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Save the Public Health Service

SUPPORT THE NURSES

Nurses are voting with their feet. 70% of newly qualified nurses leave Ireland within three years of graduating.

Huge numbers of them 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 reasons as their colleagues. Nurses can't afford to put a roof over their heads in cities like Dublin where health facilities are concentrated.

Crisis in the health service is a daily event in homes, GP clinics, A&E units, hospital wards and nursing homes all over Ireland.

We live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world and have some of the best-trained and most dedicated health-workers.

Despite this many people live in fear of ill health and we are often overwhelmed by the tasks of caring for ourselves and our network of friends and family.

Mary Harney's answer to this crisis is to attack the nurses for their demands for pay and shorter working hours.

She represents the interests of the wealthy elite in this coun-

Mary Harney must go!



**Save the public health service
No privatisation
Support the nurses
Health before profit**

**Support the Nurses
Wednesday June 14th,
Meet 2.30pm Helix DCU**

People Before Profit Alliance

try and wants to free up the health service so they can buy into for-profit hospitals.

Take Larry Goodman (the

infamous beef baron) as an example.

He has recently bought a private hospital in Galway with

considerable support from the Government.

Despite the appalling mess that the health service is in, Brendan Drumm chief executive of the Health Services Executive has been awarded a €32,000 bonus on top of his €400,000 per year salary.

Harney is putting profit before health. Private instead of public means more profit. Insurance instead of tax, means more profit.

Fees rather than salaries means more profit.

The nurses demand for a pay rise and a 35-hour week is perfectly reasonable and they deserve our full support.

It is vital that we retain our nurses and keep standards of care at a safe level.

Many nurses are not even paid the average industrial wage.

That is why their demands have to be linked to a fight for decent public health services and stop the greed of the likes of Harney, her government and her pals. Support the nurses.

Join the People Before Profit Alliance in solidarity with the nurses.

Assemble at Croke Park at 2.30pm on June 14th. Pay the Nurses! Sack Harney!

QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT

"When the dust settles I will be seen to have acted honestly, decisively and competently to deal with a very serious issue not of my making"

Michael McDowell brazenly out as calls for his resignation grew following his failure to act to avoid a crisis in child rape convictions

"Besieged by developers, fellows in Jags and pinstripes looking for bits of their land to be rezoned"

Former Labour Party councillor Eithne Fitzgerald on how her home came under seige following her election to city council in the late 80s

"It has always been voluntary and it is also very popular"

Mary Harney deludes herself about the government's decentralisation programme

"If you want to waste £1,000 we recommend fast women, slow horses or even greyhound racing"

A letter sent by Ryanair to its pilots in 2004 recommending that they refrain from joining a trade union. The letter was referred to in a recent High Court case.

"They welcomed us with open arms...shook our hands and their eyes misted up at the right place. When we left town, they slashed the (aid) budget"

Bono describes his visit to Washington last month

"To be recognised as a refugee one has to face an extremely stringent test. Many who have fled situations of extreme danger such as war or generalised violence may not pass this test, even if they face death on return to the country from which they had fled"

Peter O'Mahony, chief executive of Irish Refugee Council, on Irish refugee policy

"I don't need to spell it out, but the wars that we have seen, the occupations that we see throughout the world—people finally cannot turn away from that... Maybe if we start telling the truth about the past, we can start telling the truth about the present."

Director Ken Loach, whose new film *The Wind That Shakes The Barley* has won the top prize at the Cannes film festival

"A brutally anti-British film... designed to drag the reputation of our nation through the mud. It portrays British soldiers as trigger happy mercenaries hooked on torture, burning cottages for kicks, and using pliers to rip out the toenails of innocent Irish victims."

The Sun's Harry MacAdam, lashing out at Loach

"His purpose is to encourage direct comparisons between the Ireland of 1920 and present day Iraq. This requires the portrayal of the British as sadists and the Irish as romantic, idealistic resistance fighters. It is no surprise that Loach supports George Galloway's Respect party."

Ruth Dudley Edwards, writing in the *Daily Mail*. It is no surprise that she is the author of a sympathetic history of the Orange Order

"US forces killed two women by mistake...when they were heading to a maternity hospital in a taxi"

Incident report by the joint body of the Iraqi army and the US forces in Iraq's Salahaddin province

BASF abandons Meath 'GMO Free Zone'



On 24 May BASF, the world's largest chemical corporation, abandoned its field trial of GMO potatoes in Co. Meath. Two weeks earlier, Meath County Council voted to declare the entire county a 'GMO Free Zone'. **Barry Finnegan reports.**

Early in May the statutory body with powers governing the release of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in Ireland, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), gave the German company, BASF Plant Science, permission to conduct a five-year field trial of their genetically modified potatoes nine kilometres south of the Hill of Tara on a two hectare site at Arodstown, Summerhill, Co. Meath.

The genes of this BASF 'potato' are spliced with genes from a wild Mexican potato, some mouse-ear cress and a bacterium. The idea is to provide the crop with resistance to potato blight, a problem common for potato farmers on this island.

However, GMO field experiments and commercial planting from the USA to India, from Spain to South Africa do not provide the empirical evidence required to claim that GMO crops can be resistant to disease or pests, nor do they show that less herbicides can be used.

Michael O'Callaghan, Co-ordinator of GM-Free Ireland, the grouping which has taken a lead role in lobbying, education and organising meetings in the Meath area claimed that GMO crops were 'a new form of corporate biological colonialism that would be impossible to reverse.'

At a meeting in Navan recently, when Dr. Patrick O'Reilly, business manager of Monsanto, the world's largest producer of genetically modified seeds and crops, claimed that there was 'absolutely no evidence' linking GMOs to ill-health or to deaths in livestock and rats, O'Callaghan retorted 'that is complete bullshit!'

The EPA refused to reveal the exact location of the intended GMO site, but according to the *Meath Chronicle*, it is believed the land belonged to a retired Fianna Fáil councillor from Co Louth. GM-Free Ireland has claimed the 'site is located two kilometres north of the R156 road between Dunboyne and Summerhill, approximate OS grid reference N 885 500.'

The last corporate attempt to field-trial GMO experiments on this island was thwarted when direct action activists destroyed all five of



GM-Free Ireland were active in the campaign against chemical giant BASF.

Monsanto's GMO sugar beet sites in 1997/8.

Responsible citizens destroyed some sites in broad daylight with seven activists being acquitted in the courts, while the 'Gaelic Earth Liberation Front' pulled up other sites at night.

The threat of GMO field-trials coming to Ireland, however, has been beaten off for the time being.

Meath farmers, environmentalists and anticapitalists were delighted with the announcement from BASF that the conditions imposed by the EPA were too stringent and

GMO: 'A new form of corporate biological colonialism'

that they would not be planting the GMOs this year.

Conditions included obligations for the company to reduce the risk of cross-contamination of neighbouring farmers and wildlife, including a 40 meter wide buffer zone around the crop and to pay the costs of independent monitoring of health and environmental impacts.

BASF complained that such conditions had not been imposed for similar experiments in Sweden.

The chemical company claimed that they would be re-entering negotiations with the EPA with a view to commencing the experiment next year.

The EPA confirmed this and insisted that their GMO licensing conditions would stand and would not be changed.

The corporate climb-down followed a unanimous vote by Meath County Council on 8 May to support a Green Party motion that they join 175 other

regions of the EU and declare the entire county a 'GMO Free Zone'.

At the same meeting, councillors voted to appeal the EPA's decision to An Bord Pleanála, claiming that a rezoning from 'agricultural use' was required as the GMO potato crop would be 'experimental' and 'not intended for human consumption'.

Additionally, the EPA's 'stringent' conditions on BASF Plant Science requiring the erection of 'high security electric fence' around the perimeter of the experimental crop was further evidence the site was not being used for its intended 'agricultural use'.

The Council's vote follows a unanimous Navan Town Council decision supporting a Sinn Féin motion three years ago rejecting GMO food production in Ireland and declaring Navan a 'GMO Free Town'.

More: GM-Free Ireland Network: www.gmfreeireland.org

INSIDE THE SYSTEM

Long-serving greenkeepers at the prestigious K-Club in Kildare where the Ryder cup will be held later this year are threatening to strike over the fact they are paid less than €10 an hour or a salary of just under €20,000 a year.

They want an increase in their pay of 3%, or the equivalent of €11 per week paid in retrospective payments to July 2005. The K Club, which

previously refused to meet workers and their trade union Amicus, agreed to pay greenkeepers and gardeners an extra 3% but only from April of this year. The case has gone to the LRC.

CSO figures show that childcare costs have risen by five times the rate of inflation over a two year period. The cost of childcare varies across the state. It is highest in Dublin,

where the cost of childcare for a baby is up to €250 a week.

Despite the appalling mess that the health service is in, Brendan Drumm chief executive of the Health Services Executive has been awarded a €32,000 bonus on top of his €400,000 per year salary

A report just published by the ESRI reveals that a shocking 535,000 of the state's one million children in the

period between 1994 and 2001 were affected at some stage by income poverty

More than 60 children have been held at Guantanamo Bay since 2002 according to Reprieve, a British human rights group. There are currently 460 prisoners in Guantanamo.

Proposals for new tolls on an improved Dublin Galway road (work is currently underway on the stretch between

Kilbeggan and Athlone) will mean that motorists making a return drive will eventually pay about €10 in tolls.

Opinion polls show that one year after the French vote to reject the European Constitution, a majority of voters still oppose it.

A poll by Liberation, the French newspaper shows that 98% of no voters do not regret their choice.

According to the UN 38.6 million people across the world are living with HIV. The UN estimates that \$14.9 million will be needed to combat AIDS this year but just \$8.9 million will be available

It is now one year since the Leas Cross nursing home scandal and the government has failed to establish the independent health inspectorate that it promised by the end of 2005.

EDITORIAL

Support the nurses

The popularity ratings of the FF/PD government have been continually falling this year. The recent supreme court ruling on underage sex crime brought out the deep resentment to the actions of this government.

And early June should have been the government's finest hour, with thousands of people getting paid the benefit of the SSIA's. But poll after poll showed a continual drop in support for the government parties.

It is not just Fine Gael/Labour who are benefiting from this fallout. Support is also rising for more radical parties and for independents. This means that those who present a credible alternative to the government could make significant gains at the next election.

Working people need real political representation that challenges the cosy consensus between politics and wealth. This is most striking in the case of the health service.

How we share our wealth is more important to the whether we live and die than how much wealth we have as a whole. Ireland is a classic example of how inequality impacts on health. We have the lowest life expectancy in the EU and some of the worst death rates for heart disease and cancer.

