

# VOTE NO TO LISBON DEFEND OUR PUBLIC SERVICES



Ten thousand people marched in Dublin in April to protest at the run-down in the health service

Photo: Paula Geraghty

By SINEAD KENNEDY, editor of [www.voteNO.ie](http://www.voteNO.ie)  
Anyone who argues that Europe is good for workers rights would be well advised to look at the latest ruling from the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

The Ruffert case judgement attacks the validity of sectoral and collective labour agreements across Europe.

In the words of one European labour rights activist, 'Social Europe is being razed to the ground and the trade union movement is being rendered powerless'.

The ECJ ruling struck down a law in the

Germany state of Lower Saxony which only allows public contracts to be awarded to companies and sub-contractors who agree to pay workers the minimum wage agreed by regional collective agreements.

The case was brought before the Court after a Polish company paid workers according to the Polish national minimum wage which amounted to only 46.5 per cent of Lower Saxony's minimum wage.

Yet the ECJ declared that the Lower Saxony minimum wage law was illegal because it amounted to restrictions on free movement.

In order words, the Court ruled that it was more important to protect the free movement of capital than it was to safeguard workers rights to decent pay.

This case is just the latest in a series of anti-union rulings delivered by the Court.

Last year in the Laval judgement, the Court ruled against a Swedish union that tried to prevent a Latvian construction company from breaking a voluntary collective agreement.

In the Viking Ferry case the Court found against the Finnish seafarer's union for attempting to prevent a shipping company

from using Estonian sailors at Estonian wages on its ferries.

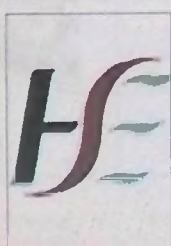
For more on why trade unionists should reject the Lisbon Treaty turn to page 5 where Jimmy Kelly, Regional Secretary of UNITE puts the case.

With all the major political parties, including the Labour Party, calling for a yes vote on the Lisbon Treaty, it now more important that ever that socialists are the heart of the No campaign.

Large numbers of voters are still undecided so there is still everything to play for and, more importantly, to win.

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# US lies in Iraq exposed

By RICHARD BOYD BARRETT, chairperson of the Irish Anti-War Movement

THE RECENT escalation of violence in Iraq has been clearly instigated by the US backed Maliki government in an attempt to crush its political opponents in advance of the forthcoming elections.

Maliki's Dawa Party and their allies the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution know they will be defeated by supporters of Al Sadr in the elections and so hope to draw Al Sadr into a conflict.

They are looking for an excuse to ban his supporters from standing in the elections or cancel the elections altogether. In other words, with the backing of the US.

Maliki is doing in Iraq exactly what Robert Mugabe has been doing in Zimbabwe but on a far bigger and more violent scale.

The United States, militarily and financially, are the main prop to Maliki government — a government who are using militias and death squads to try and crush opposition to the US occupation of the country.

The fact that US commander in Iraq, General Petraeus, has called for a pause on any further withdrawals of US troops from Iraq is clear evidence that Washington is working hand in glove with the Maliki government in its efforts to crush the political opposition.



Sadrists rally in Iraq

The calls for protests against the government and the US occupation by both Shia leaders such as Al Sadr and the Sunni Association of Muslim scholars fully and finally expose the US lie that violence in Iraq was the result of sectarian conflicts between Shia and Sunni.

As the anti-war movement has said from the start, the real division in Iraq is

between a majority of Iraqi's of all creeds and sects that oppose the US presence and a puppet government that depends on the US for its existence.

The Irish government, whether led by Bertie Ahern or Brian Cowen, can have no further excuse for continuing to facilitate the US military at Shannon when the US is blatantly trying to subvert democracy in Iraq.

## Galway: Is intimidation a sign of success?

By DETTE MC LOUGHLIN

OVER THE past 2 years Galway Alliance Against War has witnessed a number of attempts to intimidate the peace group.

In June 2006 Gardai applied pressure GAAW to halt opposition to the Salthill War Show.

It all backfired, and the annual militaristic airshow is no more.

Last June, it was physical intimidation: a senior Garda assaulted a GAAW member at a peace vigil. The case is now before the Garda

Ombudsman.

There was a menacing presence by the Garda outside GAAW public meetings on the Lisbon Treaty.

A squad car was parked shining its headlights into the venue.

When the peace group announced details of their Close Guantanamo event at which it was proposed to dress Liam Mellows statue in Guantanamo prison garb to highlight Ireland's logistical support for the CIA torture jets they were attacked through the media by a local FF councillor Michael Crowe.

Even more recently the group's PRO, Niall Farrell has been subjected to two nuisance calls—one of them a clear death threat: You are going to be shot, just like your fucking sister. Farrell's sister, Mairead, was murdered by the SAS in Gibraltar 20 years ago.

All of these attempts to intimidate members of a peace group is a clear indication that the powers—that are somewhat unsettled by resistance to the status quo—a kind of back-handed compliment? We won't be intimidated

# 28,000 health workers balloted for strike action

28,000 MEMBERS of IMPACT are balloting against the continuing Health Service Executive (HSE) recruitment freeze. The result of the ballot will be announced on the 28 April.

Health professionals, therapists, social care workers, as well as administrative and managerial staff — are taking action to campaign against staffing cuts and protect existing working agreements and conditions

of employment.

For instance, it emerged last month that a quarter of occupational therapy posts had disappeared because of the staffing freeze

Actions being considered include work stoppages, overtime bans, a work-to-rule and the withdrawal of co-operation with senior HSE management and its transformation programme.

## Protests planned to stop closure of Baggot St Hospital

RORY HEARNE, People Before Profit Alliance Representative for Dublin South East, spoke to Socialist Worker about the HSE plans to close Baggot St Hospital.

Rory said, "Baggot St Hospital provides 30 respite beds and a number of other community health services. The HSE has stated that it is closing the hospital for health and safety reasons.

"This is disgraceful that a hospital has failed such basic standards.

"However, there can be little doubt that HSE underfunding has played

a significant role in the failure of the hospital to meet standards.

"The local community has already lost the Meath Hospital, the Adelaide and St Luke's Cancer Hospital in Rathgar is also planned to be closed.

"It is time to call a halt to this Government's illogical plans of closing local hospitals.

"People in the community particularly the old and vulnerable need local health services. We call on all other local politicians to get behind the protests to save the hospital".

## Donegal – Rossport II?

By AMANDA SLEVIN, MAOR

DONEGAL GROUP MAOR has learned that oil giant Shell is drilling off the Donegal coast and that Norwegian

company Statoil is due to start drilling from April onwards.

Estimations by the Petroleum Affairs Division (Dept of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources) indicate that there is a possible 10 billion barrels of hydrocarbons in the North Atlantic Margin which at current market prices is worth approximately 600 billion euros.

However due to changes in legislation brought in by Bertie Ahern and others Ireland will not see any profits, royalties or taxes for our natural resources. The people of Ireland are not guaranteed a supply of their own natural resources and will have to pay full market prices for their own gas and oil.

Shell and Statoil have two years to outline whether they will process Donegal's gas and oil onshore or offshore. Given the hostile conditions off the Donegal Coast is it quite possible that they will apply for an onshore refinery, meaning a possible Rossport type situation in Donegal.

Contact MAOR at donegal.maor@gmail.com or 0863622378.

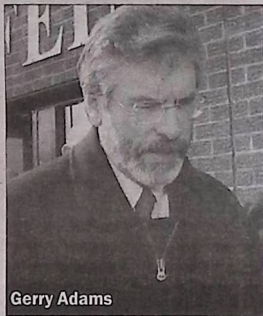
## Squinter highlights Republican weakness

By SEAN MITCHELL

THE RECENT attack on Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams by Andersonstown News Editor Robin Livingstone (aka Squinter) shows the fragile nature of the republican movement and its leadership.

The Andersonstown news is Belfast's premiere Nationalist newspaper. It is staunchly pro Sinn Fein. Whether it was a Sinn Fein MLA planting a tree, or another Shinner bravely fighting the graffiti scourge, the Andytown News shamelessly plugged the party.

The squinter article came in the wake of the murder of former republican activist Frank "Bap" McGreevy. Livingstone's argues that Gerry Adams is partly to blame for this. He says Adams has done next to nothing as an MP and has brought little in the way of jobs and investment to



Gerry Adams

West Belfast.

The article was a confused attempt at articulating the concern and demoralisation felt by long term Sinn Fein supporters. The Belfast and St Andrews agreements have brought nothing to working class people. Housing waiting lists are higher than they were when the agreement was signed and social deprivation is

going nowhere but up.

Sinn Fein tried to keep their core support through a steady stream of commemorations, but the party has lost its radical edge.

It is increasingly seen as the party of big business and privatization of public services.

It is a party determined to stop at nothing, along with its executive colleagues in the DUP, to cut jobs in the public sector in order to prove its neo liberal stripes to prospective investors in the US.

The Andersonstown News represents a Catholic middle class which looks to Sinn Fein to deliver the business agenda; it wants to see tourists for its ventures and US companies to work with.

The business agenda pleases local business but it ensures that the terrible conditions which make events like the murder of Bap McGreevy possible will only

get worse.

A recent study showed that West Belfast will be hardest hit by the current economic downturn. That means that in areas like the Shankill and the Falls houses will be repossessed. If the public sector is reduced, unemployment will rocket.

Robin Livingstone's article asked many questions but gave little answers. The alternative to the neo liberalism of Sinn Fein and the DUP is people power. Standing together we can stop the repossession of people's homes, the job cuts and the closure of community facilities.

A left alternative like that would look to offer young people an alternative to the street corner and that would help break the fear and isolation felt by the old. It would bring working class protestant and Catholics together in the common purpose of fighting for a better society.

### WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

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

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

#### REVOLUTION

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

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

greater political and economic democracy.

#### AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

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

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

#### END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

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

working class.

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

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

#### FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

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

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

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

#### FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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

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

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

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

### Join the Socialists

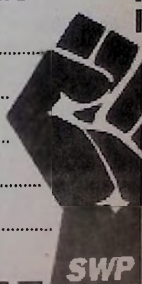
Fill in the form and send to  
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# Pay revolt rocks Britain

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

ACROSS BRITAIN, up to half a million workers are preparing for mass strike on 24 April

Pay has become a key focus for many groups of workers who are bearing the brunt of the credit crunch and are angry over rising bills, falling pay, attacks on public services and much more.

At the core of the action are some 250,000 teachers who have voted to strike against a three-year pay offer that would slash their living standards by 10 percent or more. The NUT teachers' union won a massive 75 percent support for strike action on 24 April.

Nick Grant, NUT executive member spoke to Socialist Worker. "The day will be a focus for everyone who is angry over low pay, attacks on conditions, privatisation and the whole neoliberal agenda of this New Labour government".

"These issues affect every worker in Britain, not to mention the millions who rely on public services. We are facing the same attacks from the same enemy - and we need to fight together".

"Every trade unionist has a reason to join our protest and everyone can get involved on the day - by striking, leading walkouts from workplaces, or by joining the protests and rallies that will be taking place up and down the country".

"This will be a day for everyone who wants to put people before profit and welfare before warfare".

PCS civil service workers' union have also voted to strike. Over 80,000 workers in the Department for Work and Pensions and over 10,000 workers in the Department for Transport look set to join the strike. 50,000 lecturers in the UCU union are currently balloting to strike and 20,000 council workers in Birmingham fighting a single status pay deal will come out as well.

Pickets, mass rallies and protests on the day - including a London march past parliament - will give everyone a chance to join the day's action. In many towns and cities the NUT has called rallies jointly with other unions.

In Birmingham, council workers across the Unison, Unite, Ucaat, GMB unions are set to strike for three days including on 24 April in an ongoing dispute over single status pay cuts.

The rallies, demonstrations and pickets can become a focus for everyone angry at Gordon Brown's pay restraint and neoliberal policies.

Last year, under pressure from members, a number of unions called for united action - but it failed to break through into joint strikes. Some trade union leaders held back the potential for a united fight out of loyalty to the Labour government.

The strike will have a huge political impact - it comes just one week before the elections to the London assembly and councils across England and Wales.

# Anti War Protests on March 15

Dublin



Protestors braved the stormy weather in Dublin on March 15 in lively contingents to join the Irish Anti War Movement march commemorating five years since the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The demonstrators demanded an end to the occupation, no attacks on Iraq and a stop to the use of Shannon by US military. Pic: Tina MacVeigh

# Hundreds demand a world without war in Belfast

Belfast



By MATT COLLINS

ON MARCH 15th around 400 people demonstrated against the war on terror in Belfast. THE MARCH was part of an international day of action and was organised by the Belfast antiwar movement calling for the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, no attack on Iran and an end to the Israeli siege of Gaza.

The event received widespread

support and was backed by the Irish Congress of Trade unions, NIPSA and the Belfast trades council.

Various union leaders demanded the British and U.S governments listen to the huge opposition to the war in Iraq.

