

Socialist Worker

€1.00/£0.70p

NO. 252 | DECEMBER 2005

WWW.SWP.IE

INSIDE: Irish Ferries Special

Outsourcing, the
Celtic Tiger, Ahern
and racism

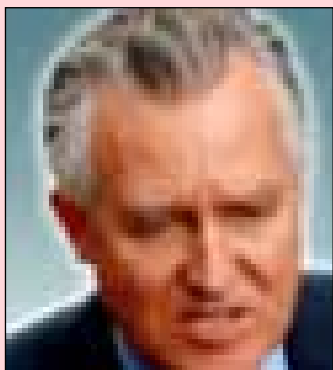


By Kieran Allen
Page 6&7

Interview with
Tony Layton,
International
Transport Workers
Federation

Page 9

Hain's
privatisation
plans for Northern
Ireland



By Eamonn
McCann
Page 12

War and CIA
crumbling in Iraq



Page 8

Irish Ferries: STOP THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM ALL-OUT STRIKE TO WIN

December 9th one-day protest is a good start but not enough. A general strike is required to beat Irish Ferries' outsourcing plans



Socialist Worker spoke to Dermot Meagher, one of the officers occupying the Irish Ferries' ship the Isle of Inishmore to get his views.

"The morale is high on the ship. We are prepared to stay as long as it takes. Some of our shop stewards are locked into the engine room but they are in constant contact and are in good spirits.

"They have enough supplies to last them a long time. We are maintaining a routine on board, checking health and safety and keeping ourselves going with some routines."

"There is so much at stake for us and it's not just our jobs. A lot of us come from a long line of seamen. I have two brothers and a sister working at sea and my father was a seaman all his life.

"This is about jobs for the

future and the future of all jobs in this country. We have no objection to any nationality working here but they have to be paid properly and given proper conditions."

"Rothwell and management think they are in a unique position and say that the rest of shipping is outsourced. This is true on the long voyage runs, the like of tankers, bulk carriers and containers.

"They might do four cargo a month. But remember we do four cargos a day back and forth between Britain and Ireland.

"While management are safe in their beds we move through waves in all sorts of weather conditions and this business of super exploita-

tion of people is just not on."

"This year freight cargo alone is up by 14% so there is no way this company can lose. It is only workers who can lose in this situation. Ireland in 2005 is a massive Celtic Tiger economy. There is no way this type of industrial relations is acceptable. It's disgraceful."

"We firmly believe that politicians can do an awful lot to stop this situation. Bertie could bring in legislation that would prevent the outsourcing of jobs.

"Something has to be done with these mavericks that think they are above the law."

"All the solidarity we can get is crucial. That's why we welcome

this one-day of protest from workers across the country and its great to hear the response that is coming from across the unions. Everybody knows this is the thin end of the wedge and that all our jobs and futures will be threatened if this is not stopped."

"The solidarity and support from workers in Wales and France has been fantastic.

"We need a massive show of strength from all workers on December 9th and if necessary after that we need to bring this country to a halt and we know that the support is there for this battle."

Continued on page 4 >>

**NO TO OUTSOURCING
MIGRANT AND IRISH WORKERS UNITE AND UNIONISE**

Health Conference calls for support for Irish Ferries workers

By Dr Peadar O Grady

Ireland's first anti-privatisation health conference: "Healthcare reform — For people or for profit?" was recently held in Liberty Hall. Delegates heard from health workers and campaigners of Mary Harney's plans to privatise the Irish health service by running down public hospitals and opening up for-profit private hospitals in their place.

SIPTU Nursing Unit official Louise O'Reilly outlined how outsourcing cleaning staff led to a decline in conditions and a rise in infections like MRSA. A warm round of applause greeted her when she ended her address by calling for all health workers to support the Irish Ferries workers.

Earlier nurse Mary Smith told the conference that plans to replace nurses with poorly paid 'hostesses' was no different to what was happening in Irish Ferries. She called for taxes on the rich corporations and a drop in stealth taxes on ordinary workers to improve health standards.

Researcher Clare Farrell showed how inequality is leading to a fall in health standards in Ireland. She presented evidence that more than 5000 lives a year would be saved if Ireland had the same levels of social spending as other EU countries.

Prof Allyson Pollock brilliantly outlined the rapid and undemocratic privatisation of the NHS in the UK over the past 25 years since Thatcher came to power. Dr John Barton clearly showed in his presentation that Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) are more expensive and offer poorer public hospital and nursing home care.

This is because they use expensive loans, and waste money on administration and advertising costs and take out massive profits and executive salaries. This means they spend less on services, cutting staff numbers, pay and conditions.

Dr Peadar O'Grady described how the government is volunteering Ireland as a guinea pig for the privatisation and cuts in public services being forced on other countries by the World Trade Organisation's



Crisis in the Health Service

GATS treaty and the sidelined EU Services Directive. This directive known previously as the Bolkestein directive is being pushed again by the new commissioner Charlie McCreevey. It applies the 'country-of-origin' principle to health and other services and will lead to multinationals flying a flag of convenience, setting up in whichever country has the lowest safety and labour protection.

This FF/PD government has refused to fund the 3000 beds promised in their own 2001 health strategy. A new ICTU report released on Friday 25th by Maeve Ann Wren and Prof Dale Tussing strongly criticised the government's failure to replace the 3000 beds. They showed that only 535 beds have been opened since 2001. They also reject Harney's plan to use tax-payers money to fund private hospitals with tax-breaks and public hospital land.

The conference was opened by an impassioned appeal from Dick Roche of the South East Radiotherapy Campaign for all campaigns and unions to join together and take action through meetings and protest demonstrations to demand a properly funded public

service and halt Harney's privatisation drive.

In the final session Fintan O'Toole powerfully compared the two-tier health service in South Africa under Apartheid based on race with the two-tier Irish system based on wealth and class. INO President Madeleine Speirs spoke of the frustration with understaffing among nurses and called for the embargo on recruitment to be lifted immediately. IMO President-elect Dr Christine O'Malley outlined the huge increases in demand being met by health staff with only 3/4 of the beds they needed and slated the government's blaming of staff as the politics of 'divide and rule'.

Closing the conference, Peadar McMahon of the Monaghan Community Alliance was supported in his call for the defence of Monaghan hospital as the thin end of the wedge in the government's drive to shut down public services and replace them with for-profit hospitals with no democratic input.

Monaghan Hospital and Irish Ferries are two struggles which must be won to halt the race to the bottom which is wrecking the lives of Irish workers.

Future of USI in question

By Andrew Payne

The future of the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) has been thrown into question following the resignation of its Deputy President/Campaigns Officer Ruth Ni Eidhin and its Education Officer Daithi MacSithigh.

Trouble was always brewing ahead of the Special Congress held in Trinity College on 26th November as delegates prepared to discuss controversial constitutional changes.

USI President Tony McDonnell led a contingent seemingly determined to remove social justice from the union's agenda.

Proposed was a move to change the requirement of votes needed for a human rights issue 'not directly related to students' to pass from 1/2 + 1 of delegates to 2/3 + 1.

This inevitably raises the ques-

tion of what human rights issues are related to students? In the view of Mr McDonnell, as he expressed at the Congress, the bin tax for example is not one of them.

This clearly neglects the fact that the bin tax affects many students directly. Likewise moral issues such as the anti-war movement are of legitimate personal concern to thousands of students across the country.

That's before even mentioning issues on students' doorstep such as poverty and inequality in society. This is clear from even a glance at the motions passed at USI's last national congress, which included support for the anti-war movement, the boycott of Coca-cola and opposition to the Criminal Justice Bill.

Fergal Scully, former President of the UCD Students' Union has described USI as 'making trouble for themselves' with the changes.

He described the policy whereby a steering committee would decide whether an issue is relevant to the membership as 'unprecedented'. 'No other union requires it and it is unnecessary'.

The changes, which were passed, in effect allow the delegates of just two colleges in some situations to veto the wishes of the vast majority of the student movement. As if this weren't enough, Mr McDonnell proceeded to accuse anyone who opposed the motion of being 'just a careerist out to further their own political ambitions'.

Ciaran Weafer, former Deputy President of the UCD SU, was later expelled from the meeting for holding a sign accusing Mr McDonnell himself of being a liar and a careerist.

The days following the Congress saw not just the resignation of Ni Eidhin and MacSithigh,

who had opposed the change, but widespread rumour of colleges leaving the union. Trinity College SU, in which both officers formerly served in similar positions, has for example set up a working group to review their position.

All sides should not forget the importance of a national union however. Such an organization has a much greater ability to act, with the right leadership, than individual colleges alone.

Something has however gone seriously wrong when the organization fails to look out for the rest of society, even when demanded to by the vast majority of its membership. Students on the left should work together and in their own unions to ensure they pursue a social agenda and should stand for USI positions in the spring to ensure McDonnell's like aren't in power again next year.

Andrew Payne is in Trinity College and a member of Labour Youth

QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT

"I think that there is no more that we can do"

Taoiseach Bertie Ahern on the Irish Ferries outsourcing plan

"We want Bertie out here to mingle with us and to see us. He drives his big hundred-grand car, and it is about time somebody said something to him. He is killing his own people on the streets"

One of the homeless protestors outside the Dail at the end of November. Bertie Ahern refused to meet them.

"There are 45 of us from the McGinley family in this part of the halting site with no electricity of our own, only one toilet and one hose. One hose wasn't going to put out that fire"

Hilda Doherty, relative of the two young boys who died in a caravan fire in Clondalkin

"I believe it is an eruption of a political volcano in Israel."

Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian Authority negotiator on Ariel Sharon's resignation from the Likud and his founding of a new party Forward.

"Is rap responsible for the crisis in the suburbs? My answer is no."

The French Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, dismisses claims by some of his party colleagues that rap music fuelled suburban rioting in France.

"I doubt the boss will be in the mood to attend"

General Guillermo Garin, spokesman for General Pinochet, after the former Chilean dictator's decision to cancel his 90th birthday lunch

"This agency does

not do torture. We use lawful capabilities to collect vital information and we do it in a variety of unique and innovative ways, all of which are legal and none of which are torture."

CIA director Porter J Goss

"The prisoner is bound to an inclined board, feet raised and head slightly below the feet. Cellophane is wrapped over the prisoner's face and water is poured over him. Unavoidably, the gag reflex kicks in and a terrifying fear of drowning leads to almost instant pleas."

CIA operative, describing "waterboarding", one of six "enhanced interrogation techniques", to ABC News

"They're withdrawing and calling fraud. What fraud? Accept the truth!...It was them that betrayed the people's hopes for so many years"

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on the decision of some parties to withdraw from current elections.

"Your offer today to personally gift me a new car to encourage me to remain on in my role is wholly inappropriate. In my view you should not have made such an offer and I reject it utterly."

Niall Phelan who resigned as constituency secretary to Minister of State Ivor Callely expresses outrage at his overtures. In recent weeks up to four civil servants have sought transfers out of Callely's office

INSIDE THE SYSTEM

☠ Derry has the highest rate of child poverty among under 18s in the UK and one of the highest levels in the developed world. In some electoral wards as many as 4 children out of every five live below the poverty line.

