

Socialist Worker

€1.00/£0.70p

NO. 259 | MAY 20th- JUNE 10th 2006

WWW.SWP.IE

INSIDE

**BIG OIL
AGAINST THE
POOR IN THE
NIGER DELTA**



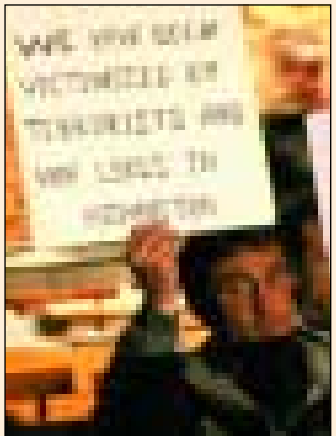
Page 8

**Sectarianism
behind the
murder of
Michael McIlveen**



Page 4

**Justice for
Asylum seekers**



Pages 12 and 3

**Plus:
Bolivian activist
talks to Socialist
Worker**

Page 5

SAVE THE HEALTH SERVICE SUPPORT THE NURSES SACK HARNEY

The Health Service is in crisis and thousands of people are suffering – some even dying – as a result.

In 2001 the Department of Health acknowledged that 3,000 more hospital bed places were needed but the government has done little to provide them

On one day alone 433 patients were left waiting on trolleys in our hospitals

100,000 women are denied screening and early treatment for breast cancer because they have the wrong postal address

Nurses across the country have been intimidated and threatened with disciplinary action for speaking out about hospital conditions.

But instead of investing resources into a proper public health service Harney has turned on the nurses.

She claims the work practices of nurses and midwives are wasting tax payers money and delaying patient treatment.

Instead of blaming the nurses, the government should be taxing big business to provide the necessary funding for our health service and decent pay and conditions for the nurses.

By contrast the banks are boasting their highest profits ever. Anglo Irish Bank for example recently announced profits of €375 million, up 35% on last year.

Permanent TSB just won €250 million extra in busi-



3,000 beds have been cut and not replaced

ness since it launched an interest free product.

The ESRI predicts nearly 4% inflation this year. House prices are set to rise by 15% - again. It is clear that the banks and speculators are fuelling inflation and making a financial killing into the bargain.

Compare the modest demand of the nurses for pay parity with the fortunes of Tony O'Reilly, one of the richest men in the world.

He is set to add a further €1.4 billion to his fortune from the development of oil and gas resources off the west

of Ireland.

None of this will benefit the Irish people an iota. O'Reilly recently boasted "Since I own 35% of newspapers I have close contact with the politicians." And on top of that Tony doesn't pay taxes on his fortune. His address is in the Bahamas but his home is in Kildare. He hasn't paid taxes here since he left the country in the 1960's.

Harney's government are now calling for pay restraint in the next partnership deal. Brian Cowen, Finance Minister suggests we get no more than a 2% pay increase.

The Government are ready to point the finger at workers and will blame us for any overheating in the economy.

They are setting the stage for a battle with the nurses over their pay and conditions.

The nurses will rally in Croke Park on 14th June to campaign for parity on pay and conditions.

No doubt with a media owned by the likes of Tony O'Reilly we will be told the nurses are being greedy. Who is fooling who?

Every trade union and community in the country should stand with the nurses.

It is time for Harney and the profiteers of Fianna Fail and the PD's to go.

We need a mass movement in this country that stands for people and not for profit.

>>Turn to pages 6 & 7

QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT

"We had drank during the day, and we had far too much on that occasion. We all came down and we had a meal that bloody evening. So we had a drink at the table. We started to have some glasses of wine and the wine carried on into the early hours of the morning. We got up the following morning for the meeting and then some of us went down in the afternoon and we started to have a few more in the bar."

"Jesus, there was - most of them had a lot. I mean, it was a knees-up type of weekend as those weekends were,"

Jim Mc Daid TD fondly remembers the Fianna Fail think-in at Inchydoney in September 2004

"There is a big ideological confrontation in the region, some defend the big project of Washington that has smashed our people. We want a profound change, a new socialism and we are going to debate: do we want socialist or capitalism? We say socialism."

Hugo Chavez, addressing an EU-Latin America summit in Vienna

"If the US has not learned its lesson from Iraq and thinks of invading Iran, notwithstanding all of the criticisms we have of our government, we will defend our country to the last drop of our blood. And we will not let an alien soldier set foot on

the land of Iran."

Shirin Ebadi, Iranian winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 speaking at the Islamic Centre of America

"It's off-the-wall stuff, there's no justification for this type of increase,"

Consumer Association of Ireland chairman Michael Kilcoyne on Bord Gais decision to seek permission to introduce a 40% price increase

"Two years ago the GAA signaled its intention to break its link with alcohol sponsorship. Yesterday's decision is a betrayal of all those who have deep misgivings about the Association accepting drink sponsorship. It makes a mockery of the GAA's expressed concern about alcohol-related harm."

Dr Joe Barry, former president of the Irish Medical Organisation, on GAA's decision to continue Guinness's sponsorship of the All Hurling Championship

"An unworkable mess"

Impact trade union on the government's decentralisation programme

"We might have taken too much on in one go,"

Bertie Ahern, as decentralisation plans begin to unravel, and the first major climbdown- reversing the decision to relocate the probation services to Navan- is announced

"Anyone who thinks I am afraid of any group would want to think again."

Mary Harney in response to accusations that she was afraid to show up at the recent INO conference.

McDowell falls out with cops



Above: Gardai intimidating and anti war protest; Top: Michael McDowell

It is interesting that it is the most right wing politician in the state, Michael McDowell, who finds himself in direct confrontation with the police.

In the run up to a general election crime is always likely to figure as a key issue, whipped up for electoral advantage by the right.

McDowell's crazed reaction to Richard Burton's revelation that he had put just two extra guards on the streets of Dublin illustrated

how sensitive a politician of his ilk is to being seen as incapable of delivering on the issue.

The Garda Reserve Force is an attractive proposition from a government point of view.

It delivers 4,000 more 'guardians of the peace' onto the street at little or no cost.

From a Garda point of view the idea that the average civilian with just 120 hours training can carry out many of their functions (granted,

under their supervision) is demeaning and it is this sleight that has led to a degree of militancy not seen since the days of the blue flu in 1998.

Hundreds of Gardai have attended meetings across the country and in a very significant move the president of the GRA announced a political campaign that will target vulnerable government TDs.

The storm of uproar from Mc Dowell and the Garda Commissioner in response to

this political move led to an apology but there is little doubt that this campaign will be a political one.

Racist immigration policy, McCarthyite witch-hunts against people like Frank Connolly and Phil Flynn, the denial of assistance for the family of Brian Rossiter are but a short list of Mc Dowell's horrible record in office.

It is interesting and heartening to see that he is now alienating his own natural constituency.

Train drivers are right to strike

The two day unofficial action by train drivers terrified the Irish establishment.

Government and media lined up in a vicious attack on the workers who took action because of safety concerns.

This might not mean much to the politicians who want to put strike action into the history books, but safety is a huge issue for professional drivers.

The action by the train drivers is an important

example of how workers can and will act when they are pushed too far.

Irish Rail's bullying management is headed up by Barry Kenny who led the attack on the ILDA some years ago.

The concerns of drivers who had only received one-days training on the new locomotives were entirely dismissed by Kenny.

As well as the lack of training, drivers are over worked on their shifts and

are concerned that the long working hours will impact on safety.

Kenny went on to try to scupper a settlement by declaring to the media that he had a guarantee that the new trains would run before Monday.

Criticism has been heaped on the workers and the unions. But management and the government had tried to push workers around and went too far.

Minister Brian Cowen is now looking for guarantees that unofficial action will not take place again under the next partnership deal.

As we go to press negotiations are still going on.

Whatever comes out of it, congratulations are in order to the drivers who took unofficial action and to the speed with which it spread, showing that solidarity and workers rights are still very much on the agenda.

INSIDE THE SYSTEM

According to recent survey, 19% of people in the Republic didn't consult a family doctor because of cost in the past year. In Northern Ireland where GP services are free just 2% of people reported a cost barrier.

However almost 50% of patients there had to wait 2 or

more working days to see a doctor.

In a significant victory for campaigners against the commercialism of education in the US, some of the country's biggest beverage companies have just announced that they have agreed to stop selling sugary soft drinks and other high

calories beverages in schools

UN special rapporteur on torture, Manfred Nowak, who was in Ireland recently said that Ireland should not accept diplomatic assurances from Condoleezza Rice that hostage flights have not taken place through Irish airspace. He urged the government to

conduct routine inspections.

With employers and government arguing for wage restraint, a number of interesting details have emerged over the last number of weeks about the conditions of Irish workers. 19% of Irish workers are classified as low paid by the EU commission

Ireland and Britain have the lowest level of statutory maternity benefit in Western Europe.

Bertie Ahern's salary of €252,000 a year makes him the third highest earning leader in Europe.

Tony Blair tops the poll at €268,500 with the German

Chancellor Angela Merkel taking second place at €261,000

George Bush received his lowest approval yet, scoring just 31% in the latest New York Times/ CBS News poll. 70% of those polled believe that America is on the wrong track.

EDITORIAL

Now is the time for the Left to get together

Events at home and abroad are adding a welcome momentum to the project of uniting the anti-coalition left in advance of the upcoming general election.