Speakers included Raid al Wazzan a citizen of Iraq. At the demonstration Raid stated, "Five years ago millions of people said no to this war, but George Bush and Blair went ahead and killed millions of people,

if that's not terrorism then I don't know what is"

Colm Bryce a representative of the antiwar movement and one of the Raytheon 9 also spoke at the event stressing the need to continue organising against the atrocities committed by the warmongers.

"There's a tremendous responsibility on us to take to the streets, to still raise our voices against this war, to build a movement against this war," he said.

## IN THE COLLEGES

# Left rattles Right in Queens Student Union election

By MATT COLLINS

PEOPLE BEFORE Profit candidates polled extremely well in the recent elections for the Queens Students Union Executive last month.

Michael Collins and Paul Simpson People Before Profit (PBP) candidates highlighted the increasing costs of tuition, the rising cost of housing and the enormous levels of student debt. The PBP candidates were pitched against a "Rainbow" coalition which included people from the Alliance Party, Christian Union, the Law Society, members of the current SU exec and GAA societies.

An independent student newspaper at Queens called The Gown, reported before the election that, "Michael Collins is up against it to overcome such a well established presence within union governance."

But the landslide that many had predicted didn't materialise when it came to the voting, and the left wing candidates managed to raise more than a few eyebrows.

Michael got 969 votes in the bid for presidency coming very close to being elected. His opponent, Ciarran Helferty, was elected with a surplus of just 92.5 votes in the tightly contested election.

Paul Simpson got over 400 votes in the contest for Vice-President Campaigns and Communications.

The good vote is credit

to the fact that the left have organized so well in Queens over recent years and shows that there is a genuine desire for an alternative that fights against the attacks on students.

Socialist Worker spoke to Michael Collins, "Myself and Paul stood to highlight the issues facing students today. Student debt is at record high levels and the cost of tuition is disgraceful. The Assembly politicians have continuously claimed that they are against the current system of top up fees yet they have done absolutely nothing about it. Not only that, but students have bore the brunt of the current housing crisis in the north, while landlords make a killing from renting houses to multiple occupants in student areas."

"While all of these attacks have been taking place the Students Union has remained silent. It has failed to represent and defend students when it comes to the big political questions like housing, fees and student debt."

"We ran because we want to see a student union that holds politicians to account and seeks to build campaigns that will put student interests at the fore."

"For too long the students unions have twiddled their thumbs while students have come under a barrage of neo liberal attacks."

People Before Profit will continue to build on this success in the coming future.

## Left challenge at NUS-USI Conference

By SEAN MITCHELL

STUDENTS FROM all over Northern Ireland will attend the National Union of Students - Union of Students in Ireland conference in Ballymena on the 16-17th April.

Delegates at the conference will select the members of the executive and also set the organisation's agenda for the following year.

The NUS-USI as a union of students has failed to channel the anger and frustration felt by many with the increased student debt, terrible student housing conditions and other important issues often claimed not to be 'students issues' such as climate change and the war on terror. These are the real issues facing students and they need to be reflected in the coming year.

Many students are unaware of the NUS-USI or what it does, it has been reclusive for too long. It is vital that it becomes

a visible group which campaigns with a radical programme.

At a time when the economic system faces a huge crisis, students need a union which encourages them to come out and fight against further attacks.

Many students from the University of Ulster and Queens University will attend the conference and have the opportunity to elect a left-wing President for the first time in years.

People Before Profit and SWSS members are standing for 5 positions. Michael Collins is standing for the position of NUS-USI president. Gerry Carroll will stand for the Deputy President position. Matt Collins is seeking to be elected as Education and Welfare officer. Both Daniel O'Boyle and Gavin Mc Manus are standing for the Non-portfolio positions respectively.

## People Before Profit tour

THE RECENT tour by Dutch MP Harry Van Bommel speaking about the Lisbon Treaty was a great success.

Some 30 people attended an early afternoon meeting in Cork with a similar number coming on Sunday evening in Tralee. In Dublin there was standing room only when some 100 people packed into the room.

Harry said, "The are striking similarities

between your campaign and ours. We started out in a minority with most people having no idea of what the vote was about - and we won.

"The more we spoke to people the more numbers we convinced. The main thing is to believe you can win. You have a chance to make history".







# Campaign against low pay launched

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

THE BUILDING industry has been the hardest hit by the economic slowdown.

Unemployment is on the rise and construction bosses want to sack trade union members to push through low pay.

They want to use subcontracting and employment agencies to undermine wages and working conditions.

Bosses are trying to use racism to divide Irish and foreign workers. Paul Hansard, a SIPTU

rep spoke to Socialist Worker about the Building Workers Alliance Campaign.

Paul said, "Tom Parlon, ex-PD politician and now head of the Construction Industry Federation (CIF), wants a 30% cut in wages for the lowest paid workers."

"This is coming from a man who earns 250,000 euro a year and a 47,000 pension from being a TD".

"The CIF want to use this temporary downturn in the industry to de-organise, de-unionism and casualise the industry.

"They want to replace full time workers with agency workers or non-compliant sub-contractors".

"The CIF hope to attack vulnerable workers, Irish and foreign. They have made massive profits on the blood, sweat and tears of workers.

"We demand a meeting with Michael Martin, the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, to explain why the government has not prosecuted companies that have robbed building workers pensions.

"Many families and widows have been condemned to poverty because of this criminal behaviour.

"We're sending a message to the CIF that we won't let them use racism and vulnerable foreign workers to drive down the pay and conditions of our industry".

The Building Workers Alliance will be organising a campaign of protests and pickets over the coming weeks and months to push back the bosses offensive.

## Aer Lingus managers squeeze workers for super-profits

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

Aer Lingus management wants to push workers into complete flexibility. Management want to make the 1800 ground staff accept 'flexible work practices' that will effectively mean doubling up on jobs.

Management want to be able to tell workers to work shifts of varying length.

This means at slow times staff will be sent home but at busy times will be expected to work longer shifts. Instead of employing more staff when needed they want existing staff to work harder.

Not content with that managers also want to be able to order workers at whim to do different jobs from what they were rostered to do.

By doing so the com-



Flashback: Anti Privatisation demonstration two years ago

pany can squeeze an extra 10 million euro in profit from the staff. Aer Lingus is already a very profitable company, last year Aer Lingus made 80 mil-

lion in profit and has also imposed a pay freeze on workers. They now want to further attack working conditions.

Aer Lingus workers

represented by SIPTU voted to reject the proposed deal from management by a three-to-one majority. In Shannon airport there was 100% rejection.

## An outsider's view on the Lisbon Treaty

By LAURENT PARDON

I AM a European citizen from France living in Galway for over two years. Obviously, as a foreigner in Ireland, I will not be given a chance to vote on the referendum.

This problem of non-representation on the most significant vote about the E.U. will happen to all foreigners, not only in Ireland but in all Europe. In the end, I don't belong to a minority but a very large majority (of 491.5 million Europeans) who will be silenced by the EU Commission, with their own governments denying their right to vote.

As Nicolas Sarkozy (the president of the French government) said himself: "There will be no treaty if we had a referendum in France."

Indeed, when the French and Dutch were asked their opinion in 2005 on the European Constitution, they rejected it, after months discussing, debating, questioning and eventually voting no to the directions dictated by the European elite.

Three years later, in Ireland, reality is worrying. The content of the Lisbon Treaty is attacking the rights and freedoms of States and individuals on the same three aspects in an even less understandable text.

Firstly, the Treaty demands an increase of military spending from Ireland and every single member-State, a common foreign and security policy (reinforcing NATO members' interests, ending Ireland's official "neutrality").

The second major direction is the opening of many national public services to "free and non-opposable competition", meaning privatisation and deregulation of workers' rights.

Last, but not least, the new legal structure of the EU will standardise rights "in the general interest of the Union" rather than defending the individual. On the Irish sovereignty as a nation, it means handing out the sovereignty to an unelected Commission, to be the only law-making body, where the Irish people will only be represented by a Commissioner two-thirds of the time i.e. only 10 out of 15 years!

The attitude of Irish politicians and EU leaders shows contempt for Irish people.

FACT: The national press is unfairly relating more PRO campaign for one reason. Until the date of the referendum is officially given, there is no regulation to give equal audiovisual time or press opportunities to YES and NO campaigns in the Irish media.

FACT: The European Commission, unlike in France, decided not to publish any literature on the text being voted on. Whereas 40 million French voters could enjoy the unreadable Constitution text in their own mailbox, the European Commission decided that the Irish people did not deserve that.

Instead of that, the Referendum Commission which was set up "to give the public accurate and unbiased information about each new referendum" granted the Irish government with €6M to be spent on a one-sided (pro) campaign!

FACT: On February 20th, the European Parliament voted by a huge majority (499 to 129) that it doesn't "undertake to respect the outcome of the referendum in Ireland". It is important to know that The European Parliament has not a legislative but only a consulting role. The only thing such an insulting vote is doing is to try to minimize the crucial importance of the Irish vote and discourage the Irish people from getting informed and voting. What it shows, on another level, is the EU institutions' fear of facing one more popular, democratic defeat after France and Holland.

The EU officials want to impress the Irish voter. Yet, most PRO arguments at any debate on the Treaty lack substance, whereas the NO arguments systematically refer to the text itself.

It is the duty of each one of us to do a minimum citizen work as to know as exactly as possible what we are voting about. So go to debates and public meetings, get really informed about it. I will not be surprised that the more you will discover, the more reasons you will have to vote against the numerous dangers which the Lisbon Treaty opens doors to.

Saying No to Lisbon is not saying No to Europe. A really democratic E.U., respectful of all its citizens and guaranteeing their social rights and the sovereignty of the many peoples of Europe, can only take time and lots of efforts to get us together, working with our European neighbours in the first place to build the feeling of brotherhood and community on which our representatives will then openly elaborate a text that looks like what people want. This treaty is far from doing that.

The unelected European Commission is trying to push it as a last resort option. Of course, it is not and there is no rush. Lucky you, the power to decide is in your hands. Please make a good use of it.



EU Referendum:

# New Union UNITE says vote NO

*The Government – the combined opposition excluding Sinn Fein and some members of the Green Party – unfortunately the leadership of the Labour Party. All of the Government parties in Europe. Those are the forces lined up against us, however we must take on this fight and seek to move our ideas and our principles centre stage during the EU referendum campaign. UNITE which brings together AMICUS and the ATGWU has decided to campaign for a NO vote, write Jimmy Kelly, Regional Secretary, ATGWU*

**T**RADER UNION organisations across the Republic of Ireland should be consulting with their members – with their lay structures – Shop Stewards – their Branches – their Districts – and their Executives within the context of making a recommendation to their membership on voting in this EU Referendum.

The context for that consultation and reaching a conclusion for a recommendation I am convinced is within the framework of workers rights.

Whether judged against the EU itself or judged against the performance of the Irish Government on workers rights, I would argue that all Unions and indeed the ICTU should conclude that recommending a NO vote is consistent with the defence of Employment Rights for workers here in Ireland.

Laval and Viking – Two cases which have been before the European Court of Justice – The findings mean that while confirming the right of workers to go on strike, in the case of Laval can make those rights of workers subordinate to the rights of free movement of goods and services – Now forgive me but I have always believed that the whole point of a strike was to prevent the movement of those particular goods or services provided by those workers on strike – until they get justice from their employer.

So in the climate following Laval and Viking I am very clear that any benefit of the doubt to be given between Bosses and Workers will fall to the Employers.

And it is the climate created by those on the YES side that I think we have to focus our thoughts on –

My Union UNITE has agreed a position on Social Partnership

- Wages
- Low Paid
- Union Recognition
- Equal Rights for Agency Workers
- Pension Rights

I won't go into detail on the Wages front other than to point to the fact that Ireland has a low wage economy despite the perception blasted out by Government and Employer organisations of high wages effecting competitiveness.

We are seeking to move the agenda of the Irish Trade Union Movement beyond just asking for better treatment but starting to fight back against the Bosses and the Government to make concrete gains for workers in Ireland.

The Irish Government is refusing to give effect to workers rights beyond the aspirational language contained in Social Partnership documentation over a long number of years.

It seems therefore sensible, logical and very necessary to take forward our agenda of Employment rights to seek to influence every opportunity to advance those demands.

So when we come to take a decision on recommending Yes – No – or stay Neutral.

What are the considerations for workers organisations???



## Where is the Social Europe?



Jimmy Kelly, Regional Secretary ATGWU

First of all let's look back to the last time we discussed these matters in detail – during the referenda on the Nice treaty – 6 – 7 years ago

At that time the Trade Union and Labour movement was encouraged to support the Nice Treaty on the basis that the Charter of Fundamental Rights would deliver on the Social Europe Agenda. Many trade unionists at the time supported the Treaty on that basis.

The Charter disappeared into a political declaration and while well meaning did not deliver in any substance on the social agenda.

If anything the 'market economy' has been in the ascendancy and the so-called social market has been overwhelmed by neoliberal economic policies.

Witness the Irish Ferries marches in 2005 to defend employment rights and in more recent times the decisions by the European Court in the case of Viking/Laval which in effect limit the effectiveness of trade unions in defending their members' interests and taking collective action.

