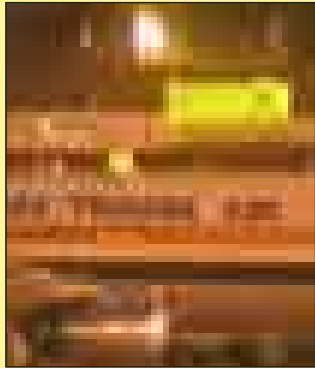


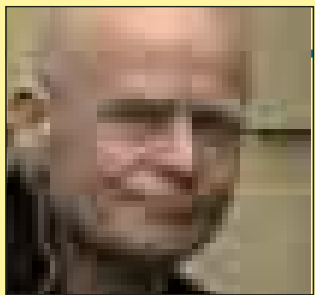
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'Partnership: Work harder for a pay cut'

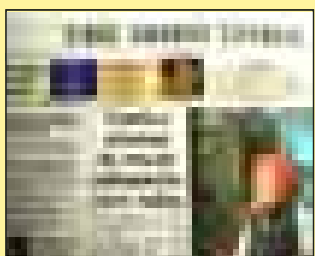
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NURSES FIGHT FOR ALL OF US



Nurses take action to fight for justice

Photo: Paula Geraghty

By Peadar O'Grady

As the nurses' strike for a 10.6% pay rise and a 35-hour week enters its second month, nurses have escalated their action from a national work-to-rule to a rolling campaign of regional work stoppages and local rallies.

The mood at the hospital rallies is electric. Nurses' determination to take on Mary Harney and the rotten FF/PD government is going from strength to strength. 'Long hours, Low pay - No way!' say placards.

At the protest rally outside St James' Hospital in Dublin one senior nurse said: 'There is no giving up. We are getting stronger each day as we go on. The government are not coming forward with anything. We are in it for the long haul. Nothing is going to change until we get what we are looking for.'

A junior nurse at the same dem-

onstration said: 'We should stay tough and, no matter how long it goes on, we have to fight for what we deserve. We really don't want to be out here at all. We still have a job to do when we go in. It's putting more of a workload on nurses. We don't want to be here but if it comes to it we have to.'

All nurses have emphasised that the focus of their anger and disruption is on the HSE management and the government. Emergency care will be maintained but a strike means withdrawing your labour and the pressure is increasingly on the government to explain why they won't give the nurses the hours and pay they deserve.

The HSE has resorted to issuing scare stories about the dangers to the health service but refuse to explain why they won't negotiate a deal.

Mary Harney and the HSE claim

that pay can only be negotiated under 'Benchmarking', which was introduced in October 2000. The HSE managers themselves have, however, been given massive pay rises and promotions outside of benchmarking in 2005. Their hypocrisy is breathtaking.

The HSE CEO Prof Brendan Drumm has seen his pay increase from €200,000 a year to a massive €330,000. Other health staff like radiographers or civil servants in the department of finance have also received pay deals outside of benchmarking so why not the nurses?

In 2002, care workers employed as house parents in residential care centres went out on strike for a much deserved pay rise. Their strike won a pay rise of between 19% and 27%!

Nurses have rightly demanded a pay rise to reflect their similar claims. These demands were ig-

nored but now the nurses are taking a leaf out of the care workers' book. Clearly the justice of a claim does not impress employers but strike action does.

The HSE management also claim that reducing nurses' hours is possible but only on a 'cost neutral' basis. This is at the same time that Fianna Fail has just published their plans to spend €850 million on tax cuts.

Huge corporations making billions in profit meanwhile are paying an effective rate of just 8% in taxes. Junior doctors were promised a 65-hour week in 1989. Almost 20 years later they are still working dangerous hours in excess of 80 hours a week. Nurses should not be fobbed off with any 'risk assessment' committees promising change in the never never.

Turn to page 3

DON'T ATTACK IRAN
Make Shannon an Election Issue

THE THINGS THEY SAY

"I am not a nurse but when I was sick they were there for me, now I'm here for them."

Placard on a nurses protest outside St James Hospital.

"What the people of Ireland and future generations have here is a hospital of excellence. The people of Ireland have let too much be taken from them over the years. Do not let this happen with St Lukes."

Joe Gilfoyle, one of the spokespeople for the Campaign to Save St Lukes Cancer hospital in Dublin.

"Our countryside is being destroyed and I've never seen so many rats on our roads."

Pat Connolly, Mayor of Bandon in County Cork, on problems caused by the introduction of pay-by-weight refuse charges.

"I would go so far as to say this is a cynical attempt by Dick Roche to pull the wool over people's eyes. It's actually making me angry. He is painting this as something new going to help Galway. It's the standard water allocations to local authorities. It's something that was in the pipeline anyway."

Galway Mayor Niall O Brochain responds to Minister for the Environment Dick Roche's allocation of €1.1 million towards Galway's water problem.



Hilary Benn

"We do not use the phrase 'war on terror' because we can't win by military means alone, and because this isn't us against one organized enemy with a clear identity and a coherent set of objectives."

Hilary Benn International Development Secretary, on Britain's decision to stop using the term.

"It's harming patients, the very people nurses say they are advocates for."

Brendan Mulligan, assistant chief executive of the HSE, condemns nurses but has nothing to say about how underfunding harms patients.

"Look, I believe in the mission of this organisation, and I believe I can carry it out."

World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz responding to calls for his resignation after he gave large pay hikes to his girlfriend, an employee of the World Bank.

"There are 40,000 nurses in the country. There are a lot of nurses in my constituency. It is an issue that concerns me."

FF backbencher and Cork South West TD Denis O'Donovan expresses unease at the government's response

to the continued nurses dispute.

"My initial reaction is no [they should not be allowed in]."

Australian Prime Minister John Howard saying HIV-positive immigrants or refugees should not be allowed to enter the country.

"The President is as isolated, I believe, on the Iraq issue as Richard Nixon was when he was hunkered down in the White House."

Senate Majority Leader Democrat Harry Reid.

"Enough is enough. Let's use a diverse range of women and not the glamour girls."

Green Party councillor Bronwen Maher objecting to the growing use of models to advertise Dublin City Council activities.

"Rather than go over there, develop an ulcer and eventually leave, I said, 'No, thanks'."

Retired Marine Gen John Sheehan one of at least three generals to turn down offers from the White House of a U.S. war "Czar" position, overseeing the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"For the public service to remain an attractive employer, our terms must keep pace with the private sector."

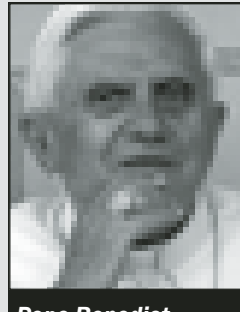
Singapore's Defence Minister justifying a 25% pay raise for Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. His annual wage is now \$2 million.

"It's a tough war. The American people are weary of this war."

George Bush addressing soldiers about to deploy to Iraq from California.

"I am against it. Marriage is between a man and a woman. That's what God says and what the Irish constitution says. I would give gay couples virtually identical legal and civil rights, but not marriage."

Michael Mulcahy, FF TD for Dublin South Central.



Pope Benedict

"We cannot haul 10,000 generations into the laboratory."

Pope Benedict says evolution is not provable.

"This is exactly what they did in 1981. It was a halfhearted inquiry then, and now the truth may not come out. It adds insult to injury."

Stardust survivor Antoinette Keegan responds to the €500,000 shortfall in government funding which threatens the proposed review of evidence in the Stardust tragedy.

"The Russian state has shown it no longer respects the world press, public opinion or even Russian law."

Gary Kasparov, former chess champion, arrested during anti-Putin protests that were attacked by police

More US troops to use Shannon

On 12 April it was announced that Shannon airport was to put on 100 new flights a month carrying 10,000 troops to Iraq. Omni Air is to be the holder of the new contract.

A business magazine announced that this new traffic could significantly increase Shannon's income, which had dropped off since World Airways diverted most of its military flights from Shannon to Leipzig last year.

This latest twist in Shannon's involvement in the Iraq war highlights the dangers of preparing an airport for privatisation. Making an airport have to service a war to keep it afloat is absurd. Those working at Shannon should have the right to full government funding for the air service they provide.

Instead of tax payers helping to fund a civilian airport, they are contributing towards a military one. Like all US multinationals operating here Omni Air will benefit from low corporation tax.

But the Irish government pays out charges for air traffic control and communications services for aircraft passing through Irish controlled airspace. Over the last five years, this gift has amounted to €10 million. Omni Air will probably be no exception. Omni Air will start operating in May. Politicians putting themselves around before the election need to be made aware of this. The Irish Government has locked itself into Bush's war, but where does each candidate in the election stand on the issue?

A few days after the Omni Air announcement, 200 people were massacred in a car bombing in Bagdad. It was one of Iraq's most wretched days in four years of slaughter. The next day US Senate majority leader signalled to Bush that the 'extreme violence' in Bagdad as proof that US military strategy was now bankrupt.

He was right. Since the US 'surge' began in there have been at least 93 car bombings, killing or wounding more than 4,000. Further, from the start of the occupation in 2003, there have been more than 1,050 deadly car and truck bombings. The total civilian death total from vehicle explosions now amounts to about 30,000.

Estimates of those dead as a result of the US occupation earlier this year were put at over 650,000.

The US troops passing through Shannon are on their way to making the civil breakdown, which the US war on Iraq created, very much worse. The Irish media present the escalation of violence in Iraq as the consequence of sectarian



Shannon Airport

strife.

This view serves US's interests and its eager supporters in Irish government circles.

In fact, the rise in sectarian attacks can be directly attributed to the US occupation. The US has used a strategy of divide and rule to bolster up the puppet Maliki government, which itself has been set up along sectarian lines. Even now, walls are being built, Palestine style, to enclose five neighbourhoods in Bagdad which will isolate communities further and sharpen sectarian tensions.

The US occupation has created the anarchy

MAKE SHANNON AN ELECTION ISSUE
 Ask each election candidate in your constituency: Have you signed this pledge?
'We, the undersigned, give a firm commitment that if elected we will not participate in any government that allows Shannon Airport or other Irish facilities to be used by the United States to conduct war in Iraq or any other imperialist war'

Wolf in sheeps clothing caught with fingers in the till

Former US Deputy Secretary of Defence in the Bush Administration, Paul Wolfowitz, who took up office as President of the World Bank in January 2005, has landed himself in trouble yet again.

Even conservatives feared that when he took office that he would make sure that as Stiglitz put it: 'the World Bank will once again become a hate figure.'

Wolfowitz was one of the central architects of the US invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. In the wake of the

attacks on September 11, Mr Wolfowitz vowed not only to pursue terrorists, but to 'end' states sponsoring or harbouring militants.

His reign at the World Bank has been dogged by controversy with dubious decisions. He presided over several appointments at the Bank of individuals formerly with the Bush administration.

Just this month, a US non-profit group, the Government Accountability Project, claimed that Ms. Shaha Ali Riza, linked to Wolfowitz in a personal

relationship, had received a promotion and salary raise outside World Bank rules and protocol.

Ironically, this is at a time when he himself has led a drive to cut aid to countries troubled by their own corruption. An oversight committee at the Bank have expressed 'grave concern' at these latest revelations and many of the main papers in the States have called for Wolfowitz to go.

The World Bank, an organisation whose own credibility has been under



Paul Wolfowitz

scrutiny for almost a decade now with the growth of the anti-capitalist movement

has not been helped by the corrupt dealings of its leadership.

