

**\* For public services**  
**\* For neutrality**  
**\* For democracy**

# Vote NO to Lisbon

**IN A rare moment of honesty IBEC revealed the real agenda behind the Yes campaign when they told the Forum on Europe that: "The Lisbon Reform Treaty creates the legal basis for the liberalisation of services of general economic interest (Art. 106).**

"A yes vote for the Lisbon Treaty creates the potential for increased opportunities for business particularly in areas subject to increasing liberalisation such as Health,

Education, Transport, Energy and the Environment."

This is the first time IBEC, the bosses organization, has intervened openly in a referendum. They have as many posters up as Fianna Fail, indeed they were put up by the same company.

A report in the Irish Times that the Yes campaign will be spending in the region of €2.3 million during the Lisbon Treaty Referendum raises important questions about the level of corporate interference in Irish democracy

The Alliance for Europe, for example, is supported by Construction Industry Federation (CIF), Irish Banking Federation and American Chamber of Commerce all groups have everything to gain from the neo-liberal policy that the Lisbon Treaty will impose on the people of Europe.

Despite the media crowning right-wing Libertas as the main NO campaign they have no campaigners on the ground.

The main people campaigning for a NO vote on the ground

are left-wing activists and trade unionists.

Members and supporters of the Socialist Workers Party alone have organized and spoken at over 100 meetings nationally.

But you won't hear this from the corporate media. It suits their purpose to portray the NO side as from the right to scare people into voting Yes.

Don't be bullied, vote NO.

Turn to pages 4 & 5 to read the reasons you should reject the Lisbon Treaty.



To submit articles or letters to Socialist Worker you can contact us at

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# Private greed destroys public housing



By ROISIN RYDER

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by builders McNamara that they were pulling out of five regeneration projects in Dublin because they wouldn't make enough profit shows the scandal behind so called Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs).

These schemes saw the city council give public land in prime locations away free to developers like McNamaras in return for a minimum allocation of social housing units.

Instead of the city council building desperately needed public housing, private developers made millions through building on free public land.

Even the Vincent De Paul has been very critical saying that the state has never met their commitments to public housing. There are 43,000 households on the waiting list which affects about 100,000 people.

Despite the best efforts of communities in the effected areas all of the regenerated projects have resulted in a net loss of social housing rather than an increase which is obviously needed to tackle the huge social housing problem in this country.

The affected projects include a €265 million redevelopment of St Michael's Estate, Inchicore planned in 2001, a €180 million regeneration of O'Devaney Gardens in Dublin 7, a €200 million project on the convent grounds on Seán MacDermott Street, the regeneration of the Dominick Street flats and a €100 million project on Infirmary Road.

PPPs are a mechanism to allow private investors to make a profit from public projects.

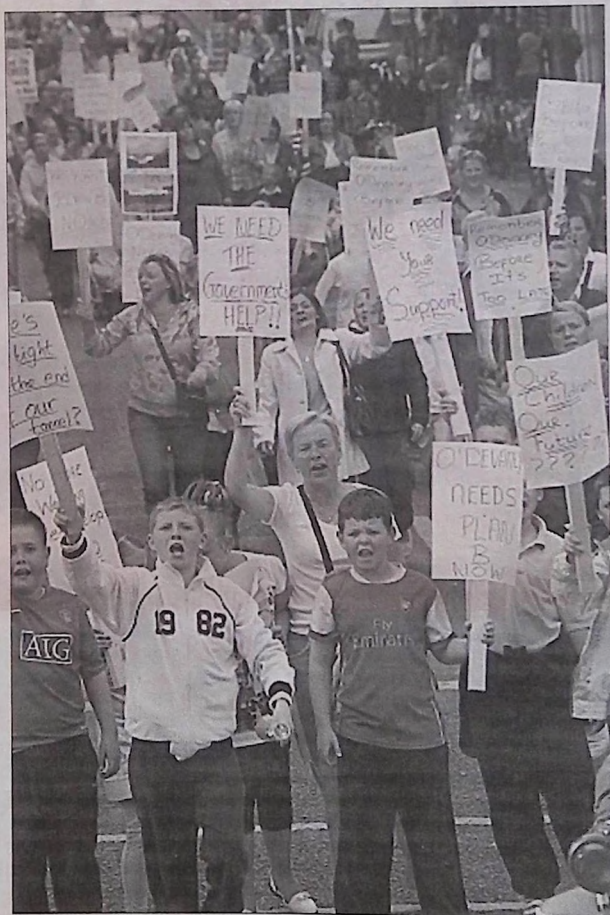
They are most known through the tolls for public roads but in the last 10 years they have been used to build schools, hospitals and in this case to 'regenerate' social housing estates.

