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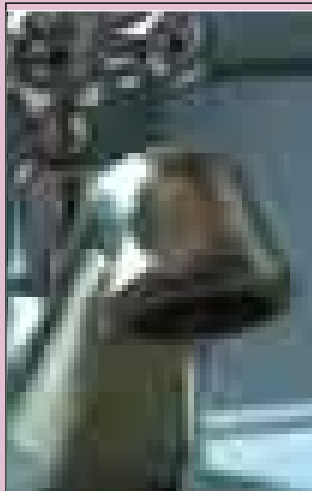
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**CAN YOU SPOT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANY OF THEM?**



# FOR A REAL OPPOSITION

By Peadar O'Grady

The General Election gives all of us a massive opportunity to teach Fianna Fail and the PDs a lesson and to vote for a real radical alternative. After 10 years of Fianna Fail/PD rule, the super-rich in Ireland are laughing all the way to the bank. Job losses like at Smurfits in Finglas and the property downturn show that the boom is not sustainable.

Other EU countries are joining the race to the bottom of corporate taxes so that Ireland's tax-haven status is also failing.

Ahern timed the election to halt the Mahon tribunal's inquiries into corrupt payments to him by businessmen in the 90s. Nobody believes Ahern's ridiculous explanation that his landlord gave him money to do up the house he was renting. Fianna Fail's record is marked with incidents concerning brown envelopes and briefcases of cash in bribes.

The Irish ruling class has made mega-profits from the boom in manufacturing and construction, paying an effective taxation rate of 8%. Many, like 'tax-exiles', Denis O'Brien or 'Sir' Tony O'Reilly paid no tax at all!

In return, Irish workers have seen below-inflation payrises, the running down of public health, education, transport and welfare services while stealth taxes mounted. The Bin-Tax, childcare fees, mortgage repayments, rent, bus/train fares and rising gas and electricity bills are all stealth taxes for what are free or subsidised public services in other EU countries. Stealth taxes are flat taxes that hurt the average worker and the poor the most. VAT on goods is a flat tax too.

1 in 4 children are at risk of poverty in Ireland and 1 in 10 children live in consistent poverty. Class sizes are the highest in Europe and pensions are a disgrace. Most workers face the increasing stress of coping

with long working hours, long commuting times, expensive childcare and little free time to enjoy with their friends and families.

Chaos reigns in Health, Education, Transport and Welfare services, so all FF/PD election promises are now just unbelievable for the vast majority of voters.

The scandal of the Health service has angered people the most. The FF/PD government was elected in 2002 on the back of the 'Health Strategy' which promised 3,000 acute public hospital beds and 100 community health clinics. After 5 years only 500 beds and less than 10 clinics are in place. The rise in population has wiped out the impact of even these minor advances.

Instead, the FF/PD government has embarked on a massive funding of Private hospitals, using taxpayers' money, for services only offering a limited elective surgery service to those who can afford to pay. Free drug prescriptions have been removed from new medical cards and called 'doctor-only cards'.

While the for-profit based health system in the United States goes into meltdown the government is hell-bent on copying it. This can only be explained by their following the ideology of 'Neoliberalism': the pursuit of profit, the worshipping of Multinational corporations, and 'the market'. In other words an ideology which puts profit before people.

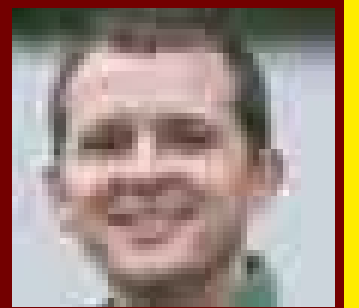
Fianna Fail demonstrated their absolute commitment to money and profits by their support for Bush's war in Iraq and their support for Shell oil against the people of Rosport. In these policies Bertie Ahern has shown that he is prepared to support murder in Iraq and the beating of protestors in Mayo when it comes to protecting the interests of the rich in their pursuit of profits.

**TURN TO PAGES 5, 6 & 7**



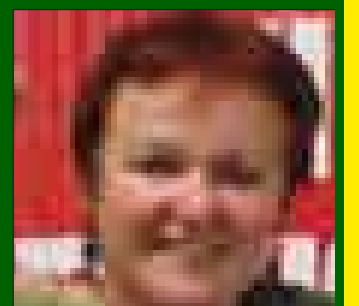
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People Before Profit Alliance  
Dun Laoghaire



**Brid Smith**

People Before Profit Alliance  
Dublin South Central



**Rory Hearne**

People Before Profit Alliance  
Dublin South East



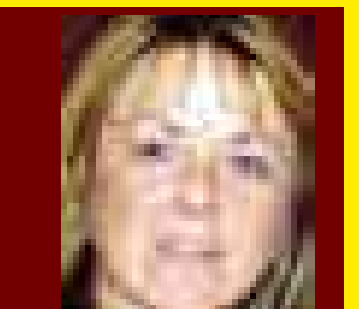
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People Before Profit Alliance  
Dublin Mid West



**Carmel McKenna**

People Before Profit Alliance  
Wicklow



**SUPPORT THE NURSES**

**TURN TO PAGE 3**

## THE THINGS THEY SAY

**'That money was not money for me. It was money for his affairs, in his house. I hope that answers the questions.'**

Bertie Aherne

**'No, it doesn't...it isn't credible.'**

Vincent Browne, extract from the now infamous exchanges between Bertie and Vincent.

**'I didn't ever say that.'**

Minister McDowell denies he ever said he would withdraw from Government if more questions were raised about Mr Aherne's finances.

**'This is not the harmless, sensible, logical, technical adjustment which some people are trying to portray it. We regard the proposal as little more than a Trojan horse for harmonised corporation tax, and that it why we will resolutely resist it and oppose it.'**

Bertie Aherne on his fears that Ireland may be forced by the EU to raise its level of taxation on big business.



Noel O'Flynn

**'We've had our warnings in the 2004 local elections and unless this manifesto is going to turn things around, then we have an uphill battle to return to power, and indeed to retain all of our seats here in Cork city and county.'**

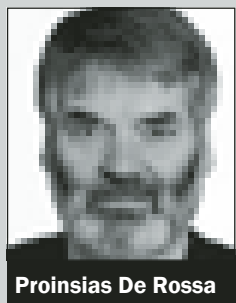
Noel O'Flynn TD, who is contesting a seat in the Cork North Central constituency, admits the government faces huge anger on the doorsteps about the health service.

**'It is time to end the political hypocrisy surrounding abortion and women's health care in this country. We call on leaders of all political parties to respond to our statement that Miss D be offered a termination of pregnancy in Ireland.'**

A statement from Doctors for Choice on the Ms D case.

**'A vote for "democracy and moderation"'**

The delight of senior figures in the Department of Education on the recent decision by the ASTI (teachers union) to move to a postal ballot. Votes up until now were cast at union meetings following full discussion of the issues.



Prionsias De Rossa

**'It is time to lift the embargo on direct assistance, which forces 79 per cent of people below the poverty line and children to walk around without shoes. There is a real feeling of hopelessness here.'**

MEP Prionsias De Rossa, part of the group from the

European Parliament who recently met Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.

**'Despite the economic boom, one in five pensioners, around 94,000 people, is at risk of poverty and 3.7%, around 17,000 pensioners, experience grinding poverty. The 200 euro target set by the current Government in 2002 has been achieved, but this is currently €3.55 euro under the poverty line. More than one-third of pensioners depend on this.'**

Age Action chief executive Robin Webster who with the National Federation of Pensioners Associations (NFPA) will petition the incoming Government to make adequate state pensions a priority.

**'The wheel has turned full circle. Long live the workers.'**

Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez on 1 May, announcing the end of multinational oil companies' control over the massive Orinoco Belt crude oil projects, a vital move in his nationalisation drive.

**'Some migrant women say they have been made to work for 80 hours and only paid €4 per hour, work odd hours, have their movement restricted and, in some cases, their passport retained by employers.'**

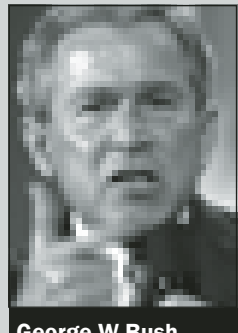
Salome Mbugua, national director of the African Women's Forum, highlighting the exploitation of immigrants at work in Ireland at the May Day rally in Dublin.

**'Compared to a year ago, the situation in Darfur is much, much worse and we're finding it increasingly dangerous to work.'**

Alun McDonald of Oxfam in Khartoum.

**'The influence of the pharmaceutical industry is unhealthy... Their [drugs] use in therapy represents unwarranted medical intervention in what are often normal emotional difficulties. The side effects include behavioural disorders, physical illness, dependence and even suicide.'**

Report of the Oireachtas Committee into the adverse side effects of pharmaceuticals calls for the setting up of a Patient Safety Agency.



George W Bush

**'Setting a deadline for withdrawal is setting a date for failure.'**

George Bush explains his veto of a war-spending bill that required the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq to start by Oct. 1 2007.

**'If they want to try again that which I've said is unacceptable, of course I won't accept it.'**

George Bush warns Congress that he will continue vetoing war-spending bills that contain a timetable for Iraq.

# New monument found at Tara

Just 24 hours after Transport Minister Martin Cullen turned the first sod on the M3 motorway a major new monument was found near the historic hill of Tara.

The newly-discovered large circular enclosure at Liamullen is a Henge structure, similar to one on the top of the Hill of Tara itself.

Work has been suspended to allow further examination, but campaigners fear this is merely a stay of execution for the site.

The Irish National Monuments Act allows for the partial or complete destruction of national monuments, or finds of significant importance, by the Government if it is deemed to be in the public interest.

The Government are obliged to consult the National Museum, who have no control over the eventual Government decision.