Further scandal has rocked the reputation of Paul Wolfowitz.

On top of the pay hike sanctioned for his girlfriend at the World Bank it has emerged that while serving as deputy secretary of defense, he personally recommended that the same woman, Shaha Ali Riza, be awarded a contract for travel to Iraq in 2003 to advise on setting up a new government.

INSIDE THE SYSTEM

☠ A pregnant mother of eight was put in Limerick prison for an outstanding debt and an unpaid litter fine. Very few corrupt politicians and tax evaders have yet ended up behind bars. One law for the rich...

☠ Children are living next to raw sewage at Longpavement travellers' site in county Limerick. Around 65 people are currently living in caravans at the site, which was intended to be a temporary arrangement but travellers have been forced to live there for the last 17 years.

☠ A 10% pay rise for the nurses would apparently damage the economy but huge pay hikes for executives don't!

☠ John Maloney, CEO of Glanbia got a 44% pay increase last year. His salary of €927,000 is equivalent to 23 times that of the average earnings of Glanbia's employees.

☠ CRH chief executive Liam O'Mahony earns 75 times the average employee's wages

☠ paid executives in Ireland, just short of AIB's Eugene Sheehy who was paid €2.4m in 2006.

☠ Plans to build a €500 million highway through the Lee Valley and Lee fields is meeting fierce local opposition. The Protect the Lee Valley campaign have launched an online petition at www.protecttheleevalley.com to gather signatures. According to a spokesperson for the campaign "This is not a 'not in my backyard' campaign. We are against anything that would destroy this wonderful amenity. There are other options available."

☠ New research on religious attitudes reveals a new and very healthy attitude towards faith in Ireland with 82% of parents surveyed saying they would be happy to let their children make up their own minds about faith. The survey also also found that 12% of Irish people no longer believe in God and 22% do not think there is an afterlife.

☠ A study of young people appearing before the Children's Court, carried out by the Association for Criminal Justice Research and Development, found:

☠ 90pc of young offenders are male and consistently come from very specific geographic locations.

☠ 86pc were formally absent from mainstream education.

☠ 27pc didn't live with either parent. Clearly urgent and far reaching investment into alleviating disadvantage is needed.

☠ Private medicine is being peddled by government as a solution to the crisis in our hospitals. However for anyone desperate to avoid the queues in A&E or to diagnose a serious illness early they will find that their hard earned cash doesn't go far: to avoid the queues in A&E an initial consultation in a VHI Swiftcare clinic will cost €95 with a follow up xray €70 or blood test €30-€50. To detect serious disease an MRI scan costs between €300 and €800 while a PET scan could cost €2000. Visiting a consultant in a private suite will cost well over €100. Many

patients are often shocked to find that even when they have health insurance, their particular cover may not entitle them to access these facilities.

☠ More than 1,500 families and friends of undocumented Irish workers in the US met in Dublin recently to register their support for the campaign in the US to allow illegal immigrants to remain and work legally. It is estimated that there may be 50,000 Irish people living illegally in the US.

☠ A survey by Childminding Ireland, a national organisation for home-based family childcare workers, revealed that 62 per cent of child minders questioned were not paid for holidays and more than half worked over 40 hours a week.

☠ The Vatican is threatening to sue Indymedia for a photomontage posted by an anonymous contributor on the Italy Independent Media Centre site in April 2005 that put the face of the Pope Benedict XVI onto the body of a Nazi officer. The picture is accompanied by the following comment, which the Italian Public Department considered offensive: "Nazi pope—happiness to all the faithful. After the anti-communist reactionary, now comes the ultra-reactionary Nazi." Pope Benedict is a former member of Hitler Youth.

☠ Despite the promises made by the government after the Leas Cross scandal broke, the number of nursing home inspectors is almost one-third less than previously believed. There are just 128 inspectors of whom there are only 12 individuals whose sole job it is to carry out inspections of the country's 437 registered nursing homes. This is just one more than last year when the highly critical report into Leas Cross was published.

Nurses fight for all of us

Continued from page one

The treatment of the nurses is in direct contrast to the massive pay rises offered to consultants. In the same week that nurses were refused a pay rise that would average about €4,000 a year, consultants were offered a massive €40,000. Ten times that amount!

Hospital consultant spokesperson, Dr Josh Keaveney even described a proposal of a €205,000 a year contract as a 'mickey mouse' contract.

This can only be understood when you consider that the average consultant income is over €300,000 (€150,000 public salary plus €150,000 in private fees). Some consultants even make over €1 million a year!

Mary Harney's offer of €205,000 a year for just 50 new consultants is only a stunt to try to tar all health workers with the same brush as the overpaid consultants. If Harney was serious about introducing a 'public-only' contract she would introduce a public only service.

Getting rid of private fees in public hospitals could be done at the stroke of the ministerial pen. Getting rid of the hated 2-tier system in pub-

lic hospitals was even recommended strongly by the government's own Commission on Health Funding in 1990 and would be massively popular.

Instead, Harney is offering massive pay rises and keeping the pathetic current 'limit' on private patients in public hospitals of 20% which will continue to be almost impossible to monitor and would be breached as often as it is now.

Nationalising our health service without any compensation to existing consultants would be 'taking on the consultants' not this pathetic half-measure. Harney cannot take on the consultants only because her plan is to hand over profiteering to for-profit healthcare corporations like Triad/Beacon, Capio, Quinn Healthcare and the like.

These corporations are being invited onto public hospitals in the so-called 'co-located private hospitals' plan. The consultants will need to be bought off and sold to these corporations. For Harney getting rid of private fees is not an option when for-profit care needs fees to survive.

Victory for the nurses would mean Harney would have failed to increase the prospect of profits by keeping workers' pay and conditions low. It will be a blow to privatisation and halt the yearly loss of nurses

from the health service due to poor conditions.

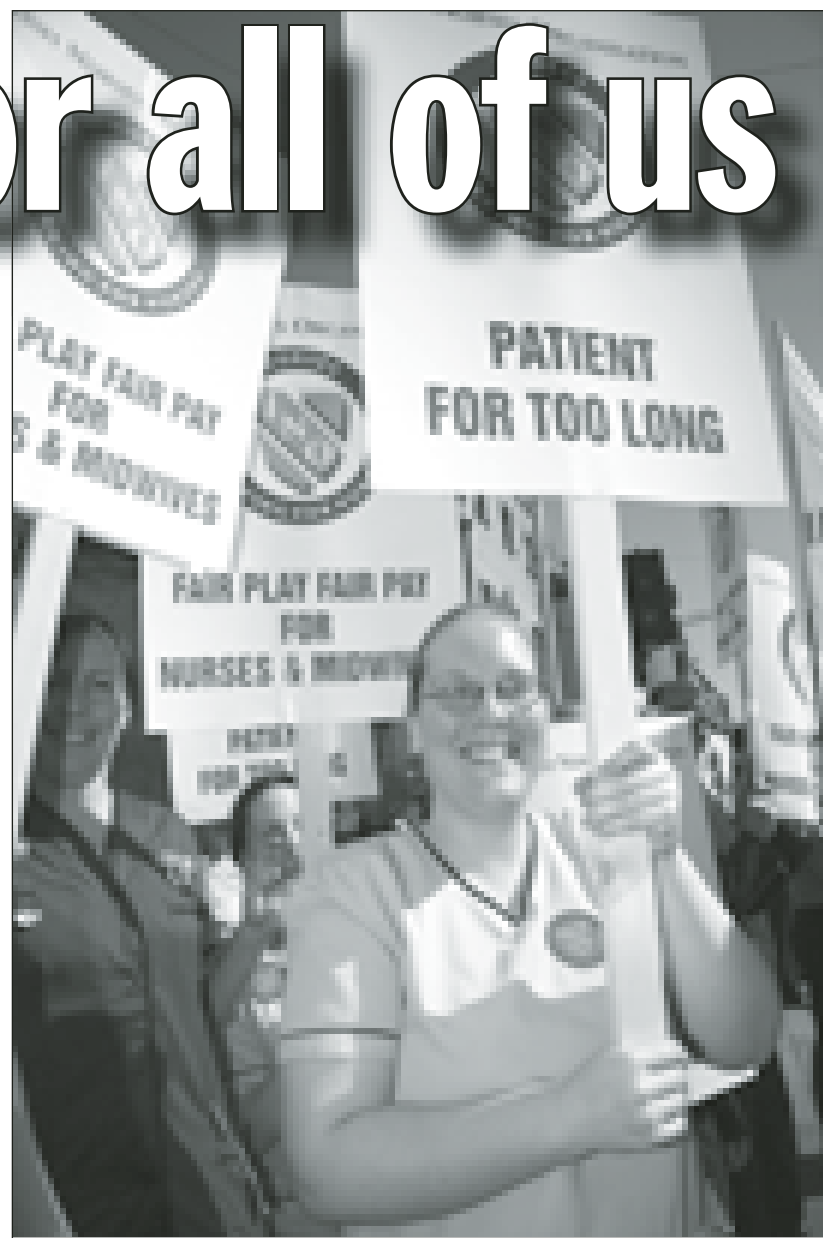
Victory will also be a blow to the rotten twin systems of partnership and benchmarking with inflation running at over 5% and pay rises at 3.5%.

All workers stand to gain from this victory and that is why several public sector unions have passed emergency motions at their conferences in solidarity with the nurses.

On 17 April, two news stories illustrated the current contradictions in this dispute. On RTE radio's 'Morning Ireland', SIPTU official, Louise O'Reilly expressed her union's acceptance of benchmarking, undermining the strike.

On the 6 O'Clock news, however, FF backbench TD, Jimmy Devins said he supported the nurses' demands for pay and a 35-hour week. Our unions need to stop shoring up this government and take advantage of the real fear in government circles that workers could make real gains from this dispute after years of massive profits.

We need to give every possible support to the nurses' strike. Petitions and messages of support from community groups and trades unions are crucial as are solidarity actions, joining picket lines and winning support for a national demonstration.



Photos: Paula Geraghty

AROUND THE UNION CONFERENCES

Teachers pledge their support to the nurses

ASTI

By Mark Walshe, ASTI Dublin North No. 1 Branch

The annual convention of the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI) unanimously passed an emergency motion in support of the nurses' campaign for improved pay and conditions and their right to negotiate outside of the so called 'benchmarking' process.

In supporting the motion, Margaret Moore, Dublin North East branch, called on the union to 'lead by example.' The ASTI had rejoined ICTU not to be 'compliant, passive and well behaved, but to shake it up,' she said.

Bernard Lynch, Dublin South branch, called on both SIPTU and ICTU to back the nurses' campaign.

It was not the Government but ICTU which 'behind closed doors is supporting pay deals that are destroying the public service.' He said the nurses' action was 'right,' 'justified,' and 'long overdue.'

'In declaring their support for the nurses the teachers have effectively thumbed their noses at social partnership,' an editorial in the Irish Independent whinged the following day.

Indeed, a second emergency motion on the latest social partnership agreement went even further, calling on ICTU to renegotiate the pay terms of the agreement 'owing to the significant increase in the cost of living experienced by all

workers subsequent to the adoption of Towards 2016 in September 2006.'

According to the Irish Times, the vote was not surprising given that 82 per cent of ASTI members voted against Towards 2016 (but were forced to accept it because of our membership of ICTU).

What was surprising, however, was the 'sheer strength of support among delegates for the move.'

Much would depend on whether the ASTI could 'oversee the orchestration of a groundswell of support within ICTU for its call for renegotiation.'