In a very positive domestic development the traditionally left-wing, ATGWU has issued an open invitation to a Left Unity conference on June 17th. If even the most minimal agreement from the various factions to back each other publicly for the elections was forthcoming from this meeting it would be the most significant day in Irish politics for many a year.

These days, were you to blindfold yourself and stick a pin in a map of the world, chances are you'd prick a country where there has recently been a major disagreement between the people and the local representatives of neo-liberalism

The French government has just been humiliated by a worker-student revolt against the exploitation of young workers. Across the water 1.5 million British public sector workers struck in defence of pension rights. Class struggle is forcing neo-liberalism on the defensive in its European heartlands.

Most relevant to activists in the West, the mass global anti-war movement of 2003 mainstreamed political protest, making taking to the streets a natural choice for any group with a grievance against the system. February 2003 was a 'global spring' that initiated a new generation of activists who have gone on to become the core of the new global wave of social movements.

Is there any sign of this pattern of ferment in Ireland? The Dublin Chamber of commerce certainly thinks so. They recently complained that business in Dublin city centre had been disrupted on 38 Saturdays over the course of 2005 by demonstrations. This when some of the biggest protests of the year- Shell to Sea, Irish Ferries- were held on week days.

Now the Irish Nurses Organisation has declared itself against the privatisation of health care and is calling on its tens of thousands of members out onto the streets in a direct challenge to Mary Harney and the government.

Unity of the left is now more desirable and more possible than ever. Hundreds of thousands of voters are seeking a political home and representation of their struggles in their day to day lives. None of the existing factions on the Irish left is capable of providing this much needed alternative alone. Let's seize the moment. Unity is strength.

Support the hunger strikers: Grant them the right to stay!



Asylum seekers from Afghanistan on hunger strike in St Patrick's

Photo: Paula Geraghty

By Rory Hearne
People Before Profit Alliance

As of going to press at least 40 asylum seekers from Afghanistan were on hunger strike.

At least six of those were not taking water either. Seven had been taken to hospital given their weak condition.

The response from Bertie Ahern and Michael McDowell Minister for Justice was, unsurprisingly, a disgrace.

They said that the asylum seekers had not gone through "due process" and if they granted these the right to stay then "the flood gates will open".

The asylum system in this country is in a shambles. The refugee appeals system is completely hidden and there are over 400 appeals in the High Court.

Some refugee appeal commissioners have not granted a single appeal that has gone

before them.

Secondly, Belgium and other countries granted asylum to asylum seekers who went on hunger strike and their immigration systems haven't 'fallen apart' as Ahern and others claim it would.

We must continue to protest in support of the asylum seekers on hunger strike.

Michael McDowell should immediately grant them the right to stay in Ireland.

They came to Ireland to escape from war, poverty and torture in Afghanistan.

It is disgraceful that the Fianna Fail/PD government is prepared to see these men get seriously ill before they take action.

It is ridiculous to suggest that the asylum system will become 'overloaded' if these men are granted asylum.

Last month Bertie Ahern said "our generation still cherishes the ideals of the courageous men and women who

fought for Ireland in Easter week."

A simple way to demonstrate the cherishing of those ideals, on this 90th anniversary of the rising, would be to grant refuge to the 40 Afghanistan asylum seekers.

McDowell is wrong when he says that there are only 'disturbances' in Afghanistan.

The truth is that violence has risen sharply in recent months in Afghanistan with attacks by US forces, roadside bombings and suicide attacks.

A recent Amnesty International report on Afghanistan stated that "Since 2001, thousands of Afghans have been arbitrarily detained, held incommunicado and subjected to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by US forces and by armed groups acting under US control.

The organization is also concerned that despite the Afghan

government's efforts to re-establish the rule of law and restore peace and stability, it is allowing violations to continue without serious protest."

Mister McDowell should explain why these asylum seekers' applications to stay have been turned down if Afghanistan remains such an unsafe and war-torn country?

Also the Minister cannot use the argument that we are being 'flooded' by asylum seekers as the number of asylum seekers coming to Ireland has dropped considerably in recent years.

Only 4,323 new asylum applications were received in 2005 down from 4,766 in 2004. Furthermore only 966 asylum-seekers were granted refugee status in 2005.

We are constantly being told how Ireland needs more workers, well why not give these asylum seekers the opportunity to work and live in Ireland?

For a new paper reflecting the new movements:

Support the Socialist Worker financial appeal: please subscribe now

Socialist Worker is your paper. It's the alternative voice, the voice of socialism and struggle.

Whether it's nurses protesting against under-funding, asylum seekers on hunger strike against their deportation, campaigns against the Bin Tax or support for the Iraqi resistance and opposition to the US use of the Shannon 'Warport', Socialist Worker is giving the real opinions, the real voice of

those movements.

The lack of a political alternative both North and South to oppose privatisation, war and racism has never been more obvious.

Socialist Worker is committed to building such a new alternative left voice, building support for the movements from below, and building toward a world without capitalism, the other world that we believe is possible and more necessary

in 2006 than ever before.

Currently Socialist Worker is a completely voluntary production. We get no advertising finance and it is funded completely by sales.

In order to fulfil the potential that exists in this current period and build support for the projects outlined above we need a higher quality paper and ultimately much higher sales.

Central to this will be raising the finance to cover a

salary for a person to work full-time on the paper.

With this in mind we appeal to you to take out a subscription for Socialist Worker, donate whatever sum of money (large or small) to the paper fund, and if possible take extra copies of the paper to sell to work colleagues, friends, classmates etc.

It's your paper; together we can make another world possible.

Never miss an issue! Receive each issue of Socialist Worker by post

Name _____

Address _____

Tel _____

Email _____

I would like a six month regular subscription (€20/£14stg)

I would like a six month solidarity subscription (€30/£20stg)

I would like to donate _____ to Socialist Worker

Return to PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, with a cheque/postal order or a bank lodgement receipt. Bank Details: Socialist Workers Movement, AIB, 37/38 Upper O'Connell St, Dublin 1. Account No: 85173469. Sort code: 93-11-36

COMMENT

Eamonn McCann

How the media talk up the war agenda

What a restrained and patient bunch those Iranian ayatollahs are!

Turn on your radio or television any day and you'll hear warnings about Iran breaching commitments and defying the "international community" with regard to its nuclear programme. Crazy bearded Muslims threatening the peace of the world..

In fact, Iran has not strayed outside its legal rights under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty or breached any other legal commitment.

It's worth comparing media coverage of Iran today with the relentless references throughout the second half of 2002 and the early weeks of 2003 to Saddam Hussein's supposed possession of weapons of mass destruction and the "threat" that these allegedly posed to the peace of the world.

In vain did a small number of commentators point out that UNMOVIC inspectors under Hans Blix had reported no such thing and could find no evidence pointing to any hidden stockpile of WMD. Over time, the "threat" posed by Saddam's WMD became so deeply embedded in commentary on Iraq that much of the argument between pro- and anti-invasion factions eventually came to be focused on what to do about this threat rather than on whether there was any threat in the first place.

Even today, Tony Blair can mask himself in a sombre expression and maintain that, while everybody now knows there were no WMD in Iraq, back then everybody believed that there were.

Maybe in a year or two they'll be telling us that, sure, we all know now that Iran wasn't developing a nuclear bomb but, back in 2006, everybody believed that it was.

It wasn't true then and it isn't true now. The BBC acknowledged as much in a reply on May 1st to a complaint from Belfast commentator David Morrison who had objected to references on news bulletins to the "threat" posed by Iran's nuclear activity. "You have a point," the BBC wrote back, and agreed that the content of his letter "should be kept in mind in future."

This seems to have made not the slightest difference to the tone and content of coverage.

This has become par for the course. On the morning after the British cabinet reshuffle, the Guardian reported on an inside page that one of the reasons Blair had demoted Jack Straw was that the Bush administration had made clear its displeasure at Straw's description of the idea of a military attack on Iran as "inconceivable" and "nuts." The suggestion was that a Foreign Secretary had been sacked because a foreign government was angered by his insufficiently belligerent attitude towards a country with which the UK was at peace...

Many will have thought that this sensational story should have been the front-page lead. But the rest of the media followed the Guardian in reacting to the story with a shrug.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council prepares to vote on a resolution which would deem Iran's nuclear programme a "threat to peace" and clear the way for mandatory sanctions if Iran refuses to suspend the programme. At the time of writing, Britain and the US seem confident that neither Russia nor China will veto the proposal.

As David Morrison has noted, "This means that "if the five veto-wielding powers"...gang up on an ordinary UN member...it can be declared to be a 'threat to the peace' without any justification whatsoever."

And on this basis, it can be diplomatically and economically isolated and even invaded and occupied.

"Moderates" on all sides debate Iran and such issues in terms of "the rule of law." But what's happening at the UN isn't the rule of law, but the end of law.

Which is why we should be thankful in all the circumstances that the powers-that-be in Teheran are such a relatively mild-mannered bunch.

Ballymena: The sectarianism behind the murder of Michael McIlveen

The media coverage of the sectarian murder of Catholic teenager Michael McIlveen in Ballymena has shed little light on why sectarianism is such a problem in the Co Antrim town.

