

34% would vote for the President's recall, while 21% remain undecided.

A victory for Chávez is no way guaranteed. The polls are often manipulated and concerns have been expressed about the lack of campaigning against the referendum on the ground by the Chávez government.

The referendum is the latest struggle in the on-going battle between the Venezuelan government's reform process and the right-wing opposition groups. History demonstrates that a half-made revolution will see those who were making the revolution defeated in often barbarous ways by the forces of reaction. The overthrow of Chile's popular president Salvador Allende was the clearest example of this.

Such forces are also gathering in and outside Venezuela. Venezuelan opposition leader, and two time president Carlos Andres Perez (CAP), made a series of statements calling for violence and hinting at an eventual dictatorial period that the Venezuelan opposition must implement if current President Hugo Chávez is to be removed from office.

"I am working to remove Chávez [from power]. Violence will allow us to remove him. That's the only way we have," said CAP. Should Chávez win there are clear intentions of another military coup.

Venezuela is an example which the Americans wish to wipe out. Bush fears that if people in Brazil, in Argentina, in Ecuador, in Chile, in Bolivia see Venezuela developing according to a different model they will say 'if Venezuelans can do it, we can do it.'

In order to survive the bolivarian revolution must deepen and put the workers and poor at the centre of the revolution.

Chávez must mobilise that base to win the referendum and they should be encouraged to take over the power centres (media of communication, factories, oil refineries, institutions) from the control of the right wing opposition and run them in a democratic manner in the interests of the workers and the poor.

This, however, still leaves the problem of foreign intervention and this is where the role of internationalism plays a fundamental part.

The Venezuelan example will not survive in isolation. It needs to spread the resistance across Latin America and call on governments to refuse to pay the foreign debt and on ordinary people to begin their bolivarian revolution from below.

Interview with Luciana Genro

LUCIANA GENRO is a Brazilian socialist MP who was expelled by Lula from the Workers Party. Along with other socialist PT (Workers Party) members, she has played a key role in building a socialist alternative party P-SOL (Partido Socialismo e Liberdade). She spoke to BRID SMITH.

SW: After three successful World Social Forums in Porto Alegre and an election victory with 52 million votes, why do you think Lula proceeded with the same right wing policies as Cardoso?

Genro: Lula's victory was due to a big wave of change across Latin America.

In other countries the desire for change was expressed in the level of struggle.

In Brazil it was through the electoral process and this was thanks to Lula and the PT who gave great hope to the workers and the poor in Brazil.

But since an election defeat in 1989 Lula was trying to soften the programme of the PT and build broader alliances with the business class.

He worked to gain the trust of sections of the bourgeoisie.

He did not present a liberal programme but what he called a National Development Programme. When he saw victory coming, he issued a letter to the people of Brazil which was really a manifesto to the banks and which indicated he would accept IMF policies.

Many of us in the PT denounced this. The original programme of the PT could not have been implemented without a willingness to confront the markets and the imperialists.

Lula was not willing for this confrontation. He took the easy option and followed neo-liberalism. This is how he betrayed the poor and Brazil's workers.

SW: Lula did make some radical promises for example he promised everyone in the country would have three meals a day. Were any promises fulfilled?

Genro: He only gave crumbs to the people.

You need to change the structures and social services of the country to make such promises come true.

Instead Lula has increased taxes on workers to pay the debt to the IMF. 60% of our budget is spent on debt repayments.

Since Lula's government took over, unemployment has increased by one million.

The average family wage has dropped by 14%.

Workers productivity in the private sector has dramatically increased because of pressures put



■ Luciana Genro: 'Lula's popularity is falling dramatically'

on them.

The same liberalization policies that you have in the EU are being implemented in health, education, housing etc.

When the pension reform law was introduced we voted against it even though we knew they would expel us. Three deputies and one senator were expelled. Although many more were opposed to it, they would not vote against it. Since our expulsion 12 deputies have voted against a reduction in the minimum wage but they were not expelled.

Lula is conscious of keeping the PT's majority in Congress but more importantly he does not want to throw anyone else into our arms. He is worried about those of us who formed P-SOL.

SW: How did the formation of P-SOL come about?

Genro: When we were expelled we knew it was necessary to build an alternative to the PT.

We united with other senators, trade unionists, students, youth leaders and intellectuals like Chico Oliveira (a founding member of the PT) to create a new socialist party.

We held our first conference in June 2004. We do not have a revolutionary programme but an anti capitalist, anti imperialist programme. P-SOL is a party of the movement not just an electoral party.

To become legal and contest elections we have to get 500,000 signatures.

The reaction to P-SOL is very very positive. In the first two weeks we have collected 10,000 signatures.

We are implanting the party in important areas of society, for example the health

workers, college lecturers, public servants, youth leaders etc.

My town is Porto Alegre where the World Social Forum takes place and whenever I go out to a restaurant I get many people coming up to shake my hand and talk to me.

This is an indication of how glad people are to see us form this new socialist party.

Lula's popularity is falling dramatically and the discontent could also go to the right so the formation of an alternative is very important.

SW: What are the prospects for Brazil in the future?

Genro: Latin America generally is boiling.

There are huge waves of discontent but in many countries there has not been an alternative party built.

We are just replacing one regime with another.

So the biggest challenge for us is to build that alternative inside the movement and at the polls.

Many people have been shocked by Lula's move to the right. They could not have imagined it possible. I come from a radical current of the PT and we could analyse the path and predict the problems.

But we did not think that it would happen so fast and so deep. It is clear now that there is nothing left to defend in the PT.

Next January in Porto Alegre there will another World Social Forum. The movement holds out hope for people.

We want to make sure it grows from strength to strength. I would like to take this opportunity to invite activists from Ireland to next World Social Forum and help build an alternative for all the peoples of the planet.

TRAGEDY IN SUDAN

Are the occupiers of Iraq the answer here?

By **CHARLIE KIMBER**

THE UN Security Council has adopted a US inspired resolution which allows for the 'interruption' of economic, transport and communications arrangements with Sudan. It could be the prelude for military intervention.

Nobody can doubt the terrible suffering in the region. But pouring in more military forces will make it worse.

What Darfur needs is avalanche of food, water and other assistance, not bombs and guns.

Sudan's tragedy is a product of colonialism, a world system that entrenches hundreds of millions of Africans in near-starvation, and the manoeuvres of the great powers and the multinationals.

Last month the UN human development report showed that life expectancy is collapsing across Africa.

In seven countries it is now below 40 years. Malnutrition and poverty are on the rise.

This is the world George Bush and Tony Blair defend-one where people still starve, lack basic shelter and don't have access to safe water, while the US spends \$400 billion a year on weaponry. These colonial leaders who preside over this system will not solve Sudan's problems.

The crisis in Darfur is surrounded by myths.

Many accounts of the fighting suggest it is between "Arabs" and "Africans". Some even say it is between Muslims and Christians.

In fact all the people of Darfur are Muslims.

There are traditional distinctions between different groupings. But, as in much of Africa, these are based on economic function rather than race.

There are two key groupings in Darfuri society.