Currently, Environment Minister Dick Roche is in contact with National Museum director Pat Wallace on the best way to proceed.

But Vincent Salafia, a long-standing Save-Tara campaigner, believes the Government is committed to developing the motorway regardless of the impact.

'Minister Roche directs that the national monument be preserved "by record",' he said.

'In other words, excavations will resume in a matter of days, and the massive enclosure will then be demolished.'

It was the Save Tara Campaign that first alerted the Na-

tional Museum to the potential significance of the Lismullen site, which is directly within the path of the proposed motorway.

The Lismullen site had not been accurately identified during the initial archaeological survey of the route and the discovery of a henge almost 80mts in diameter and comprising of two concentric circles caused surprise to the archaeological contractors and near-apoplexy at the National Roads Authority.

It would appear that there are underground passages associated with the henge. Michael Canney from the campaign said:

'Everybody knew that this route was destined to destroy the landscape of Tara if it went ahead.'

'The advice of national and international experts was ignored.'

'This route was chosen because local politicians and businessmen favoured it.'

'That this monument has been discovered is more by accident than by design and many other sites that were of significance have been hastily and inadequately surveyed.'

'We now call on the Government and the NRA to abandon this route - admit they have made a serious mistake and act properly and positively to protect our heritage.'

For the Campaign to Save Tara see <http://www.savetara.com>



Lismullen with Rath Lugh in background. Photo: Paula Geraghty

## INSIDE THE SYSTEM

**Irony of ironies:** Frank Connolly, formerly of the Centre for Public Inquiry—the man McDowell thought he had destroyed when he called him a threat to the security of the state—is the very man who broke the story of Bertie's strange house deals.

**The latest reports** from Department of Education inspectors of schools were published recently.

They reveal substandard conditions and accommodation shortages nationwide. One typical example is that of Holy Rosary NS, Rathcoole: 'the school accommodation is inadequate for the present enrolment.'

While the board of management has made valiant efforts to ensure that a suitable learning environment is available for all pupils, the accommodation lacks basic facilities such as an assembly or general purpose area, suitable rooms for special education, a library, a parents' room, a reasonably sized staffroom and staff toilets.'

A recent Irish Times poll found 65 per cent of voters supported the claim by nurses for a pay rise and shorter working week. Despite the media and government attempts to vilify them, 58 per cent of voters support the nurses' industrial action in



The pupil-teacher ratio at primary level is among the highest in the EU

pursuit of their claims.

After ten years of FF-PD government and 20 years of social partnership this is the sorry state of the nation (according to a variety of recent reports from the ESRI, CSO, OECD and Eurostat)

Ireland's inflation rate of 5.1 per cent is more than double the average rate for leading industrialised countries.

price levels in Ireland are second only to Denmark.

Irish consumers spend more than half of their household budgets on services like electricity, childcare, housing and public transport. Over the past year, the average price of services in Ireland has risen by 9.3 per cent.

government spending on social protection is only half that in Sweden..

pharmaceutical prices are 19 per cent higher than the EU average, making Ireland the third most expensive country for buying drugs.

Ireland ranks joint top of the EU price league for furniture costs.

the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level is among the highest in the EU.

overall expenditure on public and private health as a percentage of GDP remains lower than the EU average.

the proportion of Irish people at risk of poverty is one of the highest in the EU.

outstanding balances owed on credit cards have

risen by almost 20 per cent to €2,698 million in twelve months.

Children under 10 have been the main victims of Galway's contaminated public water supply, and three cases have been so serious that they have required treatment in dedicated children's hospitals.

In the dying days of this government, the Cabinet has approved the appointment of 17 new judges to serve in the High Court, the Circuit Court and the District Court. This represents the largest number of judicial appointments ever at a single time.

After years of allowing developers to build what they want, Dublin City Council is finally issuing new

guidelines that will require developers to increase apartment sizes by up to 25 per cent if they are to be granted planning permission to build in Dublin.

Immigrants contributed over €5bn to the economy in two years according to new ESRI figures. The number of immigrants, which rose from 33,000 in 2003 to 51,000 in 2005, added over 3pc to the Irish economy between those years.

The decision by Michael McDowell to deport a Nigerian woman and her children, including an autistic son who will be unable to access suitable facilities in Nigeria and may be at risk of his life, has emerged as a general election issue.

Brilliant campaigning from friends of Olivia Agbonlahor in West Cork has led candidates from all parties in the constituency to sign a petition pleading with the Minister for Justice to allow her remain in Ireland.

A scanner measuring bone density which had been gifted to Sligo General Hospital by the Irish Osteoporosis Society following a fundraising campaign has remained unused for two years due to lack of radiologists to operate it. It has recently emerged that the scanner is to be moved to a private hospital in the area.



## COMMENT

## Ireland needs abortion to be safe and legal



Dr. Juliette Bressan

Last week, Miss D was blocked by the HSE from travelling for an abortion so as to act in 'the best interests of the girl'. But the HSE ended up in the High Court trying to explain themselves.

The HSE then decided that they could have allowed her to travel, but only if the district court agreed that the girl has fully considered her position, and has had counselling, and that her parents agree.

And that's after three days of court hearings and debate by some of the top legal brains in the country. How are ordinary teenagers and women supposed to deal with the legal jumble that is abortion law in Ireland, if the biggest barristers in the country can't cope with it?

The problem is that there is no law on abortion in Ireland, which is practical and applicable. Irish doctors are not free to exercise judicial medical decisions because of a fear (as in case D) that the courts might prosecute either them or their patients, on the basis that the constitution 'guarantees the life of the unborn'.

So, in this case, the HSE thought that they had to seek the approval of the courts in order to allow teenagers in their care to have an abortion: even though there would be very few doctors here in Ireland who would not have recommended one.

This case is particularly disgraceful, in medical terms, because obstetricians would have advised the HSE that it is much safer to terminate an anencephalic pregnancy rather than go to term.

An encephalic delivery is usually very difficult, and in a young woman who has not had kids before, it would be medically inadvisable to let her go to term.

Although many Irish people are anti-abortion in theory, there is still a very high demand for terminations of pregnancy here. Based on estimates of requests to overseas abortion services, roughly 200 women per week seek abortions from Ireland, which is about one-in-five new pregnancies.

But, because the law on abortion is unclear, as last week's court hearings show, there are no legal conditions in Ireland under which women can have a safe and legal abortion here, and there is no legal protection for doctors who choose to act in the interest of their patient and provide abortion, even when it is medically judicious to do so.

The history of abortion politics in other countries shows consistently that it is during crises like the D case that changes in the law can be rapidly brought about. In France, abortion was legalised in the 60s in a radical case when a young working class mother was prosecuted for procuring an abortion for her daughter.

The arguments that she made to plead her innocence changed French political minds about the morality of abortion, and French law changed to make abortion legally available on request.

Other such cases happened in the UK, where doctors simply broke the law, and provided compassionate abortions, which forced legal change. Similar cases won legal abortion in the US, and more recently in Canada.

So, D's case is a huge personal crisis for her, and she deserves an enormous amount of respect for her courage. But, it is also very politically important challenge to the law, and therefore a step in the fight for women's rights everywhere.

## NURSES:

## Time to escalate the action to win!



Nurses take action

Photo: Paula Geraghty

By Peadar O'Grady

Escalation of strike action by 45,000 nurses can win the campaign for decent pay and working hours for nurses and halt the privatisation of our public health service.

Nurses picketed outside the Mansion House in Dublin when Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and senior Fianna Fáil Ministers attended the launch of their party's general election manifesto. The nurses warned that if the Government parties did not accede to their demands it would cost them votes on Election Day.

Over 400 nurses picketed a visit by Health Minister, Mary Harney, outside Sligo General Hospital in support of the nurses' strike.

Almost two-thirds of voters (65%) support the claim by nurses for a 10.6% pay rise and a 35-hour working week.

According to the latest TNS/MRBI opinion poll carried out for The Irish Times, a clear majority of 58 per cent of voters also support the nurses' industrial action in pursuit of their claims.

Labour voters support for the nurses was 71% but Pat Rabbitte could offer no clear promise of help because of his pact with Fine Gael.

On 1 May, International Workers Day, a joint executive council of the INO and PNA voted to restart and escalate work stoppages after derisory offers were made by the HSE. The employers offered to reduce the nurses'

working week by one hour by March 2008. And only if they worked harder and it didn't cost any money!

The INO report that the joint executive council meeting: 'received calls of total solidarity and commitment from branches all over the country, with activists detailing the anger and frustration, felt by members, at the complete failure of the HSE to meaningful negotiations on these two issues.'

Dave Hughes, Deputy General Secretary of the Irish Nurses Organisation said in a press statement:

'Many nurses and midwives are angry at the constant portrayal of their claims as being excessive and reflect on the €150 million wasted on the failed PPARS project and the other €30 million wasted on a financial system which was ultimately abandoned.'

'Nurses and midwives are there for the people from the cradle to the grave. They care for mothers and young babies, children, the elderly, the sick, the intellectually challenged, the physically challenged, those suffering from mental health problems and the dying.'

'The tragedy is that the HSE have chosen to alienate tens of thousands of loyal and dedicated staff and add to the stresses of an already beleaguered health service crying out for radical reform.'

INO general secretary, Liam Doran said that obviously the unions 'had not applied enough pressure on employers to bring them to the table with a mindset to resolve this

dispute.' He added that the INO and PNA unions were not oblivious to the voting power of 45,000 nurses.

The INO and PNA say the escalation: 'involves a range of work stoppages, nationwide, moving from one to three hours in duration. Throughout any work stoppage the INO/PNA will continue, as before, to provide all essential/emergency cover, with services being continued in critical care areas, so that patient care is, at all times, fully maintained.'