The government talk about throwing money at the health service and of sorting the inefficiencies in the system. But it is the vested interests of drug companies, doctors in private and for-profit health insurance and healthcare companies that need to be confronted. This government (or indeed the Fine Gael/Labour pact) does not have the political will to oppose profit-making in the health service. On the contrary they plan to offer even more tax breaks to encourage more private firms to become more involved in running and owning the health service.

That is why the nurses' campaign better working conditions and pay is so important. It is this sort of response that we need to challenge the trajectory towards an E.R. - style health service where living is something that money can buy.

Any political party that does not fully support the demands of the nurses will be meaningless in power after the next election. The fight for political power to bring real change has to be linked to the struggles of workers and of communities fighting the onslaught of profiteers and neo-liberalism.

It will take mass demonstrations of young and old, patients and health workers, like those seen recently in France, to turn around these policies and kick the profiteers out of the health service once and for all - and that includes Harney and her pals in Fianna Fail.

Irish collusion in torture

The invasion and occupation of Iraq is a complete disaster. Last month almost 1,400 civilians were murdered in targeted killings. Many more died in bomb blasts. US troops "mistakenly" kill around seven civilians at checkpoints each week.

After the revelations of the massacre at Haditha the US government tried to portray the event as an isolated incident, committed by a few "rotten apples".

But as Sami Ramadani says in the latest issue of the Media Workers Against the War newsletter, "The Haditha massacre is one of countless crimes. By ignoring the mass of atrocities committed by the US/UK occupation, the media are portraying the Haditha massacre by US troops as an exception, when in fact it is the rule."

Meanwhile a Council of Europe report accuses the Irish government - and 13 other European states - of collusion in "extraordinary renditions" - the kidnapping and transporting of prisoners to third countries for interrogation and torture, often passing through Shannon.

The report says, "Authorities in several European countries [including Ireland] actively participated with the CIA in these unlawful activities

The government's claims that there is "no evidence" is laughable. They have deliberately turned a blind eye. They are happy to take the assurances of Condoleezza Rice at face value, despite the documented flight logs of secret CIA planes passing through Shannon.

In the report, prepared by a Swiss Senator Dick Marty for the Council of Europe, Shannon is identified as a "stop-over point" for flights on routes from Washington to Rabat in Morocco, Egyptian capital, Cairo and Larnaca in Cyprus.

Announced on the same day was the news that record numbers of US troops now pass through Shannon - exceeding 1,000 a day.

We need to stop this collaboration. We need to build a campaign of massive protests that put it up to the politicians in the next weeks and months, that the Irish people want no part of this imperialist war for oil and we want US troops out of Shannon.

To find out how you can get involved contact the Irish Anti War Movement. Write to Irish Anti-War Movement, PO Box 9260 Dublin 1; visit Irishantiwar.org; call (01) 8727912, or 087-6187680 or email info@irishantiwar.org

Dungannon Meats:

Migrant workers lead the fight against outsourcing



By **Bernadette McAliskey**

Forty six workers at the Dungannon Meats factory are threatened with redundancy, as the company extends the proportion of its labour force contracted through recruitment agencies.

The racially constructed assumption is that 46 citizens (sic) of N.I. are being 'ousted' in favour of cheap 'foreign' labour. This is not the case. The majority of the 46 workers threatened with redundancy are migrant workers.

The preference for agency labour has been rampant in Dungannon for many years. The area basically depends on two industries: engineering and food processing.

Powerscreen led the move away from direct employment in engineering over 20 years ago and developed a situation where almost everybody connected with them was either self employed or sub-contracted.

Moypark followed suit, in food processing and began using recruitment agencies to provide workers for the unsociable hours shift. Local women and students filled these late shifts at lower rates.

The reality is that the local unions let it happen. Recruitment agencies were deregulated by the conservative government, and while many reputable companies exist any gangster can set themselves up as agents, and several did.

The expansion of both industries resulted in the agencies recruiting initially in Northern Portugal, and then as the EU expanded, in Eastern Europe to fill the demand for contract labour, which had already been, to fill acute labour shortages in the area.

How did S.T.E.P. get involved in all this and who are we?

S.T.E.P. is a local communi-



Dungannon Meats picket

ty development organisation, which was formed in 1996/7 to ensure that 'those most vulnerable to exclusion from the opportunities presented by the post-conflict era were supported in securing their right to equal access to information, advice, guidance, training, development, skills and resources, which would enable them to participate in the decision making processes that were determining their lives.

The cross community organisation works with a range of communities of interest: women; persons with disability; victims and perpetrators of political, social and domestic violence, long term unemployed and low-paid workers.

I secured gainful employment in running the organisations programmes in 1998, ending 25 years of being blacklisted from the NI labour force.

STEP was therefore 'on the ground,' when the first group of Portuguese workers, recruited by ATLANCO, arrived in Dungannon in 2000. In keeping with its objective to support and enable the most vulnerable, STEP moved quickly in to assist the new population, who were demonstrably vulnerable to isolation, exploitation and racism.

We challenged the Republic

based agency, the local racists, and the landlords on every front. We are still here. ATLANCO is not. They decided as a Europe-wide concern there were easier places to maximise their profit margin than a small rural town with organised attitude.

STEP provides a range of services to the migrant worker population. These include advice on registration, tax, social benefits, housing, health education and child welfare; We also provide immigration and employment rights advice and run a community owned interpreting and translation service. We actively support the population in challenging racist attitudes, combating, reporting and documenting racist attacks

We support the local community in acclimatising itself to the new realities through 'good practice' guidance to small employers; anti-racist, equality and rights training to local groups, employers, and service providers, and try to persuade the local community to learn at the least some basic communication skills in another language, while the incoming population more willingly and successfully learn English.

It is the rights based stand-

point of STEP, its understanding the concept of power, and its belief in partnership between the grassroots of the community and the rank and file of the trade union movement that makes the difference in Dungannon

Part of the remit of the STEP employment rights worker, a former shop steward from Moypark, is to liaise with the local unions; signpost workers to membership of the trade unions covering their area of work or factory, and to follow up collective issues with the unions to ensure they are addressed by and through the unions. A key part of our work here has been to reverse the agency process and help migrant and other workers, particularly women, into direct employment.

A major success in this regard was with O' Kane Chickens. In 2004 they ended their ATLANCO contract and directly employed the entire workforce.

Migrant workers are now directly employed in both Moypark and Dungannon Meats alongside agency contract workers, who continue to be made up of migrant workers, local women and students.

Unlike Moypark, Dungannon Meats has never recognised organised labour or collective bargaining, and the T&G have been unable to get off the ground until one of the STEP development workers, a young Brazilian woman was recruited by ATGWU as a full-time union organiser.

She has played a key role in organising and unionising the new workers, and in the campaign for direct labour.

Dungannon is making the news not because outsourcing is happening, it happens everywhere - but because it is being resisted by unionised migrant workers;

Dungannon is not the only place where racism and racial attacks happen, but in Dungannon they are not allowed to happen unnoticed, and unchallenged.

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Peter Hain caught lying to stack the Parades Commission with Orangemen

Peter Hain was so desperate to get Orangemen onto the Parades Commission, he was prepared to break every law in the book—including the law against perjury.

When his appointments were challenged in court by a resident of the Garvaghy Road in Portadown who, Hain had NIO officials lie under oath to protect him.

The procedure for appointment of the six commissioners was subject to all sorts of laws on public appointments and standards in public life.

They were also subject to the terms of the Belfast Agreement and to the equality legislation contained in the NI Human Rights Act.

It was not surprising, then, that there was widespread disbelief and outrage when two Portadown Orangemen, Donald McKay and William Burrows, both involved in the Drumcree dispute, were appointed as commissioners.

In the court case taken by the Garvaghy Road resident, Hain argued that the “best candidates” had simply been appointed.

However during the course of the proceedings it was established that, prior to advertising the posi-



Loyalists parade through the Springfield Road in Belfast, (inset) Peter Hain

tions, British Ministers and senior NIO officials had held numerous secret meetings with the Orange Order and that a special invitation to “community groups” to encourage their members to apply was not sent to a single community group, as the phrase is ordinarily understood, but only to the Orange Order, the Apprentice Boys and the Royal Black Perceptory.

In court, under oath, Carol

Moore, a senior NIO official giving evidence on behalf of Hain, said that the decision to write only to the loyal orders was taken by a junior civil servant who was currently off on leave and that the NIO could only speculate why she had taken the decision.

Lawyers acting for Hain reiterated this and argued that he was unaware of this decision. This was a lie.

Socialist Worker has obtained papers showing that not only was Hain aware of what the junior civil servant’s approach, he had been sent a letter asking for his endorsement of this approach, and had agreed.

Socialist Worker has also obtained papers showing that one of the referees for William Burrows was Andrew Elliott, one of the most senior civil servants in Stormont.

After his appointment, Burrows told fellow orangemen that he would be “working from inside the fence to get a parade down Garvaghy Road”.

The judicial review succeeded. Both Orangemen are currently off the Commission. But in a fit of arrogance, Hain has taken the decision to the Court of Appeal, saying he will “fight it to the end”.

The original hearing to remove the Orangemen took civil rights lawyers five months to have listed for hearing. Hain had his appeal listed in four days.

However even the judiciary might not be able to save Hain. At the hearing one of the judges commented “It appears bizarre that those who have attempted to thwart this Commission at every opportunity have been so richly rewarded by the Secretary of State”.

Hain’s manoeuvrings over the commission arise from New Labour’s basic strategy in the North, of consolidating politics into a “two communities” model and then trying to strike a “balance” between them.

Working-class people, whatever community they come from, should have no truck with this cynical sectarianism.

Love Music Hate Racism gig for Derry attack victims

By Goretta Horgan

One thousand three hundred pounds (about 1,800 euro) was raised at a Love Music Hate Racism fundraiser gig for the Polish family whose Bond Street home in Derry’s Waterside was destroyed in a vicious attack.

The fundraiser was part of the response by socialists in the city to the attack. The Socialist Environmental Alliance responded by going door to door in the area where the attack took place and taking up a message of support for the family. The reception they got on the doorstep was overwhelmingly positive and the vast majority of people we spoke to were horrified by the attack.

This goes against the widely held view that people in Protestant working class areas support racist attacks. “Of course, as in any part of the city, there was a handful who made excuses for the attack but nine out of ten of those we spoke to wanted to let the Polish family know that the attack was not in their name”, Davy McAuley told Socialist Worker.

