

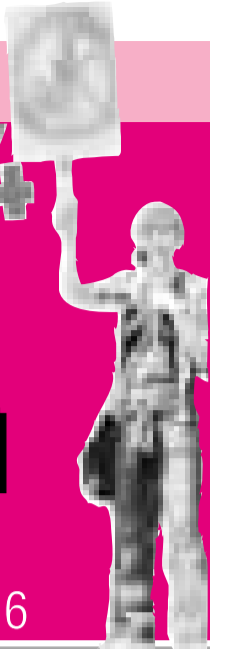
# Socialist Worker

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inside:  
 european social forum  
 2004  
 Four great days you can't afford to miss...

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WE NEED LARGE PROTESTS AS

## PAIN MERCHANTS

COME  
 TO  
 DUBLIN



■ Peace demonstrator attacked by 'crowd control' weapons in US

### A SINISTER conference will open on 19 October in Dublin's Berkley Court Hotel.

Over two days it will bring together army officers and police chiefs from a host of countries to discuss new 'crowd control' weapons and torture tools.

Incredibly, Garda Assistant Commissioner Joe Egan will be there to discuss — among other items — chemical weapons which can be used against protestors.

Billed as a 'Less Lethal Weapons Conference', it is organised by a specialist magazine, *Jane's Defence Weekly*, which circulates mainly to the army and police top brass.

'Less lethal weapons' is euphemistic jargon for tools that cause great pain and can even kill.

The category includes plastic bullets, electro-shock weapons, and chemical weapons such as CR gas — which is six times more potent than CS gas.

But there is also a new generation of pain-inducing weapons such as human capture nets which are laced with chemicals; strobes which can induce epileptic fits; and radio frequency weapons which raise temperature.

The array of new devices is a sadist's dream come true.

But the real purpose of the conference is money. There has been huge growth in the 'police-industrial complex', whereby hundreds of firms supply the world's police forces with these kinds of weapons.

Some of the firms will pay up to €10,000 to sponsor the drinks reception at the Dublin conference so that they can network with top police officers who may buy their horrific devices.

Since Bush declared his 'War on Terror', the dividing line between police forces and the military has become more blurred. The militarization of the police force often begins with the establishment of 'special units' for 'crowd

control', such as the *Special Patrol Group* in Britain or the *Public Order Unit*, which was formed recently by McDowell in Ireland.

A growing number of ordinary police officers are trained in 'riot control' and given weapons training. The tactical training is similar to that given to armies who fight 'low intensity counter-revolutionary wars'.

There is also a pattern of experimenting with weapons in colonial or prison-type situations prior to their introduction at home.

Thus plastic and rubber bullets were originally used in Hong Kong and then in Northern Ireland. They are now deployed against anti-globalisation protestors all over the world.

As McDowell steps up repression here, it is vital that this conference is met with large protests.

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# THE TRADE IN PAIN

## 'LESS lethal weapons' are closely connected with the trade in torture.

According to Alan Eisner, who recently published a book titled *Gates of Injustice: the Crisis in America's prisons*, stun guns and tasers were regularly used in 'supermax' (high security) prisons in Virginia to punish prisoners.

Simultaneously they were also developed as torture tools that left no mark. High voltage electro-shock guns have been used as forms of torture in Turkey, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia. Denis Kaufman, President of Stun Tech, explains why: 'Electricity speaks every language known to man. No translation is necessary. Everyone is afraid of electricity — and rightly so.'

A special Dispatches programme on Channel 4 in 1996 interviewed one Lebanese man who received electro-shock in the eyes.

'What you feel is terrible, you feel like it's hell, you feel lightning in your eyes and your hands, you feel you want to die'.

The other link between

torture and the Less Lethal Weapons programme is the recent generation of 'calmative' drugs under the Pentagon's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate. The team is based in the Applied Research Laboratory headed up by Andy Mazzara.

*Calmatives* is a military term used for 'psychopharmacologic drugs' — drugs which alter mental states so that captors gain control of victims. These can give victims the 'ultimate bad trip' if they fail to cooperate. They were supposed to have been deleted from military stockpiles after the Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993. But the Pentagon is using them again in its 'War on Terror'.

Other drugs, such as Precedex, are used to increase prisoners' reac-



■ US cops reload

tions to electric shocks.

The US authorities have been using such drugs in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

## PROTEST NO PROFIT FROM PAIN BERKELEY COURT HOTEL

Tuesday 19th October  
Assemble 5pm, Rally from 6pm onward  
Called by Irish Anti-War Movement and others

## THE HEAVY GANG

Speakers at the Pain Merchants' Conference include some of the biggest heavies of the global repression industry. They include:

■ COL. ANY MAZZARA: A Marine Commander during the first Gulf War, he now runs a secret Pentagon programme to develop mind-altering drugs at the Applied Research

Laboratory at Penn State University. He has also worked for the weapons manufacturer Raytheon.

■ CHARLES HEAL: Experimented with 'non-lethal weapons' in Somalia during the abortive US occupation. A commander with the notorious Los Angeles Police Department who scandalised the world with the beating of Rodney

King in 1992.

■ GRAHAM LAWRENCE: A top police officer with the West Midlands Police — the force that framed the Birmingham Six.

■ TOM SMITH: President of Taser International, which manufactures weaponry that even the British Government classified as 'equipment used for torture'.

## Remember Julie Livingstone

HOW CAN the Government let this conference take place when many people remember what happened to Julie Livingstone?

In 1981, fourteen-year-old Julie was hit by a plastic bullet while walking home. She died later in hospital.

In the same year, six other people were killed as a result of plastic bullets, including two other children.

Yet the manufacturers of such weapons will be trying to sell their wares at the Dublin conference. Their sick trade is all about profiting from pain and death.

Known as 'kinetic impact weapons' in the new jargon, plastic bullets also cause terrible injuries.

A study by Dr Ritchie and Gibbons of the Royal Victoria in Belfast found that there was an 'increased incidence of death and serious injury among patients struck in the anterior and left chest'.

Gary Lawlor was hit by a plastic bullet in 1997. A year later his mother described his condition. 'He is not the same boy as before. He has been having epileptic fits since he came out of hospital. He is deaf in one ear and has lost his sense of smell. His right hand trembles and he trails his right leg behind him.'

Just another victim of the pain merchants who will be plying their trade in Dublin.

# Airport stopover for torture

SHANNON airport is being used to transport prisoners to Guantanamo Bay and to a special Egyptian torture chamber, which is run at the behest of the US Government.

A recent Swedish television documentary showed how two asylum seekers were bundled out of Sweden and put on a Gulfstream jet, which is leased exclusively to the US Government.

The jet took the two men to an Egyptian torture centre where interrogators fastened electrodes to their genitals, breast nipples, tongue, ear lobes and underarms.

The operation was part of a special US programme known as Extraordinary Rendition, which removes activists to torture centres outside US legal jurisdiction.

The Gulfstream jet carrying the men stopped over at Shannon airport.

Two days before the Bush visit, Justice Minister Michael McDowell told the Senate that it would cause him great concern if 'unlawfully detained people were brought through Ireland' and promised to respond immediately if this happened.

We are still waiting.

## Campaign launched to get US troops out of Shannon

THE Irish Anti-War Movement has launched a new campaign to drive US troops out of Shannon within the next year or so.

The campaign has a number of key elements.

A new pamphlet on *The US Military and Shannon Airport* written by Kieran Allen, a UCD sociologist, pulls together all the information that is currently known about Shannon. It is a vital tool for activists to educate the public.

A national petition aimed at gathering 250,000 signatories has been launched, calling for a referendum to insert a new article into the Irish constitution to ensure that 'no Irish territory, Irish airport, airspace or sea port can be used

for the preparation or furtherance of acts of aggression by a foreign power'.

This would mean a ban on US troops using Shannon.

A special



■ US troops in Shannon

resolution is being circulated to all local authorities, trade unions, community groups calling for support for the referendum.

All anti-war parties are being asked to refuse to support any government that allows US troops to use Shannon. Commitments will be made public.

An initial run of 20,000 fact sheets and 5,000 special posters have been produced to get the message across.

The campaign will culminate with a major concert and demonstration to

show the popular opposition to the use of Shannon.