However at the first shaky moment when it became clear that the investor would not make as much profit as he had thought the whole PPP formula collapsed.

This proved how much this way of working was all about profits and not about people.

The collapse of the five regeneration projects in inner city Dublin has been devastating for local residents.

Caroline McNulty, resident of St Michael's Estate talked about the affect of this news on her family: 'My



child was 5 when all this started. We were promised houses with front and back gardens. He is now 15 yrs old. My new baby is 9 months old now. Will he have a front and back garden by the time he is 15?'

Residents of these estates put a huge amount of effort into fighting for a portion of the huge profits which were being made from public lands on which they lived.

What will be lost if the project in St Michael's does not go ahead? Besides social, affordable and private housing a social regeneration plan consisting of a Library, Civic Centre, Crèche, Family Resource Centre, Youth Café and funding for a range of social

initiatives which would underpin the physical regeneration.

Community Activist Eilish Comerford said: 'We are devastated and feel very let down.

'This is the 2nd time in St Michael's Estate this has happened. We accepted the PPP reluctantly at the start but then decided to go with it and put a lot of work into developing a decent social and physical plan.

'However we are determined to fight and believe that if no other solutions are found the Department of the Environment and other state departments should fully fund the project as promised to the people of St Michael's and the surrounding area'.

## COLUMN

### 40 years after Stonewall: Liberation still to be won

Dublin Pride 25 Festival 08, "Always the Bridesmaid Never the Bride" Friday June 13<sup>th</sup> to Saturday June 21<sup>st</sup> parade

By NOEL HALIFAX

IN 1969 the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) seemed to come out of the blue. It was a movement born from a riot after police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York.

But it was also a movement born with little knowledge of any of its predecessors in the struggle for sexual liberation.

The GLF was wholly of its time – it worked with the movement against the Vietnam War, the black movement and the women's movement, while worldwide it was part of a huge wave of the oppressed and exploited rising up against the system.

The gay movement adapted the ideas of the time, especially those of autonomy, dislike of structures and a strong belief in spontaneity.

It was a time of great optimism about changing the system and making a new world. As the slogans had it – "It's just a kiss away", "Sodom today Gomorrah the world".

But the GLF came with no lessons from the earlier movements and no knowledge of the history of socialist ideas of sexual liberation.

It had a dislike and mistrust of theory in general – and of the old left parties, with their sexual conservatism, in particular. But it did want change – radical revolutionary change, sexual, social and political.

The GLF had many conflicting ideas of how to achieve this new world. Some advocated forming communes and living a non-oppressive way outside of the family, or challenging gender roles through radical drag and attacking straight society by shocking stunts.

Others concentrated on marching and engaging with the then rising workers' movement and campaigning inside the trade unions.

But one thing the GLF's many offshoots shared was the belief that society must be revolutionised and changed – "It is not me who is sick, but a society who calls me sick."

That was 40 years ago. As Tony Cliff pointed out, the gay movement was the last of the great movements of the oppressed to appear, but the first to implode.

Today Gay politics is dominated by the debate on gay marriage. Marriage rights are important in capitalism, they define such things as the right to raise children, inherit property, pension and life insurance rights, even the right to visit in hospitals and prisons.