The convention also discussed the situation of lesbian, gay and bi-sexual post-primary teachers.

A clause in the Employment Equality Act currently allows for action to be taken to prevent an employee or prospective employee from 'undermining the religious ethos of an institution.'

Although the clause had never been used, Assistant General Secretary Maire Mulcahy said its existence meant there is an 'extra cudgel' to level at gay, lesbian and bi-sexual teachers and was a statement that they are somehow less trustworthy in their capacity to transmit the values of the school.

A report on the need to rejuvenate local branches, the bedrock of the organisation, was also presented and a number of creative steps will be taken to increase participation in local branches, where teachers can get a view of the bigger picture of what's



Bernard Lynch, Dublin South Branch, said the nurses' action was 'right,' 'justified,' and 'long overdue.'

happening in education.

The convention ended with calls to support our two candidates in the Senate elections following the General Election.

Bernadine O'Sullivan is seeking a seat on the NUI panel (UCD, UCC etc.), while David Martin

is hoping to get elected to the Dublin University panel (TCD).

Graduates of any of these colleges are encouraged to use their vote to elect two candidates who will be a strong voice for teachers and for workers in general.

INTO

By Niall Smyth, INTO Dublin City North Branch

The annual congress of the Irish National Teachers Organisation took place over the Easter break. The message from the leadership of the union throughout the conference was clear on future pay issues: there is no other show in town except partnership.

General Secretary, John Carr despite alluding to the 'growing unease with the capacity of the industrial relations systems to deliver fair and equitable pay settlements' went on to stress 'the importance of this benchmarking exercise to the continuation of social partnership' and strongly warned of a 'free for all which will develop with the consequence impact on our economy and inward foreign investment. Nobody wants industrial unrest.'

However, speaking to other delegates, feelings on the ground on the issue were quite different. Many felt that with the latest pay deal coming in at 4.4% and inflation hitting over 5%, members had given an enormous amount in the form of various concessions in return for what now effectively a pay-cut and change was needed soon on this.

Speaking at the debate on benchmarking, Crea Ryder, Dublin City South Branch, referred to the trade union leadership's belief that

benchmarking was the 'be all and end all'.

According to her since benchmarking was introduced people have given more and more productivity in their jobs. To much applause from delegates, she criticized the position of both the INTO and the trade union leadership generally to the nurses dispute.

She believed that as a trade union 'we should be supporting the nurses looking for 10% increase and a 35 hour week whether it is in or out of the benchmarking process.'

The INTO were completely out of step with both the TUI and ASTI who both passed motions at their respective conferences which brought into question the whole basis of Social Partnership and gave explicit support to the nurses.

In fact, despite numerous attempts by individual INTO delegates to have the union send a message of support none was forthcoming. Members of the SWP collected a large number of signatures in support of the nurses' action from delegates during congress.

The obvious gap lies between the views of the leadership and that of the membership. This was most evident in General Secretary John Carr's disgraceful endorsement of the government during his Congress address to the Minister.

He said to Minister Hanafin, 'I wish you good luck. I hope you

won't be going back to school in September! You have made your mark in education, been good for education.

If you take on board the ideas that I gave you today you could, to paraphrase Eamon Dunphy, go from being a good Minister to a great Minister.

'The INTO would be happy to see you come back and finish the job that needs to be done in primary education.' This was effectively an endorsement of Fianna Fail by the INTO General Secretary.

This led to huge anger among delegates. Speaking during a debate Donal Healy of Dublin West Branch said, to sustained applause, 'I don't know if its appropriate for our general secretary to say he looks forward to working with this minister again, there are plenty of people in this hall who are not of the Fianna Fail persuasion and I don't want my General Secretary telling me what the next government should be.'

With the ASTI and the TUI both setting themselves clearly against the tide of social partnership, the INTO are increasingly isolate in their insistence on the necessity and importance of social partnership.

The outcome of the nurses' dispute will shape the debate within and ultimately the direction the union in the not too distant future.

35 years since the Widgery Report



By Eamonn McCann

It's not often there's a commemoration meeting in the Bogside for a Lord Chief Justice of England.

But a decent crowd gathered in the Gasyard Centre on 17 April to mark the 35th anniversary of the publication of the report on Bloody Sunday by Lord Widgery.

It was apt that the occasion be remembered.

The publication of Widgery's report in April 1972 wasn't just a post-script to the atrocity in which British paratroopers had gunned down 14 anti-internment protestors.

It was an integral element in the atrocity and crucial in giving Bloody Sunday its continuing significance.

It's commonly remarked, even by conservative commentators, that Bloody Sunday gave the IRA recruitment a huge boost, particularly among working-class Catholics in the North.

Enraged by the murder of their neighbours in broad daylight, young people flocked to the only organisations which seemed to offer the prospect of hitting back.

At an emotional level, here is a great deal of truth in this.

But it was the Widgery Report 11 weeks later which solidified the feeling that constitutional politics offered no way forward.

Widgery completed his report in double-quick time. He decided there was no point taking evidence from hundreds of civilian eye-witnesses to the slaughter. The handful of Derry witnesses called were treated like suspects.

The report found that while some of the paras may have fired wrongly, or even 'recklessly,' the victims were the main authors of their own tragedies, for having participated in an 'illegal' match. None of the deaths was found to have been murder.

In the aftermath of Widgery, it was not possible to argue, particularly in the Bogside, that people should look to 'ordinary' politics for a solution to the grievances they experienced in their lives. Britain's highest constitutional authority had endorsed



Bloody Sunday, Derry, 30 January 1972,

the State killing of unarmed civilian protestors. Who could now argue for peaceful means only?

In the days after Bloody Sunday, emotion had driven many into paramilitary groups. But, following Widgery, the rejection of constitutional politics was a rational as much as an emotional response. Joining the Provisional or Official IRA wasn't the only path available to those who now saw conventional politics as futile. In the absence of any effective or

attractive socialist option, it seemed the obvious path.

This contradicts the perspective on history now being promoted by the British and Irish ruling classes and implicitly accepted in the Good Friday and St. Andrew's Agreements. In this version of history, the conflict over the last four decades has been, essentially, a battle for supremacy between the Catholic and Protestant communities.

The Stormont Assembly and

Executive are put forward as a fair and balanced outcome to this battle. Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley are heaped with praise for accepting the compromises involved. Tony Blair is hailed as a hero for having patiently coaxed the two communal leaders into a peace deal with each other.

The deal lets British governments, and Britain generally, off the hook. No wonder Blair wants to have it as his 'legacy.'

The British ruling class was a

participant in and instigator of the violence which ripped the North apart for a generation. Now, with the assistance of the main parties, including Sinn Féin, it presents itself as a well-meaning conciliator and arbiter between 'the two communities.'

Lord Widgery's intervention in Northern affairs 35 years ago this month serves as a reminder that the British ruling class has been no benign bystander but is steeped in the blood of the conflict.

An Northern Ireland Assembly for the bosses

Continued from page 12

Indeed, the parties with the strongest policies against PFI – like SF – have been the parties that in power have used it the most.

While the Assembly was suspended, New Labour worked with the Strategic Investment Board to privatise everything in sight: new schools, hospital facilities, roads, water, whatever.

Now the Assembly will be back in charge, with parties which declare themselves anti-PFI at the helm, will we see a serious challenge to this privatisation spree? No one should hold their breath.

The truth is that, underneath the rhetoric, all the main parties have bought into neo-liberalism.

They either fully accept it (most of the DUP and UUP) or believe it's futile to oppose it (Sinn Féin, the SDLP).

SF's document on PFI

(download on <http://www.sinnfein.ie/policies/document/151>) is an example of this looking-both-ways approach.

The document starts explaining that 'Sinn Féin's position in opposition to the privatisation of public services puts it in direct opposition to PFI/PPP. It is part of an effort by the British Treasury to tighten its control over northern fiscal policy and to privatise public services.'

'As such, the situation highlights the lack of economic sovereignty that exists in the north of Ireland. It also highlights the degree to which the other parties on the Executive are willing to sheepishly accede to such a lack of sovereignty.'

Sounds straightforward enough.

By page 18, however, the document concludes that 'whenever PFI/PPP is unavoidable the following must apply. Any PFI/PPP projects

that are announced by Ministers must be accompanied by strong "health warnings" that make it clear that PFI is only one option and not my preferred option.

'Simultaneously, Sinn Féin representatives who are not tied by the Executive should make more explicit public statements, in support of the Minister and in clarification of their action.'

So, Sinn Féin in office will continue to oppose PFI in principle while accepting and operating it in practice. Whether or not this amounts to 'sheepish acceptance', it certainly amounts to acceptance.

The political parties' submissions last September to the Economic Sub-Group of the 'Preparation for Government Committee' tell us more about what to expect from the new Executive.

The DUP says: 'Northern Ireland needs a serious dose of introspection within its

Government department's (sic) vis-à-vis their relationship with the business community and the promotion of a genuine partnership between Government and business with Government taking on the role of facilitating entrepreneurial opportunity.'

Sinn Féin: 'We should say yes to goal driven tax incentives which increase R&D activity, aid new product and process innovation, enhance worker training and development, help our entrepreneurs break into new markets and aid environmental improvements.'

Either statement could fit comfortably into a policy statement from the Confederation of British Industry or an election appeal from David Cameron's Tories.

The parties' response to water charges is the best example of their approach.

Forced during the election to pledge to scrap the charges and reverse privatisation,

once the election was over, they stopped talking about 'scrapping' them and started again to talk about 'dealing with them'.

On 2 April, SF's Mitchell McLaughlin told UTV that 'if we separate out the legacy cost and we set in front of people the legitimate cost of running a clean and healthy water supply to people's houses, people are fair minded, they will pay that.'

While the British government is paying this year's charges, there is no sign of either the DUP or SF pushing to reverse the moves towards privatisation of water, which came into force on 1 April.

That's as good an indication as any of what's in prospect.

The establishment of a new Assembly and Executive changes the political terrain. But it doesn't change the need for mobilisation and struggle within the trade unions and the community.

May Day in Northern Ireland

★ 1907-2007 Centenary of the Great Docks Strike.

Thursday 3 May 6pm, Linenhall Library, Belfast. Launch of a new edition of *City in revolt*, John Gray's 1985 history of the strike. Followed by a talk. Sponsored by SIPTU, all welcome.

★ Rally, March and Diversity Festival.

Saturday 5 May: Assemble 11.30 at Custom House Square for rally with speakers. Performance piece by Ger O'Leary enacting a Jim Larkin speech. March off 12.30. Diversity festival in St George's Market from 1pm: free and open to all. Music, stalls, food, children's workshops, face painting and full bar.

COMMENT

Iraq four years on

By Paul Carroll

There were worldwide demonstrations on 19 March to mark the fourth anniversary of the illegal occupation of Iraq.

A wreath laying ceremony was held at the old Customs Post at Shannon Airport. There was also one minute's silence and 655 broken daffodils, representing the 655,000 Iraqi dead, placed upon the roundabout at the entrance to the airport.

Deirdre Clancy of the Pit-Stop Ploughshares, who laid the wreath wanted the Irish anti-war movement focus to remain on Shannon: 'We owe it to ourselves to stand up against the militarisation of Shannon Airport and future generations and to the past who stood up against imperialism in an Irish context. We owe it our fellow human being to stand up stand up for their right not to be a slaughtered.'