The first are farmers, who grow crops. The second are nomadic animal-grazers who raise camels and cattle.

The first group is what the media call the Africans. The second is what they call the Arabs.

In fact the two groups look like one another, speak the same languages, depend on one another for the means of life and (in many cases) share extended family ties.

Centuries

As Alex de Wall wrote in the Observer on Sunday, "Darfur's Arabs are black, indigenous, African and Muslim-just like Darfur's non-Arabs, who hail from the Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa and a dozen smaller tribes."

Over many centuries these groups have clashed at various times, but also intermarried and cooperated at others. In most cases disputes over water and land rights were settled by negotiation and compromise.

But the clashes between the farmers and the nomads have

worsened due to desertification.

The Sahara gobbled up 1,000 square miles of Darfur's land last year.

When the media, and the world's governments, talk of war between Arabs and Africans, they are playing into the hands of Sudan's rulers.

The Sudanese government has tried to intensify ethnic battles in Darfur as a way of smashing rebellion against its rule.

What we now call Sudan is a creation of colonialism, fought over by Britain and France a century ago.

This is where the British imperialist hero General Gordon was killed at Khartoum in 1885 by local people who had risen against foreign rule.

British colonialism divided Sudan between north and south (the roots of another modern Sudanese civil war, separate from the one in Darfur), and stoked ethnic divisions to make their rule easier.

Since independence in 1956, Sudanese governments have violently suppressed any move towards regional autonomy because it might threaten their control over the country's oil deposits. In the last decade the poverty of Darfur has worsened.

The central government has also stepped up demands for cheap labour from the area. All of this led to revolt, which greatly increased a year ago.

In order to break the rebellion the government has stressed ethnic differences, encouraging some groups to see themselves as exclusively "Arab".

This is the background to the present fighting, with the government using helicopter gunships and jets to back up militias on the ground to destroy villages and murder its opponents.



■ Life expectancy is collapsing in Africa

The US interest in Sudan

The US has long been interested in Sudan. It will come as little surprise that the motives have always been US power and oil.

In the 1970s Sudan was a prized Cold War ally, as the government of Jaafar Nimeiri moved Sudan from ties with the Russian bloc to embrace the West.

It became the biggest recipient of US foreign assistance in all of sub-Saharan Africa.

In the 1980s US oil firm Chevron invested \$1 billion in drilling for oil in the south of Sudan.

Even after the fall of Nimeiri in 1985, the US backed the Sudanese government to advance its oil and strategic interests.

The US kept channelling assistance and debt relief to Sudan, even though it was carrying out an even more destructive war in the south than the present one in Darfur.

But in 1989 the Cold War ended, and around the same time the Islamist movement of Omar al-Bashir seized power in Sudan.

It clashed with the US



■ Refugees on Chad border

because it refused to support the 1991 war with Iraq. The US responded by halting food aid at a time of desperate famine.

Sudan was now marked down as a "terrorist" country. But money again talked, and Bill Clinton's administration began to make deals with the government to exploit its oil reserves.

Policy changed again after the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

In 1998 Clinton announced that Sudan was helping terrorists and launched a wave of Cruise missiles, destroying the

country's only pharmaceutical plant.

It produced 50 percent of the country's medicines and veterinary vaccines.

The destruction of the al-Shifa plant condemned many thousands of people to death, and the US has to this day refused to compensate either the Sudanese government or the plant's owners.

Now Bush has swung back again to more friendly relations with the government to clear the way for more oil deals.

Until very recently the US squashed all mention of Darfur's turmoil in case it imperilled the peace settlement between north and south. This deal would allow greater stability for the oil multinationals.

But the US knows that it has been badly discredited over Iraq. This is why Bush and Blair are trying to re-furbish their image, talking again about 'humanitarian intervention'. This was the cloak used by Bill Clinton to justify military interventions in the 1990s. But the Somalia case shows the disaster such an intervention would bring in Sudan.

Somalia: This is what an intervention would look like

OPERATION "Restore Hope" was supposed to be 'a humanitarian mission to feed people'. It was a US led mission in 1992-93 which brought 25,000 troops to Somalia under the auspices of the UN.

The Western media claimed that Somalia was being torn apart by warlords and that intervention was needed to alleviate suffering.

In reality, the US was trying to establish military bases close to oil fields in the Middle East. Symbolically, the command centre for the US army was the Conoco headquarters in Mogadishu.

By the time the US troops arrived, the worst of the famine was over. But a wave of colonial racism was unleashed.

In October 1993, US forces set out to capture General Aideed, a prominent war lord. According to Mark Bowden of the Philadelphia Inquirer, the ensuing battle resulted in more than 1,000 Somalis being gunned down. US troops took hostages, murdered wounded

prisoners, and used the bodies of Somalis as barricades.

Withdrew

Eventually the US was forced to withdraw as Somalis responded by dragging the corpses of US troops through the streets.

It was a bitter humiliation

for the world's superpower.

Racism was not confined to US troops. An inquiry in Canada found that army officers had promised to reward the first soldier to kill a Somali. Photographs showed Canadian troops beating to death a young 16 year old Shidone Arone.

WHERE IS THE 'SMART FOOD'?

If Western powers were genuine:

■ They would organise a massive food drop to the people of Darfur. They boast about 'smart bombs' - so why can't they target food drops to those who most need them?

■ They could also stop all arms sales to the region - and prosecute arms dealers who make fortunes from human misery.

■ They could work with African countries to introduce economic policies that would change agricultural practices and so combat desertification.

These would bring real solutions - but they would give no advantage to colonial interests.

Crisis of imperialism in Iraq

by **KEVIN WINGFIELD**

WHEN Bush and Blair launched their invasion of Iraq last year, they imagined they could quickly conquer, pacify the locals and put in place a puppet regime.

In the Project for New American Century, the neo-cons around Bush and Rumsfeld had enunciated a doctrine that the US could, with relatively modest troop numbers and overwhelming technical superiority, fight more than one war simultaneously and so reshape the Middle East to the benefit of US imperialism.

But things have not worked out like that. 138,000 US troops are bogged down in Iraq. Almost as many "civilian" Western personnel act as an auxiliary army.

Yet the prospects of anything that might be passed off as a victory for US/UK forces are as remote as ever.

Indeed, it is likely they will have to commit increasing numbers of troops to an escalating war against a growing resistance for years to come.



20,000 guerrillas fight to expel US from Iraq

AT LEAST 20,000 active guerrillas are fighting to expel the US according to the Associated Press, following interviews with US officers on the ground.

And among the Iraqi population the resistance has considerable sympathy.

A leaked poll commissioned by the Coalition Provisional Authority in May found that 92 percent of Iraqis considered the US "occupiers" — and only 2 percent considered them "liberators." The poll, taken after the attempts by the US to crush the resistance in Falluja and Karbala, showed high levels of sympathy for the resistance.

American documents say insurgent groups "have become more sophisticated and may be co-ordinating their anti-coalition efforts, posing an even more significant threat".