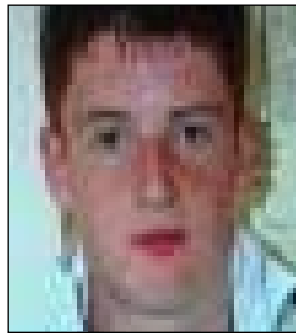
Sectarianism in Ballymena is not a 'natural state of affairs' as some of the coverage would suggest.

The reality is that an array of powerful political forces spend a great deal of time and energy nurturing sectarianism and creating circumstances where a handful of loyalist thugs believe it is acceptable to go out at night, find a Catholic schoolboy, and beat him to death.

Ian Paisley has been the MP for Ballymena for more than 35 years. In those years he has built a network of loyal supporters in the area who try at every opportunity to put his brand of sectarian right-wing politics into practice.

One of Paisley's closest supporters in the town is DUP councillor Roy Gillespie who said that Michael McIlveen would "not get into heaven" because "Catholics are not accepted into heaven".

Another Paisley supporter, William Wright, is the richest man in Ballymena and one of



Michael McIlveen

the biggest capitalists in the North. He is Chairman of the bus manufacturing company Wrightbus which employs around 800 workers in Ballymena and supplies buses to Bus Eireann.

One of his last acts as a member of Ballymena council was to wave an Orange sash above his head and declare: "The Ulster Protestants are being treated like the Jews under Hitler."

The Assembly member for the area is Ian Paisley Jnr. Like his father he specialises in giving 'bread and butter' issues a sectarian spin.

When education cuts were threatened he talked about the

'closure of Protestant schools'. When the government brought in a new way of calculating domestic rates he called it a 'tax on Protestants'.

The Orange Order also puts a great deal of effort into maintaining sectarian tension in the area; in 2005 there were 53 Orange and loyalist parades in Ballymena - including many by 'kick the Pope' bands affiliated to the UDA and UVF.

In the large, run-down Protestant housing estates of Ballymena - places like Harryville and Ballykeel, sectarian ideas can find an audience when people look at the miserable conditions they have to live in. So instead of the system becoming the target for people's anger it is channelled towards the other community who are living in equally appalling conditions.

The levels of poverty and despair in some of the Protestant housing estates in Ballymena are comparable to anything that exists in other parts of the North. If proof was needed of this it is only necessary to look at the heroin problem in Ballymena.

The Protestant housing estates in the town contain

more heroin addicts than any other part of the North. Last year just two chemist shops in Ballymena handed out almost 40,000 heroin needles as part of the needle exchange programme - this is 50% of all the heroin needles given out in Northern Ireland.

In the absence of secular, socialist, politics the alienation and despair that drives people to heroin can also lead people to sectarianism.

Lastly there is a connection between the murder of Michael McIlveen and the 'political process' in the North. Two days before Michael McIlveen's funeral politicians from all parties gathered at the briefly reconvened Assembly and held a one minute silence in memory of the murdered teenager.

As required by the Good Friday Agreement the politicians were really gathering to register as Orange or Green so that negotiations could start on the selection of an Executive. In registering their tribal loyalties at the very heart of the political and state structures they were also ratifying the sectarian system that stole the life of young McIlveen. This escaped the attention of most commentators.

Dungannon Meats: No selling of jobs



The TGWU in Northern Ireland have been protesting against a proposal by local meat company Dungannon Meats.

The company plan to make 46 workers from 5 countries redundant and replace them with 46 agency workers at lower rates of pay and conditions.

Dessie Henderson, TGWU Senior Organiser said, "We have been trying to work with the company for several months, and have now sought a meeting on the threatened redundancies.

"Up to now our reasonable requests for talks have been ignored and we are left with no choice but to take this issue into the public arena.

"In addition to bringing the issue to local politicians, we are contacting those responsible for the ethical purchasing policies of the major supermarkets supplied by Dungannon Meats. If

necessary we will protest outside the supermarkets stores to highlight this situation to shoppers who will certainly not approve of the company's action.

"None of Dungannon Meats competitors have resorted to this sort of immoral behaviour towards their Northern Ireland workers, and we are determined that this company should not get away with it.

"As a union we will not rest until we reversed this decision and are allowed to properly represent our members in Dungannon Meats."

Support builds

Dessie Henderson and some of the workers from the plant met the local District Council in Dungannon who expressed their concern at the company's actions.

The council have agreed to seek an urgent meeting with the

company

ICTU Seeks meeting

The umbrella body for trade unions in Ireland have now joined the campaign. They have agreed to seek an urgent meeting with both the company and the minister responsible for trade and enterprise

Last Monday a lively protest was held outside Finaghy Co Op to back the Dungannon workers. The Co Op head office in Britain later contacted the union and complained. Obviously the protest had the desired effect.

Backing from Derry

Derry Trades Union Council (DTUC) has called for "the widest possible support" for workers at Dungannon Meats threatened with redundancy to make way for labour provided by an outside agency.

"This move comes after 300 workers at the plant signed up to be represented by the Transport Union," said DTUC vice-chairman Eamonn McCann. "We don't believe the timing is coincidental.

"If Dungannon Meats get away with this over 46 jobs, every other job is at risk," Eamonn McCann continued. "Competitors will be watching closely. The implications go well beyond Dungannon Meats.

"If the workers and their union feel it necessary to call for a boycott of this company's products, we believe that trade unionists across the North and beyond will respond.

"The 'outsourcing' arrangement which the company has in mind is a return to the days of the hiring fairs. Workers everywhere have a direct interest in ensuring that this doesn't happen."

Sectarianism and manoeuvres behind N.I. Assembly return

By Goretti Horgan

The Groundhog Day that is the return of the Northern Ireland Assembly did not cause a lot of excitement on the ground on 15th May.

Marx said that "history repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce". There is definitely getting to be an element of farce about shenanigans in the Assembly. The news that Gerry Adams was looking

forward to backing Ian Paisley's nomination for First Minister was a joke - wasn't it? No.

Then came the news that David Ervine of the UVF/PUP had joined the Ulster Unionist Party, the original fur-coat brigade that the PUP had been set up to oppose. More precisely, the UUP and he have joined together formally to try to take an Executive seat from Sinn Féin.

The UUP refuse to join a gov-

ernment with Sinn Féin until it has proof that every rusty gun and bullet has been decommissioned and any remnants of IRA fundraising activities ("criminality") ended. That most IRA weapons are decommissioned and all IRA violence stopped is irrelevant to the righteous members of Reg Empey's party.

The UUP is happy, however, to have as part of its Assembly team the leader of the political wing of the UVF, an organisation that continues

to kill Catholics on a regular basis, is up to its neck in blatant criminality, racketeering and drug dealing, and which has yet to decommission a single bullet.

What the UUP/UVF manoeuvre shows is the extent of the sectarianism underpinning the Assembly and the Agreement on which it is based. And then they have the cheek to cry crocodile tears for teenager Michael McIlveen, murdered by sectarians.

INTERNATIONAL



Turkish and Greek activists marched together against war on Iran at the ESF in May

Photo Paula Geraghty

Police brutality in Mexico

By Valerie Lagrave

As part of an ongoing attempt to banish traditional street vending in Texcoco, near Mexico city, state police violently tried to prevent florists from setting up their stalls. The People's Front in Defence of the Land came out to help the street vendors.

The ensuing confrontation resulted in over 100 arrests with many people suffering wounds from severe beatings and projectile weapons. A 14 year old boy was shot dead and some police injured.

The movement moved to the community of San Salvador de Atenco where protests called by the Zapatistas' Other Campaign joined in solidarity. Twelve police were held hostage.

At 6.30 in the morning over 3,000 police entered Atenco with exceptional brutality, using tear gas, beating and arresting people off the streets, dragging others out of their homes. Hundreds were packed into buses, beaten for up to 6 hours on the way to custody. Dozens went missing, women were raped and foreigners deported.

Severely injured people are still being detained in appalling conditions. Few have been released and others given unaffordable bail.

The whole thing was orchestrated to criminalise the People's Front in Defence of the Land, who stopped the construction of a new international airport on their land in 2002 and to put a halt to the success of the Zapatistas' Other Campaign.

Join the worldwide condemnation of these events by protesting outside the Mexican Embassy on Ailesbury Road, Dublin on Thursdays at 6 pm.

For more information on these events and on the Zapatistas' Other Campaign, visit indymedia.org or narcnews.com. To get involved contact the Latin America Solidarity Centre.

US war airline abandons Shannon

World Airways are the largest carrier of US military forces through Shannon. Earlier this month they confirmed that they plan to relocate its refuelling stops to Leipzig, east Germany.

This news was greeted with dismay by the Independent, acting as the voice of Irish business, for whom the estimated million Euros made by Shannon Airport this year alone are worth the loss of neutrality and the internationally visible alignment of Ireland with the US's war effort in Iraq.

The Independent declared the news to be a victory for the Irish Anti-War Movement, and of course it is very welcome.

German anti-war activists will, however, be alerted to the possible move in order to keep the pressure up on the company.

A sign of the discontent with the war in Iraq from within the US itself, was shown early in May when the Senate unanimously passed an amendment to the Iraq supplemental spending bill to ensure that no funds 'may be made

available to establish permanent United States military bases in Iraq or to exercise control by the United States over the oil infrastructure or oil resources of Iraq.'

While this amendment will not shackle Bush, who has often shown disregard for the Senate, it does mark a growing concern about the costs of intervention in Iraq.

The administration is currently constructing a new U.S. embassy in Baghdad that spans the size of 80 football fields and costs \$592m.