☠ The Society of St Vincent de Paul has appealed for public donations after a year, which saw demand for its services increase to a record cost of 33 million euros.

The society said the need for cash assistance, food supplies and fuel was increasing. Brian O'Reilly, national president criticised Government policy which has given priority to the needs of economic growth, but this had resulted in a very uneven distribution of the fruits

of this success.

"The richest 10 per cent of the population are nearly 10 times more wealthy than the poorest 10 per cent," he said. "This hardly fulfils the intention of the Constitution, which proclaims that we will cherish all the children of the nation equally."

☠ Irish hospitals in greater crisis than ever. More people on trolleys than this time last year. INO figures show a 6% increase from 2004.

Women in the South have to wait up to 2 years to access mammograms. A woman from Clonakilly was told that she would have to wait 18 months to be seen by a consultant after she discovered a lump in her breast that subsequently required urgent surgery.

☠ According to the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia the Roma are the ethnic group most vulnerable to racism in Europe. Ireland reported the biggest increase in general racist attacks in Europe between 2001 and 2003.

☠ Recent research on sports facilities in schools revealed 75% of schools don't have sports halls, over 50% don't have indoor facilities and almost one third have no access to a swimming pool.

☠ Ireland has significantly over shot EU targets for producing green house gases, acidifying substances, ozone and municipal waste. Urban sprawl is also increasing at a greater rate than anywhere

else in Europe.

☠ Women graduates earn 11% less than their male counterparts. Women work fewer hours but the ESRI also found that men were more likely to have received employer-sponsored training, were more likely to have received promotion and were also more likely to have received bonuses in the last 12 months.

☠ In 2002 the distributors of Coca-Cola insisted that a Mexican small shop owner Raquel Chavez sell no other brand of soft drinks. She replied that Mexico was a free country and she could sell what she liked, in particular, a cheaper Peruvian rival to Coca-Cola, Big Coke.

The distributors responded by

cutting off her drinks supply. She took them to court and Coca-Cola distributors were found guilty of trying to enforce a monopoly.

They have had to pay \$60m and concede that they cannot insist on exclusive sales arrangements with outlets.

☠ A march of 300,000 people confronted George Bush when he went to South Korea to attend the Economic Leaders Meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Community (APEC).

☠ One of the costs of sectarianism in Northern Ireland is the election of extremely conservative politicians. DUP councillor Maurice Mills recently stated that the tsunami in South East Asia

took place because 'they are not a Christian continent.'

He said, 'Scripture says righteousness exalts nations. Asia is not a Christian nation.' He also stated that the hurricane which devastated New Orleans was sent by God to punish gays and that 'the abominable and filthy practice of sodomy has resulted in the great continent of Africa being riddled with Aids.'

The DUP when asked if they were going to sack Mills, a spokesperson replied, 'there will be nothing like it.'

☠ Minister for Justice Michael McDowell was jeered in Athlone Institute of Technology yesterday by locals who described the deportation of two Nigerian mothers earlier this year as demeaning and brutal.

Protest/Reports/Struggle

email to swped@eircom.net Phone 01 8722682

GALWAY ANTI WAR

Opposition to warplane show

The Galway Alliance Against War (GAAW) is calling on Galway City Council to rescind the €15,000 grant it gives to the Salthill Air Show each year.

Many complaints have been lodged in recent years at the inclusion of warplanes in the annual June event; and while undoubtedly beneficial to the local economy, many locals and tourists have objected to the glorification of war seen in the "shock and awe" displays of American and British fighter jets and bombers.

Niall Farrell, PRO of GAAW, said that City Council members refused a deputation leave to address the councillors concerning the inclusion of warplanes in last year's show.

This despite the fact that many asylum seekers, for whom the presence of these planes can be a hugely traumatic experience, are lodged along this seafront area.

It is also worth noting that calls (citing noise pollution) for officials to prevent the staging of a Bob Dylan concert in the same location have been seriously entertained.

In this context, it is disconcerting that in one of the self-styled humanitarian and cultural centres of Ireland, the roars of low-flying bombers seem to have taken precedence over the roars of an anti-war icon. It is a safe bet however, that the GAAW prefer the noise of Dylan's protests:

"Come you masters of war. You that build all the guns. You that build the death planes. You that build the big bombs. You that hide behind walls. You that hide behind desks. I just want you to know I can see through your masks".

If GAAW are not successful in preventing the war-planes display this year, then plans will get underway to have a different sort of protest at the next warshow, to include a flotilla of boats in demonstration across the bay.

■ **The Galway Alliance Against War (GAAW) recently held their 2005 AGM which turned out to be an inspiring and motivating meeting. Guest speaker was Richard Boyd-Barrett, chair of the Irish Anti-War Movement (IAWM), who gave an interesting and informative address.**

The recent "George Galloway Speaks" event arranged by GAAW appeared to regenerate renewed interest in the local anti-war group which resulted in new and known faces taking up active roles.

GAAW agreed to send a delegate to the monthly IAWM steering meetings to improve national anti-war links and will also have a number of members joining the all Ireland delegation to the international peace conference in London on December 10th.

Those interested in becoming involved should contact Jamie Murphy 085 7195388.

HOUSING CRISIS

Homeless people are sleeping in cargo containers in Dún Laoghaire

By Jennifer May & Colmán Etchingham

At a meeting called by the Housing Action Group in Dún Laoghaire, it emerged that homeless people are being 'housed' on Health Board property in two metal cargo containers welded together.

This windowless 'shelter' caters for 19 men and two women and is the only hostel-type accommodation available in the Borough; yet people have risked prosecution for housing animals in such conditions.

Those using this facility must queue every night from 8 pm to get a mattress on the floor. Although they pay €10 per week, they are not guaranteed a place. They are overcrowded, without regard to basic human rights and health and safety needs.

Fr Peter McVerry, long a champion of homeless young men in inner-city Dublin, spoke at the Dún Laoghaire meeting: 'We should not offer homeless people accommodation that we would not sleep in ourselves. We are telling homeless people that they are

completely undervalued members of our society. This loss of self-respect that we impose is a denial of a basic human right.' 'There is a wider issue here,' added Fr McVerry: 'This government is opposed to giving people their rights. The right to a home should be enshrined in our laws.' What is happening in Dún Laoghaire is a perfect example of the appalling situation that most homeless people find themselves in. Having no services in their own areas they are forced into the city centre, where whatever problems they have are exacerbated by separation from support networks in their own regions.

Gerry Doyle has been homeless for the last few months. Originally from South Dublin, and unable to find anything in his own area, he has been either in hostel accommodation or sleeping rough, and often uses the night bus service as a safe place to sleep. No longer a young man, he finds it increasingly difficult to cope with this transient lifestyle, and longs for a place to call home.

'I have been moved from pillar to post,'

Gerry says. 'No one seems ready to take responsibility for me; I used to be a council tenant but they don't want to know. I feel like I have been ignored.'

'The amount of homeless on our streets is a direct result of government and council policies. While they are building apartments for the rich they are doing nothing to accommodate the less well-off in society,' says Phil Kenny of the Dún Laoghaire Housing Action Group.

'I think people have become indifferent to the plight of the homeless. We have no understanding of what homelessness is really like. Unless the government start building social and affordable housing and decent emergency accommodation, we will see more and more people living on the streets of wealthy Ireland.'

Anyone affected by or interested in any aspect of housing should come to a demonstration outside the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Council offices on Marine Road on Thursday 15 December at 5 pm.

Info: Christopher Potts @ 085 1555224; Jennifer May @ 086 8432600

EDUCATION

Parents and Teachers unite to reverse staff cuts

By Niall Smyth (District 14, INTO, Disadvantage sub-committee, Personal Capacity)

250 people packed the hall in the Teachers Club, Dublin recently for a public meeting to fight losses of Special Needs Teachers in primary schools in Dublin's north inner city.

Many of the cuts will kick in next year. In the past, teachers were allocated to schools on the basis of psychological assessments of individual pupils.

However, this changed, when the Department introduced a General Allocation System, in which teachers are allocated to schools in proportion to the number of pupils on roll. Schools, therefore, cannot give the same level of support to children.

The meeting was organised by the disadvantaged sub-committee of District 14 of the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO).

Parents and teachers spoke passionately of their anger at the changes, especially at time of great wealth. They demanded that the changes be reversed immediately.

The meeting decided that failing an immediate meeting with Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, parents and teachers would picket the Taoiseach's constituency office. United, inner city communities and the teachers who work there can force change on this issue.

Campaign for commercial-free education launched

By Niall Smyth

There has been increased commercialism of Irish Education from token collecting from local supermarkets for sports and computer equipment, to multinationals sponsoring resources for environmental studies.

They arrive unsolicited into many classrooms, co-ordinated in the main by companies such as Real Event Solutions, who are (in their words) "an educational event management company that offers clients unique and engaging ways of building brand awareness within the youth market."

The target audience our school children are marketed everything from visits to Coca Cola factories to Mc Donald's sponsorship of school's programmes. In response to this a number of teachers and parents have recently come together in a new campaign.

For further information, see: www.commercialfreeducation.com, info@commercialfreeducation.com or phone Joseph @ 086 322 0688

ANTI BIN-TAX

DCC: Rainbow coalition show their true colours

Cllr Joan Collins

On Monday the 28th of November Dublin City Councillors voted for the 2006 Estimates. Last year the Estimates meeting was a charade when the three Independent Cllrs stood to call for a role call vote, not one other Councillor stood with us. It needs five and, therefore, there was no public record of how City Cllrs voted. It was a deliberate strategy of all the parties in the Council to railroad in the Estimates and to allow those Councillors recently elected in June 2004, on an Anti Bin Tax platform, off the hook.

This year a different strategy was adopted by the "rainbow Coalition" of Labour and Fine Gael. The Budget, put forward by the City Manager, was presented as one of the best in 15 years, delivering for the City, etc.

He argued that the Bin tax, which included a 5% increase, had already been signed in by himself a week previous and was not an issue in the Estimates.

After the Manager presented the Estimates Cllr Kevin Humphries, Labour, stood up and said that he was proposing and supporting the



Council workers and Bin Tax campaigners join forces at Collins Ave depot in 2003

Estimates but requested a break of 15 minutes. At this stage the Labour/Fine Gael/Green and PD coalition of 27 Cllrs were not sure how Fianna Fail were going to vote and they needed their support to carry it.

During the break that was clarified and when the meeting resumed Kevin Humphries proposed the Estimates and stated that they would be requesting a roll call vote. FG declared their support and FF. Shortly after that Sinn Fein requested a break of five minutes to discuss their position!

When the meeting resumed they declared their position and that was to vote against the Estimates, which included the Bin tax.

The Independent group who had already made it clear that we would be voting against the Estimates as it included principally for us the double tax of the Bin Tax, lack of funding r.e Local Authority housing and Community amenities. I formally declared that we would be voting against the Estimates. We also called for a roll call vote.

The vote took place and the Estimates were carried by 30

votes to 16, 1 abstention. The 3 Independants, Vincent Jackson, Mick Rafferty and myself, the 10 SF, 2 Lab, John Gallagher and Emer Costelloe and 1 FG, Bill Tormey voted against. Brendan Carr, Lab, abstained. Two Cllrs, Eric Byrne Lab and a FF Cllr left the meeting before the vote.