However, Davy pointed out that “one thing that was different about the response to the message of support for the family, which we wouldn’t get on the Cityside was the fear that some, especially



The gig was part of the response by socialists in Derry

women living on their own, expressed about signing something that others in the area might then see.”

This fear is certainly down to the influence of loyalist paramilitaries, some of whom have been shown to have links to the National Front and Combat 18. The residents who were afraid to sign feared that their own house would be attacked if they were seen to oppose racism.

According to a recent Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey report, there is more racism in Protestant areas than in Catholic ones. However, these statistics cannot be explained away simply by the influence of loyalist paramilitaries who tend to be feared and loathed in many Protestant working class areas.

Mainstream Unionist politicians have to take a

big share of the blame. In 2003, opposition to a proposed mosque in the Craigavon area was led by members of the Ulster Unionists, as well as the DUP. Former Craigavon mayor, UUP member Fred Crowe, told the BBC that Muslims were “out to wipe out Christianity.”

It is also the case that migrant workers are more likely to be living in Protestant areas because there tends to be less pressure on housing and more houses to let, for more reasonable rents, in Protestant working class areas. But for decades, if not centuries, Unionist politicians have been pushing a “siege mentality” in Protestant areas — “what we have we hold” etc. So, it’s not surprising that some people see migrants coming into their areas in this light.

Unionist politicians are

also to blame for the high levels of alienation among the Protestant working class. In his excellent book, *The Impact of Inequality*, Richard Wilkinson points out that, statistically, people who feel looked down on are much more likely to have racist and other nasty attitudes. The “fur-coat brigade” of the Unionist elite have long looked down on working class Protestants. Working class Protestants are more likely than Catholics to live in deprived areas that are surrounded by wealth, pockets of poverty among plenty.

While the new Catholic middle classes tend to get out of the working class areas as quick as they can, they are less likely to be able to openly look down on working class Catholics. They might live on the Malone Road or the Culmore Road, but they are only one generation away from Ballymurphy or the Bogside.

As Davy McAuley said about the racist attack in Derry “racism is a poison that threatens the entire community, not just one section of it and those who oppose it are as likely to come from a Protestant as a Catholic background. In fact, the main raffle prize at the LMHR fundraiser was won by a man from Bond Street, there to show solidarity with his Polish neighbours.

Campaign for non-payment of water charges growing

By Eamonn McCann

The campaign for non-payment of water charges in the North continues to grow.

As we go to press, the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU is meeting to consider the motion passed at the NI Conference supporting non-payment as the best means of defeating water charges and privatisation.

Meanwhile, local meetings organised by Communities Against the Water Tax show increased confidence and determination at grass roots level to resist New Labour’s plans. The We Won’t Pay campaign reports a similar response.

There was widespread anger at the arrogance of New Labour in May in awarding a private finance contract for water treatment to an outfit called Dalriada. A separate group, Crystal Alliance, was selected the same month to take over billing once changes and privatisation are a reality—in April next year, if New Labour gets away with it.

The water service is being broken up and flogged off before our eyes—and the main Northern parties, all

of them formally opposed to the plan, scarcely react.

A massive majority in the North draws the line at water being handed over to private interests for sale back to the public at a profit. Water isn’t a consumer choice but a necessity of life. The idea that access to water should come at a price set by profiteers strikes many “ordinary citizens” as plain wrong.

People see the precedent being set in Britain. Thames Water has just put charges up by 21 percent at the same time as recording a rise in profits of six percent. The chief executive of the company has pocketed £800,000. Meanwhile, the company seems incapable of staunching the leak of a third of its water from broken pipes. The UK Environment Agency has issued a drought warning. Plans are in place for standpipes in the streets.

And yet people are being asked to pay ever higher charges. Anger at such outrage is deep-seated and growing.

But while the four main parties say they are against charges and privatisation, not one of them backs non-payment. Nor do they

offer any alternative strategy.

Their problem is that building a mass campaign of non-payment requires people to mobilise on a basis which has nothing to do with the community they come from. No party could demonstrate through a non-payment campaign that it was the best representative of one community vis-à-vis the other. It wouldn’t fit into the pattern of politics which has shaped the DUP, Sinn Féin, the UUP and the SDLP.

This—plus their instinctive wariness of working-class self-organisation—is why they won’t weigh in behind non-payment

The leadership and impetus will have to come from elsewhere—most importantly from the trade union movement which has been mandated to take on the role. SWP members have been heavily involved in pushing for non-payment at local level. We believe there should be a single united campaign, brought together by the unions.

If we can achieve this, we can beat New Labour, prevent privatisation and stop the introduction of charges

INTERNATIONAL

Afghanistan: Protests expose the real face of the occupation



Afghanis burning the US flag

By Dave Lordan

Hurrah to the thousands of Afghans who took to the streets to demonstrate their anger on Monday May 29 at the contempt in which their lives are held by the occupying forces.

The stones they flung broke more than a few of the windows of glittering western embassies.

They also smashed the illusion that the occupation of Afghanistan has anything to do with liberation.

It is the great cover up by western governments and the mass media of the real situation in Afghanistan that allowed Michael McDowell and the Irish state to isolate and defeat the 41 Afghan hunger strikers who recently occupied St Patrick's cathedral in a courageous attempt to avoid deportation.

According to McDowell there is nothing but a few 'disturbances' taking place in Afghanistan.

But over at the department of Foreign affairs they seemed to be aware of a few facts seemingly unknown to McDowell.

Even at the height of the Hunger strike crisis their travel advice website was warning against all non-essential travel to Kabul and against all travel to other parts of Afghanistan.

The department goes on to state that The security situation in Afghanistan remains serious and the threat to Westerners from terrorist or criminal violence, including kidnappings, remains high. Irish citizens travelling to Kabul are urged to exercise extreme caution and vigilance throughout their visit.

Given the enormous mismatch in the figures for casualties between 'westerners' and 'easterners' in all the various arenas of Bush and Blair's war, we can safely assume that the risk to life and limb, if they are to be forcibly returned, of the 41 Asylum seekers is grave indeed.

The spark that set off the Kabul uprising was the killing of five Afghans after an American armoured car ploughed into a line of civilian traffic.

Afghans say it was the latest of many such incidents, a fact implicitly admitted by the NATO commander Lt General David Richards when he said 'foreign troops must stop driving so quickly and sometimes inconsiderately in Afghanistan'

But flippantly mowing down men women, and children is only an indication of the colonial attitude of the occupiers to ordinary Afghans.

The lives of the natives have no value. If they stand in the way of the empire they will be wiped out.

Thousands of Afghan civilians have been killed by the bombs and bullets of the occupation forces.

Thousands will continue to be killed and maimed as long as the occupation remains. Afghanistan was supposed to be a model of so-called humanitarian intervention.

The bombing and invasion were accompanied by a propaganda offensive designed to convince the western public that what was happening was not occupation but liberation. Toys were dropped alongside bombs.

The Taliban were the perfect bogeymen, cruel and rigid fundamentalists whose answer to Afghanistan's devastation was to return the country to a pre-modern Islamic utopia.

Very few journalists could bring themselves to mention that the Taliban were creations of an alliance of the CIA and Pakistani intelligence.

No-one taking Tony O Reilly's tax free dollars told how the Taliban had been in negotiations with the Clinton Administration about building an enormous oil pipeline through Afghan territory.

Nor was it admitted that the Northern alliance, the chief benefactors of American occupation, had been defeated by the Taliban precisely because they were even more cruel and savage than them.

Five years on and, thanks to the rioters, the truth begins to emerge from the smoke and the rubble.

Billions of dollars of 'aid' supposed to be aimed at rebuilding Afghan industry, infrastructure and civil society has been hoovered up by multinational corporations. The promised schools, bridges and hospitals have not materialised and were never meant to.

3 million Afghans are on the verge of starvation and in need of urgent food aid. 700 children a week, and between 50 and 70 women, are dying of malnutrition or related diseases.

While the weak die the bullies that are armed and supported by the US occupiers prosper.

Vast fortunes are being made by warlords engaged in the booming heroin trade, the only economic success story of the occupation.

The Taliban almost wiped out the heroin trade. The neo-liberal politics of the US invaders meant a refusal to adequately subsidise poor Afghan peasants.

The response was a mass turn to opium production.

Now Afghanistan produces 90% of the world's heroin, an industry the occupiers have no intention of disrupting since the profits fund the lavish lifestyles of their client warlords in the Northern Alliance.

All this helps to explain why the Taliban, alongside other insurgent groupings, have been able to launch a large and sophisticated offensive in the South of the country forcing NATO to double its troop deployment. NATO expects 'a difficult summer'. Lets hope so.

But it will take a worldwide uprising against the empire and all its allies to finally free Afghanistan and the Middle East from the deadly embrace of Bush and Blair.

Here in Ireland that means standing beside the Afghan hunger strikers and continuing to build the movement against the use of Shannon Airport as a military airbase.

As we do this we can take inspiration from the rioters of Kabul who are standing up to empire in circumstances far more difficult and dangerous than ourselves.

Chile:



Youth demonstrators in Chile

Fighting for a new kind of education

By Michael Stanton in Santiago

Some 800,000 school students struck in Chile on Wednesday of last week. Over 100 schools have been occupied and demonstrators have clashed with the police. Universities are on strike in solidarity and news programmes interview the school students' leaders every day.

As in the French student protests earlier this year, the Chilean movement is fighting against the impact of neo-liberalism.

But in Chile the movement, which has been building up since mid-May, is not engaged in a defensive struggle against a new government policy. The students are raising their own demands for a different kind of education system.

Education in Chile was privatised in 1990, during the dying days of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship.

The state system was destroyed, and some schools put in the hands of companies which ran them as businesses. Other schools were put under the control of local councils, but the councils were starved of money. Private schools now spend five times more per pupil than those run by councils.

The students are demanding free travel to school and the scrapping of college entrance exam fees. And they want the education system restructured to meet the needs of students rather than the corporations.

Movement

The movement is very much in evidence on the streets of the capital Santiago. On my way to work I drive down three or four streets near a shopping centre. In one, my two kids are occupying their school.

Two blocks away another school is occupied. The "pinguinos" – school students are called "pinguinos" because of their white shirts and blue ties – have piled chairs over the school gates as a sign of occupation.

As I continue down the street I pass a small private school that has a banner outside, which reads, "We support the council students." On Thursday of last week, private students showed their support by marching through the poshest area of the capital.

The wind that is blowing in the Americas has changed the way people think. The new mood is fuelled by Venezuela's president Hugo Chavez saying on TV that George Bush is an idiot and a terrorist, and by the elections in neighbouring Bolivia that brought a radical president, Evo Morales, to power.