Of equal concern is the impression created by this judgement that only wages that are set through a national minimum legal wage mechanism are enforceable. In other words JLCs and REAs have a question mark put against them. The recent case taken by the Hotels Federation in the Courts challenging their JLC. (10 cents above the National Minimum Wage) shows what Irish bosses really want – cheap labour and no statutory rights for workers.

Add to that the recent defeat of the Agency Workers Directive, which sought equal treatment for Agency workers, to prevent their exploitation, and the EU 'Social Agenda' is on the ropes if not heading indeed for a count out.

Many EU States already provide for equal treatment or minimum requirements for agency workers, so in advance of the referendum there

is nothing preventing the Irish Government from providing for equal treatment legislation.

This Reform Treaty revives the Charter of Fundamental Rights by making it part of EU Law. In other words, this sets out the rights that must be respected by the EU institutions and the Members States when they are implementing EU Law.

Articles of the Charter provide for Collective action and the right to strike. This is something which already exists in Irish Law; however the ECJ in the Viking/Laval case, previously referred to, has indicated proportionate use in this regard.

The Charter also makes reference to the right to associate (be a member of a trade union) and the right to collectively bargain. The former exists in Irish Law but the latter doesn't.

Some commentators in the wake of the recent Supreme Court/Ryanair case would argue that employers cannot be compelled to collectively bargain with trade unions under the Irish constitution. The question thus posed, is, as the Irish Constitution provides for overrule by EU law; why does't the Irish Government provide for legislation in advance.

If the constitutional issue was the obstacle, then during the new round of talks on T2016, the Government and Employer sides could show their good faith in this regard, and provide for pre-emptive legislation for collective representation and bargaining by trade unions on behalf of their members where employers are not voluntarily prepared to engage, if indeed it's coming anyway

Additionally, Articles in the Charter refer to the Social Europe and the need for intergenerational solidarity. The most obvious and material expression of this is Pensions. Surely it is time for Government and employers to agree to contribute to a fair and reasonable mandatory pensions system, along with employees. The unions have already signed up to

the concept. Again we could have a pre-emptive move from Government and employers.

These are three areas, i.e. Collective representation and bargaining legislation, Agency Workers equal treatment, and mandatory pensions, where Government and employers could, in advance of the Referendum on the Treaty, and during the course of the T2016 negotiations signal their good intent and their commitment to the 'Social Europe'.

Not only would it provide potential for a new agreement to replace T2016, (we haven't forgotten the difficulties on the pay side), but it might also allow trade unionists to view more seriously those who 'talk-up' the 'Social' aspects of the Treaty without giving any material substance to it, as happened previously.

### European Trade Union Congress

Before a special meeting of the European Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs committee John Monks, representing the ETUC, stated:

"Firstly, quickly, we need a "Social Progress Clause" issued in anticipa-

tion of the EU Reform Treaty (article 5(a)), which firmly establishes that the Treaty and especially its fundamental freedoms shall be interpreted as respecting the observance of fundamental rights and especially collective action. It should also establish the rights of workers and their representatives to take collective action to improve their working and living conditions above minimum standards. (There is a precedent for this procedure with the Amsterdam Treaty to which the Employment Chapter was added at a late stage. There are also precedents with the Monti clause and the Services Directive.)

He further stated that the TUC Executive would be meeting to discuss the details of the clause. The ETUC has also stated that its Executive will be discussing ways of dealing with the fall-out of the European Court rulings. However, at this stage neither the content nor the strategies informing such a clause has been worked out.

I believe that Irish Unions through their lay member Executives should consider placing a motion before the ICTU Executive or relevant committee to the effect that given the grave consequences of the Laval / Viking rulings and the necessity to ensure that trade unionists' fundamental rights are protected, ICTU should

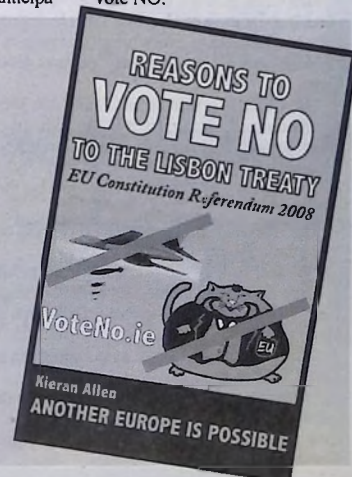
- a) Call on the Government to postpone the Lisbon Treaty to allow time to address the issue of trade union rights
- b) Demand that the Government use this 'pause' to negotiate an amendment or addendum to the Treaty to protect the right of collective action, or
- c) Introduce legislation to protect such rights if it can be determined that the issue can be resolved at national level (Proinsias De Rossa, MEP, believes this is an option)

In the event that the Government fails to act on this issue, then the ICTU should oppose the Treaty in the upcoming referendum.

The Irish Government has failed to provide a basis for workers to view this Referendum as genuinely delivering on rights in the workplace or delivering on the Social Europe as set out in the original Lisbon Treaty, therefore leading UNITE to the conclusion that workers in Ireland should vote NO.

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The so-called social market has been overwhelmed by neoliberal economic policies.



# Flames of anger at China's crackdown in Tibet

By NORA BOYLE



Protesting over China oppression of Tibet

THE OLYMPIC flame relay may have to be abandoned because of the international protests over Chinese repression in Tibet.

The relay has descended into an embarrassing farce for both the Chinese government and the International Olympic.

Since the occupation of Tibet in 1950 there have been calls worldwide for a Free Tibet.

Protesters have stepped up dissent since March 10<sup>th</sup> the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the unsuccessful uprising in 1959 when the Dalai Lama fled into exile.

"We will struggle, suffer and die for a free Tibet" say the protesters.

Rioting and protest which began in Lhasa spread to Gansu and Sichuan.

The BBC showed footage of rioting in Gansu the same day the Chinese were informed by Premier Wen Jiabao that the "criminal" unrest had been squashed.

An Independence March aimed to reach the border of Tibet in August at the start of the Olympic Games was prevented when Indian police arrested marchers just as it began from the Tibetan government in exile in Dharamsala, India.

One of the activists arrested calls for a boycott of the Beijing games something the Dalai Lama has not done.

The Olympic flame will arrive in China on March 31, starting its world relay from Tiananmen Square in Beijing and ending on the Olympics main stadium.

"Because the return of the Dalai Lama would inspire Tibetans so powerfully, that there'd be a revolution, and China can't have that happen," he said.

The Dalai Lama calls only for greater autonomy not independence however a younger generation of ethnic Tibetans call for independence with no compromise.

China refuses to admit to the numbers of protesters who have been killed so far.

Ordinary Chinese people are brainwashed to believe that Western media wants to demonise China to stem its power.

Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch said that "Given the long and well-documented history of torture of political activists by China's security forces there is every reason to fear for the safety of those recently detained"

The CCP refuse to talk to the Dalai Lama until he recognises Tibet and Taiwan as part of China.

Chinese State propaganda demonises the Dalai Lama, "The Dalai is a jackal in Buddhist monk's robes, an evil spirit with a human face and the heart of a beast".

Around 100 Tibetan students in Beijing have taken part in a candlelit vigil in a rare display of student public protest in the Chinese capital.

Since Tiananmen Square in 1989 police have taken a very hard line with student protest.

Han Chinese make up more than 90% of Chinese citizens, the mass immigration of Han into Tibet is destroying ethnic Tibetan culture and making everything "Chinese in character or under Chinese control" described as "cultural genocide" by the Dalai Lama.

The Chinese government claims that they have done much to economically assist Tibet by for example building a railway which actually just facilitates the mass immigration of more Han Chinese into Tibet.

The borders of Tibet are disputed by the Tibetans and the Chinese.

The Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) covers a smaller area than ethnic Tibetans claim is Tibet.

"We feel so very sad because we are so helpless. They have killed monks and common people - you must know this." an ethnic Tibetan student attendee at a candlelight vigil. Al Jazerra reported.

Official count of 13 and even more than the 100 claimed by exiled Tibetan groups.

Dolme says she and her classmates at the university have been talking by phone to friends and relatives in Tibetan areas who have passed on reports of Chinese police gunning down ethnic Tibetans in the streets.

# SIPTU election: Time to stand up to the bosses

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

KIERAN ALLEN spoke to Socialist Worker about why he is standing for General Secretary of SIPTU.

Kieran said, "SIPTU HAS a tough fight on its hands. The bosses want to use the coming recession to reduce our wages and conditions.

"The most dramatic example is Irish Ferries. Back in 2005, SIPTU mobilised to stop migrant workers being paid below the minimum wage.

"But the company is now paying some workers only €4 an hour and more will be paid this when the current agreement runs out in December 2008.

"We must do whatever it takes to stop them. We need a strong union that stands up for workers".

Kieran Allen is a candidate for General Secretary of SIPTU in order to put real backbone into the leadership.

He is a grassroots candidate who has been a shop steward for ten years and is currently President of the SIPTU Section in UCD.

Nearly 100 extra people have joined the union in his workplace as a direct result of a struggle for pension rights.

Kieran said, "Nationally, the union has gone soft and is too close with employers and the government.

"During the Celtic Tiger years, the unions should have pressed for more holiday entitlements, proper pension schemes and the right to bargain locally. Instead, we have started to slip back.

"The pay rises in the last national pay deal do not even keep up with the rate of inflation.

"The recent round of benchmarking has proved a disaster. To even get tiny pay rises, we have to promise ever more flexibility.

"The General Secretary of SIPTU should have a high public profile. He or she must manage the funds and streamline the administrative apparatus.

"I believe that union members should get full value for their contributions and will cut out unnecessary spending.

"If elected, I pledge to take the average industrial wage and donate the rest to campaigns for



Protestors on the Dublin Council of Trade Unions health march earlier in the month



Kieran Allen

workers rights". Kieran Allen stands for a positive change:

- Wage increases must be indexed to price rises. We should never again allow wage increases drop below the rate of inflation.
- Local bargaining for pri-

vate sector workers. Where a company is hugely profitable or where workers give extra productivity, there must be room for additional local claims.

- Pull out of benchmarking – give public sector workers back their right to put in special claims.

- Resistance to outsourcing and redundancies. Companies who made good profits in Ireland are re-locating and throwing workers on the scrap heap.

- We should take action to resist. Where jobs cannot be saved, we should fight for high redundancy payments and a company contribution to re-training workers.

- Mobilise to end the two tier health system. SIPTU conference agreed to call national demonstrations to tackle the scandal of the health serv-

ice. But nothing was done. Why?

- A law to force employers to contribute to occupational pension funds. One million Irish workers will face retirement with nothing more than social welfare pensions.

- Proper crèche facilities to be subsidised by employers and the state. Irish parents pay 20 percent of their average income on childcare compared to 12 percent in the rest of the EU.

- Co-ordinated action in construction and the meat industry to end the scourge of agency work.

- Campaign for paid Parental Leave.

- Fight Privatisation

You can contact at 087 2839964 or email kallen@iol.ie or check his campaign website on [www.kieranallen.org](http://www.kieranallen.org)

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THE CORPORATE TAKEOVER OF HEALTH

# Reverse the cuts!

The HSE issued a circular on 8 January indicating that all posts that were vacant at the beginning of September, or fell vacant and were not filled by the end of December, were effectively abolished.

These cuts have created further chaos in the health service and will mean patients spending longer waiting for operations. A report just published shows that patients now spend 10% longer on waiting lists.

We have one of the lowest population-to-bed ratios in any of the OECD and EU countries, at 3.1 beds per 1,000, versus 5.1 per 1,000 in the 1980s.

These diminished resources now service a much larger population.

Rather than investing in more beds the HSE and Harney want to cut even more beds.

This policy is designed to drive people into the hands of private health insurers and private hospitals. Private medicine can only

thrive when the public service is failing. We need to get rid of the HSE and the for-profit two-tier medicine system and demand a free healthcare service available to all on the basis of need not wealth.

## The HSE's corporate agenda

by SARAH MAHON, Healthworker

THE HEALTH Service Executive (HSE) is planning additional cuts in frontline health staff. The freeze on recruitment announced in January is already crippling essential services.

For example two needle exchanges, one in Rialto and one in Inchicore in Dublin, have closed due to arbitrary nature of the cutbacks and staff embargoes by the HSE. If staff are on maternity leave or out sick, they are not replaced therefore services they provide are closed. This means drug users who have taken responsibility for their drug use are abandoned.

Another example is the home helps and carers. Home helps generally do one hour work in homes of the most disadvantaged, lonely and elderly. This is to be cut to half an hour.

There is a strong probability that the social inclusion units will also be closed - these are sections of the health service which work directly with community.

The pro-business agenda of the HSE can be clearly seen with the 'Primary Care Teams' that were set up and funded by government to bring the broad range of medical services needed - doctors; xray; physiotherapy; podiatry; blood tests etc. to local communities. These were originally to be run as part of the public health service.

Now they are to be handed over to private companies such as Touchstone. These companies buy and fit out state of the art medical buildings with private doctors and most importantly (and most lucratively) with the big pharmacies.

These centres will then accept HSE patients including those on a medical card. The HSE will no longer provide services but will buy in services at a more expensive rate. Patients will be prescribed the most expensive drugs, not because they are the best but because the companies that run the centre will maximise their profits.