Tens of thousands of Iraqi marched from Kufa to Najaf in a rally to demand US forces leave their country. The march was organised by the Radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, whose Mahdi Army militia has been responsible for the deaths of Sunnis in Iraq's continuing sectarian struggle.

However the march was a peaceful event with no reports of violence but demonstrators did burn and stamp American flags. Placards were hoisted by men, women and children which read 'Yes, Yes to Iraq' and 'Yes, Yes to Muqtada. Occupiers should leave Iraq.'

In America there was demonstrations across the country. A demonstration was held outside the headquarters of Lockheed Martin, the world's largest weapons corporation, in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Protesters draped an American and Iraqi flag over a coffin and began a roll call of those who died in Iraq. Banners were held aloft which read: 'War Crimes Scene' and 'Resist Lockheed Martin, the face of war-making in Iraq.'

Not long after Bush took office Lockheed Martin was awarded \$17 billion in contracts from the U.S. Department Of Defence. Also a former vice-president of the company, Bruce Jackson, chaired the Coalition for the Liberation of Iraq, a bipartisan group that promoted Bush's plans for war in Iraq.

Thousands of people also marched to the Pentagon to demand the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and also to condemn the Democrats for not forcefully advancing their pre-election plans to bring the war to an end.

A prayer service was held at the Washington National Cathedral, which 3200 Christian patrons attended and prayed for peace and an end to the war.

Rev. Raphael G. Warnock, senior pastor at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church, speaking at the event lambasted President Bush:

'Mr. Bush, my Christian brother, we do need a surge in troops. We need a surge in the non-violent army of the Lord,' he said. 'We need a surge in conscience and a surge in activism and a surge in truth-telling.'

In Europe, the largest demonstrations were held in Spain. An estimated 400,000 gathered in the Spanish capital of Madrid to protest the war and a reported one hundred other demonstrations were held in cities throughout the country.

A week before the demonstrations The International Committee of the Red Cross, an independent humanitarian body, released a report entitled 'Civilians Without Protection: The ever-worsening humanitarian crisis in Iraq.'

In it they report that 'the humanitarian situation is steadily worsening and its affecting, directly and indirectly, all Iraqis,' and only 'those with the military or political influence on the ground can act now to ensure that the lives of ordinary Iraqis are spared and protected.'

But there remains a total disregard for the lives of ordinary Iraqis shown by Bush and Blair, their allies and the profiteers in this false war:

'The plight of Iraqi civilians is a daily reminder of the fact that there has long been a failure to respect their lives and dignity.'

Paul Carroll is a freelance journalist based in Cork.

INTERNATIONAL

Mining giant faces the wrath of the poor

*A multinational is attempting to sweep away communities in South Africa that stand in its way. But, writes, **Charlie Kimber**, resistance is growing*

PHILLIPOS DOLO travelled from South Africa to London this week to confront the giant Anglo American mining corporation at its annual general meeting.

He came with a burning anger at the way the company has treated the people in the area where he lives.

Anglo Platinum, which is 70 percent owned by Anglo American, is creating the world's biggest open cast platinum mine near Mokopane in Limpopo province.

'The mine bosses are destroying our community, destroying our ancestral lands and turning the whole area into a rural slum,' Dolo told Socialist Worker. 'It produces fortunes for them, but terrible poverty for us.'

'They come to an area, remove the people and then set up mines which cause terrible environmental destruction as well as destroying farming land. And the wealth goes to the mining company.'

'When people resist, they face beatings, fines, jail and constant harassment.'

'My own family has suffered. We used to have land that my mother, father and two sisters worked on to grow food to survive.'

'The company seized this land and gave us no compensation. They ignore the law and sweep away our rights. It is not just happening in my area but in large parts of South Africa's northern provinces.'

Anglo Platinum claims that "community representatives" have agreed to its activities.

But these representatives are organised in what are called Section 21 companies—fake bodies that have not allowed any elections or popular consultation over the last decade.

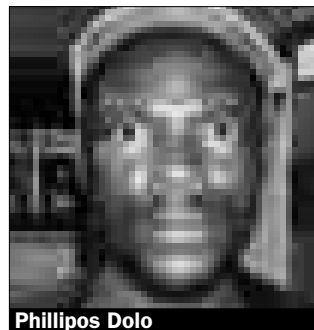
Dolo criticised these stooges as "rats and dung beetles"—and was promptly arrested and held in custody for six days. He now faces a court hearing.

Some 17,000 people have now been relocated in the area where Dolo organises, through a mixture of bribes and violence.

Shadow

In February Anglo Platinum's cronies in two Section 21 companies in the Mapela area (near Mokopane) ensured that 25, mostly older people, were arrested in Sterkwater, and that children were arrested in Mothloho.

The children were celebrating the results of an independently organised local poll that rejected



Phillippos Dolo

Anglo American's plans.

In Ga-Pila, about 6,000 people were relocated in order to make way for a mine waste rock dump.

But 26 families defiantly refused to move. The company cut off their water and electricity, bulldozed the surrounding roads, and demolished neighbours' houses to leave vast piles of rubble near where people live.

This community now exists in the shadow of the rock dump.

To prevent similar occurrences in the future, Anglo Platinum now pays compensation for displaced people in two lumps, one upfront and the rest when the last member of the community moves out.

Richard Spoor, Dolo's attorney, told Socialist Worker, "To say such compensation schemes

are an incitement to violence is to underestimate the damage that they cause.

"You have incredibly poor people who have money dangled in front of them—but only if the rest have given up their homes. This will encourage intimidation—and worse. It is criminally irresponsible to push through such measures."

While the compensation schemes are encouraging intimidation, the company is using the 1982 Intimidation Act against activists.

This law was passed under the apartheid regime for use against protests and pickets.

The ANC government has backed the mining firms in their war against local communities.

The background to the company's acts is the fantastic profitability of platinum.

The metal is a key resource for the automotive industry and 90 percent of the global reserves are in South Africa. Earlier this year Anglo American reported a 63 percent leap in full-year profits to £4.7 billion.

"We want justice for our communities and a fair sharing of the mineral wealth," says Dolo. "We will not be intimidated away from the struggle."

INDIA



A striking union member is attacked by police outside the Hindustan Motors factory in West Bengal

Striking car workers defy repression in West Bengal

CAR WORKERS taking part in an indefinite strike at the Hindustan Motors factory in Uttarpara, in the Indian state of West Bengal, were brutally assaulted by police last week.

This was the latest episode in a struggle that is fuelling growing anger with the Communist-led government in the state.

Officers armed with long truncheons attacked pickets and arrested union activists who have been taking action for more than a month.

The strike follows the

dismissal of two leaders and the victimisation of more than 100 others.

The confrontation at the plant, which employs 4,500 people, is close to the site of last month's pitched battles between police and protesters in Nandigram and Singur, which left 14 protesters dead.

Poor farmers in Singur are opposing the theft of their land to build a car factory for the multinational firm, Tata.

The state government is using police repression against

those who are fighting major corporations in an effort to present West Bengal as a "business-friendly" environment.

State government chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee describes the strike at Hindustan Motors as the work of "hooligans" and "agitators".

Nevertheless the car workers' struggle is having a knock on effect on other car plants in India.

On Wednesday of last week Hindustan Motor's management decided to

temporarily close the plant because of the strike, causing a crisis for other manufacturers who rely on Hindustan Motors for parts.

The striking workers at Hindustan Motors are determined to stay out until all their demands are met and have issued an appeal for financial support.

Send messages of support to Sangrami Shramik Karmachari Union, 51 Shibatala Street, PO Bhadrakali, District: Hooghly, West Bengal, India 712232. For more information:

www.autoworkers-ssku.org

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COMMENT

Who is behind Iraq's sectarian gangs?

By Kevin Wingfield

The US is staring ever more starkly at defeat in Iraq. Despite the recent 'surge' the number of attacks on US forces continues to rise. The majority of Iraqis want the US gone and support attacks on occupation forces.

On Monday 9 April up to a million people demonstrated in Najaf to demand US withdrawal. Later, responding to pressure from below, supporters of radical Shia cleric al Sadr left the government because it had not demanded a date for US withdrawal.

But even among opponents of the invasion and occupation, many deny the legitimacy of the resistance to take up arms against the invaders and their collaborators. The violence, it is claimed, is predominantly a sectarian war between Shia and Sunni.



Carnage after a Baghdad car bomb

Two important Iraqi exiles recently challenged this view.

Haifa Zangana, writing in the London Guardian, blamed 'US-led troops, militias and death squads' for the sectarian attacks, not the resistance which is usually blamed, encouraging the impression that opposition to occupation has been eclipsed by sectarian strife. Zangana gave an example of an attack on a mosque that was providing social services to the local people.

'Troops from the Iraqi army, supported by US helicopters, raided a mosque in the heart of old Baghdad. The well-respected muazzin Abu Saif and another civilian were executed in public.'

'Local people were outraged and attacked the troops. At the end of the day, 34 people had been killed, including a number of women and children. As usual, the summary execution and the massacre that followed were blamed on insurgents.'

'The military statement said US and Iraqi forces were continuing to "locate, identify, and engage and kill insurgents targeting coalition and Iraqi security forces in the area".'

Divide-and-rule is of course a tried and tested technique of imperialists. If the British authorities were happy to collaborate with loyalist death squads in Northern Ireland, why is it far-fetched to imagine that Bush's gang would not do the

same for the immensely more valuable prize of Iraq and its oil?

From April 2003, days after the US invasion, it is a matter of public record that the US was actively seeking out, training and arming hand-picked ex-Saddam officers and tribal leaders to organise deniable militias. The Special Police Commandos, notorious for sectarian killings and tortures were formed in this way.

The Washington Post at that time reported one example:

'Hay Al Ansar, on the outskirts of Najaf in Iraq, was glad to be rid of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath party government, when the city was seized by US forces last week. But they appear to be just as terrified, if not more so, of their new rulers: a little-known Iraqi militia backed by the US special forces and headquartered in a compound nearby.'

'The Iraqi Coalition of National Unity (ICNU), which appeared in the city last week riding on US Special Forces vehicles, has taken to looting and terrorising their neighbourhood with impunity, according to most residents.'

The US occupiers, as Iraqi author Sami Ramadanani points out in the current International Socialism Journal, 'aid and abet secret militias led by former Saddam generals, six of which were exposed by the Wall Street Journal more than a year and a half ago.'

'In addition to their own US assassination squads (trained at Fort Bragg in North Carolina), they brought in a strong force of what I call mercenaries, what the media calls private contractors. They number well over 50,000—mostly contracted to the Pentagon.'

Sectarianism, Ramadanani argues, has no strong roots in Iraqi society. But the parties represented in parliamentary institutions which the US has sponsored are organised on a communal basis and fight each other with rival armed militias. These armed conflicts necessarily intensify sectarian violence.

Two important and serious commentators, Gilbert Achcar and Patrick Cockburn take the view that sectarian conflict has gone much deeper than Ramadanani and Zangana allow. In the fog of violence and occupation it's hard to clearly make out the truth.

But on the US government published figures fully 75 percent of 'insurgent' violence is directed at the occupiers and opinion polls confirm the overwhelming rejection of sectarianism by the Iraqi population, Shia, Sunni or Kurd.

As Haifa Zangana wrote, 'The Iraqi resistance is fighting to end the occupation, it consists of ordinary Iraqis, not only al-Qaida, not just Sunnis or Shias. Iraqis are proud, peace-loving people, they hate occupation, not each other.'