Further afield, we all saw the French student protests against new youth labour laws earlier this year – another example of not accepting the "inevitable".

In Chile a new centre left president, Michelle Bachelet, was elected earlier this year. She constantly says that "people must participate". This gave a green light to the students.

One great thing about this movement is that the students' leaders talk straight. For example, last Thursday the president went on national television to offer concessions, including an extra £70 million a year for education.

The reporters tried to get the school student leaders to "informally" accept the proposals. Their reply was, "We are not authorised to talk until the students' national assembly discusses the proposal tomorrow."

The reporter asked, "But what is your personal opinion?" The reply was, "My personal opinion is that the assembly has to discuss it first." It's the first time in many years that we can hear, see and feel this kind of democracy.

Last weekend the students' assembly rejected the governments' offer and called for a solidarity strike for this Monday. Not all agreed because some students feel that when teachers' and health workers' unions get involved in a conflict it becomes too "political".

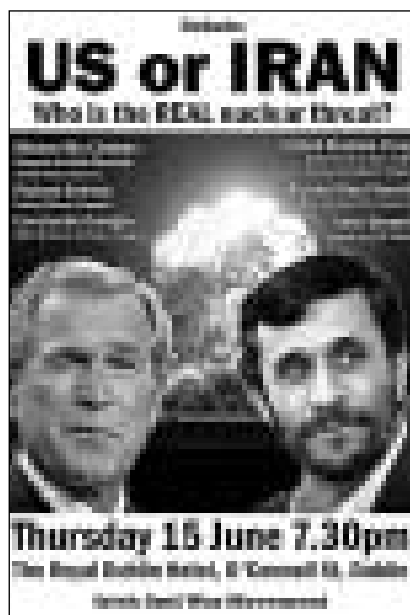
But the strike on Monday of this week was for a new education system, and that is obviously "political", but, as one of the students said on the radio, not "party political".

Generation

The new generation distrusts politicians, but also people who talk "politics", even if they are trying to help.

It's best not to exaggerate, because massive movements can turn into nothing pretty quickly.

But real change is in the air, and building organisations that talk "politics" in the best sense, and also know how to intervene, is now a real possibility and not just a dream.



Questions on the Left

How do we fight the rise of racism?

By Dave Lordan

THE RISE of racism in Ireland demands a clear response. Understanding where it comes from, is the key to developing a strategy to fight it.

One mistaken approach is to see racism as inevitable. Right wing commentators claim that racism arises because people naturally want to stick with their own.

But this cannot explain why millions of white people listen to black music or why the number of inter-racial marriages in countries such as Britain is rising.

A more radical version of this inevitability argument was recently presented by a spokesperson for one anti-racist group who argued that 'racial tension is the inevitable result of asylum seekers being housed in areas where there is already social and economic deprivation'.

The problem here is that almost every group of immigrants finds accommodation in poorer inner city areas at first. Few would claim that anti-Irish racism was caused by the Irish settling in Camden Town rather than Hampstead in London.

The traditional liberal view of racism sees racism as primarily a question of attitude: White people are prejudiced against black people. The solution is to educate people out of racism.

Structures

But this ignores the fact there is a wider structure in society which promotes racism.

And far from racism being confined to the more uneducated, racism can also be actively promoted by educated people such as the news editors to serve their own class interests.

Racism as we know it today began to develop during one of the key periods of capitalist expansion - the establishment during the 17th and 18th centuries of colonial plantations in the New World using slave labour imported from Africa to produce goods such as tobacco, sugar, and cotton for the world market.

Slavery was not the result of racism rather racism was a consequence of slavery. At the time that slavery existed, the first ideas about the 'rights of man' were being developed by bourgeois intellectuals to help undermine the older feudal system.

The contradiction between promoting these ideas and defending slavery was only overcome by the idea that Africans were, in Hume's words, 'naturally inferior' to whites and so should be denied 'the rights of Englishmen'.

It is true that slavery existed in societies of classical antiquity.

However it was not based on the idea of natural inequalities between distinct peoples.

The Roman empire enslaved anyone they considered a 'barbarian'. But they never claimed that the white Anglo-Saxons they

enslaved were either inferior or superior to North Africans.

Racism also developed to justify the expansion of the Western powers into Africa and Asia.

Here it was claimed that white people had a mission to "civilise" the lesser people who were in the words of the poet Kipling, 'half devil and half child'.

This is not to say that racism today is not simply a hangover from the past.

Racism continues to have a material basis in today's society. Capitalism has always encouraged workers to compete for the scarce resources it offers to the mass of people.

Racism divides two groups of workers, black and white, who have practically identical interests so that the wages of both can be kept low.

There is also a second mechanism at work here. Racism offers white workers the comfort of believing themselves part of the dominant group.

Thirdly in times of crisis, racism provides a ready-made scapegoat in the shape of the oppressed group.

Benefiting

None of this means that white workers benefit materially from racism. By dividing the working class it weakens white workers as well as black workers.

So for example white workers in the southern states of America often earn less than Northern black workers because their own racism has helped to weaken union organisation.

This process is also obviously at work in contemporary Ireland in industries like construction, horticulture, and services.

If racism has such deep roots in capitalist society, it follows that it cannot be combated simply by exhortations to be more tolerant.

We must challenge the idea that immigrants are taking 'our houses' by showing how the accommodation crisis was caused by policies demanded by the rich.

We must point out that reason why the Independent Newspaper group consciously promotes racism is to shift the anger of people away from the corrupt links between its owner Tony O'Reilly and Fianna Fail.

Above all we must show in practice how working class people can gain far more by organising to take on the wealthy rather than lashing out at poor immigrants. That means campaigning alongside workers on the issues that affect them, and striving to build a much larger socialist left in Ireland that proudly proclaims that refugees and immigrants are welcome here.

Why Coalitions Right for



By Conor Kostick

The Labour Party, Sinn Fein and, to a lesser extent, the Green Party represent an alternative to the political parties of big business: Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats.

Labour and Sinn Fein attempt to harness working class organisations and voters in their support, offering in return policies that will improve the position of workers.

At least, that's how the theory goes. In practice the record of Labour in government has very little to show on the positive side and a great deal in the negative column.

It is also entirely predictable that the participation of Sinn Fein or Green Party in coalition with Fianna Fail or Fine Gael would also be more harmful for workers' interests than beneficial.

Coalition governments between the left and right always result in failure for the left.

The reason for this has to do with the different social constituencies that the right and left political parties are based upon. Because the left relies on working class voters, our support grows as does the radicalism of the working class.

The more workers are protesting, the more strikes, the more campaigns against the poor state of services, the higher the left vote.



Labour leaders: Ruairi Quinn, Dick Spring and Pat Rabbitte

But coalition with the right means that instead of encouraging protest, helping organise and give voice to it, the left are silent, or worse, apologists for the government.

The question of coalition between left and right first arose in 1899 when Alexandre

Millerand, a French socialist, joined a 'cabinet of republican defense' formed by Waldeck-Rousseau.

This was the first time a socialist leader had accepted a portfolio in a conservative ministry.

All over the world the left debated

Rainbow Coalition: A cloak of many colours

By Christine Murray

The rainbow coalition of 1994 to 1997 was a classic example of the left providing cover for the depredations of the right.

With Labour and the Democratic Left on board, the Fine Gael government of John Bruton was able to practice neo-liberal economic policies without causing too much unrest among the working class.

The presence of Labour and the DL at the cabinet table effectively silenced the

Trade Unions and left the government free to pursue the agenda of Bruton's Bildeberg friends.

The organisations of the left waited to see what would be gained for their constituency and meanwhile accepted the rest of the government's agenda.

This was particularly because, with Ruairi Quinn at the helm of the department of Finance, there was hope that the economic thrust of the government would be pro-working class.

Vain hopes! The government followed a

traditional centre-right agenda and, with the noticeable exception of Mervyn Talyor's Equality bill, it was otherwise government as usual. Big business thrived, trade unions haemorrhaged members and the workers' interests were ignored as usual.

The rainbow coalition led to a pot of gold, but it was only the true blue Fine Gael supporters who got their hands on it.

Big gainers included ESAT, granted a mobile phone license by Michael Lowry, who was later found to have taken £395,000 from supermarket

tycoon Ben Dunne for an extension to his home.

Among the biggest losers were those dependent on the hundreds of rural post offices, which were closed by Lowry, and Hepatitis C sufferers who had to fight the coalition for even minimal compensation for their having contracted the illness from contaminated blood products.

The Rainbow coalition also presided over the demise of the Irish Press, despite workers occupying their workplace and mounting a vigorous campaign for state intervention to save the jobs.

Coalition with the Fails workers

whether this was an acceptable tactic or not. For revolutionaries like James Connolly and Rosa Luxemburg, there was no question but that it was a betrayal of the workers by one of their leaders.

And as Rosa Luxemburg pointed out at the time 'the first consequence of socialist participation in a coalition cabinet is the renunciation of the most important task of all socialist activity and, above all, of parliamentary activity: the political education and clarification of the masses.'

Related to this point is another fundamental political fact about coalition, which is that the prospect of winning reforms through extra-parliamentary campaigning is weakened.

Most of the important victories for civil rights, the environment and workers' living standards have come from mass movements, such as that at the time of the 'X-case' or the current Shell

To Sea campaign. But where will the Labour and Sinn Fein leaders be during such campaigns if they are participants in government? Ironically, their presence in government makes life easier, not more difficult, for the right.

Again Rosa Luxemburg put it well when she wrote that 'the tactic of coalition, which through the sacrifice of the socialist principle of opposition sought to achieve practical results, has revealed itself to be the most impracticable in the world.'

Instead of increasing the influence of the socialists upon the government and the bourgeois parliament, these tactics made them into involuntary tools of the government.'