An example of this plan is Bru Caoimhin, which was to be one of the most developed of the primary care teams, is being scaled down and Touchstone have already bought a premises in the area.

The HSE sees its main job as pushing this agenda of private medicine rather than improving the public health service.

It also looks like after closing our regional hospitals, the HSE have 'discovered' that the best way to organise our cancer services is for a 'regional cancer service'. The difference is that where previously the service was provided through public hospitals it will now be delivered through a privatised service. All the talk of centres of excellence was really a smokescreen to hand the most lucrative parts of the health service over to private companies.



Part of the 10,000-strong health protest in Dublin at the beginning of April

Photo: Tina McVeigh

## Protests planned over cut in respite services in Ballyfermot

By ALICE MAHON

THE HSE respite services in Cherryorchard Hospital in Ballyfermot are to be drastically cut from June 1st.

On Friday 28th March representatives of the HSE in the area rang families who are in receipt of respite care to inform them that the service will be terminated indefinitely from June 1st.

Over 50 families in the Ballyfermot area receive respite facilities from the HSE in Cherryorchard Hospital.

Elderly and disabled members of the community are taken to the hospital for a three day period every fortnight and cared for hospital staff.

This service ensures that the patients and their carers are not overburdened or put at any risk of isolation and stress.

It allows for families who are unable to move about freely in normal circumstances to receive some respite and break from the pressures and stresses that caring at home brings about.

Brid Smith, Ballyfermot candidate for the People Before Profit Alliance has been in contact with a number of families who are

extremely concerned about these cut backs and who are seeking support to stop the cuts being implemented.

According to Ms. Smith, "Those who care for the elderly and disabled at home are providing an invaluable service to our communities.

Their care and attention means that hundreds of people throughout the state are provided for at home and save the health services millions of euro each year that would otherwise be spent on nursing care.

Instead of further rewarding these carers and providing more services for patients, the HSE have

just cut off their life line.

Many carers have told me that their own mental health and well being as well as that of their loved ones, will be put at risk because of these cuts."

"Instead of rewarding the hundreds of managers who allegedly run our health services with annual bonuses, the money and resources could be put into a service like respite care in Cherryorchard.

The HSE informed me this morning that the cuts are due to workers in Cherryorchard taking maternity leave over the summer.

This bogus claim tries to put the onus on the workers in the

hospitals instead of telling it like it is.

The facts are that the HSE are implementing cuts and embargoes on recruitment in many services across the country.

They indicated that these cuts would be temporary but the embargo on recruitment implemented last September has still not been lifted.

Ballyfermot can expect to be without a respite service for a long time to come.

But we will not take this lying down and are planning protests and local action to highlight this issue and to try to force the HSE to rescind these cuts."

## Stop the cancer treatment cuts

THE SAVE St Lukes Hospital Campaign has been active in the Rathmines area of Dublin for over a year.

Rory Hearne, People Before Profit Alliance, Dublin South East said, "In our area the Government is closing St Luke's Cancer Hospital

despite the fact that it is the best hospital for radiotherapy treatment in the country.

Closing St Luke's is part of the Government's agenda of running down the public health system in order to provide new opportunities for the private for profit

health care companies.

The local Save St Lukes Campaign that we are supporting is planning a march from St Lukes Hospital Rathgar on May 10th at 1pm.

It is important to keep the protests going".



# The henchmen behind the HSE

By RORY CONNOLLY

WHEN THE Health Act that established the HSE was written in 2004, the word *patient* appeared in it just once. It was an ominous pointer to the bureaucratic monstrosity that lay in waiting.

But just as ominous was the composition of the HSE's Board, the people appointed by government to implement the biggest reform in public administration the country has ever seen.

The Board has a chairperson and ten members who, despite their enormous power over HSE spending priorities, have cleverly avoided the limelight. You might think they would be people with solid medical backgrounds, front line clinicians, professional health managers, people who understand - and would fight for - what's needed to deliver a first class health service. You might think it, but you would be wrong.

Six of the Board's members come from backgrounds in business and finance, and between them hold positions on every major employers' organisation in the country - an appalling bias that clearly underlines Harney's determination to turn more and more of our health service over to profit hungry privateers. There's just one doctor and one nurse on the Board, both full-time academics rather than front-line workers.

The first chairman of the Board - and the man who did much to deliver the mishapen HSE we suffer under today - was Kevin Kelly, an accountant by profession.

It is no accident that accountants dominate most private corporations these days. They know best how to cut costs and boost profits. Kelly is no exception. He's a former meat industry boss and managing director of AIB, Ireland's biggest bank.

He was group financial director when AIB was helping thousands of customers evade tax through bogus non-resident accounts and refused to condemn the crooked bank. "AIB is a company I was proud to be part of," he said on joining the HSE, "and I still retain that pride." Thanks to Kelly, the HSE now calls patients "customers".

And Kelly isn't the only AIB boss appointed to the HSE. Donal de Buitelir, general manager in the office of AIB's Chief Executive, is on the HSE Board and another AIB manager, Hugh Crawley, headed the HSE's "change management team" as Kelly's enforcer.

Kelly successor as Board chairman, Liam Downey, was CEO of a private medical technology company, Becton Dickinson, a former President of the Federation of Irish Employers, and a member of the executive council of the right-wing bosses' organisation, IBEC.

Another IBEC executive member, Joe Macri, was appointed to the HSE Board in 2005. Macri is European boss of computer giant - and infamous lawbreaker - Microsoft. He also chairs the Small Business Forum. When appointing him, Mary Harney praised his "background in business leadership" - underlining her view of health as another market awaiting exploitation.

John Murray, Professor of Business



Studies in Trinity College, and President of the Marketing Institute of Ireland, served on the Board until January this year. *Marketing* and health only go together in a world of competing private providers - Harney's dream.

Niamh Brennan, wife of former PD leader and private sector devotee, Michael McDowell, is also on the Board. She is a chartered accountant, Professor of Management at UCD, and head of the Institute of Director's Centre for Corporate Governance.

Her 2003 report on financial management in the health services helped land her a seat on the Board.

Board member Eugene McCague is a partner in law firm, Arthur Cox, whose corporate clients control much of the country's wealth. He is also a member of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce which represents business interests in the capital.

Michael McLoone, Manager of Donegal County Council, also served on the Board until recently. In 2004 he successfully sued the *Donegal Democrat* over a series of articles by the County's former chief planning officer, Gerry Convic, alleging wholesale corruption in the council that McLoone runs.

The two medical members of the Board are Michael Murphy and Anne

Scott. Murphy, Dean of Medicine at University College Cork, has kept quiet in the face of Harney's widely condemned plan to put a private hospital in the grounds of Cork University Hospital. Scott is Professor of Nursing at Dublin City University, and the only Board member to have publicly criticised the government: she condemned their failure to appoint an independent inspectorate for private nursing homes.

Pop-psychologist Maureen Gaffney is also on the Board. Rarely off the airwaves, she seems to have an opinion on everything under the sun - except health cuts and privatisation.

In January this year the two outgoing Board members were replaced by Pat Farrell and Joe Mooney.

Farrell - another man with a background in accounting and finance - is the former chief executive of Galvia Private Hospital in Galway. He's a member of the International Financial Services Sector Advisory Group and Chief Executive of the Irish Banking Federation.

His appointment will act as the brightest green light yet to the private sector. Joe Mooney is a newly retired official from the Department of Finance - the Department that is

dictating the pace of current health spending cuts.

There are just 11 scheduled Board meetings a year, and a few unscheduled. For that the chairman is paid a whopping €35,000 annually while the other members pocket €17,500 each. Absenteeism from Board meetings is endemic. At the end of last year, half the members had missed at least 20% of regular meetings, and some had missed over 30%. But they still got paid in full.

Board meetings are held in private - unlike the old Health Boards whose officials were held accountable at public monthly meetings.

Although the HSE Board minutes are published, they are frequently months out of date and often so cryptic as to be intelligible only to those who were at the meeting. This appalling lack of transparency has led to a complaint to the Information Ombudsman.

For the most part it seems, Board members are content to rubber stamp decisions already made by Chief Executive, Brendan Drumm and his separate 'kitchen cabinet' - six hand-picked advisers who operate entirely in secret and are answerable to no-one, yet who collectively trouser over €1 million annually.

## Why Health Insurance is for your health

By PEADAR O'GRADY

PROPOSALS FOR funding the health service with health insurance premiums rather than progressive taxation should be treated with extreme caution.

Health insurance in Ireland is being taken over by for-profit companies like Quinn and Vivas who add a layer of bureaucracy to funding and distort the delivery of service. Hibernian Insurance is now taking over Vivas because they can small the profit from Harney's for-profit privatisation policies.

The worst form of funding is 'out-of-pocket' payments (such as for GP visits or prescriptions) because it charges people when they are sick.

It often means sick people going without care because they tend to be poorest when they are sickest - off work or retired. Healthcare must be free at the point of delivery, that is when you are sick.

For-profit health insurance is next worst because it doesn't necessarily take into account ability to pay. It wastes money through extra bureaucratic costs in billing, ads, executive salaries, lawyer's fees and siphoning off massive profits. It also puts unaccountable power over service delivery into the hands of big business.

Not-for-profit social insurance is better but progressive taxation is the best form of health funding because the richest pay most.

But no payment system says anything about access to services and this is what everyone should ask when right-wing parties suggest insurance

schemes.

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## HSE cuts frontline boosts manager

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

WHILE CUTTING beds and frontline staff the HSE can still find plenty of money for top managers.

Figures just published show that the HSE's wage bill for managers and administrators increased by around €95 million between 2005 and 2007.

The HSE's management and administrative costs rose from €492 million in 2005 to €587 million at the end of 2007.

Over the period, the number of staff in management and administrative positions in the HSE increased by 926.

When the HSE was established after the abolition of the old health boards, there were under 30 Grade 8 managers. These are senior managers who can sign off on monies, they also earn a huge

salary. The than 700 (5 these mana generous r early retire many of th - a very exp a costly mib

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## CORPORATE TAKEOVER OF HEALTH

# Why Health Insurance is bad for your health

PEADAR O'GRADY

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The worst form of funding is 'out-of-pocket' payments (such as GP visits or prescriptions) because it charges people when they are sick.

It often means sick people going without care because they are too poor to pay. The sickest – off work or retired. Healthcare must be free at the point of delivery, that is when you are sick.

For-profit health insurance is the worst because it doesn't necessarily take into account ability to pay. It wastes money through extra bureaucratic costs, billing, ads, executive salaries, lawyer's fees and siphoning off massive profits. It also puts unaccountable power over the service delivery into the hands of the business.

Not-for-profit social insurance is better but progressive taxation is the best form of health funding because it charges the richest pay most. But no payment system is anything about access to services and this is what everyone should ask when right-wing parties suggest insurance

schemes.

The Labour Party recommends 'Universal' health insurance – but all this means is that 'everyone' should have insurance. It doesn't say how good that insurance cover will be. Cover needs to be 'comprehensive'.

That means it should cover all your healthcare needs – including all treatments, drug costs, nursing home, in-home and respite care.

In the US, the majority of people depend on health insurance. One in six, 50 million people, have no insurance at all because it is so expensive.

Probably another 100 million are insured with policies where the insurance company regularly refuses payment for treatments. So they have to pay out-of-pocket for proper care or go without. As a result, health bills are the number one cause of bankruptcy for workers in the US.

Health insurance is a bad deal for workers – expensive and unfair with two-tier access. The Labour Party's support for insurance means they have backed off from fighting for an end to two-tier medicine.

Their pandering to Fine Gael's right-wing policies of for-profit care can only be because they want a new coalition deal, however bad that would be for most people in this country.

We need a tax-funded, fully comprehensive health service that is free when we are sick. Nothing works better and we deserve nothing less.

A left-wing coalition like People Before Profit is needed to put people power in charge of the health service not Health Insurance profiteers.

## HSE cuts frontline staff, boosts managers

DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

WHILE CUTTING beds and frontline staff the HSE can still find plenty of money for top managers.

Figures just published show that the HSE's wage bill for managers and administrators increased by around €95 million between 2005 and 2007. The HSE's management and administrative costs rose from €92 million in 2005 to €587 million at the end of 2007. Over the period, the number of staff in management and administrative positions in the HSE increased by 926.

When the HSE was established after the abolition of the old health boards, there were under 40 Grade 8 managers. These are senior managers who can sign off on monies, they also earn a huge

salary. The HSE has now more than 700 (yes seven hundred!) of these managers! It seems that a generous redundancy package or early retirement is in the offing for many of these managers this year – a very expensive option to undo a costly mistake.

Overall, the number of management and administrative staff employed in the health service at the end of September 2007 was 18,421. At the end of 2004, just before the establishment of the HSE, there were 16,157 managers and administrators employed in the health service.

The HSE is about to appoint a new director of human resources on an annual pay of €305,000 a year, including a basic salary of between €220,000 and €230,000 and a potential bonus of 25 per cent.