### How You Can Help:

Join your local anti-war group and support its activities. Phone 087 6490261 or email [secretary@irishantiwar.org](mailto:secretary@irishantiwar.org)

Distribute the pamphlet and the fact sheet. The US Military and Shannon Airport costs €3 and there are discounts for bulk orders.

Wear the campaign badge and T-shirt. Badges cost €2.

## Pat Rabbitte pledges to remove US troops



LABOUR leader Pat Rabbitte was asked at a meeting in UCD if he would make the removal of US troops from Shannon a condition of supporting any future government.

In front of an audience of one hundred students, he stated that he would.

The Irish Anti-War Movement welcomed this response but has also asked that it be backed up with a full public statement that reaches wider numbers of people.

NEWS  
BRIEFGolden  
Wheels

Aer Rianta is demanding more cost control and wants to let workers go. But its former bosses get big handshakes.

The former chairperson, Noel Hanlon got a €50,000 Mercedes Benz as a gift while another former executive, Margaret Sweeney, got a €800,000 payoff.

We get a bonus  
— you get cuts

Same story in Waterford Crystal. Chief Executive, Redmond O'Donoghue got a €50,000 pay rise, bringing his salary to €1.026 million a year.

But to 'cut costs', workers were laid off for seven weeks.

No childhood  
education

Just 4 percent of three year olds in Ireland get pre-school education — compared to 90 percent in some European countries.

Now even the OECD is calling for one year parental leave; access to publicly funded crèches; and trained assistants in infants' classes to reduce class sizes to 15.

Fishing  
monstrosity

The two biggest fishing vessels in the world are owned by a Donegal millionaire, Kevin McHugh.

They were built at a time when concerns grew about depleting fish stocks and over-fishing.

The Irish Government lobbied hard in the EU for the biggest one, Atlantic Dawn, to be allowed to fish off Africa — depriving thousands of poor fishermen of their livelihood.

Fortunately, his other ship MVF Veronica has now been banned from African waters. However, McHugh wants to move it on to Australia where environmental groups are making loud protests.

The most unequal  
State in the EU

Ireland is the most unequal state in the EU.

The wealthiest 20 percent earn five times more than the bottom 20 percent.

And that is after seven years of social partnership, which was supposed to be about sharing out the gains.

editorial

# BERTIE AHERN'S CABINET RE-SHUFFLE: A further tilt to the Right

**AFTER THEIR** local election defeat, Fianna Fáil politicians talked about shifting to the left to recover their working class base.

Front bench spokesperson, Dermot Ahern, called on the party to break from 'neo-liberal economics'. The party needed a more caring image instead, he argued.

But Bertie Ahern's cabinet re-shuffle shows that FF's shift leftwards has faltered at the first turn. Instead, there has been a further tilt to the right.

Mary Harney's appointment as Minister for Health symbolises what is in store.

She has described the €45 Accident and Emergency fee as a 'small charge' — even though it can amount to one sixth of the weekly income of someone who is above the medical card threshold, currently set at a mere €258.50.

She will try to speed up the privatisation of whole swathes of the health sector. The number of private nursing home beds has already risen by 60 percent since 1997 and new private hospitals are planned in Galway and Sandyford in Dublin. Harney will push the process further.

According to media reports, Ahern tried to get rid of Seamus Brennan after he clashed repeatedly with the transport unions. However, Brennan refused to go and now is running the



■ Several hundred people joined the civil rights march in Derry 36 years after the march that launched the civil rights movement in 1968. One of its main themes was opposition to the homophobic attacks in the area recently

Department of Social Welfare.

The fate of tens of thousands of the poorest people is now in the hands of this arch-Thatcherite.

Replacing him in Department of Transport is another PD convert and militant neo-liberal, Martin Cullen. Cullen will be eager to sell off as much CIE property as he can to his

big business backers. Cullen gets more in corporate donations than any other politician.

Fianna Fail was always the main party of the Irish rich. It pretended it was for the 'plain people' of Ireland but this was a myth inherited from an earlier republican era.

Ahern's re-shuffle shows it cannot even shift its image.

## The Opposition who won't oppose

**WHAT A** disgraceful way the Left parties behaved over the Presidency when they allowed the arch-conservative Mary McAleese to hold onto office without a contest.

McAleese was a former spokesperson for the Catholic Bishops and opposed legislation to liberalise divorce and abortion.

She welcomed Bush to Ireland and barely expressed the outrage that the majority of people feel against his war.

During her seven year reign, her only major 'controversy' was to take Communion in a Protestant church!

When Fine Gael decided to back her again, the Left was given a glorious opportunity to unite around a figure that could oppose the US military using Shannon airport and press for greater liberalisation and social justice.

However, anyone who tried to go forward was met with buckets of cold water. The former UN representative Dennis Halliday could not get real back-



■ Election fiasco: Pat Rabbitte, Michael D Higgins and Eamon Ryan

ing. Michael D. Higgins was shafted by his own leadership.

Worse, Pat Rabbitte then tried to cover up for his cowardice by pretending that Higgins had previously agreed not to run.

The Greens, in turn, bungled the nomination of Eamonn Ryan.

More bizarrely, Sinn Féin never publicly denied reports that they were backing Mary McAleese!



Behind the whole affair is a more ominous warning: This is the first price to be paid for the coalition that is being forged between Fine Gael, Labour and the Greens.

Labour did not want Michael D Higgins to run on a Left ticket because they thought it would jeopardise their relationship with Fine Gael.

And the Greens did not want to upset Labour by pushing their own candidate.

So the appallingly insignifi-



cant Fine Gael leader, Enda Kenny, got his way.

The debacle over the Presidency shows that a new radical Left alliance must be forged among parties and activists, who campaign against war and racism, oppose social partnership, and refuse to compromise with neo-liberalism.

Such an alliance of parties is emerging in Scotland, England, Germany and Brazil. We also need one in Ireland.

# Eamonn McCann

## Sectarianism threatens gay rights



■ Belfast Pride Parade

Last month's Belfast gay pride march was one of the most cheering demonstrations any of us had been on for an age.

The large, loud, gaudy procession was applauded all along Royal Avenue from pavements packed three or four deep with smiling Saturday afternoon shoppers. The only sour notes came from a clump of sad-faced fundamentalists at the City Hall.

It says something about Northern politics, then, that when the Civil Partnership Bill is voted on at Westminster on October 12th, an impression will be given that it's those in favour of gay rights who are isolated on the sidelines, and the fundamentalists who are the mainstream majority.

The Partnership Bill won't deliver equality.

But it's a step in the right direction. It guarantees gay couples who register their relationship the same tax benefits as married couples, social security and pension rights, next-of-kin hospital visiting rights etc.

### Prevent

The six DUP MPs will vote against it. Their aim is to prevent the bill becoming law or, if this fails, to exclude Northern Ireland from its provisions.

One of the five Ulster Unionists may support the bill. The others will vote No.

At the time of writing, the three SDLPers haven't declared their hand, but past performance suggests that abstention is the best we can hope for. Sinn Fein's four members will not, of course, be involved in the proceedings.

The votes of Northern MPs, therefore, are likely to suggest, totally inaccurately, that more than 90 percent of Northerners take their stand with the City Hall hecklers.

New Labour, with its huge majority, could carry the day anyway. But this won't happen.

The vote had originally been set for September 23rd—which coincided with the Leeds Castle talks. Paisley demanded a postponement so he could be at Westminster to vote No. And Blair immediately agreed.

This recalls the performance of Mo Mowlam on the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to the North, which she'd passionately supported in opposition.

But in office she used her clout as a Minister to browbeat Labour back-benchers who wanted to follow through on the policy. "You are stirring up the tribal elders," she warned one MP.

The implication was that pushing for equal reproduction rights for women in the North might rile the likes of Paisley and thus put the prospect of a peace deal at risk.

### Argument

Now the same argument is being used to stymie a move towards equality for gays.

This is a result of accepting a pattern of politics based on the rival rights of "the two communities", so that for practical purposes "equality" means only equality between Catholics and Protestants.

If the fundamentalists succeed in excluding the North from the bill, the battle won't be over. It will have only just begun.

The issue may be devolved to a restored Assembly. But, Assembly or no Assembly, what we will need is to mobilise all who support gay rights, in order to expose the false notion that "Northern Ireland is different".

There is a real chance of beating the bigots on this one.

