

Ennis march against HSE cuts

5,000 people marched in Ennis Co. Clare on Saturday 29th September to oppose the cuts and threatened closure of the local general hospital Page 5

Ken Loach interviewed



Award-winning director Ken Loach spoke to Berit Kuennecke about his new film, It's A Free World, an exposé of the exploitation of migrant workers. Pages 6 & 7

Rebellion rocks Burma



Revolt from below, not intervention from the West, is the key to overthrowing Burma's military Junta writes Gilles Ji Ungpakorn from Bangkok Page 9

The truth is out there,



Eamonn McCann tries to decode the unspeak of northern and southern politicians. Page 2

Iraq: Three sectarian ethnic states?



Richard Boyd Barrett asks if Iraq will break up as a recent motion by the Democrats in the US has advised. Page 6

SOCIALIST

WORKER
swp.ie

€1.00, £0.70 NO 278: OCTOBER 2007 WWW.SWP.IE

1 MILLION TROOPS 1 MILLION DEAD



by Donal Mac Fhearraigh

The most recent estimates by www.justforeignpolicy.org estimates that over 1 million people have now been killed in the war in Iraq. Ireland and Shannon airport have been central to this massacre. Over 1 million US troops have passed through Shannon over the past five years on their way to kill 1 million people in Iraq. Ireland has become a glorified aircraft carrier for the US who has now started the drumbeat for war against Iran.

The death rate is based on extending the July 2006 study, published in the Lancet Medical Journal, that estimated 650,000 dead, to September 2007. The Lancet survey has been scientifically verified as the most accurate method of estimating deaths in a conflict zone and was used in places like Rawanda.

This figure is given further credibility by the fact that the last year has seen a five fold increase in air strikes and bombing missions by the US Air Force in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The US has to rely on air power because its troops are losing against the resistance. Air strikes however mean greater numbers of civilian deaths. When you factor in the deaths from the sanctions against Iraq during the 90s Iraq is the scene

of one of the greatest killing fields of modern times, greater than Pol Pot's genocide.

The US is now also seriously talking about bombing Iran. John Bolton, the discredited ex-US ambassador to the UN, is once again doing the rounds talking about weapons of mass destruction and the need for war, this time on Iran.

Disgracefully the Green Party dropped its commitment on Shannon to get into government and is now silent on the possible use of Shannon to facilitate an attack on Iran.

The International Anti-War Conference hosted by the Irish Anti War Movement on Saturday 13th October in the Royal Dublin Hotel, in Dublin city centre is an important event to keep pressure on the new government over its support for war.

The attempt by the US embassy, prominent journalists and politicians to scupper the conference by demanding the withdrawal of visas from invited speakers, Ibrahim Moussawi of Al-Manar TV in Lebanon and Dr Qusay Abdulawahab Al-Suhail, an Iraqi MP, shows that the pro-war lobby are worried about the anti-war movement mobilising the majority sentiment in the country against the government.

Richard Boyd Barrett, chairperson of the IAWM said,

"It is very alarming that the US government or an Irish politician should attempt to suppress free public debate in this country. Its an attempt to deny the Irish public access to important information about the plight of the Iraqi, Lebanese and Palestinian people".

"Attempts by the US government or Alan Shatter to label certain people "terrorists" are pretty ironic considering they are very happy to stand over and justify the terrible atrocities committed by the US and Israeli governments".

"If the US and Israel are both allowed to have embassies in this country surely representatives of their victims have just

as much right to come here and give their side of the story".

"The attempt to undermine the conference makes it vital that the anti-war movement gets back on the streets for the biggest possible national demonstration against war on the 10th November and keeps pressure on this government and the Green Party in particular".

"The anti-war movement is also working with the Labour Party and Sinn Fein to put a motion in the current session of the Dail calling for and end of the use of Shannon by the US Military".

Lancet report <http://www.thelancet.com/webfiles/images/journals/lancet/s0140673606694919.pdf>

Irish Anti War Movement

International Anti War Conference
- Saturday October 13th -
Royal Dublin Hotel, O'Connell St. Dublin 1

with international guest speakers

- Dr Qusay Abdulawahab Al-Suhail (Iraqi MP)
- Michel Samaha (Lebanese MP and Human Rights Activist)
- Ibrahim Moussawi (Al-Manar TV)
- Amr Dabab (Human Rights Activist)
- Mira Dabab (Human Rights Activist)
- Roudbeh Shafiq (Human Rights Activist)
- Rosa Gendebatary (Human Rights Activist)
- Andrew Murray (Human Rights Activist)
- David Crouch (Human Rights Activist)
- Dr. Eoin O'Connell (Human Rights Activist)
- Angus O'Sullivan (Human Rights Activist)
- Ed Hogan and Patricia McKenna (Human Rights Activists)
- Mary Brennan (Human Rights Activist)
- Richard Boyd Barrett (IAWM)

Media Enquiries: www.irishantiwar.org



SHOCKWAVES THROUGH THE HEALTH SERVICES

By Jo Tully, INO Rep and 2nd Vice President of INO (personal capacity)

On Sept 4th the HSE announced a recruitment freeze and a host of other cutback measures including a stop to the provision of

- Locum/agency cover
- Additional overtime
- Filling of existing vacancies and other measures to curb its overrun of 240 million.

The day after this shock announcement it was revealed that HSE managers will receive a productivity bonus of up to 20% of salary.

For Professor Drumm it means a bonus of 80,000. For the rest of us, frontline staff and patients, it means cutbacks the extent of which have not been seen since the 1980's.

The effect of this announcement is already upon us. In Sligo 30 nurses, 4 consultants and 6 housekeeping staff are to be

let go. In Tullamore Midlands General Hospital 9 nurses are to be laid off and a 19 bedded orthopaedic unit closed. Other hospitals i.e. Limerick are making similar provisions. In the Community Services nurses have been stopped from returning to work from maternity leave.

Nearly all staff due to take up new jobs are left in limbo and many contracts will not be renewed.

In addition to these cuts

further cuts have also been announced in the guise of 'excellence in cancer services' with Mary Harney's instruction to hospitals to close with immediate effect the provision of cancer services in 13 hospitals throughout the country.

It is important to note that the closure of these facilities in hospitals such as Nenagh, Ennis, Cavan, Mallow, Mercy Hospital Cork etc. is happening ahead of the introduction of facilities not due to come on stream un-

til 2011 and possibly years later than 2011.

These cuts are taking place in a service that is already in crisis - the bed shortage has not gone away.

The national A&E trolley count - patients deemed needing admission and awaiting beds in the overcrowded A&E departments - was worse last Friday Sept 29th 07 (186) than for the same Friday last year (169).

For those of us working as frontline staff in the Health

Services and for our patients a bleak winter lies ahead. While the Trade Unions in the Health Service have come together - INO, SIPTO, IMPACT, IMO etc - united in their outrage at this assault they have had little solace from either Harney or the HSE at their meetings this week.

A national demonstration combining the forces of the trade union movement and patients against these cuts is what is needed.

The disability debate - social or charity model



Do we need a move away from purely lobbying methods and a return to the campaigning style that launched the disability rights movement in the 1970s? Page 10

Sean O'Casey: A playboy for today?



A review of O'Casey's play updated for todays Ireland of Immigration at the Abbey Theatre. Page 11

The EU Treaty debate



Ireland is the only EU country that will get a vote on the new EU Treaty. Kieran Allen cuts away the spin and looks at what the treaty is really about. Page 4

Billy Piper as 'Belle de jour', trafficking and the prostitution debate



Sinead Kennedy reviews ITV2's new series 'Belle de Jour' and compares it to the reality of the trafficking of young women for prostitution in Europe. Page 11

More job losses on the way?



Mamie Holborow looks at the recent trend of job losses and the future of companies like Intel in Ireland. Page 10

Comment

By
Eamonn
McCann



A lobster pot in one hand and a suitcase full of money in the other

The All-Ireland Society of Semantic Lexicographers has agreed to send a small squad to Belfast to try to work out what Ian Paisley Junior and Catriona Ruane are talking about.

This is very decent of the Semantic Lexicographers, given the gargantuan task they are facing down South, dealing with Bertie Ahern's explanation of how he and Ms. Celia Larkin—his "life-partner," said Bertie in evidence: got that one wrong, didn't he?—travelled around the city in 1994 carrying suitcases of spondulicks in and out of banks for reasons neither of them can exactly explain at this point in time. It's the sort of thing would slip your mind, right enough.

I loved the bit about Bertie staying behind the wheel of the car around the corner from the bank in O'Connell Street as Celia went in with the thirty grand sterling, or maybe it was some other amount altogether, in roubles possibly, which Bertie had told her to deposit in her own name because he wanted to use it to buy curtains for a house a pal from Manchester was thinking of buying, unless, indeed, it was somebody else he'd sent or somebody else who'd sent Celia, probably it was two other people entirely up to god knows what. I wonder if he kept the engine running.

The last time I heard a fellow on a witness stand with a story as improbable and a memory as maimed as Bertie's he was known by a cipher and was telling Lord Saville—or to be exact, not telling Lord Saville—what had happened on Bloody Sunday.

I wonder was Bertie ever in the Paras? He says he wasn't. What would you read into that?

We can be certain Ian Paisley Junior was never in the Paras because the Paras—not many people know this—don't accept lobster fishermen. Some mysterious tradition, origins lost in the mists of time. Perhaps it could be challenged under Section 75.

Anyway, Ian Junior doesn't go in for garrulous prolixity of the Bertiesque sort. He specialises instead in droll Ballymeaningful observations such as: "I know of him, yes."

This is something Ian Junior and myself have in common. I know of him, too. Seymour Sweeney, that is.

On the other hand, I have never given evidence at a planning appeal in support of a development which Mr. Sweeney had proposed. Nor have I supported a controversial pub expansion scheme of Mr. Sweeney's. Neither have I lobbied the Fisheries Conservation Board to give a drift-net fishing licence to a boat crewed by, among others, Mr. Sweeney and two of his relatives. Mr. Sweeney has never sold me a house. We have never shared membership of a political party. Nor set sail from Portavogie together to catch lobsters.

For these reasons, I might reasonably respond to a BBC interviewer who asked after my relationship with Mr. Sweeney: "I know of him, yes."

But if I were Mr. Paisley and the same question were put to me, would that response not be considered, well, inadequate?

Mr. Paisley was being questioned in the context of the brouhaha over his support for Mr. Sweeney's proposal for a visitors' centre at Northern Ireland's only World Heritage site which Mr. Paisley's and Mr. Sweeney's party colleague Arlene Foster, is, or was, apparently, minded to approve, in contradiction of the advice of everybody in the vicinity who could claim disinterested expertise in the matter.

I gather that Fianna Fail has decided to organise in the North. Some say the intention is to merge with an existing Northern party. Most speculation centres on the SDLP. But I wonder.

I am told by the commentators who know about this sort of thing that the main motive for the Soldiers of Destiny launching a foray across the border is to head Sinn Fein off at the pass. I wonder about that, too.

Education Minister Ruane is a member of Sinn Fein which supports the striking classroom assistants—"100 percent," it says in An Phoblacht.

At Stormont on Monday, she declared: "I have decided that to make progress, I am going to intervene. I am now calling on the employing authorities to proceed as swiftly as possible to implement the new gradings so that these valuable staff receive the pay rates to which they are entitled as a result of the systematic job evaluation process which has been carried out."