Commenting on the lack of security

around Baghdad airport, just outside the city, a US military source stated, "recent attacks on air assets suggest that all type of aircraft, civilian, fixed-wing and military ... are seen as potential targets of opportunity".

In the leaked poll, 80 percent of Iraqis interviewed had an "improved opinion" of Muktadr al-Sadr, the militant Muslim cleric whose followers have fought US-led forces, and 64 percent said that the actions of the resistance had helped unify Iraq.

Confidence

According to one assessment, "There are perhaps more than 50 different resistance organizations consisting of Ba'athists, dissident communists, nationalists, groups of Iraqi soldiers and officers disbanded by the occupation, and Sunni and Shia religious groups."

And the resistance has severely

dented the gung-ho confidence of the US military occupation.

US forces have been pushed back from the city of Fallujah. Just three months ago US Marines surrounded Fallujah preparing an all-out assault on the defiant inhabitants.

But the siege of Fallujah became a powerful symbol of resistance, stimulating nationalist feeling against the occupation and encouraging further risings in Sunni towns and villages along the Euphrates.

Resistance groups took control of the highway from Baghdad to Fallujah, destroying US convoys of petrol tankers.

The Marines eventually abandoned the planned assault on Fallujah, allowing a militia led by a former Republican Guard general to take control of the city.

Despite the terrible casualties among the population of Fallujah, both guerrilla and civilian, the people felt

triumphant.

This is not the only example of areas of Iraq falling to the resistance. Shiite leader Sayed Moqtada al Sadr's Madhi Army has taken control of Baghdad's largest neighbourhood of 3 million in defiance of demands by US officials and their puppet Interim Government of Iraq that the militia group disband.

In late March, US occupation officials shut down Moqtada al Sadr's weekly paper *Al Hawza*. In April Sadr's Madhi Army launched an uprising in Sadr City and took control of the centres of a number of Shiite holy cities in central southern Iraq.

After a prolonged stand-off and then a few weeks of fierce street battles with the Madhi Army in and around the Shiite holy city of Najaf, US commanders announced on May 29 that they were seeking a ceasefire.

Last month the ban on Sadr's newspaper was quietly lifted.

The nightmare of defeat facing Bush and Kerry

RESISTANCE to US imperialism on this scale prompts comparison to the Vietnam War, which claimed 58,000 US lives — and more than a million Vietnamese — between 1961 and 1973.

The parallels are obvious: US forces in Vietnam were heavily stepped up after the invention of North Vietnamese attacks in the Gulf of Tonkin; in Iraq it was the weapons of mass destruction that were never found.

In 1968 a daring Tet offensive convinced US commanders in Vietnam that they were up against a resourceful and determined foe. US occupation forces in Iraq learned the same lesson in Fallujah and Sadr City.

The 1968 massacre of hundreds of Vietnamese in the village of My Lai suggests com-

parison with US torture in Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison.

It was the resistance of the Vietnamese that encouraged the anti-war movement in the US and elsewhere that created a political crisis in the US which eventually forced it to withdraw.

But the pace of events is far quicker in the Iraq war. For several years the Vietnam War was a foreign policy issue that was relegated to the back of the public consciousness in the US.

The Tet Offensive took place six years after the "official" start of the Vietnam War. But just twelve months after the invasion of Iraq, US forces were facing serious resistance and military reverses.

The first US national anti war demonstration — held in Washington DC on April 17, 1965, more than three years after the official beginning of

the war — attracted 25,000 participants. The first US national protest demonstration against the war in Iraq — held in Washington on October 25, 2002, seven months before the war began — attracted 100,000 people, four times as many participants.

Mistake

Now more than half the US population believe the invasion was a "mistake" and the war dominates the political agenda in election year in the US.

In Britain, the war has provoked crisis after crisis for Blair, with ministerial resignations, polarisation and electoral reverses.

And the "Coalition of the Willing" is beginning to fray at the edges. Spain withdrew its troops after the pro-war Aznar government was defeated in

March's elections.

Last month the Philippines pulled its troops out a month ahead of schedule, after militants threatened to kill a Filipino truck driver.

More worrying for Bush and Co, France and Germany have resolutely refused to provide troops to help dig out the US-led forces.

But US imperialism has more at stake than it had even in Vietnam. Iraq is far more central to global capitalism than Vietnam.

And the reason is oil. The US consumes more oil than it produces, but it imports most of its requirements from Venezuela. However, control over Iraq's and the region's oil promises to give it leverage over potential and actual commercial and military rivals.

China, with its population of 1.2 billion — one sixth of the world's population — and its

rapidly growing economy, threatens to become a major rival. But it is also heavily dependent on imported oil to fuel its expansion. Japanese and European capital have also emerged as major competitors to the once dominant position of US industry.

This means that although the dream of installing a stable pro-US regime in Iraq is going up in smoke with every Humvee that is shot up, the US cannot withdraw without paying a huge cost. The war is likely to go on for a lot longer yet, and the political crisis with it.

The anti-war movement has a huge responsibility, as well as a big opportunity, to build mass opposition. This includes upping the opposition to Irish government collaboration in the US occupation through its provision of Shannon airport for use by the US military.

US ally fights for 'human rights'

ITS government has its population in a state of terror, it "routinely uses" rape and torture in its prisons; it shoots political dissidents; and it is a significant member of the Bush and Blair 'Coalition of the Willing'.

That is the state of play in Uzbekistan, not according to Amnesty International but to the present British Ambassador to the country, Craig Murray.

The evidence from the Ambassador gives the lie to Blair's claims that he went to war to stop the human rights abuses in Iraq.

According to the Ambassador the Blair and Bush ally is "using torture as a routine investigation technique".

"People come to me very often after being tortured," he said in a recent Guardian interview.

"Normally this includes homosexual and heterosexual rape of close relatives in front of the victim; rape with objects such as broken bottles; asphyxiation; pulling out of fingernails; smashing of limbs with blunt objects; and use of boiling liquids including complete immersion of the body.

This is not uncommon.

Thousands of people a year suffer from this torture at the hands of the authorities.

Murray describes the Uzbekistan regime as "kleptocratic".

The leader Tashkent is supported by Bush and Blair and has begun shutting down private businesses, ensuring all economic activity - from the cotton picked by child labour to the gold mines - lines the presidential elite's pockets.

A new book on Ryanair exposes... A tale of bullying and greed

By **DAVID LYNCH**

AS the FF/PD government continue to push forward their plans to break up Aer Rianta and privatise Aer Lingus as part of their neo-liberal agenda, they have a number of powerful supporters in private business.

Michael O'Leary CEO of Ryanair and supporter of the Progressive Democrats is the 'poster boy' of capitalism in modern Ireland.

His brash style has seen him at the forefront of attacks on the state sector and trade unions.

However a new book* looking at the history of Ryanair has helped expose many of the myths surrounding the company so beloved by the supporters of the neo-liberal agenda.

On one of the mornings during the baggage handler's dispute at Ryanair in early 1998 Michael O'Leary was waiting for the workers to return from their hour long stoppage to vent his spleen at them. When one worker from Ballymun returned to work O'Leary screamed at him: "Why would I be talking to some scumbag like you from Ballymun? What do you know about anything?" This is the side of Michael O'Leary that most workers in Ryanair will know. The loud-mouthed, anti-union, bully.