If we do, we will have struck a blow not only for gay and lesbian couples but for all who have lost out over the years from communal politics allowing bigots to dominate our lives.

# Frame Up attempt



■ Police Ombudsman Nuala O'Loan and Detective Chief Inspector Derek Williamson

THE police ombudsman in the North is believed to have recommended action against a senior PSNI officer for his role in the investigation of an attempted Real IRA bomb attack.

A report by Nuala O'Loan, completed in the last month, accuses Detective Chief Inspector Derek Williamson of trying to manipulate evidence in order to conceal the identity of an alleged

police informer involved in the attempted bombing near Newry in September 2002.

The ombudsman's inquiry was launched following the collapse in November last year of the case against two men, Martin Brogan and Mark Carroll, charged with possession of explosives with intent. A third man, Seamus Doherty, from Derry, is still on remand in connection with the

offence.

Defence lawyers claim that Williamson tried to persuade forensic scientists to suppress evidence pointing to the involvement of Kevin Byrne, who they say had been driving the bomb car when it was stopped outside Newry.

Brogan and Carroll were arrested at a nearby police checkpoint. Byrne, who was not charged, has since disappeared, reinforcing the view that he

was a police agent. Doherty was arrested in Derry some weeks later.

The ombudsman's recommendation emerged in Belfast on 1 October, where a preliminary hearing relating to Doherty's case had been scheduled. The hearing was postponed when the prosecution revealed that it would be seeking a public interest immunity certificate (PII) to prevent publication of evidence relating to Byrne.

## Fruit of Loom's new sweatshop

SIX hundred and thirty textile workers in Derry and Buncrana are to lose their jobs once Fruit of the Loom moves to Morocco.

The company's slash-and-burn policy in the North West has already left thousands on the dole.

It has promised to phase out production here over four to five years, but many fear it will pull out much sooner.

Fruit of the Loom's record in Morocco is a scandal. In 2001, the International Textiles, Garments and Leather Workers Federation found that bosses had hired militia men to intimidate workers who had attended a union meeting at its plant near Rabat.

Eight union reps were sacked and later detained by the police for five hours. All of this happened with the approval of the local governor, who said: 'I don't want unions in my prefecture.'

Workers at the Moroccan plant make garments from the cloth that is cut in Buncrana. Soon they will be weaving and spinning the yarn and dyeing the cloth too — for a fraction of the wages.

Across the economy, average yearly earnings are \$1,181 — that's just over \$20 a week.

Moroccan textiles work-



■ Fruit of the Loom, in search of cheap labour

ers earn as little as 30 cents an hour. When there is an urgent order, they work 10 to 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Union-busting is rife and women workers face physical and verbal harassment.

Those wage levels are precisely the reason why

the US government is pushing Morocco as an investment location. In fact it has just signed a trade agreement which allows US companies to export their goods from Morocco into Europe — duty free.

And it'll be a secure investment location, too. A

briefing from the US Commercial Service says after last year's bomb attacks in Casablanca, the Moroccan government will crack down on terrorism.

With a '23% unemployment rate ... and 19% of the population living below the poverty line, Morocco cannot afford the economic price of terrorism.'

Morocco, in other words, is about to police US interests in the Arab world.

Big business gets an easy ride around the world. But the workers who make the profits whether in Morocco, the US or Ireland are squeezed dry and left on the scrapheap.

Fruit of the Loom is not just a rotten apple — it's part of a global system that's rotten to the core.

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# Iraqi Resistance Speak Out

Attacks on US occupation forces in Iraq now number 70 a day.

But who are the resistance? Here SIMON ASSAF interviews the Iraqi delegation who attended an anti-war conference in Beirut.

**A**cross Iraq the resistance is now known as “al-Muqawama al-Shaabi”—the popular resistance.

Nidal al-Jaz’iri represents women and children’s groups from the southern city of Basra. She says that in the first days after the invasion many people hoped life would improve. But these hopes were quickly dashed:

“In the south we know about the British because we were occupied by them before. Some of our main institutions were set up under British occupation in the 1920s, and there is still a British cemetery near Basra. We hoped we could cooperate with the British, but we were disappointed.

“There still has not been any real reconstruction. Non-governmental organisations came to Basra and made lots of promises, but often they just repainted the walls and made superficial repairs.

“Schools have still not been rebuilt. In many schools the roof still leaks and the floor is just mud. Children come home each day covered in dirt from the mud floor.”

Ordinary people began to organise to demand improvements in basic services, like water and electricity. But, instead of listening to these demands, the British troops ignored them and their representatives.

“People protested about the election of the governor and the appointment of the chief of police in Basra,” says Nidal. “Negotiations began with the occupying troops. People began to mobilise. They began to ask, ‘What about the future?’

“But we found it was impossible to negotiate with the troops.”

Dr Fatima Saloum, editor of the al-Mutahid newspaper, says people in Baghdad began to take matters into their own

**‘The people of Fallujah have risen in rebellion. The Americans cannot enter large parts of the city’**

hands: “It is the ordinary people who began rebuilding the schools, cleaning the streets, running the hospitals—many of which were badly damaged by US bombs.

“People began to ask, ‘What use are all these armies? They don’t even know how to reconnect the electricity.’ We quickly realised that we had to do it ourselves—that we had to run our own towns and cities.”

In Fallujah and Samarra, part of the so called Sunni triangle, the resistance began after US troops opened fire on unarmed demonstrators in the early days of the occupation.

Sheikh Khalil Ibrahim, of the Beni Tamim tribe of Fallujah, says the armed resistance was sparked by US troops sweeping through neighbourhoods:

“First come the air raids, then the troops open up with their artillery, and finally they send in the tanks. They enter the town and seize the men, the youth and sometimes even the women. The only way to stop them is to rise against them.”

He says that after the Fallujah uprising it became clear that “cities that resist and are strong can keep the US out”.

“The people of Fallujah have risen in rebellion. The Americans cannot enter large parts of the city. The Beni Tamim have also liberated Yathrib in the Baled region north of Baghdad and towns near Baquba.”

The resistance has also undermined attempts by the US to sow divisions between Sunni and Shia Muslims.

Sheikh Sa’ad al-Ani of the Sufi Islamic Union of Iraq says that people from across the country helped the Fallujah resistance fighters during the April siege:

“People came from Baghdad, Najaf, and Basra to help Fallujah, and to bring us food and oxygen supplies. They came from every province of Iraq to show solidarity with us.”

Sheikh Sa’ad al-Ani says the victory in Fallujah proved it was possible to defeat the Americans: “The creation of the Fallujah Brigade, which ended the siege, was a victory for Fallujah.

“The religious scholars made an agreement with representatives of the US-backed interim government to select members of the brigade from among the people of Fallujah.”

The Fallujah Brigade has now joined the resistance.



■ Resistance fighters in Iraq

## There will be no civil war

**S**heikh Khalil Ibrahim also dismissed claims that the country would descend into civil war if the US coalition were to withdraw:

“I am a Sunni Muslim, but the Beni Tamim is a mixture of Shia and Sunni. Do you think that as soon as the Americans leave we will start killing each other? That a father will kill his son?”

“This lie about a civil war has only one purpose—to extend the occupation. We say, ‘Get out! Get out of our country. America and your allies, get out of our country. If

you are afraid of civil war breaking out, turn the matter over to the United Nations so that it can bring peacekeeping troops to Iraq.’

“As for the US forces they are completely rejected by every man, woman and child in Iraq, of every religious creed—Sunni, Shia, Christian, Yazidi and Sabian, Kurd and Arab.”

Sheikh Khalil Ibrahim dismissed claims that the resistance in Fallujah is under the control of Al Qaida:

“The Western media claim the resistance is being directed by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the

Jordanian leader of Al Qaida, but this is not true.

“The resistance in Fallujah is controlled by the people of Fallujah. In the other cities it is the same. We believe this is a deliberate lie spread by the Americans to discredit the resistance and to try to stop it from spreading.”

Samira al-Gaylani, a lawyer from Baghdad and head of the secular Progressive Movement of Iraqi Women, dismissed US attempts to play the sectarian card, saying, “Iraq has been mixed for 7,000 years. The resistance has general support among the Iraqi people.”