Kevin Wingfield is a member of the Irish Anti War Movement Steering Committee and writes in a personal capacity

Read Sami Ramadanani at <http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=299&issue=114> and Haifa Zangana at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,2054881,00.html>

THE REAL SCANDAL: WORK HARDER FOR YOUR PAY CUT!

Kieran Allen, author of The Corporate Take-Over of Ireland, examines how workers are losing out because of 'Social Partnership'.

Workers are taking a pay cut and their union leaders are saying barely a word. This extraordinary situation has arisen because a tight nexus controls the leadership of SIPTU and the ICTU. They believe that workers have no alternative but to accept whatever social partnership offers.

Most of the top union officials are either members of the Labour Party or are close to it and they have no intention of rocking the boat for Pat Rabbitte.

Inflation is presently running at 5.1 percent but workers are only receiving a 3 percent pay rise.

The situation is even worse than even these bald figures indicate because inflation in Ireland is calculated in a manner that excludes house prices. The Consumer Price Index only takes account of the rises in mortgage interest, but not the actual price of the house.

Bizarrely, if interest rates fall while house prices are rising, the CPI will show a drop in the housing component of inflation.

Even when no account is taken of house prices and the huge mortgages, which many workers have, the official figures show that workers are taking a pay cut.

The corporations who have made huge profits from the Irish boom could easily afford extra pay rises. The banks, for example, have seen their profits shoot up to over €2 billion a year.

But despite this, the union leaders have not called for the Towards 2016 deal to be negotiated.

Instead they have largely kept silent, with ICTU's David Begg making the most mealy-mouthed statement noting that if inflation continued to rise he might be 'pressurised' to call for more pay.

Instead of giving a lead, he was in fact signalling to the employers that he was doing his best to hold the line.

The first union to take a firm stance was the teachers' union ASTI. At their annual conference, they called for an immediate re-negotiation of the partnership pay deal to reflect current reality.

This has now been followed by the CPSU who have unanimously called for the re-negotiation of the partnership deal.

Working harder to get a pay cut

In the 1950s, Japanese car factories developed a technique known as 'Kaizen' as a way of increasing pressure on their workforce.

Workers were never supposed to stand still but to show 'continuous improvement' year-on-year as a way of expressing loyalty to their company. Companies like Toyota only got away with this because Japanese unions had been weakened during WW2 many union militants were victimised under the subsequent US

occupation.

In most other countries, workers were able to bargain over productivity.

Typically workers received pay rises which were supposed to compensate for the rate of inflation and then bargained for extra pay by giving additional productivity concessions to their employers.

Ireland's system of social partnership, however, has scrapped all this and introduced the old Japanese method of 'continuous improvement'.

This occurs in two main ways.

First, the long detailed clauses of the social partnership deals give management ample scope to restore their 'right to manage'. The agreements state quite explicitly that workers must accept 'normal ongoing change', including the contracting out of work.

Workers must simply work though the changes and are only allowed to process their objections through the slow, torturous machinery of the Labour Relations Commission and the Labour Court.

Second, even to achieve the modest pay rises which are granted under partnership agreements, workers have to submit 'action plans' and 'progress reports', showing 'verifiable' productivity improvements.

Before getting the last 3 percent pay rise, shop stewards in most public sector jobs sat down with their management in a 'partnership forum' and were forced to sign up to plans to show more improvements.

If the employers did not feel that enough productivity had been given, they can refuse to sign off on the plan.

These plans were then sent into a Performance Verification Group, which was supposed to decide if the productivity improvements were genuine.

Far from being neutral, these PVGs are often fronts for different branches of the government as their 'secretariats' are made up of top state officials.

Through this mechanisms a subtle game is played whereby local managements maintain informal contacts with the PVG and do a 'good cop'/'bad cop' routine.

The local management will imply that the 'bad cop' on the PVG will not be satisfied with the list of productivity improvements and will offer to 'help' shop stewards write their action plans so that it gets through the PVG and a pay deal is granted.

This activity normally takes place away from the eyes of most union members who sometimes do not even get to see exactly what they have been signed up for.

The Benchmarking Fraud

Throughout the nurses dispute, the government have repeatedly claimed that grievances can be sorted out by the 'benchmarking process.'

Instead of nailing this lie and sup-

porting the Irish Nurses Organisation, the SIPTU leadership and the ICTU have echoed the claims of the right wing government.

SIPTU has even urged the INO to call off their industrial action and to go to the benchmarking body.

The reality, however, is that benchmarking is a fraud that is perpetrated on public sector workers.

Not so long ago, the public sector workers had the right to present relativity claims where they found their wages falling behind comparable grades. However, as part of the partnership process, the union leaders agreed to do away with this and replace it with benchmarking.

Benchmarking is supposed to be an 'objective' assessment that compares public sector wages and conditions to those in the private sector.

Yet this is in itself a biased comparison because there are not always comparable jobs where an exact match can be measured. Moreover, as the public sector is better organised, it forces a comparison with sectors of the economy where there are less union members.

The real fraud comes with the claim that the process is 'objective'. The benchmarking body operates in secret and does not publish the reasons for its results.

There is no appeal mechanism and this shadowy body therefore acts as both the judge and jury. To compound the secrecy, the evidence on which it apparently based its judgements is destroyed so nobody can check the figures.

The Minister for Finance appoints the benchmarking body and the current membership could not be regarded as pro-worker.

It is made up of a Senior Counsel, a former Fianna Fail candidate, a former Economics Professor with strong neo-liberal views, two right wing former union officials, one of whom has already been nominated onto several state bodies, a former government department secretary general and a corporate executive of a US finance house, State Street International.

Telling the nurses that they must cease to act like trade unionists and let their fate be decided by this body is an utter disgrace.

What you can do:

Social partnership is destroying the union movement and has led to a major fall in union density with just over a third of the Irish workforce now being in a union.

We need to break it before a pattern is established whereby workers must give ever-increasing productivity just to get wage cuts.

In the immediate period, union activists should press for:

■ **The present deal to be immediately re-negotiated to stop workers getting pay cuts.**

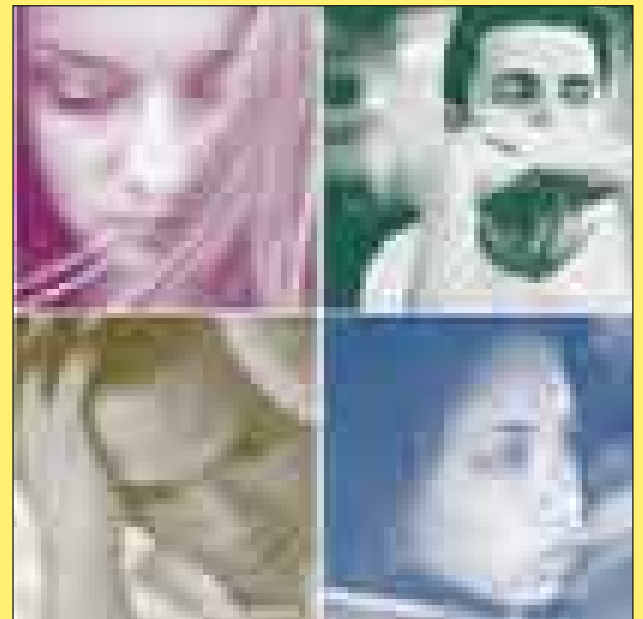
■ **Immediate withdrawal from partnership if the bosses fail to agree.**

For more news, comment and analysis, visit the Socialist Worker webpage www.swp.ie



Nurses fighting for decent pay and conditions and repudiating Benchmarking
Photo Paula Geraghty

Harney's Failure to Deliver on Mental Health



One in eight of us have taken antidepressants

By Kieran McNulty

Mary Harney has forced the mental health service in Ireland to rely more on dispensing drugs than providing alternative therapy as a result of the savage cuts that have taken place in staffing numbers, together with clever marketing strategies of pharmaceutical companies.

Shockingly, in Ireland today, one in eight of us have taken antidepressants which means this medication is being taken by a very broad cross section of society, though those who are the poorest, especially people dependent on welfare, are the most effected.

Twice as many women use antidepressants as men. Along with antidepressants sedatives and tranquilisers are also being used. Such tablets Valium, Librium, Tamazapan, Largactal, Prozac and Anafranil are in common use.

Instead of proper investment in the mental health service these tablets are being dispensed by the HSE as a quick fix solution. Young people are often the most vulnerable and at risk of suicide and may also be taking large amounts of alcohol and illegal drugs as well as prescription medication.

Many of these prescription drugs have side effects that are known to exacerbate the mental health condition of the individual concerned and often the damage is done when they are finally taken off the market.

They also tend to be highly addictive: many people have been known to be on them for life. Dehydration, headaches, weight gain are just some of the side effects which frequently arise from taking this medication.

These drugs are legal and are coming onto the market because pharmaceutical companies including Pfizer and Novartis are motivated purely by profit and ultimately abstain from responsibility of the often devastating consequences caused to people taking these tablets.

While it does need to be stressed that drugs do have an important role in mental health, they need to be used in conjunction with other treatments, especially well-funded community-based approaches that include clinical psychology services and occupational therapy.

These approaches require a massive increase in investment by the state. This is something Mary Harney will not countenance and has instead chosen to push on with her policy of privatisation.

'A Vision for Change', a report on the Irish mental health service commissioned by the Tim O'Malley—Harney's man in charge of mental health and like her a Progressive Democrat—was released in January 2006. As yet none of the recommendations included in this report have received the financial backing to make them realisable.

Per capita, mental health receives little more than half the state funding of the other health sectors, which themselves are being subjected to severe cuts.

One reason for this is because people with this disability are often the most vulnerable and the least able to campaign for their rights. Amnesty International has been campaigning since the beginning of 2003 that the human rights of those in Ireland with mental health conditions can only be fully protected if legislation is passed and properly funded.

At least part of the problem here is that there is a severe shortage of trained psychiatric nurses and this is why it is important that the psychiatric nurses along with their colleagues in the INO are successful in their current campaign of industrial action.

Only a properly resourced mental health service can provide alternatives to medication which so many people in Ireland desperately require. It is appalling that the suicide rate in Ireland is around the same figure as road deaths, yet receives so little attention by the media.

Unfortunately there is still stigma attached to mental health and it is still difficult to raise the issue publicly. This is why it is important for socialists to oppose the government's health policies and support all those professionals and patients who are fighting for a better health service.

International Socialism

Issue 114 out now €8/£5

International Socialism is published by the International Socialist Group, PO Box 1648 Dublin 8. It is available in English, Irish, and Spanish. The magazine is published quarterly. The subscription price is €8/£5 per year. Single copies are available for €2/£1.25. The magazine is available free of charge to members of the International Socialist Group. For more information contact Bookmarx, PO Box 1648 Dublin 8 email info@swp.ie or go to www.isj.org.uk

The Media and Workers' Struggles

By Sara O'Rourke

In recent weeks the media has repeatedly tried, but failed, to undermine the Nurses strike action. The defiant and upbeat atmosphere at hospitals around the country where actions have been taking place is evidence of their refusal to back down regardless of media attempts to turn public opinion against them.

It is not the first time we have seen the type of negative coverage published in papers such as the Evening Herald and Daily Mail. The Irish Ferries workers in 2005 were also victims of it.

The people of Rosport in Mayo continue to have particularly nasty media attention which aims to make them look like troublemakers, as people with nothing better to do than disrupt work at a Shell terminal.

That Shell is the real cause of social conflict in Mayo is ignored. Do we ever read in the mainstream press how it has wreaked havoc at enormous human and environmental cost in countries such as Nigeria and is on a path to doing the same in Mayo?