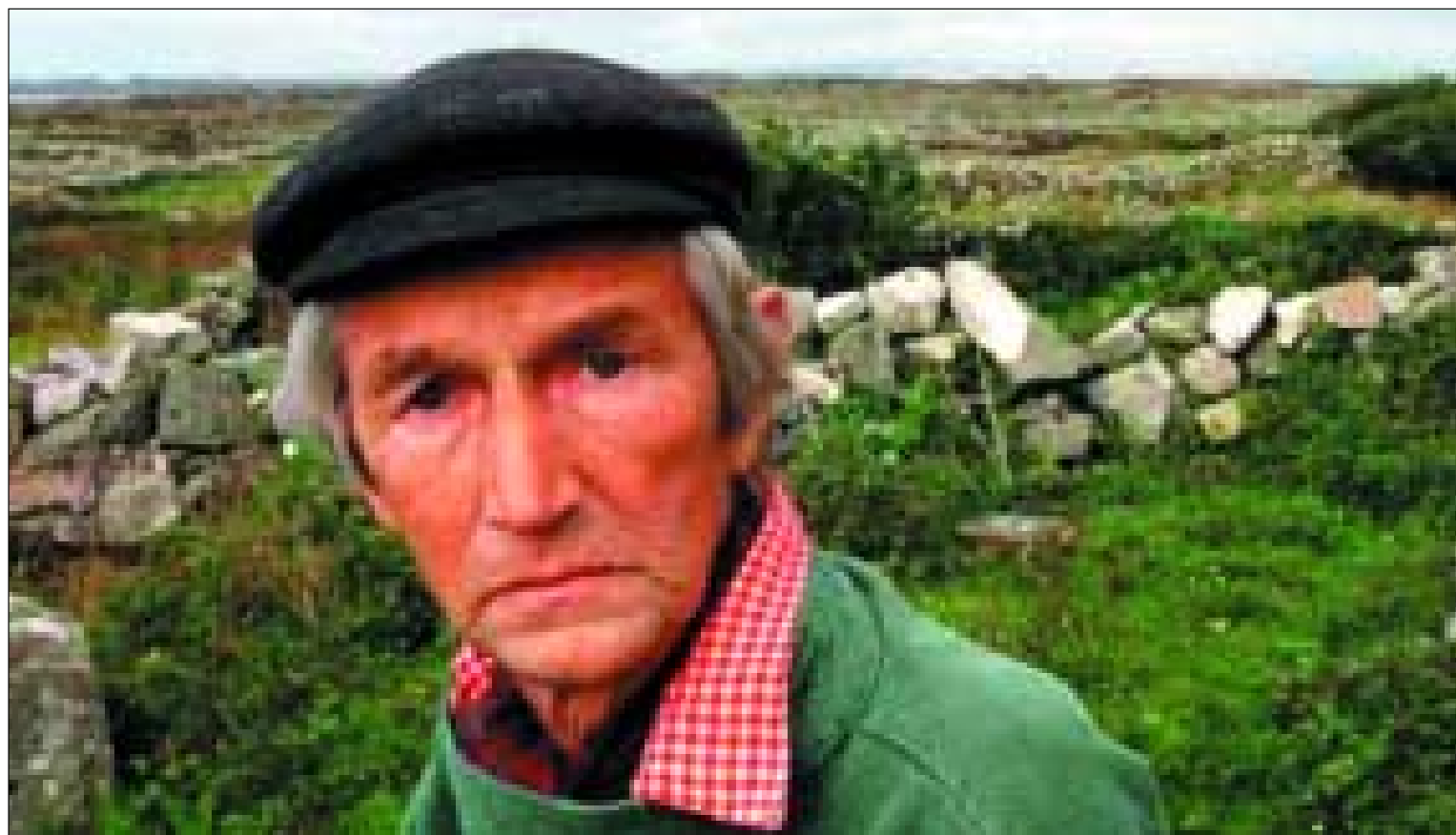
This key reason: the turning of the left parties against those wanting to fight against neo-liberalism is why no matter what limited policy gains are allowed for the left in a coalition with the right, it will only be the sugar coating on a bitter pill.

The Left Unity conference on 17 June sponsored by the ATGWU is therefore a very welcome development.

If a sizeable non-coalition left came into being, it would represent a major step forward for the working class movement, not simply in electoral terms, but also in giving voice to all campaigns and protests against the government.

Such a new left would represent a departure from the cycle of hope followed by disillusion that has followed every upsurge of support for Labour in the past.

The 1948-51 Coalition: The first and the most noble



Reforming health Minister Dr Noel Browne

By Eoin Martin

Ireland's first coalition government had a greater impetus to introduce beneficial reforms for the working class than any since.

The 1948-51 coalition, however, also set the precedent for the way in which the right wing destroy such aspirations.

The 1948-51 coalition was the result of a general malaise in society, particularly amongst the youth of post-war Ireland, with the inadequacies of De Valera's Fianna Fail rule.

Out of this general feeling arose Clann na Poblachta, an expression of discontent amongst the young urban voters.

Much of this discontent was due to wider economic problems such as post-war inflation but a major point of contention was an extremely

inadequate health service.

The post-war health service was a shambles. Tuberculosis was a major killer amongst the poor (claiming between 3,000 and 4,000 lives annually) and the only free, state provided, health service consisted of an inadequate number of dispensary doctors and it was local officials who decided who was entitled to free medical care through the use of humiliating probing means-testing.

The Minister of Health of the coalition government was Noel Browne.

Browne, from a poor family, provides a shining example of what a radical in government can do.

He introduced wide ranging and extensive schemes to eradicate (successfully) T.B., he reorganised the provision of health insurance and

was responsible for the building of hospitals around the country.

However when Browne tried to tackle the other killer of the poor, infant mortality, through the Mother & Child scheme, he was blocked by the self-serving forces of the conservative right.

He was stopped by the Irish doctors, fearing a loss of income, and the Catholic Church (led by Archbishop Mc Quaid) who described it as dangerously communistic.

The Mother & Child scheme saw the demise of Browne and the Coalition; a noble idea which fell due to right wing needs.

The 1948-51 coalition is an important indicator that even the most sincere reformer needs extra-parliamentary support from mass campaigns to face down resistance from the conservatives.

ATGWU Conference to help to bring together a New Left

Dear Colleague,

As the years of the Celtic Tiger draw to a close, inequality has worsened. Public assets and services are being privatised wholesale, the health service is in a shambles, new stealth taxes are continually introduced, and housing is a nightmare for young couples.

Factory closures are a weekly occurrence and workers are facing the biggest attack on employment standards and trade union conditions in years. Yet there are now 250 people in the country with wealth of at least €35 million each.

We have lived through a boom for more than ten years - we have the resources to resolve many of these problems.

Many people are now looking for a genuine alternative to this government's neoliberal agenda, and are suspicious of opposition parties who identify with similar policies.

On the electoral level this is illustrated by a steady fall in popular

support for the "Podge and Rodge" of Irish politics, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

Their combined share of the vote for decades topped 75 per cent. Since 1987 they have steadily won less support, and different alternatives on their left have grown.

**Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union
Conference Dublin, 17th June 2006**

**A New Left Alternative:
ORGANISATION AND REPRESENTATION OF
WORKING PEOPLE OUTSIDE COALITION.**

**Saturday 17th June 2006 11.00 am. to 4.00 pm. at the Matt
Merrigan Hall, 55, Middle Abbey Street, Dublin.
For further details contact Des Bonass at 087-7925120**

In 2002 the combined FF/FG total was 64%, compared with 84% in November 1982. The movements that supported the Irish Ferries workers and the Rosspoint Five show a willingness by great numbers to act in solidarity against the new corporate ruthlessness.

A general election is due by May 2007 at the latest. Entering into coalition and coalition arrangements with these parties perpetuates the unjust set up and robs people of a genuine electoral and campaigning alternative.

The Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union is hosting a Conference in Dublin on 17th June 2006 to bring together all those on the

left who oppose coalition with the right, to discuss how an anti-coalition left alternative can be provided for working people.

Political parties and groups, trade union, community and campaign activists, and interested individuals, who are opposed to shoring up the conservative parties and wish to see an alternative built, are cordially invited to attend and participate in the day's deliberations.

An open, frank, friendly and forward-looking discussion is aimed for, without dwelling on past differences.

Sincerely,
Michael O'Reilly
Regional Secretary, ATGWU

'If we knew more about Ireland, we might never have invaded Iraq'

Ken Loach's award winning film "The Wind that shakes the Barley" is to go on general release this month.

Loach has been vilified by sections of the press for his "poisonously anti-British corruption of the history of the war of Irish independence." But as George Monbiot wrote in the Guardian "This is what happens when one country occupies another.

When troops are far away from home, exercising power over people that they don't understand, knowing that the population harbours those who would kill them if they could, their anger and fear and frustration turns into a hatred of all "micks" or "gooks" or "hajjis". Occupations brutalise both the occupiers and the occupied. It is our refusal to learn that lesson which allows new colonial adventures to take place. If we knew more about Ireland, the invasion of Iraq might never have happened."

Here Conor Kostick examines the history of the Irish War of Independence and the subsequent Civil War and draws the comparisons with the occupation of Iraq today.

One of the earliest examples of a national movement defeating the occupying forces of a great empire is provided by the Irish experience of 1918 to 1923.

With the ending of the Great War it might have seemed that Britain once more had the military reserves at its disposal to be able to deal with unrest in Ireland. Senior military figures like Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson and General Neville Macready were worried about the problems faced by the Empire internationally, but thought that Britain's role in Ireland could be maintained through the deployment of up to 100,000 troops.

They were wrong.

In December 1918 the alienation of the Irish population from the British government was demonstrated by the electoral victory of Sinn Féin, the party that had become the voice of rebellion. Sinn Féin won 75% of the vote, taking 73 of the 76 seats available in the South. Their rivals from the conservative nationalist tradition were in ruins.

These new Sinn Féin radicals were from a variety of backgrounds, with professionals, intellectuals, and white-collar workers dominating the movement. The strategy of the conservative nationalists, representing the interests of Catholic businessmen like newspaper and transport tycoon

William Martin Murphy, had been to politely lobby in Westminster for improvements in Ireland's status within the Empire. Sinn Féin, on the other hand, were out to make Ireland ungovernable.

On the political front, figures ranging from the cautious Arthur Griffith to the fiery Countess Markiewicz, created Dáil Éireann, the republican government of an independent Ireland.

The British authorities declared Dáil Éireann to be illegal and suppressed its activities, nevertheless, by meeting on the run, the shadowy structures of a rival to the British system was created.

Militarily those wishing to fight for the Dáil were now recognised as the Irish Republican Army and began to wage a very effective campaign to make large parts of Ireland ungovernable. Desperately short of arms, with only some 3,000 fighters out of a paper



Main: Black and Tans threaten an arrestee; above Ken Loach; top right: a scene from The Wind that Shakes the Barley

'Pure' military activities could never hope to lead to the defeat of the British army in Dublin and Belfast.

membership that ran into the tens of thousands, the IRA was nevertheless able to destroy the court and tax records of the Empire in Ireland and drive the police and army out of smaller rural barracks.

This campaign is the most romanticised part of Ireland's struggle to defeat the British administration, with the flying columns of the IRA risking their lives in daring mobile operations.

Certainly the era was full of dramatic moments, such as in October 1920, when republican activist Sean Tracey was spotted by two British intelligence officers in Talbot Street, and all three died in the subsequent gun fight.