Sounded like support for the overstressed, underpaid people whose labour is crucial to the present happiness and future prospects of our most vulnerable children. At first sight, anyway.

Closer reading reveals that Ms. Ruane was calling on the employers to impose on the classroom assistants the deal with they'd rejected by 94 percent in a secret ballot and were now going on strike to oppose. May ring a colliery bell with older readers. It's the strategy adopted by Mrs. Thatcher towards the National Union of Miners way back in '84.

Front-woman for a party which can cheer on the workers, even as it urges the employers to stick the boot into them. Where would you get the like?

Within Fianna Fail, the Republican Party, matter of fact. Why don't they all merge? They have created a terrific little system of governance across this island. The buck stops nowhere.

Hard times for the Semantic Lexicographers.

A year of blockades in Mayo



By Maura Harrington,
Shell 2 Sea

And so the Corrib Gas issue enters its 8th year ... To use a tug-of-war metaphor, for seven years a community of country people has held the strain against the combined forces of Shell, the State and the Church hierarchy. In crass, Celtic Tiger Ireland, that is no mean achievement.

Along the way we've been vilified, imprisoned, battered, beaten and attempts made to criminalize us as a community. None of this has managed to break our spirit.

We remain determined to fight the unholy alliance which, years ago, dismissed us as bogtrotters who wouldn't be able to get their heads around "complicated stuff" and the proposed Corrib Project would become another fait accompli. We aren't, it hasn't and it will not!

Through dogged endurance we have got to the point where the Burke/Bertie give-

away of our natural resources is known to many throughout the country; we have shown the duplicity and lack of citizen protection ingrained in so many statutory bodies who roll over when Shell come calling; we have withstood a year of State-facilitated thuggery under Supt. J. Gannon and his paid (by whom???) nasties.

On the positive side we have the support of the regular people of Ireland, for which we're grateful; Willie Corduff is the 2007 recipient (on behalf of all of us) of the Goldman Prize which is described as the Nobel Prize for the Environment; we have the interest of two legal chambers in London, which is significant - there will be a continuous stream of Shell 2 Sea related cases making their inexorable way to the Supreme Court; the EPA has postponed its decision on grant of pollution licence from 28th September to November this year; there is no viable pipeline route and no possibility of finding one without

bringing in the army or Shell mercenaries (and even then, the chances are zilch). 850 people out of the receiving community of approx 1100 (over 80%) have signed a petition rejecting the Corrib Project as proposed.

This affirmation of Place and People is not to be underestimated by anybody.

It is in common with growing movements throughout the world where People are reclaiming basic rights set aside by weak governments subverted by unaccountable corporations.

Fianna Fáil's problem is - if you can't buy people and you're precluded from shooting or hanging Europeans, where does that leave you? Like Shell, up s*** creek without a pipe-line!

The good guys have to win sometime. To return to the tug-of-war, one of these days/months/years the anchor man will shout 'Heave'.

Let's all be there to pitch in when needed.

1,500 join Tara event

M. NI Bhrolcháin said: 'The support for the Campaign is growing - this was clearly demonstrated at the recent equinox event when 1,500 people gathered to form a huge human harp on Tara for the international artist, John Quigley. With climate change a frightening reality, it is madness to persist in building motorways instead of public transport.'



Fine Gael councillor working with developer?

By Deldre Cronin

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council granted permission last month for a large scale residential and commercial development on Dun Laoghaire Golf club lands despite vocal opposition. To put the development in perspective, it is tantamount to building the town of Fermoy in the heart of Dun Laoghaire. It includes 856 housing units, a shopping centre and office blocks.

The Council voted twice in recent years against the

rezoning of this land for residential and commercial purposes.

However following the intervention of Minister Martin Cullen a third vote saw the rezoning go through.

Serious conflicts of interest arose on the Council with a member of the golf club's relocation committee, Fine Gael Councillor Eugene Regan, among those who voted for it.

The Combined Residents for Open Space has been to the forefront of leading the opposition. They are holding an information meeting in October

8th to help organise an appeal to An Bord Pleanála. Local People Before Profit candidate Richard Boyd Barrett is among those involved in opposing the development.

According to Richard "It is important to keep up the opposition to this development. The way in which this has been forced through highlights the lack of democracy in this area. Once again the wishes of local people have been ignored."

For further information or advice on making a submission to An Bord Pleanála contact rboyd Barrett@hotmail.com

Balbriggan school crisis

By Alan Kinsella

The recent media spotlight on the lack of school places for immigrant children in Balbriggan highlights the total lack of planning in the town and in North Dublin generally.

Developers have made huge profits building on the north-west fringe of the town. Only one playground has been provided in the entire development.

Educate Together is operating at least 3 prefabs in the Moylaragh estate.

This is wholly inadequate considering the population of the town has doubled in 5 years to 16000.

Part of the reason for the crisis is the local 3 Catholic primary schools only taking a small number of non-catholic children who needed places.

To add to this some local right-wing politicians have blatantly played the race card to deflect anger away from Fingal County Council and the Dept. of Educations disastrous lack of planning despite knowing full well these developments were under construction in 2002.

Cork Anti Racism Network says Bring them back

By Joe Moore



Deported: Great Agbonlahor

Over 60 people attended a meeting, organised by the Cork Anti-Racism Network, on Thursday 27th September to launch a Cork based campaign for the return of the Agbonlahor family from Nigeria. Olivia Agbonlahor and her six year old twins Melissa and Great were deported by the Minister for Justice, Brian Lenihan, on August 14th last.

The case has been highlighted in part due to the fact the Great has been diagnosed with autism, and while he lived here was responding well to treatment both in Clonakilty and Killarney.

This treatment is not available in Nigeria and Great will suffer as a consequence.

As a result Olivia moved to Accra, where it was thought Great would receive some level of treatment.

This was not the case and all the while Great's condition is getting worse.

A number of people who are in the asylum process also attended the meeting and described the conditions under which they are forced to live.

They are not allowed to work and forced to exist on €19.10 per week, and the only future facing the majority is deportation.

The Cork Anti-Racism Network supports an open border position and supports the right to travel as a human right. The campaigns immediate focus is to have the Agbonlahor family returned to Ireland.

The family's solicitor Kevin Brophy (interviewed in the last edition of Socialist Worker) will be returning to the High Court in October in an attempt to have the deportation reversed.

Anybody who wishes to get involved in the Cork group can do so by contacting Joe Moore, 087-2994796, email mapuche@eircom.net.

Dublin City Council announces plan to privatise bin collection

By Donal Mac Fhearralgh

In a plan to further privatise Dublin bin collections Dublin City Council have announced they intend to allow private companies to tender for the bin collection service in the city. DCC claim their move is to stop cherry-picking by private operators but in fact it is an attempt to force everyone to pay for collection. As the council service is withdrawn people won't be able to throw their rubbish into the private bin truck like they can the council service.

Over 100 private companies have permits to collect waste in the Dublin region. These companies have been waiting in the wings to make their move. Recently PANDA have moved into the Dunlaoghaire/Rathdown area and more recent CITY BIN have applied to collect in Firhouse/Ballyboden/Knocklyon and Lucan in South Dublin.

Brid Smith of the Dublin Anti-Bin Tax Campaign said, "It has taken 7 years for the private sector to make its move because of the Dublin Anti

Bin Tax campaign. The huge level of non payment dented the private sector and now that some areas have much higher levels of payment the vultures are moving in assisted by DCC".
"The Anti Bin Tax Campaign has always called for No Double Tax, as tax payers we are paying for this service through our taxes. We have always said bin charges were a precondition for privatisation".

"In 2005 two directors of Oxygen Waste in Dublin were able to pay themselves a dividend of €5 million each. That money could have gone into the public purse".

"We need an effective national waste management programme, run by Local Authorities. Once private companies take over, the experience around the country id prices increase and waiver schemes are discontinued. Outsourcing of services is also used to drive down wages and working conditions".

"The Anti Bin Tax Campaign will support, in whatever way it can, action by Council workers to oppose privatisation".

Garda Ombudsman to Investigate Assault on Galway Peace Activist

By Dette McLoughlin

On June 22nd last, Galway Alliance Against War (GAAW) held a peaceful assembly outside a Galway Hotel while a reception was being held inside for USAF pilots participating in the Salthill Air Show.



Niall Farrell, GAAW spokesperson:

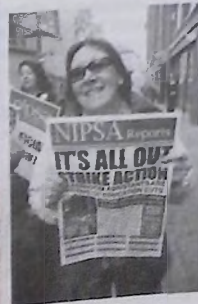
"We felt it was wrong that US pilots, who had openly boasted in the media of their role in the illegal Iraq war, should fly war manoeuvres in US combat planes over Galway Bay. Therefore we held peace flags, banners and placards in front of the hotel to express our opposition".

Everything was calm until a Superintendent Garda ordered GAAW members to move. Before one middle-aged man was able to move, the senior Garda grabbed him aggressively, and with such force and pressure that the demonstrator was hurt and severely bruised.

Last year senior members of the force tried to intimidate the anti-war group because of their anti-Salthill war show action. They attempted to criminalize their 99 Red Balloon peace event.

Public Meeting

FIGHTING PAY CUTS & PRIVATISATION



Speakers:
John Corey (NPSA General Secretary)
Eamonn McCann (Medical journalist)
Jane Scott (Training Class - com Assistant)
Postal Worker
Sean Mitchell (People Before Profit)

Wednesday 17 October 7.30pm
Unemployed Resources Centre
Donegall Street (opposite John Heaney Bar)

200 students join Socialist Worker in Queens

By Matt Collins

The success of the Socialist Worker Student Society at Queens University in Belfast this year shows that students are looking for an alternative to the corporate influence reshaping education.

While many parties promoted their politics during Freshers day it became more and more visible that SWSS was the only radical alternative to the neo liberal agenda dominating the college and the country.

SWSS campaigned on opposition to war and the erosion of public services, all in the drive for profit.

We got a huge response with over 200 students leaving their names to get involved in the society. SWSS members stressed the significance of a broad movement in order to tackle issues such as the war, privatisation



and the destruction of our planet.

The following day 40 stu-

dents attended a public meeting held on Che Guevara. Sean Mitchell spoke about Gue-

vara's revolutionary ideas and the need to carry on his tradition today in order to oppose the imperialist occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and help fight for a better world.

This experience is replicated across college in the South.

This is the first year People Before Profit is a registered society in UCD.

An impressive 130 people signed up for PBP which shows that students want a strong non-sectarian left alliance on campus.

SWSS is off to a healthy start too recruiting large numbers on campuses, in UCG 45 students signed up to the distinctly socialist organisation, 50 in UCD and 40 in the DIT.

This is an increase on last year signalling a consistent shift to the left among students consciousness.

matcollins_22@hotmail.com

Victory for People Power in Battle to Protect St Michael's Hospital

By Donal Mac Fhearralgh

Richard Boyd Barrett of the People Before Profit Alliance has welcomed Dun Laoghaire Rathdown-County Councils' decision to refuse planning permission to developer Noel Smyth for an 8-storey apartment block on the site of a car park used by St Michael's hospital.

He said the decision was a "victory for people power and the campaign launched by the People Before Profit Alliance to protect the hospital".