But this is a long way from the vision that inspired the Stonewall rebellion. The lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender movement of today is very different from the revolutionary if confused movement of the 1970s. Out goes revolution – in comes Ikea and gay marriage.

If the mainstream of the gay movement is embracing capitalism and consumerism, on the left we see remnants from the radical past that remember some of that period's tactics, but forget most of its lessons or context.

OutRage! for example has continued the tradition of shocking stunts and publicity geared events – but without the wider understanding.

It was never the case, for instance, that gay activists in the 1970s (apart from the separatists) refused to support or take part in struggles unless the organisations behind them backed gay rights. If we had taken such an approach, there would have been nothing for us to join or support.

Welcoming arms did not greet the arrival of gay activists on picket lines, demonstrations and such like in the 1970s.

Workers were often homophobic and had to be argued with. We had to fight inside unions to change their policies and practices. But that can only be done when you fight together against the common enemy.

CND campaigns had links to the homophobic churches. The Vietnamese struggle had links to Stalinism. But both were supported by most gay activists, because they realised that the basis of any effective criticism had to be from within a common struggle.

Today the most widespread form of racism is Islamophobia and the most important anti-imperialist struggle is in the Middle East. Muslims are painted as being misogynist, homophobic and 'fundamentalist'. These lies are used to justify and win support for the 'war on terror'.

Imperialism and Islamophobia need to be opposed without conditions being placed on those resisting them.

Stonewall launched a movement and it was that radical movement that brought change, not appeals to those who run the system and use homophobia to divide us.

If the gay movement sees itself as just one more pressure group refusing to join in the wider struggle, it isolates itself from potential allies and abandons any wider struggle to transform society.

And this undermines the ability to fight effectively for gay liberation and change the ideas of those involved in the struggle.



# Raytheon 9 win first court battle

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

NINE MEMBERS of the Derry Anti-War Coalition faced trial in June for occupying Raytheon's offices in Derry during the 2006 Israel war on Lebanon.

The nine took the actions to try to stop Israeli war-crimes in Lebanon.

At the time of their protest Israel was using Raytheon made bombs to target civilians and infrastructure in the war on Lebanon.

The Derry Anti-War Coalition decided to take the action after seeing the deaths that happened in the Qana massacre of 30 July 2006.

One main prosecution witness was John Reilly, head of Legal Affairs and a member of the Board of Raytheon Systems Ltd (the UK company).

Defence barristers asked him about his view of Raytheon's involvement in supplying the weapons used in war crimes, and therefore 'aiding and abetting' war crimes.

He said that he believed Raytheon was an ethical company.

When presented with the findings of a report by the Norwegian government that Raytheon was unethical due to its production of cluster munitions, he said that it did not trouble him.

He was shown a BBC TV report about the Qana massacre



Members of the Raytheon Nine in fighting spirit outside the court

and said that it was not an issue for him that Raytheon weapons had been used in the killing of innocent civilians.

The nine included Eamonn McCann, prominent journalist and author and a member of the Socialist Workers Party.

In the witness box Eamonn McCann described the run-up to the occupation of Raytheon, detailing the public meetings at

which the need to take action was discussed and the reasons this particular form of action was decided on.

Eamonn argued at length that the purpose had been to save lives by hampering the manufacture of bombs and therefore, at the least, slowing their delivery to Israel.

The jury found the defendants not guilty under the direction of the judge.

This was because the prosecution failed to show the defendants were guilty of any violence or intimidation.

The trial has been adjourned while there is an appeal over the remaining issues of criminal damage.

Raytheon's claim of damages of £300,000 was considerably reduced by the Compensation Agency to £97,000.

One of the interesting facts to emerge from details of the damage done to Raytheon's offices was the extent to which the offices were refurbished following the occupation.

So, a bill for over £3,000 for Venetian blinds was included as part of the damage caused by the nine.