The best way to prevent deterioration in patient care, however, is to sharply escalate and win the strike.

This would be a huge step toward the halting of privatisation and the government's tactic of running down the public service to drive people into private insurance and private hospitals that can never offer the quality or efficiency of public, not-for-profit care. It would save many lives.

The two nurses unions have also decided to consider further escalation of their strike campaign on Thursday, 10 May 2007, when the INO will hold a Special Delegate Conference in Dublin.

Escalation and a national demonstration will be hugely popular because they hold out the opportunity to break with the rotten system of, so-called, social partnership and to rebuild a better and safer public health service. With victory in sight, every worker in Ireland is backing the nurses to win for all of us.

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# RAYTHEON ARE THE REAL CRIMINALS



By Eamonn McCann

In Sandino's in Derry on 2 August, a public meeting called by the local Anti-War Coalition heard Joshua Casteel, a former US Army interrogator at Abu Ghraib, and Iraqi lawyer Hani Lazim outline their views on the Iraq war.

The news from Lebanon lay heavily on the minds of the 70-strong audience. Every day brought reports of Israeli attacks, allegedly on Hizbollah positions but, as was clear from the news footage, bringing death and agony to terrified civilians.

Rocket attacks by Hizbollah on Israel were also killing civilians, if on a significantly smaller scale.

Some incidents stood out. Ten days before the meeting, two Lebanese Red Cross ambulances had been targeted by the Israeli air-force near the village of Qana in the south of the country. By astonishing luck, there were no fatalities: five medics were seriously wounded. The United Nations expressed 'shock,' but not condemnation.

Two days later, Israeli forces attacked a UN observation post in Khiam Village. An Austrian, a Canadian, a Chinese and a Finn were left dead. UN headquarters in New York issued a statement expressing 'distress'. But, again, no condemnation.

On 30 July, three days before the Derry meeting, Israel returned to Qana. A precision-guided 'bunker-buster' smashed through an apartment building and exploded, killing more than 50 people, a majority of them children, who had huddled in the basement for safety.

By the night of the meeting, the scale of the slaughter and the fact that the victims had not been combatants but unarmed civilians of all ages was apparent. Pictures of the bodies of babies being brought out from the rubble in dripping bundles had led the television news.

Discussion after Joshua and Hani had spoken centred on the



Top: Death in Qana after Israeli bombardment last summer. Above Left: Shrapnel with marking identifying the bombs as made by Raytheon. Above Right: The Raytheon Nine outside the court in Derry

possible involvement of Raytheon. I made the point that Raytheon was the biggest manufacturer of Guided Bomb Units in the world, and had close commercial and ideological relations with the Israeli Defence Forces: there was at least a possibility that the company had supplied the munitions for the slaughter at Qana.

Even without evidence of direct involvement in this particular atrocity, there was no doubting the company's general complicity in Israeli aggression and in the supply of the category of bomb used in Qana.

By the end of a meeting, the question was not whether we should take action to highlight Raytheon's role, but what action should be taken.

The meeting voted to picket the Raytheon plant on August 9th and, if possible, to occupy and try to 'de-commission' the premises.

In the event, nine of us managed to gain entry. Computers and papers were hurled from the windows. The mainframe was disabled.

After eight hours, men from the PSNI broke down the doors, which we had barricaded, and arrested the

nine of us. We were charged under emergency, 'terrorist', legislation and remanded to Maghaberry Prison.

The High Court released us on bail two days later. By then, we were already being called the Raytheon 9.

Last month came evidence that Raytheon product had indeed been used in the Qana killings. The evidence can be viewed at [www.tyros.leb.net/qana2](http://www.tyros.leb.net/qana2), which displays a close-up photograph of the fuselage of a bomb retrieved from the Qana carnage.

The markings identify a Raytheon bomb: MK-84 guided bomb unit BSU-37/B.

On 5 April, we were remanded to a hearing on 5 June at which charges of affray and criminal damage will be formally made against us.

The substitution of affray for aggravated burglary 'deschedules' the charges, i.e. we will have a jury trial.

If the Raytheon 9 are branded criminals then we are being asked to accept that it is a crime to occupy the office of an arms company, but



not a crime to occupy a country; that it is a crime to drop computers from an office window, but that it is not a crime to drop missiles on innocent people.

The Raytheon 9 will face the court as the accusers of Raytheon not the accused, and will use the trial to highlight the war crimes of the US and UK governments.

## Support the Raytheon 9

The Raytheon 9 have received support from throughout Ireland and across the world. Among those who have signed the statement of support are Noam Chomsky, Mark Thomas, Christy Moore, George Galloway MP, Salma Yaqoob, Stop the War Coalition, Ibrahim Mousawi (Lebanon), Caoimhe Butterly, Richard Boyd Barrett, Irish Anti-War Movement, Anti War Ireland and many others.

To add your name to the statement, visit the Raytheon 9 website [www.raytheon9.org](http://www.raytheon9.org).

The Irish Anti War Movement has launched a campaign for the charges to be dropped. As part of that campaign, the Derry Anti-War Coalition appeals to all those opposed to the wars in the Middle East to support the Raytheon 9 at the Preliminary Enquiry of their trial at the Derry Court House, Bishop Street at 9.30am Tuesday 5 June 2007.

Transport is being organised from across Ireland and accommodation can be provided in Derry the night before for those who need it. For more details phone Derry Anti-War Coalition 07771 781958.

For transport from Belfast, phone Belfast Anti-War Movement 07837 507935. Or from Dublin, Cork & Galway phone Irish Anti-War Movement 00353 872886646



## INTERNATIONAL

# Democrats play a double edged game over Iraq

By Alex Callinicos

Even the Senate, where the Democrats' majority is wafer-thin, voted to continue funding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan only if US troops are withdrawn from Iraq by 1 October.

It's hard to judge how serious the confrontation over Iraq between George Bush and the Democrats in the US Congress is.

The bill passed by both houses of Congress last week is certainly a major challenge to the president's authority to carry on waging the "war on terror".

Even the Senate, where the Democrats' majority is wafer-thin, voted to continue funding the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – to the tune of \$95 billion – only if US troops are withdrawn from Iraq by 1 October. The pullout could be even earlier if the Iraqi client regime fails to meet various "benchmarks" laid down by Congress.

The White House has denounced what it calls "defeatist legislation that sets a date for surrender". Bush has made it clear that he will veto the bill. Overriding him would require two thirds majorities in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, which the Democrats have no chance of making.

This confrontation is just a stage in a longer term political struggle between Bush and the Democrats. But what's at stake is not ending the "war on terror" or improving the plight of the wretched people of Iraq. The real issue for the politicians is who will win the White House in the November 2008 presidential election.

With the Republicans in disarray, the Democrats know they have a real chance of winning. They also know that, to the extent that they take an anti-war stance, they have public opinion on their side. In a



US veterans of the Iraq war join protests to bring the troops home. There is growing unease among US and British troops

New York Times-CBS News poll last week, 64 percent supported setting a "time line" for the US to withdraw from Iraq in 2008.

That's why in their first debate last week, all eight Democratic presidential candidates united in denouncing the war and supporting Congress. Even Hillary Clinton, who has taken a strong pro-war stance, said she would not have

voted for the invasion of Iraq "if I knew then what I know now".

But this facade of unity conceals many differences. Harry Reid, Democratic leader in the Senate, caused outrage in the White House when he said a couple of weeks ago that the Iraq war was lost. He contemptuously brushed aside a subsequent denunciation by vice-president Dick Cheney, saying, "I'm not

going to get into a name calling match with somebody who has a 9 percent approval rating."

#### Crumbled

Reid's stance shows both the despair within the US ruling class about the Iraq debacle and the degree to which the Republican right's ability to intimidate opponents into submission has crumbled.

But this doesn't alter the fact that

the Democrats remain the second party of US imperialism. In order to maintain the support of big business, they have to show their ability to defend the interests of US capitalism – and that means maintaining US global power.

So Hillary Clinton, for example, does not want full scale US withdrawal from Iraq. Instead, as she explained in a recent New York Times interview, she favours pulling a reduced US force to bases outside the cities. This would allow the Pentagon to retain military leverage in a region that will remain of huge economic and strategic importance whatever the outcome of the Iraq war.

The real divisions on the Democrats' side became clear in last week's debate. Only three weaker candidates, Senator Christopher Dodd, Congressman Dennis Kucinich, and ex-Senator Mike Gravel, said they favoured eventually cutting off all funding for the war.

Barack Obama is the youngish black Senator from Illinois who has rapidly emerged as the major threat to Clinton's chances of winning the Democratic presidential nomination. He has the great advantage in current circumstances that he opposed the invasion of Iraq in 2002-3.

But Obama is no radical. The Financial Times reported last week that he's getting big campaign contributions from the hedge funds that have done so well out of the US's booming financial markets.

Kucinich and Gravel challenged him for refusing to rule out any option, including war, in dealing with Iran's nuclear programme. "Tell me, Barack, who do you want to nuke?" Gravel asked him. Obama laughed and brushed the question off, but it was a good one. The Democrats will do their best to ensure that the US empire is in good hands.

## Africa pays the price for Western intervention

By Charlie Kimber

A large swathe of Africa is either on the verge of war, or actually at war – and outside intervention by the great powers will only make it worse.

The series of conflicts in the region around Sudan are fuelled by old colonial policies and modern imperialist strategy.

So more imperialist intervention, as some people urge in Darfur in Sudan, will only make the agony worse.

An article in the Financial Times spelt out last week that the fighting in Darfur is now "a proxy war between Sudan and neighbouring Chad, and is in danger of spreading to other states in the region".

One of those states is the Central African Republic (CAR). Here there is already fierce fighting between the government forces and rebels.

The repression carried out by the government is backed by French troops, leaving thousands dead and tens of thousands homeless.