The Council's decision follows months of campaigning by the People Before Profit Alliance against moves by developer, Noel Smyth, to gain control of land around St Michael's hospital and the hospital itself for private commercial devel-



opment.

Over the last number of months the campaign had gathered thousands of signatures on a petition, held one of the largest public meetings ever in Dun Laoghaire and organised a street demonstration of over

600 people.

Richard Boyd Barrett said, "This is a very important victory to secure the future of St Michael's hospital."

"If Noel Smyth got away with building an apartment block on the site it would put

pressure on the St Vincent's Healthcare Group to sell him the hospital site itself.

The People Before Profit Alliance were also the only political organisation to lodge an objection to Noel Smyth's plan. But the battle to secure the future of St Michael's hospital is not over. Noel Smyth will almost certainly lodge an appeal to An Bord Pleanála.

Over the coming weeks the campaign will be distributing thousands of postcards to local residents addressed to our local councillors, calling on them to re-zone the St Michael's hospital site and car park for "hospital use only." We intend to make it fully clear to them that it is what the public want them to do.

rboydbarrett@hotmail.com

Aer Lingus Dail protest over broken commitments

The government TDs from the Clare and Limerick region, despite commitments and assurances to the people of the mid west, voted to support the Aer Lingus management in the Dail.

Socialist Worker spoke to the Aer Lingus workers protesting at the Dail at the end of September.

Conor Mahon, an Aer Lingus worker and PRO of the Shannon Action Group said, "We just want to show them the anger that has brought us up to Dublin."

"It took us an hour to get through Limerick on our way to Dublin and this is the connection that the government claims is adequate to keep jobs in the mid west region. The government is building a monster in Dublin airport, the new runway will double the capacity of the



'Lack of faith in agreements with this government'

airport and will suck everything into Dublin".

"We feel the Aer Lingus so-

lution is the only long term so-

lution for the Shannon region".

"There are five unions rep-

resented at the airport and in the Shannon Action Group. We're united in our position in all the unions. Our attitude is 'All workers, all sections, all united' we're all part of same agreement with this government.

"We face the same lack of faith in agreements with this government. If the slots can be removed from Shannon they can also be removed from Cork and Dublin, including the transatlantic routes.

"The labour court said no jobs would be affected by the privatisation of Aer Lingus. We now face the loss of over 40 jobs in Aer Lingus and thousands more in the Shannon area".

"Ryanair is now paying higher wages than Aer Lingus in Belfast. This is a new race to the bottom in the aviation industry".

GET YOUR COPY OF Socialist Worker EVERY FORTNIGHT

Six month subscription €15/£10stg

Name _____

Address _____

Tel _____

Email _____

I would like to receive _____ copies of Socialist Worker each issue

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

A different class of assistance



By Eamonn McCann

"After God had finished the rattlesnake, the toad and the vampire, he had some awful substance left with which he made a scab," noted Jack London in a speech in Oakland, California, in 1903.

The words came back to me recently as I listened to a chap on the radio introduced as a trade union official explaining that the only way for workers to make progress was to lie down in front of the boss in hopes of being propelled forward by a kick up the backside.

What had given the fellow a fit of the vapours was that members of another union had gone on strike in an effort to force their employers to deal with a grievance which 12 years of talking had failed to resolve.

You never hear an employer on the radio, do you, slugging off a fellow employer for refusing to concede a trade union's demands?

But then, the bosses quite commonly have a more finely-tuned sense of class solidarity than the occasional union official.

"A scab," continued the great novelist, "is a two-legged animal with a corkscrew soul, a water brain, and a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumour of rotten principles."

The classroom assistants organised by Nipsa intend to go all-out if there's no settlement. The Education Boards offered to buy out the unions' demands with a £15 million once-off payment. This would have given classroom assistants up to £2,500 each. In return, they would have had to abandon the historical 32.5-hour contract and accept a 36-hour regime, with obvious implications for all future pay calculations.

It would have meant, too, that the classroom assistants of the future would have lost the conditions bargained away by their current colleagues' acceptance of a single-payment deal. The rejection of the offer



Classroom Assistants on strike last month

Pic Paula Geraghty

was an act of solidarity with the future.

Some may consider this behaviour quixotic. But Jack London would have reckoned it no more than union duty.

"When a scab comes down the street, men turn their backs and angels weep in heaven, and the devil shuts the gates of hell to keep him out. No man has a right to scab so long as there is a pool of water to drown his carcass in or a rope long enough to hang his body with."

I have heard 'phone-in commentators wondering what it is that classroom assistants do, that the withdrawal of their labour can lead to school closures. The puzzlement is understandable. Fifteen years ago,

classroom assistants were seen as general dogsbodies, putting straws into milk bottles and tidying up after little tearaways had scampered off home. Now they are trained in pedagogical aspects of education and, most importantly, play an irreplaceable role in striving to ensure the contentment and assisting in the development of children with special needs. Nobody who has stood for five minutes in a classroom of special-needs children could be in doubt about the dedication, professional expertise and sheer necessity of classroom assistants.

The majority are paid between £11,193 and £14,523 a year. This rises to between £14,787 and £15,825 for those

working with children with special needs. The average wage across the North is £17,900.

Janette Murdock, a classroom assistant at Tor Bank Special School in Dundonald, told the strike rally in Belfast last week: "If this isn't sorted out the children's education will suffer...The boards will have downgraded the jobs so much that they will have created an inexperienced, high-turnover workforce."

Mark Regan, father of four-year-old Charlotte, who attends Riverside School in Antrim, told the Telegraph on Tuesday: "There must be some kind of equality issue here because it is disabled children who are being penalised. The classroom assistants do a wonderful job and they've been forced out because it's the only way anyone will listen to you these days."

The majority of the public seem to me to be open to sharing Mr. Regan's point of view.

Among the reasons this hasn't yet become the dominant point of view or well enough focused to force the Boards and the Department to defy the Treasury and do the right thing, is that, typically, none of the mainstream parties talks straight on the dispute.

Another is that there's ever on hand, squawking from within the trade union movement itself, somebody who'll say...

But let Mr. London finish his point: "Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. Judas sold his Saviour for thirty pieces of silver. Benedict Arnold sold his country for a commission in the British Army."

"But the scab sells his birthright, his country, his wife, his children and his fellow workers for an unfulfilled promise from an employer."

There is a way around all this.

It is for the classroom assistants of all unions to act on their own volition, join their Nipsa colleagues on the picket lines, and make it plain they'll stay out until decency prevails.

If they did, there's no telling who else might join in.

Comment



EU Treaty: Blueprint for a Neo-Liberal Europe

By Kieran Allen

Dick Roche, the Minister for European Affairs, has promised an early referendum on the EU Treaty and a vigorous debate. Given the complexity of the issues, that debate can hardly start early enough.

The 'Reform Treaty' of the European Union is several hundred pages long, contains twelve protocols and has several dozen declarations that have the same legal standing as the Treaty itself. Its sheer complexity creates a formidable barrier that allows local politicians to hide its real intent.

To simplify matters they will make probably two central claims 1) that it is in Ireland's interest to show enthusiasm for the EU project as this is the only way to gain foreign investment b) the opponents are 'anti-Europeans' who want a return to nationalist isolation.

These, however, should not be the terms of the debate. Despite a more frequent rhetoric about closing the 'democratic deficit' in Europe, the political elite is deeply shocked by the rejection of the EU constitution France and Holland

They are therefore using the most undemocratic measures to get the new 'Reform Treaty' through. The initial draft from the Portuguese Presidency only appeared in July but it is to be ratified by the Council of Europe on 18-19th October. After that, the only country where people will get a vote is Ireland. By an accident of history, therefore, the Irish people will be voting for the whole population of Europe.

The real debate therefore should be about what type of Europe its people want. Will it continue to be a Europe that is shaped by neo-liberal lobby groups like the European Roundtable and a host of other lobbyists who act in the interests of big business. Or will it reflect an aspirations for a 'social Europe' that grants economic rights to its citizens?

At present approximately 15,000 professional lobbyists work in Brussels with over 70 percent of them employed directly or indirectly by corporations. Over the past two decades they have promoted a series of 'directives' which have opened the way to increased privatisation.

Such directives give cover to local politicians who may want to express 'concern'; but then claim that 'nothing can be done because we must be in conformity with EU law'.

Thus, the government pushed through the disastrous privatisation of Aer Lingus on the grounds that EU directives prohibited extra state investment in the firm.

The hall marks of this neo-liberal approach lies at the core of the new Treaty.

Article 188c of the treaty calls for 'uniformity in measures of liberalisation'. This means pressing for privatisation at the pace of the quickest EU country.

Protocol 6 of the Reform Treaty states that 'the internal market as set out in Articles (1-3) of the Treaty on European Union must be based on a system whereby where 'competition' is not distorted'. It also gives the EU permission to 'take action' to end these 'distortions'.

'Undistorted competition' is code for not allowing the state to put extra investment into public services - even though such services carry a social obligation.

Support for the current World Trade Organisation policy of neo-liberal globalisation is expressed in Article 188b which states that the EU 'shall contribute to the progressive abolition of restrictions on international trade and on foreign direct investment, and the lowering of customs and other barriers'

'Other barriers' refers to non-tariff barriers' such as environmental standard or consumer protection regulations.

Anti-globalisation activists in Africa are deeply concerned about the way the EU presses for 'non-discriminatory agreements' which stop African governments imposing restrictions on capital flight or policies which favour local industry in government procurement projects.

The World Development Movement recently published leaked EU document which showed how the EU was using the General Agreement on Trades in Services to press for water privatisation and the opening of financial services to EU multi-nationals.

The Reform Treaty also retains the independence of the European Central Banks from any democratic control. Instead it will remain answerable to the needs of financiers who want 'price stability' and lower levels of state spending.

So while the ECB warns governments not to release any surplus funds in social spending, it was able to inject over 100 billion euro into the banking system to shore up speculators made a fortunes from mortgages on over priced property.

Declaration 17 of the Treaty legitimises this approach by setting as an objective of national governments 'to gradually achieve a budgetary surplus in good times'.

A vote against this Reform Treaty, therefore, is not a nationalist or backward vote but one which points to a different path - a social Europe where the needs of its people come before profit.

5000 march against HSE cuts



On the march in Ennis

Pics: Paula Geraghty

By Brid Smith

Over 5,000 people marched in Ennis Co. Clare on Saturday 29th September to oppose the cuts and threatened closure of the local general hospital.

The mood of the crowd was very determined. For the past twenty years the people of Clare have seen the services of in the local hospital consistently run down. Bed numbers have been cut from 128 in 1987 to 88 today, despite a 20% increase in the local population and a higher proportion of elderly people.

Nationally there is a shortage of 3,000 beds and 250 beds are short in the mid west region, between Ennis and Nenagh hospitals.

Ennis currently runs at 117% capacity while the recommended international operation rate is 85%.

The maternity services have

been withdrawn. There are no radiology or laboratory services.

But there is still a demand for acute services in Ennis. If the Hanley report is implemented and A&E services are withdrawn from Ennis, emergency cases will be expected to go to Limerick Regional Hospital.

In theory it should not take more than one hour to get to an A&E unit but it is estimated that around 60,000 people or roughly 40% of the population of Clare would not get to an A&E in less than one hour if Ennis is closed.

Marchers to defend Ennis hospital were joined by Aer Lingus workers from Shannon Airport who marched in uniform to highlight once again the neglect of this region by the Government and the consequences for jobs losses at Shannon.