**Why do they send boys to occupy our country?**

**D**r Fatima Saloum says that there was some sympathy for the troops of the occupying powers:

“We see the young British and US soldiers and most of them are very young—just boys really. We wonder why such powerful armies would send these boys to occupy our country.

“We feel sorry for them because most of them just look scared all the time.

“At first they would give sweets and Coca-Cola to the children, but now they are even scared of the children.

“It is important to know that there are two faces to the resistance—the armed resistance, like in Fallujah and Samarra, but also the other resistance, the civilian resistance.”



■ US occupying troops

## RIGGED ELECTIONS

**T**he Iraqi delegates also dismissed the national elections planned for January.

Nidal al-Jaz’iri says, “People in Basra reject the elections. They are dominated by political forces which are not known to us—people who came from outside Iraq.”

Samira says, “There will not be any democratic elections because the national convention which happened in Baghdad was just a piece of theatre. Everything was decided beforehand. After that kind of convention, you can imagine what the elections are going to be like.”

Sheikh Khalil Ibrahim of Fallujah says elections will not stop the resistance. “Any election which takes place under occupation will not be a genuine, national election, and will not be accepted by the Iraqi people.

“If they impose these elections on the Iraqi people, in order to set up a permanent government which supports America and its allies, the resistance will continue.”

## DISABILITY BILL

# Landmark or betrayal?

**THE LONG** awaited new Disability Bill 2004 has been launched. Minister of State Willie O'Dea described it as "a landmark day for people with disabilities in Ireland."

A previous Disability Bill was withdrawn after huge protests forced the government to promise new 'rights based' legislation instead. So the disability organisations, had very high hopes of this legislation.

In the days immediately following its publication, the national media carried a range of responses from guarded welcomes and reservations to sustained criticisms.

Many welcomed the right of a disabled person to have their needs assessed and to get a statement outlining what services would be provided for them.

The Bill put an obligation on public bodies to make their buildings and services accessible.

There was a commitment to employ increased numbers of people with disabilities in the public service.

There are also restrictions on the use of information gained for genetic testing, for example by insurance companies.

## Problems

But there are also huge problems. You can only appeal a decision through an assessment board set up by the health board. This cannot be considered to be truly independent.

There is nothing in the bill about housing and accommodation needs. The bill also only says that services would be provided where 'practicable' and where resources are available. But a right wing government which cuts taxes can always claim they do not have enough resources.

Already Bertie Ahern was unable to say what resources would be available for the next five years.

The launch of the Disability Bill was accompanied by a 'commitment to a multi-annual Investment Programme for disability support services' - details of which will not be announced until the Government Estimates and Budget.

This has been understood as a masterstroke on the Government's part. It could be used to silence very trenchant criticisms of the Bill's provisions.

Disability groups will know that if they speak out, they may not be funded in forthcoming budgets. This fear may extend to individual families.

And concerns extend beyond the funding question.

A number of different definitions of disability are advanced throughout the Bill for reasons which are not clear.

Implementation of the codes of practice to ensure accessibility to public buildings will be at the discretion of individual ministers - as will employment quotas in individual government departments.

Some disability activists are also asking if the Bill would roll back the advance of equality legislation. There are other laws which guarantee rights in the past and it is not clear that if you can appeal to these laws.

A recent letter in the *Irish Times*

**Bertie Ahern was unable to say what resources would be available for the next five years**

congratulates 'the Government spinmerchants, who have once again pedalled an illusion of caring while using the bill to effectively prevent parents from turning to the courts to secure services for their children - up to now the only means open to them.

So the questions remain.

Why are rights being so attached to the allocation of funding?

Why is the implementation of the codes of practice to ensure accessibility to public buildings at the discretion of individual government departments?

Why are employment quotas at a similar discretion?

Why are plans being prepared for six departments only?

In short, does this Bill fundamentally improve the situation of those with disability or is it a blatant fudge on the part of the government?

■ **Disability organisations have given mixed responses to the government's Disability Bill, Below Irene McKinn**



## 'I just don't believe what politicians say'

**IRENE MCKINN** has an eight-year-old daughter, Megan, who on her good days is described as being very bubbly, funny, loving and sweet. But Megan also has a very rare condition called Smith Magenis Syndrome.

Little known in Ireland, the condition means that Megan has behavioural problems, a moderate learning disability and will never live independently.

Prone to behavioural tantrums and sleep disturbance, Megan also has to grapple with speech difficulties.

Insecurity appears to be the defining feature of those services which are available to Irene and her daughter.

Megan has been lucky to secure a place in St. Peter's School, Rathgar, but behavioural difficulties place a continuing question mark over her transport to



and from the school.

Megan is in need of speech therapy and occupational therapy but experiences great difficulty in securing either.

Having waited for eighteen months for speech therapy, she will now receive an assessment and six sessions but will then be put back on a waiting list.

In receipt of occupational therapy until early summer, there is now no mention of this equally vital service.

Megan has never been offered a needs assessment and Irene worries

constantly that Megan may not be receiving either the care or the medication appropriate to this rare syndrome.

She speaks with great frustration of being referred backwards and forwards between social workers, health nurses, doctors and the clinic to which Megan's care has been assigned.

The provision of a needs assessment would represent a very significant advance which would allow Irene to begin planning for the future, but the absence of an accompanying right to the necessary service is 'infuriating' and 'sickening'.

In the absence of assessment and sufficient information, Irene describes how a parent becomes both very dependent on a particular service centre and very fearful of moving to

another.

Before the summer, Irene was obliged to care for Megan without any assistance whatsoever.

It was only upon reaching a point of total exhaustion that the State appeared able to provide Irene with a home based grant to access vital respite service days each week.

The availability of respite care since the summer months has totally changed her life but its provision is to be reviewed at Christmas.

Meanwhile the promise of occasional respite care in centre called Angels Quest has yet to materialise. For her, the voluntary Carers' Association has been and remains a lifeline.

'I would love to work but it is very hard to get a childminder to look after a child with special needs and in any case I could not afford it.'

'My biggest concern is what will happen to her without me. She would become the Government's problem,' says Irene.

And for her, as a young mother and sole carer, there is the fear of remaining alone.

But the future is a minefield so she tries not to think about it. In any case, the absence of any long-term service entitlement removes the possibility of planning of any kind.

She is extremely angry with the Government. 'I just don't believe what politicians say. If it were one of their children, the availability of services would not be an issue.'

But she has no fears about voicing criticisms of the manner in which the State treats those with disabilities and their carers. 'Maybe I should have, but I don't,' she says.

# UEFA Cup amongst the bloodshed

By **DETTE McLOUGHLIN**

WITHIN ISRAEL, on a day of extensive bloodshed, a small unknown soccer club called Bnei-Sakhnin was a focus for Arab-Israeli pride.

Coming from Sakhnin town, Galilee, with a population of 22,000 Arabs, Bnei-Sakhnin is the poorest squad in the Israeli premier division. The team qualified for the UEFA Cup after unexpectedly winning the State Cup, becoming the first Arab club to represent the Jewish state at international level.

Immediately the Hebrew press set about accentuating the positive. There was lots of talk about harmony encouraged by the State and personified by the team's Arab, Jewish and foreign players. Surely a symbol of its acceptance of their 1 million Palestinian citizens?

The full story of Bnei-Sakhnin was not reported in the Hebrew press.

Amid the mood of hostility towards Arabs in Israel, only 2,000 supporters dared turn up in Tel-Aviv to watch their side win the State Cup.

Since Bnei-Sakhnin and another Arab squad Nazareth qualified for the premiership last year, matches have become a pressure point for tensions with "Death to the Arabs" a common chant from opposition fans.

In June the first fan was convicted of incitement to racism and more cases, mainly right-wing supporters of Jerusalem Beitar, are awaiting prosecution.

In 1976, Sakhnin residents protested against land confiscations stripping away their resources. Six unarmed demonstrators were shot dead by security forces. Each year throughout the Middle East this is commemorated as 'Land Day' — just one of the reasons why Bnei-Sakhnin's success is resented by many Jews, and supported by many Arabs.

The town is completely hemmed in by luxury Jewish settlements. It was an important Arab farming community. Now there is no space. Many Arab homes are under threat of demolition. Homeless families are forced to build illegally on their ancient olive groves. The Jewish Council refuses them construction rights.

The local municipality has been battling with the Council for land to build a stadium for the football team as they don't have a ground. The players have to train on a makeshift pitch. Most big business is in Jewish hands and they refuse sponsorship.