Egypt: Mubarak steps up repression



Egyptian protesters attempt to flee riot police in the centre of Cairo (main). A plain clothes state security officer savagely beats an activist (top right). A demonstrator chants support for the high court judges (bottom right).

On Thursday 11 May some 500 people were seized by security police in Central Cairo.

Over 10,000 riot police, plain-clothes thugs and police officers prevented activists from the Moslem Brotherhood, Kifaya, and other organisations demonstrating in solidarity with two Egyptian judges facing disciplinary hearings. Journalists attempting to cover the event were harassed by security forces; camera operators had their equipment seized and broken.

On Wednesday night, May

10, a musical performance in Talaat Harb Square, organized by the songwriter/poet Ahmad Fuad Negm, was disrupted by security forces and Negm himself was threatened with arrest.

Meanwhile the two judges facing disciplinary hearings - Mahmoud el Mekki and Hisham el Bastawisi - were prevented from entering the courtroom with their accompanying delegation. They have been stripped of their immunity and are facing disciplinary hearings for leaking reports to the media regarding

electoral violations during the parliamentary elections of October-December 2005.

The Mubarak regime is clearly terrified by the transparency and accountability that Egypt's judges are promoting.

Please attend the demonstration in Dublin on Thursday 25 May at 6pm outside the Egyptian Embassy, Clyde Road, Ballsbridge. This is an international day of solidarity action called by the European Social Forum in Athens.

Bolivian activist says 'We can see a new future through these movements'

As Evo Morales, Bolivian President nationalises the country's natural resources, Socialist Worker spoke to **Tania Quiroz** from the 'Coordinadora de Defensa del Agua y de la Vida', a Bolivian social movement that has been prominent in the water and gas wars. She spoke at a conference in Dublin on 'Ownership of natural resources in Latin America and Ireland'.

The popular movements emerged as a response to the attacks on our social services that were conditions to the IMF and World Bank loans of the 1980s and 1990s.

The government privatised not just water and electricity, but also health and education services.

The government and the IMF tried to justify the neo-liberal agenda by saying public services were inefficient and that business could do it better. But people soon realised it was not in their interest.

The privatisation of water resulted in water scarcity because business users were prioritised and the water that poor people got was contaminated.

The social movement brought together different forces. The irrigation workers were the most important sector. They operate and maintain the national irrigation infrastructure. In the south were the 'drinking water committees'.

The domestic users and factory workers committees from the cities joined these two sectors. Finally there were the coca farmers who have been organised since the 1990s, Evo Morales is one of them.

The social movements began in the region of Cochabamba but is now a national movement.

A similar movement in Al Alto in the capital La Paz has joined us. In Cochabamba we got rid of Bectel Corporation who bought the water rights. In La Paz we are fighting the multinational Suez.

There has been a lot of resistance on the part of the people. In the year 2000 we saw the water war victory. 500,000 indigenous people led the revolt.

In 2003 the state was thrown into a political crisis when companies were found stealing the gas resources. Nine days of struggle ended with 67 people dead and over 400 injured and with the president resigning.

This year saw the victory of Evo Morales who has promised to defend our natural resources.

We hope we can bring an end to neo-liberalism. Our hopes lie in establishing a constituent assembly that can pass laws for the people.

There are two very important issues for the movement.

Firstly the re-appropriation



Tania Quiroz

of our collective natural resources and secondly what are the best ways people can participate in the political process to change the state.

We hope the government will bring change but we also know unity means strength and it's good to have critical movements to keep the government in line.

We can't expect everything to change overnight. But the whole political horizon of the social movements is to overcome this model and bring in real democracy at a local level.

The indigenous peoples are especially active in this.

There are also pressures on the government from multinationals and from the rightwing forces mainly in the province of Santa Cruz.

The rightwing talk about civil war. We have to see how Morales deals with them. Its important that the popular movement is clear on what it wants and stays firm regardless of what the government does.

Morales and the MAS know that if they don't get a move on the social movements will challenge them. I believe that change is only possible through grassroots movements. We cannot wait for others to do it for us. To wait for Morales to do it for us would be the worst form of paralysis.

We also understand that what happened in Iraq could also happen to us if the US tries to grab our hydrocarbon resources.

The US military now also talk about water being a key resource for the coming centuries.

I think we can see a new future for South America and for the world through these movements against privatisation and neo-liberalism.

Questions on the Left

The socialist alternative

By Conor Kostick

A new generation are looking for alternatives to capitalism and, understandably, are sceptical that socialism has the answers. After all, the experience of governments that have called themselves socialist is bad, those calling themselves communist even worse.

But examples such as Mitterrand's France or Stalin's Russia are not real tests of the socialist alternative to capitalism, in fact they have very little to do with the socialist goal of a classless society, where meeting people's need, rather than trying to compete for profits, is the driving force of the economy.

The change from capitalism to socialism has to be as fundamental a change as that from feudal society to modern society.

It has to be a global change and it has to completely reorganise the way production takes place, from bottom to top. In respect to these very deep transformations of society, socialism has not been tested at all.

The important historical examples where a few steps have been taken towards a classless society are Paris in 1871, Russia in 1905 and again in 1917, Barcelona in 1936, Hungary in 1956, and Poland in 1980.

But these revolutions, inspiring though they were, stopped a long way short of transforming the world, they were repressed before they could spread their examples of workers' democracy and control of the workplaces.

The 1917 revolution came the closest to achieving the kind of profound change that genuinely would mark a break with capitalism, but it was isolated by the collapse of the German revolution in 1923.

By 1928, when Stalin introduced the first Five Year Plan, there was nothing left in Russia of the revolutionary era, other than the red flags and socialist rhetoric with which a new state capitalist class garbed their rule.

Perhaps, the sceptic might say, the reason why socialism has yet to establish itself, is that it does not accord with human nature. Rather than look for political explanations for the defeat of each of these revolutionary moments, their failures could be attributed to the fact that socialist goals simply don't fit basic human behaviour.

This extremely common objection to socialism is far weaker than it appears. It portrays the case for socialism as though it is based simply on wishful thinking, and it has a fixed view of human behaviour that simply does not fit the wide



Stalin: Not a real socialist alternative

variety of historical experience.

Firstly, whilst there have been many socialist dreamers, ever since Karl Marx the case socialism has been given powerful theoretical roots in history and economics.

In particular, Marx's argument was that capitalism creates its own gravedigger, a vast working population, whose exploitation gives them a common interest in changing the system.

Not only that, but the working class, by contrast, say, to the unemployed or to peasants, is a collective class.

To strike, let alone take over factories, or a city, workers have to act as a group. The possibility of achieving socialism arises out of this fact.

A working class takeover of the means of production, is a different kind of revolution to all those which have taken place in the past. It is a change that leaves no new underdog to be exploited, and no small elite able to control affairs.

A working class revolution is a mass, collective, democratic act; necessarily so because of the economics of modern production.

Secondly, should a working class revolution spread across the globe and begin the reorganisation of society, it would find no obstacle in human nature to a policy of sharing goods to meet people's needs.

For over a hundred thousand years human beings lived by sharing all they had, in the hunter-gatherer stage of our existence.

Behaviour such as warfare, sexism, and greed is widespread today, but anthropology suggests that for most of the time that human beings have been present on the planet, it was unknown.

What a modern socialist revolution would do is rid the world of the injustices and violence of the last five thousand years of class societies and return to a co-operative type of society, but with inconceivably more resources than our ancestors could have imagined.

Support the defend our

Peadar: Congratulations on your election Jo. What do you think was different about this year's INO conference?

Jo: What was different this year was that nurses were much angrier with Mary Harney.

Nurses also had fewer expectations that she would improve things in the health service. Last year there was a feeling by many that she should be given a chance even though she was heckled and jeered by others at the end of her speech. This year it is likely that she would have been booed from the start had she shown up. The no-confidence motion was overwhelmingly passed by conference. After her performance in the last twelve months Mary Harney should resign.

The hope for change last year has been replaced by disgust with Harney's behaviour. Nurses are angry that despite the crisis in staffing levels she continued to harshly impose the employment ceiling. 480 beds were left idle when opening them could have given urgent relief to the acute bed shortage on hospital wards.

Harney's ten-point plan was a half-hearted failure and the A&E crisis is now worse than ever. The number of critically ill patients on trolleys waiting for a bed reached a record high of 495 on one day across the country. Of course the A&E trolley crisis is only a symptom of the severe difficulties across all sectors of the health service all round the country. Everywhere shortages in nursing and other staff, beds and facilities are leading to falling standards of care and safety for patients.

Public Health Nurses at the conference spoke of staff shortages causing cutbacks in services to the elderly, the long-term ill and children including developmental screening and vaccinations. Because of the employment ceiling, staff who leave or are off sick are not replaced and services are cancelled. In areas like south Dublin one nurse reported that services are worse now than they were ten years ago.

Peadar: Professor Drumm, CEO of the HSE says that services in the community need to be built up to take pressure off the hospitals.

Jo: Nurses completely support that proposal but we see no evidence of the Primary Care Strategy being funded and we completely oppose his idea that this means the promised 3000 extra acute hospital beds are not necessary.