What lies behind this media bias against people fighting for their rights? Why do newspapers not carry headlines that say 'Support the Nurses' or 'Victory to the people of Rosport'?

Noam Chomsky, left-wing activist, linguist and author has written extensively on the subject of media control. He explains that the media does put a bias on subjects both by way of crude misrepresentations and by a subtle use of language.

In *Media control: the spectacular achievements of propaganda* he lays out his theory of how the media and democracy, so-called, works. He says that 'propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state'. As democracy is a favourite buzz word, one we regularly hear from the likes of George Bush in relation to what the US is trying to achieve in Iraq let me briefly discuss this foggy notion.

There are many (mis)conceptions of democracy. While we would like to believe that it means living in a society in which the public has the means to participate in the management of its own affairs, in reality it is more like Chomsky's version where the public are barred from managing their own affairs and where the means of information are narrowly and rigidly controlled.

He describes the public as spectators of action in this type of democracy. They vote in elections from time to time and then retreat back to their spectator positions, never becoming participants in the political process.

Chomsky views society as having three classes and focuses particularly on what he calls the 'specialised class'. The specialised class have an active role in running things. They run the political and economical systems. They are educated intellectuals who keep a leash on the public, who they think of as the 'bewildered herd', by means of propaganda. And they work for the people who own society.

This specialised class has to have instilled in them the beliefs and doctrines that will serve the interests of private power, the people who own society. Private ownership of areas such as media, for example, becomes a source of censorship.

When the Irish Ferries workers went on strike in 2005 they received negative coverage in Independent Newspapers in particular. Interestingly one Bernard Somers of Change Management Firms was on the boards of Independent Newspapers PLC and Irish Ferries.

States too support this private power. Shell in Mayo is again a good example. The government has put the interests of a multinational corporation ahead of the interests of the people. We are told it is for our benefit to have them there drilling gas for our use. It is rarely mentioned that we will be buying back gas that is ours.



Massive trade union protest in November 2005 over Irish Ferries planned replacement of 543 Irish seafarers with lower paid crews from Eastern Europe

Photo: Rob Bremner



Noam Chomsky

So state propaganda, when supported by a layer of intellectual supporters and when no dissenting voice is permitted from it, can have a big affect. In this model the bewildered herd are to be kept that way because if they stop being spectators and were to become active in the political process they would only do so in the role of troublemakers.

The reality is that labelling protesters as troublemakers, be they Nurses or antiwar protestors, is an attempt to keep people in check. The interests of those who own society are threatened when people realise they can change things by organising and getting together so they try to lessen or eliminate the threat by various propaganda means.

In the US, post-WWI, there occurred what is now famously known as the 'Red Scare'. Among many other groups, several trade unions were judged by private power to be dangerous elements in society and were almost destroyed. Outspoken and critical individuals within the media and art world for example were witch-hunted.

The specialised intellectual supporters of big business and the state were able to drive a reluctant population into a war by terrifying them and eliciting what Chomsky describes as 'jingoist fanaticism'.

One type of propaganda most often whipped up is a fear of 'the other'. Fear of 'devils' such as foreign workers, people of different cultural and religious beliefs or sexual orientation and so on, is something the media regularly tries to elicit. The best recent example of this is the 'War on Terror', Muslims the world over come under suspicion of terrorist activity simply by the fact of their being of that particular religious persuasion.

Another example of this type of propaganda is the excuse the US are using for not leaving Iraq: that it will descend into civil war because the Sunni Muslims and Shia Muslims will kill each other without the presence of US and British troops. This idea is

everywhere.

What is not everywhere is that in recent weeks for example, over a million people protested in Najaf. The demonstration included people of all denominations and was led by religious leaders of both the Shia and Sunni communities.

Chomsky's theory of the *manufacture of consent* means that the state gets agreement from the public for things they don't want by propaganda techniques such as this kind of selective reporting.

Here in Ireland, when there is a strike or a demonstration the media usually rush to tell us all about the disruption being caused, usually to traffic and profits of businesses in Dublin city centre in the case of demonstrations.

When it is workers on strike the propaganda is always of a more serious nature. Dissent might spread to others groups and when this happens private power gets very worried. Since the Nurses began their work to rule action on 2 April they have often been the subject of vicious media attacks and many mistruths.

One such mistruth is that the starting wage for a nurse is €56,000, this aims to alienate them from the vast majority of us who earn much lower wages than this. It is an attempt to make them look unreasonable and thereby lessen their support.

Nurses are the only qualified group in hospitals to work 39 hours so it is not unreasonable to want parity with others such as radiographers and even some administrators who work a 33 hour week.

They also want a 10% pay rise because they earn €3000 less than care workers who have less qualification. The difficult nature of Nurses' jobs and the poor conditions that we all know exist in hospitals is not emphasised much in newspapers such as the Evening Herald, which instead has emphasised the suffering of patients because of the action.

It is not said that public patients are suffering anyway in a way private patients are not because they can pay

for a better service. We do not have a public service where everyone is treated according to their needs but rather a two-tier system for the haves and have-nots.

Finally, while it clear the media is biased we should not forget that they cannot be too biased. The power of big business and state control over the media is a limited one. Those who own our society are a small group, too small to keep the profits of newspapers healthy.

It is the worker who makes up the mass of society so they can't afford to alienate us too much. The more recent coverage in the papers of the nurses' dispute is a good example.

They have had to bend more towards public opinion because the majority of people now support the nurses. Their fight while about wages and hours of work is also about fighting a government bent on privatising not just hospitals but transport, education and more.

Moreover, especially in times of social crisis, many of those working in the media gain the confidence to resist the pressures from above and report events honourably and truthfully. Sometimes that is just a particularly courageous individual; even more effective can be the collective action of media workers.

Famously, during the great miners' strike of 1984 - 5 in the UK, Sun workers refused to print a front page that attempted to portray the miners' leader, Arthur Scargill posed as a Nazi. Instead, the paper came out with a big blank space.

Outside of the mainstream media, there has also been a growth of alternative sources of reporting and information.

What we can do is support independent media such as trade union websites, encourage more people to buy this paper for example, join the fight and refuse to be bewildered.

Further info: www.ino.ie; www.chomsky.info/; *The Corporate Takeover of Ireland* by Kieran Allen.

'Propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state' -Chomsky

COMMENT

Abortion is a Class Issue

By Tina MacVeigh

Having read the International Women's Day articles in a recent issue of Socialist Worker, I got to reflecting on the irony of what I had been doing on International Women's Day this year: I accompanied a friend to Leiden in the Netherlands for an abortion.

I have been at her side from the moment the pregnancy test result confirmed her worst fears. She was pregnant. She was not in a relationship with the father and she had no money. Her experience really opened my eyes to the humiliation that women have to suffer as adequate services are not provided for them in this country.

There are many who fear that if introduced, abortion will be used as a flippant alternative to contraception. If my friend's experience is anything to go by, I find it hard to see how that could be the case.

I witnessed her suffer at the decision she was forced to make. I saw her scrape together the money to go to Leiden. I saw her suffer the humiliation at having to 'persuade' the father to make a financial contribution.

He saw it as 'fair' that he should make just a contribution towards the cost. After all wasn't it really her problem and wasn't he being great giving her €100?

This, despite the fact that he could more than afford to pay for it all, or at least a significant proportion of it, if he had wanted to. And yes, the financial cost was €600, but what of the personal cost to her?

The time spent feeling ill. The time spent agonizing over her decision. The time spent feeling every second of an unwanted pregnancy for eight weeks: the morning sickness, headaches all day, swollen and tender breasts. The time spent organising the trip to Leiden. Begging the money from friends. The time spent traveling there. The agonising hours in the clinic. The long and painful journey home. The days spent recovering physically, the emotional recovery and the memories that will last a lifetime.

The fact that abortion is not a choice available on this island continues to oppress women and families who are faced with crisis pregnancies. Women are forced to spend a lot of money traveling abroad. Abortion, family planning, crisis pregnancy management, whatever you want to call it, the reality is it becomes a class issue as those who are economically disadvantaged, may be faced to accept unwanted pregnancies.

In the clinic we were greeted with warmth, compassion, professionalism and no prejudice. We found the first hour there extremely difficult. My friend was very upset by the scan she had to have.

The staff could not have been nicer nor more supportive. They all spoke perfect English of course! But the problem was not the clinic, the problem was that we were not at home. We had to travel half way across Europe to get to it.

After the procedure, we had to hang around for five hours before taking our flight home, which, to add insult to injury, was delayed by another two hours. And all this time, my friend in a lot of pain and discomfort. She should have been able to go straight home to bed.

I am very proud of my brave and beautiful friend.

Abortion is not about murder. Abortion is not about pro-life. Abortion is about tolerance and freedom of choice.

How can the distribution and use of condoms in Africa be condemned and in so doing perpetuate the increasing birth of children with aids?

What kind of life do those children have, doomed to ill-health and for many of them, certain untimely death? Is that pro-life? And what of the sexual abuse scandals that have come to light in recent years? Suffer little children who come on to me.

For too long now this issue has been caught up in a religious and moral debate, and yet the very institution who defend its advancement causing suffering to many.

Its time to end the intolerance and the stream of 13,000 women who are estimated to travel each year from the island of Ireland for abortions abroad.

Tina MacVeigh is a community worker and freelance writer.

CINEMA

The Lives of Others



The truth of the nightmare of life in the DDR is not diminished by romance

Reviewed by Juliet Bressan

The Lives Of Others is a very gripping plot-driven movie that delves into the cruelty and corruption of East German communism in the decades before the collapse of the wall.

If you've read Stasiland by Anna Funder, you will want to see this film, which captures through a gripping human drama the absolute horror which was perpetrated on ordinary peoples lives by the secret police force of the DDR communist party.

Christa Maria is East Germany's favourite actress, and her husband Georg is its favourite playwright.

When the chief of the Stasi

takes a shine to Christa, and forces her to start an affair with him, he arranges for the Stasi to spy on her husband in the hope of digging up some evidence of 'disloyalty' so that Georg can be imprisoned and he can pursue his relationship with Georg's wife.

So, in a massive espionage operation, Georg and Christa's apartment is bugged and and Georg is monitored day and night.

But, the main spy Wiesler who is the good cop in the good-cop-bad-cop element of this tale, refuses to stoop to this level of corruption, and instead manipulates his report of Georg's activities to protect him and Christa, whom he has grown to admire.

Sadly, it all goes horribly

wrong, and there is a very moving and fairly edge-of-seat plot before tragedy strikes.

Although you might find it hard to believe in the good cop role of Wiesler, the Stasi man who loves the theatre and so risks his life and his career to protect an actress and her literary husband, Wiesler's character does remind us of the natural tendency of humans to struggle against injustice.

Wiesler tries to beat the system, and ultimately fails, but the development of the secret relationship between a dissident writer and the Stasi man who spied on him makes a powerful human story.

There is a growing list of films since Schindler's List, which deal with conflict and war from the

point of view of one individual who refuses to give in to the system and tried to use his power for good: films like Hotel Rwanda, The Good German, and Black Book.

In the case of the history of the Second World War, and the division of Germany, there is always the danger that stories like these can be criticised as revisionist.

But, The Lives Of Others avoids this criticism by having a fantastic plot, pretty believable characters, and a suitably believable ending, in which everyone suffers, and the truth of the nightmare of life in the DDR is not diminished by romance.