In Somalia, to the east of Sudan, hundreds of

thousands of people have fled a firestorm unleashed by Ethiopian forces who have the full backing of the US and Britain.

To the south west of Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo is still at war. This, the 21st century's costliest war with over four million dead, was made far worse by the great powers' manoeuvres.

If United Nations (UN) forces are sent to Darfur, as Tony Blair urges, they will be controlled by the UN security council's permanent members – France (causing mayhem in CAR, Chad and many other African countries), Britain (despoiling Iraq and Afghanistan, and the premier colonial power in Africa), China (pouring arms into Africa, and with its own strategy to control African resources), the US (butchering Iraq and Afghanistan while sanctioning the Ethiopian assault on Somalia), and Russia (the butchers of Chechnya).

Will such powers organise a "humanitarian force"? They have never done so, and



Collecting water in a Somali refugee camp last week

Picture: Irin news

they never will. Their own rivalries will probably make it impossible to agree the terms of such intervention.

The Chinese government, for example, is the main partner with the Sudanese oil industry.

Many of the people who took part in the protests last weekend calling for increased action against the Sudanese government over Darfur are motivated by the desire to see the end of the suffering there. But the demands of the

Save Darfur Coalition – a no fly zone, more sanctions against Sudan and UN intervention – are a recipe for more war.

The coalition has also invited war criminals like former US secretary of state

Madeleine Albright to its rallies.

The media often belittle the numbers on demonstrations against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet they welcomed protests for intervention in Darfur – and even led the BBC news with them last weekend.

The hypocrisy of the British government is revealed by home secretary John Reid's repeated attempts to expel Sudanese asylum seekers who came from Darfur.

It was only the decision by three high court judges on 4 April that has prevented the mass deportation of Sudanese asylum seekers.

Darfur's suffering is terrible and real, but it cannot be wrenched from a wider context which includes the actions of the great powers that have raped Africa and continue to hold it in their grip.

Across the whole of Africa there is a new scramble for control of vital resources – principally oil. Any intervention in Darfur will be part of this power game.



# People Before Profit

*Socialist Worker profiles candidates of*

## BRID SMITH, DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL

**You are running in the General Election for People Before Profit, can you tell me a bit more about this?**

I have been selected the local People Before Profit Alliance as their candidate in the Dublin South Central Constituency for the 2007 General Election. I feel very proud to represent those that have selected me.

I have been active in Ballyfermot since I moved there in 1997. I got stuck into the bin charges campaign almost immediately and that brought me into contact with people from all over Ballyfermot who have been fighting this double tax. We have a strong campaign there and have a very high rate of non-payment.

**You went to jail as part of this campaign, why do you feel so strongly about the bin charges?**

My experience as a socialist for many years meant I understood that fighting the bin tax was the first of many fights against the privatisation of our public services and that it was important to win this as other services charges would follow.

We now know that water charges will be brought in by the next government.

**When did People Before Profit form in Ballyfermot?**

The People Before Profit Alliance was formally established in October 2005 by workers from a variety of local campaigns. I was one of the founding members.

The Alliance represents a different form of politics. It sees 'people power' and the mobilisation of citizens in workplaces, communities and on the streets as the key to bringing change in society.

At this time a group of us proposed that the Ballyfermot Bin Tax campaign link in with People Before Profit. It made perfect sense at the time in terms of linking in with other struggles like the campaign against Shell in Mayo, the campaign against the incinerator in Ringsend and other campaigns happening in the community.

**Are People Before Profit mainly about the bin tax campaign?**

There is no doubt about it that the



Brid Smith (left) with running mate Councillor Joan Collins (right).

back bone of the PBP group in Ballyfermot and Inchicore is made up of anti bin tax activists but we have linked in with a variety of issues.

We did some campaigning for services in a community complex for elderly and disabled people living in Rossville in Ballyfermot's Drumfinn area, which was faced with closure towards the end of 2006.

We have been involved with challenging the way plans for development in the Cherry Orchard area have been pursued by the Council. We have been on view, opposing the closure of Crumlin Children's Hospital and now opposing Thorntons toxic dump which is on Ballyfermot's door step.

We are also campaigning for support for the nurses in their strike against the HSE and have collected thousands of signatures on a message of support from the local community.

In fact we already handed over a thousand signatures to Liam Doran of the INO at the protest and stoppage outside St James Hospital. It was an inspiring demonstration of people power.

**Why is the Thornton's campaign important?**

This is probably one of the most important issues for local people in Ballyfermot and beyond. Extremely important for Ballyfermot because it is poisoning local people daily and we have no idea what toxins are being leaked into the environment.

It is also very important for everyone in the country because there needs to be very strong regulations regarding the recycling and disposal of toxic material.

The first rule of thumb is that toxic dumps should not be sited near water or near people. Thornton's licence has been expanded over the

years where they can now dispose of almost any type of waste produced in Ireland and its right on the backdoor of thousands of Ballyfermot residents.

In fact the latest expansion by Thorntons is for End of Life Vehicles (ELV's) and Thorntons have a contract with the leading car companies to crush and recycle used cars in Ballyfermot.

The Environmental Protection Agency are a joke and are a cover for giving a free hand to private companies out to make money from waste management.

We are going to carry out preliminary research at a local level on the health of the local population and we will be keeping records of all complaints about Thorntons' activities.

But we are starting our campaign with a series of protests at Thornton's to raise awareness of what exactly is going on there.

**If elected, what will you bring to the Dail?**

For starters I think I would bring a lot of hope to the people of this constituency. And I say that because it is so easy for people to become totally cynical about politics and politicians.

We are coming down in Tribunals investigating political corruption but nothing is done.

In fact the way Bertie has yet again slithered out of corruption scandals is remarkable. We sometimes think that the rich and powerful are untouchable. It is vital that candidates who will really challenge them get into the Dail.

Joe Higgins is a very good role model of how a TD can raise the real questions that real people want answers to. He has a great record of speaking with anger and seriousness on our behalf.

But I think that TDs who win elections from the basis of the struggles that working people have fought must use the Dail to continually raise the issues involved in those struggles and crucially use their position in the Dail to mobilise people power to get change.

One or two TD's cannot get the changes just because they are elected. Real change comes from below and from the power of the people. So I would spend my energies organising people to get the changes they demand and that they so much deserve.

I think I would also bring a truly critical view of the Government and of the system because I won't be chasing a coalition deal or any cosy swops for votes to support any Taoiseach from the establishment.

In the long run I believe that groups like People Before Profit have to grow and multiply all over the country if we are to have any real alternative.

A new organisation for working people is urgently required in Ireland today.

■ **Brid Smith is running alongside another community activist, Councillor Joan Collins (Community and Workers' Action Group), and urges her supporters to give Joan their second preferences.**

## RORY HEARNE, DUBLIN SOUTH EAST



**Why are you standing?**

Ireland is at a crossroads. I believe its time for real radical change. We need the voice of change being demanded by the people to be heard at the highest levels in Ireland - it needs to be heard in the Dail and across the nation that's why I am standing in the General Election.

There is a huge lack of political representation in this country. The Celtic Tiger has left so many people behind in Ireland. Despite decades of 'social partnership' issues like housing have not been addressed.

While others try to out do each other on the issue of stamp duty there is another side to the housing debate and that is the lack of

social and affordable housing. Of the 81,000 homes built last year only 830 were social and affordable homes. 43,684 households still sit on housing waiting lists with over 6000 people on the housing list in the Dublin City Council area.

I want to stand as a voice for communities fighting back over issues in their areas. There has been an obvious failure by existing councillors, and TDs, especially those of the so called opposition to act on issues such as bin charges, the incinerator to name but a few. They pass motions, but have never led any action on the issues.

What really is our choice in the next election - tweedle dee Bertie

or Tweedle dum Enda Kenny - Fine Fail or Fine Gael? There's no difference. They are all 'tough on crime', 'tough on migrants', 'tough on the poor and marginalized' and of course easy on big business and greedy multinationals.

It's time for real change. People power can make it happen.

**What issues do you feel strongly about?**

I have been campaigning for over ten years at a grassroots level on many, many issues housing, funding for education, youth services, funding for public services and against privatisation, for migrant's rights and for improved worker's rights

and conditions.

Locally I have been leading a campaign with patients for the retention of St Luke's Cancer Hospital and I am working with community groups against the Poolbeg Incinerator.

Other major issues for myself and the campaign include the underfunding of education, which has led directly to the exploitation of our schools by supermarket chains such as Tesco pedalling tokens for school equipment and despite government commitments to Ireland having one of the largest class size ratio in Europe.

The bin charges campaign is still alive in many areas throughout Dublin South East with



# presents election challenge

Offering a real alternative in this month's General Election

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT, DUN LAOGHAIRE



Richard Boyd Barrett has a record of years of grassroots activism in Dun Laoghaire.

Richard Boyd Barrett led the successful campaign to stop privatised development of Dun Laoghaire baths.

As a result, today we can still enjoy the magnificent promenade on the pier without high-rise apartments blocking our views and the Council have promised to restore the baths as a public amenity.

He is leading the campaign in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown against unjust Bin Tax, water charges and other unfair stealth taxes.

He has campaigned consistently against unwanted development and

for real local democracy and proper local services in our county.

He is chairperson of the Irish Anti-War Movement and was the principle organiser of one of the biggest demonstrations in Irish history when over 100,000 people marched to oppose Bush's war on 15 February 2003.

He has been selected by the newly formed People Before Profit Alliance to contest the general election in Dun Laoghaire.

The People Before Profit Alliance brings together socialists like Richard with campaigners from Save Our

Seafront, the anti-war movement, the campaign against bin charges and other grass-roots campaigns.

It's a different type of politics based on 'People Power'.