Professor Drumm met the INO executive committee last month and he admitted that his insistence that no extra public beds were necessary was based on no study of any kind. The government report by Dr Mary Codd in 2002 showed a shortage of 4300 more acute hospital beds and the government promised 3000 of these beds before the 2002 election. It is important to remember that the Fine Gael-Labour coalition and Fianna Fail governments slashed almost 6000 beds in cutbacks between 1987 and 1992. There are now fewer beds per head of population than there were in 2002 when the government promise was made.

Peadar: What will solve the crisis in the health service?

Jo: The health service needs urgent changes in three areas: funding staff, beds and facilities in the public system; getting rid of the two-tier private fee system; and halting the development of 'for-profit-private hospitals and other private for-profit facilities like nursing homes and clinics.

This is repeated time and again in research on what works in other health systems.

The move from promoting well-funded public services to pushing private health insurance and for-profit community, hospital and nursing home care is what we call privatisation and it must be stopped. It diverts money away from health into administration costs and profits. You get a more expensive and poorer quality service. That is what Mary

Jo Tully, activist with the Irish Nurses Organisation conference. Jo is a passionate opponent of the private Worker. Peadar is the author of a



Harney and the government plan for the health service. It is why fighting privatisation means taking on the government.

Peadar: But Mary Harney says a pay rise for nurses will divert money from the health service.

Jo: Ensuring staff have decent conditions is a central part of ensuring we have a world class health service. The nurses demand for a 35-hour week and the same pay as other technical staff such as radiographers is vital to retain nurses and keep standards of care at a safe level.

It is important to stress that there is no contradiction between supporting pay and conditions for nurses and improving health care. While an argument can be made in relation to consultants private fees or massive salaries it makes no sense when applied to nurses. Very many nurses are not even on the average industrial wage. It takes 21 years before a nurse makes more than the less qualified social care workers that nurses often supervise.

In fact, improving pay and conditions for health workers to decent levels is the main way to improve care. Poor pay and long hours means lower staff ratios because of high turnover and therefore poor continuity of care and a poorer standard of care. Leas Cross nursing home is the best-known example of failures in this area.

The fight for decent conditions is also linked to our campaign against privatisation of hospitals and other health facilities. For-profit health care companies like Vivas, Triad or Comfort Keepers spend money on ads, billing, executive salaries and profits by cutting back on workers' conditions. This is why for-profit care is worse care. Also, keeping down pay and conditions in the public service is crucial for the for-profit sector to keep their sector's costs low and their profits high.

Peadar: How important are the nurses in the wider campaign for a better health service?

Jo: A nurses' victory could break privatisation plans and win more funding for the health service.

...the nurses to ...r health service

...n was elected second Vice President of the Union at last week's annual delegate
...ratization of the health service. She spoke to **Dr. Peadar O'Grady** for Socialist
...recent pamphlet, "Why is the Irish Health Service in Crisis?"

 Cut out and pin on your notice board



Why you should support the nurses

Nurses are essential workers in the health service. They work in difficult, overcrowded and underfunded hospitals and clinics.

Nurses are not overpaid or selfish. After they qualify it can take years for their salaries to reach the average industrial wage.

Nurses pay is below other grades of workers such as radiographers or technicians.

Nurses work longer hours than other grades in our hospitals. They work 39 hours per week while clerical workers and other grades work below 35 hours a week.

Nurses are standing up to the government for a better health service for all of us. They want an end to overcrowding, more beds to be provided and oppose the for-profit medicine agenda of Mary Harney's department.

Nurses are right to fight. This government and other politicians are not listening to them or to the public who are facing a health crisis in this country.

A victory for the nurses would be a major blow for Harney's privatisation plans.

If we are calling for funding for the public service we need to be clear that this money would only be properly spent if it ensured that health workers including nurses are properly paid. 'Lower pay means we can employ more' is not actually a practical proposition.

Nurses are voting with their feet. 70% of newly qualified nurses leave Ireland within 3 years of graduating. Huge numbers of these never return.

We are increasingly dependent on overseas recruitment of nurses from countries like the Philippines or India to keep the service going. We would be lost without them but poor conditions mean they are leaving after a few years also.

They leave for the same reason as their colleagues. Nurses can't afford to put a roof over their heads in the cities like Dublin where health facilities are concentrated.

The INO has a credible critique of government policy. Without proper pay and conditions there will be no health service to speak of. We need to go over the heads of the politicians and speak directly to the Irish public and make

the connections between exploiting staff and privatisation. Nurses could bring the support of the entire population behind them.

Peadar: What role does Privatisation play?

Jo: There is nothing else that can explain the refusal to open idle beds, the ceiling on recruitment and the giving away of tax-breaks and hospital land to private companies.

Cork University Hospital is one of 8 public sites approved by the HSE for locating a private hospital. Every €60 million that a private investor like Larry Goodman puts in is subsidised by €40 million more from the taxpayer. At the end the investor owns all €100 million worth. It's a scam on a massive scale.

Cork people are being lied to and told there is no other way to get extra beds. This plan is not driven by any health policy. It is driven by the same motive behind privatising transport or water supplies or even our gas reserves. It is the drive to make profits for big business.

Our conditions at work are getting worse because the government is diverting money into private for-profit hospitals and nursing

homes. It is not because of any shortage of money. The economy is booming with record government surpluses. The Irish Medical Organisation report that 3 patients a week die unnecessarily because of the A&E trolley crisis.

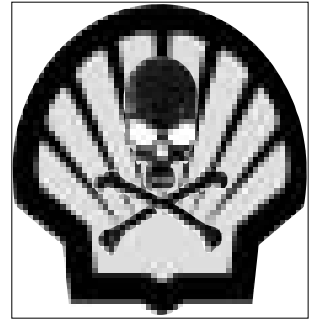
Peadar: What does the future hold for nurses?

Jo: There is no option for nurses but to campaign against the cutbacks and stop privatisation.

Nurses have little faith that the partnership or benchmarking process will deliver fair and equal treatment for nurses on pay and conditions.

The conference delegates voted to hold a mass rally for all the members of both the INO and the PNA (Psychiatric Nurses Association) in Croke Park conference centre on Wednesday June 14th at 3pm. It is likely that a campaign for decent conditions and an end to privatisation would have the overwhelming support of the country's 40,000 nurses. This government's days of selling out our health service could soon be over.

Big oil against the poor in Niger Delta



By Kieran Allen

The Niger Delta is a site of an undeclared war between oil companies like Shell and local inhabitants who live in deep poverty.

Every day, the Nigerian government and the oil companies will gross over €100 million from pumping oil in the Niger Delta. Two million gallons of oil is being exported every day from the region.

Yet this vast wealth has brought misery and suffering for the people of the area.

The discovery of oil ushered in an era of corrupt 'petro-capitalism'. After half a century of oil production, \$300 billion has flowed into the Nigerian federal exchequer. Yet the Nigerian per capita income stands at \$290 per year. Companies like Shell work closely with the corrupt political class who dominate Nigeria and back up their repressive regime.

Several independent human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, have linked the oil company to a spate of killings, rape and inter-communal feuds that have crippled social and economic life in the Niger Delta since 2003.

Ecological damage

Shell pays no compensation for oil spills when it can claim they are caused by sabotage.

An oil spill at Yenagoa, for example, in 2003 poisoned a key water resource for several communities but was hardly touched for a month after the spill.

Even when the company has to accept responsibility, it pays a pittance. When a spill occurred at its Well 32, for example, it paid out only 18 cents to local people who were affected.

Every known law on environmental safety has been violated in Nigeria. A good example of this is the volume of natural gas flared in the country. The average rate of gas flaring in the world is about 4%. In Nigeria, over 70% of associated gas is flared.

There are intense debates about compliance with United Nations Agencies 21 and the Kyoto protocol in other parts of the world. Nigeria is a signatory to these and other international conventions.

Yet, the government does not enforce them because the main victims of this ecological genocide are the people of the Niger Delta. As far as the power brokers in the country are concerned, the resource-blessed people of the Niger Delta are fair game; they do not deserve the protection of their national government. Even the World Bank admits that gas flaring on the Niger Delta has 'contributed more emissions of greenhouse gas than all other sources in sub-Saharan Africa combined'.

The deadline for an end to gas flaring was first fixed for 1985. Yet Shell canvassed 2008 as another deadline. That is only two years away. Yet the programs on the ground do not indicate that 2008 will be realistic. What is more, none of the gas flaring sites has been discontinued.

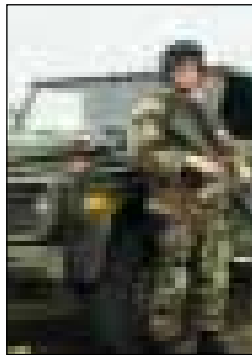
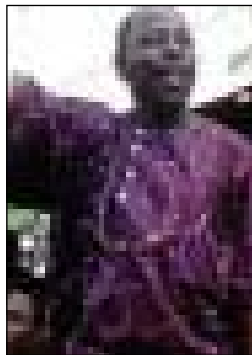
In the oil-producing states of Nigeria, an average of one oil spill occurs every week. In the delicate ecosystem of the Niger Delta, these oil-related accidents cause grave damages to the environment and all that it harbours. Protected by the might of the federal government, the oil companies accuse the impoverished victims of being the cause of their tragedy.

Over 1,000 youths, women and children perished in the Jesse inferno. The figure of the dead in the Odi invasion has been estimated to be about 2000. In all the cases of major calamities associated with oil, the Nigerian government has not taken the pains to calculate the casualty figures nor has it bothered to rebuild the devastated communities.