Siobhan Creaton's 'Ryanair' has recollections from many members of staff who had been bullied by O'Leary.

"Staff who have been on the receiving end of one of the chief executive's furious verbal assaults—known within Ryanair as O'Leary 'hate beams'—are left shattered. When problems are raised he will simply bark at the person bearing the bad news to 'fix it'. One person suggested that Ryanair doesn't have a senior management team but one that recognises the Fuhrer." This



Fuhrer has done everything possible to prevent his workers from joining a trade union. When over 50 baggage handlers went on strike looking for union recognition in early 1998 they received massive support from workers across Dublin Airport.

There were a whole series of sympathy actions by other workers and the Airport was closed down. Some of the striking workers had been kept under surveillance during the strike by private investigators.

However despite his anti-union, anti-worker stand (or because of it) O'Leary has become an important symbol for the political right in Ireland. In their eyes he has led a small company against all the odds to become one of the most successful airlines in Europe.

Taking on the state sector, the unions, and EU regulation the story of Ryanair is usually used by Mary Harney and others as the perfect 'rags to riches tale'.



■ In September 1989 Seamus Brennan granted Ryanair exclusive rights to fly into Stansted, Left: Michael O'Leary

However a look at the early history of Ryanair undermines a number of those myths. While O'Leary now never shuts up about the 'interference' by the government and the supposed unfair advantage that Aer Lingus and Aer Rianta get, Ryanair got plenty of help from their friends in FF/PDs in their early years.

Exclusive

In September 1989 the then Minister for Transport, Seamus Brennan, granted Ryanair exclusive rights to fly into Stansted, despite opposition from Aer Lingus.

This proved to be a lifesaver for the company which was in terrible financial trouble.

The eventual profitability of the company has not been shared by all the workers.

Following the baggage handler strike, an independent report found that they were paid £5,000 a year less than British Midland workers and more than £2,100 less than Aer Lingus workers despite managements claims that they were being paid more! A financial deal made in 1996 proved to be very profitable to O'Leary and the Ryan family (who founded the company) when the company floated in '97.

But the staff of Ryanair was not to share in this deal. In 1986 the staff that joined the company had been each given 500 shares. But the Ryan's began to buy these back. "One staff member fought hard to hold onto the shares but was eventually browbeaten into submission." When Ryanair was floated in 1997, Michael O'Leary's stock rose from being valued at €44 million to €71 million in the space of one day's trading.

While Ryanair had made O'Leary very rich, the Ryanair CEO was already from a very privileged background. Despite some of the spin from his PD/FF supporters that O'Leary is a

'self-made man', he got all the breaks that money could buy in his early life.

His father was a businessman from Mullingar and he was able to send his son to the exclusive Clongowes Wood College in Kildare—often referred to as the 'Irish Eton'. He studied in Trinity and then got a job in the major accountancy firm, Stokes Kennedy and Crowley.

Siobhan Creaton's book is to be recommended for clearing up some of the many myths that surround O'Leary and his company.

* *Ryanair: How a Small Irish Airline Conquered Europe*, by Siobhan Creaton €13.99.

Socialist Worker interviews Karen Gearon

When Dunnes Stores workers struck against Apartheid

KAREN GEARON was the shop steward for the Dunnes Stores workers in Henry Street who took strike action in 1984 in defence of a colleague (Mary Manning) who refused to handle South African goods. BRID SMITH spoke to Karen about their struggle when after 20 years the strikers came together to mark the 20th anniversary of this now famous political struggle.

SW: How did the strike start?

Karen: Our union IDATU (now Mandate) issued us with an instruction to refuse to handle produce from South Africa as a protest against the Apartheid regime.

I don't believe that they expected any of us to take it seriously but when Mary Manning refused to check out grapefruit from South Africa she was suspended.

Thirteen of us walked out

with her and began a dispute which lasted 2 years and 9 months.

SW: What did you learn from the struggle?

Karen: The main thing that stands out for me about this strike was that it expressed solidarity with workers over a thousand miles away, none of whom we knew, and a society we knew little about.

But that changed dramatically for us in the course of the strike.

We learned so much about apartheid, about racism and about the class struggle.

We also learned a lot about our own trade union movement. Yes, we got money from them and huge support from individual trade unionists, which kept us going.

But the official union movement was very slow and reluctant to support us. So for example it took a whole year before we got an all-out ICTU picket. I honestly think they were hoping we would give up long before it ended.

But our action meant we were politicised so much that

there was no way we would go back to work and handle South African goods.

Our strike effectively changed Government policy. It led to a boycott by the Irish State on the importation of South African fruit and vegetables and we eventually went back to work.

Within 15 months I was sacked. The Dunnes management victimized me because I was an active shop steward both during and after the strike.

I eventually won an unfair dismissal case against them.

At one stage during the strike we were invited by South African trade unionists to visit that country but got no further than Johannesburg airport.

There was a dramatic security response to us.

Heavily armed men and women stopped us at the airport and guarded our every move until we were turned back out of the country. It was a shocking response to our act of solidarity.



■ The brutality of the Apartheid regime

SW: You went to South Africa this year. What were your impressions?

Karen: This year I finally got to visit South Africa. I was totally shocked at the level of poverty among the black population.

You just see miles and miles of crowded townships without decent housing, water, electricity or any basic services. It is incredible the conditions people

live in. You also see massive wealth especially in the white areas.

I was there during the general election and saw millions queue for hours to cast their vote.

It is hard to imagine how important that vote is to them. The ANC have now won in all the provinces.

They have more power now than ever. But ten years on, they haven't delivered the change that was promised.

It is clear though that the people still believe that elections will work for them and for change.

If that doesn't work then there will be other forms of struggle because there is such a passion for defeat and the memory of the defeat of apartheid is still very fresh.

So I am hopeful for the people of South Africa.

The problem is that change cannot come if the IMF and the World Bank continue to choke Africa.

Why should these people, whose countries have been

raped by capitalism, have to pay for huge debts to the multinational banks? The next few years will be very telling for South Africa.

SW: Do you still believe that struggle is relevant today?

Karen: Absolutely. I work in Kerry with Travellers groups and the level of racism against these people is incredible.

The similarities with the conditions in the townships is striking.

And everywhere they go Travellers face an apartheid response.

They are followed around shops, chased out of pubs, hotels and there are all sorts of racist responses to them. No political party or trade union in this country takes this racism seriously.

This is a disgrace. But Travellers themselves are becoming political. For the first time ever in their lives most of them in Kerry voted in the elections this year.

They are showing signs of getting active and confronting the system. They need the sort of solidarity that was shown to workers in South Africa.

comment

Neoliberals
in the media

By MARK WALSH



■ Alan Dukes and Jim Power

RECENT threats to the Government's neoliberal agenda brought out in the corporate media the full battalion of economists, journalists, and other 'experts' who pop up regularly on radio programmes and in the press to promote and defend the neoliberal economic order.

