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COVER UP ON EXPLOITATION OF MIGRANT WORKERS

In a recent shocking report commissioned by the Labour Relations Commission, it was revealed that 85 percent of cases taken by migrant workers to the Rights Commissioner win.

It was one important indication of huge levels of exploitation. The LRC Report also listed out the main ways this happens,

“The main issue was underpayment of wages, including payment below the minimum wage; followed by non-payment of overtime (including non-payment of Sunday and public holiday premiums) excess hours and non-payment of holiday pay.

“Other issues were those of unfair dismissal, unlawful deductions, bullying and non-issuing of payslips.

“What was particularly remarkable about the issues raised is that, in almost all cases, the claimant listed more than one and, in many cases, listed all of the above complaints’

The government know this is going on but are covering up.

Migrants workers who are work for recruitment or temp agencies suffer the most abuse as these agencies often take between 10 percent and 15 percent of their wages and pressurise them to work unsocial hours.

In 1997, there were 272 recruitment agencies in Ireland but by 1999 this had jumped to 447.

The government is legally obliged to collect statistics on how many workers are hired by recruitment agencies but since Mary Harney’s reign on the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment they have not been doing this.

Instead they are deliberately



Gama workers on strike last year over starvation wages

covering up the number of workers who are hired via temp or recruitment agencies.

There are some indication, however, that many employers are using these agencies as a way of reducing their wage bill.

One study commissioned by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions found that Ireland had double the EU average for the number of workers on temporary agency contracts.

All of this shows that migrant workers need more rights in Ireland – not less.

This is why Pat Rabbitte’s comments about work permits were such a disgrace. Work per-

mits give huge power to employers as workers have to keep on their good side to get their permits renewed.

GAMA got away with terrible exploitation until the story was broken by Joe Higgins T.D. – precisely because the company had workers under their thumb through work permits.

Rabbitte is trying to copy Tony Blair and appeal to a soft racist vote because he is frightened by the rise of Sinn Fein.

The best way to stop the ‘race to the bottom’ is not to put more restrictions on migrants but to campaign for better labour standards and to launch a massive union recruitment drive.

At the moment there are effectively only 31 labour inspectors for a million strong workforce in Ireland. More inspectors are employed to monitor the smoking ban than to ensure that employers are not breaking labour laws.

But labour inspectors alone will now solve the problem – we also need a massive union recruitment campaign.

15,000 migrant workers have already joined SIPTU and tens of thousands more will join SIPTU and other unions if they are encouraged.

Solidarity between Irish and migrant workers in the answer – not attacks on migrants from Labour politicians.

BIN TAX BATTLE RESUMES

Dublin City Council are leaving uncollected rubbish all over the city. They are taking on the six year old Campaign Against the Bin Tax in many working class areas.

But Council is nervous about resistance and is moving very slowly to implement their policy of non-collection in order to avoid a major confrontation in the larger areas of Dublin.

When the council first announced they would leave behind the bins of non-payers of the double-tax, they only pursued this policy in the more leafy suburbs of Dublin city, affecting areas like Donnybrook, Rathmines and Rathgar. Then they moved to leave bins behind in parts of Ringsend and Cabra.

Since they made their announcement there have been large and lively public meetings of the campaign to prepare a response to non-collection in the big working class areas.

In Crumlin, nearly 300 attended a lively public meeting to decide on tactics in response to the council. In Drimnagh and Ballyfermot 150 turned up to meetings to plan their response in the event of bins being left behind in their estates.

Large and lively meetings have also been held in Donnycarney, Coolock, Edenmore, Finglas.

In Ballymun, two successful meetings were held and over sixty residents came together to organise resistance to imminent non-collection.

It was agreed unanimously when bins were left uncollected, residents would organise a mass clean-up. In addition residents agreed to support mass pickets and protests.

A newsletter is being distributed to all residents in the area outlining these decisions and a network of volunteers has been established. Emergency meetings will be organised if and when non-collection is implemented in the area

Throughout Dublin, campaigners will be organising to dump rubbish bags in the backs of trucks and to organise mass clean-ups of their areas and force the council to collect all rubbish.

"There is still plenty of fight in this campaign. People are not going to throw away the struggle of the last five years and let the council walk all over them," according to Paddy Dodson from the Ballyfermot area.

IF YOUR BIN IS NOT COLLECTED

Phone The Anti-Bin Charges Campaign on 087 9090166 immediately.

The campaign will help you get leaflets and posters around your area to organise resistance.



Bin tax protestors last year

Workers and campaigners unite

Local campaigns are also planning public protests at the bin depots and outside the city council meetings.

When the Crumlin and Drimnagh campaigns organised an early picket on the Davitt Road depot over 60 people turned out on a cold, dark morning to protest.

The council workers were very impressed and extremely friendly to the pickets who handed in leaflets to the workers calling for solidarity between workers and communities.

At the Rathmines depot protesters were

given a warm welcome and warm tea. Workers there explained to the campaign how each morning the bin trucks are driven out of the depot by senior management and engineers and parked at various locations in the area.

Later in the morning fleets of cars take the bin workers from the depot to the trucks to start their days work.

As one of the binmen told Socialist Worker, "This is a sign of nerves from management. They don't trust us not to respect pickets from the campaign if they turn up at the depot so they

take the trucks out before we get into work.

"All the money that is being spent on overtime for supervisors to do this just to get the better of the campaign. It's a disgrace."

The city council is using a computerised technique to try to defeat the campaign. They have mechanised the trucks to read computer chips in each bin.

Maybe because the contract for computerisation of the trucks (worth a lot of money) was awarded to a son of one of the top managers of Dublin City's Waste Management Department!

BACK TO THE COURTS

The city council is pre-empting an expected hearing in the Supreme Court on the legality of bin charges.

Campaigners who were brought before the Courts for not paying their bills in 2001 and 2002 have won three appeal cases so far in front of Circuit Court judges.

This is because the failure of the council to provide any financial incentive to re-cycle, is against their own waste management policy.

Having realised that the

implications of such a legal outcome could be absolutely massive - not just for Dublin City Council but for every local authority in the country - the legal reps of the council appealed to the President of the Circuit Court to be allowed to take one test case before his court and then on to appeal to the Supreme Court.

This test case is to be heard in February.

But why have the Council pre-empted this legal process by moving to take away our refuse

service before the actual legality of bin charges is proven?

The campaign has taken on many court cases and has had some success in proving that bin charges were wrong, that people were not given incentive until 2005 and that re-cycling facilities are at best paltry in this city.

So any attempt to blame the campaign if rubbish starts piling up on our city streets has to be rejected outright. The blame lies fairly and squarely with the City Godfathers.

Who runs Dublin?

Less than a year ago the democratically elected councillors of Dublin voted that all bins must be collected to protect public health and safety.

But under the Waste Management Act an unelected, city manager has been given the right to over-rule elected representatives.

So one person has decided

that a rubbish services is to be withdrawn.

The irony is that Dublin City Council manager John Fitzgerald, even wrote recently that

'All too often Democracy is perceived as a spectator sport, but in real democracy all voices need to be heard, and it is our aim to foster new forms of public involvement in local policy issues'

Another emergency resolution is before the next City Council meeting to insist that all bins be collected in the interests of public health.

The Anti-Bin charges campaign is calling on all activists to come along and protest at this council meeting at 6.15pm outside City Hall on Monday 6th February and let our voices be heard loud and clear by those inside.

NEW RESISTANCE IN WATERFORD

Over forty people attended a meeting in Tramore recently to protest at increased bin charges and the lack of a waiver system.

The annual flat rate charge in County Waterford has increased from €120 to €150 a year.

On top of that people are supposed to pay €13 a lift for bins with general rubbish and €7 for bins with rubbish that can be re-cycled.

There is no waiver system in the county and instead the elderly and the poor are asked to personally turn up at City Council offices and plead their case.

'It is a deliberate attempt to humiliate and turn us into beggars' one activist said.

A protest will take place at the next Urban District Council meeting and anew campaign of resistance is underway.

Protest/Reports/Struggle

email to swped@eircom.net Phone 01 8722682

DUNNES STORES

Sacked for wearing a union badge

Joanne Delaney, a shop steward at Dunnes Stores has received an indefinite suspension from work for wearing a badge identifying her as a member of Mandate, the Union which represents over 40,000 workers in the retail sector and bar trade, including staff at Dunnes.

Joanne received a letter on 29th November 2005 informing her that she had been dismissed by the company.