Ten hankies, at least, for this one.

THEATRE

Is terrorism a matter of psychology?

Reviewed by Valerie Coyne

Those who have volunteered their time on stalls raising awareness on Palestine, the war on Iraq, Bush's megalomaniacal march onwards, or other related topics will be familiar with the odd passer-by who zealously relates how in their opinion conflicts can be resolved and solutions to terrorism found.

Calypso Productions 'Talking to Terrorists' directed by Bairbre Ni Chaoimh drew similar opinions from both audience and reviewers when it played recently in the Samuel Beckett Centre, Trinity College.

The play by Robin Saons is an examination of individuals who, because of a number of factors—childhood experiences, oppression and their psychological make-up—become susceptible to joining terrorist organisations.

A psychologist played with wry humour by Chris Mc Hallen guides the audience through individual stories in the first half of the play. We meet ex-members of the UVF, IRA the Al Asqa Brigade, and the Kurdish Worker's Party.

The characters address the audience directly, the text originating from the authors interviews with the real individuals depicted



Criticised for not addressing the issue of state terrorism

in the play.

A young Ugandan woman played with vigour and intensity by Lauretta Essien tells us how after receiving a severe beating from her father at the age of nine she left home only to find surrogate parents in the shape of the rebel soldiers of the National Resistance Army of Uganda and was supervising torture at the age of thirteen.

The second half of the play differs from the first in that we

see more of a dramatic interplay with the characters as the story of Craig Murray (played by David Pearce), whistleblower extraordinaire, and ex British Ambassador to Uzbekistan unfolds.

Murray was sacked from his position because his highlighting of human rights abuses in Uzbekistan did not serve British interests in the region in the run up to the Iraq war.

The set design, by Moggie Douglas, sees a large carpeted

floor space transform from a Luton Mosque to the lush home of Murray. A large wall stands in the background, small doors and windows in the wall serve as entrances and exits to both comfortable homes and prison cells.

A lively post show discussion held in Trinity saw both participants (including Raymond Deane of the IPSC and Abi Bowman (performer and writer of Jesus the Guantanamo Years) and audience members discuss what they felt were positive aspects of the play and its shortcomings.

It was felt by many that the play did not address the issue of state terrorism. The psychologist in the play informs the audience that post-traumatic stress disorder is experienced by murderers as well as victims.

It would be interesting to see on stage an exploration of the psychological make up of those currently in powerful government positions who give orders unleashing havoc and inflicting terror. Perhaps a play that one of the more vociferous critics of 'Talking to Terrorists' will undertake to write.

Valerie Coyne is Writer and Director of Sugar Suit playing in the Civic Theatre Tallaght in from 10-12 May.

New Left Journal
Special web edition

- ★The death of radical republicanism
- ★Marxism, religion & the War on Terror
- ★Corporations & carbon footprints

Available on www.swp.ie/html/nlj.htm

DUN LAOGHAIRE

Neglect of council estates condemned

Richard Boyd Barrett, the People before Profit Alliance candidate for Dun Laoghaire has said the local Council's consistent neglect of council estates and more general failure to provide basic public services is a disgrace.

Overcrowding is leading to great hardship for the elderly, disabled and families suffering from who have to wait a year or more for vital alterations to their homes or simply can't get them done at all.

He said the problems, which are causing huge anger, result from a deliberate policy of running down the number of council workers employed and contracting out council work to private companies.

In a statement Richard Boyd Barrett said, 'knocking on doors over recent weeks, I have come across hundreds and hundreds of complaints by residents about the failure by Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown council to maintain basic services.

'Laneways behind many houses are left absolutely filthy for months on end, with little effort being made to maintain basic standards of cleaning.

'Bizarre excuses have been made to residents such as claiming that it is not the council's job to come back repeatedly to areas which have been

littered.

'Even more bizarrely, the

Council often responds to complaints by sending down a litter warden to take photos of litter. The warden then files a report but no one is sent down to clean up the area.

'Lighting on many public walkways is either absent or bulbs are not replaced for months on end, making many places no-go areas after dark. Cracked roads and broken paths are left unrepaired for months and often years.

'In even more serious cases, the elderly and disabled have to wait a year or more to get vital alterations to their homes to accommodate their mobility problems.

'There are really terrible situations where people can't make it up a stairs to the only toilet in their home being told by the Council that will have to wait a year or more for a downstairs toilet.

'We have people with mobility problems afraid to get into their bath in case they slip being told it will take a year or more to have a walk-in shower installed.

'Many families suffering from overcrowding are now being refused extensions by the council because they live in mid-terraced houses. The Council used to do these extensions but now have stopped because they are "too much trouble".

'The neglect is particular-



Richard Boyd Barrett, People Before Profit candidate in Dun Laoghaire

ly bad in Council estates like Loughlinstown and Sallynoggin, although it also widespread in other areas.

'The Council's failure to discharge its most basic responsibilities to the residents and taxpayers of the county is not an accident. The neglect is a direct result of a systematic policy of running down and privatising council services.

'Instead of employing sufficient numbers of council workers, essential work is being outsourced to private contractors. This causes huge delays because of the long drawn-out tendering

process or simply because finding contractors takes months.

'The whole process is also much more expensive for the taxpayer because a profit for the private operator has to be factored into every job.

'If we want to end the terrible neglect of many areas, provide for those in need, and simply keep our streets clean and safe, we need to end the current obsession with privatisation. We need more Council workers employed directly to provide essential services.'

To contact Richard Boyd Barrett phone 087 6329511.

DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL

Public forum called over concerns with Thornton's recycling plant in Ballyfermot



Brid Smith, People Before Profit candidate in Dublin South Central

As summer is approaching and the weather is heating up, residents of Ballyfermot situated near the Thornton's recycling centre are once again very concerned about what lies ahead of them.

They are fearful of a return of the noxious odours, infestation of bluebottles and filthy air which they experienced last summer. As one local resident put it: 'I should be sending my window cleaning bill to Thornton's each week which is filthy from the black dust which lands on my window and enters my house. I wonder what is going into my lungs.'

Thornton's Recycling operates the country's largest recycling centre at Killeen Road in Dublin, processing 250,000 tonnes annually.

The plant started out recycling cardboard only but in recent years its license has been extended by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to include the processing of domestic waste from the city council, hospital waste from most of the biggest Dublin hospitals, waste from Dublin City

University, MacDonalds and many more large organisations.

All of this waste is being processed in the back yards of the community of Ballyfermot.

Thornton's Recycling issued a statement indicating that they had invested over €1 million in clean air technology to improve air quality and control the problem of odorous air emissions at its Recycling Centre in Ballyfermot.

According to Brid Smith who has been helping residents with the campaign: 'I would not trust the EPA to fully act in the interests of the people. They should never have allowed Thornton's to process this type of waste and I believe the plant should be relocated out of Ballyfermot and away from where people live.'

The local People Before Profit group have organised a public forum as an opportunity for local residents to come together and decide how they will address their concerns with regard to the environmental hazards they are facing.

DUBLIN SOUTH EAST

People Before Profit candidate backs the nurses

Rory Hearne, People Before Profit Alliance Candidate for Dublin South East, attended a large and lively INO protest at St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin on the 11 April.

Rory Hearne expressed his support for the nurses' campaign and stated, 'I am here today to express my solidarity and the support of the People Before Profit Alliance for the Nurses' campaign for better pay and conditions.

'It is disgraceful that fat cat politicians on salaries greater than 100,000 per year have the cheek to tell nurses on less than 30,000 that nurses don't deserve a wage increase.

'We are losing thousands of nurses every year because they

are not getting decent pay and conditions.

'I publicly express my support for the nurses and express my outrage at the way the government are treating them.

'I also criticise the opposition parties for not attending the protest today and supporting the nurses.

'Would they do any different in government? I believe they would not and that is why we need a real alternative.

'I am campaigning for a public health system that is available to all and where nurses and health staff are properly paid.

'We are making this an election issue and will be supporting the nurses on the doorsteps.'



Rory Hearne, People Before Profit candidate in Dublin South East, joins nurses on their protest

INCINERATOR PROTEST



Protesting at DCC offices.

Photo Paula Geraghty

Residents from areas set to be affected by the proposed Poolbeg Incinerator held a protest at Dublin City Council offices over the fact that thousands of objectors were not informed that an oral hearing was scheduled to take place on 19 April.

Rory Hearne, anti-Incinerator campaigner said, 'almost 3000 people from Ringsend, Irish-town, Sandymount and other areas lodged individual objections to the Poolbeg Incinerator last October. They should

have received a letter informing them that the oral hearing is taking place this Thursday and that they have a right to speak if they want.

'However very few objectors received a letter. It was left up to community activists like ourselves to try and inform people that the Oral Hearing is taking place.

'This is a disgraceful undermining of the democratic process of planning when thousands of objectors are being silenced

because they are not aware that the oral hearing is taking place. We protested here at Dublin City Council Offices to call on Dublin City Council and the Minister Dick Roche to postpone the oral hearing until the community and objectors are properly informed.

'It is also very hard for working people to attend an oral hearing during working hours. To facilitate maximum community participation it should be held in the evening and in a location in the community rather than Croke Park.

'Unhelpful statements by the Tanaiste Michael McDowell suggesting the incinerator has collapsed also have left many people confused. The reality is the Government and the four Dublin local authorities are pushing ahead with the planned incinerator.

'This incinerator will mean traffic chaos, poison Dublin City with dioxins and require further increases in waste

charges for the public. An alternative waste strategy is urgently

required.'

To contact Rory Hearne phone 0861523542.

MAY DAY EVENTS

May Day in Belfast

★ 1907-2007 Centenary of the Great Docks Strike.

Thursday 3 May 6pm, Linenhall Library, Belfast. Launch of a new edition of City in revolt, John Gray's 1985 history of the strike. Followed by a talk. Sponsored by SIPTU, all welcome.

★ Rally, March and Diversity Festival.

Saturday 5 May: Assemble 11.30 at Custom House Square for rally with speakers. Performance piece by Ger O'Leary enacting a Jim Larkin speech. March off 12.30 Diversity festival in St George's Market from 1pm: free and open to all Music, stalls, food, children's workshops, face painting and full bar.

MAY DAY FESTIVAL 2007
GLOBAL DAY FOR FAIR PAY
Sunday April 29th 2007 Dublin

A celebration of our multi ethnic citizens day on International workers day.

■ Colourful May Day Parade Assemble@12.30pm Parnell Square Proceed to Customs House Quay to arrive at 2.00pm Join the parade with Chinese Dragon, Salsa and Flags of Europe and the World!! FAIR PAY FOR THE WORLD'S WORKERS

■ May Day Rally 2.00pm with special guest appearances by: Liam Ó Maonlaí Dublin Workingman's Band Colours Afrobeat Orchestra Jalopy

Plus short speeches!

■ Customs House Gardens 2.00pm - 5.00 pm Information Booths Bookstalls Children's Face Painting / Balloon Modelling, Clowns!!!

■ Liberty Hall 12.00 noon - 4.00pm Viewing Balcony Open Feast your eyes on our Fair City from the tallest building in Dublin. Ticket event only, available from stewards at venue on the day. Customs House Quay

Organised by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions, ICTU Youth and Affiliated Unions.