Jim Power of 'Friends First', for example, popped up on a number of occasions after the Local and European Elections when Fianna Fáil backbenchers were reported to be seeking a 'loosening of the purse-strings', i.e. increased Government spending in areas such as the health service. Writing in the Irish Independent, Jim Power warned of the dangers of adopting such 'left-wing' policies:

"...the risk now is that the Government caves in to the pressure from the 'chicken-livered' backbenchers and takes a serious lurch to the left." (Jim Power, 'Running scared after the elections won't justify a lurch to the left', *Irish Independent*, 24 June 2004).

On the day after the announcement of Charlie McCreevy's departure he popped up again, this time on *The Last Word* on Today FM. Again he warned about the dangers of increasing Government spending:

"I think the biggest mistake over the next three years of this government would be for an incoming Finance Minister to accede to the pressure from the Fianna Fáil backbenchers and go on a spending binge..." (Jim Power, *The Last Word*, Today FM, 21 July 2004)

But who is Jim Power? And why does he show such contempt for the 'chicken-livered' Fianna Fáil backbenchers and portray Government spending as a drunken 'binge'?

Financial Services

Jim Power is the Chief Economist of 'Friends First', which, according to its website, is "one of the leading financial services groups in the Irish market, providing a range of broadly based financial products including pensions, investments, savings and finance."

Friends First employ over 450 people in Ireland and has offices in Dublin, Galway and Cork.

The Group's total assets exceed €4.4bn. Friends First is part of Eureko B.V. which is one of the largest insurance groups in Europe with a total asset base of €94.8 billion and over 25,000 employees in 12 countries. (http://www.friendsfirst.ie/article_126.shtml)

So Jim Power is essentially a corporate lobbyist for the Irish arm of a large multinational corporation. Increased Government spending conflicts with the neoliberal perspective outlined on the Friends First website:

"The right wing perspective is that low taxes and controlled government expenditure represents the most effective way of guaranteeing strong economic growth and expanding wealth into the future." (http://www.friendsfirst.ie/article_126.shtml)

In other words it represents the most effective way of expanding the wealth of the corporations such as Friends First whose "total net assets exceed €4.4bn".

Nothing terribly new or shocking about corporate lobbying, you might say. For quite some time now, however, Today FM have been promoting him as 'one of the country's leading economists'. Ian Noctor repeated the familiar refrain in his introduction to a recent news report on Charlie McCreevy's departure. (Lunchtime news, Today FM, 21 July 2004)

The unsuspecting listener might reasonably conclude that they are listening one of the best economists in the country and accept what he says as the opinion of an objective expert, while in fact they are on the receiving end of the neoliberal propaganda of corporate vested interests.

Cinema

Stepford Wives remake of cult classic

Hollywood's happy ending

By SÍOFRA NÍ
CHONGHAILE

"STEPFORD wife" entered our vocabulary to describe the overly house-proud after the original film became a cult classic. In *Stepford* the menfolk kill off their wives and replace them with buxom barbies.

These new "improved" ladies aspire to nothing except waxing floors and keeping their husbands happy.

This year's version is a ridiculous spoof that's best avoided. Instead of the chilling original we are presented with a Hollywood parody with a happy ending.

There is no mention of Joanna's involvement in the women's liberation movement. *Stepford*'s only black family has been cut and the only gay men in the film are Republicans!

Much more radical is the Ira Levin book upon which the film is based. Joanna Eberhart is a part-time photographer, full-time mother who is shocked to discover that there are no women's organisations in *Stepford* and that the only local group discussing politics is the ominous Men's Association.

She gradually uncovers *Stepford*'s secret but is killed off before she



■ Instead of the chilling original we are presented with a Hollywood parody with a happy ending.

can expose it.

The new *Stepford Wives* mirrors the changes that have taken place in the movement itself.

Demanded

In the 60s, women demanded wages for housework, real equality and widespread social change.

These demands gradually diluted once a minority of women

smashed through the glass ceiling of corporate and political America.

Today, even some women argue that we live in a post-feminist world where women's liberation has gone too far and men are suffering because of it.

For instance, the architect of the *Stepford* project is now a woman who wants to return to a time when "men were men and women were women".

Today, women earn on average 60% of men's wages while we continue to do 70% of the housework.

Careers

In many cases the women doing the housework are immigrant workers who are paid an abysmal wage while their middle class sisters are freed up to pursue their careers.

Women in positions of

power, like Mary Harney, have no qualms about cutting community employment schemes which impact most harshly on other women.

Winning rights on paper was not enough.

It's time that the anti-capitalist movement embraced the real struggle for women's liberation and that women and men took to the streets again to demand an equal world.

Books

Three good reads to have on the beach

By COLM O RIAIN

RATHER than a throwaway book you'll forget in five minutes, *Socialist Worker* would like to recommend some great books to do more than just pass the time.

True History of the Kelly Gang, Peter Carey, Faber and Faber

For anyone who hasn't come across it already, this is a great read. Carey tells the story of the infamous Ned Kelly in the first person.

The result is a truly gripping novel that gives a very moving and sympathetic account of Kelly's life.

From the poverty, oppression and persecution that poor immigrant families like the Kellys suffered in Australia, Carey creates the context in which Ned was forced to tackle head on the

injustices suffered. Branded an outlaw and criminal and pursued relentlessly by the state, Kelly became a hero amongst the local population who supported and sheltered him over the many months when he evaded capture.

The voice of Ned Kelly is very real. The lack of punctuation and the use of a slightly antiquated vocabulary gives this voice authenticity and energy.

As the story unfolds the reader is fully immersed in the life of Kelly and, though the ending of his life is well known, when it comes it is all the more brutal and unfair for the fact we have entered so fully into Ned Kelly's world.

Dead Air, Iain Banks

Iain Banks has always been a great writer – if you haven't read his book *Complicity*, you've missed out.

Dead Air doesn't disappoint

– the main character is Kenneth Nott a radio presenter who shocks with a lot of his opinions.

He hammers on about everything from the European to gun control and Lady Diana in a lefty rant.

These rants alone are reason enough to read the book – for a lot of the time we see him ranting and drinking – but a problem emerges when he's facing a death threat from someone.

Is it a right wing whacko? Things go terrible wrong and he's not sure if he'll get out of it.

All this is written in the shadow of 9/11 and it's good that Banks can sound off about it.

The best line? "If 9/11 was meant to be an attack on democracy, they should have rammed the planes into Al Gore's house!"

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, Mark Haddon

This great book follows Christopher, a fifteen year old

with Asperger's syndrome, in an entertaining and thrilling murder-mystery full of very strange events and adventures.

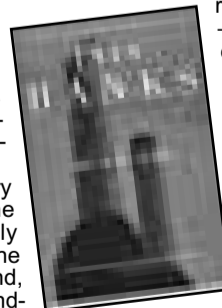
Asperger's syndrome is a mild form of autism – Christopher takes everything very literally and can't pick up on people's moods or any subtleties in conversation.

He'd be confused by phrases like catching your death of cold.