One of the most disturbing ironies in the Niger Delta today is that crude oil for export is transported to the ports of Bonny and Forcados through a network of pipelines covering 6000 kilometres.



Above: Burnt and poisoned rivers from oils spill and fire which the oil giants refuse to take responsibility for; below: Ken Sara Wiwa; bottom: US marines protect US investments



Protected by the might of the federal government, the oil companies accuse the impoverished victims of being the cause of their tragedy

The pipelines are laid across farms, waterways and fishing grounds. Some pipes cross communities and living quarters. Not enough care is given to the technical integrity of the pipes, and so they corrode, burst and cause a deluge of oil spills and fires that consume plant and human life.

Laid low by greed

The Niger Delta is located in the southern part of Nigeria, a geo-political framework mainly populated by the Ijaw ethnic nationality. Spreading over a total landmass of about 70,000 sq kilometres, the region is inhabited by an estimated population of 20 million Nigerians in 2000 communities.

Fishing, farming, trading and forest product gathering remain the primary occupations and means of sustenance of the people and despite the emergence and subsequent dominance of the hydrocarbon industry, over 80% of the people are still dependant on the traditional agrarian trade.

The immediate source of livelihood for the people of the region was supplied by the rich flora and fauna of the area for many generations. For so long the people there lived in harmony, and there was evident balance in the ecosystem.

The Niger Delta region is characterized by wetlands and water bodies with creeks and rivers crisscrossing the entire southern parts.

However the region is endowed with enormous natural resources. It has the world's third largest mangrove forest with the most extensive freshwater swamp forests and tropical rain forests characterized by great biological diversity. Alongside the immense potential for agricultural revolution the Niger Delta region also has vast reserves of non renewable natural resources particularly hydrocarbon deposits in oil and gas. Other known renewable natural resources includes clay pits for burnt brick making in the construction industry and silica sand for the glass manufacturing industry, which have, remained largely untapped. Part of a World Bank report, following a visit to the Niger Delta in 1952 and 1953 declared that the region has great prospect to feed the entire population of West African sub region and has sufficient commodities for export.

Yet, the Niger Delta remains pervasively poor and under developed, lacking virtually all forms of social amenities and

infrastructure, including electricity, medical facilities, roads and shelter.

And the cause is greed for the profits from oil.

Resistance

In 1990, the writer and poet, Ken Sara-Wiwa, began mobilizing his people for change on the leverage of the Ogoni Bill of Rights. The mobilization was clearly successful, and it is said Ken's Ogoni project is, perhaps, the most successful grassroots democratic experiment ever put together in Africa. The Ogonis successfully resisted Shell, the Anglo-Dutch Oil Company, and drove it out in January 1993.

The state and the oil companies responded with a wave of repression and Ken Sara Wiwa was executed in 1995

On December 11, 1998, Ijaw youths gathered for the All Ijaw Youths Conference and issued the Kaiama Declaration. The events following the declaration led to resistance that took the Niger Delta region by storm.

The state and the oil companies have responded with a new wave of brutality. Countless homes and property have been destroyed by federal authorities acting through organs such as the Internal Security Task Force.

In February 2006, for example, the Nigerian military attacked four Ijaw villages on the pretext that they were stopping 'bunkering' – illegal taking of oil.

Soldiers fired on the village of Okerenkoko from the air, killing 15 people. Barely 24 hours later, a nearby Shell Petroleum Development facility went up in flames, costing the company about \$2.27 million daily in revenue.

With the traditional economy constrained by environmental pollution and other negative oil industry-related interventions, and with the modern economy closed to the youths on account of lack access to employment and other economic activities within the oil industry, the youths of the Niger Delta have encountered nothing but frustration. Their actions to redeem themselves have only been described as restive.

The oil industry has played a very significant role in the collapse of the Niger Delta, through an adverse reshaping of the local political landscape, and the introduction of corrupt and divisive community relations policies reminiscent of the divide-and-rule tactics of colonial Nigeria.

A major cause of the instability in the

delta is, therefore, the inability of the oil industry to sincerely engage Niger Delta communities in constructive and balance dialogue. Even more fundamental is the long-standing injustice imposed on the people of the Niger Delta through undemocratic and unjust resource ownership laws and statutes. The crisis in the Niger Delta is now deeply entrenched after many years of environmental negligence, fiscal neglect and political marginalization.

No blood for oil

The Shell oil company should be stopped from robbing the people of the Niger Delta.

In Venezuela and Bolivia, governments have managed to take back natural resources which have been previously owned by foreign multi-nationals. The same needs to occur in the Niger Delta.

But control of these resources should not pass into a corrupt regime in Abuja which has long co-operated with the oil companies in the debasement of the people of the Niger Delta.

We need a strong political movement to take public ownership of these resources and see that they are used for our benefit.

For more information:
www.unitedijawstates.com/ogele

Socialist Worker

FROM ROSSPORT TO THE NIGER DELTA:

Shell & the robbery of natural Resources

Speaker:
Philip Ikurusi (Niger Delta Activist)

30 May: **Athlone** Genoa Café 8.30
31 May: **Galway** Imperial Hotel 8pm
1 June: **Waterford** ATGWU Keyser St
8 June: **Cork** Spailpin Fanach 8pm
9 June: **Dublin** Cassidy's Hotel 8pm

COMMENT

Gino Kenny

Outside the Box

On 9th June the greatest show on earth finally begins. For 30 days billions of people around the world will be watching and listening.

From the barrios of Latin America to the housing estates of Dublin, everybody will share the joy, the passion and the marvel of what is the Beautiful Game.

Of course it's a great pity that Ireland won't be taking part but we will have to make do with following our post Colonial cousins, whether that be Angola, Costa Rica or Iran.

There's also the little matter of watching England getting humiliated. For the first thirteen days, I will transform myself from being a man of the World to "ich bin Brazilian, Paraguayan und Trinidadian."

But the greatest show on earth has another side and it's way offside. The Corporate World Cup - the commodification of football and sport generally. From here on in product endorsement will be everywhere, promoting everything alcohol, fast food and fast cars.

I am always amazed. Aren't these the very things that prevent us from playing the game in the first place!

There are fifteen main Corporate sponsors with naming rights to the competition.

These multi nationals are among some of the biggest capitalist enterprises on the planet, each will pay €30 to €50 million for the privilege of being associated with the main FIFA logo.

The World Cup is a massive business. Only the Olympic Games comes next for raising revenue and for commercial exposure.

The scandal of ticket distribution in the competition is never too far away. Of the 3.1 million tickets available almost half a million will go to corporate sponsors. Corporate entertainment seems to be the new "going out".

If you are seen in one of the corporate boxes you have finally reached the zenith of your game. Half of these people wouldn't know a penalty box from a corporate box..

The genuine fans, who want to see the games, will pay way over the odds for the tickets. The real football fans have just been "prawn sandwiched."

In all 32 Countries will be contending the World Cup. But you look carefully and you will see there will be 34 teams in the competition. The battle of the brands is on between the superpowers of football shirt manufactures, Nike and Adidas.

Nike have a small problem though, they are not one of the main 15 main sponsors. Adidas is - it's a German Company.

Nike have been very clever. They are currently running the "joga bonita" campaign with the Brazilian national team. Nike are a relatively new-comer to football finance.

Remember in the 1998 World Cup Brazilian star player Ronaldo was a shadow of his former self. He was forced to play the final even though it was clear he was not fit.

Nike apparently had put pressure on the team insisting that Ronaldo must take part. But it gets worse.

Last year Nike ran the anti racism campaign "Stand up, Speak out" to try and eradicate the cancer that is racism in football.

This is the same company that runs sweatshops in the four corners of the developing world and treats its workers like battery hens.

Nike telling us to "Stand up, Speak out" (of course I agree with the sentiment) is sickening coming from the biggest exploiters of them all. It's so sickening in fact, that Manchester United Captain Gary Neville, publicly said that Nike were using the anti racism message, to sell their products.

It's no secret what these companies are trying to do, to our lives, our emotions, our way of interacting with other peoples of the World.

The simple art of playing sport and football is to be bought and sold, to be traded on markets, to be a trophy in corporate halls. Their cynicism knows no bounds.

Football has been repackaged in the past two decades.

The Captains of Industry have seen the massive potential of sport to boost their profits. The TV revenue for this year's competition will be worth billions.

Football, it is said is the new religion. We are all-consumed consumers. But with all their money and glossy advertisements, the World Cup is our game, the Peoples game. It will always be the beautiful game.

They can never buy the simple joyous experience of learning the game on the backstreets, the disused field, the patch of land that is ours.

Our heroes of past competitions Pele, Maradona, Platini, Ronaldo, McGrath will always be our heroes and the new heroes and teams of this World Cup will be ours.

Football brings solidarity, comradeship and humility to all that play and love the game. That is something capitalists of this world will never be able to buy and sell or something they will never experience.

Film Review

Remember the Guy Fawkes plot



Riding the Tube in totalitarian Britain

By Rosa O'Laoghaire

V For Vendetta is about the total loss Individual freedom and identity in a totalitarian Britain.

The world depicted here is one which has been devastated by a major biological war. This has left vast swathes of the world, including the USA, essentially a 'leper' colony.