EVENTS

DUN LAOGHIAIRE

Funky Punky Reggae Party, Kingston Hotel, Friday 11th May
Live music with Unitetribes and Dubtones plus DJs Mog-Y & Wurzel (Funky Break and D&B) Admission €10 Doors 8pm In aid of People Before Profit candidate Richard Boyd Barrett

GALWAY

Galway Water Crisis Public Meeting to form an alliance / campaign group Monday 30th April
8pm The Imperial Hotel Eyre Square

CORK

The Big Question: Can Africa be truly free from the effects of the Slave Trade? Thursday 3rd May.
Speakers: Uche Odinukwe, a Nigerian activist and Joe Moore Cork SWP Victoria Hotel, Patrick St. Time, 8.00pm. To contact Cork SWP phone 086-2668341

BELFAST

Henry and Harriet: A play and walking tour by Carlo Gebler.

Henry and Harriet tells of an ordinary man whose life changes for ever in the course of one short hour. Performed within four shops, each still open and located within the Cathedral Quarter, Kabosh take the audience on an adventure into the world of Home Rule, emigration and that doomed floating cathedral, SS Titanic. Henry must purchase what he needs for his voyage to the New World, but will he succeed in his mission, and will his sweetheart Harriet, be there to meet him at the Albert Clock at six thirty on a dusky May evening? Henry and Harriet is staged by Kabosh.

Commences nightly from 5.45pm, 6.20pm, 7.05pm, and 7.45pm, beginning at the Northern Whig, Bank Street
Tickets are priced at £10 with a special preview evening on Wednesday 2 May, priced at £8.00. The play ends 12 May.

200 AT LATIN AMERICA MEETING

An SWP meeting on 'People power and revolution in Latin America' on Friday 20th April in Dublin drew 200 people.
The meeting was addressed by activists from Chiapas in Mexico and El Alto in Bolivia. 15 people asked to find out about joining the SWP and over a hundred to be kept in touch with the SWP.

DONEGAL

Oil and gas sell-off continues

By Amanda Slevin

MAOR is an Irish word meaning guardian or stewardship, and is an acronym for Mobilise, Act, Overcome, Reclaim. We are a group of Donegal residents who have formed in response to the issues surrounding hydrocarbon (gas and oil) exploration and licensing in Donegal.

There are currently 9 Frontier Exploration licenses and 5 Petroleum Prospecting Licenses outstanding for areas off the Donegal coast (a number are shared with Mayo). Areas which may be affected by exploration and in turn, commercial mining include; Malin Head, Tory Island, Gaoth Dobhair, Burtonport, Killybegs and Ballyshannon. The terms of the companies' contracts are the same as those of Shell, Statoil and Marathon in Rosport, which concerns our group greatly.

These terms mean that the people of Ireland get no profits or royalties from our natural resources with companies having to pay very little, if any tax, as the low 25% tax rate is offset against costs accrued over a previous 25 year period.

We will not get reduced prices for our natural resources as the companies will sell our resources back to us at full market prices. We are not guaranteed a supply of our resources in an emergency. Communities face possible Compulsory Acquisition Orders in the event of onshore refineries, which also bring a range of environmental, health and safety concerns.

According to the Petroleum Affairs Division (Department of

Communications, Marine and Natural Resources) there is a potential 10 billion barrels of hydrocarbons in the North Atlantic Margin (Donegal to Kerry).

At current market prices, the value of these Irish resources is approximately 450 billion euros, from which the people of Ireland will see little benefit.

A particularly pressing issue is that four of the license-holders are obliged to carry out exploratory drilling within the next year as a condition of their licenses.

As a group MAOR is focused on three key areas surrounding the aforementioned issues: licensing and exploration, environment (including infrastructure), and community.

On a local level, we have carried out a range of media and awareness-raising work on the issues in Donegal and Rosport, from radio and newspaper interviews to attending public events and giving out information leaflets.

We have also held a number of public events, including 'Sounds, songs and solidarity - from Rosport to Nigeria': a well attended, dynamic event, which tied the local-national and global issues together and featured talks from the Rosport Five and Fr Kevin O'Hara, founder and director of the Centre for Social and Corporate Responsibility in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

A key message of the night was the fact that exploration and mining in these areas are inextricably linked, particularly the areas of Rosport and Donegal. The political event was tempered by a range of intercultural music and dance



Tory Island: Under threat

acts, including Irish and African musicians and dancers.

Our second event was a public meeting in October which has culminated in the formation of MAOR.

More recently our group participated in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Letterkenny, and we gave out around 4000 brown envelopes in our own humorous take on the deeply troubling manner in which a number of prominent politicians changed legislation to the advantage of the oil companies and to the disadvantage of Irish citizens.

We have been proactive in supporting the Shell to Sea campaign, and have attended all the recent protests, with two delegates from our group participating on the National Shell to Sea group.

The group is currently focused

on organising our launch, and are planning a range of road-shows in County Donegal to let people know what is happening across the spectrum of issues surrounding exploration and drilling.

It is also important to mention that MAOR is non-party political and comes from a genuine community-oriented view, not influenced by any party's political agendas.

We are Donegal residents, concerned about our county and have been doing this work on a completely voluntary basis.

There has been absolutely NO consultation about any of the issues, and at the end of the day it will be all of our communities which will lose out.

For further information email Donegal.maor@gmail.com or ring 086 3623378.

TRALEE

Parking win

Earlier this month, Tralee Town Council finally passed a new proposal officially granted planning permission for residents of St. John's Park, Strand Road/O'Rahalleys Villas, Castle Countess, and Connolly Park to park their cars in front of their own houses without having parking charges imposed on them.

This has followed a protracted campaign in which Tralee SWP played a significant role. At one stage almost sixty residents, including SWP members, lobbied a council meeting.

Although the council has a left-wing majority, only two councillors supported the residents throughout: Labour Party member Karen Tobin and independent Tommy Foley, who himself lives on St. John's Park.

Planning permission was made official after a series of talks between the council's planning department and residents led by Cllr. Tommy Foley. This was clearly a class issue, which all those claiming to be on the left, including Sinn Fein councillors and the remaining Labour Party councillors, should have supported from day one.

The fact is, the anti parking charges campaign halted the council in their tracks so there was not even the need to organise a non-payment campaign, which would have been the next step if charges had been introduced.

This represents a very significant victory against stealth charges and for the left in Tralee and North Kerry generally and as Cllr. Tommy Foley put it, 'people power won the day'.

NURSES' PROTEST

Mary Harney visited Tralee General Hospital on Friday 13 April, to open a palliative day-care unit.

Upwards of 200 nurses, members of the INO and PNA made a silent and dignified protest as Harney arrived at the hospital, some with their children

Amongst those who shook hands with Harney as she unveiled the new day care unit was none other than former Labour Party TD for North Kerry and Tanaiste, Dick Spring!

If this is the best the opposition can do then it is more important than ever that workers see there is a real socialist alternative.

EDUCATION

Dublin City University's corporate pact

In an incredible development, 150-year-old Mumbai University, in India, is considering putting itself on the stock market to raise ready cash.

Dublin City University, and more particularly its President, Ferdinand von Prondzynski, must be looking on with envy.

He like other head of Irish universities would like to see universities become more and more like a business.

Von Prondzynski has committed DCU to raising a whopping 70% of its funding from sources other than the Higher Education Authority. DCU will become even more dependent on multinationals. It already has 'research' deals with 'Big Pharma' companies like Bristol Meyers Squibs.

In an absurd move, McDonalds have recently sponsored two PhD students at DCU 'to investigate the multicultural workplace'.

Von Prondzynski wants the university to have the same ethos as a bank or a multinational. He sees himself as a CEO and along with other Irish Heads are demanding mega salaries to match. Entrepreneurship, commercialisation and intellectual property are

what counts in DCU's 'mission'.

The Sciences are where 'innovation' can be profitable. The Humanities are rated pretty useless in this model. After all, literature, history or languages do not lend themselves easily to being recycled as patents.

But the business ethos goes deeper. Von Prondzynski is on record as saying that permanent tenure should no longer be part of the staff landscape. More temporary contracts - with no commitment to permanency - are his aim and he is prepared to sidestep the law to achieve it.

Irish law protects temporary contract abuse under the Fixed Term Work Act of 2003. Von Prondzynski, in a recent interview, noted with satisfaction that as far as he was concerned 'labour legislation does not get in the way of good HR practice'.

Ironically, he was formerly an official with the university lecturers union, IFUT, and so he knows what he is talking about.

More recently, he has seen fit to dispense with even the minimal democratic structures of the university. On 21 March, he informed staff, via email, that elections for

the two places on the university's Executive were to be suspended.

His reason was that one of the nominations - Prof Paul Carroll - had recently successfully brought a case against DCU in the High Court (after the university tried to dismiss him).

Von Prondzynski has claimed that, while DCU's appeal of the decision is underway, Cahill's status as a member of staff is 'in doubt' hence the elections could not go ahead.

The reality is that DCU management simply could not cope with someone seen as 'uncooperative' being on the Executive. For near on a decade, a few key officers in Finance, HR and Administration have run DCU very tightly.

The entry of those prepared to rock the boat certainly did not fit into the president's view of how DCU should be run, or so it appeared to staff.

Several emails braved the chill winds of opposition and challenged the president's decision. More felt too intimidated to do so, such is the atmosphere of conformity that reigns in DCU.

On this occasion, Von Prondzynski may just have over-

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.....



Prepare to organise against

AN ASSEMBLY FOR THE BOSSES



By Goretti Horgan

The photograph of Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams side-by-side announcing they were going into government together was projected across the world as evidence of a bright future for the North, built on a new spirit of cooperation between Sinn Féin and the DUP.

Scarcely had the photo been printed than the DUP and Sinn Féin rushed to reassure their followers that they wouldn't sell out their principles in order to make the Stormont deal work.

The DUP are doing it to 'protect the Union', while Sinn Féin are doing it as the only way to achieve a united Ireland.

That contradiction apart, SF and the DUP disagree on a range of issues. For instance, Martin McGuinness's last act as Education Minister in the Assembly

in 2002 was to abolish academic selection.

But the DUP have made retention of academic selection a precondition for going into government and Sinn Féin has accepted this as the price of power.

When it comes to economic matters, however, business editors of the Belfast papers agree that there is little difference between the four main parties.

For example, in May 2006, the parties met the Business Alliance and Federation of Small Businesses. Reports afterwards were unanimous that they had spoken 'with one voice'.

Gerry Adams was thus speaking for the other party leaders when he described their meeting with the business chiefs as 'a very useful exchange'.

One of the main points made was the need for a sustainable devolved administration here.

That is the only way we can deal with all of these outstanding issues, whether it is education cuts, health cuts, water charges, rates or the whole issue of the economy.'

In other words, the way to deal with these issues was in an Assembly and on an all-party basis.

Confirmation that any party leader could speak for all on economic matters came from the Irish News.

The reporter described an Institute of Directors' lunch he'd attended at which leaders of the four main parties 'were invited to give their parties' take on economic issues.'

'What began as an interesting discussion too quickly became monotonous as each speaker, by and large, repeated what had been said before.'

Everybody is for better paid jobs, joined-up government, speedier plan-

ning decisions and the holy grail of a levelling of corporation tax throughout the island.'

There is an almost religious belief by all the parties that lower corporation tax would bring the Celtic Tiger north of the border.

The fact that the Celtic Tiger was born before corporation tax was reduced in the South, that the 'Tiger economy' emerged while the South's corporation tax level was considerably higher than the North's is today, is ignored by all.

Also ignored is the parties' formal position on privatisation.

All of them have policies that, to varying degrees, oppose privatisation and Private Finance Initiatives (PFI). But in government, all have been happy to use.

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