He's isolated from others, and likes to pretend that he is the only person alive in the universe. In any event, on a night walk he comes across a neighbour's dog, killed with a garden fork and tries to figure out who did it.

This is a story that works both for adults and children. The plot rockets along as we see the world through his eyes.

All the time his observations and comments hit the target. Most notably when he notes in that in the bible it says 'Thou shalt not kill', but that Christians kill people in wars. George Bush springs to mind.



news from the struggle

the fight against cutbacks and privatisation

PRIVATISATION

We need a national transport strike to stop the sell-offs

Aer Lingus

1,300 jobs threatened in new attacks

Workers at Aer Lingus face a new round of attacks. Chief Executive Officer, Willie Walsh announced that 1,300 jobs are to go.

This is despite projected profits of €100 million this year and the “best balance sheet in its history”.

This is the same Willie Walsh who last month approached the government with a management buy-out in mind.

Walsh plans to get rid of 300 of the cabin crew even though Aer Lingus is set to expand its operations in Europe.

This can only mean more intense rostering arrangements for the remaining cabin crew.

Denied

Catering and cleaning is to be outsourced with the loss of 280 jobs. The company will instead rely on companies who employ low paid contract staff who are denied the right to join a union.

Hundreds of jobs are also set to go in baggage handling and on the check-in desks. Just three years ago, Aer Lingus workers accepted a radical survival plan that led to the loss of 2,000 jobs and deferred pay rises.

At the time, the airline industry was in trouble after September 11th. But the major global airlines used the tragedy to restructure their operations and carry through the type of attacks now being mounted on Aer Lingus workers.

The game plan of the Aer Lingus management team and Transport Minister

Aer Lingus

Seamus Brennan is outright privatisation. They want to destroy Aer Lingus unions now – so that major profits can be made with privatisation.

Asset

A national airline that is providing employment for about 4600 is a vital asset. It cannot be allowed to go the way of Eircom where cynical business interests profited at the expense of ordinary working people.

Aer Lingus owns extremely valuable slots at Heathrow and at JFK airport in New York. Heathrow, for example, is valued at €120 million. If these were available to a global airline operator, they could be used for flights that do not connect with Ireland.

SIPTU has responded to these attacks by carrying out a ‘protective ballot’. This would enable to the union to call a strike if management pushes through its plans.

But resistance needs to be strengthened still further.

Most of the staff who have stayed with Aer Lingus have already turned down a voluntary redundancy offer in 2001. The issue now is the preservation of decent jobs and conditions at the airport.

There should be a coordinated offensive by unions representing all transport workers. Instead of letting each group be picked off individually by Brennan, there should be a national transport strike to resist privatisation in Aer Lingus, Aer Rianta and CIE.

send reports to *Socialist Worker*
Phone 8722682 email socialistworker@swp.ie



CIE: Franchising of routes still on the cards

If you read the papers over the last month, you'd be forgiven for thinking that Fianna Fail have backed down from the sell-off of Dublin Bus routes.

Minister Brennan, in the face of strike action announced that he had shelved plans for the franchising of 25 percent of Dublin Bus routes. *Socialist Worker* spoke to Bill McCamley, worker director in CIE on what he thought of the climb-down. “The government were given a bloody nose from the voters and have tried to change their image. They're looking for the survival of their back benchers now and they have to drop their love affair with their right-wing ideas.”

So have they dropped their plans for Dublin Bus? Bill isn't convinced. “I don't think that Brennan's backed down altogether, I think he's modified his plans, but he still wants them to go ahead. The strike put him under pressure, but he knows what he wants. He's going after privatisation by stealth, he's afraid that the public will drag him over coals if he tries it on now.”

“While SIPTU and the NBRU are saying that we've won, Brennan still talks about franchising 25 percent of the routes. I believe that his plan is still there – there will be private operators. The extent of the franchising depends on what they can get away with.”

This part-privatisation will be a hammer blow for Dublin Bus, and indeed the transport system in Ireland. Franchising out will mean the selling off of

Dublin Bus

the best routes to private companies – meaning that Dublin Bus revenue will fall. Then Dublin Bus will be less able to service the less profitable routes.

Bus Eireann

Bill points to the case of Bus Eireann to show how this works. “CIE wanted to extend Bus Eireann services into Newry and Cavan – giving an important service to isolated areas. We could do this using the profits from the Dublin – Dundalk corridor to sponsor other areas. The Minister for Transport gave a license to Matthews' coaches to run the Drogheda to Dublin route. Bus Eireann revenue fell, and the important social routes disappeared. Matthews' coaches are making the profits that would have gone to funding these routes. It all comes back to the question – is public transport about providing services for communities or making profits? Certain things, the transport system, phones, ports should be publicly owned. When they're privatised workers, consumers and society as a whole suffers.”

While Brennan made some concessions it's clear that he still has plans for the sell off of routes. The trade unions must keep the pressure on to stop the rot. Bill feels that the unions missed a perfect opportunity for united action. “We should have hit them hard in March. At that time Dublin Bus, Aer Rianta and the SIPTU taxi drivers could have gone out. That would have beaten them back. I'd be keen for action if the circumstances were right, if we were united not fragmented. We can't do it on our own.”

Dublin Bus workers' rights under attack

THREE DUBLIN BUS drivers have been suspended without pay in Phibsboro and Connyngham Road Garages in Dublin.

They were targeted for giving out leaflets for the Independent Workers Union, a group they are trying to build in Dublin Bus. The three were suspended on the 22nd and 29th of July. The drivers are unhappy with the NBRU and SIPTU and want another union to represent them.

According to Owen McCormack, from Phibsboro: “This is an outrageous attack on the rights of these workers in the garage. Whatever we feel about the idea of a new union, SIPTU and the NBRU should not have let Dublin Bus management attack them.”

“Workers should be allowed to discuss and debate what our unions are doing in the workplace without threat of reprisals from management. If the bosses can do this now to these workers they will have no problem hammering people who disagree with the attempts to privatise Dublin Bus in the future. These drivers have mortgages and children and they shouldn't be suspended without pay”.

Jarvis plc

JARVIS Construction has built five Irish secondary schools under Public Private Partnership arrangements with the government.

They are also due to begin construction on the Cork School of Music.

However it has recently emerged that Jarvis is in serious financial difficulty. It has a £230 million debt and its share price has fallen by 10 percent.

This raises major problems for the Irish Government. Under the multi million euro PPP deal, Jarvis was contracted to design build and maintain

these schools for the next twenty five years. If it goes bankrupt where does this leave the schools?

This is just more evidence that private sector involvement in the provision of public services is a disaster.

Jarvis's difficulties probably have a lot to do with their increasingly tarnished reputation. Not only was it responsible for track maintenance when a train derailed at Potters Bar in England a number of years ago killing seven, it has also been investigated by the British Department of Education for corner-cutting and poor work standards in the construction of schools.

HIBERNIA College is a private college that is providing on-line teacher training courses for graduates.

Minister Noel Dempsey gave the go-ahead to Hibernia to run the course last year.