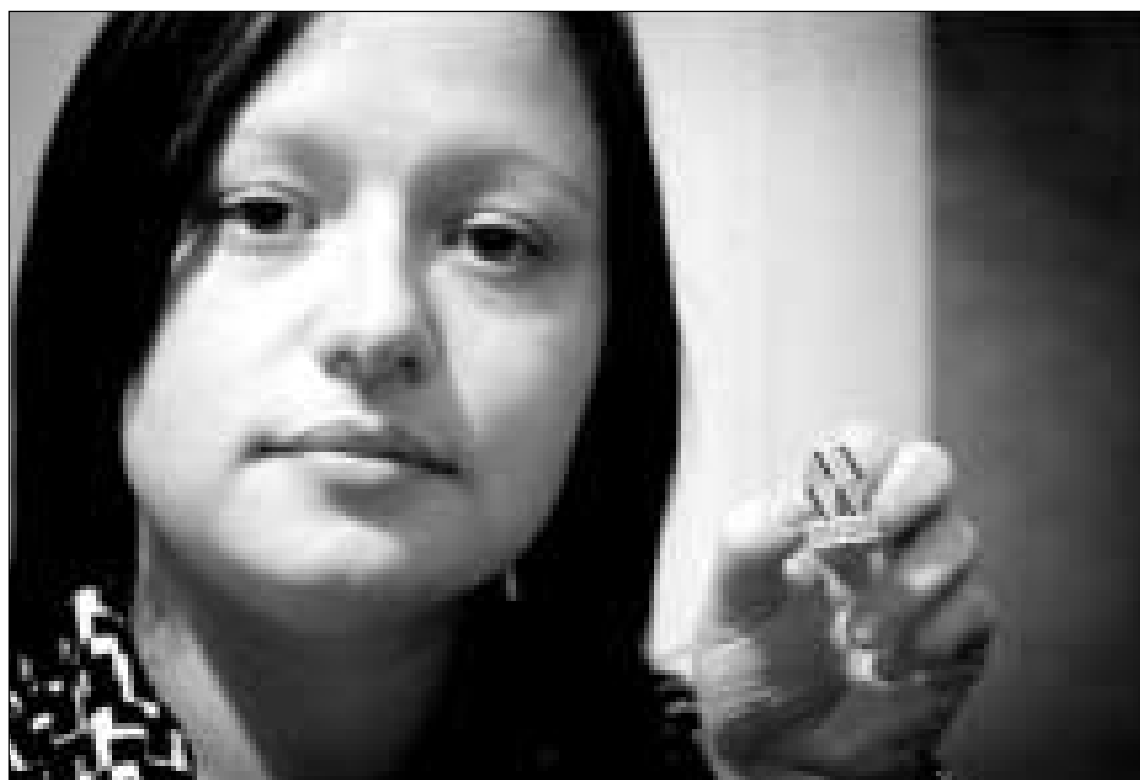
Many trade unionists around the world will remember the Dunnes Stores Strike against Apartheid which ran for almost three years from June 1984 to April 1987.

In the face of an intransigent employer, the union eventually persuaded the Irish government of the day to implement economic sanctions against the old Apartheid regime in South Africa.

According to Mandate Trade Union, Dunnes Stores are at it again.

This time the raging, anti-union Irish retailer (the Wal-Mart of Ireland) has achieved a new low in union-bashing by sacking Joanne Delaney.

With more than four years service in the Ashleaf store in Crumlin on the south side of Dublin, the 22 year-old union member was elected shop steward by her fellow-members and says she is proud to be a trade union activist and a Mandate



Joanne Delaney: Victimised Mandate shop steward

member.

Before sacking Joanne, Dunnes refused to attend a meeting with her because she was accompanied by her union Organiser.

Brendan Archbold, National Official with Mandate.

"The decision by Dunnes to sack a member of Mandate for wearing her union badge is symptomatic of a wider cam-

paign by the chain to undermine our union and to systematically erode our right to represent our members effectively.

"For a considerable period of time now, it has been clear to Mandate that the company has wilfully and methodically sought to obstruct our efforts to engage with them on a variety of issues.

"This is just one example of the company's deplorable atti-

tude to Trade Unions.

"Issues such as this have contributed to the souring of the industrial relations environment in Dunnes Stores.

"Unless this matter is dealt with satisfactorily from the union's point of view, it has the potential to escalate given the worsening atmosphere at the company" he concluded.

E PROTEST

Please communicate your disgust at the behaviour of Dunnes Stores by sending a protest message to Mr. Frank Dunne, a director of Dunnes at frank.dunne@dunnesstores.com

Dear Mr. Dunne,
The news that Dunnes Stores has sacked Joanne Delaney of your Crumlin store for wearing her union badge was greeted with a mixture of disbelief and horror in many quarters around the world.

We were under the impression that the Irish system of industrial relations was based on a social partnership arrangement where each party respected the rights of the other.

This most savage of actions by your company is hardly the behaviour of a social partner and we wish to place on record our disgust at the decision to dismiss Joanne.

Far from penalising Ms. Delaney, your company should be proud to have in its employment a worker with determination and principle who will not be intimidated by the bullying tactics of local management.

We call on Dunnes Stores to immediately re-instate Joanne Delaney.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Bricklayers take action in over lay-offs

Bricklayers employed by the Spanish building company Ferrovial have placed pickets on their sites in Ballyfermot and Tallaght.

Just before Christmas the company moved to lay off 11 bricklayers on an arbitrary basis.

The union had said that they accept the temporary lay-off of brickies but that the custom of

last-in first-out had to be observed.

Tradesmen are regularly laid off on a temporary basis from sites but the lay-offs have always followed good trade union practice that does not allow for discrimination or victimisation of workers.

When the company refused to discuss the issue with the

BATU representatives, the union took a ballot for strike action. The dispute has been before the Labour Court who have recommended the implementation of the last-in first-out principle. T

he workers demand is for the implementation of the Labour Court deal which the company are ignoring. Pickets have been

ongoing on the two sites for the last fortnight.

Although the pickets are placed by BATU, all of the SIPTU members who are labourers on the sites have refused to cross.

And there are about 60 migrant workers who are employed by contractors who are also respecting the picket

lines.

Socialist Worker spoke to one of the shop stewards who described the company management as "descendants of Franco".

"Ferrovial is a formidable operation and could swallow up its competitors. It's absolutely huge but why are they behaving like bullies?"

"Why not accept the labour court recommendation which ensures a fair system for lay-offs.

"We have to stand up to them or they will walk all over us. We voted 100% for strike action and are prepared to see this thru to the end.

"This is an important principle on the building sites and we will fight to defend it."

SUB-CONTRACTING

Protests planned in Ballybrack and Loughlinstown

Building workers from Ballybrack and Loughlinstown are being told there is no work for them on a Council building site run by Collen Construction at Laurel Ave in Ballybrack, where new council homes are currently being built.

Foremen on the site made it clear no locals would be employed refusing even to take their names for work that might come up in the future.

In the past when Loughlinstown Woods

was being built, there were agreements with the local community that a certain proportion of the workforce on the site would be local labour. Similar promises were made when the Cherrywood development was built although in that case the developers failed to keep their promises to the local community.

Building workers strongly suspect there is a deliberate policy on the Laurel Avenue site to keep trade union members out so sub-contractors can

avoid giving proper pay and conditions to workers.

On many sites sub-contractors employ workers on C-45 certs so they are classified as self-employed.

This allows the builder to avoid paying the proper rates for the job, sick pay, travel money and other entitlements. In many cases sub-contractors are not paying pension contributions for those employed even though they are legally obliged to do so.

Builders unions have been fighting an on-going battle in recent years against sub-contacting and the C-45 scheme on building sites. They want to see workers employed directly by the contactors so they are given proper pay and conditions.

It is bad enough private companies like Irish Ferries are trying to destroy well-paid jobs and replace them with low-paid employment and terrible conditions. It is a total disgrace that on a publicly

owned site being developed by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co. Council there is no local labour and locals are actually being discriminated against because they might want decent pay and conditions.

Local Building workers plan to mount protests to demand from the council that there is a reasonable proportion of local labour employed on the Laurel Ave site and that all workers are given proper pay and conditions.

AFTER IRISH FERRIES THE FUTURE OF TRADE UNIONISM

A One-Day Seminar hosted by **Socialist Worker**



Saturday 4th February. The Central Hotel, Exchequer Street, Dublin City Centre

11.00 - 13.00 Debate on Social Partnership/ Jack O'Connor, President SIPTU / Mick O'Reilly, Regional Secretary ATGWU
14.00 - 15.30 Migrant Workers Rights and the EU Services Directive /Tom Tully, Chief Shop Steward, Irish /Ferries; Barbara Muldoon, Legal Advisor on Immigration; Bobby Gilmore /Chairperson Migrant Rights Centre
15.45 - 17.30 Building a Fighting Trade Union Movement /Owen McCormack, Busworkers Action Group; Eamonn McNally CWU
Cover charge €5.00
For booking and information contact Brid Smith
Tel: 087 90 90 166 or e-mail: industrial@swp.ie

PALESTINIAN ELECTION

By Kevin Wingfield

In a major upset, Hamas has won the election for the Palestinian Legislative Assembly in a landslide. Running under the name Change and Reform, Hamas scored 434,817 votes or 43.0% of the total vote taking 76 of the 132 seats.