Under cross-examination, it became clear that as little as 10-15% of the blinds had been damaged, but they had taken the opportunity to replace the lot!

A spokesperson for the nine said, "The Raytheon nine have won this battle in the courts over the affray charges.

"This gives us more confidence that we win a full acquittal"

## Loopholes shred cluster bomb treaty

By BRIAN MCFADDEN

DIPLOMATS FROM 111 countries agreed to a ban on cluster bombs at a conference in Dublin last week.

The agreement bans the majority of current designs of cluster bombs and requires signatory states to destroy their stockpiles within eight years.

Adoption of the draft treaty was greeted by a standing ovation from delegates.

It will be signed in Oslo on 2-3 December, and will come into effect in mid-2009, when ratified by its signatories.

But the world's biggest militaries, including the United States, won't sign. The primary argument, it seems, is that cluster bombs are just too good to give up.

Cluster munitions, fired from aircraft or artillery, spray small "bomblets" over an expanse the size of two or three football pitches. They are little more than air-delivered landmines, leaving a legacy of horrific injury and death for those who have the misfortune to live there. The most appalling of these devices can look like a desirable object — a can of food or a toy.

The most recent use of cluster munitions was by Israel in Lebanon in 2006, when it is believed to have dropped 4.3 million sub-munitions, of which up to one million failed to explode, with the aim of driving the population out of the region and prevent it from returning. The bomblets remained unexploded on the ground, threatening the lives of civilians, including farmers and children. In the two years since the July 2006 war, exploding bomblets have killed at least 40 people in Lebanon and another 218 have been wounded, most of them civilians.

The United States and its allies have used them in Iraq, Afghanistan and other wars.

Any deal that will curb the production and use of weapons is good news. But while 111 countries agreed to the ban the main countries that use and produce the munitions didn't even take part in the discussions surrounding the deal.

Along with the United States, this Hall of Shame includes China, Russia, Israel, India, Pakistan and Brazil. Nevertheless, commentators hope that the moral force of



Up to one million unexploded cluster bombs in Lebanon

the ban will persuade other countries not to use the bombs.

The likelihood of the U.S. being shamed into keeping their cluster bombs locked in the cupboard must be viewed in the context of America's disregard for the Geneva Conventions as seen in Guantanamo Bay and their use of torture and kidnapp.

During the talks in Dublin the original draft treaty was significantly watered down. The U.S. - who did not want any agreement - secured through

its NATO allies two key exceptions. Technologically advanced cluster munitions that they claim are "pinpoint accurate" will be allowed, and so will cooperation with forces who use cluster bombs (Article 21).

So for example Britain can call in U.S. air support that might include planes dropping cluster bombs, although British forces would not themselves use them.

Despite declaring that he was in support of a full ban, Gordon Brown's government quietly excluded new anti-tank cluster shells that are not yet in service. Brown has given the go-ahead for the army to continue with an £83 million contract, signed last November, to buy a new generation of cluster munitions.

Britain, France, Germany and Sweden, which all use or manufacture similar weapons, pushed through amendments to the treaty to exclude these larger cluster bombs from the ban.

Compared to the 1997 Ottawa Treaty that banned the use of anti-personnel mines the loopholes in the treaty are much bigger and far more dangerous.

## Triple lock offers no guarantee of neutrality

By SARA O'ROURKE

THE YES side in the Lisbon Treaty says Ireland is safeguarded from military alliances because we have a 'triple-lock'.

This so-called triple lock is a joke. We can see this from a number of recent cases.

It didn't stop the government from allowing over a million US troops pass through Shannon airport and it has not stopped the government from allowing the transport of prisoners on their way to suffer torture in secret detention centres or to Guantanamo Bay.

The current EU for mission in Chad is another example. There are now 400 Irish troops serving in Chad, not as peacekeepers as we were told prior to the mission but as 'peace enforcers' accompanied by 100 French and Dutch troops. However the French addition is taken when you consider that France has maintained a post-colonial

military presence in Chad for years, over 1000 troops, propping up a dictator.