A grand coalition of Labour, Fine Gael, Fianna Fail, the Greens and the PD's carried the Estimates.

The people of Dublin city know now, as it is on public record, exactly the position of all the Party's and Cllrs in relation to double Taxation.

DUN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN BIN TAX UPDATE

By Colmán Etchingham

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Council has sent out new bin-tax bills. They include demands for arrears and for the new so-called 'pay-by-weight' system. Bills in some cases amount to €1,400. The bin-tax campaign in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown urges householders not to pay these bills.

In Dublin City the courts have ruled that the old flat bin charge was illegal because it gave householders no incentive to recycle. Dublin City Council is appealing, but is unlikely to win. If they lose, they will have to scrap the arrears for the old flat charge and refund those who have paid. This is why Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown

recently announced they will NOT take householders to court to recover arrears. If Dublin City Council loses its appeal (as seems likely), Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown will almost certainly have to scrap the arrears and refund those who have paid.

Non-payment widespread

Dublin Council recently admitted that at the end of 2003 there was over €15 million outstanding in unpaid bin charges. More is outstanding for the subsequent two years. Seemingly, over 50% of people are not paying the bin tax - more than that if you include waivers.

The pay-by-weight system is supposed to be fairer and good for the environment, but it is not. It's

another rip-off. People should not pay this either.

The Council abolished the full waiver for pensioners and people on low incomes. It provides no accessible recycling facilities for the full range of waste materials.

The Council is now charging €100 for the green bin if you recycle all waste and opt out of the black bin service. In other words, you are punished if you are a good recycler.

The new charges discriminate against larger families and people on low incomes. €250-400 per year is nothing for wealthy people, but more than a week's income for some!

The charges encourage people to burn or dump rubbish and so are bad for the environment.

What should be done?

If bin-tax is paid, it will rise rapidly every year. The service will be privatised and water-charges will follow. There is huge anger about the 'Rip-Off Republic'. But anger must be organised. People power stopped the privatisation of Dún Laoghaire baths. The same can happen with the bin-tax if people resist.

Labour, Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil & the PDs all voted for the bin-tax. But a general election is coming and soon they will want people's votes. The politicians can be left in no doubt that they will pay the political price if unjust bin-taxes are not scrapped.

More info: Richard Boyd Barrett 087-6329511 or Christopher Potts 085 1555224

IRISH FERRIES

Stop the race to the bottom

Interview with Dermot Meagher continued from front page:

“Our feelings on this are very strong. We have always been strong union workers. The support we got from Dublin port workers and workers in Rosslare port has been vital. But we expected them to be strong – we have always had a good rapport with them. When Dublin port allowed the Normandy to dock after it was refused in Rosslare the shop stewards went to Rosslare to explain to the workers why SIPTU took the decision to allow Normandy dock. It was a humanitarian move by the union but we made sure it went back empty and wont dock again.

Management’s style is no surprise. We have had to put up with them niggling at us for years, chipping away at leave and other entitlements. But when they outsourced the Normandy a year ago and saw their profits soar, the greed factor kicked in. And that is what this is all about the greed of the fat cats.”



Support in the unions for December 9th

An emergency meeting of Waterford trades council has called for a massive turnout on December 9th from all workers across industry. But nobody is taking the issue for granted.

Shop stewards will travel from factory to factory to talk to other shop stewards and to ensure there is a 100% turnout for the demonstration.

The Communications Workers Union has voted to call all members out on the protests from mid-day and post office workers will march in united contingents together to show solidarity.

They are no strangers to strug-

gle and to marching for justice in their own jobs and are making the links in the fight against the bosses’ greed.

The Civil and Public Services Union have issued a call for Civil Servants across the country to march on December 9th.

But more has to be done to give confidence to workers to stand and walk out without fear of intimidation. In every workplace CPSU reps need to call local meetings to agree to leave the job together and organise a time to walk out.

SIPTU members of the Education Branch have organised meetings in colleges across Dublin

and will be running buses to carry workers into the protest at 1pm.

In the construction industry outsourcing is a real problem for workers.

They are all too familiar with the super exploitation of Eastern European workers and the use of fly-by-night agencies.

Shop stewards on the building sites will be organising a walk-off from 9am. Friday is an early finish on the sites and they want to hit productivity as much as possible.

The teachers unions: INTO, ASTI and TUI have all called on teachers to support the demonstration.

Speaking on Five Seven Live John Carr said:

“We’re asking our members to come out in support of the call by ICTU to participate...because of fact that we believe that this is a make or break for the Trade Union movement...and bring home to the government that this not the type of society we want where workers are exploited where workers are being displaced where work conditions are being changed by a greedy few and we went into partnership in the last 10 or 15 years and we excepted modest pay increases and we created industrial peace in the past 2 decades that laid founda-

tions for the prosperity we have today and under no circumstances do we want to see the children of the future coming into a society governed by greed and exploitation and that’s the reason.”

Teachers from the Integrate Ireland Language and Technology school in Ballsbridge have voted unanimously to support the day of action in support of Irish Ferries workers.

The school caters for refugees and other immigrants, many of whom are Eastern European. The teachers, all members of SIPTU, voted to close the school for the duration of the Dec 9th Protest.

An Post Workers set to reject LRC recommendations

By Brid Smith

Postal workers are set to reject Labour Court recommendations that were issued to settle the row over back pay due to the workers under Sustaining Progress.

The Labour Court recommended immediate payment of the owed increases but in relation to the back payment of monies owed, it is clear they will not be paid until the company returns to full profitability.

But the deal also contained proposed changes to the collection and delivery service. These changes have been linked to the pay rises although the union maintains that the issues are separate. Post office workers are furious about the deal and

now the union wants to ballot them on the productivity only and not on pay.

Over 500 members of the CWU met in Liberty Hall on December 1st to hear what the union leaders had to say about the deal.

The CWU general secretary was supposed to attend but instead sent apologies through another official. The reception at the meeting was extraordinary.

Shop stewards who spoke to Socialist Worker told how the union officials were left in no doubt where to stick the deal.

“I think all the reps underestimated the feeling against this deal. From the word go the meeting was so angry and hundreds of workers shouted shame, shame at the union

official who told us why we should vote for this. One rep talked about how a year ago our General Secretary, Steve Fitzpatrick stood in Liberty Hall and told us that there was no way our money would be linked to any deal on changes. How can the union do such a U turn in one year. They got a 98% rejection at that time – now they must be looking for 100% rejection to listen to us.

The meeting called for a delegate conference next year to reject the ratification of the General Secretary. Someone asked was Steve Fitzpatrick really Con Scanlon in disguise.” (Con Scanlon, the previous General Secretary made himself a rich man on company shares and was pushed out of his

position by popular opposition)

Workers talked about taking action to force the union to represent them properly by withholding their union dues and organising this on an office by office basis.

Shop stewards from Wicklow, Kildare, Meath and Wexford who attended the meeting in Liberty Hall were really impressed with the reaction. A group of reps are now planning to print and distribute their own union bulletin to keep the momentum and to ensure a massive rejection of the deal.

The anger and confidence of An Post workers is rising. They are furious with the union and know that they can get justice without selling their souls.

But they now see the need to take on the union leaders as well as the company.

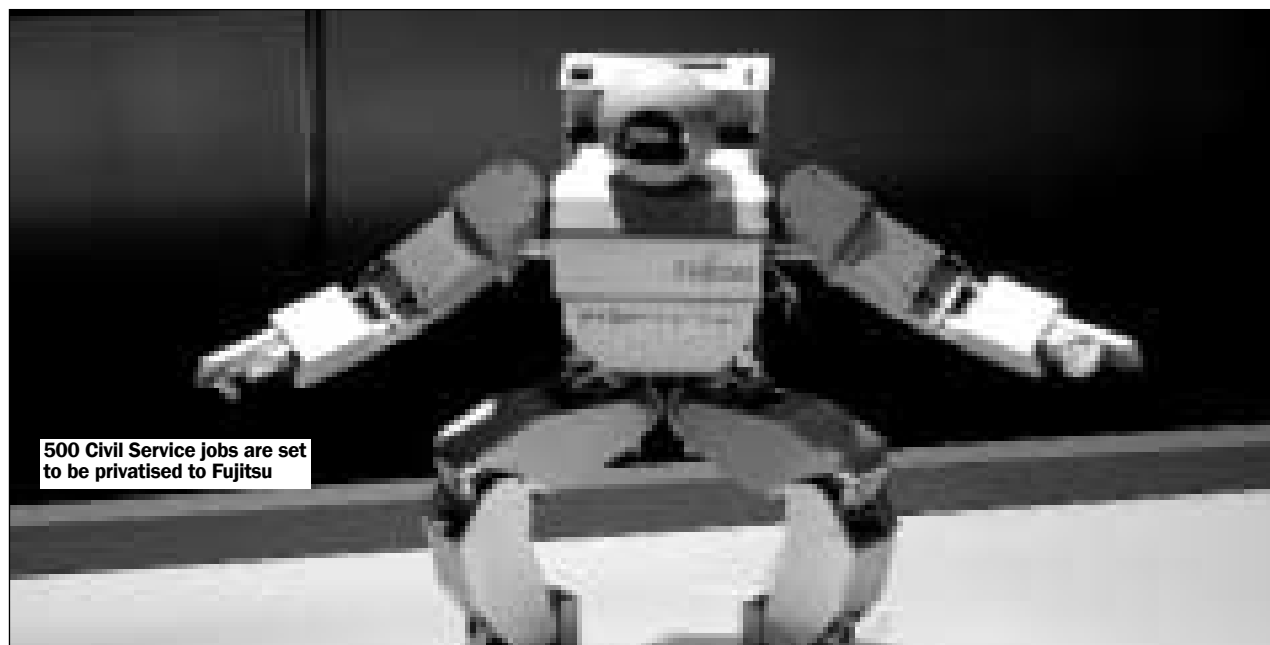
As one worker said at the meeting, “We need to do a good gardening job and prune all the deadwood. It’s time we got people power back into this union.”

Partnership has failed. In An Post it is completely discredited because the monies owed to these workers is being literally robbed from them. And there is now a renewed sense that these workers can fight for their rights and win.

Meantime, An Post management plan to spend €35 million refurbishing their head quarters. Once again it’s one law for management and another for the workers.

News from Northern Ireland

Sinn Féin and SDLP play dumb on privatisation



By Eamonn McCann

The SDLP and Sinn Féin in Derry have been singing in perfect harmony on the economy- while gouging one another over on-the-runs.

Both parties reacted with anger to an announcement on December 1st that a contract for privatising the human resources operation within the NI civil service had gone to Fujitsu rather than Accenture. Around 500 jobs are up for privatisation.

Two hundred of these are currently in Derry. Most of the rest are in Belfast. Fujitsu says it will locate the replacement, yellow-pack jobs in Belfast. Accenture had promised to set up in Derry.

From the point of view of the workers presently occupying the jobs, in whatever city, this is a choice between being hanged

in Derry and facing a firing squad in Belfast.