Fatah, the party led until his death by Yasser Arafat, and which has dominated Palestinian politics for decades, was pushed into a poor second place winning just 43 seats.

For the past two years, Bush and the US neo-conservatives claimed they were bringing democracy to the Middle East.

But they were far from willing to accept the outcome. They wanted to see a pliant strongman emerge in Palestine who would follow Arafat in agreeing to yet further concessions to Israel. But what they got was the rage of the mass of Palestinians.

Once the scale of Hamas's victory was revealed, the US and the EU threatened to withdraw aid from Palestine.

Bush justified this by denouncing Hamas as terrorists and demanding that they "renounce violence".

Yet the week before, the US bombed a house inside Pakistan, in which 17 innocent people including women and little children were killed.

They justified this as a failed effort to kill one alleged Al Qaeda leader who wasn't even there.

In the three months before last year's Palestinian Authority presidential election, Israel killed 88 Palestinians—one-quarter of whom were children—and injured 339.

During the same period, Israel conducted 1,155 raids into Palestinian areas, arrested 901 Palestinians and detained 276. Israel demolished 89 Palestinian homes, imposed 42 curfews and carried out nine assassination attempts resulting in the death of eight Palestinians.

But no one told Israel to 'renounce violence' before receiving US aid.

Nor is Hamas's stated aim of removing the state of Israel a reason for imposing sanctions.

Fianna Fail and Sinn Fein have often argued that Northern Ireland is a 'failed political entity' which needs to be amalgamated into the South. But no one has suggested that sanctions should be imposed on Ireland or international aid withdrawn.

Hamas have every right to call for a one state solution because the political problem in the region has been caused by Zionism.

The Bloody History of Zionism

Founded as a specifically Jewish state, Israel was inevitably built on "ethnic cleansing", discrimination, brutality and expansionism.

It required making non-persons of the Palestinians. Former Israeli PM Golda Meir, famously said "There is no such thing as Palestinians".

The Zionist enterprise could only be realised through an alliance with a major imperial power.

At the end of the First World War, the British promised to back a Jewish state in Palestine in the Balfour Declaration. Winston Churchill remarked that it could become "our little Ulster" in the region.

From 1948 the American government has showered Israel with military and other aid—it has been the largest recipient of US aid for decades.

The US regularly vetoes UN resolutions which condemn Israeli war crimes and covers up for Israeli nuclear weapons.

In 1967 Israel invaded and occupied Gaza, the West bank and annexed East Jerusalem. According to U.S. State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights



HAMAS: A vote of resistance

Practices for 2004, the population of Palestinians living in Israel and the occupied territories exceeded the number of Israeli Jews. The Palestinian population stood at over 5.3 million while the Jewish population stood at 5.2 million.

In response Sharon devised a new strategy for Zionism.. He courted international public opinion by making a great play of handing over the

Gaza the Palestinian Authority.

But simultaneously, he promoted a policy of enforcing complete separation from Palestinians. One result was the building of an apartheid wall which has inflicted great suffering on Palestinians.

He also sought more US aid to build new settlements in the Negev and Galilee to make them more Jewish. Today right wing Israeli

politicians advocate fresh forced expulsions of Palestinians.

The Palestinian Authority (PA), was set up out of the 1993 Oslo agreements between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the government of Israel, but the PA is responsible for little more than educational, health, municipal and taxation.

But Israel and the United States

saw it as a way to control the occupied territories.

The rise of Hamas

Many Western liberals will be appalled that Palestinians have apparently made a decisive lurch towards Islamism. But the move is entirely understandable. The corrupt Fatah movement failed because it meekly accepted the Oslo Accords. Since Oslo Israel has continued to expand the "Jewish settlements" in the land occupied since 1967—there are now 450,000 armed Israeli colonisers.

Israel hoped that oppression would so demoralise the Palestinians but that changed with the Second Intifada which began after Sharon stated a provocation. By standing up and fighting, Palestinians found a new dignity and a renewed strength to resist.

As elsewhere, the rise of Islamism is a reflection of the failure of secular movements for change. The PLO shifted from a militant national liberation movement to one which aligned itself with the corrupt pro-Western stooge Arab regimes. It constantly searched for diplomatic favour from the US and those very regimes.

Hamas grew because it opposed the corruption of the PA. It won many supporters by building welfare and charitable services around mosques. In contrast to degradation and corruption that stalked areas like the Gaza, its religious zeal and uncompromising hostility to Israel brought it admiration.

The city of Qalqilya shows in microcosm how Hamas won. Situated in the north of the West Bank, it is home to 50,000 Palestinians. It is surrounded by Israeli settlements and now completely enclosed by an Israel's Apartheid Wall, its resident's prisoners in an Israeli-controlled giant ghetto.

Fatah dominated Qalqilya's city council for years but after the completion of the wall, Hamas won every single city council seat in municipal elections. What happened in Qalqilya has now spread across the occupied territories.

As one commentator noted "Hamas' success is as much an expression of the determination of Palestinians to resist Israel's efforts to force their surrender as it is a rejection of Fatah.

It reduces the conflict to its most fundamental elements: there is occupation, and there is resistance."

Where now for Hamas?

Despite proclaiming a militant opposition to corruption and imperialism, Islamist movements often look for compromises. In Egypt, for example, the Muslim Brotherhood limited the number of candidates it put forward deliberately so as not to antagonize the Mubarak regime.

Hamas has ties to the Saudi regime and that link will be used as leverage on them. Having won the election, they too will be put to the test. Their problem is that they have no strategy to foment a revolt by the poor of the Middle East against corrupt pro-US tyrants. Their use of tactics such as suicide bombing is a sign of despair rather than confidence. Serious divisions within Hamas are therefore likely to open up as it is the governing party.

The left in Palestine can recover on two conditions. One, that it has nothing to do with US-Israeli efforts to destabilise the democratically elected government in the name of any spurious secularism. Two, that it breaks fully from the corruption and compromising positions taken by Fatah.

The slow re-emergence of anti-capitalist forces through the region is the hope for the future.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

"O SUL NORTE DE NOSSOS POVOS"

Chavez gives keynote address at World Social Forum

Sixty-thousand people have attended the World Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela which was more political than ever. Delegates of diverse organisations from across the world came together to discuss and put forward plans of action.

Up to now the forums have focussed on criticisms of neo-liberalism, planning days of action but steering clear from offering alternatives to capitalism. Now there is a clear call to build a global anti-imperialist front and to see socialism as the goal. The dominant theme was the need to go on the offensive.

This year the keynote speech at the WSF was delivered by Hugo Chavez to an electric atmosphere.

Before it started the Internationale was played and everyone stood with fists in the air, people holding hands and swaying. Inside the stadium was like a red tide as eight thousand people, with t-shirts, red caps and flags, rose from their seats.

The action began with a play in the style of Via Campesinos, where groups of men and armed women of the field with machetes staged a mock confrontation with large estate owners and corporations like Microsoft, Macdonalds and Texaco.

Chavez said that "One of capitalism's greatest crimes is the exclusion of the majority". "No empire is interested in giving light to the slaves, those living under domination. Only revolutions give off light to the people. There can be no revolutions without ideas."

"US Imperialism can call us what they want but they are going to suffer a defeat in the South American continent as they have never before seen in 500 years.

He referred throughout

to George W. Bush as Mister Danger.

"Venezuela has the biggest land reserves of oil in the world. This is the principal motivation of Mr Danger. They want Venezuelan oil and gas. They had it for 100 years but now that oil is for the people of Venezuela, for the continent. Never again will Venezuela be a colony of the North Americans.

"There are reasons to be optimistic. In the US the movement is re-emerging, stronger than ever. Remember Cindy Sheehan started just on her own outside the ranch of Mr Danger. She is Mrs Hope!

"Remember Katrina and the movement of indignation in the US at a government abandoning its people, especially the poor, Latinos and Africans.

"It's clear, as Karl Marx said: the world, we have to save it, and it's the people that have to do it. It's the people of the US who are central - there must be an insurrection of the people in the US with the people of Latin America, Caribbean, Europe, and Asia.