Deputy Chief of Staff Major Gen Nash in Chad, in May, stated that our 400 troops must be ready to face 'warrior' rebels and would be beginning to 'patrol in force'. This is not the language of peace keeping but of military aggression.

The Lisbon Treaty will copper-fasten the commitment to battle groups. The machinery for these missions was bought from the Israelis (so they can upgrade their military capabilities) and then transported by contractors who, like in the US military, make a fortune from our tax-payers money.

If we are to engage in military activity as opposed to peacekeeping we will need to spend money on equipment.

The Arms Manufacturers will have a new target market, another new customer and a reason to set up shop here.

### WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

**REVOLUTION**  
The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy. To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

#### AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth. Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

**END RACISM AND OPPRESSION**  
We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

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

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

#### FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government. Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'. We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain. Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

**FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY**  
To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc. We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

### Join the Socialists

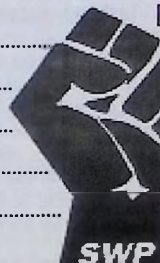
Fill in the form and send to  
SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

Phone.....





# 3 Reasons to VOTE NO on June 12

## 1 Vote No to Protect Public Services

The Lisbon Treaty would make privatisation of our public services easier by reinforcing the principal of competition. It seeks to create even more favourable conditions for big business to operate in an unrestricted Europe-wide market.

Since the 1980s the EU has also moved to restructure essential public services such as water and sanitation, public transport, energy, post and telecoms as private business. Today, Irish schools and hospitals, already suffering from chronic under investment and cash shortfalls, are in the ridiculous position of being forced to pay tens, indeed hundreds, of thousands of euros in water charges. When challenged on this issue in the Dail in December last, Bertie Ahern simply stood up and blamed the EU.

Now, with the Lisbon Treaty, health, education and social care systems are up for grabs. This is confirmed by the pro-business organisation, IBEC, who recently admitted that: "A yes vote for the Lisbon Treaty creates the potential for increased opportunities for Irish business particularly in areas subject to increasing liberalisation such as health [and] education . . ."



## 2 Vote No for a Demilitarised Europe

The Lisbon Treaty would further militarise the EU. It calls for all member states to increase their military spending and obliges them to make facilities available for EU military activity.

Lisbon would extend the grounds on which the EU can participate in military interventions beyond the borders of the EU.

It strengthens links between the EU and NATO and allows a small group of member states to form a military alliance within the EU and in cooperation with US-dominated NATO. Lisbon would also allow for the incorporation of Irish forces into EU military structures and planning, which are dominated by states with colonial histories.

As for the so-called 'triple-lock', this clause was in effect when Fianna Fail allowed one million troops travel through Shannon on their way to fight a brutal war and occupation in Iraq.

## 3 Vote No for More Democracy

The leaders of Europe don't believe in democracy – if they did they would give every citizen of Europe a vote on this treaty. The only reason the Irish have a vote is because the government is obliged by law to have a referendum.

Lisbon is not about more democracy. It does nothing to change the fact that the only EU body with the power to draft laws is the European Commission. This body is not elected by the people of Europe, so there is no direct link between us and them. It changes the voting balance in the EU in favour of countries with larger populations.

Most worryingly of all, Lisbon would reduce the areas where governments could veto policy proposals. There is also a provision that allows heads of state, in the future, to agree to change EU policies and remove vetoes without referendum.

The EU would have a "legal personality", a president and a foreign minister. The European Court of Justice would be the new Supreme Court and its rulings have almost always given priority to corporate interests over social rights.









# Irish wages are 25% lower than EU peers

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

AS TALKS on a new partnership deal get underway Ireland's bosses want to use the credit crunch as an excuse to cut workers pay.