The successful military operations of the IRA, being the most striking manifestations of the national movement, would not have been possible without enormous popular support.

Not only with regard to the sustenance given to the IRA combatants, but also in the way that popular boycotts of the British administration isolated courts and barracks just as effectively as burning them.

By July 1921 a stalemate was reached. On the one hand, Britain was incurring a great deal of expense and a small but steady loss of military personnel in policing Ireland.

On the other hand, the republican

movement was struggling in the face of severe repression, including deployment of the notorious 'Black and Tans', a special military body whose policy was to intimidate the population through destruction of life and property.

If the British administration of Ireland was like a tree, whose leaves and smaller branches had withered, the key question for republicans was how to uproot the entire trunk. Here the national movement was stuck. 'Pure' military activities could never hope to lead to the defeat of the British army in Dublin and Belfast.

This impasse is what led the most pragmatic of the activists, such as Michael Collins, to accept a compromise with Britain, a treaty that maintained six counties of Northern Ireland within the Empire and placed a great number of restrictions on the newly created Free State of the South.

Conservatives rushed to embrace the Treaty of 1922. It was their route back to power from the political margins to which they had been pushed by the temper of the population during a revolutionary war.

The Church leaders, owners of the big transport companies, breweries, large farms and newspapers stampeded towards the settlement fervour proportional to their fears that they might otherwise lose their privileged



positions.

Other republicans were deeply dissatisfied. Britain had made a genuine concession, but it fell far short of their hopes. Curiously, few republicans drew attention to the worst consequence of the Treaty, which was that it would lead to a state in Northern Ireland that relied upon sectarianism for its survival, at the cost not only of the Catholic minority, but also working class living standards and civil rights in general.

Those against the Treaty set up their own government, creating a crisis that was resolved by a civil war, the initiation of which was repeatedly urged to the Free State government by Britain. The victory for the Free State forces meant that Irish independence was born in a very restrictive and conservative manner, one whose legacy remains today, even in the twenty-six counties. There is a very striking contrast between the goals of the republican leaders in 1916 say, and the practice of the Irish government over the decades.

Could matters have been different? Was there a way out of the Empire that did not involve partition? This has a crucial relevance for Iraq today.

There was indeed an alternative, but it was one that was feared by Sinn Féin: social revolution. Alongside the national struggle of 1918 – 1923 and intimately connected with it, was an uprising of the working population across the whole of the 32 counties. This was an era of general strikes, of 'soviet' takeovers of workplaces, of land expropriations, all accompanied by the symbols of revolution inspired by news of events from Russia. Belfast, for example, was taken over for nearly a month by a workers' committee, during the course of massive strike for the achievement of a 44 hour working week.

The vast majority of the Sinn Féin leadership were hostile to this working class movement. Indeed, the law courts they had created were more concerned with the restitution of seized land than any other issue.

Surprisingly the Labour leaders of the time were similarly shaken by such radicalism and did their best to avert it. But James Connolly was dead, Jim Larkin in a US prison. In their absence more conservative trade unionists of a type familiar to us today took over the labour movement.

For the sake of nationalist 'unity', class struggle was dampened and dissipated, not by the repression of the British administration, but by the politics of the national movement. Taking the energy out of the popular movement meant, however, reliance on a military strategy that could not win.

It also amounted to a betrayal of the left in the six counties. Both Protestant and Catholic workers had demonstrated support for a new Irish state, particularly through the growth of the Independent Labour Party, but the more it became clear such a state would be conservative and Catholic the more isolated were the left. Eventually, with a sigh of relief, the Unionist leaders were able to crush not only Catholic aspirations for independence, but also the ILP.

The shipyard pogroms of 1920 not only drove Catholics out of their jobs, but also Protestant trade union activists. They destroyed the ILP's meeting hall.

The situation in Iraq has many similarities to that of Ireland's fight to leave the Empire. Any defeat for the US and British government's policy there is to be welcomed, but the more the opposition is a 'pure' military one rather than a mass social movement, the more conservative and divided will be Iraqi society in the aftermath.

COMMENT

Eamonn McCann

Has McGuinness been outed as spy?



Denis Donaldson and Martin McGuinness

Is Martin McGuinness a British spy?

The suggestion comes from former British spy handler “Martin Ingram.”

But Ingram has produced no plausible evidence. More important, his allegation has obscured the politics which led Sinn Fein into an informal alliance with a section of the British ruling class. This isn’t “collusion” in the usual sense of the word. But it provides a political explanation of events which some have put down to collusion between Republicans and British agents

People who are themselves involved in conspiratorial politics tend to see conspiracies everywhere. As well, there is an element on the Left which finds this spooky world a source of fascination. So much more exciting, even at second hand, that the mundane business of socialist campaigning and working-class organisation.

It’s possible Martin McGuinness has been a long-time “asset” of British intelligence. The same goes for every other IRA leader of the last 35 years. Irish Republicanism has been riddled with informers down through the ages. The torture and murder of “touts” has been a grisly feature of clandestine armed groups everywhere. Everywhere, it is wide open to being used to settle scores and deflect attention from real problems, or even real informers.

Ingram points to his track record. It was he who outed Freddie Scapaticci as “Stakeknife.” Against that, the only evidence he has produced against Martin McGuinness is what he says is the text of a MI6 document recording a conversation between two unidentified men. Ingram says that an unnamed member of the PSNI Special Branch has assured him that one of the men is McGuinness.

Not only is this not proof, it’s hardly even evidence.

The important truth is that the politics of the Sinn Fein leadership and of at least a faction of British capitalism have been converging for a long time. It is difficult to say when this process started. Maybe as far back as the early ‘70s.

Provo leaders recognised that the armed struggle was going nowhere and wanted it stopped. The British also wanted rid of the armed struggle. So the two sides have had plenty to talk about. This didn’t mean anybody being an agent of anybody else, but it did involve pulling the wool over a lot of people’s eyes.

Sinn Fein and the IRA have never aimed to end capitalism. They have aspired to take their place among the constitutional parties of Ireland and to win as prominent a role as possible for themselves as nationalists within the existing structures.

There is nothing in that perspective which the British fundamentally object to.

Nor is there anything particularly sinister in it. Virtually every nationalist movement in history has travelled this road—the ANC, the PLO, Zanu, Swapo, the Sandinistas, etc.

From a socialist point of view, the McGuinness-Ingram controversy is marginal. To focus on sensational allegations against a prominent individual is to divert attention from the relevant issue—the political inadequacy of Sinn Fein’s Nationalist politics.

Debate and Comment

Da Vinci Code drivvel

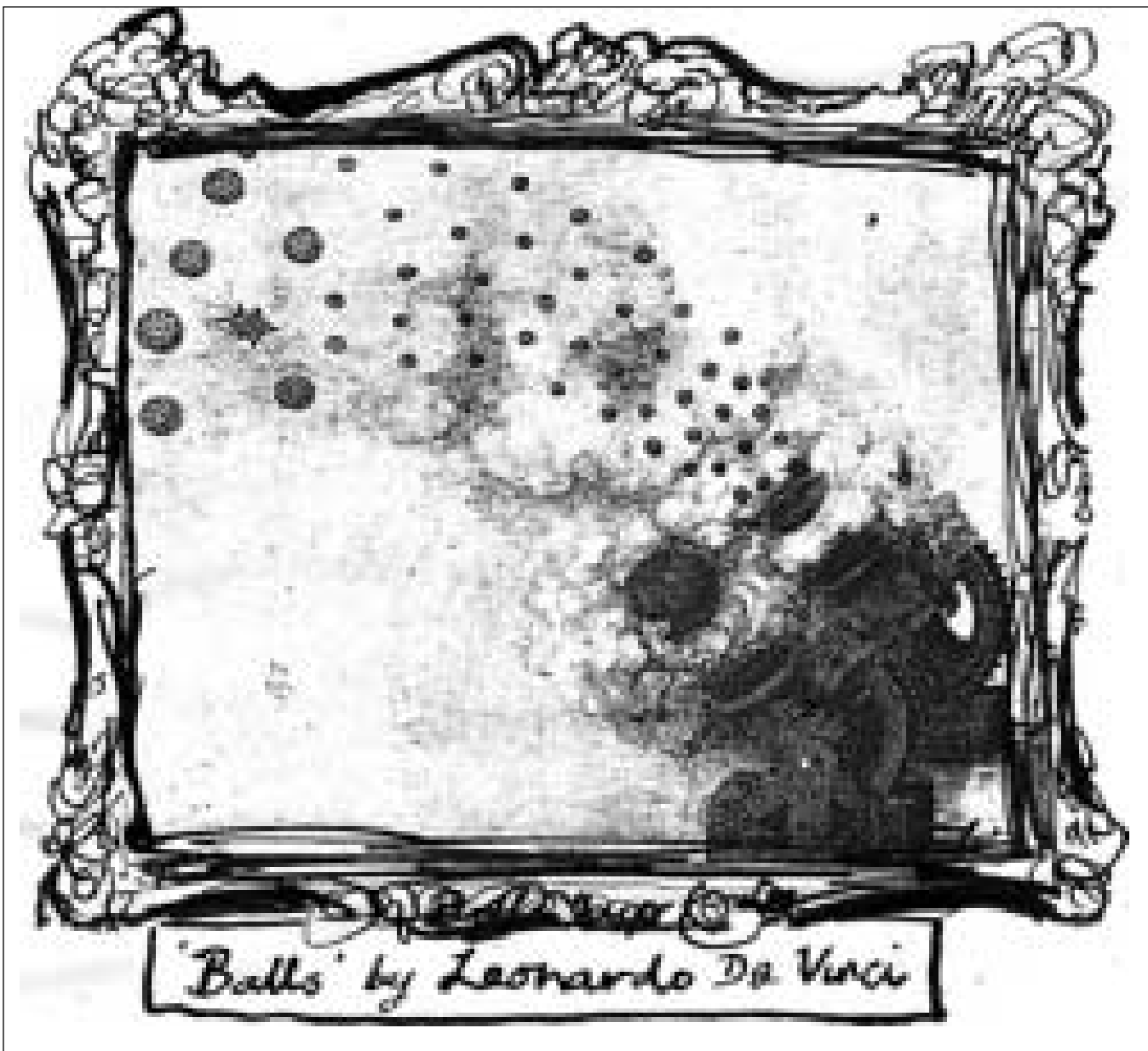


Illustration: Tim Sanders

Historian **Elaine Graham-Leigh** decodes the film of Dan Brown’s best selling novel and uncovers a dangerous right wing agenda

The film of Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* opened the Cannes film festival in May to universal critical panning. The response to the book was somewhat better, but no one argues that either version is great art.