"The World Social Forum has grown in importance because the forum grew out of the heat of struggle - in Seattle, Cancun; the struggles against the WTO, the IMF, the FTAA against neo-liberal globalisation. It was born in the heat of this battle.

"If we do an assessment of this last 6 years, can we say we are on the defensive from those who defend injustice and inequality? No. We have to form a union of the

offensive. The path to victory it will be long, but all of us have to unite into a victorious offensive against imperialism.

"Here in Venezuela we are going forward. Millions who couldn't read or write before can do so now. We are constructing participative democracy where the people are the primary actor. Representative democracy has always been a false democracy of the elite. The only true democracy is where majority push and are the impulse for change - participative democracy.

"We have to defend this from imperialism. Because imperialism starts by trying to lure you with honey lips and tries to divide. I was in the White House, at the meetings of the IMF, in the World Bank, in the WTO during my first year of government. With those huge meals, imperialism was luring me.

"Later I realised that I am the servant of all of you. I didn't get elected to be a traitor of the people - to pass into the long line of traitors. I started fighting against imperialism which replied with an attempted coup in 2004.

"The strategy of the US is to eliminate whatever threat, however they classify it, before it takes shape. They launched a coup against us to get our oil; as they did the following year against Iraq.

"Imperialism has huge power but is not infallible. Not only is it failing in Iraq, it has already failed. But they are not recognising defeat - they will keep sending thousands of soldiers to their death and mas-

sacring children.

"I saw the faces of the soldiers in Baghdad, their fear and aggression. How different was the face of the soldier helping a child out of the floods in New Orleans. That is what the US soldiers should be doing everyday.

"Each day in the US there is more misery, more poverty now with 40 million poor. Imagine a government in the US that withdrew its armies and spent the billions it spends every year on aggression instead on health and education, to produce medicine and food.

"This will depend on the people of the US. The waking of this sleeping giant, within the territory of the US is key. WE need to unite the largest fight for peace, equality and justice.

"The WSF has a huge importance in this world wide offensive of movements and governments. It would be a huge waste if the WSF confined itself to nostalgia, to folklore, to tourism. This would be terrible. It would be losing time and we can't afford to waste time.

"I call on all the leaders of the social movements to enact a massive unitary work and plan of action to push the movements in all the world. It is vital for the future of the world.

"The Bolivarian Revolution is ready to help all it can to get things going in this direction - while respecting the autonomy of the social movements, the currents and struggles. As Marx said: 'socialism

or death'.

"We have to be dramatic. I think we have arrived at the century in which the dilemma will be resolved. As Chomsky and other philosophers said perhaps the human species was an error of nature. We are only here 10000 years but there is no history of any other species where there is such an impulse towards self-destruction.

"Capitalism is killing the planet, the environment, the life of the seas, of the woods, drying rivers and lakes

"I plead with all of you in the forum, to push hard to build a massive anti-imperialist movement to encompass the whole world in a struggle. I believe we have taken steps in this direction.

But we are running the risk of doing, as what was said in Porto Alegre at last year's forum, of just being a discussion forum with debate but no conclusions. To me this seems strange.

"We can't lose time, I emphasise this. We have to save the planet, to save human life to change history and change the world. Here we have lifted again the flag of socialism. We have generated a new movement of genuine socialism - new and fresh.

"I repeat with force and passion from the World Social Forum to all the movements of the world: Es socialismo o muerte, patria o muerte, venceremos! Its socialism or death, patriotism or death. We will win!*

Venezuela: The Voices of

Rory Hearne reports on a revolution that is becoming deeper and more radical.

Factories have been taken over by workers after the employers fired them, locked them out or shut down the companies by declaring bankruptcy.

During the famous employers' paro (strike) in April 2004, the bosses used lock-outs and mass sacking of workers to try and destabilise the Chavez government.

"But workers responded by occupying the plants and setting up co-operatives which are sometimes referred to as conglomerates - often with workers' houses, recreation and other services within the complex.

In some factories, workers have taken over fully while in others they are working as a co-operative with the companies or with the state.

But in the case of Invepal, a paper factory in a state about 100 miles outside Caracas, the capital city of Venezuela, the workers have taken over and forced the state to finance the factory.

They are currently in co-gestion (co-management) with the state whereby the workers own 49% of the company and the state 51%.

The workers have engaged in an intense struggle and have declared that they want to reach a point of 100% worker ownership and control.

Their struggle is known throughout Venezuela, providing a new model - workers' leadership in the revolution and hope and resistance for the poor in the barrios.

The (relatively) independent trade union, the UNT, is promoting the co-operative of Invepal as a model that should be spread throughout the country, and indeed the world.

I spoke to some of the leading workers occupying the factory at the World Social Forum in Venezuela. They were, to put it mildly, euphorical and excitedly talking about their struggle.

They said that they themselves were transformed through this process and want the world to see what they are doing, follow the example and give support and solidarity.

'WE TOOK OVER AND RUN OUR FACTORY'

Alexis Pereira is an electrician in the co-operative and Alexis Polanco works in the chemical sector in the factory.

They explain that this factory is almost like a town in itself, with places for the workers to sleep and even cinemas.

"Invepal was a private company. Before there used to be a union which made deals with the bosses and wasn't very democratic. Then in 2000 some of us formed a group and organised a new union.

"We won the elections as reps in the factory and fought for the rights of the workers in the factory. When Chavez was a candidate in the elec-

tions, the bosses threatened that if Chavez won then they were going to close the company.

"In 2001 the company closed down and offered a terrible redundancy to 850 workers. But only 200 workers signed the redundancy and 650 refused.

"We went to the Minister for Labour and forced an agreement with the company so that we could retain our jobs and continue working in the factory.

"The problems, however, continued and then in 2003 the company decided to close the factory again. Then finally in September 2004 they closed completely and declared bankruptcy.

"We then set up blockades at the entrances and no one was allowed in or out. We went to the Minister for Labour again and to the Vice President. During our one year and half struggle to keep the factory open, we organised many marches.

The workers from the PDVSA [petrol company], from the UNT and other unions and workers around Venezuela gave us huge solidarity support through food and money.

We demanded that the government should re-start the company. The national assembly of the UNT supported workers' control of the company and other companies where workers were occupying.

"This was because of what happened in Chile with Allende and the coup in 1973. We feared it could happen to us at any moment, especially with the US at our door.

"Then on 2 December 2004 we organised an assembly of the workers and took the decision to form the co-operative Venepal as an organization of the workers to start running the company again.

"Then the government issued a decree which stated that any company which was considered to serve the public interest or need could be appropriated by the workers or the state. On 12th January last year Chavez signed that decree into law.

"We took over the factory and put it under workers' control. Thanks to national workers solidarity we got a victory and workers are operating the company through assemblies.

"We are a workers collective. The salaries are basically equal. The profits are divided 49% to the workers and 51% to the state.

"We wanted to get rid of the situation in companies where the minority dominates the majority. The leadership in our factory is now collective and the workers assemblies make the decisions.

@We advertise the assemblies all around the factory and put at the bottom: 'The success of the assembly depends on you'. Everything in the assembly is recorded and written up.

"This is a result of many years of



struggle and raising the consciousness of the workers in the factory.

"We had an assembly and kicked out the old directors and named workers to represent us.

'HERE THERE ARE NO BOSSES'

"In the factory there are 15 or 20 departments or areas: production, electricity, maintenance etc. Each area

formed a committee and the workers in each area elected a co-ordinator.

"Here there are no bosses! - Because the management is collective. The management is organised through the committees.

of Revolution in motion

FOR ALL OUR STRUGGLES

Thousands took part in a march through Caracas city called: Por Todas Nuestras Luchas: Seguimos movilizados: For all our struggles: we will continue to mobilise.

The march was called by indigenous groups, landless peasant movements, feminist collectives, workers co-ops and anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist organisations. The march was in support of the revolution and Chavez but demanding that it deepens, goes further and confronts imperialism, the multinationals and the remaining corruption, bureaucracy and reformism within the Bolivarian state.

Some of the banners read: "No revolution financed by the multinationals". The logo o" all". But some carried the logo with the changed versions "Ahora es de todos las multinacionales".

A major struggle is taking place in the indigenous area of Wayuu, Yukpa and Bari where thousands of families are in danger of being dislocated from their land as multinationals who were granted concessions by Chavez plan to open huge mines in the area.

The indigenous communities of Bari, Yukpa de Perija and other areas are demanding that Chavez cancel the concessions.

One indigenous activist explained why they were struggling "We have organised marches with thousands of people demanding that these multinationals are not given access to our lands. If they go ahead with the mining of our resources - especially the plans to mine carbon in la Sierra de Perija - then the environment will be destroyed, our livelihoods, the water will be polluted.