#### WHAT RICHARD STANDS FOR

■ End the Two Tier Health System – For a free, comprehensive service for all.

'Mary Harney is boasting about the health service but she should hang her head in shame.

'We have fewer hospital beds per head of population than the EU average. We have one of highest death

rates from breast cancer. More people get MRSA in Irish hospitals more than almost anywhere else.

'No wonder that half our population has taken out private health insurance because they fear they will not get proper treatment.

'Those that cannot afford to go private are left to rot on trolleys in A&E or hospital waiting lists.'

■ Fund Our Schools – Proper Child care facilities.

'Dublin schools are hopelessly overcrowded and under-funded. Dun Laoghaire has among the most overcrowded schools in the country even though this is the Minister for Education's own constituency.

'We have the dearest childcare in Europe; a scarcity of qualified staff; no inspectorate with a specific training in childcare—and a shortage of places.

'Recently, Dun Laoghaire Co. Council even evicted the Blackrock playgroup from its premises of twenty-five years, giving them nowhere else to go.'

■ Housing, Amenities and Local Services – This government has failed.

'The government has failed to provide for those in need of social and affordable housing. Those that get on the property ladder are saddled with huge debts.

'New housing is usually without adequate public amenities, green spaces, public transport and other community facilities.

'Many council tenants find it impossible to get maintenance and repair work done. The elderly, disabled and those suffering from overcrowding have to wait years for alterations to their homes or simply can't get them done at all.'

■ Save Our Seafront – It's Not For

Sale!

Richard Boyd Barrett is Chairperson and founding member of Save Our Seafront(SOS). SOS is an alliance of local residents and community activists from the greater Dun Laoghaire area set up to campaign against privatisation and high-rise development on the public seafront. SOS wish to see the seafront in the greater Dun Laoghaire area and around Dublin Bay protected and enhanced as public and natural amenity that is accessible to all.

'Private developers working with the Council are targeting the public seafront for high-rise and exclusive development. They do not see the seafront as unique public amenity – they only see it as another chance to make super-profits.

'On two occasions in the last few years, the Council and developers tried to put high-rise private developments on the site of Dun Laoghaire baths.

'On both occasions, it was Save Our Seafront that gathered thousands of signatures and mobilised huge demonstrations to stop these plans.

'People power forced the politicians and council to abandon plans to privatise the baths. People power has now forced the Council to agree to restore the baths as a fully public swimming amenity.'

Electing Richard to the Dáil will send the clearest possible message to any incoming government that the public seafront is not for sale.

■ No To Bin And Stealth Taxes – Free Public Recycling.

Richard Boyd Barrett is convenor of the Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Campaign Against Service Charges, which has campaigned against bin taxes since they were introduced in the County six years ago. CASC has advocated a boycott of bin taxes on household waste collection because bin taxes are a double tax on ordinary workers and their families, who already pay a high proportion of their income in income tax and other indirect taxes to pay for essential services.

■ No support for Bush's Wars—US Troops out of Shannon.

The Irish Anti-War Movement was established in late 2001 when it became clear that the US government under George W Bush planned to respond to the 9/11 atrocities with wars against Afghanistan and Iraq and more aggressive military stance across the globe.

Bush's wars are based on lies-and the Irish government has tamely cooperated.

With Ireland now acting as the main European base for transporting US troops and the recent claim that Ryanair is involved in the Pentagon's war effort, a vote for Richard is a vote against Ireland's complicity in the occupation of Iraq.

■ We need your help to put Richard Boyd Barrett into the Dail.

The big parties do very little for people between elections but they spend a lot of money to get elected.

The Richard Boyd Barrett election campaign relies on the energy of many people at grass roots level.

If you want to contact Richard Boyd Barrett or join his campaign Phone 087 6329511

Or email rboydbarrett@hotmail.com Or text "Join" to 087-9794115 Check our website www.richardboydbarrett.org



households refusing to pay the double tax.

The health service is crisis. There were over 300 patients, on average, on hospital trolleys every day last winter, 15,000 adults on hospital waiting lists and 3,000 children on waiting lists for mental health

services.

Despite all of this, the Government plans to hand-over publicly owned hospital land to private developers. In fact Ireland spends one of the lowest proportions of national wealth on the public health service of any European country.

What national issues are important to you?

Outside the issues already mentioned, there are two other major issues, with a national dimension that need to be addressed: inequality and poverty, and the use of Shannon airport by US military. There is again no difference between the two main right wing parties on this issue. It

is a disgrace that a so-called neutral country like Ireland is effectively being used by the US as a aircraft carrier on the edge of Europe to carry out acts of aggression against the people of Iraq and possibly Iran in the future.

What is your attitude to coalition if elected?

Many if not all of the opposition parties believe that there is no other option but partnership with one of two major right wing parties. For me getting elected will help raise issues national and give a radical voice to campaigns throughout the constituency. However, real opposition exists outside Dáil

Eireann on the streets of Dublin South East. It was the actions of patients and locals, which has forced the closure of St. Luke's onto the political agenda and not the actions of existing councillors or TDs.

Coalition only serves to give us another term of Fianna Fail or resurrect the right wing conservative party of Fine Gael, who believe in the same pro-business, privatisation agenda as Fianna Fail.

For more information on the campaign see: www.roryhearne.org or email: rory.hearne@yahoo.ie or call 086 152 3542/ 087 698 8540

# People Before Profit's election challenge

**GINO KENNY, DUBLIN MID-WEST**

A member of the SWP, he is based in Clondalkin and has been involved in political activism for over thirteen years.

He has been involved in many campaigns such as the bin tax campaign, Shell to Sea, The Irish Anti War Movement and has campaigned against CE (community employment) scheme cut-backs.

Clondalkin in particular is an area which has suffered from years of planning corruption, a shining example of Fianna Fáil's brown envelope policy with the development of The Liffey Valley Shopping Centre, and an area where a basic amenity such as a library was promised but never built and where space for children to play is still a major issue.

The big focus of Gino's campaign has been to 'Think Global, Act Local'. Running in the local elections in 1994 Gino got 1100 votes, which was approximately 8% of the total and in

the run-up to this election Gino believes there will be a huge anti-establishment vote with a back-lash against Fianna Fail and of course the Minister for Health and PD candidate Mary Harney.

The issues Gino stands for locally are:

■ Halt the traffic madness. We need a proper public transport system with fleets of low-fare buses. National Toll Roads should not get €600 million of Irish taxpayers money. It should instead be invested in public transport in this area.

■ Abolish the hated bin tax. Stop the new moves to bring water charges. No to Stealth taxes.

■ Proposed town centre in Balgaddy/ South Lucan, to be community led, not developer led.

■ The Liffey Valley Park is a public amenity. Hands off our green spaces!

■ A major increase in the provision of quality social and affordable housing.

■ Recycling in this constituency is a joke. We need proper public facilities in every estate.

■ A radical strategy for the causes of drug abuse and for suicide prevention.

■ Real democracy with genuine public participation to decide effective use of surrounding public lands.

■ Where are the libraries for North Clondalkin and Palmerstown.

■ More funding for youth diversion projects. ASBOs are not the answer.

Gino has a strong community campaign and is already doing well, topping the poll at a recent mock election in Collinstown Community College in North Clondalkin.

The mock election was conducted by the

Gerry Ryan Show on 2FM because north Clondalkin traditionally has low rate of voting in elections.

Two days of canvassing took place in the school with all the candidates present including Mary Harney. The students were canvassed and the students voted.

While Fianna Fail brought lollipops, sweets and other sugary treats for the teenagers Gino and his team put up posters saying 'Don't Let Your Sweet Tooth Make Up Your Mind'.

Gino's comment with regard to this unbelievable stunt was that they must have expected 'jelibabies to be brown envelopes for young adults'.

The mock-election was conducted as a PR system and the vote of the young people of Clondalkin reflects the growing anti-establishment atmosphere right around the country: Gino topped the poll.



Gino Kenny

## FOR A REAL OPPOSITION

Continued from page one

Most working people have now decided that it's time to get rid of Fianna Fail and their miserable sidekicks the PDs. The key question in this election will be what is the real alternative. Apathy or a vote for Fine Gael will just mean more of the same.

While the rich win a one-sided class war the opposition parties have offered little if any opposition. On the right, Fine Gael support FF policies of tax cuts for the rich and the privatisation of public services like Health and Transport.

On the Left, Labour has gone into an election pact with FG and sided with FG on Private health insurance while offering no answer to how they will oppose the FG policy of privatising public services like the Buses. Their support for the valiant fight of the nurses has been lukewarm.

The Greens too have given no commitment to refuse coalition with right-wing parties and are likely to prop up Fianna Fail or Fine Gael in government.

Sinn Féin promises to defend public services but are advocating low corporate taxes and refused to support the campaign of non-payment of Water Charges in the North. This is consistent with their policy towards the Bin-Taxes in the South, where again they failed to support a non-payment campaign.

Sinn Féin are looking to go into coalition government with Fianna Fail and have already shown a willingness to drop core policies, such as that of increasing corporation tax, in order to do so.

If Labour, Sinn Féin or the Greens don't offer a break from the right-wing parties, what is the real alternative?

In the past few years a growing number of campaigns show the appetite in communities and workplaces for a fightback. The Bin-Tax campaign and campaigns against hospital closures, Shell-to-sea, Incinerators, Toxic Dumps as well as the Nurses strike show how much opposition there is to the policies of cutting corporate taxes and giving away our natural resources and public services to the corporations.

These campaigns reflect a new mood for people power and a change from below for which a new generation of public elected representatives are lacking.

Across Ireland there are many left-wing candidates standing who represent this movement. The People before Profit Alliance, the Socialist Party, Crumlin Workers Action Group, Clonmel Workers and Unemployed Action Group and several left-wing independents like Catherine Connolly in Galway West are standing candidates who seek to represent this change from below.