Speaking at the rally lo-

cal doctor Michael Harty said "The Government has starved Ennis hospital of resources and this has led to very low morale among the hospital workers.

"We professionals are not supposed to talk of such things, but the time for niceties has long past.

"The Hanley report is no longer mentioned but is being quietly implemented. In the run up to the election politicians promised to keep Ennis open.

"They knew they couldn't keep their promise. They knew they wouldn't because they will not go against the Government.

"The time has come to tell local politicians we expect them to stand with the people and not with their party.

"The time has come to put people before profit."

Marchers were joined by representatives from the IFA, the ICMSA, the ICA, the GAA



and the church. Campaigners from the Save Monaghan hospital travelled to Ennis to support the protest and Peadar McMahon from Monaghan addressed the crowd.

"We in Monaghan know

better than most the tragic consequences of this Government's health policy.

"Today the HSE are moving into Monaghan hospital to take away another twelve beds. 94% of people polled in Ireland want acute services in their local hospital.

"We are the majority. People power has to be to the forefront in demanding change.

"We must shout with one voice against this agenda of cuts and privatisation or we will end up with needless deaths on our hands. We must make them listen."

Janette Byrne of Patients Together spoke of how people in the West were denied services such as Breast Check that are available in other parts of the county.

She urged the protesters to "remember the strength of people power. Shout together to

those dictators who ignore our rights.

"Let our voices be heard and show them that the west will not be ignored."

The local Bishop Willie Walsh condemned the privatisation of the health service and said "It is not right that anyone gets preferential treatment just because they can afford it".

The mood and the anger in Ennis is palpable. This campaign to save Ennis hospital and to immediately stop the closure of the A&E services is growing from strength to strength. It has linked up with similar campaigns in Nenagh, Monaghan and beyond and the message is clear.

We need a national campaign to defend our health service from the ravages of Harney and the HSE and we need to put people before profit before it is too late.

Harney closes down Cancer Services

By Peadar O'Grady

In the wake of the scandals last month of missed cancer diagnoses in Cork, poor cancer services in Limerick and massive delays in Radiotherapy services, Mary Harney has announced her solution - close down all cancer services in 13 hospitals!

In all these cases Profits are being put before people.

In Cork, two women who had smear tests for cervical cancer were reported to have normal results but hospital staff found they actually tested positive for early cancer. The hospital had outsourced the tests to a US for-profit

corporation, Quest Diagnostics in Texas, who do not recheck all the smears as is the rule in the Cork laboratory. Less than a quarter are rechecked to save money in the for-profit lab.

The Irish Times reported that the Department of Health had known for over a year and a half that there were concerns about the standard of care for Breast cancer patients in Barringtons for-profit hospital in Limerick. They did nothing because, amazingly, neither the Department nor the HSE have any authority to investigate any for-profit hospital.

In mid-September leaked documents from the HSE revealed that vital radiotherapy

services due by 2011 will now be delayed until 2015, 8 years from now. Harney's insistence that the services be provided by state funded for-profit companies in a 'PPP' (Public Private Partnership) is the main reason for the delay.

Condemning the lack of interim radiotherapy facilities, Irish Cancer Society Chief Executive, John McCormack told the Irish Times:

"The Irish Cancer Society is very angry about this... we were completely misled in 2005 about this. The waiting lists for people in Ireland for radiotherapy are immoral. There is a 20-week waiting list for men with prostate cancer.

It causes anger and frustration and it shouldn't be allowed today in 2007."

Harney then ordered 13 Hospitals to immediately close down their breast cancer services and to close all their cancer services within 3 months!

These hospitals are at: Naas, Tullamore, Mallow, Cavan, Ennis and Nenagh, as well as St Columille's in Loughlinstown, Louth County Hospital, Our Lady's Hospital in Navan, Roscommon County Hospital, Portiuncula Hospital in Ballinasloe, Mercy hospital in Cork and St Michael's Hospital, Dún Laoghaire. Harney incredibly claimed

this was 'in the interests of patient safety'. Harney claimed that services would be better provided in 'centres of excellence' but none of these facilities will be open for years.

Irish Medical Organisation President, Dr. Paula Gilvarry, said:

"Given the HSE's track record to date, these facilities will probably be delayed for a further two to three years adding further severe stress and unconscionable concern to patients and their families. It is outrageous that vital services within communities can be shut down immediately and yet the HSE are unable to have the

replacement services up and running with the same sense of urgency. It is unacceptable that they have also failed to recognise the further trauma and difficulties patients and families will face by being asked to travel significant distances to receive cancer treatment with no transport arrangements in place."

These cutbacks are just part of the Hanly report plan to close down local hospital's services to maximise for-profit healthcare.

Organised resistance from local communities and trade unions will now be needed to stop this destruction of public cancer services.

Will Iraq break up?



Aftermath of a car bomb explosion in Karbala

By Richard Boyd Barrett
Chair Irish Anti War
Movement (per. cap)

The US congress has passed a resolution calling for the division of Iraq into three separate regions based on religious or ethnic identity – Sunni, Shiite, Kurd. The proposal put forward by Democratic Congressman, Joseph Biden, received support from both Republicans and Democrats and claims to be a solution to the raging violence in Iraq.

In reality, such a proposal not only fails to understand the dynamics of violence in Iraq but if implemented would spell further disaster for the country.

The premise for the proposal is that the violence in Iraq results from an escalating civil war between religious and ethnic factions, with the US forces as simply 'piggies in the middle,' doing their best to prevent sectarian slaughter. This is, of course, what the Bush administration itself claims as justification for its continued occupation of the country. Yet just as earlier claims about WMD in Iraq were lies used to justify a war the US wanted for quite different reasons, the idea that violence in Iraq is a result of sectarian hatred is also a lie.

Historically, there is no basis for the view that Iraq is a hotbed of warring sectarian factions. Iraq is one of the oldest multicultural states on earth, where a vast array of different religious and ethnic groups have lived together without any major history of conflict. Almost every area, tribe and family in Iraq contains a mixture of Sunni and Shia, not to mention the co-existence of a whole range of other groups or sub-groups such as Kurd, Turkman, Assyrian, Christian and more. An Iraqi national consciousness also cuts strongly across all religious and ethnic boundaries and is deeply embedded in Iraqi society. The modern Iraqi state emerged precisely from a series of popular nationalist revolts in the 1920's, 30's and 50's in which Iraqis from all sects rose together against British occupation and puppet rulers imposed by the colonial power.

Significantly, a leading figure and hero of the Iraqi nationalist movement that drove out the British was the great grand-father of Muqtada Al Sadr, who today spear-heads a huge section of the resistance to the US occupation. Members of the Al Sadr family were also among the most prominent opponents of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, two of whom were assassinated by Saddam for that opposition. Contrary to the popular perception peddled by the US, Al Sadr, although a Shia cleric, is first and foremost an Iraqi nationalist who publicly opposes any project for the sectarian partition or re-division of Iraq. Sadr is also actively hostile to Iranian interference in Iraq. Throughout the period of the occupation, Sadr has co-operated with Christians, Sunni's and leftists in Iraq who are opposing the US occupation.

The commitment of Sadr and most of the mainstream resistance groups, from all backgrounds, to opposing the US military presence and supporting a unified multi-religious and multi-ethnic Iraq echoes the views of the majority of Iraqi people. All polls taken in Iraq since 2003 show an overwhelming majority of Iraqi's wanting the US to leave and supporting a single unified Iraq – albeit in the case of the Kurds with regional Kurdish autonomy. Some recent polls of Iraqi public opinion show the following: 78% of all Iraqi's oppose the US led occupation including, 83% Shia, 97% Sunni and 25% Kurd; 61% of all Iraqi's approve of attacks on the US led occupation forces, including 62% of Shia, 92% of Sunni's and 15% of Kurds; 72% of Iraqi's believe Iraq will still be a unified state in five years time, including 80% Shia, 56% Sunni and 65% Kurd; 77% of all Iraqi's support a single governmental authority as opposed to factionally based militias.

Such evidence refutes US and media propaganda about the situation in Iraq. The Iraqi people want the US out not the sectarian division of the country. It is the US that is encouraging sectarian conflict and division in Iraq and they are doing it precisely as a

way of trying to undermine the overwhelming opposition of the Iraqi people and the escalating resistance that flows from it. Again some facts are revealing: Of the roughly 4,500 attacks taking place every month about 60 per cent are against the US led coalition forces, another 20 per cent are against the Iraqi government forces working with the US and its allies, and less than 20 per cent are against civilians. Another poll shows the Iraqi people are convinced that the US has no intention of leaving Iraq at any time in the near future with 80% saying the US wants permanent military bases in their country.

Of course, there are sectarian groups and killings in Iraq, but the groups stoking up sectarianism are not primarily those opposed to the US presence but those who support it such as the Shiite Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution and a number of smaller mostly Sunni parties.

The US, because it is facing such overwhelming opposition to its occupation of Iraq, has sought allies among these unrepresentative and sectarian groupings, many of whom are returned exiles who lived either in the US or Iran during the period of Saddam's dictatorship. Ironically, for example, it is SCIRI, a group that has worked closely with the American occupation since 2004, that has the closest links with the Iranian regime and is also widely believed to be running some of the most murderous death squads.

US threats against Iran, which are currently being cranked up in alarming way, are simply the logical extension of their policy in Iraq. If plan B, after failing to successfully gain control of Iraq, is to devastate and divide it; the same logic applies doubly to Iran. The US has no hope of occupying Iran but it can devastate it and hope to ignite sectarian and ethnic conflict thus removing it as a regional threat.

The key then to preventing a sectarian civil war in Iraq is not sectarian partition of the country but the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the US led occupation forces.



Ken Loach into his new film, It's A Free World

Award-winning director Ken Loach's new film, *It's A Free World*, an exposé on the exploitation of migrant workers in Britain.

"They call it 'flexible labour,'" says veteran left wing film director Ken Loach. "What that means is its good for the employers but not good for the people who work. And I think this shift from stable employment to casual labour has not been explored significantly yet." His new film, *It's A Free World*, starts to fill this gap. It was written by his long term collaborator Paul Laverty and was released on DVD at the start of October.

Laverty's script has already scooped one major award, taking the prize for best screenplay at the Venice Film festival last weekend.

I asked Ken why he decided to make a movie about migrant labour in Britain today.

"Paul Laverty and I wanted to make a film about immigrant workers for some time," he said.

"Paul has been interested in the subject ever since spending time in Los Angeles with Central American workers while writing the script for our earlier film *Bread and Roses*.

"Both of us were also following closely what was happening here with the arrival of new workers from eastern Europe.

"What interested me was how the experience of workers has changed. We've gone from the security of a job that would often last a lifetime to casual labour, agency work and short-term contracts."

Angie, a woman who sets up an "employment agency" for immigrant workers, is the film's main protagonist. I asked Ken why he chose to do this.

"We wanted to make a film from the point of view of the exploiter rather than the exploited," said Ken Loach. "Which would have just been too predictable. We wanted to look into the process of exploitation from the employer's point of view, to try to understand that mentality.

"Angie is working class. She's 30 years old, she's been ripped off for ten years of her working life, going from one job to another and on short-term contracts and so on.

"She's afraid of ending up like her parents – in comparative poverty in a council flat.