But in Derry, both Nationalist parties reacted to Fujitsu getting the nod by screaming from the rooftops that Derry had been discriminated against and demanding that NIO Minister Lord Rooker reconsider.

Meanwhile, in Belfast, both parties sang dumb. Neither so much as mentioned the possibility of defending the public sector against privatisation and saving the existing jobs. Neither responded to an appeal from John Corey, general secretary of the Northern Ireland Public Sector Alliance (NIPSA), for backing for a fight.

The reason the two parties take this line is that they have bought into the neoliberal agenda, which has become, near enough, a new religion.

Privatisation is inevitable, they cry.

Resistance is futile. We must do whatever is necessary to prove we are worthy of any crumbs, which fall our way. Indeed, we must prove ourselves even worthier than workers elsewhere. This is the philosophy of the race to the bottom.

Even if the contract had gone to Accenture, and if the privatised jobs had landed in Derry, there was no guarantee that Accenture wouldn't have shifted them on to Bangladesh or China a couple of years hence.

Both Sinn Féin and the SDLP know all of this. The question they should now be made to answer is: are you going to continue to whinge about the company getting the go-ahead to wreck public sector jobs, or join NIPSA in resisting the wreckers and trying to save the jobs now under imminent threat in both Derry and Belfast?

Bald men fighting for the affections of the world's imperialist powers

By Eamonn McCann

If the SDLP and Sinn Féin are agreed on supporting privatisation, they are in sharp disagreement on the NI Offences Bill.

The SDLP criticism of Sinn Féin for collaboration with the British Government on the issue is well made.

If the Shinners really didn't cop on until after the Bill was published that the Brits would ensure that their own side was covered, they are too gullible to be let out on their own.

Of course, they are not gullible.

What appears to have happened is that they were focused so narrowly on their own concerns—winning concessions which would enable them to sell decommissioning and policing to their rank and file—that they lost sight of the interests of any wider constituency, and



Mark Durkan of the SDLP and Conor Murphy of SF

just assumed that families bereaved by State murder would accept whatever Sinn Féin recommended.

On the other hand, Mark Durkan takes the people for fools when he claims that his party had been on the ball on this issue all along.

The first objections to the inclusion of British soldiers in the measure came not

from Irish Nationalists of any stamp but from British Conservatives angry that soldiers of the Queen were being put on the same moral plane as Provos.

It was only when this brouhaha bounced the issue into the mainstream that the SDLP cottoned on that the Shinners had left themselves wide open.

Sinn Féin arrogance had been matched by SDLP opportunism.

However, the Nationalist rivals have no disagreement when it comes to serious examples of Irish parties collaborating with imperialism.

Both aim for a huffer-mugger association with the leading imperialist operators on the planet, the US administration.

The attitude of the SDLP to Bush-Cheney is, 'Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full, sir!' Whereas the attitude of Sinn Féin is, 'We'll make that four bags, sir!'

Only a dwindling minority of Americans would abase themselves before Bush in this manner.

Listening to Conor Murphy and Alex Atwood disputing the high moral ground with regard to collusion with imperialism on the BBC's 'Hearts and Minds' was like watching two bald men mud-wrestling for possession of a comb.

Suspension of Sinn Féin's Francie Molloy

By Barbara Muldoon

The suspension of Sinn Féin party stalwart Francie Molloy for his recent comments was greeted with much more surprise than it actually merited.

Francie Molloy's apparent crime was to state publicly that he held the personal opinion that the slashing of local councils across the north was an act of gerrymandering and amounted to nothing more than a sectarian headcount. In fact the decision regarding the new council boundaries is not as Francie put it, a sectarian headcount.

The sectarian headcount has already been calculated. This is in fact the sectarian apportionment of Northern Ireland. North and East for the orange, South and West for the Green.

Francie belongs to a party that is fully signed up to an agreement that dictates that the north operate strictly on that basis. The question of equality is not addressed in relation to comparing the resources of ordinary working people with that of the middle and upper

classes. Instead it compares the resources of ordinary working Catholics with the resources of ordinary working Protestants. The premise being that if both sides are getting roughly the same, even if it's virtually nothing, then we enjoy equality.

Francie should be applauded for his bravery in not being afraid to break with the party line on the issue of local councils.

However, Peter Hain's Review of Public Administration does not just mean slashing local council representation for people. It will lead to the further impoverishment of hundreds of thousands of working people here. It will mean the introduction of water charges. It will see our public services and our public buildings sold off to the highest bidders.

The Sinn Féin party leadership has publicly and wholeheartedly endorsed the Review. Therefore, the challenge for the vast majority of Sinn Féin supporters who want to see real equality is to not just break from the current party line on individual issues - but to set out on an alternative direction that can challenge the privatisation plans for Northern Ireland.

Civil Servants prepare for vital strike action

By Ryan Mc Kinney
NIPSA Branch 8 Chairperson
(Personal Capacity)

Following a meeting last month between NIPSA and Secretary of State, Peter Hain, Civil Service workers in Northern Ireland were offered a pay rise of, on average, 1p an hour - before tax.

A statement by Hain a couple of days later, telling civil servants to "live within their means" had the effect of further solidifying the determination of workers to take action on pay.

By the time NIPSA's Executive Committee (EC) met to decide on its response to Hain, members expected them to give a clear lead.

There was an argument about the tactics. Some Executive Committee members pushed for a one-day strike before moving to indefinite action. This they argued would demonstrate our intentions and could be used to measure support.

The rank and file activists from the Uncivil Servant argued that the last pay dispute demonstrated how nothing less than all-out indefinite action would demonstrate our intentions to the government and as the demand for all-out had come from members right across Northern Ireland there was no need to be pessimistic. Indeed they argued that a one-day strike could blunt the anger already evident in civil service workplaces.

This faith in the willingness of members to take decisive action was well-placed. Since the union began a consultation exercise on the EC's recommendations every workplace has so far voted to support the all-out strike call. Members in historically more



Peter Hain

conservative areas, such as Planning or Veterinary Services have voted at their branch meetings by margins of 20-1 to support the EC and in the CSA the call for all-out action was supported by 475 votes to 5 at a great meeting, this despite the anger felt towards the EC following the disastrous pay campaign of 18 months ago.

The EC will now proceed to an individual ballot of all members in January. This is where the mistakes of the past must not be replicated. In areas where meetings have seen lower attendances there must be a huge concentration of resources to persuade members to vote for action.

The Stormont Estate must be the focus of a day of action to ensure that all members there hear the arguments and are informed of exactly what the 0.2% offer will mean. In Derry the gap left by having no centralised district committee should be filled by getting all activists together in order to co-ordinate leafleting.

As Peter Hain begins his attempt at ripping apart the public sector of N.Ireland a victory for civil servants could be the catalyst for a real fight-back in defence of our public services.

Irish Ferries: The Race to t

By Kieran Allen

Eamonn Rothwell and the owners of Irish Ferries have set themselves up as the William Martin Murphy's of the 21st century.

They want to take on SIPTU, the biggest union in the country and teach it a lesson. They cannot abide by even the most minimal labour standards and under the cry of 'globalisation' they want to pay staff just €3.50 an hour. Workers who receive this pittance will also be expected to stay on ships for 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If Irish Ferries get away with this, it will be a signal for others employers to follow suit. Already the construction and meat industries are employing large number of workers on a self-employed or agency basis and have used this system to undercut hard won trade union conditions. If Irish Ferries succeed, it will spread like wildfire throughout the Irish economy.

These are no mavericks

The press has claimed that Irish Ferries are just a maverick case – that this is merely a local dispute, which is upsetting social partnership.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The Irish Continental Group who are the owners of Irish Ferries are plugged into the top networks of Irish capitalism. Its Board of Directors is made up of captains of Irish Industry.

John McGuckian: Is the chairperson of UTV and is also a director of Allied Irish Banks. A man who recognises no Irish borders, he was the former chairperson of the Industrial Development Board of Northern Ireland.

Peter Crowley is also the Chief Executive Officer of IBI Finance. This is the leading corporate finance advisor operating in Ireland.

Bernard Sommers runs one of Ireland's main 'change-management' firms. 'Change management' is a business term of down sizing and attacking workers conditions.

In 2001, Somers was given state money to be involved in the corporate re-structuring of AerLingus. He recommended the lay-off of 700 staff and the refusal to pay 5.5 percent of the national pay deal.

He was also on the board of Ardagh Ltd, the company that sacked hundreds of workers in the Irish Glass Bottle plant. Before that he was an advisor to Larry Goodman.

He is also on the board of the Irish Independent group. So too is Peter Crowley's brother. Which is probably why they have sidelined journalists who dared to tell the truth about Irish Ferries.

The Human Resources manager of Irish Ferries, Al McGrath, was formerly the HR manager at the Irish Independent. There he sacked hundreds of clerical workers and outsourced their work.

The company has also a close relationship with the Irish state and has repeatedly been favoured.

Originally, the company grew out of the privatisation of Irish Shipping and has regularly benefited from special tax breaks.

It does not pay social insurance for its staff and has also recently cut its wider tax bill by a full ten times through the use of the special tonnage tax.

Far from being a maverick, Irish Ferries is at the heart of the business and political elite.



Do the employers want social

In 1913, William Martin Murphy started off leading a minority faction of the employer class - but by showing that he could take on Larkin he won over the majority of the employer's federation to his side.

There is a direct parallel with Eamonn Rothwell and the board of the Irish Continental Group today.

Ever since 1987, the main employers organisation IBEC has been wedded to the strategy of social partnership. They originally signed up reluctantly after

Charles Haughey bullied them into it - but soon they found that it worked to their benefit.

Social partnership meant co-opting a layer of union activists to a corporate strategy, which assumed that 'flexibility' and productivity was in the 'national interest'. Typically unions accepted low pay rises in return for tax cuts – and then gave the employers an almost free hand to manage as they wanted. Shop stewards concentrated on individual case work – rather than fighting to erode

managerial prerogatives.

By 2000, ninety percent of workplaces were employing Higher Performance work techniques – often with the support of the unions.

However, as wage costs rose and the Celtic Tiger began to fade, a key section of the employers looked around for other ways of raising profits.

A substantial minority of the employer's organisation, IBEC, were opposed to the last partnership deal, Sustaining Progress.

People like Sommers, who might be classified as one of the main 'hatchetmen' of the capitalist class, began to look on the unions as paper tigers.

They recognised that partnership had drained the living energy out of the unions. They saw how union membership had begun to decline and membership participation at union meetings had reached an all-time low.

They reckoned that they could take on a weakened union movement in a struggle that would become a tipping point in Irish industrial relations.

However, they under-estimated the resilience of the union movement and the pressure that the grassroots could exert on their leadership.

This is the real background, which has led to the Irish Ferries confrontation.

The Employers' Offensive

Irish Ferries is the testing ground for a new employer's offensive. The vast bulk of them may dream of paying workers €3.50 an hour – but they realise that they will not get away with it.

The real danger comes from the wholesale use of 'contingent' workers on the model that has been tested in

Take it down from the mast

The confrontation at Irish Ferries began when the owners re-flagged their ship so that the Cypriot flag replaced that of the tricolour. Cyprus is known as a country, which provides 'flags of convenience'.