Once the side qualified for international attention UEFA stepped in to avoid Israel the embarrassment of the team's plight coming to light. All matches in Israel would be played in Tel-Aviv for the safety of visiting clubs. Worried by bad publicity Ariel Sharon announced \$2m for a stadium for the club (if they can find land to build it on!).

Just a few hours before the UEFA Cup fixture against Newcastle United, Israel killed 23 Palestinians near Gaza. Maybe this blotted the significance of the match on the night. It certainly didn't seem appropriate to wave the 'Star of David' flag in support of the Arab team.

Bnei-Sakhnin lost 5-1. They may be out of the UEFA Cup but Bnei-Sakhnin remains a focus for Arab-Israeli pride against all the odds!



■ Victory for Bnei-Sakhnin in football, but oppression in life

## EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM

# Four great days you can't afford to miss...

ACTIVISTS attending the ESF will have a packed diary over four days, with hundreds of seminars and workshops covering almost every political topic under the sun.

The meetings are organised around six main themes: war and peace; democracy and fundamental rights; social justice and solidarity; corporate globalisation and global justice; against racism and the far right; and environmental crisis.

### SOME MEETINGS:

Richard Boyd Barrett of the Irish Anti-War Movement, Aleida Guevara (daughter of Che), and Ahmed Ben Bella, hero of the Algerian independence struggle, will be among the speakers at a meeting on 'Challenging US imperialism'.

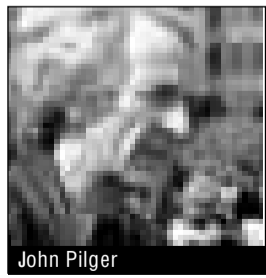
Tony Benn and Eamonn McCann will take part in a session on 'Overcoming wars in Europe'.



Richard Boyd Barrett

Angela Davis, the inspirational American civil rights activist, will speak on women's rights.

Meena Menon, leading activist with India's mill workers' unions, on 'Labour



John Pilger



Angela Davis

rights against casualisation, exploitation and deregulation'.

Journalist John Pilger will be speaking on 'Culture, education, intellectual property and the media'.

Tariq Ramadan, the renowned Muslim theorist recently barred from a teaching post in the US, is among the speakers at a meeting on 'Voices of resistance from the global South'.

Walden Bello, the head of Focus on the Global South, will join speakers from G8 Alternatives, the mobilising group for next year's demonstrations in Scotland, at a meeting entitled 'G8: global poverty and protest'.

Patricia McKenna and José Bové (the French author, farmer and anti-McDonald's activist) will join George Monbiot and others in a debate on 'Environmental crisis and

THURSDAY 14 OCTOBER -

## The opening ceremony

The ESF officially opens in the evening with a welcoming ceremony for delegates from across Europe.

That evening, at the Prince Charles cinema in Leicester Square, socialist film-maker Ken Loach will unveil a new director's cut of his inspiring movie *Bread and Roses*.

The film is about low paid US cleaners and their fight for justice.



Ken Loach

SATURDAY 16 OCTOBER -

## Love Music Hate Racism

Three of the new left-wing parties that have been active in the global movement against neo-liberalism will be coming together to host a rally at the ESF fringe — Britain's Respect, Brazil's P-Sol and Italy's Rifondazione Comunista. That evening sees a pan-European anti-fascist concert at the Astoria in central London, promoted by Love Music Hate Racism and Ethical Threads. The line-up includes Billy Bragg, Lady Sovereign, Skitz & Rodney P, plus Carbon/Silicon — ex-Clash guitarist Mick Jones's new band.



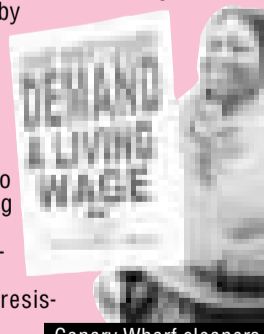
Billy Bragg

FRIDAY 15 OCTOBER -

## Bosses get a scrubbing

The ESF proper kicks off at 9am in Alexandra Palace, with a huge variety of plenaries and seminars.

At 4pm the Canary Wharf cleaners will head up a demonstration against their treatment by multinational companies based in London's Docklands. The evening sees what promises to be an electrifying rally featuring Asher D and others speaking on rap, racism and resistance.



Canary Wharf cleaners

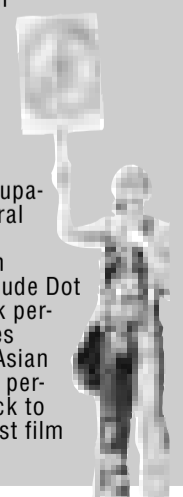
SUNDAY 17 OCTOBER -

## Action after the debates

The Assembly of the Social Movements meets all morning at Alexandra Palace. This is the umbrella body for all the anti-capitalist and anti-war organisations involved in the ESF. It will launch pan-European protests against next year's G8 summit in Scotland.

The ESF comes to a climax with a huge demonstration against George W. Bush, the occupation of Iraq, and neo-liberal privatisation.

The closing concert in Trafalgar Square will include Dot Allison of Massive Attack performing with ex-Libertines frontman Pete Doherty. Asian Dub Foundation will also perform their new soundtrack to the classic anti-imperialist film *The Battle of Algiers*.



■ To find out more, visit the European Social Forum website at <http://www.fse-esf.org/>  
 ■ Irish mobilisation: Hundreds of activists from Ireland are travelling to the ESF. The ATGWU will also be helping members to go. The big Irish delegation will meet up regularly in London. You can contact them on 087 6490261.

# Why the US Left should vote for Ralph Nader

By DECLAN GALLAGHER

RALPH NADER is a veteran US activist who campaigned on road safety and the environment before he became involved in the "big picture" issues.

Working alongside citizen groups, he played an important role in winning an auto safety act, a clean air and clean water act, and the Freedom of Information Act. His activities helped force the US authorities to set up an Environmental Protection Agency and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

So, for the American Left, surely there can only be one choice for president: Ralph Nader. He is the only candidate to have called for an end to the occupation of Iraq. He is also the only one calling for a \$10 per hour minimum wage, Medicare for all, and full public financing of elections (as opposed to corporate donations).

Both the Democrats and the Republicans, to varying degrees, aim to appease big business and this election will be no different. Bush brought the American people into a war they didn't want. But Kerry has attacked him for retreating from Fallujah, claiming he left the town in the hands of 'terrorists'. Both candidates also agree on keeping Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs), where business management companies are contracted to manage health centres and hospitals. Both Bush and Kerry are also opposed to public financing of elections.

Kerry's election team have done their best to portray an image of Kerry as a 21st century JFK — such as being dull and boring in the same manner as Kennedy. Or showing that he has compassion for the ordinary American. But despite the populist image, JFK was a colonial adventurer. He tried to overthrow the Cuban government during the

Bay of Pigs fiasco. He was also responsible for the major escalation of the Vietnam War.

Kerry may disagree tactically with Bush on the management of war on Iraq but he is committed to winning it. This is not the only war Kerry and Bush agree on. Kerry has been a supporter of Israel since he first got elected to the Senate and has voted in favour of Israel on every proposition and resolution. He has visited Israel several times and is quite friendly with Sharon and his administration. He is for the assassination of members of the Palestinian resistance in Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

So why then are leading anti-war activists advocating a vote for John Kerry? And why have the Green Party in the US refused to endorse Ralph Nader as their presidential candidate and instead endorsed an unknown candidate who will be no threat to John Kerry?



■ Ralph Nader

## JOHN KERRY IS NOT THE BEST WORST OPTION

LEFTISTS SUCH as Naomi Klein, Michael Moore and even Noam Chomsky have endorsed Kerry, although Chomsky has said that he also advocates a vote for Nader in swing and safe states.

Chomsky like Kerry is Jewish, but unlike Kerry has renounced his Israeli citizenship due to Israel's occupation of Palestine. Chomsky was

quoted by a *Guardian* interviewer saying, "Kerry is sometimes described as Bush-lite, which is not inaccurate", but he still advocates a vote for Kerry.

The Green Party in the US have said that they will pull out of any state that will take votes off Kerry. They claim that a vote for Nader is a vote for Bush. But according to *Guardian* columnist George

Monbiot, some people on the left in the US said the same thing about the 2000 elections. If it was right to support Nader in 2000, why is it wrong to support him today?