Thatcher

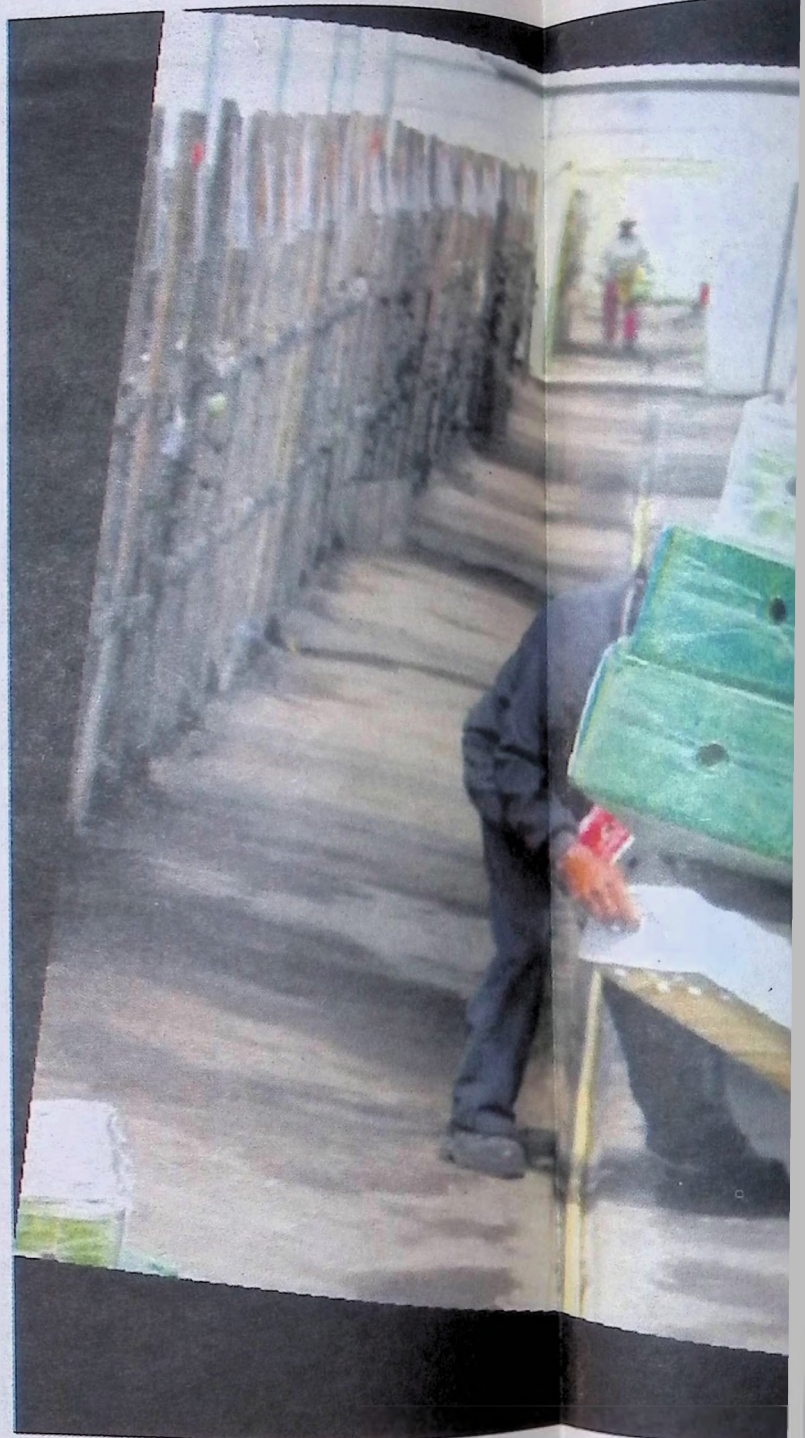
"She's on the make. But we wanted her to be sympathetic initially – someone who takes the audience on the journey of her being a victim to her becoming the exploiter.

"We tried to show that there has been a shift of consciousness among a lot of people – and you can trace this back to the Thatcher years.

"We wanted a protagonist who would express this new consciousness – everything is a deal, everything is to be negotiated, you're on your own, you look after yourself, and you have no responsibilities to the rest of the world.

"As Margaret Thatcher famously said, 'There is no such thing as society'.

"We tried to contrast this with the ideas of Angie's father, who is obviously from an earlier generation, with his values of solidarity and looking after your co-workers.



A still from Ken Loach's *It's a Free World*: "We've gone from the security of a job that would last a lifetime to casual labour, agency work and short-term contracts."

"Angie has absorbed the 'business ideology' – she's ruthless in pursuing her interests. She follows all the business dictums – get the labour as cheaply as possible and undercut the opposition.

"Gradually she sees that she can make more money by moving from 'bad practice' to downright illegality."

I asked Ken how he'd researched the movie.

"We talked to a lot of people from different backgrounds.

"Paul went to the north of Scotland and to Aberdeen, Manchester, London and the West Country.

"We could have made a movie just about the horror stories people were telling us – the accidents,

the lack of safety.

"One woman died of a haemorrhage after working continuous shifts at a factory.

"People get killed by unsafe machinery.

Bogus fees

"There are endless stories about people working and not getting paid. Somebody had worked all week and made 21p because of all the bogus fees his agency deducted. Some people did a week's work for £10 or got taken in cars and dumped in the middle of nowhere.

"But we thought the best film to make would be one where you saw the logic of what the exploiters do. It isn't arbitrary and they aren't necessarily bad people. It's

the logic of business."

In *Bread and Roses* film about janitors in workers began to organise fight back. I asked him thought were the possibilities that happening here.

"There are signs of grants getting organised very frail at the moment said.

"We did hear a student young Ethiopian student north of Scotland down when they discovered they were being ripped off.

"But they were in a terrible position than most workers who send money home to their families.

"In the original script have a scene where some

Loach interviewed about new film, It's a Free World

Director Ken Loach spoke to Berit Kuennecke about his new film *It's a Free World*, an exposé of the exploitation of migrant workers



It's a Free World: "We've gone from the security of a job that would often last a lifetime to casual labour, agency work and short-term contracts."
the lack of safety.
"One woman died of a haemorrhage after working continuous shifts at a factory.
"People get killed by unsafe machinery."
Bogus fees
"There are endless stories about people working and not getting paid. Somebody had worked all week and made 21p because of all the bogus fees his agency deducted. Some people did a week's work for £10 or got taken in cars and dumped in the middle of nowhere.
"But we thought the best film to make would be one where you saw the logic of what the exploiters do. It isn't arbitrary and they aren't necessarily bad people. It's

the logic of business."
In *Bread and Roses*, Loach's film about janitors in the US, workers began to organise and fight back. I asked him what he thought were the possibilities of that happening here.
"There are signs of immigrants getting organised, but it's very frail at the moment," he said.
"We did hear a story about young Ethiopian students in the north of Scotland downing tools when they discovered they were being ripped off.
"But they were in a less vulnerable position than many other workers who send money back home to their families.
"In the original script we did have a scene where some of the

workers went on strike. But when we shot it, we felt that it had become redundant in the context of the film. It wasn't dramatically necessary – but it is included on the DVD.
"I think the efforts of the unions to organise migrant workers are quite valiant in some areas. But I do think the union leadership has to be much more dynamic.
Act immediately
"It's one thing to persuade immigrants to join a union – but then they have to see that the union is doing something. Otherwise, why should they join?
"The problem is that even when a union decides to take action it is often too late – because

of the anti-union laws. So a lot of immigrants will already have moved on, and will be off the agency's books. The unions need to act immediately to have any impact.
"I think there also needs to be a campaign by the wider public to repeal the anti-trade union laws. Gordon Brown doesn't want this – he wants weak unions.
"But I also think the unions need to go back and say, 'To hell with our big offices – we need to organise on the ground, at a grassroots level.'
"Their priority should be organising workers, not looking after the union's bureaucracy.
"Exploitation and low wages are not peripheral features of this society – they are central to it.

"Many immigrant workers aren't registered, they don't receive benefits when they are sick or out of work.
"But their cheap labour is at the heart of the economy – it makes a nonsense of the minimum wage legislation. Cheap labour gives us cheap clothes, food and so on.
"Brown says he has to control inflation. If people were paid the minimum wage, the cost of food and clothes would go up and he would lose the battle against inflation.
"So the government has to make sure the minimum wage exists in name only – it has to subvert its own legislation. There's a great hypocrisy right at the heart of the New Labour government."

From Movement to Revolution



Gdansk shipyard workers in 1980

By Colin Barker

This month marks the 90th anniversary of the 1917 Russian revolution. As part of commemorating that revolution Colin Barker looks at how revolutions happen and how mass movements can transform people

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels suggested two reasons why revolution is necessary.

First, there is no other way that the ruling class will give up their power, property and privilege.

On that, all kinds of revolutionaries agree – both those who think minorities can change the world, and those who look to the revolutionary activity of the majority.

The second reason is distinctive to Marxism. It is that only in revolution can the working class "succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew", as Marx himself put it.

That's a view of revolution as the act of great mass movements. It's tied to a view of socialism as a vast extension of popular democratic control over all aspects of society.

It also identifies a key obstacle to socialism – the "muck of ages", those features of everyday life that impede the working class majority from being able to rule.

A working class that today is alienated, divided, and powerless cannot wake tomorrow fully equipped to run the world democratically.

It has to change itself through struggle. The key bridge is participation in mass movements of revolt. Only such movements contain the possibility of becoming movements aiming at workers' power.

Already, early in this new century, mass strikes are reviving across the world. They, along with other kinds of mass revolts like that erupting in Burma, are not just important in their challenge to the rich and powerful.

They also initiate a vital process of collective self-organisation and introduce the beginnings of practical, mutual solidarity.

And not only that. The core idea tying us to the ruling class world of hierarchy and deference is the feeling that we amount to nothing. Class society is a system of organised humiliation.

In mass movements, people start to raise their heads. They begin to look their rulers in the eye, and notice how they blink and turn away. In mass movements, people laugh more and enjoy themselves. In mass strikes and

similar struggles, two other developments sometimes occur. Both point the way forward.

The first is when ordinary working people start taking over the running of bits of everyday life. This might seem mundane. Organising food supplies for a factory occupation or a long strike doesn't sound very revolutionary, but it's a vital material necessity, and it draws people into new forms of activity. Done badly, it hurts morale. Done well, it raises confidence.

The miners' wives in 1984-5 started with organising canteens, and went on to claim a central place in the strike committees.

In Seattle in 1919, the general strike committee commandeered lorries – issuing passes to drivers and controlling the movement of necessary supplies.

In Gdansk in Poland in 1980, the strike committee took over taxis and trams too. They put their own guards on the shipyard gates, checking who went in and out of the occupation. They also took over the loudspeaker system, using it to relay their talks with the government to the whole workforce.

In these and many other ways, mass movements enable people to start envisioning a new form of society, by starting to experience pieces of life under their own collective control. The beginnings may be small, but their potential is huge.

Often different struggles within capitalist society seem separate from each other, even antagonistic. Workers are divided by nationality, ethnicity, religion and gender. Sometimes in mass movements, different struggles fuse together.

The movement's new unity breaks down old divisions. Indeed, finding that unity is often a condition of success.

In the US, before black and white workers learned to organise together, they fought each other. One great achievement of the US strikes of the 1930s was the forging of black and white unity in the auto and steel plants.