'Flags of convenience' are used when employers want to evade minimum wage or safety legislation and re-flagging is one the main weapons they use against seafarers all over the world.

By flying a Cypriot flag, Irish Ferries claimed that they were no longer answerable to Irish legislation on the minimum wage.

The use of flags of convenience reveals the deep sickness at the heart of global capitalism.

Cyprus is placed seventh on the list of the top seafaring nations of the world – because so many ship owners want to pay their staff peanuts. Panama, Liberia and the Bahamas are also favoured destinations for Flags of Convenience.

Today about fifteen percent of the world's fishing fleet are flying flags of convenience and most of the dangerous single hull vessels also used such flags. Despite hypocritical talk about a 'social Europe' half of all European ships used

flags of convenience.

By evading laws and standards these ships pose a real danger to both passengers and the environment.

The huge toxic sludge that destroyed the coast of Galicia in Spain in 2002, came from a ship, the Prestige, which was registered in the Bahamas and owned by a Liberian company.

Flags of convenience are the dream scenario for global capitalism. There are no rules, few safety standards and slave labour pay rates. This is why Irish Ferries has rushed to embrace this flag.

he bottom



al partnership?

Ahern's Hypocritical Double Talk

Some of the union leaders looked to Bertie Ahern to stop Irish Ferries setting a bad example.

They pointed to his rhetoric about being against the race to the bottom and a letter he sent to SIPTU giving assurances that the government would do everything in its power to stop it.

Ahern had pulled off the same trick of writing a letter of 'concern' to the union leaders when he managed pushed through the break up of Aer Rianta.

But once bitten, workers were twice shy and they put so much pressure on the SIPTU leaders that there was no way they were going to settle for Ahern's crocodile tears.

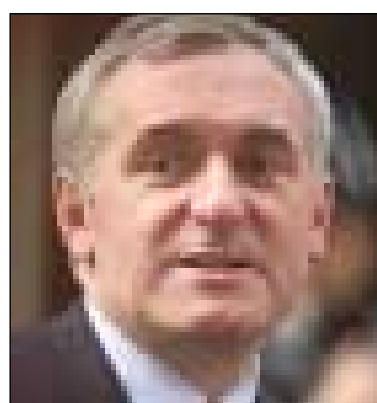
Which is just as well, because on the day before the confrontation blew up, Ahern casually announced that his government was 'powerless' to do anything about Irish Ferries.

Ahern has always been a master of double-speak – being as his mentor Charles Haughey described him – 'the cutest and most devious of them all'. This is why he was both willing to verbally attack Irish Ferries to shore up Fianna Fail's declining working class base – and still carry on pushing the very policies the company was leading on.

Evidence of this governments' support for a strategy to reduce Irish wage levels are not hard to find.

When Irish Ferries made their Irish crew on their ship the Normandy redundant and replaced them with agency staff, they received €1.3 million in redundancy support payments from the Irish state.

When wage rates began to rise in the building industry after successful struggles by bricklayers and general workers, Mary Harney went to Turkey to directly invite in the Gama construction company. Gama became the biggest recipients of work permits and enjoyed the most



Ahern

social insurance relief from the Irish state. Harney had been informed about Gama work practices long before a strike broke out but still their company won important state building contracts.

Last year, the Irish government voted against an EU measure to prevent ferries between EU countries re-flagging.

At EU level, the former Fianna Fail Finance Minister Charlie McCreevy is pioneering the infamous Bolkenstein directive through the EU parliament. This new services directive applies a 'country of origin rule' whereby companies would be subject to the legislation of their home countries rather than those where they operate. So a Latvian cleaning company would be subject to Latvian laws and anyone who wanted to challenge their activities would have to do some before the Latvian courts.

Ahern's calculation was that he could sound off about the evils of displacing workers but would eventually be able to preside over the 'new realities'.

The militancy and determination of Irish Ferry workers has scuppered those plans.

Don't blame migrants

SIPTU has taken a clear and honourable stance – stating repeatedly that migrants are not to blame.

They want all workers –Irish, Latvian, Polish or whatever nationality to get the same rates.

The Irish government has a different approach. Publicly, they display an anti-racist posture.

But behind the scenes they have set up structures that are deliberately designed to divide workers and undercut wages.

In 1997, a semi secretive Expert Group of Skills Needs was set up. Its chair is an executive with the recruitment agency CPL and representatives of Hewlett Packard, Cement Roadstone and other big companies dominate it.

It works with FAS and the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment to monitor areas where it needs to recruit workers.

The government dances to its tune.

The EGSN has devised a strategy to source unskilled labour from Eastern Europe and the more skilled labour from outside the EU – because Irish pay rates for graduates are one of the lowest in the older EU.

It keeps migrants in bondage by either denying them social welfare for two years – or by forcing them to work under a work permit that is held by the employer.

Skilled workers are given more leeway to attract them here – but they most are not allowed to be reunited with their families.

All migrants are ritually humiliated by being forced to apply for entry and re-entry visa when they



Turkish Gama Strikers join the May Day trade union parade

come and go from Ireland over the holiday period.

Each morning, for example, queues start at 5am outside the Garda National Immigration Bureau as people seek these needless pieces of paper.

The trade union movement should forge a deeper unity with the 8 percent of the workforce who are migrants.

This means opposing the work permit system; calling for workers to be let in and out of the country without special visa; supporting family re-union and campaigning for regularisation of undocumented.

In the 19th century Irish migrants were used by employers to undercut wages in Britain. That stopped when those migrants learnt that the labour movement provided a welcome home for their grievances.

Similarly we need to reach out here to stop employers sowing division.

Who is to blame for the 'race to the bottom'?

By Conor Kostick

On the morning of the 28 November, a Lithuanian man died in Dublin from serious head injuries he had received after being attacked the night before. His violent death is a warning that racism against eastern Europeans is on the rise in Ireland.

There is an argument being put forward by some people that immigrants are undermining the living standards of Irish workers.

Quite apart from the fact that such hostility directed towards immigrants contributes directly to a climate in which thugs feel that they can get away with horrific attacks, this racist argument has two fundamental flaws.

First of all it deflects anger away from the employers who are the real driving force behind cuts in wages and conditions. Secondly it drives a wedge into the working class.

Immigrant workers are usually highly educated and have trade union traditions of their own. Recent figures show that of immigrants aged 25-29, almost 70 per cent had third level qualifications.

The corresponding figure for Irish people was 32 per cent. Of those aged 30-39, almost 65 per cent had third level qualifications, compared to 27 per cent of the Irish in that age group.

They are potentially allies of Irish workers. Eastern European workers arrive here to find that although the wages they had been told about seemed attractive, high levels of exploitation by employers, Ireland's cost of living, and accommodation costs in particular, means that they are working two jobs or long hours to make ends meet.

They are open to joining Irish trade unions and fighting for equal rights. Dublin Bus provides a good example of a changing workforce where strong unions have made sure that newer workers are integrated with older workers, without the employers being able to undermine living standards.

The trade union adage 'an injury to one is an injury to all' has been with us for centuries, because it contains a fundamental truth. When the employers can play off one section of workers against another, they can get away with savage cuts.

The Latvian workers in the Irish Ferries dispute should be seen as victims of the manipulations of the employers. ICTU has contacts with the main trade union organisation in Latvia (the FTUC).

They should bring an organiser over to try to win over these workers and make sure that when the company is forced to take back the mainly Irish workforce, it also compensates these workers for having dragged them into conflict with their Irish colleagues.

start of the Celtic Tiger 10 percent of Irish workers were classified as 'atypical,' employees but by 1999 this had fallen.

However, this has begun to change dramatically again with the decline of manufacturing in the Celtic Tiger.

In 1987, there were 195 licensed agencies in Ireland but by 1999 this had jumped to 447. These agencies initially concentrated on areas like 'temping' in white-collar work – but they have expanded to all sectors of the economy since.

Employers have been using clauses in the recent social partnership agreements to speed up the use of outsourced contractors and atypical workers.

For example, clause 21.8 of the current agreements gives union consent to the outsourcing of work to contractors for temporary, non-core work in the public sector.

Once the employers became used to the joys of outsourcing, they naturally wanted more.

What is at stake then in the Irish Ferries battle is an attempt to impose a new wave of outsourcing and agency work by displacing tens of thousands of 'older' jobs.

It is a battle that the union cannot afford to lose.

America over the past two decades.

A contingent worker refers to a host of categories, which have been used to push workers conditions right to the bottom. It includes agency temps; direct hire temps, on-call workers, day labourers, contract company workers and self employed workers.

A full 30 percent of the US labour market now falls into these categories.

Contingent workers receive lower pay with four times as many receiving family incomes below €15,000 in 1999 compared to the population of permanent workers.

They do not get pensions, receive the most minimal holiday or sick pay and do not enjoy the same legal protections as other workers. Workers who are classified as 'independent contractors' or 'self employed', for example, do not enjoy the Fair Labour Standards Act in the US.

By introducing this system throughout the Irish labour market, the employers hope to reduce their costs further and put Ireland once again, ahead in the 'race to the bottom' in Europe.

During the boom years of the Celtic Tiger, Irish and multi-national employers did not resort to contingent workers on a large scale. In a tight labour market, they wanted to hold onto staff as the orders flowed in. Part-time work grew, particularly for women, but contingent work actually decreased. In 1995 at the

Socialist Worker

Editorial

Web: www.swp.ie Email: swped@eircom.net Phone: 01 8722682

The end of an unequal partnership?

Social partnership, the handiwork Charles Haughey, has been around almost 20 years. But how can partnership be taken serious if workers are expected to be partners with a mob like Irish Ferris?

Other union-busting companies like Ryanair, Independent Newspapers, Gama even, are also supposed to be our partners. Partnership denotes a relationship and sharing, however, the experience of working people in Ireland does not bear this out. Sharing and equality has not been a feature of the Celtic Tiger.

An old Newsweek headline on the Celtic Tiger put it that "A rising tide lifts all yachts." The actions of Irish Ferries management have certainly sunk that analogy.

The period of Social Partnership has witnessed an unprecedented boom in the Irish economy, with growth rising to an average 7.3% per annum and a projected current account surplus of over €4 billion for 2005.

While workers created the boom, the fruits of it went to employers and the wealthy. Instead of a trickle down effect, there has been a steady flood upwards to the rich.

In relation to migrant workers, it is Irish Ferries management; their partners in IBEC, and the government stooges who are clearly to blame for this mess, not the migrants who are just looking for a better life.

In today's Ireland, it is Irish and migrant workers, in struggle from below, like at Gama, who can stop the race to the bottom and the rise of racism.

Partnership, which was supposed to protect the position of the trade union movement, instead has done the opposite. The trade union movement is right to see this as a fight or die battle.

Workers need to heed that call. However, the unions must use every possible tactic- including general strike- to ensure victory.

The Irish Ferries management have effectively ended Social Partnership and therefore unions should disregard the restrictions on industrial action that it imposed.

Is there an alternative?

While taking part in the Irish Ferries protest all 'opposition' parties are mindful of becoming part of the next government. Neither Sinn Fein, Labour nor the Green Party is arguing for radical action in the dispute.