The central premise of the film is that the only way to oppose state oppression is through people power. This view is represented by "V", a Guy Fawkes mask wearing anarchist, or terrorist depending on the point of view of the character.

V uses 'Guy Fawkes and the Gun Powder Plot' as a symbol to establish his point. The film starts out with his blowing up of the (now

abandoned) Old Bailey on the 5th November, along with his call that the people join him when in one year he blows up the (also abandoned) parliament building.

The film takes place in the year between these two events.

The film is at times as predictable as you Hollywood film can be expected to be.

But beneath the superficial level

is a thought provoking and intelligent political commentary.

It explores the ease at which certain regimes can be allowed to come to power if the ubiquitous people are not conscientious enough.

This is definitely a film worth watching whether you want a simple action/thriller fest or you're looking for a provocative film.

Book Review

Confessions of an Economic Hit Man

By Michael McGabhann

Confessions of an Economic Hit Man - John Perkins (Ebury Press, Random House 2005)

This is the memoir of a man trying to repent for his role as one of the many highly paid professionals whose function is to cheat countries around the globe out of trillions of dollars.

They funnel money from the World Bank and other foreign "aid" organisations into the pockets of the "corporatocracy" - global big business.

Perkins' book is a great explanation of modern methods of Empire-building. People like Perkins work for consulting firms, and their job is to entice a foreign head of state to go deeply in debt through large loans for huge engineering and construction projects conducted by US companies such as Halliburton and Bechtel. They do this by greatly exaggerating the economic returns on big projects such as dams and electrification systems.

The foreign country hires American contractors to build the systems and earn enormous profits. Then, mired in debt, the



John Perkins speaking at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre

head of state will do what the United States government tells him to do: "They would be forever beholden to their creditors, and so they would present easy targets when we needed favours, including military bases, UN votes, or access to oil and other natural resources."

If a head of state proves too independent or too honest to accept bribes, if the threats of the economic hit men haven't worked, the "jackals" come in to take care of them. The jackals are the CIA-

sanctioned heavy mob who cause coups and revolutions, murder, abduction and assassination. And when the jackals fail, as was the case in Iraq, then the military goes in.

Economic hit men, Perkins says, work entirely separately but completely in concert with the state. Perkins never once reported to a US government agency - but he is in little doubt that the US government always knew and approved of what he was doing. His

analysis of how the "corporatocracy" works hand in glove with the American government to keep profits high and developing nations in check is entirely plausible. Much of it, particularly in Central and South America, is more or less a matter of public record.

Predictably, Perkins has taken a lot of flak for his claims, being called "a frothing conspiracy theorist" and "a vainglorious peddler of nonsense" by the Washington Post and

prompting a similarly dismissive press release from the U.S. State Department. This, if anything, only lends him credibility.

One valid criticism of the book is that, for a memoir about economic decisions that must have caused a substantial paper trail and involved many people, Perkins does not seem to care for corroboration. He is happy to centre his story on his own spiritual conversion which prompted this memoir.

But such criticism appears petty when set beside the facts. As an Economic Hit Man, he helped exploit Ecuador to the extent that, since 1970, during the period known euphemistically as the Oil Boom, the official poverty level grew from 50 to 70 percent, and public debt increased from \$240 million to \$16 billion. Meanwhile, the share of national resources allocated to the poorest segments of the population declined from 20 to 6 percent.

This is a very valuable book and a shocking insight into how developing countries are bled in the name of aid and assistance.

Protest/Reports/Struggle

email to brid@swp.ie Phone 01 8722682

DECENTRALISATION

Bertie Ahern's plans unravell

By Willie Cumming

Bertie Ahern's admission that they had "taken too much on in one go" is just the latest in a series of government climb-downs on their plan to decentralise 10,600 civil and public servants from Limerick, Cork and Dublin by 2007.

Earlier in the week it had been announced that the Probation and Welfare Service would not be moving to Navan as originally planned.

Two things have forced this change. Firstly, thousands have refused to be intimidated or bullied and have just not applied to move.

As the government insist that application to move is 'voluntary', the continued high level of refusal is critical.

Secondly, the series of industrial actions by SIPTU Fás members have highlighted the level of opposition - particularly significant in view of the ongoing negotiations on a new social partnership deal.

Expect that when things start to go wrong, recriminations will start. PD Minister Parlon, arch-cheerleader of decentralisation, commented that the 2007 date "was a throwaway remark from McCreevey. Nobody intended that other than him."

More sinisterly he suggested that the plan is in difficulty because of inter-union rivalries. This is classic divide and conquer strategy.

There is no doubt that each union has slightly differing agendas, reflecting the levels of interest or opposition to the decentralisation plan.

But it is important that they act together to ensure that those who want to move are sorted, and that those who want to remain in their present locations and jobs can continue to do so.

CORRIB GAS PIPELINE

The fight is still on



Huge protests last year in support of the Rosspoint Five

Proposals produced in Mayo for the re-routing of the Corrib gas pipeline were "the subject of much hilarity in this area", according to Vincent McGrath of the Rosspoint Five.

Shell have been hell-bent on presenting themselves as caring, kind and approachable since the report by Advantica was released. Their record speaks louder than words. (see report on the Niger Delta page 8)

The Advantica report was welcomed by Minister Noel Dempsey who announced that it paved the way for the gas pipeline to go ahead.

But according to local people, there is a long way to go in the mediation process and all development concepts are "up for discussion". That includes the concept of a refinery on-shore.

The Corrib Gas field is worth millions and the profits will be used to build roads, schools and hospitals. BUT these will all be in Norway unless we push hard for a renegotiation of the deal. As the deal between Shell and the government stands the economy won't gain and with predicted gas price hikes the Irish consumer will be forced to pay the international market price.

On the other hand, the deal allows Shell to write off tax against

their exploration, production and even closing down costs. Further exploration licences for other gas fields have also been granted to private companies rather than being bought by the government and exploited for the good of the people of Ireland.

The same situation that we currently face in Rosspoint will no doubt arise as fields elsewhere on the west coast are exploited for private profit.

Providence Resources (a company in which Tony O'Reilly has a 45% stake) obtained a licence from the Government to explore the Dunquin Prospect off the south west coast. Analysts believe this area could contain up to 25 trillion cubic feet of natural gas and four billion barrels of oil with an estimated value of more than €20 billion at current prices.

This is a huge natural resource entirely sold off by the Irish State. The State conceded all ownership rights over the country's oil and gas reserves under a fiscal and licensing regime introduced by Ray Burke in the late 1980's and further refined by Bertie Ahern in 1992.

It is indisputable that if this campaign should fail the Rubicon will be passed, and the precedent it sets will see other communities held ransom by private corpora-

tions and continued giveaway of our natural resources. The Shell to Sea campaign and the Rosspoint 5 continue to fight for safety issues to be resolved, production to be carried out at sea and equally that this rip-off deal should be discarded and renegotiated to meet international standards and benefit the Irish People. For details of up-coming events/protests and ways to get involved see www.shelltosea.com.

Davitt League - Seminar

1906 - THE LAND OF IRELAND FOR THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

2006 - THE RESOURCES OF IRELAND FOR THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

The Davitt League will host an open seminar on The Ownership and Control of Ireland's Natural Resources and has invited all political parties to submit where they stand on this issue.

Venue: Imperial Hotel, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

Date: Saturday 27th May

Time: 11 am

ALL WELCOME

Two weeks ago a 20 year old local fisherman was put at huge risk by Shell's activities in the Corrib basin. Jonathan O'Donnell was hauling crab pots 40 miles north of Erris head. He was

working on deck when his radar alarm went off. A 300 foot rig was being towed by three tugs to the Corrib field and no warning had been given to local fishermen. Jonathan had to cut the

ropes from the pots and lost about €2,000 worth of equipment. According to local fishermen, two years ago Shell promised to appoint a liaison officer to inform fishermen of their

activities but there is no such thing. Their excuse was that they advertised this movement in marine magazines but that does not provide local people with protection or any warning system.

ROAD FATALITIES.

Privatisation will not cut road deaths

By Owen McCormack

The high level of deaths on Irish roads continues with no sign that any of the Govt strategies have succeeded in stopping the carnage.

The Govt is to privatise the use of speed cameras. The reality of this will be the privatised company concentrating on stretches of road where it is easy to capture speeding drivers such as motorways and dual carriageways, in order to maximise its profit. The problem is this is not where the fatalities occur.

The profile of drivers involved tends to be young males who are speeding and over the limit for drink. The latest campaigns have concentrated on driver attitude and behaviour with much lecturing about the evils of speeding and appeals to young "boy racers" to slow down. While this is all very true, it is ironic that the campaigns are part funded by drinks and car companies.

A multi million euro industry in advertising cars and drink aims directly at young men and women, selling speed, cars and drink as the essence of cool.

Of the 126 deaths this year, 31 are foreign nationals, an extraordinarily high proportion. Some have suggested that these drivers are somehow more incompetent than Irish drivers. The real reason is much simpler.

Inappropriate speeding and drink driving cause many of the fatal

incidents. The tendency is for young men between 18 and 30 to be directly involved. Often the accidents will occur on poor and dangerous stretches of road in rural areas. The almost total lack of any form of public transport in these areas means that young people tend to drive to the pubs and clubs and drive home afterwards. The cost of taxis again means that many will take a chance..

The high numbers of foreign workers involved is because they fit the category most at risk from this behaviour; young, male working on low incomes, living in places away from any public transport network especially at weekends.