Mass movements can thus challenge not just competition between individual workers but division into competing groups. Inherited forms of oppression can be rapidly undermined.

These are possibilities. They don't always occur, and they don't always realise their full potential. We'll look more at this next week.

Colin Barker is the author of *Festival of the Oppressed: a History of Solidarnosc in Poland*. It is available for £3 from Bookmarks – go to www.bookmarks.uk.com

Editorial

One Law for Ahern another for the rest of us

Ahern's performance at the Mahon Tribunal showed he is far from made of Teflon and the confidence vote in the Dail which Ahern won by one vote showed he would not survive in politics without the support of the Greens. The loss of Ahern would cause a political crisis and would throw FF into disarray as the various factions fought for control. The Greens rescuing Ahern proves their betrayal of the movement is complete.

Ahern's story to the tribunal is full of holes and he has been accused of perjury in the Dail. His explanation was picked apart. How many more payments did he receive? Gilmartin claims he has 15 million hidden in offshore accounts. The fact that Ahern could tell such a dodgy story and walk away shows little has changed in Ireland since Haughey. Its still one law for the rich and their hangers on and another for the rest of us.

This is a weak government that will face serious challenges in a changed economic environment and may not last a full term. Already the EU anti-competition ruling against Microsoft has major implications for other US multinationals based in Ireland. Intel has already started plans to transfer their plants to China. With a housing crash and job losses increasing there will be major openings for the left to challenge the government.

Tax evasion

Ireland has some of the lowest rates of tax for the rich in the world. A third of all hedge funds are registered in the IFSC in Dublin because of it lax regulation and low taxes. Even with this the top three richest people avoided paying any tax at all in 2003 according to the revenue commissioners. The 150 richest paid less than 30% tax mainly through property speculation.

Brian Cowan wants to make workers pay for the slow down in the economy with job losses and worse public services like the freeze on recruitment in the health service. Cancer services are being cut while the super-rich pay no tax.

Green energy?

The claims by the Greens that all the betrayals of the movement are justified to get movement on climate change are exposed by the decision to break up the ESB. The EU directive to split up power generation from distribution shows what the future EU Treaty is about—cherry picking the most lucrative public industries by big business.

Where this was done in the US companies like ENRON made millions from inflating electricity prices and caused power blackouts because they didn't invest in the power grid. Just like we saw with the Eircom privatisation—profits at the expense of infrastructure.

Breaking up national grids also runs counter to what is needed to tackle climate change. We need to be linking up national grids to enable more inputs from renewable energy on a continent wide basis. Where wind power from the Atlantic can be linked to thermal, solar and biomass from other regions.

The return of the unions

The magnificent strike by the classroom assistants and the postal workers in the North show union militancy is on the way back. The rapid escalation of the classroom assistants strike combined with lively pickets and protests has won widespread support. We need to unite these different struggles and spread the new mood of struggle to the South where the union leaders are still pushing partnership. We also need to give these struggles a political expression through the People Before Profit Alliance.



Is high rise the future?

By Jack Cummins

The recent vote by Dublin City Councillors against the granting of planning permission to developer Sean Dunne for a 37-storey high-rise development in Ballsbridge, should come as no surprise. The scheme was grossly oversized for the site. Dunne, having paid an astronomical sum for it, is clearly trying to maximise his potential return.

However the case raises the debate about the desirability of high-rise and high density development. It is important to understand that these are not the same thing.

The old Ballymun estate although high rise, at least in part, was also low density.

Saorstát Eireann, Official Handbook of the Irish Free State, published in 1932, to mark ten years of national independence, had for its frontispiece a typical Paul Henry painting of a cottage landscape—an image no doubt chosen as capturing the essence of the nation.

The national ideal was an Irish speaking, frugal, rural society as exemplified by De Valera's famous speech of a 'land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of

athletic youths, and the laughter of comely maidens'.

This ideological view had a direct consequence on the model for the development of our towns and cities.

The detached or semi-detached, owner occupied, single-family house with front and back gardens was pushed with the argument that 'the Irish cul-

turally had an emotional need to have land around them'.

It is also probably no accident that the model also suited the relatively small-scale, under-capitalised building industry.

With a stagnant or declining economy and population it was just about possible to maintain the myth. But the Celtic Tiger years have blown it right open. The facts are telling.

The monocultural society no longer exists. Today it is estimated that 167 languages are in daily use.

Ending over a hundred years of continuous decline, the last fifty years has seen a population growth of over 50%.

It is estimated that population will grow by another third over the next twenty-five years. 40% of houses in the state are less than fifteen years old, a significant proportion of which are on one off rural sites—a direct reflection of the decline in agricultural incomes.

This pattern of development has resulted in the low-density sprawl that makes up the greater Dublin area, stretching almost halfway across the country. Many rural towns have become commuter suburbs for Dublin. Similar patterns are repeated in the other major urban centres with the direct result that 26% of the working population now have a daily commute of about

50 kms. 1250 kms of motorway or dual carriageway are planned for the period 2000/2015 to cater for the extra traffic.

We have become one of the most car-dependent societies in the world—ahead even of the US. There is less rail track today than a hundred years ago.

Awareness is growing, even at official level, that this is no longer sustainable.

It is not just the pressures on those who have the long commutes; there is also recognition at official level of the economic costs—costs that could negatively affect future growth.

There is also a growing understanding of the factors adding to global warming.

High density development, within which high-rise will play a part, will be necessary to house our growing population. Communities have often been thrown into opposition to such proposals because of fears that higher densities will put extra pressure on limited services and road space.

However I don't believe that we should be opposed in principle to high density or high rise. The demand should be that such development is built to a high standard and includes the public transport system, and the social, healthcare, educational and recreational facilities necessary to sustain living, vibrant communities.

40% of houses in the state are less than fifteen years old, a significant proportion of which are on one off rural sites – a direct reflection of the decline in agricultural incomes

WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

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

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

REVOLUTION

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

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

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

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

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

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

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

working class.

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

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

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

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

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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

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

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

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

Join the Socialists

Fill in the form and send to

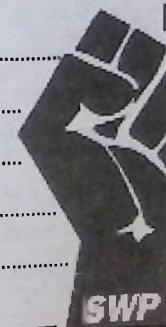
SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

Phone.....



Rebellion rocks Burma

By Giles JI Ungpakorn based in Bangkok and a member of the Worker's Democracy socialist organisation in Thailand

Revolt from below, not intervention from the West, is the key to overthrowing Burma's military junta.

The mainstream media concentrates on the pronouncements of foreign governments and the supposed role of the United Nations in stopping the bloodshed perpetrated by the Burmese military junta.

But the real struggle is on the streets and in the cities across Burma. The idea that the Chinese government, responsible for the Tiananmen Square massacre, will somehow restrain the Burmese military is laughable.

As for the West, it has a long history of supporting military juntas in South East Asia and never lifted a finger to stop massacres in Indonesia or the Philippines.

In fact the recent demonstrations in Burma arise out of a realisation by the country's democracy activists that they cannot rely on Western powers or anyone else to bring about a change - they have to act themselves.

The last great uprising in Burma was the so called 8888 movement that started on 8 August 1988. It was initiated by student protests over economic issues but soon developed into demands for democracy (see below).

For years after the defeat of that uprising, demoralised activists had hoped the US would pressurise the Burmese junta into releasing opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and negotiating a road map to democracy.

But lessons have since been learnt. Earlier this year a loose network of activists decided to start open protests in the form of "prayer marches" at temples. This was followed by the large demonstrations of monks after fuel price rises of 500 percent.

Thousands of ordinary people gained confidence and joined the monks' protests. Hundreds of politicised young men have become monks in recent years, partly due to the



Monks and other democracy protestors face repression in Rangoon

fact that the junta closed down or restricted entry to colleges and universities.

The temples were safer places for people to gather and talk, much like the mosques during Iran's 1979 revolution or the Catholic church in Communist Poland before the uprising there.

The pro-democracy movement today has more experience than in 1988. Twenty years ago it was prepared to allow Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), to lead the movement.

Today there are more debates about the way forward. While everyone agrees that Suu Kyi and all political prisoners should be freed immediately, the radicals are wary of leaving the leadership of the movement in the hands of the

NLD.

Many of the current activists trace their roots back to 8888. On the morning of 8 August 1988 a general strike started in the Rangoon docks and spread to government offices across the city. The regime tried to suppress the movement and killed 3,000 people but Ne Win, the old military dictator, was forced to resign. Once elections were promised Aung San Suu Kyi told demonstrators to disperse, arguing that they should trust the army. Suu Kyi's NLD party won 392 seats out of a total 485 but a new dictatorship was installed.

But thousands of young people on the protests are too young to have taken part back then. There are signs that they are prepared to resist the army with great courage and sacri-

fices. And democracy can only be achieved by overthrowing the junta.

This will involve fighting back - and also winning over ordinary soldiers to the side of the people.

The movement needs to deal with the long running ethnic conflict in Burma. Non-Burmese make up more than half the population and have never been happy with a unified state.

Many groups have been in a state of constant armed struggle against the central government since independence in 1948.

It is encouraging to see that the Karen National Union, one of the key national minority groups, has come out very clearly on the side of the pro-democracy movement, urging Burmese soldiers to turn their

guns on their officers.

The democracy movement should respond to this act of solidarity by backing self-determination for Burma's ethnic minorities.

In the past Burma's independence leaders were less than enthusiastic about granting autonomy to different ethnic groups. Suu Kyi herself has been unclear on this issue and is not fully trusted by non-Burmese.

Burma's working class will also play a crucial role. We know very little about how well organised workers in Burma are - obviously there are no open trade unions - but in 1988 they managed to pull off a general strike.

The country has significant concentrations of workers in textiles and oil. There are also large concentrations

of Burmese workers just over the border in towns like Mae Sot in Thailand. These refugee workers are organised and have links to workers inside Burma.

It is possible for a mass movement to take on a repressive military dictatorship and win - it happened in the Philippines against Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, in Thailand against General Suchinda Kraprayoon in May 1992 and in Indonesia against President Suharto in 1998.

The movement can use tactics such as strikes, cat-and-mouse demonstrations, or fraternising with lower ranking soldiers to encourage them to break from their officers. These are all dangerous - but ultimately only the Burmese people have the power to bring down the regime.

Historic victory for Egyptian workers at Mahalla textile plant

by Anne Alexander

Workers at the huge state-owned textile company, Mahalla the biggest textile mill in the Middle East with 27,000 workers, triggered a wave of strikes after walkouts in December last year.

The workers forced President Hosni Mubarak's regime into a humiliating retreat.

As well as winning at least 130 days' pay and improved transport to work, the strikers forced the company to sack the factory boss and remove the corrupt head of the local union committee.

This strike is merely the latest battle fought by Egypt's increasingly combative working class.

In Kafr al-Dawwar near the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, 12,000 textile workers celebrated the victory in Mahalla by launching their own strike and occupation.

The strike contagion quickly spread to other groups

of workers, including postal workers, transport workers and teachers at the Islamic university of al-Azhar in Cairo.

The price of fresh vegetables in Egypt rose by 38 percent this year. Inflation is running at 12 percent, many workers take home as little as 40.00 a month.

"What is meat, what does it look like? I haven't seen meat for months," a woman striker told journalists visiting the Ghazl al-Mahalla strike last week.