Many people hope to give a bloody nose in the next elections to Fianna Fail and the PDs and support the opposition, in particular Sinn Fein, in bringing forward more pro-worker policies. But the Labour Party have dropped their radicalism in order to be a suitable coalition partner for the right-wing Fine Gael.

Sinn Fein's Mary Lou Mc Donald said recently: "Irish unity will come about much more speedily if we can build a broad-based coalition to end partition and create an Ireland of equals." The question is who will make up this coalition.

Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin's recent remarks clear this up saying that Sinn Fein is prepared to go into government with anyone except the PDs. Adams and others have been making noises towards Fianna Fail.

Labour's actions over the past few decades has proved conclusively that entering coalition as a minor partner with the Right achieves nothing and you end up curtailing your radicalism. Why would Sinn Fein be any different tailing FF?

The task for those who want to see an end to privatisation and proper funding of public services both north and south, is to unite the social movements and those who oppose neo-liberalism on principle- otherwise another generation's efforts will be squandered to republican populism.

COMMENT

Coalition of the Willing crumbling: War and CIA comes under scrutiny

By Donal McFerraraigh

The leaking of a secret memo in Britain showing Bush wanted to bomb the Al Jazeera news agency headquarters once again exposes the lies about bringing democracy to the Middle East. Blair's attempt to suppress it using the official secrets act shows how worried they are about the anti-war movement.

Bush's opinion poll rating is now consistently below 40%. Many of the pro-war Democrats and now some Republicans are targeting Bush and calling for a timetable to bring US troops home. Even John Murtha, a gung-ho, pro-war Democratic congressman said "Our troops have become the primary target of the insurgency, it's time to bring them home." Serious divisions are now appearing in the US ruling class over Iraq."

It is the mass anti-war movement and continuous protests that's forcing the issue. There is a growing anti-war sentiment and a rejuvenated anti-war movement in the US and Britain. The existence of a mass movement and continuous mobilisations has made it impossible for Bush and Blair to "draw a line under Iraq". The international peace conference in London in December marks a new offensive phase for the international anti-war movement. It will call for a new wave of mass protests on March 19th to bring the troops home.

Allied with this is the continuing resistance in Iraq. A report by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy in December said the US operation in Iraq were at a "tipping point". The resistance showed no sign of losing steam 32 months after the US-led invasion. Foreign jihadists represented only 5-7% of the insurgency and did not account for the majority of attacks or fatalities. Far from containing the resistance it enjoys growing support. It has a



mass popular base.

In contrast the US occupation continues to whip up sectarian feelings using undercover operations, and according to independent journalist Arun Gupta are setting up death squads. The western media parrot the military line of a civil war and ignore that most fighting is still between US forces and the resistance, not intra religious fighting.

The scandal over torture also continues to haunt the White House. Iliad Allawi, previous favoured US backed prime minister of Iraq, has come out and say that there is now more torture in Iraq than under Saddam. Secret CIA torture bases in Europe and use of airports for torture flights has re-ignited the debate about the war across Europe. Most European governments went along with the US kidnapping and torture program. Ireland has allowed the CIA torture plane to use Shannon Airport 33 times.

Unlike Willy O'Dea we do not accept the word of a 'friendly nation' and Condoleezza Rice, someone whose administration supports torture and pre-

viously covered up the existence of torture in Abu Graib. The US used napalm and White Phosphorus in its attack on the city of Fallujah in 2004. These illegal weapons were possibly transported through Shannon. It puts the focus back on Shannon Airport as the main US military transit point in Europe.

Bulgaria and Ukraine will pull out of the 'coalition of the willing' this month, Australia, Italy, Japan, Poland and South Korea may pull out early next year. We need to return to the streets with mass protests to bring this crisis to the Irish government and get the US military out of Shannon.

Public Meeting: Cindy Sheehan (Mother of US soldier killed in Iraq, who protested at George Bush's ranch in Texas) to speak in Dublin: US TROOPS OUT OF IRAQ & SHANNON: Speakers include: Cindy Sheehan and Rose Gentle Mother of British soldier killed in Iraq, Tuesday 13 December 8pm O'Reilly Theatre, Belvedere College Denmark St, Dublin 1. Cover Charge: €10 waged, €5 (unwaged)

LETTERS

Galway support for Irish Ferries Workers

The SWP held a special public meeting in Galway 30th November following the announcement on the national demonstration. Entitled "Support Irish Ferries Workers: Stop the Race to the Bottom" it was addressed by Micheál Ó Conaghaille, an Irish Ferries worker and Kieran Allen of SWP

Ó Conaghaille reported on the situation with Irish Ferries, "victimising individuals and attacking agreed pay and conditions over the last 2 years...running down staffing levels...to an absolute safety minimum...resorting to temps and agency workers, reducing the workforce from 850 down to 543. Now they want to replace the whole 100% of the workers with agency staff who will only be paid half the minimum wage." Micheál demonstrated that Irish Ferries is far from financial ruin with a turnover of €140 million and cleared €21 million last year which was an increase of 4.5% on the previous year.

According to Allen, "The stand off was forced by the company. It is now up to every working class person in Ireland and further afield to put manners on the bosses and the governments. Everyone must build for and support the demonstration on Friday 9th December." Astonishingly Frank Fahey, Fianna Fail T.D. also attended the meeting and said that "only people power can defeat Irish Ferries management!"

The Galway Council of Trade Unions are calling on people to attend the Galway march and rally on Friday 9th December assembling at 1.30pm Spanish Arch, Galway City. Dette Mc Loughlin of Galway Trades Council said, "We can all identify with this dispute. The only thing that will force the government's hand is determined action by workers and a massive display of people power. We must stop the race to the bottom."

—Dette Mc Loughlin, Galway

Fight for GM Free Ireland

Due to Dick Roche's absence at a vote in September EU commissioners approved Monsanto's genetically modified GT73 oilseed rape for use as animal feed in Europe. Despite opposition from 13 member states and support from only 6 the legislation was passed because a Qualified Majority vote had not been reached. Since 6 member states, including Ireland, abstained from the vote the decision was left to the unelected EU commissioners. This legislation to allow GM seed into Ireland has been passed under our noses of the general public.

This has angered farmers and food producers alike because GM crops inevitably cross-breed with wild and cultivated plants in the surrounding area, which can destabilise the ecosystem, threatening biodiversity. Once contaminated with GM plants, the situation is irreversible. Although GT73 oilseed rape is intended as animal feed, there will inevitably be spillages of seeds, which will germinate and grow and are capable of cross pollinating. This will result in produce from Irish farms, having to carry a GM label and farmers choosing not to buy GM seed are likely to have their crops contaminated by other GM plants.

Farmers in North America have faced legal action from biotechnology companies whose seed accidentally grew on their land; this can result in farmers losing their land and livelihood as the companies are more powerful and more likely to win a legal battle. GM technology allows companies to monopolise food supply by making farmers dependent on them. Ireland has a great agricultural tradition and we must act to protect that heritage and food security for future generations.

We must fight GM in Ireland and force an immediate ban on Monsanto's live GMO animal feed. We should launch an effective campaign immediately.

Contact Mairead Lineen maireadlineen@hotmail.com.

—Mairead Lineen

Corporations and the state silence free speech

In 1915 James Connolly wrote an article entitled: "Our Disappearing Liberties", which criticised the British Government's restrictions upon freedoms of expression and association enforced to censor criticisms of WWI. Fast forward 90 years to the 'democratic' Celtic Tiger where the free flow of ideas and criticism of government policy are enshrined into the Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights.

We live in an effective state of apartheid in health, education and social services and suffer all the abuses that flow from those, but fear not, we are free, at least, to criticise them. However if you take two examples, the treatment of the Rosport 5 on the back of the Shell 'deal' and its impact on our natural resources, safety and environment and the human rights abuses perpetrated against Frank McBrearty by the Gardaí, our right to communicate our concerns about these issues was removed in Dublin City. Dublin City Council achieved this by destroying the means to communicate with the wider public, principally through systematically removing all of those campaign's posters from Dublin's streets.

Add to this mix the removal of Irish Independent journalist Gerry Flynn from covering the Irish Ferries story because his article was seen as too favourable to the workers, and the removal of Justin McCarthy's article in the same paper that pointed out the similarities between the tactics of Irish Ferries and Shell. She was informed she would be writing no more columns for the Irish Independent.

Connolly concluded his article thus: "Every one of the liberties our fathers won must be fought for tenaciously. War or no war, none of our hard won rights should be, or will be, surrendered without a struggle." This is as relevant for all persons concerned with the discarding of our rights by corporations and agencies of the state today as it was in Connolly's time.

—John Kelly, Dublin Shell to Sea (Personal Capacity)

Irish Ferries 'terror' tactics

Interview with **Tony Layton**, International Transport Worker's Federation Inspector

Tony Layton spoke to Socialist Worker about the events at the Welsh port of Pembroke when Irish Ferries' management attempted to force out the SIPTU workers on the Isle of Inishmore using private security.

He was also present at Rosslare last Sunday when, in a magnificent show of solidarity with the Irish Ferries' workers, workers at the port refused to allow the Irish Ferries' ship the 'MV Normandy' to dock.

The workers at Rosslare were absolutely determined not to allow the MV Normandy to dock. They are disgusted at the attitude of Irish Ferries' management towards its workers.

The Rosslare port workers know that if the port authorities get the chance it will be them, the shore workers, who will be next to face what the Irish Ferries' workers now face. Pressure will be put on Iarnród Eireann to reduce costs and cut their jobs.

So they know they are fighting as much for their own jobs as well as acting in solidarity with the workers at Irish Ferries.

The Port Authority management put considerable pressure on the workers to try and change their minds and allow the MV Normandy to dock, but the workers refused to give in to that bullying. The rank and file said that even if the shop stewards recommended allowing the ship to dock, there would still be an overwhelming majority vote in favour of refusing to allow it dock. There is nothing but absolute solidarity between all the workers.

Disgraceful action by Irish Ferries' management

I've been a union member and representative for 11 years - 25 years as full time official - and I've never seen anything like what Irish Ferries' management have done. They have used 'terror' tactics. I was in Pembroke (when security went to take over the ship) and it was like something out of a horror movie. The management's security goons (who had gone on to the ship in civilian clothes) sprang out of the toilets like a task force of commandos.

The ship's officers are trained to deal with emergency situations and



initially they thought that they were defending the ship from a terrorist attack.

They got in and sealed the engine control room and the controls generator, which controls the ship. Then they realized they were defending their jobs and they stayed there.

The rumours are that the security were seen with weapons - iron bars and iron cutters - and the management were working in complete collusion with this.

The guys inside are completely determined to see this thing out. Their jobs will be gone and re-offered at a third of the wages.

We should do whatever we have to do, be that national strikes or whatever.

Ahern says he can't do anything but he can and we have the legal advice that proves it. Even if the company decides to re-flag under a 'flag of convenience' to avoid Irish labour law, the government will still own the ports (although they are trying to sell those off too now).

They could say to Irish Ferries that, in order to dock in Ireland, their workers should have contracts containing terms and conditions in line with Irish labour law.