Naomi Klein justifies her motivation for jumping on the "anybody but Bush" bandwagon by saying "not because he will be different but because in the most key areas — Iraq, the 'War on Drugs', Israel/Palestine, free trade, corporate taxes — he will be just as bad.

The main difference will be that as Kerry pursues these brutal policies, he will come off as intelligent, sane and blissfully dull. That's why I've joined the *anybody but bush* camp: only with a bore such as Kerry at the helm will we finally be able to put an end to presidential pathologizing and focus on the issues again," she said.

Another bore you may recall was Bill Clinton. He brought America into more wars than his four predecessors. In Sudan, his administration bombed what they said they believed was a bio-chemical weapons plant, which actually a pharmaceutical factory.

His administration was also involved in the war in the Balkans.

Historically, Democratic Party presidents make promises to all types of groups. Whether you are pro-choice or anti-war, feminist or an environmentalist, you will be let down by a Democrat.

When Bill Clinton was running for president in 1992 he promised to pass a Freedom of Choice act to give women the right to choose on abortion. But he dropped the bill when he was elected and maintained the ban on Medicaid funding for abortion.

Contrary to myth, left-wing candidates have received good votes in the past. Eugene Debs, a founding member of the Socialist Party of America, did well in the 1912 election and Norman Thomas, a socialist Presbyterian minister, received a respectable vote in the 1932 election. So did Ralph Nader in 2000 when it looked like he could finally break the Tweedledum-Tweedledee system.

There were monster 20,000 strong rallies across America. But every time the 'lesser evil'

argument was used to put the Left back in their box and reduce politics once again to the false choice of Democrat versus Republican.

Back in 1968, the brilliant socialist writer Hal Draper was grappling with the same argument when Hubert Humphrey was presented as a 'lesser evil' to Nixon.

Draper argued that between the Lesser Evil and the Greater Evil, the more probable outcome was third case:

"This is when the Lesser Evils who, as executors of the system, find themselves acting at every important juncture

exactly like the Greater Evils, and sometimes worse.

"They are the product of the increasing convergence of liberalism and conservatism under conditions of bureaucratic capitalism."

Draper pointed out that in 1932, in the German presidential elections, the Nazis stood Hitler and the bourgeois parties stood Von Hindenberg.

The SDP and the Communist Party sponsored Von Hindenberg for the simple reason that they thought him to be the 'lesser of two evils'.

However when Von Hindenberg was elected President, he appointed Hitler chancellor. Had the Communists and SDP stood a joint candidate they might have won — or if they hadn't they would at least have created a stronger network of resistance.

While Bush isn't Hitler and Kerry isn't Von Hindenberg, it's safe to say that they have far more in common with each other than divides them.

The Left should get out of the consensus that binds the official candidates together and support one of their own. His name is Ralph Nader.



■ John Kerry and George W Bush



■ Eugene Debs



## cinema

# Life on the Wild Side



■ Out drinking and (below) a sober Fintan O'Toole

By ROISIN RYDER

In a recent article in the Irish Times entitled 'Live fast, die young', Fintan O'Toole claimed that we are 'addicted to danger and allergic to responsibility'. We do not wish to think about the future.

The research, he says, was illuminating. Irish people have the highest rate of binge drinking in Europe — defined as over 5 pints in a session. A quarter of 18-25 year olds don't always use contraception when they have sex, leading to unwanted pregnancies and an increase in the rate of sexually transmitted diseases.

70 percent of Irish drivers think it is acceptable to drive up to 10mph over the speed limit and between one fifth and one-third of drivers don't wear a seat belt. Debt has increased, mostly on mortgages but also on credit cards. Whereas 4 percent of Europeans get into a fight after a drinking session 12 percent of Irish men do.

As an individual you are bombarded with these statistics and you almost feel like wallowing in the old Catholic guilt syndrome. You are not behaving in a responsible way you should be drinking less, eating less, saving more and behaving responsibly in every aspect of your life.



Fintan O'Toole joins in some of this individual guilt tripping. We should be putting more into our pension plans, he sternly claims, making the assumption that workers should be the sole providers of their income when they reach old age.

But there is a clear lack of social analysis in his approach.

He does not really look at the social impact of the Celtic Tiger. Job creation brought more affluence but the Irish also work on average the longest hours per week in the EU. More people work 80 hours per week than in any other European country. The intensity of work has turned people to quick fixes to unwind from their weekly routine.

This has been exacerbated by the failure to put money back into a social infrastructure. Living in Ireland is extremely stressful. There is no childcare to speak of, no decent public transport system, no proper health care, few playgrounds for children, very few facilities for young people, and very few accessible facilities for people who do not wish to go into a pub. Sports facilities are mostly privatised and overpriced.

The more services have been made easier by technology, the longer people have to wait to avail of them. Think of the times spent on a telephone pressing numbers and just wishing you could talk to someone with your simple query.

Ireland has moved from a parochial infrastructure held together by church, the GAA, Fianna Fáil and publicans to a cut-throat competitive society which only sees profit and not people.

In France there is widespread childcare available on a district basis, linked to people's income. It is professional and state subsidised. In a town the size of Gorey there are facilities such as a swimming pool, skateboard ramps, football pitches, all sports pitch, athletic facilities, theatre, town hall, a cinema, and a range of leisure activities. Sex education is taught in the schools with backup community programmes.

This is not to say that France is a model society — the biggest attack on pension rights took place in France.

However there are certain infrastructures which underpin society in France, which deliver social services to working people.

Instead of beating ourselves up for not being 'perfect' citizens, maybe we should look for some of these services.

## music

# Race, religion and love in multi-ethnic Britain



■ Roisin (Eva Birthistle) Casim (Atta Yaqub) in *Ae Fond Kiss*, directed by Ken Loach (below)

By DAVID LYNCH

VETERAN socialist director Ken Loach has many films dealing with the fallout from love and war in his back catalogue.

In the latter category, *Land and Freedom* (1995) and *Carla's Song* (1996) were excellent explorations of the effects of war on the individual and the fight against oppression. In the former category Loach's *My Name is Joe* (1998) was a sympathetic portrayal of urban love and the crushing effect of chronic alcoholism.

His most recent offering, *Ae Fond Kiss* (2004), is a most subtle treatment of race, religion, and relationships in modern multi-ethnic Britain. With obvious comparisons to the most famous of all love stories, Loach's film is far more than just a gritty Romeo and Juliet with Glaswegian accents.

*Ae Fond Kiss* deals with

the pressures on second generation Muslims growing up in Britain, with racial discrimination from official society and cultural pressure from family. In doing so, Loach gives a nuanced and sympathetic insight into Muslim Britain — far from the fundamentalist vision that is to be found in the pages of *The Sun* and other tabloid rags.

The film tells the tale of the growing relationship between the super cool part-time DJ



Casim (Atta Yaqub), a second generation Pakistani from Glasgow, and the instantly likeable Roisin (Eva Birthistle), a bright and bubbly music teacher from Ireland.

As their relationship develops, the pressure on them to end it grows. Casim's parents, Tariq and Sadia, are devout Muslims and plan for him to marry his beautiful cousin Jasmine, who is soon to arrive in the UK.

His proud father spends all his spare time supervising the building of an extension to the family home where the couple are to live.

Loach shows how intense the pressure on Casim is to go along with the arranged marriage although he does not want to. But in doing so, Casim's family are not shown as unthinking bigots.

His father tells his son that the only way that Muslims can survive with racism all around them is to stick together and to continue the strong bonds

of religion and tradition. Casim understands where his father is coming from.

Proudly he tells Roisin of how he had left partitioned India with nothing in the 1940s and how, despite being spat at and discriminated against by racists in Britain, he still managed to keep his family together and build up a business.

And as a Catholic, Roisin finds that her own community are not very supportive either. The local Parish Priest gets her sacked from her job in the Catholic school over the whole affair.

At a time when much of the media is obsessed by a fake 'clash of civilisations' between the Muslim and Western worlds, Loach shows through the growing love between the two main characters that despite the problems, real life is a lot more hopeful.

■ *Ae Fond Kiss* is now showing in UGC on Parnell Street.