For those fortunate enough not to have read it, the book’s central thesis is that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had children whose descendants are alive today, a bloodline which is the real Holy Grail. This is protected from the vengeful arm of the Vatican and Opus Dei by a 1,000 year old secret organisation called the Priory of Sion and their military frontmen the Knights Templar.

The list of the Priory’s leaders supposedly included aristocrats, alchemists, scientists and artists like Jean Cocteau and, of course, Leonardo da Vinci.

Dan Brown presents this as fact, even stating in the book’s preface that the Priory of Sion is a real organisation founded in 1099. As one of his characters acknowledges, the argument is basically the theory advanced in 1982 by another book, *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* (HBHG).

This started with a mysteriously wealthy southern French priest called Berengar Saunière (the surname used by Dan Brown for his Grand Master of the Priory of Sion). It progressed via the Templars and mystic secrets of the Cathar heretics in the south of France, ending with Jesus and his

supposed descendants.

While HBHG was the best seller, it was in fact only one of a large number of works which make up what has been called the “secret history” of the south of France in general and the Cathars in particular. This features mystic pentacles in the landscape, hidden treasure, descendants of Jesus and the location and/or nature of the Holy Grail.

The role usually played by the Cathar heretics is, in *The Da Vinci Code*, occupied by the heroic Priory of Sion members themselves. They are revealed as peaceful worshippers of the female principle and all round new age good guys defying the patriarchal established church.

It will come as no surprise that the theory is bunk. The frequently repeated argument for Jesus’s marriage and therefore the likelihood of his having had descendants is that all Jewish men of his time were expected to marry by their early 30s. It is true that the

‘There was peculiar activity by the Nazis around the ruined castles associated with Cathar mysticism’

gospels which were chosen in the fourth century to form the New Testament suppress the role of Mary Magdalene.

But the Gnostic gospels, which did not make it into the Bible, reveal that what was suppressed was not a sexual relationship but the lack of one—the idea that men and women can live together in a spiritual rather than a physical union.

As for the poor old Knights Templar, accused of worshipping everything from heads called “Baphomets” to the “Great Mother”—they were in fact a perfectly orthodox organisation who were suppressed in the early 14th century at the behest of the king of France, who owed them a large amount of money he didn’t want to pay back.

So, does any of this matter? Isn’t it just entertainment? There is a more serious side. Dan Brown’s statement that the Priory of Sion has existed since 1099 is definitely untrue, as is HBHG’s contention that they have been manipulating European history for the last 1,000 years. However, it is probably true that in the 1970s and 1980s there were people in France who thought they were members of an organisation called the Priory of Sion.

The authors of HBHG met one of them, a man called Pierre Plantard, who claimed to be the Grand Master and a descendent of Jesus. According to HBHG, the

Priory’s aim was to put him “on the throne of Europe”, and this gives a clue to its real nature—a small, obscure, French monarchist sect.

However, while the Priory itself may be minor, the conspiracy theories have been used to some effect by the right. The theories have been around since the 19th century, but they came to particular prominence in France in the Second World War.

The Vichy regime used Cathar emblems in its propaganda, and there was also peculiar activity by the Nazis around the ruined castles most associated with ideas about Cathar mysticism.

The *Da Vinci Code* takes a profoundly right wing position and gives it a new age gloss, as if it was a genuine opposition to the establishment. This countercultural tinge has probably helped to make it a bestseller, and leaves readers with the impression that it would be nice if there were something in its arguments.

But real resistance is never made up of mysterious organisations protecting secret knowledge from ordinary people. Dan Brown’s presentation of fringe monarchist fantasies as the answer to all modern ills is not only a badly-written thriller. It’s a con.

Elaine Graham-Leigh is a member of the Respect executive in Britain and author of *The Southern French Nobility and the Albigenian Crusade*.

Protest/Reports/Struggle

email to brid@swp.ie Phone 01 8722682

GALWAY ALLIANCE AGAINST WAR

Protest at Salthill Air Show

Yet again Galway faces the controversial annual Salthill Air show. Spectators are invited to watch US and UK warplanes perform over Galway Bay.

But a growing number of people object to weapons of death and destruction being presented as entertainment.

The "War show" display teams use Shannon airport as their base.

At the same time, to the great shame of the nation, the Irish government policy of appeasement towards state-sanctioned terror permits US aircraft and troops to use Shannon airport as their hub, and along with US aircraft exported to Israel through Shannon, fly off to cause death and mayhem throughout the Middle East and from Iraq to Afghanistan.

CIA aircraft are allowed to ferry kidnapped foreign nationals through Shannon to prison camps condemned by every human rights organisation.

Dave Lynch, Daily Ireland reporter, has also drawn links between Iraq and the Salthill Air Show.

He has produced evidence that there is a direct link between the war in Iraq and the Salthill Air Show. 4 pilots involved in the British RAF helicopter Merlin display team have served in Iraq.



Flashback: Protest at Salthill last year

Lynch states: The official 'Team Merlin' website and RAF press release outlines the military biographies of the team members. The display pilot has been deployed in Iraq.

The display co-pilot "has recently completed operational tours in Iraq". Another display co-pilot has "just completed his third tour in Iraq". And finally the Team Merlin display lead crewman has recently been "on Op Telic in Iraq".

Operation Telic is the British military codename for its role in the

US led 2003 invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq.

According to RAF information 4 of the 5 members of Team Merlin, have served in Iraq.

The fifth, the display manager, spent 4 years on the Puma helicopter with the 230 Squadron in Northern Ireland.

The Galway Alliance Against War (GAAW) has called on both Galway City Council and Ireland West Tourism to withdraw funding to the air show.

€15,000 of Galway City's

annual budget are donated to the event. Niall Farrell, PRO for GAAW told Socialist Worker:

The organisers of this war show try to pass it off as harmless entertainment. But now we not only have the killing machines but the original pilots, not circus artistes, flying them. Galway City Council and Ireland West Tourism must distance themselves from this obscenity by withdrawing funding.

These pilots have been involved in the illegal invasion and occupation of Iraq; they have been involved in an unnecessary war that has taken the lives of over 250,000 people.

By their very involvement in this illegal war they are British war criminals and they should be banned from our skies and our land."

In light of the new information Galway City Councillor Catherine Connolly, who will run as an Independent in the general election, has pledged to raise again the issue of Council funding for the air show in an effort to have it withdrawn.

GAAW are also planning a peaceful opposition activity on the day of the war show, 25th June.

For further information: Niall Farrell

PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT ALLIANCE

Support the nurses on June 14th at Croke Park

The current chaos in our hospitals is a national scandal. The government's policy since 2001, 'The Health Strategy', is to put back 3000 public hospital beds, but Harney wants these to be private beds in for-profit hospitals.

Harney says a pay rise for nurses will divert money from the health services. However ensuring staff have proper conditions is essential to ensure we have a world-class health service.

The nurses' demand for a 35-hour week and pay rise is vital to retain nurses and keep standards of care at a safe level. Many nurses are not even on the average industrial wage.

Immediate funding for better health centres and more hospital and nursing home beds and staff would solve the crisis within months.

The People before Profit Alliance supports the nurses' demands for decent working conditions and to halt Harney's privatisation plans. Join us in supporting the nurses at 2.30pm at Croke Park on June 14th.

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Mary Harney must go!

Save the public health service
No privatisation
Support the nurses
Health before profit

Support the Nurses

Wednesday June 14th,

Meet 2.30pm Croke Park

People Before Profit Alliance

CORK ALLIANCE AGAINST WAR

Support for Guantanamo victim

Cork Alliance Against War held a very successful day of information and discussion in the fight against war and torture on May 28th. Over 100 people attended the screening of "The Road to Guantanamo" and a follow up public meeting. Both events were addressed by Abu Baker Deghayes, brother of Guantanamo prisoner Omar Deghayes.

Sarah Danaher of Amnesty and Paddy O'Keefe of British Stop the War coalition also spoke.

Abu outlined how When war broke out in 2001, Omar moved his family from Afghanistan to Pakistan, fearing for their safety, and en route back to the UK.

There he was arrested by bounty-hunters along with his wife and young son (both later released) and taken to Bagram, which he describes as reminiscent of a Nazi prison camp.

He was later sent on to Guantánamo, where he has suffered further human rights abuses. On one occasion, guards

attacked Omar with pepper spray, rubbing the chemical in his eyes, so that he is now completely blinded in one eye.

He has not heard anything of his brother since August 2005.

Cork Alliance Against War has adopted the case of Omar. To write to Omar Deghayes address is as follows. Pass on to any friends that may be interested.

Omar Deghayes Prisoner 272 160 Camp Delta Washington DC 20053 U.S.A

IRELAND PALESTINE SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

Irish cultural hypocrisy over Israel

By David Landy, Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign

This month, the Israeli embassy is sponsoring two events in Dublin: at the Irish Writers Centre and the Dublin Writers Festival.

By accepting money from the Israeli government, these bodies aren't just ignoring Israeli war crimes, they're also backing Israeli censorship of Palestinian culture.

In November 2002, two Palestinian poets, Zakaria Mohammed and Ghassan Zaqtan were due to take part in a poetry evening in the Irish Writers Centre.

They never arrived; the Israeli government which

has destroyed cultural centres across Palestine, prevented them from leaving.

Despite this, the Writers Centre has no problem hosting a talk given by the writer, A.B. Yehoshua on 6th June, sponsored by the Israeli government.

Yehoshua, a supporter of the Apartheid Wall that Israel is constructing, has notoriously called for a terrorist war which would target Palestinian civilians, similar in fact to the one Israel is now waging.

Later this month, the Dublin Writers Festival is hosting another Israeli writer, Amir Or, also sponsored by the Israeli government. Israel is bringing both these writers over so as they can portray them-

selves as a bastion of culture.

This justifies their occupation as a war of civilisation against primitive fanatical Palestinians; it's the other side of the coin of their attacks on Palestinian writers and culture.

Make your views known to the Dublin Writers Festival (Dublin Writers Festival, Dublin City Council, Arts Office, The LAB, Foley Street D.1. 01 222 7847.

Email office@dublinwritersfestival.com about what you think about their willingness to sell out the Palestinian people and the faint trace of artistic principle for a few coppers from the Israeli government.