Ahern is to blame - not the immigrants

Ahern is a right-wing gurrrier. He comes across as Mr Nice Guy but he acts in the interests of those who make a financial contribution to his

party - and that includes Irish Ferries.

I'm from Donegal and many from my school had to emigrate. I have a lot of sympathy with people who have to leave their country to look for work.

Unfortunately there are trade unionists coming out with anti-foreigner statements that I am not comfortable with.

They say the immigrants are coming to take our jobs, but that's wrong. These are poor people getting terrible contracts from manning agencies.

They aren't told they are being used to turf us out of our jobs.

They are bussed 1000s of miles in the expectation of good wages. We have to try not to make victims of them. I'm very sympathetic to them.

I'm an international trade union person and I was on a ship recently where I spoke to a Syrian worker who was completely exploited.

His wages were \$664 a month, and he was on a nine months contract, but had to beg and borrow from friends to pay the agency \$2,000 to get the job in the first place, so he started his job with half his wages gone.

This is slavery in 2005. Things cannot continue as they are. Irish workers are increasingly being replaced by foreign workers being paid half the wages.

We will end up with racism, which if it starts will be hard to stop. That's why it's so important that we win this struggle.

The Bolkestein Directive and its impact

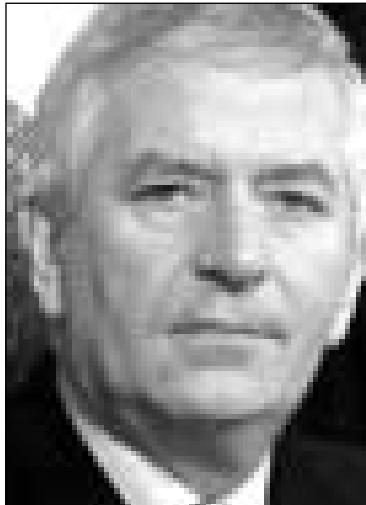
By Eimear Finnigan

Proposed by the European Commission in January 2004, the Bolkestein Directive came from the Commissioner on the Internal Market, Frits Bolkestein

The Bolkestein directive is being pushed again by the new commissioner Charlie McCreevey.

The directive maintains that small and medium enterprises cannot fully exploit the growth of services because of "complex bureaucratic" impediments, which for most of us mean decent employment standards.

The aim of the Directive is to enable services move across national borders within the European Union just as easily as within a single member state.



Charlie McCreevey

This 'country-of-origin' principle will lead to multinationals flying a flag of convenience, setting up in whichever country has the lowest safety and labour protection.

Implementation of the Directive depends on the removal of "unnecessary" barriers (e.g. licensing procedures) that discourage operators from other European States and the "country of origin principle", i.e. once a service provider is operating legally in the state, it can market itself in others without having to comply with further rules in the "host" member state.

It is derived from a legal incentive for companies to move to other countries, with minimal legislation on social, fiscal and environmental issues.

If the Directive is enforced it will lead to enormous pressure being placed on countries with social, fiscal, and environmental standards that protect the general interest and is likely to lead to a reduction in the regulation of standards in healthcare, employment agencies and other areas.

It will affect any business activity that constitutes a service including professional consulting, architectural, engineering, and legal advice, business centres such as technical testing, data processing and employment, environment (for example, waste management) security, retail, travel, hotels, restaurants, entertainment, health and the services of craftspeople.

It covers all services relating to economic activity excluding only

non-economic services of general interest like schools and welfare provision.

The Directive is advocated under "the elimination of obstacles", and provision of "a clear legal framework extending freedom of establishment for service providers".

By 2010 there will be a prohibition of restrictive protections that might still be in force in certain member states. These "barriers" ironically are often rules employed by governments, intent on raising standards and service delivery while protecting employees.

A Belgian trade union has summed up the prospect of Bolkestein; "If Bolkestein gets what he wants, Europe will be a liberal far west, with a lot of "hamburger jobs" and no social security"

Socialist wins Patrick Kavanagh Award



Dave Lordan

Dave Lordan, a long time member of the SWP and regular contributor to Socialist Worker has been awarded the 2005 Patrick Kavanagh Award for poetry. The award is the most prestigious for a collection of poetry in Ireland.

Dave is well known for reading his poems at anti-war and anti capitalist events and is an unabashedly political poet. Here we print a poem from the winning collection 'The Boy in the Ring'.

You can read more of Dave's work, including the long anti-war poem 'Reflections on Shannon' on his website at www.freewebs.com/davelordan

Shelley Leaving Dublin

I went down among the mob and shouted loudly as I could but no-one heard. I chased all through the drunken neighbourhoods past huts that leaned like rotten teeth but they took no heed. Though I rained my pamphlets down from balconies and dropped my Address in their hoods no seething wind blew up to show that they had understood. Perhaps they could not read.

Perhaps I hadn't spelt the proper words.

I swallowed more than claret dining at this crow-shat city's tables of fireside enlightenment to speak out on their behalf, but won neither shillings nor commitment.

(Though raised many the fatherly chuckle, the patronising laugh: 'When you get old you'll sup and puff like us, you'll make no dent in God or nature's given world by raising such a fuss'.

I pleaded in sheets of letters to the London set for public words and an Irish vote in parliament. But men whose minds fired on the incandescence of the French events and, in the dawning rage of sans culottes, saw the chrysalis of nearly perfect love, have flown from youth and with it all that's news. Some even hymn the church, the generals, the government, stand side by side with Castlereagh, praise aristocratic

shite as sugared cake.

And so I've failed. The many headed monster's still sleeping deep within it's sightless cave. I need retreat and confess I'm more than slightly burnt. But this I've learnt: I was not wrong To plant the flag of fire among the mob, but one man's voice is not enough, one cry, however like the nightingales, dies amidst the clamour, cut off. Minds like mine must seek proliferation. Therefore, I propose an association.

Would you like a rise with that? Unionising Starbuck's in New Zealand

By Joe Carolan

Joe Carolan is a full time organiser for the Unite union in New Zealand which recently organised the SupersizemyPay.com campaign and the first wildcat strike by Starbucks workers in the world.

Unite's SupersizemyPay.com campaign to unionise young workers in the fast food multinational chains has taken hold of a generation's imagination, in a way I haven't seen since the big pre-war mobilisations of Feb 15th 2003. Make no mistake, this new trade unionism is a social movement of the young, the brown, the immigrant and the poor, and in store after store, we are getting 100% per cent votes for strike action.

I've just returned from a night's visting, recruiting and balloting, meeting workers on the graveyard shifts all over South Central Auckland, New Zealand. In the KFC in Balmoral, same as the Pizza Hut in Royal Oak or the McDonald's in Greenlane, there's one sentence I keep hearing from our members and delegates - "when's it our turn to strike?". Young workers are flaunting company rules, proudly wearing their Unite union badges and \$12-an-hour stickers on their uniforms at work.

The Starbucks strike was awesome - when Vicki Salmon, CEO of Restaurant Brands, scoffed on National Radio that there were only three workers going on strike at the K Road store, she ignited the anger of our other Starbucks delegates and members citywide. 35 Starbucks workers took wildcat action, and the Workers Charter Freedom Bus ferried the wildcats down to the rally. Nick, the 16 year old Starbucks worker from St Lukes,



Young workers join the struggle

pic Indymedia

spoke at the KFC strike ballot meeting two days later in the Balmoral store. His energy ignited the anger of the workers there, who voted 100% for strike action on December 3rd, the first strike action in New Zealand led by a strike committee made up in the main of teenagers, furious at the discrimination they suffer under youth rates.

The Starbuck Strikers had a loud carnival picket line with music and free fair trade coffee there and the union organisers drove the wildcat strikers back after two hours of strike action and ensured there was no victimisation in their stores.

This is a David and Goliath battle. But what makes you realise that this is a movement for social justice and not just an exercise in collective bargaining, is the energy, creativity and thirst to have a go at the multinationals that you find in every store. Elements of the anti-capitalist movement might have been misguided in their calls to boycott these chains - all along, we were really needed inside them organising young working class people.

Socialists and Workers Charter activists have been at the heart of this uprising, and at the time this article was written, were building flat out for a solidarity rally with the 30 brave KFC workers striking at Balmoral. In the weeks to come, the strikes will spread out to Lincoln Road, Royal Oak, and into the centre of the city and Queen Street. At the Unite strategy meetings, we often talk about Farrell Dobbs and the Teamsters rebellion in Minneapolis - and how a small group of dedicated socialists could build a massive citywide union movement. Hopefully this summer we will have our Fastfood Rebellion, and we hope thousands of low paid workers in petrol stations, supermarkets and video stores go

on to follow our example.

Left wing groups and unions are out of touch with where workers are at nowadays. So we at Unite have decided to go back to the class and organise a combative, grassroots union for the working poor.

Back home in Ireland I was a precarious English Language Teacher, another sector that Unite organises here in Auckland. I used to hear horror stories from my Chinese and immigrant workers every week of their treatment by Irish employers, and despaired that there was no combative union out there willing to take a risk on the fast food sector. A lot of union work in Ireland is still in the traditional public service or industrial sectors, but what I've learned in Auckland is that we can organise call centres, restaurants, language schools, hotels and the low paid service industry to stand up and fight.

I hope Irish activists back home in the trade union movement can take inspiration from our fight. Perhaps the better unions such as the ATGWU could organise a similar campaign - we would be happy to share our experiences with them. The battle has only begun here, though, and we have some serious enemies to contend with. The Starbucks Workers Union in New York has been working closely with us. If we can unionise and beat them citywide in Auckland, then we have no doubt it will spread to other cities and countries.

Also see Starstruck: David and Goliath http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=73204 and Union Busters leave a bitter taste <http://www.swp.ie/socialistworker/2005/sw240/SW-240-web.pdf>

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON RECYCLING AND WASTE DISPOSAL

I am collecting data on people's real experiences with recycling and waste disposal in their local areas. Race against Waste has gained much media coverage and large payments to consultants and advisors such as Monica Leech but it is not at all clear that local infrastructures are being put in place. If we are to refute the hype and the spin-doctors, we need facts and figures. Anybody willing to take part in this project please write to:

C Swift, Ballynaguilky, Hacketstown, Co Carlow or email: Catherine.swift@may.ie

OBITUARY TO GEORGE BEST

A revolutionary of the imagination

By Eamon McCann

A hundred times at least during coverage of George Best's funeral, somebody said that he had brought Catholics and Protestants together. As if he were the footballing equivalent of the Community Relations Council.

This was a misuse of the man's memory. But hardly unexpected. Barry McGuigan had been hailed as a unifying force. For a period, Bono was promoted as the great reconciler. Even Liam Neeson was advanced as the man to bring Ballymena together.

This makes as much sense as noting that Catholic and Protestant children queue up together for the new Harry Potter and concluding that JK Rowling must be a significant ecumenical figure.

Politicians without an idea in their heads about how to tackle sectarianism latch onto glittering symbols of a life outside sectarianism so as to use it as a diversion from reality and a substitute for a real policy.

As well, establishment drones everywhere try to embrace popular celebrity, to give their images a sprinkling of glamour. This, too, was happening at Stormont on December 3rd.