## Incendiary Cinema

THE Irish Film Institute (IFI) has just launched an evening cinema course titled 'Incendiary Cinema', which, according to the promotional literature, will explore 'the history, politics, and aesthetics of some of the most provocative films ever made'.

Each film is followed by a talk, which is restricted to those who have signed up and paid for the course. However, IFI

members can go to any of the films as part of the normal IFI schedule. (IFI annual membership costs €20.)

*Socialist Worker* recommends *Battleship Potemkin*, 12 October; *Battle of Algiers*, 26 October; and *Fahrenheit 9/11*, 16 November.

■ For details of each film, go to <http://www.irishfilm.ie/educ/evoco2.asp?SID=62>



■ *Battle of Algiers*

**SOCIALIST  
WORKER  
FORUMS**  
All Welcome

**ARTANE**

MacDonalds and the politics of food  
Tuesday 19th October  
830pm, Artane Beaumont  
Family Recreation Centre

**BALLYFERMOT**

Bring the Troops Home  
- What is the Future for  
Iraq, Wednesday 20th  
October 8.00pm  
Upstairs in Ruby  
Finnegans, Lower  
Ballyfermot

**CLONDALKIN**

After McDowell's  
Referendum - Are Irish  
people racist? Monday  
11th October 8.00pm  
Upstairs in the Steering  
Wheel, Clondalkin  
Village

**DUBLIN NORTH CITY**

Torture, State Violence  
and Bush's War on Civil  
Liberties, Wednesday  
13th October 8pm  
upstairs in O'Neills Pub  
(formerly The Snug),  
Dorset Street

**RATHMINES:**

Why is the West afraid  
of Islam Portbello Hotel,  
Monday 11th October  
8pm Speaker: Kieran  
Allen

**TALLAGHT**

Public meeting against  
racist attacks  
Details 872262

**WATERFORD:**

The US Elections: Is  
Kerry and Better Than  
Bush? Phil Grimes pub,  
Johnstown, Monday 11th  
October at 8.00pm:  
Speaker:  
Roy Hassey.

**For details of  
Socialist Worker  
meetings and  
activities in other  
parts of the country  
contact:  
(01) 872 2682**

# Has the wildcat returned?

DUBLIN Busworkers staged two unofficial stoppages recently.

Here *Socialist Worker* interviews an activist with the *Busworkers Action Group* about the mood among the grassroots.

The Busworkers Action Groups is a longstanding network of rank and file activists that works inside the unions.

*Q: Seamus Brennan has been moved from the Department of Transport. Do Bus workers see this as a small victory in their campaign against privatization?*

A: To an extent. Brennan said that a quarter of Dublin Bus would be privatized by January 1st 2004.

We are still here, though, and he is gone. It was our willingness to take action which forced them to retreat.

But on the other hand, he has been replaced with Martin Cullen who is a carbon copy, a clone. Both of them are committed to privatization – but he will have to take us on to get it.

*Q: What were the two wildcat strikes about?*

A: There were two separate incidents. The terminus of some routes operating out of Conyngham Road were relocated further back from Wood Quay to Pearse St. But no allowances were made for the drivers who had to go through heavy traffic or stop at more points.

The strike was a direct outcome of a deal accepted at the top of the unions. It showed that the grassroots are restless.

The other incident occurred in Ringsend after a driver on a double decker bus was urinated on. Some clowns went upstairs and urinated down the periscope.

The driver did not want to off sick because it would have meant a drop in pay. But he did want assault leave to recover – and rightly so.

But again a recent union deal has given local managers more power to refuse this leave. There was a four hour picket and the drivers

were told the situation would be monitored.

*Q: Do the two incidents show that confidence is returning to the unions?*

A: You have to be careful there. Partnership has meant that the union reps often work closely with management and see every action by workers as trouble that has to be put out.

The incidents showed that many workers do not like the deals that have been negotiated and are willing to take action. But there is a long way to go.

*Q: How does the Busworkers Action Group operate.*

A: The BAG is network of drivers which came together about seven years ago. We produce a regular bulletin which is distributed widely. We want to restore power to the grassroots membership; we oppose social partnership and we try to keep an eye on the union leaders and pressurize them to take action.

We have organized public



■ Many workers do not like the deals that have been negotiated

forums against privatization and have sought to link up with the anti-globalisation movement.

Some of our supporters, for example, went to the huge protests against the G8 in

Genoa.

We believe in working inside the existing unions – to take them back for their membership. It is all about returning power to the grassroots.

## Bin Tax Campaign Demands Left Parties Vote Down Tax

DUBLIN CITY Councillors will vote on a budget for the coming year in December. The estimates to be presented by the City Manager of November 1st will contain a bin tax.

Since this year's local elections the Left have had a clear majority on the City Council. Unfortunately, the Labour group have a formal alliance with Fine Gael, PD and the Greens on the Council.

However, Sinn Fein and the independents are so far working together on a strategy to try defeat the bin tax. They will attempt to put forward alternatives to the budget which eliminates the bin tax or at the very least reduces to a nominal charge of one euro per year.

A number of resolutions are already before the Council. One is calling for an amnesty for non-payers whose arrears are already mounted to nearly €800 euro. Another resolution calls on the City Manager to stop the issuing of litter fines to residents who have excess refuse outside their houses.

No information or warnings of fines



■ Anti Bin Tax protest

was given to any housing estates in Dublin but litter wardens are consistently giving them throughout the city.

The Dublin Campaign Against the Bin Tax have been holding public meetings to invite all locally elected

Councillors to state where they stand on the budget. The key demand to the Councillors is to vote down any budget which includes a bin charge.

The vote on the budget will be very tight but just as happened a few years ago the Lord Mayor who has the casting vote could make the crucial difference.

tion then that is what the Councillors who oppose the tax must do."

Nearly 100 people attended a public meeting in Ballyfermot. Local councillors Tony Smithers (SF) and Vincent Jackson (Independent) told the meeting they were totally committed to defeating the bin charges and would support resolutions put forward for alternatives budgets.

They stopped short of agreeing that the councillors should push the issue to the abolition of the city council by the Environment Minister. But local people consistently asked why the Lord Mayor, Michael Conaghan, from Ballyfermot refused to attend the meeting. As John from Ballyfermot Crescent said, "The Lord Mayor attended every public meeting of the campaign before the elections and put himself on side with us. Where is he now?"

### All Out for November 1st

THE CAMPAIGN is calling for a huge mobilization outside the first estimates meeting at City Hall on 1st November at 6.30pm.

Brid Smith of the Ballyfermot Campaign called on people "to turn out in massive numbers for this protest to send a clear message to the councillors that this campaign has not gone away is demanding that those who were elected to end this injustice vote down the city manager's budget.

Campaigners in Crumlin, Drimmagh, Walkinstown and Ballyfermot have organized a letter campaign to the local councillors calling for their commitment to end the bin charges.

There has been a huge response to this campaign with local people queuing up to sign the letters in Ballyfermot to demand that their Lord Mayor Michael Conaghan stands with the people on this issue.

## 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.....

### Big Meetings held in Areas

AT A public meeting in Crumlin attended by 350 local people, Independent Socialist Councillor Joan Collins, called on the Labour Group, Sinn Fein and the Independents "to stick together on this issue.

The people voted for change in the local elections and all of these groups used their opposition against the bin tax to get votes. Now we need to see their action on the issue.

"If the City Manager is confronted in this way and the government tries to abolish the City Council it would mean a huge political crisis for Fianna Fail/PD government. If that is what it takes to defeat this unjust double tax-

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

**send reports to *Socialist Worker* phone (01) 8722682 email socialistworker@swp.ie**

*SWP ANNUAL CONFERENCE:*

# A new confidence

THE Socialist Workers Party held its most successful conference ever over the weekend of the 24th to the 26th of September in Dublin.

Over one hundred delegates representing party branches throughout Ireland met to share their experiences in building movements against war, racism, privatisation and in defence of public services.

Joe from the Dublin North City summed up the new confidence of the party 'Walk into any bookshop and the shelves are lined with books critical of Bush and his cronies in the new world order.

"Socialists have got to be the ones who help to organise this dissent and facilitate people participating in struggles for democracy and social justice"

The many new faces on the conference floor were an indication of the party's active role in a whole range of international, national and local campaigns. Valerie from the Dun Laoghaire Branch said: "I was very happy with the conference.