"We protested and marched in 2004 and the Minister for the Environment did a report which stated that the mines should not go ahead. Even Chavez himself promised before the election in 2000 that the mines wouldn't go ahead. But just last year he went to down to our region and met with the multinationals and the Venezuelan mining companies. We demanded to be allowed in but were thrown out. We are calling on Chavez to fulfil his promises.

"The Minister for Environment says they are studying our demands. But now any day the multinationals are going to start construction. We will stop them and confront them. But what will the National Guards do? They have gone against us already. In our area they are controlled by an ex-general of the previous government. We are very worried for our safety. Our rights should be respected".

For more information (in Spanish) see www.soberania.org

"Each co-ordinator is elected for one year. Later they can be removed.

"We didn't want a situation where any one should stay a life -time in a position.

"Now we believe we should rotate

positions and everyone should participate in production, we should all be leaders.

"The co-ordinators can be replaced at any time by the committees. We made a statute of all our needs and

decisions.

"We are a social control, watching where the resources go, what materials we are buying etc. We are involved in all of that.

"We also help out with the community. The ambulances and fire brigade of the factory is used in the community, we help the community when it looks for help.

"We believe we are giving a form or life to a new model of participation and workers' production in this country. It's a new experience where the company is co-gestionada (co-managed). But our aim is to get full workers' control.

We want a situation in which more and more companies' decisions are taken in workers' assemblies. We believe this is not just an experience for the country but for all workers who are in struggle, for the workers in Europe. We have not yet won a victory in Invepal.

"We are still fighting and in discussions with the government. There are contradictions in Chavez's government.

"Within the revolution we believe that the questions of participation, organisation and democracy are vital.

"We need to be organised, efficient, disciplined and promoting participation, especially opening the doors to the community to get involved in planning different aspects of the company.

"We don't want to create a monster bureaucracy where Invepal becomes taken over by a bureaucracy or be taken over by the state, we want workers from the base to control, to finance ourselves.

"We don't want a co-management where there is the father state way above us sending the line down to the bottom. The line should go from the workers and the people.

"We have a confidence in the leadership of Chavez, although there are contradictions. There are groups within the government who think that co-management is just dialogue to get industrial peace.

"But we believe in the co-management we are pushing in occupied factories, under the administration of workers where the working class are pushing from the bottom to the top. Not creating a monster bureaucratic corrupt state.

"The workers in the world are looking at the experience we are living here. To the working class in the world: we tell you that we are not going to fail. We want to consolidate the revolutionary process.

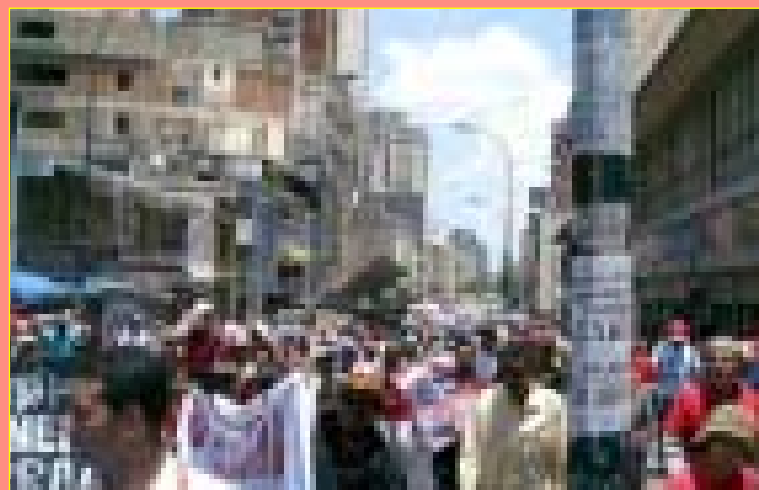
"The workers must be the ones who give impulse to the revolutionary process. A revolution without workers is not a revolution.

"Workers need to be the motor of the revolution.

"We are not going to repeat the mistakes of other 'socialist' countries like USSR and Yugoslavia. We are using them to learn. We are not going to fail in the same way. Be sure the things happening now are going to be very different.

"So the objective here in Venezuela is to confront our common enemies - capitalism and imperialism. We are going to defeat imperialism here and internationally only through the unity of the working class internationally."

WE WANT OUR LAND BACK!



William Artiaga, is from the movement of campesinos (peasants) in the state of Yaracuy. They have been involved in trying to occupy the lands of the large latifundias (landed estates), just like the MST are doing in Brazil.

"We have fought to regain our lands and taken on the large business interests of the previous government and their tentacles that still exist within the current government. We reject the accusation by some officials that we are 'invaders of land' when in reality the real invaders are those who claim to own the land - those large latifundios who assassinate, dislocate our companeros.

"We are trying to organise the first national forum with campesinos in struggle and we want to get international participation as well. The problem is that the judges are still strongly against us - the oligarchy, the latifundios still have free influence. They have the money and, through corruption, continue to influence. We want to help Chavez because parts of the old government remain in this one. They are holding the revolution back. We hope to bring back the fight for our lands, for freedom. The world needs it. This is a fight for land, for the sustainability of the human race and the planet".

The Frente Nacional Campesino Ezequiel Zamora, marched in lines wearing yellow t-shirts with the slogan Against Imperialism and Capitalism for Socialism holding mock machetes high chanting "all out war against the latifundios", "continue the marching, organise, formalise and mobilise". Their large banner read "all-out war against imperialism, reformism and the bureaucracy".

The Frente is a social-political movement of campesinos, communities and individuals throughout the country pushing for agrarian revolution, popular power and socialism. They consider themselves part of the revolutionary current within the Bolivarian process.

Miguel Herrera of the Frente explains, "We want to demonstrate to the world that the revolution has permitted us to sit down and debate the importance of uniting all our struggles together. If imperialism attacks us then it will do it through dividing us and isolating our struggles. We understand we have to create a space to defend ourselves from attack. We have to construct popular power at the base. Those at the base should have the last word.

"However sectors of the state are being infiltrated by reformists and pawns of imperialism whose only role is to destabilise the revolutionary process. We have to be prepared for whatever eventuality - be it corruption, egoism, and the opposition. For this we have to diversify and unite our struggles. The people have had their eyes opened. They understand that it is them, the popular power that have the responsibility to defend this revolution as they are primary beneficiaries."

Constanza Manquela is from Chile and studying public health in the Bolivarian University of Venezuela. She was marching with the Pachamama Feminist Collective who were shouting: "Women, men, together fighting for popular power".

She explained, "A space has been opened up for us by the revolution. But what's still lacking are laws that demand complete equality and 50-50 participation and representation. In many countries in Latin America women have no space, they are extremely oppressed and discriminated against.

"At least here in Venezuela we have a space now to struggle. We believe in the struggle of all the women in the world, of the indigenous, of the campesinos, against discrimination, for reproductive rights, for women's rights within the family, with regard to health.

"Women need to get organised with men and get equality".

COMMENT

The Revolutionary Ideas of Charles Darwin

By Tom Williams

February 12th is Darwin Day, when scientists around the world will celebrate the 197th birthday of Charles Darwin and 147 years of his seminal work “On the Origin of Species”.

The book’s scientific importance is widely known: in one stroke, it revolutionized the framework biologists used to interpret the natural world, providing a new approach that has remained fruitful to this day.

However, Darwin’s ideas have had an impact far outside the field of natural science.

The theory of evolution by natural selection successfully overturned the religious dogmas of the past and replaced them with a richly rewarding, rational view, of life’s diversity and our place in it.

Despite occasional misappropriations of his theory, socialists have many reasons to celebrate this great scientist’s birthday.

Contrary to popular belief, Darwin did not come up with the idea of evolution.

When he began working on Origin of Species, it was already suspected that living beings changed over time.

Geologists were unearthing ancient fossils of strange creatures which did not seem to belong to any living species. Several hypotheses had been put forward to explain this phenomenon, but none of them seemed credible.

Darwin’s major achievement was to propose the mechanism by which evolution could occur: natural selection. Despite its status as the unifying theory of biology, Darwin’s big idea is surprisingly simple. In fact, the entire theory boils down to five observations and two conclusions.

Firstly, Darwin observed that living things tend to overproduce offspring.

That is, in most species two parents produce more than two young – for instance, some species of turtle lay hundreds of eggs after one mating.

Secondly, he observed that wild animal populations stay relatively constant in size, despite this overproduction.

Thirdly, he saw that environmental resources are limited.

This led him to his first conclusion: Not all offspring survive to maturity, so there must be a struggle for survival within each generation to determine those that do.

Darwin’s fourth observation was that all living things are unique, and there are differences even between members of the same species – just think of the humans you know!