This election offers the first opportunity in years to build a real opposition to the neoliberalism of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael: to put people before profit and build the rising campaigns of community activists and trades unionists.

Vote Left for a Real Alternative – People Before Profit!

## Other Left candidates whose challenge should be supported

There are several other candidates who are taking a principled stand of opposition to the right-wing political parties.

Foremost among them is **Socialist Party** member **Joe Higgins TD**, who over the past ten years has set an example of how socialists can use the Dáil to support workers' struggles and challenge the complacency of traditional conservative politics.



Joe Higgins

He is prioritising the lack of schools, public transport and other public facilities in **Dublin West**, a constituency that has struggled to cope with the consequences of the rapid and unplanned expansion of Dublin.



Clare Daly

**Dublin North** also has experienced the downside of the Celtic Tiger and Socialist Party; Councillor **Clare Daley** is standing there, emphasising the need for public transport and her track record as a campaigner against bin charges and for workers' rights.



Mick Murphy

Other Socialist Party candidates are Councillor **Mick Murphy** in **Dublin South West** and **Mick Barry** in **Cork North Central**.



Mick Barry

In **Galway**, Councillor **Catherine Connolly** resigned from the Labour Party to run as an Independent.



Catherine Connolly

Her main issues are health and housing, as well as the need to provide free water for the people of Galway during the cryptosporidium outbreak.

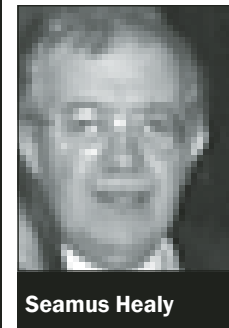
Another independent councillor standing for the Dáil is **Joan Collins**, who is running in **Dublin South Central**, with opposition to the bin taxes as her major campaign message.



Joan Collins

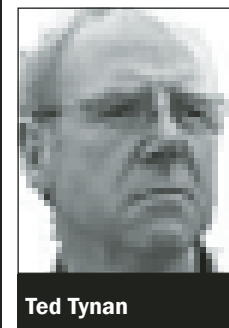
Joan Collins is running alongside **Brid Smith** and both candidates urge their supporters to transfer their second preference to the other anti-bin tax activist.

In **South Tipperary**, **Seamus Healy TD** has been a voice for the left ever since his by-election victory in 2000.



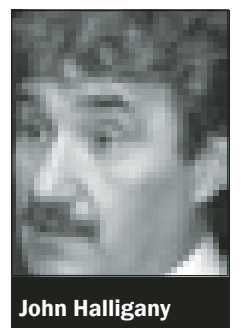
Seamus Healy

He is standing again as a candidate of the **South Tipperary Workers' and Unemployed Action Group** and, despite the economic growth in Ireland in the past while, believes that the levels of regional unemployed are still unacceptable.



Ted Tynan

The **Workers' Party** are standing a broad slate of candidates, of whom the most prominent are **Ted Tynan** in **Cork North Central** and **John Halligan** in **Waterford**.



John Halligan

By contrast the **Irish Socialist Network** are concentrating on **John O'Neill** in **Dublin North West**, who is running on housing, education and healthcare.



John O'Neill

All these candidates deserve the support.

This is on the grounds that it is better to have representatives who use their public position to campaign on behalf of workers, than those who are willing to join either **Fianna Fail** or **Fine Gael** in government, necessarily at the cost of their core principles.



# How to stop water privatisation

*Andrew Payne talks to leading anti-water charges campaigner Tommy Hogan about the fight against service charges in Waterford in the 80s and 90s.*

The political leaderships North and South are changing this month. The Northern Assembly is opening while the people of the south are going to the election polls. In both jurisdictions privatisation is a growing scourge.

Popular resistance is strong however, in the North the campaign against water charges is in full swing while to the South organised opposition to neo-liberalism is gaining more and more ground. Many people despair that in this globalised era local protest can be futile.

The people of Waterford's struggle against water charges in the 1980s and 90s is a shining example to all of how popular protest can be and is successful.

On 13 September 1994, two corporation workers disconnected the water supply of a schoolteacher living in the Hillview estate in Waterford who had refused to pay service charges.

When the work was completed, local women and children surrounded their van. Over the next five hours about 70 more people joined the protest and declared they would not move until the Waterford City Manager gave an assurance that there would be no more cut-offs.

Eventually more than 40 Gardaí from around the county arrived on the scene and a stand off ensued. The Gardaí used force and manhandled people out of the way to clear a path for the van to exit the estate.

Outraged by the violence that had been displayed against them, 150 people marched to the local barracks and staged a protest outside. Tommy Hogan was active in the fight against water charges in Waterford from their inception.

He explains that 'people were really incensed. While there wasn't mass violence, these were normal people who had never experienced violence or been in trouble with the Gardaí being manhandled. They would not stand for it.'

The actions of the people of Hillview were to ensure that this disconnection was the last hurrah of the campaign of intimidation that had been carried out by the Council for 13 years. A campaign that had included fines, disconnections and even threats of jailing.

The issue of water charges developed out of the abolition of domestic rates and car tax by the Jack Lynch-led Fianna Fáil government of the late 1970s. The shortfall involved was to be met by increased VAT and income tax.

This left a situation where local authorities were deprived of their main sources of income. Initially they were helped by a rate support grant, but as the economy nose-dived in the early 80s this was removed and the 1983 Fine Gael-Labour coalition government brought in legislation to allow local authorities to introduce water charges to meet the deficits they were facing.

Outraged by the decision to charge ordinary people for an essential service, residents associations in Waterford along with local political organisations such as the SWP, the Workers Party, Labour members and trade unions met that year to create the Combined Residents and Tenants Against Water Charges group.

The group's slogan was 'Water Charges No Way, Can't Pay, Won't Pay'. The group began lobbying local councillors, going as far as to call at the door of councillors and demand answers if they supported charges. As the campaign escalated the group took on a solicitor to represent those brought to court and even plumbers to reconnect the water supply to those cut off.

Initially, those who refused to pay



**Anti water charges protest in Belfast earlier this year**

**The Combined Residents and Tenants Against Water Charges group was then able to promise all residents that they would not be cut off for more than 24 hours as they would be reconnected from next door.**

water charges were brought to court. They were threatened with being listed in Stubbs Gazette or with having the sheriff's office seize goods to the value of what was owed.

Those who continued to refuse to pay were told they were in contempt of court. While no one was ever jailed in Waterford, in 1991 two people were jailed in Cork and another in Limerick. Over time however the residents learned to use the court appearances to their advantage. The courts would be picketed while inside protestors would take the chance to make a public stand.

Tommy explains how he himself appeared before the courts, 'being in front of the courts gave you an opportunity to give a big speech for 5 minutes. When you came out of the court you'd then get interviews with the local media and it gave you a chance to publicise the whole issue to a wider audience.'

As court orders failed to work, the council attempted to intimidate residents further by threatening that those entitled to education grants and other allowances would not be given them unless they paid.

On top of this, threats were made that if those who could afford to pay charges didn't, then the 3,500-4,000 people who were exempt from paying through a means test would be forced to pay in order to make up for the financial shortfall. Tommy admits that over the years this impacted on people who would end up paying tem-

porarily in order to gain their social entitlements.

In the end however this, like the court orders, was not enough to break the determination of the campaigners.

After the failure of all other measures, the council in 1993 began cutting off water to those who refused to pay. The move was blocked through the courts in Dublin but went ahead in Waterford where water was cut off from families' homes.

This is when the protestors took to recruiting plumbers. Some of the council's own plumbers came forward to volunteer to help the group as well as others who had gained plumbing knowledge over time.

The Combined Residents and Tenants Against Water Charges group was then able to promise all residents that they would not be cut off for more than 24 hours as they would be reconnected from next door.

It was from this movement that the blockades on workers cutting off residents' water came about. 18 months prior to the Hillview incident, a similar event took place on Brown's Road where 1,000 people gathered to prevent council workers from leaving for nearly twelve hours.

After the defeat in Hillview, the council never again attempted to cut off water in Waterford. Soon afterwards the charges were suspended. National momentum continued to grow, Joe Higgins came within 370 votes of election in a 1996 Dublin

West by-election running on an anti-water charges platform in addition to continuing protests elsewhere, and by December 1996 mass resistance led to the abolition of the charges.

Tommy Hogan believes strongly in the power of popular protest and mass resistance. He warns that water campaigns can be long but that they will always succeed if people believe in them. He believes that massive challenges face the people north and south in the future.

An EU water framework directive is seeking for water charges to be brought in by 2012 and Tommy believes authorities will hide behind the argument of global warming. Without opposition however charges can spiral out of control, as has been the case with bin charges in many areas of the country.

Tommy believes that 'Won't Pay' campaigns are essential in order to fight privatisations.

If everyone refuses to pay a charge on an essential service then it can never be sold. In his words, 'charges for basic services must be made uncollectible. If you can't raise money then there is nothing to sell. Why would a private company buy something that they know no one will ever pay for? They never will. The fight may be long but you must refuse. If you do and you keep fighting, you will always win in the end.'

Andrew Payne is a freelance journalist based in Dublin

## CULTURE



## Love Poetry Hate Racism

Love Poetry Hate Racism events were held in over 50 towns and cities around the world on the weekend of 20–22 April. Cities as diverse as Perth in Australia, Seoul in South Korea, New York, and London as well as cities right across Ireland and Northern Ireland put on anti racism events using poetry to bring people together.

The central theme was the celebration of diversity and for those who argued that poetry cannot change anything the event in Belfast was as good as any to show that bringing people together to celebrate diversity can have an impact.