Teacher training students, the Teacher Training Colleges and the primary teacher's union, the INTO, have opposed the move.

Concerns centre around the issue of quality, teacher employment, the privatisation of education and the future of the Teacher Training Colleges.

Over two thousand students marched against the course in November last year and a Dail Committee was set up to assess issues surrounding the course.

Two weeks ago Hibernia

and the representatives from the groups opposing it were invited to make their arguments to the committee.

Hibernia never bothered to turn up! In a letter to the Committee, Noel Dempsey stated that because Hibernia was a private college the Department of Education had no role in regulating its intake.

He added that market forces should dictate the demand for student teachers.

Most worryingly he stated that as long as the Hibernia course continued, the future of the existing public teacher training colleges was up for consideration.

The existing Teacher Training colleges applied to run on-line courses in November 2002 but the Minister and the Department

Hibernia College

news from the struggle – news from the struggle – news from the struggle

Sustaining Progress Let's defeat this deal

TRADE UNION members are being asked to accept the second part of Sustaining Progress; disgracefully many union leaders are throwing their weight behind the pay deal.

What is on offer is an insult to workers.

A 5.5 percent pay increase is not enough, especially when the economy is picking up. The employers and government can afford much more.

Derisory

The offer of an extra half percent to the lowest paid is derisory – such a small percentage increase on an already tiny salary gives nothing. The unions sought flat rate increases during the negotiations but were turned down by government and IBEC. We know there is a huge problem with low pay in this country. This agreement fails to deal with it. It must be rejected.

We have been presented with charts showing how well we have done over the lives of recent agreements but they show pay increases before inflation is

accounted for.

Even when they are factored in, the official inflation figures are a joke, they take no account of house prices, and the raft of new stealth taxes and charges are conveniently ignored.

Costs have increased for working class people, from TV license increases to ESB hikes. At the same time there is the issue of bin and water charges.

Delegates in Mandate and the CPSU have seen through the bluff and voted against the recommendations of their trade Union leaders. The decision of the INO to recommend rejection is to be welcomed.

Most of our union leaders are asking us to accept a new deal while some workers, like those in TCD, have still not received payments for benchmarking and other related payments. Why should we accept another deal when the employers haven't respected the last one?

At the same time, the agreement calls for "flexibility" and the continued erosion of existing work practices.

Privatisation is part of the government agenda. The new agreement further cements this – and we can see that process in action in Dublin Bus and Aer Rianta.

Is there any reason for trade unionists to support it? Clearly there isn't!

Opposition

There is significant opposition to the deal which is why they are trying to sneak it through in the summer months. Many sections are calling for a No vote, many are private sector branches such as the AGEMOU section of SIPTU. SIPTU, as the largest union in congress will be the most important union in which to win a No vote.

In spite of the attempts of the union leadership and ICTU, a campaign against the deal is growing on the ground. We must do everything we can do to make sure that when the ICTU conference takes place on September 1st to vote, the deal is rejected.

To receive leaflets for your workplace contact Marnie Holborow on

send reports to **Socialist Worker**
phone 8722682 email socialistworker@swp.ie

News from the Unions

CPSU
CPSU delegates overwhelmingly rejected the partnership deal. Blaire Horan, the CPSU general secretary, was pushing for a Yes vote. The executive were split down the middle and offered no recommendation. At the end of July, a conference threw the deal out. Dennis Redfern, a CPSU rep, said "it showed how out-of-touch our general secretary is with our members, that he would push such a rotten deal". 5.5 percent over 18 months is nothing and if you earn below €350 a week, an extra 0.5 percent increase doesn't do much. Really 5 percent of nothing is nothing. We rejected the deal and every member who receives their ballot paper will be told that".

INO
Nurses have voted by a three to one majority against Sustaining Progress. The executive council of the Union recommended rejection of the deal and nurses gave it a resounding No.
The union will vote against the deal on September 1st. Nurses have been treated disgracefully by the FF/DP government. After their strike finished they were given a derisory deal, and have received smaller pay increases under the Benchmarking report.
They are understandably frustrated by the underfunding of the Health Service. Seeing the lack of partnership between health workers and the government, they rightly rejected the fake partnership this deal offers. Now we need to make sure that the INO are joined by a majority of the Unions in ICTU.

NIPSA strike action

Talks show need to up the Ante

THE CIVIL SERVICE management and Secretary of State, Paul Murphy, did not come up with any new money during recent negotiations with NIPSA.

Management representatives stated that they had no authority to negotiate a settlement for 2003 and 2004 outside the Treasury's spending limits for 2004. Despite the determination of workers in areas such as MOT centres, Teachers' Pay branch and in the Grants and Subsidies branch, who have stayed out now for over 2 months, the government has not been put under enough pressure.

There can be no other option now other than an escalation of action. In many areas of the civil service members have complained that they have been forced to sit on the sidelines cheering on the selective strikers while having no real part to play themselves.

Workers in the CSA for example have complained bitterly that despite the fact they are in the largest single branch in the NICS, their role in the dispute has been reduced to, as one activist told *Socialist Worker*, "cheerleaders, who are only called into action when the NIPSA leadership needs good numbers for a photo shoot."

Every time management are faced with a small group of workers going on strike they can re-deploy resources from other areas of the civil service to undermine the action.

In the case of the MOT centres, they can rely on the state to introduce emergency legislation to get round the problems caused by the strike. Only a civil service-wide strike can win. Every time the union leadership have called on members to support a walkout, work-to-rule, rally or strike the response has

been magnificent, even 7 months into the dispute. Civil servants in Britain took to the picket lines again on the 29th and 30th July.

The similarities of the two disputes are clear and the ingredients are there for a massive fight back.

The strikes by PCS members in Britain would have been an opportunity for NIPSA members to join forces in a "united front" that would really put this government on the rails.

Rank and file activists need to promote this strategy and feed it into the growing list of complaints about the handling of the dispute.

There are currently 350 NIPSA members on strike; there are over 20,000 of their colleagues left out. The involvement of these workers in an all-out strike would have Ian Pearson and the rest calling for the cheque books.

N.C.T.

Workers at the car testing company NCT, members of the AGEMOU branch of SIPTU, shut down most of the company's testing centres in June.

They were protesting at management attempts to victimise a union activist. The action shut down 42 of the 63 testing centres throughout Ireland.

Management sacked the worker after they had used hidden cameras to accuse the man of misconduct at work.

But as one NCT worker told *Socialist Worker*,

"The Labour Court found against the company and recommended an award of €22,000. It was an obvious attempt to fit up the man."

Two years ago workers were forced out the gate when the company demanded they work ten hour shifts. "This Swiss company refuses to make any move on a list of grievances but instead brings in private detectives and hidden cameras to try to catch people out."

Workers are preparing to take further action if they do not receive satisfaction.

Dundrum swimming pool

THE local authority swimming pool in Dundrum has been shut down. Built in 1971 it was expected at that time that it would be replaced in the mid 1980s.

This however did not happen and in the last number of years its condition deteriorated significantly.

Plans were drawn up for a new pool, planning permission was granted and an

application for funding was made. Adequate money has so far not been made available and the pool shut its doors on July 15.