By ORLA O'DONOVAN

Orla O'Donovan is the co-editor of the recently published *Power, Politics and Pharmaceutical: Drug Regulation in Ireland in the Global Context* (Cork University Press, 2008).

IN IRELAND more and more public healthcare resources are being absorbed by expenditure on drugs.

By 2005 it exceeded 15 per cent of total public spending on healthcare.

The public drug bill grew by over 600 per cent between 1993 and 2005; in this period total pharmaceutical expenditure under the government's Community Drugs Schemes increased from €211 million to €1,367 million.

Evidence from the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics shows that a significant factor contributing to this dramatic growth in public expenditure on medicines is that medical card holders are being prescribed greater quantities of drugs.

They are also being prescribed new and more expensive medications.

In the decade up to 2005 the number of people eligible for medical cards fell by almost 10 per cent, but the number of items prescribed to medical card holders doubled.

During those years, there was almost a four-fold increase in the number of prescriptions with six items and almost an eight-fold increase in prescriptions with seven or more items.

In a healthcare service in which access is increasingly determined by people's purchasing capacity, you might say that the prescribing of greater quantities of expensive medications to people on low incomes is something to be celebrated.

However, the fact that considerable proportions of scarce public resources are being spent on patented medications the health benefits of which have been shown to be dubious, and many of which are available in cheaper generic forms, suggests that we should be sceptical about the easy equation that consumption of more expensive drugs equals better health.

Antidepressants, for example, are widely prescribed, but a recent analysis of data on all clinical trials submitted to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the licensing of the 'SSRI' antidepressants concluded that the difference in efficacy between the drugs and placebos is small and there is little scientific evidence to support the prescribing of these medications to any but the most severely depressed people.

For some people the consumption of these drugs has been worse than a waste of money; SSRIs have been the focus of an ongoing controversy as it has emerged that for some patients they cause suicidal and violent behaviour and can lead to drug dependency.

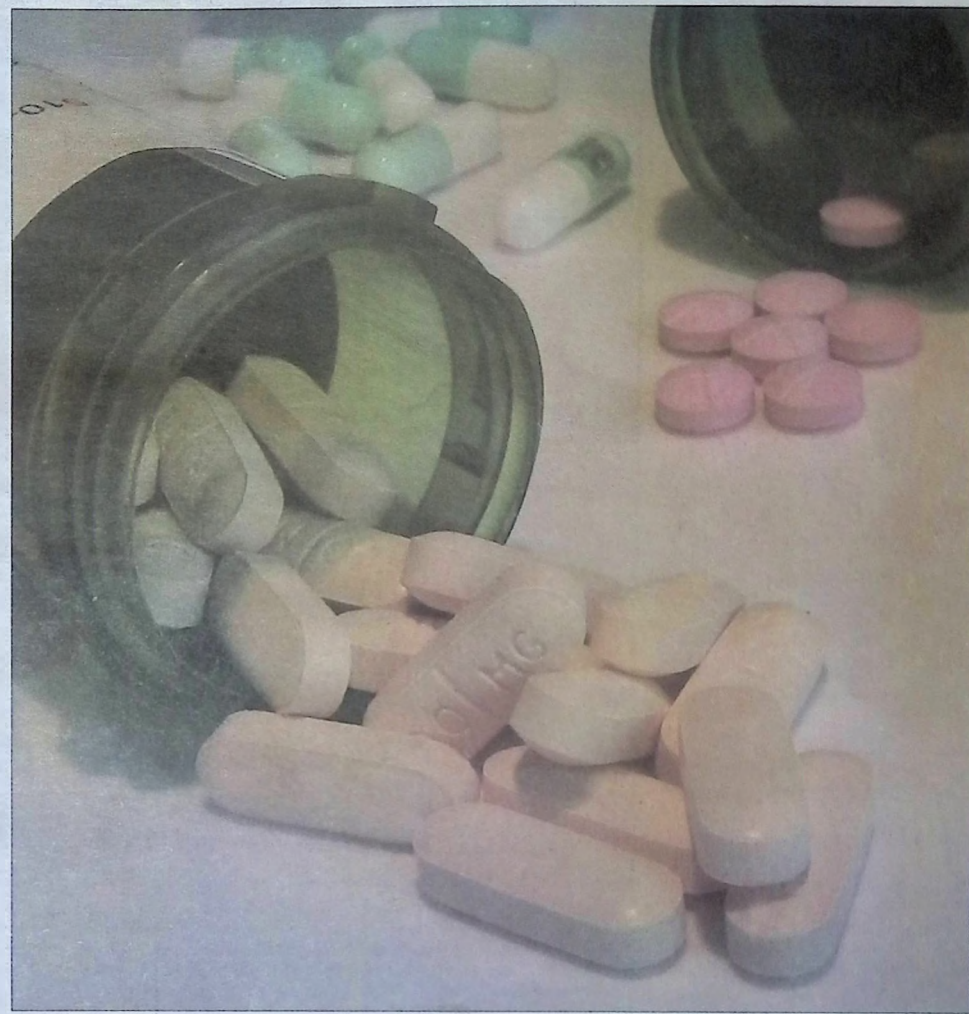
The withdrawal of the painkiller Aulin from the Irish market in 2007 because its use had led to a number of deaths is a further example of a drug controversy that raises questions about how unsafe medicines come to be licensed, widely prescribed and publicly subsidised.

Irish government pharmaceutical policy, however, endorses the equation of more drugs with better health.

Historically, there has been a double redefining of the role of the state in protecting the public from unsafe and ineffective drugs.

First, the state shifted from a

# Big pharma, drug profits and Ireland



Pontius Pilate "it's nothing to do with us" official attitude at the time of the thalidomide drug disaster in the 1960s to the establishment of the National Drugs Advisory Board and a severely under-resourced and consequently ineffective regulatory system.

Although a "hands off" regulatory regime, this initial system prioritised monitoring drug safety.

The second shift came with the establishment of the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) in 1995, a move to an industry-funded drug regulation authority principally concerned with the industry's priority of speedy drug licensing, which enables the marketing of drugs as quickly as possible.

Similar to what can be seen in many other countries, regulation of the pharmaceutical industry in Ireland has followed a neo-liberal pharma-friendly course in which "economic competitiveness" (aka corporate profiteering) has been prioritised over public health.

Since the 1960s, measures in which the pharmaceutical industry has a direct commercial interest have become policy priorities in a way that measures that are of significant importance to public health, but which can undermine the industry's profit-making, have not.

The prioritisation of accelerating the marketing authorisation process for drugs, or "speed to market",

stands in sharp contrast to the failure to seriously address the gross under-reporting of adverse drug reactions by doctors and other health professionals.

Efforts to promote pharma-unfriendly policies have foundered, such as control of public expenditure on drugs through generic substitution and effective price controls, not to mention the once-proposed nationalisation of drug manufacturing.

What has emerged is a for-profit drug regulatory regime.

Neo-liberalism is often associated with calls for reduced state regulation, for *deregulation*.

Trends in pharmaceutical policy show that neo-liberalism is better characterised by *re-regulation*, new modes of state intervention that prioritise facilitating corporate profit-making.

Furthermore, regulation of the pharmaceutical industry is an intensely secretive realm of "public" policy in which the private property rights of drug companies are given precedence over citizen's rights to know.

All of the material submitted to the IMB by pharmaceutical companies seeking approval for a new drug is treated as commercially confidential and therefore will not be released without permission of the company that owns the data.

Similarly, any comments made by IMB reviewers are treated as

confidential.

Consequently, members of the public cannot verify the quality of the original data or the IMB's interpretation of it.

Another barrier to public scrutiny of the decision-making processes of the IMB arises from the lack of access to information on the conflicts of interest of individuals directly involved in licensing and other decisions.

We know that many of these staff and scientific advisors come and go to employment in the industry through the revolving door between the regulatory authority and drug companies, and are in receipt of industry research grants and consultancy fees.

In addition to commercially sensitive information, under current freedom of information legislation "personal information" such as declarations of interests is exempted from release to the public.

These fundamental weaknesses in the drug regulation system have even been recognised in official circles.

Calling for a more in-depth review of the drug regulation system, the 2007 report of the Oireachtas Sub-Committee on the Adverse Side-Effects of Pharmaceutical concluded that the influence of the pharmaceutical industry is "unhealthy and needs to be counterbalanced" and that there are "steps which could be taken to improve the strength, independence and transparency of drug regulation in Ireland".



# HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

*As spiralling food prices hit the poorest, Sadie Robinson and Esme Choonara examine how we can have famine in a world of plenty*

**T**HE LIVES of billions of people across the globe are under threat due to rising food prices. A series of massive price increases has sparked panic in many parts of the world.

The latest food stuff to soar is rice, with prices doubling since January.

There have also been steep rises in the prices of other basic foods, such as wheat, dairy and corn. This situation is set to produce a deadly crisis for the world's poor.

The mainstream media has put forward a number of explanations for the hike in food prices.

These rest upon the premise that there is a shortage of food. So a drought in Australia, a major wheat exporter, is said to cause shortages and higher prices.

The finger of blame is also being pointed at China and India, who are already being blamed for climate change.

Their "larger and more affluent" populations are supposedly responsible for the alleged lack of food.

But the fact is that there is no food shortage. The world's food supply is characterised by abundance, not by scarcity.

There are enough grains, rice and wheat produced to provide every human being with more than their daily needs—and this is before other foods such as meat, dairy, vegetables, nuts, beans or fish are taken into account.

In the modern world, there has been enough food to feed people during every famine.

People do not starve due to a lack of food—they starve because they cannot afford to buy it. Famine always hits the poorest.

## Consumption

And the view that growth in population and consumption leads to poverty and scarcity is not true either.

According to the World Hunger Education Service, a US-based NGO, global agriculture produces 17 percent more calories per person today than it did 30 years ago—despite the population of the world increasing.

Revolutionising production and increasing productivity are the hallmarks of capitalism. Today there is the



Queuing for food in Bangladesh

potential to end food shortages.

So why have food prices risen so sharply recently? The main reason is that food is a commodity like any other, and is subject to speculation and the fluctuations of the market.

It seems the recent credit crunch is making food price rises worse. As speculators find their investments in housing and the stock market threatened they have shifted to invest in commodities, such as food.

The recent rush to investment in biofuels has also helped to drive up food prices as agribusinesses and traders shift from food to fuel crops in an attempt to chase profits.

"The credit crunch has pushed a lot

of investors into commodities as a safe haven," wrote Paul Braks, commodities analyst at Rabobank, in the bosses' Financial Times newspaper.

Now speculators are betting on the chances of food prices climbing even further and are rushing to buy, which pushes the prices even higher.

There is no thought, of course, for what this means for the billions people this will affect around the world.

This is just one aspect of the madness of a world run on the basis of profit. Capitalists compete within the food industry to grab the biggest share of the market, leading to overproduction and a glut of food.

So business and governments use

## RICE PRICES

### A fight for the right to food

THE CRISIS around spiralling rice prices starkly demonstrates how food insecurity and hunger are built into the global system of food production.

Rice prices have shot up in the past few months. Thai rice, seen as the global benchmark, has almost doubled in price from January to March this year.

Rice is a staple food for more than half the world's population.

In countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma and Vietnam, the majority of the population rely on rice for up to 80 percent of their calorie intake.

Millions consequently face food insecurity or severe hunger.

Governments are desperate to stop riots and protests developing over rice prices.

In Bangladesh the army is

overseeing the distribution of discounted rice. In the Philippines the government has called on restaurants to cut rice portions to protect stocks.

The most common response is to ban exports. Governments including China, India, Vietnam, Egypt and Cambodia have in recent months imposed total bans or serious curbs on rice exports.

This allows governments to temporarily protect their domestic supplies, but it is worsening the overall problem by pushing up rice prices further as traders rush to buy up and stockpile any available rice.

Rice is mostly produced for a domestic market—only 6 or 7 percent is traded on the world market.

But this international trade plays a crucial role in determining world rice prices. It is also where countries turn to for imports if they face rice shortages.

Rice stocks are at their lowest levels since the 1970s, so every

market shortage becomes a crisis—or an opportunity, if you a trader.

As prices started rising, many rice traders started stockpiling and hoarding rice to sell at inflated prices when the crisis becomes more acute.

Commodity markets are the main factor behind price rises.

But rising fuel prices and a lack of infrastructure to deal with extreme weather in countries such as Bangladesh have also played their part.

Long term trends in land use have also seen rice cultivation become static or even decline.

In many countries land has been shifted in past years into more profitable crops, or taken over for commercial development.

The rising costs of wheat, corn and soya, are making the crisis worse for millions as it becomes impossible to switch to a cheaper food staple.

The problem is not just in Asia. Many countries in Africa were forced after 1995 by the World

a variety of methods to keep food prices—and profits—high.

This can mean the stockpiling of food or even its destruction as a way of dealing with overproduction and hiking up prices.

The US destroyed huge amounts of food during the 1930s Great Depression, despite rampant malnutrition—causing people to organise hunger marches.

The Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 restricted food production to keep prices high. Six million pigs were slaughtered, ten million acres of crops were ploughed under and fruit was left to rot.