The full house (a rarity for events featuring poetry in Belfast) saw Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech open proceedings. This was followed by Pauline Buchanan from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions outlining the measures ICTU was implementing to ensure that racism was being combated in the workplace, Barbara Muldoon from the Anti Racism Network, and Tommy Wilson a community worker from the Village.

Tommy, from the predominantly loyalist area, told the audience that for a couple of years the Village was considered the 'race hate capital of Belfast'. Over the past two years local community workers had been conducting an argument that anyone who comes into the Village to live should be considered part of the Village community.

By learning Polish and other languages, local residents have been able to make common cause with new arrivals to fight for decent housing in the area.

He went on to say that exploitation of immigrants, students and long-term residents by landlords had brought everyone together and that the struggle had united the Village in a way that he had hoped for but not expected. The struggle for decent housing had also paved the way for the Village campaign to link up with the predominantly nationalist St James residents.

After the speeches poets from Ghana, Argentina, Cuba, the Hebrides and local Belfast Poets made for a memorable evening.

One organiser told Socialist Worker 'we are now going to follow this up with cultural events that will help challenge racism in the communities.'

## FILM

# Radical politics in the midst of macho gunfire



Bob Lee is just one individual with a lot of firepower

By Sara O'Rourke

Shooter is classified as an action/adventure film, directed by Antoine Fuqua director of Training Day, it is adapted from a novel by Stephen Hunter, Point of Impact.

While an action movie full of bulging muscles, violent explosions, little or no dialogue and 'America-land of the Brave and Free' propaganda would not be my normal choice of film, I had read enough to be curious.

One review in particular said this film had all the ingredients of the genre and would have been a good movie but for the addition of anti-American. And since seeing the film and reading almost 20 online reviews, it is clear to me that the politics in this film have been mostly ignored, or, when not ignored, lambasted for being a 'government bash-fest'.

The government in question is of course the US and the

Shooter of the title is Bob Lee Swagger played by Marl Wahlberg, a former army marksman trained in counter-intelligence who left the armed forces after a mission in Ethiopia goes drastically wrong.

Living in isolation in a log cabin in the mountains he receives a visit from a very shady Colonel Isaac Johnson (Danny Glover). The story here is not new or original, the president is in danger of assassination and they need Swagger's expert help to try and stop it.

Expressing initial reluctance he tells us he doesn't like this president and didn't like the last one either, nevertheless, he heads off to Washington. What follows is an assassination attempt in which an Ethiopian bishop not the president is murdered and our hero Bob Lee is framed.

Enlisting the help of a young and cynical FBI agent he sets off

on a violent spree as he tries to get to the bottom of the whole thing. There are lots of big guns, lots of exploding home-made bombs, blood and a big conspiracy at the centre of which is a corrupt Senator who has been responsible for a mass murder in Ethiopia.

The victims are buried in a mass grave, over which runs an American-owned oil pipeline. This despicable Senator is played by Ned Beatty who makes statements such as 'there is no Sunnis and Shiites, there's no Democrats and Republicans, there are only haves and have-nots'.

The message from this Senator is that Bob Lee can shoot as many people as he wants but nothing will change because the whole system is corrupt and bigger than anyone imagines.

While Bob Lee is just one individual with a lot of firepower the message seems to be that regardless of how big the conspir-

acy is, 'justice' (even if it is the American version) will prevail.

That no WMDs (weapons of mass destruction) were found in Iraq has had more of an effect on the American psyche than most of us had realised. Gone is the ideal of America as the good guys in a world of all kind of bad guys such as Al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein.

Now Americans know what kind of government they live under and resistance to the war in Iraq is increasing. This is reflected right across the mainstream media in the US with even the most popular sitcoms referring to deaths in Iraq, troops wanting to come home, discrimination against Muslims and so on.

Films like Shooter while, not being everyone's cup of tea, are box-office hits and it surprising to find radical politics in such films, even if they are a little difficult to discern in the midst of macho gunfire.

## BOOK

## Three Irish socialists who were victims of Stalin's gulag

By Paul O'Brien

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union access to the Soviet archives has made it possible for historians to reconstruct the political and personal history of many of those who perished during Stalin's purges in the 1930s and 40s.

As the Russian revolution degenerated, Stalin and his supporters waged a relentless internal war against anyone who showed the slightest sign of disloyalty.

Up to the time of Stalin's death in 1953 the Soviet secret police sentenced over 4 million people for political crimes against the State.

Over 800,000 were shot and millions died in the slave camps of the Gulag system. The enormity of the terror is difficult to comprehend; individuals were reduced to statistics, their political and

personal history apparently lost forever.

Left to the Wolves is based on painstaking research in the Moscow archives and is part history, part biography, and reads in part, like a John le Carre spy novel.

Barry McLoughlin reconstructs the story of three Irish socialists, detailing their formative years in the Irish and British socialist movement to their deaths in Stalin's Gulag and interweaves the drama of their lives with the drama of this unfolding maelstrom.

Their lives and political activity crisscrossed Europe and touched on many of the major events of the century. McLoughlin wonderfully evokes the texture of the social and cultural relations of the period and provides a fascinating insight into the world of international revolutionaries, Comintern



Stalin

agents, and the expatriate community in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.

By personalising the narrative, McLoughlin makes it more understandable. He has provided a micro-history not only of the important events in Soviet and Irish history, but also of the political history of Europe in

the 20th century. This book describes the life and political history of three Irishmen, Pat Breslin, Sean McAteer and Brian Goold-Verschoyle who were victims of Stalin's terror.

Left to the Wolves is a fascinating read that takes us inside the terror with a cast of revolutionaries, spies and informers, which straddled the international movement. McLoughlin is good at describing the process of the terror: the numbers, the organisation, the minute details of the interrogation and the confessions extracted from the men. But he has no political explanation as to why it happened. He is forced to rely on irrational explanations; the paranoia of Stalin, the Bolsheviks were 'hard men', or the failure of party functionaries to carry out the plan.

McLoughlin throws up a mass of information but the

analysis fails to identify the key issues in Soviet history. He has no sense of the degeneration of the revolution, the counterrevolutionary nature of Stalinism and the theory of 'socialism in one country'. There is no sense of a new class society emerging.

There were real threats to Stalin's power in the mid-1930s; the old Bolsheviks who had led the revolution in 1917 were increasingly dissatisfied with Stalin's leadership and sections of the army who had served with Trotsky during the Civil War in the early 1920s posed a real danger.

Foreign revolutionaries who had sought sanctuary in the USSR were particularly vulnerable, as the regime feared that they might have been influenced by Trotskyite ideas. All of these elements had to be liquidated if the new social order was to consolidate its position.

These men deserved more. They were not friends or acquaintances; all they shared was their Irish nationality and their belief in the Soviet Union as a haven from prosecution and their belief that it was the heartland of world revolution.

They were minor figures in the communist movement, but McLoughlin has forensically pieced together their involvement in the movement and their confidence in the Soviet Union as a model socialist society.

Instead, they found a new class society emerging from the destruction of the revolution. Their disillusionment with the USSR led to their arrest, transportation and death

Barry McLoughlin, Left to the Wolves: Irish Victims of Stalinist Terror (Irish Academic Press, 2007). €29.50.



**GALWAY WATER CRISIS**

# Protest demands free clean water

300 people marched through Galway City on Saturday 5 May with an amazingly moderate and sensible demand: that free, clean water be delivered to the people of Galway.

The demonstration was called by Galway for Free, Safe Water (GFSW), a broad campaign group come together to make demands of the Irish Government, and the local city officials over the causes and handling of the Galway water crisis.

90,000 people do not have access to free, safe water in their homes; hundreds of people have been contaminated with a potentially fatal infection of the parasite cryptosporidium.

The children of the city are among the most vulnerable, and some of them are so sick they have had to be transferred to Dublin hospitals.

It beggars belief that the citizens of Galway have to take such drastic action as taking to the streets to demand their basic rights.

The rally was addressed by City Councillor and Independent election candidate Catherine Connolly, and T.D. Michael D. Higgins, both of whom support the immediate demands of the GFSW group.

John Gibbons of the Corrib Anglers and chairman of the Water Protection Group also addressed those assembled, highlighting the plight of the country's rivers and lochs, calling for this to be made an election issue.

Dette Mc Loughlin spoke on behalf of GFSW campaign and made a clear call for the current crisis to be declared a public health emergency by the government, and for it to be funded and dealt with as such.

People find it hard to accept that whilst we have an army capable of joining 'rapid reaction forces' dealing with humanitarian crisis around the world, the local Green mayor, local officials and the Department of the Environment claim it unfeasible and unnecessary to call the army in to distribute free, clean water to those homes affected by the crisis in Galway.

And yet people are aware that if there was a strike to bust, or a warmonger to protect, then there would be no hesitation, and no expense spared, to call out the troops.

The Irish Government, Minister for the Environment Dick Roche, and the unelected city officials all ignored the warnings, the reports, and the alarm bells that could have avoided this crisis.

Now they are ignoring the situation and needs of the domestic water supply users.

This is replicated through out most of media, who are not willing to highlight the plight and demands of Galway residents.

Maybe because it would reveal how the FF/PD government has allowed the pollution and contamination of our water supplies around the country by continually putting the pursuit of profits ahead of the needs of the people and the environment.

Dick Roche definitely does not want it to be advertised that he has been negligent in his job, or more cynically, has allowed the run down of this essential public service in order to justify privatisation.

The city manager has no excuse for allowing unbridled development without ensuring adequate water and sewerage treatment facilities. Perhaps it is to keep the tourists flocking to the city.

One tourist revealed to Socialist Worker that his B&B residence gave no warnings about the need for bottled or boiled water to be used for cleaning teeth.

The propaganda of 'business as normal' is paramount.

It would appear that no-one is accountable for the crisis, and certainly nobody is accepting responsibility.