His fifth observation was that some of the differences between individuals were heritable, that is, they could be passed down from one generation to the next: if you breed two large cows, you tend to get large offspring.

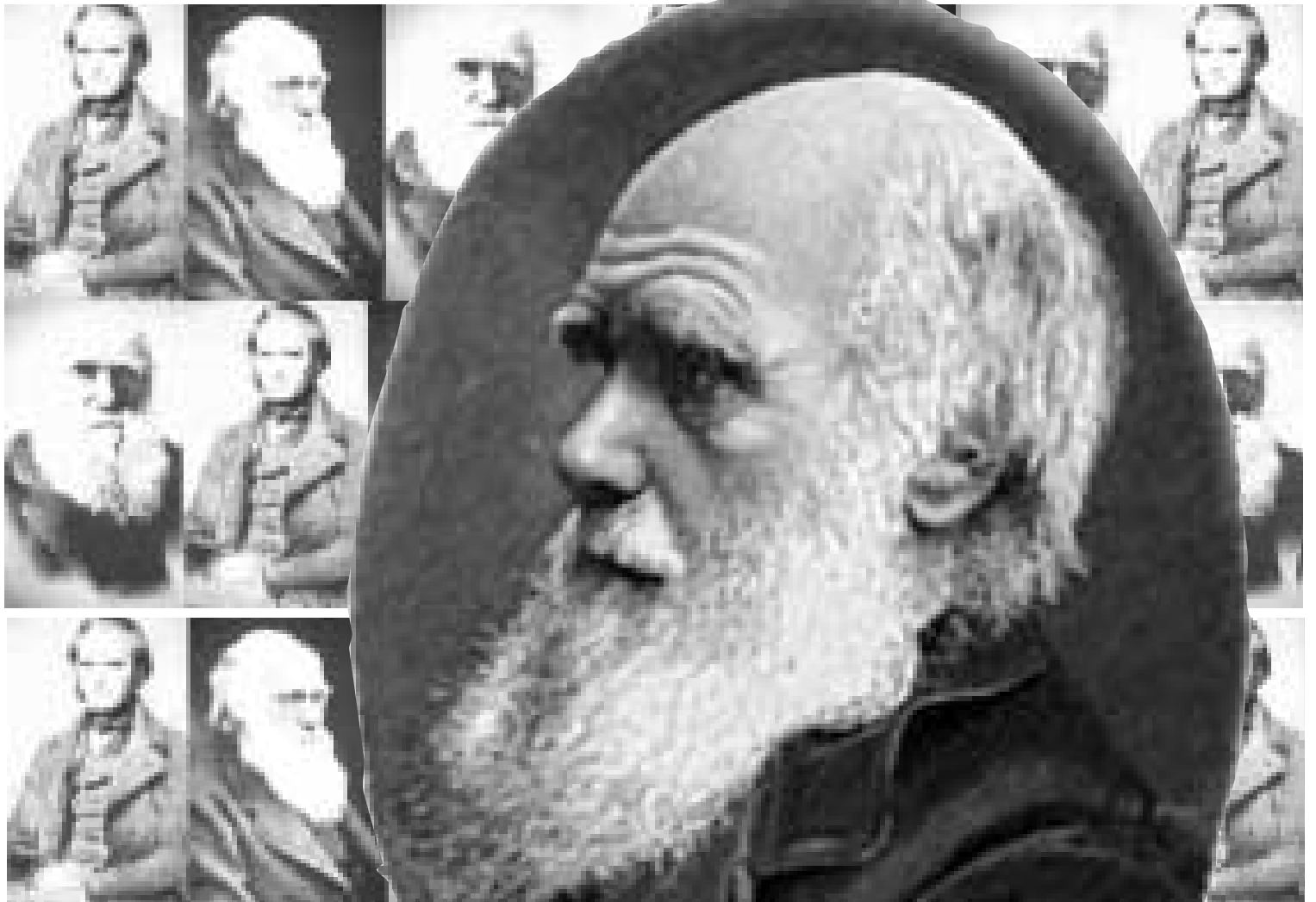
This suggested his another conclusion: if success in the struggle for survival is influenced by the differences between participants, and if those differences can be inherited, then over time the population will come to resemble those individuals with the most successful traits.

The reason for this is best illustrated with an example. Rabbits need to have strong leg muscles in order to outrun foxes.

Any rabbit caught by a fox will not get the chance to reproduce. In a rabbit population, leg muscle strength varies: some rabbits are particularly weak, some especially strong, and most are in the middle.

These differences are heritable: strong parents tend to have strong cubs.

As a new generation of rabbits matures, some will be caught and eaten by foxes.



Critically, the rabbits with weaker muscles will be caught more often than those with stronger ones.

By the time that generation reaches sexual maturity, there will be a disproportionate number of stronger rabbits in the population.

As a result, the next generation will have stronger muscles, because more of them will be the offspring of stronger rabbits.

Darwin argued that all species are subjected to pressures from their environment, and that these pressures “select” particularly beneficial traits, causing the species to evolve.

In the example above, the environmental pressure is attack by foxes, which “selects” for stronger leg muscles in rabbits. This is the principle of natural selection.

Different environments pose different challenges, and Darwin proposed that all the species that exist today evolved from a single ancestor by responding to the unique problems of their individual environments.

Further, since new species can only arise by natural selection from existing species, all species must be related to varying degrees.

To call Darwin’s ideas revolutionary is an understatement.

For centuries, Western society had believed in a static view of the Earth, populated by an unchanging group of species each individually created by God for the sole purpose of serving humans.

This world view was also deeply hierarchical, with a ladder-like “Great Chain of Being”. God sat on the top rung, followed by angels, humans, and finally animals and plants.

It was a deeply arrogant and authoritarian outlook which emphasized “knowing one’s place” and justified mankind’s subjugation of nature, which was increasing throughout the 19th century.

diversity of living things, revealing the real history of life for the first time.

Many scientific applications of his ideas are of major importance to non-scientists.

For instance, an understanding of the evolution of HIV/AIDS was instrumental in developing effective drug treatments for the disease.

Evolution has taught us about our own origins.

It was once claimed that the “races” of modern humans were in fact different species: however, this hypothesis – beloved of many racists – was disproved when an evolutionary analysis showed that modern humans evolved once, in Africa.

Sadly, Darwin’s brilliant idea was misappropriated by the philosopher Herbert Spencer to his own political ends. Spencer’s “Social Darwinism” was an attempt to justify social inequality by comparing it to the struggle for survival in nature.

Leaving aside the ethical problems, the strongest arguments against this abhorrent ideology are scientific, because Spencer simply got the biology wrong.

In nature, it is the “fittest” that survive the competition, whereas socioeconomic factors are more important than innate quality in determining success under capitalism.

Despite such subversions, Darwin remains one of most important figures in human history.

Not only is his theory the most important in biology, it was also critical in freeing people from centuries of religious dogma by providing an explanation of our origins that did not invoke the supernatural.

February 12th is a day socialists should celebrate.

Since new species can only arise by natural selection from existing species, all species must be related to varying degrees

Evolution by natural selection completely shattered this view. Darwin’s theory implied that humans are not the special creation of God, but originally a species of ape related by descent to all other forms of life.

The conclusion that humans are a species of animal follows inevitably from the theory of evolution, but we should not be afraid of this idea.

Darwin’s concept of the unity of life provides an important perspective in an era where human activities are causing the extinction of more than one hundred species every day.

Essentially, Darwin replaced a mystical, static, hierarchical world view with a materialist, dynamic, egalitarian one. In many ways, this paralleled the reassessment of Western social dogma that Marx was engaged in at the same time.

For this reason, his theory was hated and denounced by theologians and many biologists alike.

In fact, On the Origin of Species was suppressed fairly successfully until the 1920s, when the mounting weight of evidence in its favour became too large to ignore.

Since that time, natural selection has brought about a revolution in biology.

The Russian geneticist Theodosius Dobzhansky was not exaggerating when he said that “nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution”.

Darwin’s theory has allowed biologists to get to grips with the enormous

REVIEWS

Redrawing the Map in Blood



Unfailingly Fisk points the finger of guilt at the US and their allies who when not actually pulling the trigger are pulling the strings of those that do.

Kevin Wingfield reviews **The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East**, by **Robert Fisk**, Fourth Estate, £25/€37.50

Robert Fisk has reported from Beirut during the Lebanese war, Palestine, Afghanistan in the case of first Russian then American invasions; Iran and Iraq during the war between those two countries during the 1980s, Bosnia and Iraq during the two Gulf Wars.