Even in "normal" times, malnutrition and food insecurity is a permanent feature of capitalism. Some 1.2 billion people in the Global South live on less than \$1 dollar a day and of these, 780 million suffer from chronic hunger.

Children are particularly vulnerable—the stunting that results from malnutrition affects 33 percent of children in developing countries.

Malnutrition is estimated to contribute to the deaths of five million children in poor countries every year.

## Potential

The socialist revolutionary Karl Marx noted 150 years ago that capitalism provides the potential, for the first time in human history, to expand production to meet the basic needs of the world's population.

But he noted that although capitalism could expand production up to a point, eventually the way the system puts profits above other considerations would become a barrier to further development.

This is the situation we face today. Millions will starve and billions more will be malnourished because the system is geared towards making profits rather than meeting human needs.

The crisis in food prices has sparked riots and protests around the world—in Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Argentina and Burkino Faso.

The resistance of ordinary people will be the key to putting an end to the capitalist system that produces too much food while letting people starve.

Sadie Robinson



The rise in rice prices threatens the world's poorest people

Trade Organisation to drop import controls and open borders to rice imports. This created an increased reliance on rice in those countries.

As Robert Zeigler from the International Rice Research Institute points out, we already know the devastating human costs of rising food prices.

"We have seen this before in the 1970s, associated with the oil price shocks," he says. "There was a serious spike in food price rises, in particular rice. The consequences were very serious.

"Bangladesh shortly after its independence could not source rice on the world market—it had no stocks and couldn't access credit—and according to colleagues in Bangladesh, up to three million died as a result."

It is obscene that the drive for profits is threatening to deny basic foods to millions today. The fight for the right to food is set to become a defining feature of our era.

Esme Choonara



# The intifada spreads to Egypt

by SIMON ASSAF

TENS OF thousands of Egyptians faced down murderous repression in a historic show of defiance.

At the beginning of April one of the US's key allies in the Middle East, has been severely shaken by a movement the like of which has not been seen in the country in decades.

Security forces attempted to drown a popular strike movement in blood, in what was Egypt's Bloody Sunday.

But crowds tens of thousands strong stood firm and ripped down massive portraits of Egypt's US-backed tyrant Hosni Mubarak.

The movement began with a call for a protest strike against inflation and low wages by textile workers in the industrial city of Mahalla el-Kubra.

The regime panicked and flooded the Nile Delta city with riot police, state security forces and thugs from the ruling party.

Armed with shotguns, tear gas, rubber bullets and electric cattle prods, they surrounded the Mahalla mill that employs 27,000 workers. On Saturday 5th April they began welding shut the factory gates.

## Intimidation

At 3am on Sunday the police stormed into the factory and seized 150 workers ahead of the shift change. Security agents dispersed any group of workers who gathered inside the plant.

The intimidation stifled the attempted walkout, and a tense stand off began to develop at the factory gates. But sometime after 3pm a demonstration broke out in the town square. Up to 7,000 workers and supporters began chanting against price increases.

Mubarak's police opened fire killing four, including a 20 year old man and a nine year boy. Over 90 people were wounded.



Mass strikes and protests shake the Egyptian regime

The crowd responded by attacking police trucks. The police then fired on a bus full of workers setting it ablaze.

The street battles continued throughout the afternoon and evening. Workers withdrew into their neighbourhoods, showering the state security forces with rocks and bottles.

People set fire to barricades in the streets and chanted insults at Mubarak's son and heir, Gamal.

The police beat children. Hundreds of opposition activists and bystanders were arrested, including two key strike organis-

ers, Kamal el-Fayoumi and Tarek Amin el-Senoussi. Lawyers who asked about the arrested were threatened by police wielding swords.

Other workplaces across Egypt attempted to stage similar strikes. A strike by textile workers in Kafr el-Dawwar was aborted following police raids.

But one witness said that while production was not brought to a complete halt, "hundreds of workers demonstrated twice that day

— before the start of the morning shift, followed by another one that was staged before the afternoon shift started".

In central Cairo, Egypt's capital, security forces turned on a small crowd who were chanting, "The strike is legitimate against poverty and starvation."

As they surrounded the demonstration, residents showered the police with wood and bottles.

A strike and occupation by the Mahalla workers in December 2006 triggered a rash of strikes, protests and factory occupations across Egypt.

This year local demands have been transformed into a national call for a rise in the minimum wage. A one-day protest strike was called for Sunday April 6.

## Tense

A democracy activist told Socialist Worker, "The government is claiming a victory. But far from it, tens of thousands stayed away from work and the demands of the workers still stand."

The Muslim Brotherhood, the main opposition in the country, said that it would boycott local elections set for April.

Another mass demonstration took place in Mahalla on Monday April 7.

A socialist activist in the city reported that at 4pm 2,000 people began chanting against the government, price increases and police brutality.

The crowds grew to 50,000 and chanted, "Gamal, tell your father we will fuck him."

Some are calling it the beginning of the revolution, others the start of the Egyptian Intifada, or uprising. It is unclear where these demonstrations will lead, how long they will last, and if they will spread.

But on Sunday 6 April something changed in the Arab world's most important country.

# ZIMBABWE: Workers protests not courts will bring down Mugabe

By LUKE CHOTO, Zimbabwean socialist

ZIMBABWE HAS got the highest inflation in the world of more than 100,000 percent with mass unemployment and daily struggle for basic necessities like fuel, bread and cooking oil.

The elections were the only hope for the majority for a better life with out oppression but now the country is sinking into deeper political stalemate with the opposition claiming victory and the ruling party challenging the result and ordering a recount in some constituents.

The opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) is going to the courts to force the release of the election results.

The courts in Zimbabwe will not defend the votes of the working people.

There is a need of the working people to defend their votes on their own and not wait for the MDC. In the past elections the MDC failed because it relied on the courts.

It took years before some of their complains were resolved.

This time the working people should defend their vote and not the courts as Mugabe has shown time and time again that he can ignore the rule of



Robert Mugabe

law if it does not suit him. Zimbabwe is being run illegally by Robert Mugabe and Zanu PF.

Ten days after Zimbabweans cast their votes in harmonized



presidential, parliamentary, senate and council elections Mugabe's regime continues to keep a lid on the all-important presidential result.

After demolishing the working class homes in towns four years ago without any major resistance from opposition parties.

Mugabe is testing the political temperature to see how far he could push against the people's will.

This is no longer a MDC-Zanu PF issue but the oppressed and the oppressor. There is no need to wait for MDC leadership, the working people and all those who voted against the regime of Mugabe

should reclaim their vote.

The Mugabe's regime is at its weakest, broke, split and could not sustain a long period of repression if people took up the mantle and fought back.

MDC leader

Morgan Tsvangirai's pre-election call for people to remain behind at the polling stations and defend their votes was the right strategy and this now needs to be developed further into some form of people power.

The tendency of MDC to go to courts has cost it before and should not be trusted this time.

Zimbabwe's courts are compromised and engaging in litigation is a strategy of the middle class to disarming the people's vigilance and substitute the people from self emancipating hence creating a sideshow.

Mass participation is the key to freedom from the current regime of Mugabe and to re-build a new working Zimbabwe with new people's driven constitution.

It is important that the constitution issue should be addressed as part this political crisis and that the MDC's key allies, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and National Constitutional Assembly mobilise on this issue even if the MDC wins.

## Mixed loyalties of the MDC leadership

by KEN OLENDE

THE MOVEMENT for Democratic Change (MDC) was founded in 1999 out of Zimbabwe's trade union movement.



Morgan Tsvangirai

It is led by Morgan Tsvangirai, a former trade union leader, who in the MDC's early years once said, "Don't forget where we come from — our base is the workers, peasants and the poor."

The MDC has been increasingly influenced by various NGOs, academics, businessmen and lawyers with their own ideas about the direction the party should take.

The party has always

been contradictory. One side comes from labour forums and the streets. But the other side is dominated by the middle class and sections of big business that hope to co-opt the opposition movement.

The MDC's leaders wanted to combine a mass base with the support of business, multinationals and Western governments.

At the 2002 election the party was arguing against land redistribution and openly siding with white commercial farmers. This allowed Mugabe to present himself as the saviour of the poor and more "left wing".

For all its many contradictions, the MDC remains the repository of hope for the majority of Zimbabweans, who see the party as the only way of ridding the country of Mugabe.

But real liberation for Zimbabwe's workers and peasants will not come from parties that back neo-liberalism, behind which stand George Bush and the Western powers.



## EDITORIAL

# Cowan: A safe pair of hands for the rich

**Bertie Ahern's lies and corruption finally caught up with him. He was forced to resign because his entire testimony to the tribunal was contradicted by the testimony of his constituency secretary.**

He claimed he never lodged any stirling, she confirmed that stirling was in fact lodged to his (many) accounts. In today's terms well over half a million euro passed through his accounts. And we have only seen a few years of his bank accounts.

Fianna Fail have been fighting a hard rearguard action to define Ahern's legacy as one of peacemaker and bringer of prosperity.

Ahern's real legacy is that of continuing corruption, increased inequality and the end of Irish neutrality.

Brian Cowan is a chip off the old FF block. Already it has emerged that Cowan's brother had to settle an unpaid tax bill of 100,000 euro with the Revenue.

Cowan and Ahern are politicians who consistently looked after the interests of the rich in Ireland — from Ahern's tax amnesties to low taxes on profits. Cowan's last hurrah of the boom for his developer friends was a tax loophole tax handed them 400 million euro.

Ahern's legacy is an era when wealth was transferred from Ireland's workers to the rich.

At the end of the 90s Ireland's rich had an extra 10% of GDP, resources that should have gone into our public services instead went into the bank accounts of millionaires.

Ahern's term as Taoiseach is a period when the gap between rich and poor in Ireland increased. Ireland after 15 years of boom still ranks as one of the lowest on healthcare spending.

We also have one of the lowest hospital beds to population ratios in Europe.

Cowan has said he sees continuing the cuts in the public health service as a priority. He backs Harney's and the HSE's drive to private medicine.

Far from being a peacemaker Ahern was a consistent supporter of war. He ditched Ireland's neutrality in order to support George Bush and his war in Iraq.

Over 1 million US troops have passed through Shannon Airport on their way to destroy a country and kill over 1 million civilians. Ahern's government refused to investigate CIA kidnappings and torture flights through Shannon.

The settlement in Northern Ireland was achieved as a result of a massive popular mood and mobilisation for an end to war. It was also achieved as a result of a change in strategy on the part of the Republican movement.

The settlement has done nothing to remove the sectarian basis of politics in Northern Ireland, in fact it has copper-fastened it.

Ahern presided over the Irish economy at a time when there was enough money around, if necessary, to buy social peace.

Cowan comes into office at a time when global Capitalism faces its biggest crisis since the 1930s. Any honeymoon for Cowan will be short lived if at all.

There are major social and economic battles to come. This government could well collapse or be kicked out before its term ends.

The first battle will be over the Lisbon Treaty. The left can transform politics in Ireland if a NO vote is carried.

Most people are already wary of the treaty, the NO campaign can win if it is shaped by leftwing politics and has the confidence to take the battle into every estate and workplace.

The Greens and Labour betrayed the interests of workers by going into government with Ahern and FF.

Their support for rampant capitalism through the Lisbon Treaty shows they have abandoned any hint of being an alternative. The space for socialist politics and for the 'People Before Profit Alliance' has never been greater.

## DEBATE &amp; COMMENT



Illustration: Tim Sanders

## Islamophobia on film

*Behind Dutch politician Geert Wilders' film Fitna lies a system that has let racism into the mainstream, writes Maina van der Zwan*

**T**HE FAR right Dutch politician Geert Wilders made international headlines last week with the release of his anti-Muslim movie, *Fitna*.

He says the film aims to expose Islam as intrinsically violent and a threat to "Western civilisation".

Wilders also argues that the Koran is a "fascist" book that should be banned.

The resulting film is a disgusting piece of racist propaganda which resembles *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew), a film Nazis used in 1940 to "expose" the Jews of Europe.

The first half of *Fitna* consists of gruesome images of terrorist attacks, alternated with selected verses from the Koran. That is followed by pictures of Dutch Muslims and images of gays being hanged with the subtitle "The future of the Netherlands?".

A woman wearing a hijab and pushing a baby buggy forms the background for population statistics for Muslims in the Netherlands—54 in 1909, 458,000 in 1960 and 944,000 in 2004.

The warning is clear—the terrorist, gay-bashing, women-oppressing Muslims will take over the world if they're not stopped by brave Western politicians like Wilders.

Wilders heads the Party For Freedom (PVV), a single-issue organisation dedicated to sowing hatred against Islam and Muslims.

He specialises in racist provocations, making statements such as "Dutch culture is a thousand times better than Islamic culture."

The sad thing is that the Dutch political establishment has accommodated to his politics of hate.

The debate going on in the Dutch parliament at the moment accepts Wilders' basic premise that Islam and Muslims are a threat to "Western values". He is only criticised for "generalising too much" or "failing to

offer practical solutions". This illustrates the extent to which Islamophobia has moved into the mainstream in the Netherlands in the past few years.

Two developments have laid the foundation for this.