Local politicians before the election in June were quite happy to imply that funding would be forthcoming. It was all lies.

Ballinteer and Dundrum are both witnessing a population explosion. Large

scale housing and apartment developments are under construction at the moment. Facilities in the area will need to be expanded not cut back.

According to one local resident, "The children of Ballinteer and Dundrum have lost their local pool and have no reasonable alternative to enjoy one of life's simplest pleasures. We

need to get together as a community and demand funding for the Dundrum Family Recreation Centre."

A petition is being circulated around the area and a meeting for those interested in joining the campaign will be held in the Dundrum Family Recreation Centre on Monday 9 August at 8pm.

Coiner's Lane Wexford

Coiner Lane runs from the main Wexford-Rosslare road at Kerlogue Industrial Estate in the direction of Wexford Harbour as far as the railway line. Originally this lane continued as far as Rosslare Strand until it was washed away in the early 1940s. It followed a wooden catwalk over the railway bridge until CIE removed these planks. A branch of this path brought the walker back to Wexford Town.

Coiner's Lane gets its name from Coiner Whelan who built a house half way along this lane on the right hand side in the 19th century. Mr. Whelan was the manager of the Drinagh cement factory which was the first such factory built in Ireland. The house and surrounding lands passed through a variety of owners including John Kirwan a cattle dealer and Kenneth Cooper, a barrister and the Eccles family until purchased by the Stafford family in

the 1940s.

The house was separated from the lane by an entrance gate. Typically, lanes laid by property owners ran directly to the main house but in this case the lane leads to the entrance gate and on past the house as it is a public road that originally gave access to an old windmill. In the early part of the 20th century two families—the Sinnotts and Morris's—lived along this lane close to the railway line. This lane was their usual access.

This seemed to be the accepted norm until 1990 when a notice appeared in the local paper stating that the lane was private property. Gates were erected at the junction with the main road at Drinagh in 2000. These were placed with out planning permission. The portion of the lane leading towards the railway was dug up and reclaimed as a field. Local politician

seemed unable to prevent this despite the fact that planning permission wasn't sought.

This lane has been a public road for centuries. I remember walking this lane as far back as 1928 with my father because I found a band new "cock" penny which had just been minted for the new Saorstát Eireann.

I am asking that Wexford County Council act in the public interest to ensure continued access to Coiner's Lane for the people of Wexford. I am asking that Coiner's Lane be restored to its original condition to allow access once more to Wexford Harbour. Along with some other people I will continue to walk this lane to uphold the public right to access the area around Wexford Harbour.

—RAY WALSH aged 82

Waterford Radiotherapy

Campaigners for a radiotherapy unit for the South East reacted angrily to the announcement that two private hospitals with radiotherapy units will be developed in Waterford.

Almost ten thousand people marched through Waterford City demanding radiotherapy services just before the recent local elections.

The government parties paid dearly and lost badly to the parties calling for a cancer care unit. Martin Cullen, the Minister for the Environment and local Waterford TD met with representatives of the campaign and tried to suggest that the development of the private

hospitals are a solution for the South East. However the campaigners and locals are enraged with this notion and have reiterated their call for a radiotherapy unit to be built at the public Waterford Regional Hospital.

Those who find it most difficult to travel for radiotherapy due to expenses will not in any way be helped by these private hospitals.

The proposal for private hospitals is an insult to the campaigners. It reveals once again that the government only cares about helping the wealthy. If you are poor or can't afford private care the government's response is "tough luck!" The campaign for public radiotherapy care for the South East must continue!

Socialist Worker

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As racist attacks increase in Northern Ireland...

IN A matter of days in Northern Ireland racists were responsible for assaulting a Chinese woman in East Belfast, assaulting and racially abusing a Portuguese man in Derry, intimidating three Nigerian men out of their homes and petrol bombing a family living in South Belfast.

There have been 149 reported racist attacks in the last four months. The reported incidents are only the tip of the iceberg.

Newly recruited Indian nurses working in the Mater Hospital told *Socialist Worker* that they are being racially abused every night of the week in their homes in North Belfast.

A Filipino nurse working in the Royal said that even nurses in uniform have been racially abused and assaulted on the Falls Road.

One of those attacked, Mohammad Hossain knew that his family were going to be attacked. They had been attacked eight times in the last eight weeks.

The attacks were getting worse. Luckily Mohammad Hossain was sleeping on the settee at 2.20am when racist thugs threw petrol bombs at the bedroom windows of the house where Mohammad, his wife and their five year old daughter were asleep.

Had he not heard the smashing of the glass, all three could have been killed. Mohammad says he will never go back to live there.

He says that he believes that the majority of people in Northern Ireland are not racist. The money, gifts for his family and messages of support have helped convince him of this and ease the family's anguish.

However, Mohammed says after 20 attacks in the last couple of years, the racists have finally "broken them".

Institutionalised racism

Those wanting to push back the tide of racist attacks in the North have little reason to believe that the "powers that be" will be any help in doing so.

There were almost 500 attacks reported to the PSNI between 2003 and 2004. There have been 8 convictions.

In the last four months there have been 149 reported attacks with one conviction. The Hossains reported the last 20 attacks on their home to the police.

They say they never took them seriously and he believes this allowed the racists to believe they could act with impunity.

The Hossain family went to the Housing Executive less than one week before the house was petrol bombed saying that they feared for their lives.

The Housing Executive sent them away because although Mohammad has been living here for 11 years, he did not have his passport on him.

When contacted the Housing Executive said "often *these people* say that they are entitled to be here and they are not".

Even after the house was petrol-bombed the Housing Executive were refusing to consider re-housing the family until they saw the pass-



■ United against Racism

STAND UP TO RACISM

port.

This time they said that they require any photographic ID for most people but that they have to see passports for asylum seekers to make sure they are here lawfully". Mohammad Hossain has never been an asylum seeker.

Failing

It's not only the institutions that are failing to address the issue.

The North's politicians have fuelled racism by blocking planning permission for Mosques and arguing in Westminster against a "tide of Eastern European Workers coming to Northern

Ireland.

In fact in the same week that the above attacks took place, SDLP Councillor Tommy McTeague referred to black people as niggers at a Council meeting in Antrim. Forced to apologise afterwards he said that he said it in the heat of the moment and that in fact he had friends who were "coloureds".

What is needed in Northern Ireland is the broadest possible movement from below to challenge the racists attacks. People should organise in workplaces, schools, colleges, community centres etc to make them no-go areas for the racists.

Instrumental in any movement will be the weight of the trade union movement. Most of

the attacks are taking place against overseas workers.

The trade union movement played a massive role in the nineties in terms of pushing back the tit for tat sectarian killings and mobilising people to call for an end to the conflict.

Racist attacks don't only diminish the whole community, the scape-goating of the minority ethnic community is diverting attention away from those responsible for the lack of resources in Northern Ireland.

Invest NI is currently boasting on its website that one of the reasons to locate in Northern Ireland is to enjoy the benefits if a workforce that earns up to 29% less than the European average.