He wrote for The Times until his reports were censored and then for the London Independent. This first

hand account runs to 1,300 pages of honest but brutal reportage. He tells the stories of shattered lives, of throats cut, of women gang raped in the cellars of rancid police stations, of children dying pitifully of strange DU-induced cancers in overcrowded hospital wards, of civilians incinerated by the latest "precision" weapons in the hands of vast Western armies.

Unfailingly Fisk points the finger of guilt at the US and their allies who when not actually pulling the trigger are pulling the strings of those that do.

He pours scorn on the outright lying of the network journalists—the "embeds"—parroted the lies from their latest briefing or "self-censoring".

As the defeated Iraqi army retreated from Kuwait in 1991, the "allied" troops blocked their escape. While

US bulldozers buried alive thousands of Iraqis in the trenches, fire from the air incinerated the defeated soldiers in their tanks, buses and cars. An ITN crew filmed the scene but casually remarked "It won't get shown—just for the archives".

Days later Kurds in the North and Shias in the South answered the call from Bush the elder to rise up against Saddam. Fisk noticed how Iraqi army officers asked and were granted permission by the Western forces to take their equipment north to bloodily put down the insurrection. Those Kurdish and Shia insurgents not killed were imprisoned and tortured. This reminded Fisk of Stalin's advancing armies halting outside Warsaw for the Nazis to crush the uprising before taking the city.

A decade earlier Saddam was gassing Iraqis, the US was supply-

ing him with satellite pictures and intelligence of the disposition of the Iran "human waves", the better to aim his nerve and mustard gas.

And when the US shot down a civilian Iranian airbus—on a scheduled daily flight—US administration officials and commanders lied, pretending the aircraft was military. Even when forced to accept that the plane was innocent and the attack on it without any justification, the US refused to apologise to Iran or the families of the crew and passengers—all killed.

The chapters on the Palestine-Israel conflict present eye-witness accounts of rock throwing young Palestinians facing murderous Israeli gunfire. Fisk protests at the spurious "even-handedness" of the media speaking of "clashes" in "disputed areas" or "Jewish neighbourhoods".

As far as he is concerned the Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank are armed colonists. Quite right.

Not all of Fisk's political judgements are as sure-footed, particularly in relation to the war in Bosnia, but Fisk is a journalist of passion and honesty and has written a book that should be on every socialist's shelf.

The "Civilisation" of the title is surely ironic as Fisk builds a cumulative picture of US imperialism's brutal re-conquest of the Middle East. The fact that Easons were discounting the price by €8 before Christmas indicates they expect brisk sales. Good.

Many of its readers will have marched in the huge anti war protest on February 15 2002. It is virtually certain reading it will encourage them to become active once again in the anti war movement.

Galway writer's new album highlights glorification of war at Salthill Air Show

Protest songs, blues, mediaeval music and trad all feature in the new album "Local Papers" by writer, poet and musician Fred Johnston. He spoke to Dette Mc Loughlin about his new C.D.

"I have been involved with folk music, traditional and contemporary, since the Sixties and my early teenage years; when I left home I had a guitar in one hand and a typewriter in the other, which is absolutely true, and was a fervent follower of Woody Guthrie," explains Johnston.

"For me, there can be no division between one's writing, being a writer and being engaged in the world around you. Everything is politics. The new CD, 'Local Papers,' has some of my own songs on it. One of them, 'F-16,' was written after the Americans wiped out an Afghani wedding party, and it is a protest against the pornographic Salthill Air Show held annually in Galway that

sees US/UK warplanes scream across our skies."

"There's another song in the protest vein, 'Darkness in the Gloom,' which tries, hopefully, to remind us that prejudice and racism are not new in Ireland; some journalists and activist groups tend to see racism as a new toy they've found under the bed."

"I would be delighted if other singers took up the songs. Yes, I am aware that there is censorship of all sorts in the media, and it's a kind of praise: Christy Moore's song about the Granard girl who died in childbirth at the church grotto some years ago was, let's not forget, banned from RTE radio. At present I am barred from reviewing poetry for the Irish Times, as I used to, because my reviews have been considered too "robust" for the new consensus."

Fred Johnston is certainly an artist that takes his duty of singing, writing and speaking out



Fred Johnston

seriously. The album "Local Papers" is an enjoyable compendium of styles, and comes well recommended. Anyone looking for a copy of the new CD should e-mail fredjohnston_52@hotmail.com

Di Canio Says he is a fascist, not a racist—So?

By **Dette** and **Dean Mc Loughlin**, Manchester City Supporters Club members, Galway.

Well-known Italian footballer Paolo Di Canio, who has formerly played for Celtic and West Ham, recently hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons.

During a soccer game between his team Lazio and Italian Serie A leaders Juventus he performed a fascist salute to fans in the stadium. Lazio has a hard-core fan base known as the "ultras", with links to far-right groups.

His gesture led to a one match ban and €10,000 fine being imposed by the Italian Football Federation.

Di Canio is quite unashamedly pro-fascist: he proudly wears a "Dux" tattoo, the Latin for "Il Duce" or leader, the preferred appellation of Mussolini. He made the absurd claim that he was "a fascist, not a racist" - suggesting there was in fact a difference

Di Canio should be reminded of



Fascist: Di Canio

what happened to thousands of his fellow countrymen at the hands of fascists. In the late 1930s many Italians were sent to work in the munitions industry in Germany because of labour shortages.

When Mussolini was overthrown in 1943 these same Italians faced a terrible fate being forced into labour camps. Between 30-40,000 of them were subsequently murdered by Nazi fascists.

Shell to Sea Campaign: Alive and Kicking Back

A high powered delegation from the Shell multinational visited the Rossport area recently in a bid to win local people to their agenda. The

delegation included the former Dutch Primer Minister Win Kok, former president of US food company, Bestfoods and a managing director of Shell also on the boards of Lloyds TSB, British Airways and the BT group, Maarten van den Bergh.

They came to Mayo to meet selected individuals including all the local politicians like Enda Kenny's brother who is chair of the local county council.

They also met with representatives of groups and individuals in the area who have vested interest in the gas-line project.

Patrick O'Donnell, a local fisherman, told Socialist Worker that the local delegation was "hand-picked from specific groups such as quarry owners, truck drivers, owners of plant-hire – people with a direct interest in making money out of the project.

They didn't give an invitation to fishermen who are opposed to the pipeline. I personally met Peter Cassells yesterday and he said he was surprised that the Dutch delegation was not meeting the fishermen.

But it is obvious why they are not meeting us. We already told Cassells we are against the pipe line and want the gas refined at sea."

But the Dutch delegation got a belly-full of what the local people really think of their project when they were confronted by a protest of about 80 people opposed to the gas pipe line.

The Shell to Sea campaign invaded a private meeting set up between the Dutch delegation and local landlords in favour of the project (about six in total were present).

Shell's representatives were left in no doubt that they will not get their pipe line past these people. As one local man told them, "I am in debt up to my eyeballs but if you offered me a million I'd burn it. The people around here won't be bought."



Protestors from the Shell to Sea Campaign demonstrate in January

The meeting turned out not as was intended but this high powered management teamed were escorted out of the area by Gardai and left fully informed of the lies, bribery and corruption that has surrounded this dispute in Mayo.

WORKING TO SHELL'S TIMETABLE

Peter Cassells was appointed by the Minister Noel Dempsey as mediator in the row over the gas pipe line.

But Dempsey put his foot in it on the day the Dail reopened when he announced that the mediation would be completed in one month. Cassells has just started meeting people in the local area!

According to Maire Harrington to the Shell to Sea campaign, "Dempsey is obviously dead set on suiting Shell's timetable. We haven't even got the terms of reference yet in the mediation process."

WATER CONTAMINATED

Water filtration equipment installed to clean the water leaving the Shell site in Mayo and travelling into the local water supply at Carrowmore lake, has not worked since it was installed last November.

Local people complain that their water supply is contaminated with peat and aluminium. But Mayo County Council are ignoring them and say the water is in no

immediate danger.

The campaign picketed the head office of the Council in Castlebar and handed in a letter of protest, addressed to "Shell County Council".

Patrick O'Donnell, one of the protest organisers said, "We want the county council to monitor the water because now nobody give a damn, neither the council, the EPA or the fisheries board."

The Rossport Five are due back before the High Court on February 13th. They are to be given their punishment for defying the injunction last year.

What will happen next in the campaign will be determined by what moves Shell makes to keep up with their construction project but as one local organiser said,

"McDowell would want to get

his new prison up and running because no pipe line will get pass the people of this area and there will be plenty of us willing to go to jail"

FROM ROSSPORT TO CARACAS

The Shell to Sea campaign held a successful meeting at the World Social Forum with audience of around 100 people coming from various countries including Chile, the US, Venezuela, Brazil, Australia and many other countries.