But far from his life suggesting a formula for managing the communal divide in the North, George Best was remarkably innocent of such matters. He'd left Belfast City for Manchester City at 15, in 1961, having grown up in the least eventful period in the North's history.

In 'Blessed', published in 2001, he recalled with wonder the pride of his neighbours on the Cregagh Estate on the occasions he went home after making it big-time. He scored his first goal for United in a Christmas 1963 fixture against Burnley and was home next day when the Belfast Telegraph shouted it from the back page. "(It) just seemed so unreal to me and to all my mates: I had scored for Manchester United, and there was the picture in the Belfast Telegraph to prove it! There was a sense of disbelief among Tommy, Robin and the others. My goal was a big talking point on the estate. It was as if I'd scored for them, too, which made me a bit weepy."

You have to wonder if he was weepy, too, because he sensed that this might be the start of saying goodbye. The age when footballers came home and shared glory around the old neighbourhood were



gone, or at least going. After that first senior goal, there is no indication that he ever celebrated another footballing feat as a sort of communal achievement. Tommy, Robin, and the others aren't mentioned again in 'Blessed'. His visits home became fewer and fewer.

Off the field in 1964, he wrote, something odd was happening. All the old values in life were changing as the Sixties began to take hold: "I didn't mix with the other first-team players socially, partly because they were older and many of them were married. I was part of this new generation."

Part of the price of being the first pop-celebrity footballer was that he was detached from players around him even as he was tugged apart from the people he'd come from. It was commonly remarked that there was a vulnerability about him, a sense of him always standing alone, even, or especially, as applause cascaded upon him.

He strove to describe his roots in the Protestant community but managed only to make clear his uncertainties. "If you were a Protestant, you automatically supported Linfield," he wrote. "And if you were a Catholic you supported

Glentoran."

George didn't get it about sectarianism and football in Belfast: while the Glens weren't characterised by strident Loyalism, their fans, like Linfield's, were overwhelmingly Protestant.

He tells that his family were "Protestant, Free Presbyterians to be exact." But they were not. If they had been, they'd have had no time for secular fripperies like football.

There is a startling naivety about his suggestion in "Blessed" that, "We used to get a few taunts from the Catholics, calling us Proddy bastards and we would call them Fenians: It was a bit like being a member of the Rotary Club or the Freemasons."

These are the observations of a man, not recalling the culture which had shaped him but trying and failing to imagine what its content must have been.

This is not to suggest that his life and his art were irrelevant to overcoming sectarianism.

No-one who saw him live in the flowering of his genius can ever forget, because it's on permanent play on a loop in the mind, his feint and dribble, his slalom and surge, the way he'd pause and sway and then spasm in an instant through a cluster of defenders to arrive as an apparition in the area, his nonchalance and daring, his beauty. He had such balance as, Hugh McIlvanny observed, might have made Newton City think again about gravity. Plus, he was a great header of the ball, a great reader of the game, a great tackler back when he had to. He was everything a footballer could or should be. He was brilliant. Millions draped their dreams around him. And these were dreams, which had nothing to do with achieving a communal aspiration.

And great art—and Best made high art from a popular pastime—raises our minds above the mundane, enables us to apprehend an aspect of ourselves which transcends the categories and divisions of the alienated society we live in. It teaches us, so to speak, not to tolerate, much less 'celebrate', these differences, as the banal reconcilers of the North would wish, but to find a different, better sense of ourselves, toward which we can all rise up together. He was a revolutionary of the imagination.

Join the Socialist Workers Party

Ireland is governed by politicians who answer only to a wealthy elite

Despite the boom, there is little money for public services. Our hospitals are in a chaotic condition; there are hardly any publicly run crèches – but we increasingly pay a host of new stealth taxes. The reason: Ireland has become a tax haven for the big corporations.

Ireland should not be supporting Bush's war on Iraq

About one quarter of a million US troops travel through Shannon each year on their way to fight in Iraq. Shannon airport has also been used to transport prisoners to secret CIA torture centres. But the majority of the Irish people oppose this war and want to remain neutral.

Migrants are being mistreated by Irish employers

Irish Ferries and Gama have exposed gross exploitation.

Employers use the fact that migrants need a work permit to keep them under their thumbs. They want to replace permanent workers with agency or 'contingent' workers. Socialists seek to unite workers to challenge employers – and not let them divide us.

Catholic and Protestant workers have more in common than divides them

James Connolly wanted a 32 county Workers Republic – where all workers gained. Not a country where the Catholic Church ran the schools and hospitals (or where sectarian bigots wanted to make Catholics into second class citizens). You will never get that by going into Coalition with Fianna Fail – or Ian Paisley! The Socialist Workers Party is the leading anti-establishment party in this country.

We advocate 'people power' as the main way to bring about change.

Instead of just electing another politician, we can bring change from below.

The best way to do that is to unite people from many different backgrounds into a common struggle.

The SWP is keen to play its part in a coming together of a New Left to fight the establishment parties and their neo-liberal agenda.

Within all these movements, the SWP keeps to the fore the goal of fundamental change – a revolution which brings about an end to war, racism and privilege.

But can I afford the time?

It's the question that many ask when they consider getting involved. And it's no wonder, as we face hugely stressful lives.

Socialists want to create a

mass party where everyone makes whatever contribution they can.

If that just means distributing a few leaflets to your friends or workmates, that is fine. Or if you want to help organise activity, that is also fine.

You choose what level of involvement you want – but do get involved!

Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to
SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

Phone.....



Socialist Worker

We must defend our Public Sector: STOP HAIN'S DRIVE TO PRIVATISATION

In the School of Hain: Only room for one economic creed

By Eamonn McCann

In a speech grandly titled "Grasping the Opportunity: Investing in our Future", Peter Hain has set out New Labour's overall economic plan Northern Ireland.

The Government is working with the private sector, trade unions and the voluntary sector to create a world-class Northern Ireland economy, he declared.

A more accurate view would be that New Labour working for the private sector; treating the unions with contempt; and using the voluntary sector to manage sectarianism.

The decision to hand over the water service and chunks of the civil service to private companies speaks volumes about New Labour's relationship with the private sector.

The casual dismissal of all objections to the sell-off indicates the lack of standing of the union movement in New Labour eyes.

Meanwhile, the allocation of public money to voluntary groups on the basis of community balance rather than social need is the best way forward.

The future which New Labour envisages is one in which the interests of business are seen as coterminous with the interests of society itself. The extent to which this view has become the defining ideology of New Labour came through with ringing clarity in a section of Hain's speech, which has attracted little

comment.

The Government aimed to establish links between companies of all sizes and our education system in order to ensure (that) a culture of enterprise and entrepreneurship is instilled from school age, he explained

The notion that schools should see their role as drawing out the talents and aptitudes of every child in all their dazzling diversity will make no sense at all in Hain's shiny new world where profit is put on a pedestal in the classroom, like a primitive icon demanding obeisance.

Some of us have spent years challenging the churches, particularly the Catholic Church, for using the education system to brainwash children into acceptance of beliefs based on faith rather than reason.

Now our children are systematically to be inculcated with ideas on how the economy ought to be run-based, again, on ideology and dogmatism.

Even the Catholic bishops accepted in recent years that the case for alternative religions should be given a mention in the classroom, if only in passing.

But there's no suggestion that alternative economic models to free market competition should be given space in Hain's curriculum of the future.

Indeed, we are not dealing here with curriculum at all. Just as religion has mainly been promoted via



Hain: Organising the sell-off of Northern Ireland's Public Sector

the ethos of denominational schools, rather than in set lessons, so belief in enterprise and entrepreneurship is to be spread via the culture of our schools.

The reason Hain's strictures on education sparked no controversy is that belief in the necessary primacy of the private sector is fast becoming the common sense of the middle class.

Just as religious dogmatists refuse to consider any belief system other than their own, so the free marketers regard all alternatives to their theories as outside the bounds of permissible debate.

Some exactly mimic their religious equivalents in insisting that their theories aren't theories at all, but the Truth, denial of which can lead only to damnation.

The SDLP may battle with Sinn Fein for the Catholic vote, and the DUP contest with the UUP for the Protestant vote.

But none of these parties offers any sharp challenge to New Labour on economic strategy. They are never done telling us what they will and will not accept as the price for reinstating the Assembly and Executive.

But privatisation, the introduc-

tion of water charges, cut-backs in education and health-issues such as these are never mentioned as make-or-break matters for any of them.

On the face of it, given that the four main parties pull more than 85 percent of the total vote, Hain has good reason for confidence that the New Labour agenda will encounter little resistance.

But down below and all around, discontent is brewing.

The responsibility of socialists is to show maximum unity in organising at grass-roots level, and to stiffen resistance with socialist politics.

BUDGET CONSULTATION IS A FRAUD

By Gordon Hewitt

The official public consultation for Hain's Budget was even more farcical than that of the water charges consultations.

Firstly, few people knew that it was being held because of the lack of advertising; and those that made it were greeted by a panel, which was incapable of answering any questions other than to repeat a government mantra.

Even more disturbing was the announcement that the budget implementation date is only a few weeks away; too soon for this part of the public consultation to have any meaningful effect.

As someone from the local government sector pointed out, had

this been a local council consultation there would have been an expectation that the councillors responsible for drafting the budget, the department heads who would implement proposals, and perhaps, even key figures in the council would have been present to take on board any criticisms and answer questions.

Despite the constant complaints from the floor that the process was unacceptable, the government representatives ploughed ahead outlining the budget priorities.

We learnt that the budget is predicated on two interlocking arguments.

Firstly that the "cake is only so big," so the government has to be prudent in the allocation of funds to the various departments, particularly health, education and welfare. It was

further explained that demands are unlimited and we will never be in a position to meet them all.

However, the "cake" seems quite expandable when it comes to the nuclear industry, the occupation of Iraq or bailing out failed privatisations, so why could it not be expanded to meet our needs?

This objection was dismissed as "unrealistic."

It was then argued that, "because Northern Ireland doesn't pay its way" i.e. what is raised in taxation and rates falls short of what is given over from the government, the government will have to use public monies to secure investment from the private sector, and tender for private investment for public projects.

The government must also secure more money from people here

through rates increases and water charges.

The floor informed the panel that Northern Ireland does actually pay its way if we take into account the additional charges paid here for fuel, gas, electricity, heating oil, clothes, transport and groceries, and that far from paying less than counterparts in England and Wales, we probably pay slightly more.

Add to that the high levels of people who live solely on benefits and our situation seems especially deserving of increased funding not increased charges.

These objections were also dismissed.

When a NIPSA member quoted costs for the building of three schools, one built by the government costing £8 million and 2 equivalent centres

built by the private sector costing £131 million, evidence which seemed to completely dispel the idea that private sector efficiency would pull us through the shortfall, "we can't use individual cases to back up one side or the other" came the reply.

And finally, water charges. No plans for privatisation and the charges will be used to increase frontline services. Another lie.

The most that can be said for the consultation is that at least we know how much disdain the government holds for working class people here.

What is currently missing is a coordinated campaign, which fights the government both in terms of the ideas and arguments and on the ground when privatisations take place.