Yet Egypt's economy is officially booming, growing on average 7 percent a year since 2004. According to the World Bank, Egypt is 2007's most improved economy for investors.

Anger at both neoliberalism and imperialism has been simmering for years. Ghazl al-Mahalla workers chanted last week, "We will not be ruled by the World Bank! We will not be ruled by colonialism!" Muhammad al-Attar, one

of the strike organisers and an activist with the independent Centre for Trade Union and Workers' Services, told a huge rally, "I want the Mubarak regime to come to an end. Politics and workers' rights are inseparable. What we are witnessing here right now - this is as democratic as it gets."

Solidarity for workers spread across Egypt

Whatever happens at Mahalla sets the tone for the struggle in Egypt. Workers are fighting without the backing of corrupt union officials.

Decisions are taken in mass meetings. In one incident one of the organisers hinted that it was time to suspend the strike. Workers shouted back, "We're staying put!" So he made a U-turn - "I'm staying with you!"

The workers organised their own security guards who patrolled the factory. Strikers organised the delivery of food for breaking the Ramadan fast together each day at sunset.

There was so much unity. Women workers played an impressive role in the strike. The strike in December last year was started by 3,000 women workers, and they are still active.

The strikers won impressive solidarity with collections from across the Nile Delta. Workers in Kafr al-Dawwar textile mill near Alexandria struck in solidarity.

Egypt has the biggest working class in the Arab world so these events will have an impact across the region. The strike triggered a winter of discontent.

Other workers such as EgyptAir see Mahalla as a model. One EgyptAir worker said, "Do we have to strike like the textile workers to win our rights?" he asked.

These are well-paid workers who are looking to the textile workers for leadership.



Mahalla strikers parade a symbolic coffin with the name of the factory boss, who was forced to resign as part of the deal ending the dispute (Pic: Mohamed el-Saied)

For more go to - www.arablist.net/arabawy

People with Disabilities Demand Rights not Charity



By Kieran McNulty

Marx's view of history is useful in looking at the origins of the social model of disability. According to this model, how society views disability is a direct result of how it has constructed a theory of disability over past generations, and is a consequence of social, political and economic forces.

The social model of disability came about through opposition to the medical model, which viewed individuals scientifically, in isolation from the rest of society. The medical model led in essence to notions of charity as opposed to rights.

The ultimate effect of a persistence of the medical model has been to render people with

disabilities "socially dead", unable to fully interact and develop relationships with the rest of their community.

The disability rights movement has its origins in the mass protest movements in the US in the 1960's taking inspiration from the anti-war movement. Returning Vietnam veterans, many of whom had been physically and mentally damaged while serving in the armed forces were central to both these movements.

In 1976 the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) brought the disability movement to Britain and Ireland. UPIAS argued for the empowerment of the disabled and that "Disability is a situation caused by social con-

ditions".

Today the disabled demand the power to determine their own needs, as opposed to being passive recipients of charity, however well meaning. These needs should be met by the state not by voluntary organisations.

One activist, Jenny Morris, took part in a protest outside the BBC which was broadcasting its 'Children in Need' event. "Two men came up to us thinking we were part of the event. One of them offered me a £5 note, which I refused, giving him a leaflet and explaining that we wanted rights not charity. He stopped short, realised with a shock what I was saying and then said he agreed with me".

The Disability Act (2005)

defines disability, establishes rights, and draws up plans for each government department to deliver them. While welcoming the plans, the National Disability Authority stresses the need to broaden their scope and provide more detail.

Another significant development was the Mental Health Act (2001) coming into operation in November 2006. This act stresses that the best interests of the patient will be the principle concern. It also establishes Mental Health Tribunals to review decisions made by professionals.

The UN has been also forced to push, for the first time, a treaty on human rights for the disabled. These laws and treaties are important because they establish legally binding rights for people with disabilities and are a further step towards their acceptance as equal citizens.

In Ireland notions of charity in regard to the disabled still exist. Organisations like Enable Ireland and the Irish Wheelchair Association do good work but they are, nevertheless, perpetuating the charity model of disability.

Other organisations like People with Disabilities Ireland and Disability Federation Ireland receive statutory funding and are rights based.

However, the problem with these latter groups is that they can only go so far with their campaigning, as they are funded by the state and end up cooperating with the existing system.

Growing numbers of people in the disability movement feel the leadership of the movement has lost touch with the radical spirit of people power which first brought it into existence in the 1960's and 1970's.

We need a move away from purely lobbying methods and a return to the campaigning style of Jenny Morris's organisation, the Campaign to Stop Patronage.

The example of the street politics of groups like Patients Together and Laoise Offaly families for Autism is the forward for the disability movement.

Comment



A rising tide of job losses?

By Marnie Holborow

Economic experts are hard to believe at the best of times. They have been bending backwards to tell us that there is no risk of a recession and that according to Bank of Ireland's Dan McLoughlin, despite financial turbulence, a massive slowing down of construction, growth rates will continue at 4.5% next year.

The Economic and Social Research Institute's recent report has revised things sharply downwards to 2.8%. They outline how house building will be down to 65,000 new houses in 2008. They are now pinning their hopes on consumer spending to get us out of the hole. Just how that is going to happen when unemployment is set to rise to 5.6% is not quite clear.

In the real world, away from corporate spin, job losses are hitting and hitting badly.

Intel's announcement that 200 jobs are to go may reflect worse to come.

Intel is one of Ireland's biggest employers with a 5,100 strong workforce in huge plants in Leixlip and Shannon. Significant numbers of staff who work for Intel via third parties have already been let go.

Gerry McDonagh, an employee of Applied Materials one of the largest specialist suppliers for Intel and also an independent member of Kildare County Council, wrote to local newspaper the Liffey Champion, claiming that up to 800 staff could be let go from third-party suppliers this year.

Intel has received €258 million in grants from IDA Ireland since it first came to Ireland in 1989. They are the biggest recipient of IDA grant aid. They would have received even more if an EU directive had not blocked a further €170 million grant.

The IDA simply has no mechanism to make its grants to multinationals hold good. As easily as corporations can take the huge hand-outs, they can fly away in search of greater profits elsewhere. The IDA operates as an extension of the logic of the market. It gives a leg up to big competitors and then allows them to move on.

Migrant workers will bear the brunt of unemployment

Migrant labour has played a huge role in the boom. From May 2004 - May 2006 there were 133,258 workers from the accession states that had officially received PPSN (Personal Public Service Numbers). To give it an international comparison, the US received 1 million immigrants per annum under its visa programmes - if it were to have the same rate of immigrant visas as Ireland it would be 6.75 million. In other words Ireland's economy is in large part due to the work - often highly exploited work - of migrant workers.

A recent study from the ERSI has highlighted that rather than migrant workers displacing Irish workers, it is new immigrant who displace other migrant workers. For example, after 2004 non EU permits fell while new European Economic Area (EEA) permits rose after 2004. The 20,000 job losses announced in the construction sector will fall on Polish, Lithuanian, Latvians.

Immigration policy in Ireland has institutionalised hierarchy among migrants and has been devised to take on and shed workers as companies see fit. The range of different types of work permits - green cards, work permits, intra company transfer permits, spousal and dependent permits, graduate and non EEA students temporary employment permits - bear witness to this new disposable reserve army of labour.

Agency workers

There are thousands of agency workers in the Irish economy. Yet the Central Statistics Office has no official figures for this category of workers, even though Ireland has the highest percentage of agency workers across Europe. The fact that hourly wages in construction rose by just 1.7% and in hotels by 2.2% in 2006, well behind official wage increases, points to huge numbers of agency workers in this sector

Outsourcing

Outsourcing has become another way of being able to get rid of permanent workers.

Independent Newspapers outsourced editorial work and got 135 "voluntary" redundancies. Shannon Airport had already outsourced its catering workers before Air Lingus tried to do the same with its move to Belfast.

Altogether, Ireland has lost more than 30,000 manufacturing jobs in the last five years. More recently the mid-west region has suffered another jobs blow with the loss of 178 manufacturing jobs at Shannon-based electronic component-maker, Tyco Electronics. The jobs are being transferred to the company's facilities in India, China and Mexico. The irony was that SIPTU had already agreed a voluntary redundancy programme with the loss of 25 jobs. According to SIPTU official Mary O'Donnell they were assured then that there would be no further job cuts. This has heightened fears that other multinationals in the Shannon region could follow suit by announcing job cuts or plans to relocate elsewhere.

marnie.holborow@dcu.ie

Siemens ordered to pay €12,000 compensation for Discriminating against a visually impaired person

By Donal Mac Fhearrailg

Siemens were ordered by the Labour Court to pay €12,000 to Martin O'Sullivan, a visually impaired person, who they discriminated

against when he sought employment as an IT support specialist. This award is one of the highest given by the Labour Court in such a case and reflects that Siemens tried everything in their power to fight the case.

Martin O'Sullivan said, "The company put up high powered layers against me. They dragged the case out as long as possible in the hope that I would give up and walk away. The case took over two and a half years and was a major investment of time and energy. I think many cases don't get to court because people can't afford the time and energy involved".

The court found that Martin O'Sullivan had been discrim-

inated against by "the failure of Siemens to make reasonable accommodation in the selection process, and the consideration which Siemens gave to his disability in deciding on his application, constituted a single consolidated act of discrimination".

The court also found that "Martin O'Sullivan was denied an opportunity to undertake an integral and otherwise essential part of the selection process because of his disability. This meant that the

whole selection process was tainted with discrimination"

Martin O'Sullivan, a prominent disability rights activist and member of the SWP said, "I hope that this judgment will highlight the ongoing discrimination faced by people with disabilities in their search for employment."

"In the last few weeks we have seen a situation where people with disabilities have been working in workshops, and getting less than the minimum wage. It is time for people with disabilities to be given a fair and level playing pitch when it comes to seeking employment."

Martin previously led the successful campaign to keep the audible traffic crossings after Dublin City Council tried to turn them off last year.

He said, "This is an important victory in highlighting the discrimination that goes on against disabled people. But the courts can only bring us so far.

The campaign on audible crossings shows what people power can achieve. If we organise and are prepared to protest we can advance disabled rights in Ireland further and more quickly".



The Playboy of the Western Suburbs



(Clockwise from Left): Olu Jacobs, Kate Brennan, Aoife Duffin, Joe Hanley, Phelm Drew and Charlene Gleeson in *The Playboy of the Western World*, A New Version by Bisi Adigun and Roddy Doyle, at the Abbey Theatre, until 24th November 2007.
Pic: Ros Kavanagh.

By Paul O'Brien

John Millington Synge, uncomfortable with the smugness of the Irish revival, set out to write a play that would really 'make them hop'. On 26 January 1907 *The Playboy of the Western World* opened at the Abbey Theatre. That night Irish Theatre was born. Synge held up a mirror to Irish society that shocked the middle-class Gaelic Leaguers in an astonishing play full of poet-

ry, tragedy, and black humour that left the audience wondering, as it still does – is this realism or satire? At the heart of the play is an 'outsider', Christy Mahon, whose arrival in a West of Ireland community boasting that he had 'killed his father' introduces an exciting and exotic element into their otherwise closed and humdrum lives.

Roddy Doyle and the Nigerian writer Bisi Adigun have teamed up to present a modern

version of the *Playboy*. In this new version Christy Mahon is Christopher Malomo, a well-educated Nigerian refugee who is on the run for killing his father back home. Doyle and Adigun have updated and transposed the location from the West of Ireland to a West Dublin working-class suburb.