First, there is the "war on terror" in which the Dutch state has been a loyal ally of George Bush, supplying troops for Iraq and now in Afghanistan. Dutch politicians have built on a legacy of Islamophobia to justify this.

Second, there is the crisis faced by all the mainstream parties in the Netherlands. The referendum in 2005 that rejected the European Union (EU) constitution laid bare an enormous gap between the political establishment and public opinion.

The unpopularity of the political centre and its neoliberal policies have driven right wing parties into ever harder rhetoric over issues such as crime, immigration and Muslims.

Wilders himself is an example of this shift. He used to be a member of the

Dutch Conservatives but broke away because he refused to follow the party line in favour of Turkey's EU membership.

Despite the fact that all the mainstream parties have proved themselves incapable of combating the rise of Wilders, there is a strong degree of popular sentiment against him.

All kinds of "counter-movies" to *Fitna* have been launched on the internet and there has been a host of local initiatives to celebrate and defend multiculturalism.

Harry de Winter, a well known Jewish TV producer, bought front page advertisement in the Dutch equivalent of the *Irish Times* to warn against Wilders.

The International Socialists, sister organisation of the Socialist Workers Party, has been centrally involved in organising street protests against Wilders for months now.

These protests provoked a national debate when demonstrators were arrested on several occasions for "insulting a parliamentarian". It seemed that the much vaunted notion of "freedom of speech" doesn't apply for critics of racism.

Outraged by these double standards, more than 1,500 people bought our satirical "Wilders: Extremist" poster (left). Some were prominently displayed in the windows of homes and shops. This public backing helped turn around the media war, and after a week the public prosecutor withdrew all charges against the demonstrators.

In the wake of this small victory a demonstration against racism took place last month in Amsterdam.

The multicultural make-up and defiant mood of this demonstration showed the potential for a real alternative to the rightwards drift towards racism and bigotry that dominates the established political landscape.

Maina van der Zwan is a member of the International Socialists in the Netherlands





FINANCIAL CRISIS

# Is this the big one?

By KEVIN WINGFIELD

**T**HE FINANCIAL pages of the broadsheets are speculating whether the continuing crisis in the US and world financial system is "The Big One"—a depression of 1930s magnitudes.

In this they are reflecting fears and panic among the financiers, bankers and investors. They are right to be worried.

The sub prime crisis and the collapse of the US house market have combined to freeze the credit system.

The wild falls and rebounds on the stock markets are indications of the panic among investors but of greater significance are the banking crisis and the drying up of credit.

Since summer 2007, the Federal Reserve has tried to jump start the stalled banking system by lowering its interest rates (more than halved since then to 2.25%—lower than inflation and therefore in real terms negative interest rates) and injecting liquidity into the system.

Last month Fed boss Bernanke bailed out investment bank and financial trader Bear Stearns via a huge loan to bankers JP Morgan. He also announced that the top twenty investment banks in the US would now have available the lender of last resort facility.

As well as this he relaxed the rules on the sort of collateral that would need to be provided against these loans to include the toxic securities and paper backed by sub-prime loans.

In effect the US state is buying these "assets" which nobody else is prepared to buy from the financial institutions.

## Federal Reserve

The reason nobody else is prepared to buy them is that it is not clear how much of the underlying mortgage debt is recoverable and how far the housing market has yet to fall.

These and similar measures have not been taken by the Federal Reserve since the 1930s.

In reality the US economy was kept afloat by the Fed making extraordinarily cheap money available following the collapse of the dot com bubble. This fuelled the housing bubble of which the sub-prime mortgage scam was a part.

On the back of this a mushrooming of derivatives and other opaque financial instruments created a huge financial bubble of debt. Now all that is unravelling.

While the Fed is responding as if dealing with a crisis of liquidity in the financial system, what it really faces is a crisis of solvency.

A banking crisis of this magnitude is important not just for the investors who have been burned.

The credit crunch means that firms cannot find the money they need for investments, productive and otherwise, in the real economy.

What lies behind the unfolding crisis is the decline in the rate of profit and the attempts of the capitalist class to



Panic on Wall Street as the financial crisis unfolds

But the bubbles have to burst sooner or later and then the debt burden becomes a nightmare for millions of families, severely curtailing their purchasing power.

What has been gained for the capitalists through the back door of real wage cuts has been lost through the front door of non-performing loans and restricted consumption.

Even with negative real interest rates, overstretched consumers will be less likely to take on new loans even if they can get them.

Insiders speak of America already being in recession and the only question remaining is how far down it will go and for how long.

The willingness of governments and central banks to bail out the banks and financial institutions is "socialism for the millionaires".

While profitable activities are privatised, losses in the billions are off-loaded on the taxpayer. But as even Financial Times columnist Martin Wolf has noted, this spells the end of neo-liberalism ideologically.

## Intervention

The argument that the market must be left unhindered to organise the economy has been refuted by the demands of the financiers and the actions of governments.

If governments can bail out the financial institutions whose massive gambling debts have become due, why cannot they intervene in the interests of working class people?

The US economy has been in relative decline for decades encouraging their rulers to attempt to achieve by military means what the power of the dollar is now increasingly unable to.

Securing control of Middle East oil is part of this strategy and as the crisis deepens we can expect to see more of the same from Administrations Republican or Democrat.

Japan, a far less important economy than that of the USA, suffered a banking crisis more than a decade ago, its economy stagnated for years and still has not fully recovered.

The ramifications of the crisis in the US are spreading internationally as a result of the internationalisation of finance.

The imploding Irish housing bubble and the end of the Celtic Tiger economy, compounded by severely curtailed export markets in the US and Britain mean that is probable that a deep and long slump threatens.

This will mean misery for many working class people.

It will encourage our rulers to scapegoat immigrants and play the racism card.

But it will also mean large scale struggles as workers try to fight off attacks by the employers and government.

And it will be an opportunity for the radical Left to gain mass influence.

This is a huge challenge and one socialists must step up to.

If you agree you ought to get involved.

reverse it.

A key strategy in the US was to raise the rate of exploitation by making workers work harder and longer and paying them less.

This is reflected in the long term decline in real wages in the US over the seventies, eighties and nineties and the falling share of national income going to wages and salaries and more going to capital.

Unless everything that is produced is bought, a crisis of overproduction takes hold and the economy stagnates or goes into slump. T

hose buying roughly consist of consumers (mostly workers), capitalists (for either reinvestment or luxury consumption) and government.

Marx identified the tendency of the rate of profit to fall as being at the heart of capitalism.

The suggestion was that although increasing exploitation and other measures could temporarily offset the tendency, this would only put off a greater crisis later on.

## Massive slump

Only something like a massive slump involving bankruptcies of huge companies – allowing those still standing to grab

market share and buy up their competitors at fire-sale prices—or some other such calamitous events, would allow a significant restoration for a fresh upswing.

But such a crisis is also likely to produce political upheavals of potentially revolutionary proportions that can threaten the continued existence of the very system itself.

With profit rates having undergone a long-term decline, capitalists are more reluctant to risk investing their wealth in productive projects and more likely to look to mergers and acquisitions, financial seams, etc. to increase their stock of capital and profits.

This failure therefore threatens a crisis of overproduction as outlined above.

Squeezing workers harder is at best a short term fix.

This can (and has) temporarily and partially restored rates of profit, but spending power has been reduced, threatening again a crisis of overproduction.

Consumer spending was only kept afloat by a massive increase in credit and debt.

On the back of the housing bubble, working class people were persuaded to believe they were sitting on rising wealth and encouraged to borrow against this on credit cards, bank loans, etc.

**Such a crisis is also likely to produce political upheavals of potentially revolutionary proportions that can threaten the continued existence of the very system itself.**

## 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

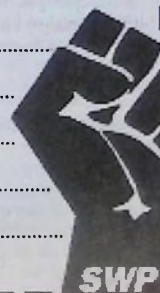
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# James Connolly's letters throw light on his struggle

Conor Kostick reviews the book *'Between Comrades – James Connolly Letters and Correspondence 1889 – 1916'*, Edited by Donal Nevin.

**D**ONAL NEVIN is to be congratulated in making available, at long last, the letter collection of Ireland's most dedicated socialist: and a very inspiring collection it is too. It consists of Connolly's surviving letters, those written to him and some written to organisations Connolly was centrally involved in.

As you read through the book, it is not immediately obvious that there is much significance to the letters. A great many of them concern the particulars of money for sales of newspapers or pamphlets. But the struggle over shillings and pence becomes deeply involving. Even though we all know the outcome of the story, hearing his voice some hundred years on you can't help but find yourself willing Connolly to succeed in establishing a socialist newspaper and party: being delighted with him when support is flowing and frustrated too at the failures.

The overall effect of reading letter after letter about the success or otherwise of getting a paper out is an appreciation that such work is vital and always worthwhile.

Despite the difficulties of bringing up a family in impoverished circumstances, Connolly never gave up the struggle to organise Irish socialists and that in itself is inspiring.

The other positive conclusion that emerges from reading again and again about Connolly's concerns with regard to paper sales, is that he personally was an extraordinarily honest and decent person. That might seem to be stating the obvious, but it is refreshing to see socialists behaving like socialists.

Far too often in recent times, representatives of the working class movement have disgraced themselves by justifying large salaries from their organisations: first class travel, five star hotels and so forth.

Connolly, with more excuse than any organiser today, nevertheless was scrupulously honest in accounting for every penny that came his way.

This, in fact, turns out to be the main reason why Connolly left the organisation he founded, the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP) and emigrated to America.

The latter act he called 'the greatest mistake of my life', because poverty nearly prevented him from returning to Ireland when the working class movement here began to revive.

In 1902 Connolly had embarked on a major speaking tour of the US, thanks to the Socialist Labor Party (SLP). During the tour Connolly sold collecting cards for the ISRP's newspaper, the Workers' Republic. He also gave many to supporters, who in turn got them filled in by their acquaintances.

All in all, Connolly returned to Ireland in high hopes, having remitted back enough money to cover the costs of the paper for a year and with a significant number of US subscribers.

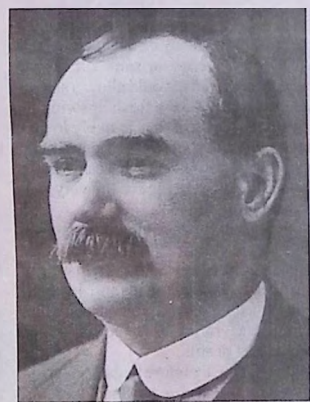
It was devastating to find that due to the dilletantism of the Dublin ISRP, a lot of mistakes had been made with regard to money. Moreover, their lack of activity meant they had failed to keep ahead of their own needs with regard to rent and bills.

Not only did this mean that Connolly was bound to fail in his obligations to his US readers, some of the ISRP members even went so far as to suggest that all his work was driven by the desire to obtain a living from the socialist movement.

Ashamed of the position he was in with regard to the US subscribers, bit-



The National Executive of the Irish TUC and Labour Party, 1914 (see Connolly, far left, and Larkin, seated second from right).



**The only way he could honourably face those workers in the US to whom he had promised a paper in return for their hard earned shillings, indeed the only way he could feel honourable about himself, was to resign and start again. And so he did.**

ter at his comrades. Connolly resigned from the party.

This is how he explained himself: 'When members used me as an intermediary with comrades beyond the sea, and then dishonoured their obligations to those comrades, when my vehement protest against such action was represented by one member as the result of anger at not getting a good job, when another member asked the business meeting to refuse me membership because I wanted to live upon the Party and had kept it back in the past by doing so, when a traitor, whose treason is only limited by his opportunities, twisted my every word out of all meaning it could bear and had his interpretation accepted for the sake of doing me an injury, and when a section of the Party withdrew in alliance with a man who had openly declared he would "wreck the party in six months" Ireland was scarcely habitable for me.

'These things have changed the whole course of my life, but my conscience is clear, as my judgement was correct; let those who are responsible for those acts be assured that no amount of belated praised can gild the pill or sweeten the bitterness of my exile.

'My career has been unique in many things. In this last it is so also. Men have been driven out of Ireland by the British Government, and by the landlords, but am I the first driven forth by the "Socialists"?''

This was indeed a decision that changed the course of Connolly's life. It can be seen as too bitter and bloody-minded, a Roy Keane moment; after all, the ISRP represented a crucial development in Irish working class politics.

Just as Grattan provided vital service for the bourgeois national movement of the late eighteenth century, when he recognised that Catholic emancipation would lead in a radical, not reactionary, direction, so the ISRP had been the first working class organisation to appreciate that the struggle against the British Empire aided not hindered socialist revolution.

Should Connolly have stuck with the ISRP? Reading these letters, you can't help but admire Connolly's decision.

The only way he could honourably face those workers in the US to whom he had promised a paper in return for their hard earned shillings, indeed the only way he could feel honourable about himself, was to resign and start again. And so he did.

For those readers interested in the more theoretical aspects of socialism, the letters will be something of a disappointment. Connolly's most brilliant insights and ideas are to be found in his longer works, not his letters. There is, however, a life long correspondence with J. Carstairs Matheson, a Scottish revolutionary; that is very rewarding to read.