OUT NOW NEW LEFT JOURNAL In the Summer 2006 issue:-

Fortress Ireland: after the Afghan hunger strike/Bolivia, Venezuela and the Revolt in Latin America/Behind the veil of lies: Iran/Islamophobia: the new racism/Health and the neoliberal agenda/Politics, the movement and the Left: France & Germany/Immigrant rights in US /The legacy of Michael Davitt/Nuclear Power and more

We hope, in the pages of New Left Journal, to capture some of the anger and resistance against corporate capitalism—across the globe and in Ireland.

We want to help expose what neoliberal Ireland is doing to our services, our education, our workplaces, our health and quality of life, to our cities and natural resources, and how their interests are enthusiastically represented by the mainstream political parties.

NLJ seeks to develop a radical alternative view to neoliberal economics and privatisation—something that the traditional left is sorely lacking—and challenge the right-wing consensus in Ireland. Such an alternative will only take shape if all voices for socialist change are heard so we will be including representatives of different campaigns and political traditions.

In this way, we hope that New Left Journal may become a genuine forum of the anti-war movement, of anti-racism and the battles against the neoliberal agenda in Ireland.



New Left Journal is available at €3 plus postage from Bookmarx, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

Partnership Set Wage rises at 3.5%

The spin doctors have been working flat out to convince workers up to accept a new partnership deal.

The media have claimed there is a 10 percent pay rise over two years. The private radio stations have also prominently featured right wing spokespersons who want to scrap partnership in favour of market forces. ISME, the small employers federation, has even denounced IBEC for 'sell-

ing-out' the collective interests of the capitalist class.

But trade unionists should not be taken in by these smokescreens.

The actual pay deal means a three months pay pause and a rise of 2 percent for the first six months and 3 percent for the second six months for each of the other two years of the deal.

It does not make sense mathematically to

add two and three to claim that workers are getting a five percent pay rise.

To work out your pay rise you need to take an example of €100 a week income (it is only a simple example for mathematical purposes) and add a 2 percent increase for the first six months and then a 3 percent rise on €102 for the second six months. If you add the cumulative increases on an annual basis and calculate it as a

percentage of the original €100 you will find the annual increase is far lower than 5 percent.

The actual increase amounts to 3.5% - which is below the present inflation rate of 3.8 percent.

And remember this rate of inflation does not take account of rising houses prices!

Even before the details emerge on the conditions which workers have to trade for this wage

increase, it is already apparent that they have fallen behind.

What is startling, particularly for public sector workers, is that these small increases will be conditional on accepting of outsourcing, more flexible opening and closing hours and performance management.

A broad based campaign is needed to alert workers to what is really happening.

NIPSA CONFERENCE

DELEGATES DEMAND REAL ACTION AGAINST WATER CHARGES

By NIPSA Delegate

The highlights of the Annual NIPSA conference were two different 'events' which demonstrated the need for unity in the face of attacks on all areas of the public sector.

On one hand delegates overwhelmingly rejected a motion from the General Council which congratulated them on campaigning against water charges, and instead supported a motion which basically said 'get you finger out, NOW!'

On the other hand history was made when the conference was suspended to allow delegates to protest outside the meeting of the South Eastern Education & Library Board. The meeting was called in order to approve the minutes of the previous board meeting which had voted to accept £3.5million of cuts in the provision of special needs education.

Around 120 members of NIPSA and UNISON heckled board members as they went into the meeting before about 70 people squeezed in, to the obvious annoyance of the majority of the board members. Even though the meeting was public the Chairperson threatened us with the police, unconcerned we stood our

ground. After two hours of debate and with the elected members of the board emboldened by the protest a narrow vote led to the imposition of cuts being postponed.

While a victory in terms of the saving of a special school and dozens of jobs it is only a temporary reprieve and NIPSA, UNISON and the Teachers Unions must mobilise hundreds of people for the next meeting.

What both of these issues demonstrate is the extent to which NIPSA is on the front line, and in the way of, the Hain project. Both Water Charges and Education Cuts are part of the same agenda, which includes the Workplace 2010 jobs and assets sell-off.

The importance of building and organising a rank & file inside the union cannot be overestimated. But it is clear that to maximise our effectiveness union activists must also be linked with those struggling against water charges and education cuts outside the unions. The need for an anti-Neo liberal alliance to link up all these campaigns, and the activists involved in them, is more immediate than ever before.

ANTI BIN TAX CAMPAIGN

Organising against non-collection

By Cllr Joan Collins

Six years on from their introduction, the battle over double taxation bin charges continues in Dublin city. Dublin City Council (DCC) like to claim that the issue is dead, and that there is 90% compliance with the bin tax.

However, after six years of bullying, involving dragging people before the courts to intimidate non payers and the jailing of activists for protesting, only one in three households have actually paid this tax in full.

Those that have paid do so not because they support the tax but because they have been intimidated into paying.

Some 40% of households have a waiver, for the time being.

The rest have paid

nothing or have arrears.

That is why DCC have, over the last two months, begun a policy of non collection in wheelie bin

areas.

The areas affected so far are Ringsend, Terenure, Harolds Cross, Crumlin, Raheny,

Edenmore, Donaghmede and Coolock.

The Anti Bin tax campaign have moved quickly to organise public meet-

ings in all these areas and to organise people to put their bagged waste into the bin trucks themselves.

This follows the example of bag areas like East Wall where people have been doing this now for 18 months.

So far the Council have not attempted to stop people doing this, as they initially attempted to do in areas like East Wall.

However, this can not be seen as a long term solution.

It is a short term tactic to combat DCC's "salami" tactics, where they have been afraid to attack all the working class areas at once.

The Anti bin tax campaign will step up this battle into outright confrontation on our terms, when all the big working class areas to the west of the city have been affected.

Watch this space.



PUBLIC SERVICE DECENTRALISATION

Anger over government's cynical decentralisation scheme

By Decentralisation Refusnik

Decentralisation was a major issue at most of the civil and public service union conferences. Two and a half years after McCreevey announced the plan to decentralise 10,600 civil and public services to 53 locations throughout the state, details of how the programme is to be implemented are still unclear.

This is causing major unease and uncertainty. Added to this is the awareness that the choice of locations was a cynical attempt to improve the government's re-election chances.

Although the programme was heralded as a way of reducing the pres-

sure on Dublin, over 50% of those who have applied are already decentralised.

They are using the opportunity of the programme to move to a more suitable location or as a chance to enhance their promotion prospects.

On the other hand, Dublin based staff who have applied to decentralise are being moved into new positions in Dublin, on the promise that they will be going to the location of their choice at some time in the future.

Some have already made commitments to buy or rent accommodation in these locations, however management are unable to provide definite details of when they are to move. General service grades that

wish to remain in Dublin fear that their promotion possibilities will be severely curtailed. And then there are the specialist staff and staff in the state agencies represented by IMPACT and SIPTU - only 65 agency staff out of 2500 and 15% of specialist staff have applied to move.

The irony is that the Department of Finance had previously advised the Scottish Executive that such grades or agencies should not be included in major decentralisation plans.

IMPACT, in a recent report, estimated that the cost of decentralising civil service organisations with a high dependency on specialists could cost between €51.1 and €65.5 million a

year at current salaries and rents. Clearly the plan is a mess and unworkable.

There have been a number of significant developments in the last few weeks. The first was the announcement that the Probation & Welfare Service was no longer on the list to move to Navan. This was a move that made no sense whatsoever - probation officers travelling to Navan each day and then returning to Dublin to deal with cases in the Dublin courts. The Government have conceded the point by taking them off the list.

The campaign of industrial action by Fás SIPTU members has resulted in a limited victory which concedes that promotions will

not be tied to decentralisation. SIPTU members in Bord Iascaigh Mhara in Dun Laoghaire held a public meeting to which all the local politicians were invited. Staff brought their families with them who contributed powerfully to the case as to why they did not want to move. Similar meetings are planned for constituencies throughout the country.

There are real issues to be addressed and it is clear that neither government nor management is doing so. The programme urgently needs to be reviewed to ensure that the concerns of all staff are addressed. That review will only come from united pressure by all the affected unions.

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.....



NO ONE IS ILLEGAL

STOP THE

IMMIGRATION

PRISON

The disgraceful news that the British Government has been fingerprinting all children under 5 at its asylum screening unit in Croydon is another warning on how the question of immigration is being used to divide us and undermine all our rights.

A report from the Immigration and Nationality Directorate even acknowledges that in the process children would have to have been 'manhandled'.

The only other country even to contemplate fingerprinting children was Malaysia—but they backed down because of the outcry.

The building of a 'detention centre'—in reality a prison for 'failed asylum seekers' in the North—the first in Ireland, would allow similar types of degrading practice to be experimented with.

It would also cement the myth that 'foreigners' have a large element of criminality about them.

Some who have championed the cause of immigrants have defended the idea of the prison on the grounds that its better detaining asylum seekers in a purpose built facility instead of alongside 'ordinary criminals' in the North's prison system.

However there should be no detention full stop.

People seeking a better life should be entitled to seek refuge and there is plenty of vacant accommodation throughout all parts of this island.

The symbolism of an immi-



Dungavel Detention centre in Scotland: Police and barbed wire to keep imprisoned 'failed asylum seekers'

grant prison would also signify that there is something separate and different about asylum seekers.

The cost of building it and maintaining it would be better spent on providing decent housing for all in the North.

The PSNI have demonstrated how the immigration snatch squad connected to the prison would operate.

In May they raided the house of

a South African family who were holding a birthday party for their one year old daughter.

One woman described to the local press how the police body-searched parents of the children. "It was bedlam—children were screaming in fear because they didn't know what was happening and the whole thing was very frightening for them.

"We were all scared and confused. I just can't tell you how

humiliating it was to have people we don't know watching on the street and thinking we were doing something wrong."

They arrested the father and then issued a statement stating that the raid was carried out by the drugs and vice unit.

They obviously want to criminalise sections of the immigrant population. The message they want to send to neighbours is that there is something illegal about

these people.

This raid came in the same month that the police's own statistics showed that racist attacks have continued to escalate—936 recorded incidents—up 15% from last year.

Almost half the 20-strong new immigration snatch squad will be from the PSNI.

The manner in which the police carried out this operation shows that far from being able to tackle the growth in racism they are part of creating an atmosphere where attacks are more likely.

We will see more raids on houses, in workplaces, in the street. The racist thugs who petrol bomb the homes of the minority ethnic community or immigrants will get confidence from the actions of the snatch squad.

What can you do?

The Anti-Racism Network had launched a campaign against the prison being built.

It has drawn up a fact sheet and petition against the immigrant prison and snatch squad.

These can be downloaded from www.anti-racism.tk where there is also an online petition.

Resolutions should be passed in trade unions. To get involved email the ARN at antiracism_ni@hotmail.com.