This is very much a play for today that asks us to look at ourselves as we are and as we might be. They present an Ireland that is being transformed

as 'outsiders', with all their cultural differences come to live amongst us. In this retelling of Synge's extraordinary play Doyle and Adigun have re-discovered the ability of the *Playboy* to tell the truth about a contemporary Irish experience that could never have been imagined by Synge.

The poetry of Synge's original text has not been totally lost with the mixture of the raw Dublin idiom and the lyrical African language of this

production.

The rewriting of an iconic Irish classic that is so familiar to Irish audiences leaves it open to comparison with the original.

This uncompromising version stands on its own and should be judged as such. I am not sure that any play can make people 'hop' with anger anymore, but this play is worth seeing. Like so much of Doyle's writing he is interested in the contradictory way that

people think and feel. Doyle and Adigun engage with the difficulties involved in being Irish and in being foreign, while in reality, both groups are outsiders in today's Celtic tiger economy.

This play is in the best tradition *The Commitments* and of the old Passion Machine theatre productions and deserves to be seen across the country.

The Playboy of the Western World
Abbey Theatre, Dublin

Myths of modern day slavery

By Sinead Kennedy

In *Secret Diary of a Call Girl* Billie Piper does a good job of presenting the well-travelled, but lucrative 'happy hooker' myth.

The drama is based on the 2003 prize-winning blog and later book "Belle de Jour" which claimed to depict the authentic life of a twentysomething university-educated prostitute who apart from having sex with her wealthy male 'clients' spends her days in luxury hotels trying on expensive underwear, and having literary discussions about Martin Amis.

Reality for the estimated 5,000 women who are sex workers in the Ireland is very different. The vast majority do it because they have drug problems or families to support and have no other viable way of making money. Two-thirds of sex workers have experienced 'client violence', including rape and an estimat-

ed 95 per cent of prostitutes who work on the streets are drug users.

The same week that Belle de Jour added fuel to the Pretty Woman idea that prostitution can be a fantastic career choice for young women, Ruhama, an Irish organisation working with women involved in prostitution, announced that at least one woman a fortnight is being trafficked into Ireland to work in the sex industry.

Of the 132 trafficked women that Ruhama came in contact with between 2000 and 2006, 73 per cent came from eastern Europe and 21 per cent from Africa. Some 4 per cent came from South America while 2 per cent came from Asia.

Ruhama has repeatedly criticised the government's failure to introduce adequate legislation to tackle sex trafficking, despite having signed various international protocols and conventions.

They argue, rightly, that

the trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation is a modern form of slavery and forced migration that has increased significantly over the past 10 years.

Policy makers continue to be conflicted about what to do: some think the solution is to legalise brothels, while others point to what has happened in the Netherlands, where legalisation has increased trafficking and violence against prostitutes.

Within these debates the complexity of trafficking is ignored and too often reduced to moralistic questions about sex and prostitution. Trafficking is not the same as people-smuggling, although it is difficult to separate the two.

The UN argues that 'The mere facilitation of illegal entry into or through a country is not, on its own, trafficking in persons, although such migrant-smuggling may be part of a trafficking operation or turn into a trafficking situ-

ation.'

Trafficking is defined as 'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion... for the purpose of exploitation.'

Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.'

A combination of trafficking and people-smuggling affects an enormous percentage of the world's working population and it is not just about the sex industry.

In many European countries, including Ireland, it's highly likely that illegal and trafficked labour has picked the vegetables you eat or is looking after your old sick grandmother in a Nursing home.

Certainly it is prostitution

that represents the most sensational and troubling aspect of trafficking. It grabs the headlines and has become a journalistic obsession. It still seems to be impossible to talk about sex without getting moralistic and by extension, the trafficked women are easily categorized as helpless victims. They have either been duped into sex work, or else are knowing prostitutes.

What is often ignored is that the rise of trafficking and people smuggling is closely connected with the increasing draconian nature of Western immigration controls.

For example in several European countries, like Italy, young East European women are told that when applying for a tourist visa they must first bring a declaration from the police stating that they have never engaged in prostitution. Travel agencies in Eastern Europe will tell you how hard it is now for a young single woman to get a tourist visa to

any West European country.

Imagine the outrage if a young American woman applying for a tourist visa was asked to provide such a declaration.

By making visas so prohibitively difficult, Western governments, including Ireland are effectively forcing migrants into the hands of people-smugglers or traffickers.

Governments in many of the top destination countries for smuggled and trafficked people unofficially recognises that their care systems and service industries would collapse without them but refuse to allow legal possibilities for work there.

The employers and pimps who exploit the desperate are the dark end of a spectrum of a system that turns all human beings into commodities. Politicians who say they abhor trafficking while standing over 'tougher immigration' policies are in fact propagating the very misery and fear that underpins this entire system.

VICTORY TO THE CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

UNITE TO DEFEND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Written by NIPSA 516, strike committee member

3000 classroom assistants were beginning all out strike action across the North as Socialist Worker went to press.

This comes on the heels of 4 previous strike days as part of a determined campaign to halt attacks on their pay and conditions.

For more than twelve years the education workers have been trying to get their employers – the Education & Library Boards, to implement the process of evaluating their jobs, so they can be given pay that reflects the worth of the work they do.

The dragging of feet by the ELB's means that they owe the workers millions in back-pay.

However the real decision makers, the Assembly politicians, who control the public purse, have refused to instruct the Boards to act.

They are not likely to in the immediate future either, that's because they want to further cut further public spending.

Sinn Fein Education Minister Catriona Ruane has disgracefully encouraged employers to impose a settlement on the workers, that ignores the issue of back-pay.

Like Martin McGuinness

before her she pays lip service to the important role classroom assistants play then refuses to do anything to support their pay claim.

On the first day of the action, over a thousand strikers brought traffic to a stand-still in Belfast City centre as they took to the streets to illustrate their determination and solidarity.

They marched to the Customs House steps, where 100 years ago, Jim Larkin inspired thousands of dockers to fight for better wages.

A similar militancy was evident only this time round it was almost entirely working women who shouted chants for fair pay.

A classroom assistant, addressing the strikers, said that 12 years ago classroom assistants were paid for doing tasks like putting straws in milk bottles for children and tidying up.

Now they play an important role in a child's learning development, take account of special needs, and are trained in pedagogical aspects of education.

The employers, who talk constantly of quality education, now wish to remove the special needs allowance, de-recognise the qualification that they use for hiring purposes, and cut the

pay of the assistants.

In response management offered a bribe of £15 million – about £2000 per assistant for them to simply forget about their claim and conditions.

At mass meetings across the 5 ELB's, there was solid votes to reject the offer, typically expressed as "Tell them to shove it".

400 angry assistants protested outside the Belfast Board HQ to make sure bosses there got the message.

It is scandalous that other unions who also represent classroom assistants are not encouraging their members to take action alongside NIPSA members.

Disgracefully a leader of the GMB, Eamonn Coy, has publicly attacked the strikers.

Unison, who represents a significant section not striking, called off a consultative ballot to consider the bribe.

The £15 million appeared on the table after the first day of the strike – showing that one day of action has achieved more than years of negotiation.

Yet Unison are willing to let NIPSA stand alone strengthening the hand of the employers.

Many assistants not in NIPSA understand the implications of this and nearly 1000



Striking classroom assistants take to the streets

have joined them since the dispute began.

Postal workers have begun two 48 hour strikes, this time to break Gordon Brown's pay freeze of 2% and attacks on jobs and pensions.

These issues affect the whole of the public sector including all NIPSA members and classroom assistants.

The need for united action by all unions in the North to fight for decent pay and to de-

pend conditions is urgent.

This would also be a giant step forward in defending the public sector from the onslaught of privatisation which is being championed by all the major parties in the Assembly.

Support the post workers' strikes

By Donal Mac Fhearrailh

Why are postal workers on strike?

This strike is about defending public services, about pay, job losses, terms and conditions, and the future of the company pension scheme.

Bosses are offering a 6.7 percent pay increase over two years – which equals about 3.3 percent per year.

That the offer is above Gordon Brown's 2 percent pay ceiling because of the strike action that the postal workers' CWU union has taken so far. But the rise is still well below inflation.

In return for it Royal Mail

is demanding the removal of everything that currently makes the job tolerable. It aims at ultimately rendering the union powerless to resist management's diktats.

What changes is Royal Mail demanding?

Bosses want workers to accept being told to start work up to two hours early, or stay up to two hours late, on the say so of a manager. They want the right to permanently change workers' hours, with just seven days notice. These changes will wreck havoc with people's lives.

What is "total flexibility" about?

Management's aim is

to break the power of the postal workers' union. "Total flexibility" will allow managers to award easier duties to those workers who are responsive to their demands, while punishing those who are known to be loyal to the union.

Will workers lose pay?

Yes. Royal Mail wants to cut overtime. Basic pay in Royal Mail is low and so many workers rely on overtime in order to make ends meet. Lots of people have taken out mortgages on the basis of expected overtime.

Royal Mail wants to introduce annualised hours – this means during quiet periods workers will be sent home early.

Then during busy times, such as the run-up to Christmas, they will be expected to work up to 13 hours a day basic pay.

How many jobs do Royal Mail want to axe?

Royal Mail want to cut 40,000 jobs and make five workers do the work of six. They want to close mail centres in Oxford, Paddington and Reading, with the loss of thousands of jobs.

How will pensions be affected?

Royal Mail wants postal workers to pay for an estimated shortfall in the company pensions scheme.

It plans to increase the pension age from 60 to 65

years old and reduce pensions to "career average earnings" rather than "final average salary". The scheme will also be closed to all new workers.

This will net Royal Mail around £1.6 billion – about £10,000 per working member of the scheme.

Do Royal Mail need "flexible working" in order to compete?

The government will allow private firms to "cherry pick" lucrative Royal Mail contracts, in which they collect and sort mail and then pass it on to Royal Mail to deliver to your door, for a fixed price per letter. Private firms deliver only a tiny fraction of the mail but will make huge profits and transfer

most of the costs onto Royal Mail. The battle for decent pay and conditions has to be combined with a political fight to eliminate unfair competition by private companies.

What is the government saying?

Gordon Brown is backing Royal Mail. He is central to the attempt to limit pay rises in the public sector to around 2 percent.

The fight with Royal Mail will affect every other public sector worker too. That is why Brown cannot afford to allow the union to win, and why millions of workers cannot afford to allow the union to lose.

Ennis march against HSE cuts



5,000 people marched in Ennis Co. Clare on Saturday 29th September to oppose the cuts and threatened closure of the local general hospital Page 5

Ken Loach interviewed



Award-winning director Ken Loach spoke to Berit Kuennecke about his new film, It's A Free World, an exposé of the exploitation of migrant workers. Pages 6 & 7

Rebellion rocks Burma



Revolt from below, not intervention from the West, is the key to overthrowing Burma's military junta writes Gilles Ji Ungpakorn from Bangkok Page 9

The truth is out there,



Eamonn McCann tries to decode the unspeak of northern and southern politicians. Page 2

Iraq: Three sectarian ethnic states?



Richard Boyd Barrett asks if Iraq will break up as a recent motion by the Democrats in the US has advised. Page 6