"As a new member it was important for me to see how open the party is to change and to new ideas and approaches in dealing with issues"

The conference agreed that the most important task facing socialists in Ireland was the forming of activist alliances with the many different groups and individuals that are taking part in the social movements.

Kerry Ann from Derry spoke from the floor about the Socialist Environmental Alliance in The North.

"The SEA has a reputation for taking on issues that the other parties have abandoned.

"We are contacted all the time by people who want to take on to defend their communities against the attacks of the right. In the next few weeks we are going to organise meetings and protests across the north against the introduction of water charges.

"We will be doing this in alliance with both protestant and catholic

activists"

The conference agreed to strengthen work in the unions by establishing an Industrial Department made up of some of the party's leading union activists.

It will encourage SWP members to unionise their workplaces and help establish rank and file groups in major unions.

The party agreed to throw its full backing behind the recently launched campaign by the Irish Anti War Movement to drive US troops out of Shannon.

As resistance grows in Iraq, the left must redouble its efforts to expand the anti-war movement.

Reports were also heard from members involved in anti-racist work, both in the North and the South.

The party agreed that there was a need for a broad based movement that neither concentrate solely on lobbying from the inside - or of organizing activities for the committed minority.

In the wake of McDowell's referendum, it is vital that a new movement emerges which gives confidence to anti-racists.

The SWP has also embarked on a strategy to deepen the party's roots in local areas.

Gino Kenny from Clondalkin who ran in the local elections said, "Over a thousand people, many of whom never voted before, turned out to vote for the SWP in the local elections.

"That was because we stood clearly for the interests of working class people and had a record of involvement in community campaigns, for example against the bin tax, and we were also known as anti-war activists.

"It is clear that many people are seeking a political alternative that is about more than just vocal opposition.

"Running in elections is important and must be taken seriously but it has to be linked to building activists networks on the ground that will take on the issues as they come up".

## Disability rights fight in Ballymun



■ Five year old Megan, still waiting

By KEVIN WINGFIELD

**BALLYMUN** mother of three Adrienne Cahill has been organising protests outside Ballymun Civic Offices to get fair play for her disabled daughter.

Five year old Megan suffers from cerebral palsy and is wheelchair-bound. Adrienne and her children have lived on

the third floor of a decaying block of flats in Ballymun for the past nine years.

Adrienne told *Socialist Worker*, "The lift is often not working and my daughter is wheelchair bound. Getting her from our flat to the school bus is a nightmare."

As part of the Regeneration project, the flats are to be

demolished and replaced with houses and apartments. Adrienne was told last year that she had been allocated a new house in the area which would be adapted to meet the needs of her child.

"I was told the house should be ready some time in 2006 and I agreed to accept it. But then I got a phone call to say that my daughters Occupational Therapist had reported on the changes needed to make the house suitable for my child. Ballymun Regeneration (BRL) said that the changes could not be made and I could not therefore take the house.

"Officials from the city council even threatened to take me off the housing list and even evict me if I didn't accept another place that was completely unsuitable.

"I am standing up for rights for my disabled child. Why can't the BRL and the City Council give my child what she is entitled to—wheelchair accessible housing?"

Reacting to the popular and lively protests, BRL boss Eamon Farrelly met with Adrienne and her supporters, but she feels that no real progress was made.

"I am going to continue the protests, every day if necessary, it's the only weapon I have left," she told *Socialist Worker*.

Contact 086-3074060 if you want to help the fight for disability rights in Ballymun.

## RESIDENTS PROTEST STOPS TRAFFIC

By SHAY RYAN

**Residents of the Cuffe street Mercer House area in Dublin's south inner city have been protesting over the lack of a proper traffic management system which is putting peoples lives at risk.**

They have blocked the traffic from entering into the surrounding streets of their area

everyday from 1 to 6pm.

Lorraine said "We highlighted this problem four years ago to the city council. We've had meetings with officials, written letters, handed in petitions but nothing has been done. Will it take the death of one of our kids before they give us what we're entitled to?"

Sandra explained "The younger children have no where to play around here so what we want is a system that

slows down the traffic which at the moment just speeds right through our streets."

The new one way system around St. Stephens Green has made matters worse.

Marie agrees but said " If they can spend millions on the Luas why can't the council bring in simple things like speed ramps and pedestrian crossings so local people can feel safer in our neighbourhood."

## Dundrum: Making a Splash

Over 200 hundred people turned up to a recent meeting in Dundrum about the closure of a local swimming pool.

It is now almost three months since the swimming pool at the Dundrum Family Recreation Centre was shut. With just two community pools left in the whole Dun Laoghaire Rathdown council area, anger is growing at the government's negligence.

Campaigners are outraged by the plans to build a €10 million gym in Leinster House. One woman said. 'Expecting people to jump into cars and travel half way across the city for an hour long swim is just mad. There are very few facilities for children anywhere in the area and despite all the talk about childhood obesity the government is actually colluding in the closure. But they look after themselves, though.'

The campaign is committed to securing full public funding to build the pool.

According to Deirdre Cronin, co-ordinator of SPLASH- campaign for a community pool, "People in the area voted unanimously at a public meeting that money for this pool must come from public funds. The campaign is putting in its own submissions to the Departments of Health and Education and people across the area are petitioning door to door.

'At the end of October local campaigners are holding an information day in the local supermarkets when the plans for the new pool which were drawn up over five years ago will be on display for everyone to see. "

For info phone or check out [www.splash-dfrc.org](http://www.splash-dfrc.org).

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## DUP politicians stoke up racism

The DUP have been winning praise for their new found 'moderation' in contemplating a government with Sinn Fein. But beneath the gloss, the party is still made up of right-wing bigots.

Comments made recently by a Ballymena DUP councillor, Robin Stirling, show that the upsurge in racist attacks in Northern Ireland is being driven by a minority hell bent on creating a political climate in which racism and racist attacks can grow.

At a recent local council meeting Stirling declared that he did not believe in racial equality, insisting there was a 'hierarchy' of races. 'The nub of the problem is the idea that all ethnic groups are equal. I cannot subscribe to this. At a given time in history there is a hierarchy.'

Such comments by 'respectable' politicians like Stirling (who is also a retired school principal) encourage racist thugs to attack ethnic minorities.

The DUP has a long record of stoking up racism in the North. During a debate on asylum seekers in the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2001, DUP MLA Jim Wells attacked Yugoslavian asylum seekers for trying to 'hoodwink' the authorities about political persecution.

He said that the UK was being 'swamped' by 'thousands if not millions' of migrants who were coming simply to get a 'better lifestyle'. Wells accused asylum seekers of wanting to come to the UK because the 'range of social security benefits is better in the United Kingdom than elsewhere.'

He added: 'I do not believe that we, as United Kingdom taxpayers, should pick up the bill for it.'

Wells then directed his vitriol at Chinese students. He said that there had been a huge increase in the



■ Above: recent anti racist demonstration, below Jim Wells DUP attacked asylum seekers



falsehood in China, applies to a uni-

number of Chinese students coming to UK universities and 'it has been discovered that in almost every case, the Chinese student obtains the necessary qualifications by

iversity in England, and then promptly drops out and disappears into the community, never to be seen again.'

Another DUP MLA David Hilditch stated: 'One country's asylum seeker is another country's terrorist.'

This is the racist agenda being pushed by bigots who masquerade as respectable politicians. Their poi-

son aims to point the finger of blame at immigrants, rather than themselves, for the poverty, poor housing, and lack of jobs in the North.

This, taken together with the rise in Islamophobia caused by the 'War on Terror', goes a long way to explaining the rise in racist attacks in the North.

## The Racist Nightmare

600 racist attacks were reported between July 2003 and July 2004

But, according to Barbara Muldoon who works the office of human rights lawyer,

Padraigin Drinan, this is an under-estimate. 'From the cases we deal with, we believe the real figure is about five times higher'.

Recent incidents include:  
Murder of a

Lithuanian man, whose body was found in Ballinderry river, Cookstown

Murder of Brig Sharma in Moneymore

Brutal attack on a Chinese woman who was 9 months

pregnant and her husband in Village area of Belfast

Attack on a Venezuelan man in South Belfast. The attackers called him a 'Paki' and split his skull.

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Photo: GRAINNE CLOSE