All over the world at the time of their exchange, the working class movement was beginning to take shape and everywhere the same questions arose. What kind of workers' party was needed: a broad, reformist one? Or a narrow, revolutionary one? And what should the relationship of the party be to the trade unions? Especially revolutionary trade unions like the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)?

Connolly and Matheson batted this question back and forth over ten years or so. At first they both shared the idea that a narrow but honest revolutionary party was the only way to make lasting gains. The modern reader can see that these early letters were correct to anticipate that 'broad' parties would lead to betrayals and the growth of a reformist tradition that did very little for workers.

But what Connolly saw in America was the opposite: that the small revolutionary party often made a virtue out of the purity of its politics and refused to campaign in the daily struggles of workers. They were 'ultra left' to use a later phrase of Lenin's.

The art of steering a revolutionary party between the Scylla of reformism and the Charybdis of 'ultra-leftism' turns out to be a very subtle one and nearly all the twentieth century practitioners of it came to grief.

Today, indeed, the question hasn't been fully settled and more historical experience is needed before the last word is written on the subject.

What can be confidently stated is that without a friendly, comradely, spirit infusing the life of the revolutionary party, it cuts itself off from correction by historical developments and withers.

In Connolly's experience this was the case with the SLP of the US, so tightly controlled by its leader, Daniel DeLeon, that even though Connolly fought hard, the party reduced itself to an irrelevant sect. By contrast, industrial unionism, such as that taking the form of the ITGWU in Ireland saw tens of thousands of workers fight together in the most revolutionary manner.

This led Connolly to believe he had found the solution to the problem. What was needed was a revolutionary party of those socialists, necessarily a minority at the beginning, which threw itself into assisting industrial unions.

The revolutionary spirit of the unions would correct the tendency towards passivity and elitism among the socialists; the socialists would bring their vision of humanity organised without greed or competition to the unions.

In practice, the intense conflicts of the IWW and the ITGWU with their respective employers were a greater priority on Connolly's time than the needs of the small socialist parties he was involved in. But what these letters prove is that right up to the last Connolly remained a dedicated socialist organiser.

There is nothing in them, for example, to justify the rather tired theory that Connolly entered the 1916 Rising having abandoned socialism for republicanism.

Unfortunately too, there is nothing, such as a letter to Matheson, which sheds new light on the topic of 1916. But then, given the nature of the enterprise, it is hardly to be expected that Connolly would commit anything to paper in advance of the rebellion.

Overall the value of the letters is not in what they say about the great events of the era, but what they say about the character of one of the most decent and determined of socialists ever to have lived.

Conor Kostick is the author of *Revolution in Ireland*



# THE OTHER SIDE OF THE MIDDLE EAST



Kafiy protest in Egypt

By PAUL O'BRIEN

ALAA AL Aswany's *The Yacoubian Building* was a best seller across the world. In the novel he interweaves the lives of a disparate group of people living in a once-grand apartment building in downtown Cairo, its high-classical facade now as shabby and worn as the European elegance of Cairo's colonial past.

Al Aswany gives voice to some of the most controversial issues in Egyptian society. There's Taha el Shazli, the son of the doorkeeper, who is refused admission to the police academy because of his family's poor background and whose disaffection is gradually exploited by radical Islamists; Hatim Rasheed, urbane editor-in-chief of a French newspaper, who by night cruises back streets and underground gay bars; Zaki el Dessouki, an ageing playboy who laments the loss of the old regime; and Hagg Azzam, a former



Alaa Al Aswany

shoeshine boy-turned-millionaire car dealer, attempting to buy his way into party politics.

Al Aswany is also an active member of the political movement Kifaya, meaning Enough, which campaigns for democracy, and he also writes articles for the left-wing press against government

corruption. Al Aswany likes to keep his fiction separate from politics, though the distinction is not always clear. He has been a consistent opponent of the Egyptian regime. In a recent interview he said that while he was disliked by the regime in Egypt his troubles are "minimal compared to my comrades in the movement, who have been jailed for months and tortured. Arab dictators try to convince us that the symptoms are the disease. So you have this nonsense - government people on TV saying 'how can we fight terrorism?' The only way to get rid of terrorism is to give the people the right of choice - democracy." This, of course, was also George Bush's argument, "He's trying to make another war. He killed 500,000 people, and he destroyed a country, and now he's trying to do this in another country."

His new novel, *Chicago*, is set in the city where he studied medicine at the University of Illinois

and follows the lives of a group of Arab immigrants. The story details the problems faced by Egyptian Arab immigrants in the USA. "It has every subject that makes a fanatic unhappy. It has the problem of a veiled person who goes and revises her conservative education. She began to fall in love, and she has some sexual scenes. You have an Egyptian intellectual who falls in love with a Jewish American and he explains to her that he has problems with Israel, and not with the Jews."

*Chicago* is full of plausible, well-drawn characters whose lives intersect as in the *Yacoubian Building* in a unifying locale - The University of Illinois. The novel begins with a compelling history of the city, from the massacre of Native Americans by European settlers in the 17th century to the devastating 1871 fire. He then delves into his engrossing narrative of Egyptians, Egyptian-Americans, and Americans fumbling for mean-

ing in the giant metropolis.

As much as he indulges and empathises with nearly all of his characters, Aswany heaps contempt on Denana and Shaker, two agents of the corrupt Mubarak regime.

The author seems to relish depicting them as a fraud and predator, respectively. Denana is a failed student who owes his academic standing to his lifelong collaboration with State Security officials; he's a cheapskate, a liar, and wifebeater Shaker is a womanizing sadist who preys on the poor, broken wives of the Islamist activists that he persecutes and imprisons.

There is a genuine warmth in these beautifully written novels that are a microcosm of the social and political troubles of the Egyptian people and they tell us more about the Middle-East than the embedded journalists have managed to do in the last five years.

## The Burial at Thebes

A version of *Antigone* by Seamus Heaney.

ON THE fifth anniversary of the Iraq war Seamus Heaney's new version of Sophocles' *Antigone* has been revived at the Peacock Theatre in Dublin.

Heaney draws on many aspects of nature in his retelling and he also gives the proceedings a politically contemporary feel.

At one point King Creon informs those before him 'that you're are a either with me or against me.' A similar remark underlines George Bush's views on how to deal with the threat of global terrorism.

The Play deals with the conflict between personal loyalty and duty to the state, between the secular and the sacred and between members of one dysfunctional family.

Central to the disharmony are the royal family of Thebes and the children of Oedipus.

*Antigone* is the last daughter in the house of Oedipus. Her uncle, King Creon, has assumed power in Thebes after the death of her two brothers in a bloody Civil War.

Creon has decreed that the body of one brother, Polynices, shall never be buried because he was a traitor in life, who killed his other brother, Eteocles, when he brought an army to attack Thebes.

*Antigone* is very much a timeless piece.

First performed in 442 B.C it has constantly been translated and adapted.

Part of the play's enduring strength is its susceptibility to allegorical interpretation.

During the second world war Bertolt Brecht made an adaptation in which *Antigone* becomes the embodiment of his hope for a German rising against Hitler.

The play has featured more recently, too, in Irish public life in the controversial article that Conor Cruise O'Brien published in *The Listener* in October 1968, in which he identified *Antigone* with the Queen's University student civil rights campaigners

Paul O'Brien

# The most political show on television

By SINEAD KENNEDY

THE MOST political show on television returns this month for its final season.

No, not the West Wing, I'm talking about *Battlestar Galactica*.

Don't let the fact that it sounds like a sci-fi B-movie, with its robots, low-tech battleships and beautiful space women, fool you, this one of bravest shows on television.

Name one other US show that is not afraid to tackle the complexities of terrorism, religion, race, gender, abortion, civil liberties and democracy? Indeed, in one



Battlestar Galactica: one of bravest shows on television

episode dealing with the question of class, the real no-no of US television,

the fleet is paralyzed by a general strike. *Battlestar Galactica*

is a 'reimagining' of the classic but cheesy late-seventies sci-fi series

about a group of human survivors trying to find earth in the face of the genocidal robots called cylons.

The writers are not afraid to use the story as an allegory for contemporary society addressing questions such as the use of torture in a time of war, the tactics of insurgency and the democratic process.

To complicate matters even further, the show does this by making the humans, with whom the audience tend to identify, into the insurgent terrorists, using tactics such as suicide bombings and torture.

Each week audiences

are forced to ask difficult questions:

In a time of emergency, how should we balance security and liberty?

How do we deal with enemies who may be burrowed in among us?

How does a society decimated in a war reconstitute its political, economic, and legal systems?

The questions are rarely resolved as the writers refuse to appease their audience with the easy comfort of simple answers and happy endings.

The final season of *Battlestar Galactica* begins April 15 on Sky One.



# Houses and jobs at risk MAKE THE BANKS PAY FOR THE CRISIS

By SEAN MITCHELL

A NEW study has shown that working class people in the North are set to be hit hard by the global economic downturn.

This is because the thousands of people already finding it hard to make ends meet, will find it impossible as banks look to protect profits by upping mortgage rates.

What is incredible about this is that the NI assembly plans on continuing with its plans to downsize the North's public Sector.

Efficiency schemes are already under way, a fancy word for job cuts, and plans to privatise MOT services are being touted. Northern Ireland's myopic politicians are pinning their hopes on US investment.

But all US investment would do is bring more of the low paid jobs which we have in abundance.

There is unlikely to be much uptake on the offer in the US, corporations and banks are keeping their purses tight as they await the full picture of the consequences of the economic downturn.

It dangerous strategy deployed by neo liberal politicians who will stop at nothing to fulfil their dream of standing shoulder to shoulder with the likes of Donald Trump.

An attack on the public sector at any time would be disastrous, causing job cuts, lower wages and higher costs.

But downsizing the public sector in the middle of a recession is tantamount to economic suicide. It will only result in increased hardship for many

families across the region

There are so many people on the housing waiting lists that the government has stopped allowing new registrants. But closing the gates will not stop the problem.

A shocking 59% of households in west Belfast are said to be in danger of a major financial crisis.

This isn't an isolated area, it is indicative of how working class people, faced with high mortgage rates and costs, and working in a low wage economy will fair.

We need a massive re allocation of resources to stop the prospective housing crises.

The thousands of empty houses owned by the major developers should be taken into public hands. Not one house should be repossessed and there should be a freeze on mortgage rates.

Privatisation in the public sector should be ended.

At the very least the public sector ensures that people are employed, but also ensures lower costs than prices rise in the private sector.

However these changes will not come within the chambers of the assembly. Both Sinn Fein and the DUP have proven themselves to be fully behind neo liberalism.

We need to build campaigns in every area for social housing and for the opening up of empty ones.

We need to strengthen Unions and workers networks within them to stop the job cuts and outsourcing.

And we need to build People Before Profit as the political voice that stands up to the politicians and fat cats

## Raytheon 9 Defence campaign gets moving

ANTIWAR campaigners and peace activists from across Ireland are gearing up for the opening day of the trial of Raytheon 9.

The 9, who occupied the Derry offices of Raytheon, at the height of Israeli war crimes in the summer of 2006 are facing jail time because of their efforts in decommissioning the arms manufacturer in an effort to save lives in Lebanon.

The trial has been long awaited, with prosecution services, continually stalling the process.

A date has now been set for Monday May 19th. There will be a demonstration outside the court on the day.

The prosecution were forced into moving the trial from Derry to Belfast because they feared popular opinion was overwhelmingly behind the



defendants.

With the trial now being moved to Belfast a broad

based Raytheon 9 defence campaign has been set up. Campaigner Matt Collins

explains, "We believe there is just as much support for the Raytheon 9 in Belfast

as there is in Derry and we plan on tapping into that.

"We are writing a letter of support, which will be circulated, to activists, trade unionists and prominent individuals in order to garnish as much support for the dropping of charges".

"We will be holding public meetings and symbolic actions over the coming weeks.

But most importantly we will be building for a mass presence outside the court on the 19th of May, the opening day of the trial.

Occupying the Raytheon offices was an extremely honourable action, stopping war crimes is not a crime"

Activists are mobilising support from across the country. Expert witnesses will be arriving from Lebanon to explain Raytheon's role in arms

manufacturing and war mongering in the region, and will speak at public meetings throughout the course of the trial.

At the same time there will be anti cluster bomb events, which will be used to raise awareness of the horrific consequences of these bombs but also to tie Raytheon's complicity and the arms industry that make these things possible.

There will be buses leaving from Derry and Dublin to ferry campaigners to the courthouse in support. Join us outside the Laganside Courthouse, Belfast at 9:45 am Monday April 19th

For more information contact  
Matt (Belfast) - 07815796312, Goretti (Derry)- 07973528772, Mary Smith (Dublin) 0872917415

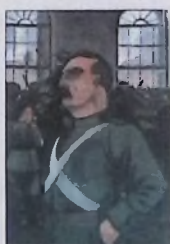
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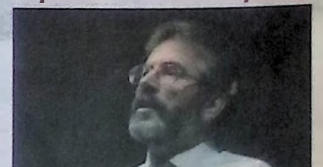


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### Republican weakness spotted



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