The various campaigns to stop this slaughter are really tinkering around the edges. Since 1969, 18,000 people have been killed on Irish roads.

The continuing over reliance of cars, the spread of housing estates away from centres of towns and villages and the dearth of well-funded public transport means this death rate will continue.

What is needed is a campaign that places public transport at the heart of any solution to the increase in road fatalities. Only a move away from the car as the primary form of transport will halt the deaths on the roads. This means challenging the car industry (and the advertising of the drinks industry) something you are unlikely to hear Minister Cullen ever doing.

NBRU

Rule change threat

The NBRU conference at the end of May will debate a series of motions from the leadership aimed at restricting democracy and debate in the union.

The rule changes relate to disciplining and expelling members, and the most outrageous one would remove the right of ordinary members to stand for the position of executive member; essentially a chief shop steward for each garage.

This move will result in an executive totally removed from any accountability to the members. It will create a layer at the top of the union that effectively cannot be removed by drivers regardless of how unpopular or out of touch they are.

The leadership is known to be concerned

that a number of existing executives may lose their positions in upcoming garage elections. This move will shore up those seen as supporters of the leadership and head off any dissent in the run up to a number of important deals that are due, including talks on a 48 hour week and Cullen's new attempt to bring in private operators in the Dublin bus market.

The union debated a similar move last year but after campaigning by rank and file drivers dropped it. The move should concern all trade unionists, as the NBRU has a reputation for militancy second to none. These rule changes if implemented would pose a threat to its traditional ethos and history.

WYSE PARK WATERFORD

Campaign group wins significant victory

Waterford City Manager, Mr Conn Murray and his officials have been forced to drop their plans to rezone part of Wyse Park in the inner city to sell off to developers.

Following a campaign by local residents which included public meetings, petitions, street stalls, submissions to the city council and radio debates, the manager in a report to councillors has conceded, "there was merit" in the protestors' case.

The rezoning of Wyse Park - the only public park in the inner city area - was part of a wider plan by council officials to allow a private consortium to build a massive bunker type, multi-story car park, shopping centre, hotel and apartment complex in the locality.

Residents feared loss of natural light, traffic congestion, pollution and noise which would destroy their quality of life and

possibly force them to move out of their inner city homes.

The Alliance for Sustainable Inner City Development are not opposed to new development in the historical quarter of the city, but argue that it should be on a human scale that retains all the open space as well as all the historical buildings on the sites.

They also argue that any development should have the interests of the local people at its core and that there must be an

ongoing community dividend such as a health centre, children's play area/crèche and community centre arising from future projects.

John Cloono, a committee member of the group said, "This is a climb down by the city council officials for people power and will encourage resistance to other rezoning as well as insuring that any future proposals for the area will put the interests of people before profit".

ATGWU Conference backs Water Charges Campaign

By Brid Smith

Delegates to the ATGWU annual conference from all over Ireland unanimously backed the Campaign Against Water Charges and endorsed the Northern Ireland ICTU position of giving full backing to the campaign of non-payment of water charges.

Eugene McGlone told the conference that for too long working class people were expected to obey the law but employers could break it with impunity.

In addressing the resolution on non-payment of water charges, conference heard how the implementation of the charges was the beginning of privatising an essential service and would open the floodgates for further selling off of our services.

A key point of discussion was the future amalgamation of the union with Amicus and the GMB.

Talks on the process were progressing and would deliver the formation of a major union in this country, comparable in size to Siptu, according to the T&G general secretary, Tony Woodley.

A number of delegates expressed concern that the amalgamation talks would take into full account the priorities of the rank and file membership and would not result in the formation of a Big but not necessarily Beautiful union.

Tony Woodley told the conference that the autonomy of the Irish region of the union would be guaranteed.

Full time organisers appointed to develop the union in the northern counties are making good progress, particularly in the food processing and aviation industries, with organisation and recruitment in a number of key companies.

One of these companies, Dungannon Meats (see report on page 4) are implementing an "Irish Ferries" style policy by making 146 workers redundant and engaging cheaper contract labour. The ATGWU have mounted a major campaign in response.

The conference also passed a resolution calling for an open public enquiry into the Stardust Tragedy of 1981 and for a letter to go to Bertie Ahern regarding the resolution.

A former Cadburys shop steward and union activist John Keegan, lost two daughters in the fire. His widow is currently the chairperson of the campaign for justice for the Stardust victims and their families.

At a lively fringe meeting, Eamon McCann (Derry Trades Council) and regional secretary Mick O'Reilly argued for a new left to be formed both North and South.

The meeting discussed the vacuum created in politics in both states by the failure of the Labour Party to represent working class interests by endorsing and implementing neo-liberal policies.

The ATGWU is hosting a meeting of anti-coalition left wing activists in the Union hall in Abbey Street Dublin on Saturday 17 June.

ANTI BIN TAX CAMPAIGN

Council removes refuse service

Dublin City Council has escalated its non collection threats, leaving bins behind in parts of Coolock, Santry and Crumlin.

Three years ago the Council threatened all areas that the service would be removed for non-payers of the bin tax. Areas that have been left without a service are now getting organised to respond to this latest attack by the council.

In Ringsend and East Wall residents regularly take action by meeting on the streets on the morning of the bin collection and organise to throw bags of rubbish into the backs of trucks. Now campaign activists in these other areas are organising mass public meetings to make a similar response.

A Supreme Court hearing contesting the legality of the bin charges is due to take place this Summer. The anti bin tax campaign won several appeal cases against the tax for the years 2001 and 2002 in the Circuit Court.



Previous Anti Bin Tax Campaign protest

Dublin City Council has appealed these cases to the Supreme Court and as we go to press we are still waiting for a court date.

But the City Council have decided to jump ahead of the legal process and take matters into their own hands. They are pre-empting the

outcome of the Supreme Court case by implementing a policy of non-collection.

This is ironic given that the establishment are very

quick to condemn workers like the train drivers for taking industrial action and pre-empting negotiations. Where is the condemnation of the council from the establishment and the media when they preempt the legal process and deny residents of an essential public service.

The campaign is urging all its supporters to stick with the campaign and refuse to pay the bin charges. This struggle is not over and we need to get leaflets and information to all residents and build mass public meetings in the areas affected.

For more information for meetings in Crumlin area contact Joan Collins 086 3888151

For information on meetings in Coolock contact Ritchie Browne at 087 2035207

Or contact the hotline number for the campaign at 087 2837989.

IRISH ANTI WAR MOVEMENT

Brother of Guantanamo prisoner to speak in Ireland



Dublin
Friday 26 June 8.00pm ATGWU Hall Middle Abbey St
Cork

Sunday May 28th : 12pm - Film showing of Road to Guantanamo Kino Cinema, Washington Street,
Followed by public meeting at 3pm in same venue

AER LINGUS



Aer Lingus workers took their campaign against the privatisation of the airline to Fianna Fail's doorstep. Over forty workers took part in this protest at the 80th birthday celebrations of Fianna Fail at the Mansion House in Dublin. Sean Haughey, one of the Northside TD's who recently refused to meet the workers, gave the protesters the two fingers as he arrived at the function. Unfortunately the camera didn't catch him. But his constituents did.

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
SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

Phone.....



Socialist Worker

LET THEM STAY!



Asylum seekers from Afghanistan on hunger strike in St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. Immigrants in Northern Ireland could face long imprisonment in the proposed Detention Centre: See full report page three. Photo: Paula Geraghty

SAY NO TO IMMIGRANT PRISON OPPOSE IMMIGRATION SNATCH SQUAD

The British government is planning to wage a war against immigrants in the north.

It has been revealed that by the end of the year the north will have its own dedicated immigration squad of ten immigration officers, nine seconded PSNI officers and one "expert" Dundalk Garda Inspector.

The purpose of the team will be to round up and deport undocumented immigrants and "failed asylum seekers".

The team will have the power to carry out raids on homes, workplaces, colleges and schools. They will have the power to stop and search anyone "foreign looking" in the street to check that they have the correct papers.

The team will work out of a purpose built centre at Belfast City Airport. Most worrying the building will house a holding/detention centre.

The terms "holding centre" and "detention centre" are simply euphemisms for an immigrant prison as people are not free to come and go as they please. They are subjected to all sorts of restrictions and humiliations and are constantly monitored by security staff.

There have been a number of suicides in detention centres in England and Scotland. Dungavel in Scotland is a perfect example of the gross inhumanity of holding centres. An

investigation by the Sunday Herald found that the government was routinely lying about conditions in Dungavel. Ministers and Home Office officials had said that children were only detained there as a last resort and for a matter of days.

The Herald investigation uncovered that this was not true, that the detention of children was routine and some had been imprisoned for over a year. They also uncovered a catalogue of incidents showing the inhuman treatment of those being detained there.

The Anti Racism Network in the North has launched a campaign against the plans. At a time of an unprecedented level of racist

attacks in the north this squad and immigrant prison can only help fuel those attacks by creating a perception of criminality of those coming into the north to live and study and work.

The ARN are also demanding to know why it was felt that nine full time PSNI officers could be spared for a dedicated immigration team but could not be spared for a dedicated team to deal with race hate crime.

The ARN are calling on all the unions, churches and human rights groups in the north to be part of a campaign of opposition to the proposals.

To contact the ARN email antiracism_ni@hotmail.com