Meanwhile, the crisis goes on, there are more casualties affected by the bug weekly, not just people from Galway but tourists and visitors too.

People suffer the sickness, and the expense of water, fuel bills and medical expenses. Those on the poverty line are obviously the hardest hit.

It took 4 weeks for the people to access reduced-price bottled water through lobbying sympathetic councillors such as Catherine Connolly; it took 7 weeks to get limited free refuse collection of empty plastic water bottles after a public protest at the council offices.

The people of Galway have been patient too long: we demand free, clean water be delivered to the people of Galway and we will increase the campaign activity to achieve this!

**END IRELAND'S COMPLICITY WITH THE US OCCUPATION OF IRAQ**

# Is Ryanair Involved?



Omni Air military flight at Shannon

Photo: Edward Horgan and Conor Cregan

Shannon airport is set to see an additional 100 extra flights a month by the US military, courtesy of Omni Air International.

Omni Air are a US based charter company, privately employed to carry some 10,000 US troops a month through the Irish Airport.

Curiously, the Pentagon Channel, the Department of Defence's cable television channel, recently boasted that the station will be broadcast 'on participating military

charter flights, including Omni Air International, Ryan Air, and United Airlines.'

The appearance of Ryanair in a list of companies engaged in US military charter flights comes as a shock and needs further investigation.

Unlike Shannon airport, in which the Irish public have a stake, Ryanair are a private company who can adopt whatever policy they like, but they risk massive public outrage

at the news.

Richard Boyd Barrett, Chairperson of the Irish Anti-War Movement said, 'it's bad enough that Ryanair have such a terrible anti-union record, but to assist with the US military operation in Iraq is shameful.'

'If this contract is confirmed there is no doubt that the IAWM will be calling protests against Ryanair.'

Visit [www.irishantiwar.org](http://www.irishantiwar.org)

# Kerry firm to supply technology to US military

By Sean Moraghan

Just when you thought that the war in Iraq couldn't get even closer to us than Shannon, it turns out that an Irish company is planning to supply technology to the US military for use in Iraq.

According to The Kerryman newspaper, Tralee company Altobridge will supply technology which will improve battlefield communications, and which will be 'in use in conflict zones like Iraq and Afghanistan'.

This is in marked contrast to the beneficial technology the company had previously created to allow mobile phone communications aboard aircraft.

The military technology appears to follow on from the earlier civilian use, and points up the problem of so-called 'dual-use' products.

The latter form a large section of the largely unacknowledged Irish arms industry. About 60 companies based in Ireland, both Irish and multinational, supply various products to the world military market.

In 2003, an Amnesty International report complained that Irish exports of military or dual-use products were not being logged accurately; the implication being that government is unwilling to admit that our much-lauded technology industry is so involved in products with unsavoury end-uses and with states with poor human rights records.

Of concern is the fact that US military hardware and software often finds its way into other theatres of imperialist aggression, most notably Israel.

The fact that the company's product will, it claims, reduce friendly-fire incidents cannot belie the fact that the technology will be used by the most aggressive and powerful military force in the world in the pursuit of global political hegemony.

The company's insistence that there will be no risk of its staff going to Iraq or Afghanistan to monitor the equipment also betrays a certain cynicism.

**MAYDAY IN BELFAST**

By Gordon Hewitt

Over 2000 Trades Unionists and activists marched to celebrate Mayday in Belfast. This year also marked the 100th anniversary of the 1907 Belfast Dock strike. The week leading up to Mayday has seen the anniversary celebrated in a number of ways not least the re-publication of the John Gray's magnificent 'City in Revolt.'

'City in Revolt' was first published in the mid eighties, at the height of 'the troubles.' It is a history of the struggle of the 1907 Belfast Dock strike which as John says makes for uncomfortable reading for many in the traditions, whether nationalist or unionist, which have dominated Northern Irish politics for the last 100 years.

John states in the new introduction that the book was not written, 'to condemn the legitimacy of accounts of the undoubtedly dominant themes in Irish political history, the respective triumphs of

unionism in the north and nationalism in the south. It is however to say that such history carried on to the neglect of other strands in the story, has about it a monolithic certainty, far from the truth.'

The book centres around three themes, the condition of the working class in Belfast, the arrival of Jim Larkin and the role he played in organising the Labour movement and finally the great strike and crisis of 1907.

John argues that Belfast, much as it is now, was notorious as a city of poverty in the midst of plenty. Then, for many workers wages were lower than elsewhere, diseases like typhoid and TB raged, and living conditions were cramped and squalid, while Belfast boasted the largest industrial concerns in the empire.

The strike, which erupted in the spring and summer of 1907, brought together the skilled and unskilled workers of Belfast docks, in the process welding together Catholic

and Protestant workers. 'This demonstrated the possibilities of united working class action and the dramatic threat that any such development immediately presented to a more barren status puo in Northern politics. However briefly, their action raised the question whether there was a viable alternative for the working class to the traditional rivalries for which the city was (and is) notorious.'

The upheaval in 1907 created a crisis so great in such a short time, that the government was forced to act to put an end to the dispute.

Battleships were sent to Bangor and troops sent to Ormeau Park.

The strike was defeated through the combination of military intervention, the lack of support from the Trade Union leadership, and sectarianism coming in to play.

In the Annual Mayday lecture John suggested that 'while Jim Larkin's role was invaluable and no-one could dispute that,

he organised thousands of workers into the union in the space of only a few months and was able through powerful oratory to articulate the frustrations and anger of the working class of the city.'

'But what must be stated is that in the face of such overwhelming pressures the Catholic and Protestant workers withstood the onslaughts of the Belfast employers and the shroud of sectarianism waiting in the wings and being driven forward by the employers at every opportunity.'

'City of Revolt' is a must read for working class activists seeking to fight against the neo-liberal, privatisation agenda which will undoubtedly guide the Assembly.

The struggle against the imposition of water charges, against rates increases and for decent housing can all be strengthened by the realisation that the politics of tribalism can give way to politics of working class unity.

**WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR**

**Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.**

**A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.**

**REVOLUTION**

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

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

**greater political and economic democracy.**

**AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR**

**War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.**

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

**END RACISM AND OPPRESSION**

**We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the**

**working class.**

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

**We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.**

**FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH**

**We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government.**

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

**We want to see an Irish workers republic where all**

**workers gain.**

**Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!**

**FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY**

**To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.**

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

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

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

## Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to  
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# Socialist Worker

## BLAIR'S REAL LEGACY: 600,000 DEAD IN IRAQ



Below: British PM Tony Blair. Above: Blood on his hands, more deaths in Iraq, Blair's deadly legacy

**By Gordon Hewitt**

By the time this article is printed Tony Blair will more than likely have resigned as the British Prime Minister.

All reports suggest that the big day will come shortly after he attends the fanfare of the opening of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The lead up to his resignation has been awash with media reports on 'Blair's legacy,' while many of the TV documentaries and newspaper reports have granted Blair a 'modernizing and visionary' role over the last ten years.

Gordon Brown, Tony Blair's proposed successor, writes of 'Blair's decade of achievement' in government, suggesting in the Sun newspaper that Blair gets 'ten out of ten'.

The truth is far less rosy, and most people are well aware of it.

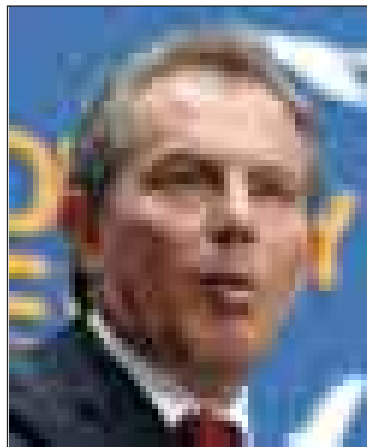
A poll published in the Independent showed that over two-thirds of the population see Blair's legacy as one of warmongering and not peace-making.

Over the last week there has been every attempt made to ensure that Blair gets a statesman's send off at the Assembly's opening.

In response to this hypocrisy, the Belfast Anti war Movement called a protest at Stormont saying that the people of Northern Ireland could not 'let Blair wipe the blood stains of Iraq on the Northern Irish peace process.'

The BAWM also released an open letter urging Northern Ireland politicians to block Blair's presence and instead tell him that he is not welcome.

David Morrison, author of Iraq: How Regime Change Was Dressed up as Disarmament said: 'Northern



Ireland has a particular understanding of the devastation that war and conflict wreak on a society.

It is totally unacceptable that as Northern Ireland is trying to move on from the pain and devastation of the conflict here that we would welcome someone who is responsible

for the same type of devastation on a much bigger scale in Iraq.'

He went on to say that, 'Tony Blair lied to take us into war in Iraq and that war has claimed over 600,000 lives. Tony Blair is not a man of peace; he is a man of war.'

'He is not welcome in Northern Ireland. If the politicians don't tell him that he is not welcome here then peace activists certainly will.'

Blair's main achievements apart from war have been presiding over a growing gap between the rich and the poor, and attacks on working people.

In Northern Ireland while many talk of the 'Belfast Boom', poverty is still higher than the UK average and as many as 25 per cent of people here have an income derived solely from benefits. This is almost double that in the UK. The Assembly, despite the wishes of

the vast majority of people here, will carry the legacy of Blairism.

Northern Ireland's drive to privatise, was described by Mark Serwotka, the general secretary of PCS, who were on strike last week, as 'the dogmatic hostility to publicly run services and the misguided view that the private sector is always better than the public.'

This privatisation agenda will include the selling off of the public sector, of handing over health, education and transport to the private sector and will include the imposition of water charges and the privatisation of the service.

The need to build a political alternative to the tribalism that dominates the Assembly, which puts opposition to the war in Iraq and continues to build the fight-back against the water charges are the key antidotes to any continuation of Blairism.