There were suggestions for an international day of action against Shell and multinationals who are destroying the environment..

RESIDENTS DEPLORE COUNCIL ATTEMPTS TO BRIBE THEM OVER INCINERATOR

Combined Residents Against the Incinerator (CRAI) in the Ringsend/Sandymount area has rejected an attempt by Dublin City Council to buy off opposition to the proposed Poolbeg incinerator. Under a so-called 'Community Gain' initiative, the Council intends funding local community facilities from the profits of the incinerator, amounting to 'several million euro'.

This crude inducement is promoted in a survey currently being conducted by TNS-MRBI on behalf of agents of the Council. Respondents are asked to select community amenities for funding. The survey allows the authorities

to appear to engage in public consultation. According to CRAI, the survey sums up all that is wrong with the Poolbeg incinerator project by totally disregarding democracy in planning and the real interests of the community.

Frances Corr, of the Bath Avenue Residents' Association, and PRO of CRAI, said:

"Clearly this survey is part of an attempt to buy-off the community and divide it, by tempting groups seeking funding for good projects to drop their opposition to the incinerator.

"It may even be intended to set one group against another in

competition for this funding'.

"The survey seeks views on incineration in general — and, incidentally, on landfill, but not, interestingly, on re-use and recycling which is the real answer to the waste problem.

"The survey assumes the incinerator will go ahead. The whole exercise is loaded. The real question is 'Does the community want an incinerator at Poolbeg?'"

"This question is not asked because for the council the answer is pre-determined. That is not 'public consultation. It is a sham."

May Kane, of the Ringsend Residents' Association, said: "Why should we be expected to

roll over and accept the incinerator to get public amenities? It's the duty of public authorities, which we elect and fund with our taxes, to provide such amenities. Accepting an incinerator in return for public amenities was not in the manifesto of any party for which we voted in any election that I recall. We want amenities but we do not want an incinerator. It's about time the Council got that message."

Ena Cavendish, of the Sandymount and Merrion Residents' Association, said: 'We should not be deflected by the authorities' cheap tactic. Let's keep our focus on the main issue:

the people don't want an incinerator, with good reason. Incinerators can produce dangerous dioxins.

"They actually discourage recycling and reduction because a private company stands to gain the more waste there is to burn.

"The huge increase in traffic taking hazardous waste and ash in and out of the incinerator will cause a traffic nightmare in the area. In a democracy, the people are supposed to be supreme.

"We will fight this anti-democratic disregard for the people's views."

Every year hundreds of people from across Ireland and beyond attend the weekend socialist conference called **Marxism**.

They come to hear some of the best speakers on the left, including guests from home and abroad discuss and debate the issues and ideas that are vital for the movement.

This year is marked by growing resistance to occupation of Iraq which is only one brutal part of Bush's plans to dominate the Middle East.

In Latin America the flames of revolt against the neo-liberal agenda rise from Venezuela and Bolivia.

In Ireland's trade unions debate flourishes following the massive mobilisations of working class people in solidarity with the fight of Irish Ferries workers and in the run up to "Partnership" negotiations.

Our meetings at **Marxism 2006** reflect these concerns as well as discussions of controversial questions of history and socialist theory.

SOME OF THE SPEAKERS AT MARXISM 2006:

The ongoing crisis in the Middle East is addressed in meetings with **Sami Ramadani** (Iraqi Democrats against the Occupation); **Elaheh Povey** (Iranian socialist); **Raymond Deane** (Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign); **Dave Lynch** (journalist on Daily Ireland, recently returned from Palestine) and **Richard Boyd Barrett** (chair of the Irish Anti War Movement)

Discussing developments in the trade union movement will be **Tom Tully** (Chief Shop Steward Irish Ferries), **Ryan McKinney** (NIPSA Rep Belfast) **Brendan Ogle** (ESB officer from ATGWU). ATGWU Education Officer **Ritchie Browne** will talk on outsourcing.

Recently returned from Bolivia, journalist **Muireann DeBarra** will discuss developments in that country since the election to President of Evo Morales the left wing indigenous activist.

Eoin O Broin of Sinn Fein will debate **Donal Mac Fhearraigh** of the Socialist Workers Party

The question of building a broadly-based New Left based on co-operation and mutual respect is getting a resonance in Ireland with initiatives like **People Before Profit**. We have much to learn from the experience in Europe and we are pleased to have a discussion on The New Left in Europe with the participation of **Martin Smith of Respect** in Britain as well as speakers from the **Links Partei** in Germany and the **Left Block** in Portugal

Other speakers include **Eamonn**



A weekend conference to organise & discuss ideas to arm the movement

**March 3rd, 4th & 5th
Central Dublin**

McCann (author and journalist); author **Kieran Allen**; **Maura Harrington** of the Shell to Sea Campaign; **Lorcan Collins** (author of The Easter Rising - a guide to Dublin); **Conor Kostick** (author of Revolution in Ireland 1917-1923); **Sinead Kennedy** an activist with Alliance for Choice, and much more.

The sessions will avoid jargon and obscure language allow plenty of time for questions, discussion and the airing of points of view.

Marxism 2006 is not to be missed. It takes place on March 3,4,5 in central Dublin. Come and join the discussion and debate. Fill in the booking form and mark your diary now!

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WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

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

REVOLUTION
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

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

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

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION
We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

working class.

We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH
We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY
To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.

We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.

We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to
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Socialist Worker

N.I. CIVIL SERVANTS MOVE INTO BATTLE ON PAY

SUPPORT THE STRIKERS STOP HAIN

Though he wouldn't admit it, Direct Rule Minister, Peter Hain, will have lost some sleep after the announcement that 20,000 civil service workers had voted for strike action on pay.

Hain's arrogant statements in the run-up to the ballot were based on assurances from senior civil servants that the workers, members of NIPSA, wouldn't vote for indefinite all-out strike action.

Now Hain will be worried that such a huge dispute could light a fire of resistance to his plans to sell-off Northern Ireland's public sector.

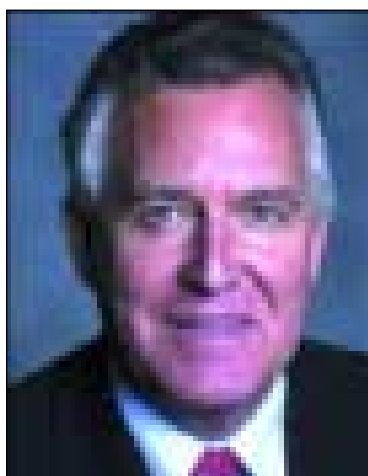
Civil servants are the single biggest group of workers in the North. On strike days during the last dispute in 2003/4 every street in Belfast city centre had a picket line. This month's strike will involve

meat inspectors, office workers, vehicle test centres and port inspectors. Virtually everyone in the north will know someone who is involved, and no-one will be able to ignore it.

NIPSA officials met with Peter Hain on two occasions since last summer regarding the Treasury's insistence that any pay deal would be subject to a 3.49% ceiling. It was clear that the union's leadership wanted to avoid industrial action only one year after effectively losing a 40 week dispute.

However the leadership was forced to consult members when it emerged that the 3.49% included the annual incremental pay progression that civil servants are entitled to.

This meant that, while civil servants could move one point up the scale, the real rise



Direct Rule Minister, Peter Hain

would be only 0.2%. Most civil servants at lower grades would end up with less than 20p a week extra in their pay. With inflation included this represents a cut of 8% in three years.

The anger of NIPSA members was fueled by two other events. One was the revelation that 1,500 of their colleagues had to receive emer-

gency payments in October in order to keep them in line with the National Minimum Wage legislation introduced by New Labour. The minimum wage rate of £5.05 an hour was supposed to protect workers from exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

This was followed up by a statement from Peter Hain telling civil servants to "tighten their belts."

Socialist Worker spoke to NIPSA activist, Ryan McKinney about the strike.

"The stakes couldn't be higher, this dispute could make or break everything from education cuts to water charges. Last time round we argued for 40 weeks to escalate the dispute. We only had two days of civil service wide strike action and we couldn't win in those circumstances.

"This time needs to be dif-

ferent. Members are clearly ready for all-out action. The union needs to plan for picket lines and rallies and hit management hard from the start.

"The Irish Ferries dispute had an impact here, we should call for a day of action too.

"This dispute can unite people in common cause by pointing out that we are taking on the man who is implementing water charges and presiding over hospital closures. Union members in my branch have brought up the war, the cuts in school crossing patrols - they are angry.

"One thing is clear, this dispute is not just about pay, it's about fighting for a decent standard of living and defending our public services. The mainstream political parties have failed workers in the north, but workers are ready to fight back".