A new report published by Ireland's second largest union, UNITE, blows apart the myth of Ireland as a high wage economy. In fact the report shows that Ireland's real wages are comparatively low and that when comparing EU economies, the higher the wages the more competitive the economy.

Jimmy Kelly, UNITE Regional Secretary said, "Employers' organisations and government ministers are constantly lecturing us about how Irish wage levels are unsustainable, about how wage increases are undermining our competitiveness, and about how wage-inflation is pricing the Irish economy out of the international marketplace".

"These facts are untrue. Our analysis of Irish private sector wages corrects the misrepresentations and distortions that have been sold to the Irish public. We have focused on the private sector since wages in the public



sector are benchmarked against comparable private sector pay".

"Drawing on international data bases and the CSO, we show that Irish

workers are paid considerably less than most of their European counterparts".

"Rather than being paid too much, Irish workers are paid too little and have a long ways to go before reaching even European averages, never mind levels that exist in advanced economies".

"We do not intend to allow Irish workers to take the blame for failed government policies and management shortcomings".

"A dynamic, innovative and prosperous economy will not be built on the basis of repressing wage levels and living standards. Rather, a prosperous workforce is the key to resolving many of our social and economic issues".

Social Partnership was a myth that benefited the employers. Now that the boom is over and instead we have a global financial crisis we need a different sort of trade unionism to get a better deal for workers. Bosses and the government want workers to carry the cost of the hard times. Our unions will have to fight the government rather than seeing them as 'partners'.

## Summary of findings:

- \* Irish wages are below the EU-15 average, coming in at the bottom half of the EU-15 table
- \* Irish wages are nearly 25 per cent below the average wage levels in our peer group - the 10 wealthiest EU countries
- \* When account is taken of living standards, Irish wages fall even further down the EU-15 table
- \* Wage increases in Ireland are about average
- in the EU lying in the middle of the table. Employers and government ministers intentionally distort this data to suit their own agenda.
- \* Employers payroll (PRSI) costs are the lowest in the EU

## Employers payroll costs among the lowest in EU

EMPLOYERS AND the government claim workers are ahead and point to percentage wage increase figures.

But because Irish wages start from a lower base than most other EU-15 countries our percentage wage increases appear much bigger. Belgian and Irish workers both got the same wage increases but this translated into 19% for Belgium and 28% for Ireland because Irish workers are paid so much less to start with.

Similarly Danish workers received a lower percentage increase (26 per cent) than Irish workers (28 per cent). But Danish workers received a higher wage increase - €1,000 more. Yet, Irish wage increases are deemed too high by the government.

At the same time as low wage costs employers get some of the biggest tax breaks in Europe. We are all familiar with how low corporation tax rates are in Ireland. At 12.5 per cent, companies in Ireland benefit from one of the lowest tax rates in the EU and industrialised world.

However, employers benefit from another low tax - Employers' PRSI.

In Ireland, employers pay a standard 10.2 per

Country	Employers' Standard PRSI Rate (%)
Belgium	34.7
Italy	33.1
Sweden	32.5
Spain	30.6
Portugal	23.7
Austria	21.6
Germany	20.8
Luxembourg	15.8
UK	12.8
Netherlands	10.9
Ireland	10.7
OECD 2005	

cent PRSI contribution levy

on all employees' wages and salaries. This is one of the lowest social security rates in the EU. Money that could be used to improve our public services or schools is foregone to instead give more corporate welfare.

## Irish wages, compared to its EU-15 counterparts, are below average and in the lower half of all the tables.

THE OECD has compiled a comprehensive database of private sector earnings including both industrial and service sector employees.

This is particularly useful as it combines all economic activity in the private sector. What the OECD figures reveal are that Irish wages are:

In the bottom half of the EU-15 table, lying 11th, and Nearly 11 per cent below the average EU wage in the private sector.

### Industrial Wages

We can see that not only are average Irish wages below average, they are well down in the bottom half of the EU-15 table - again lying 11th.

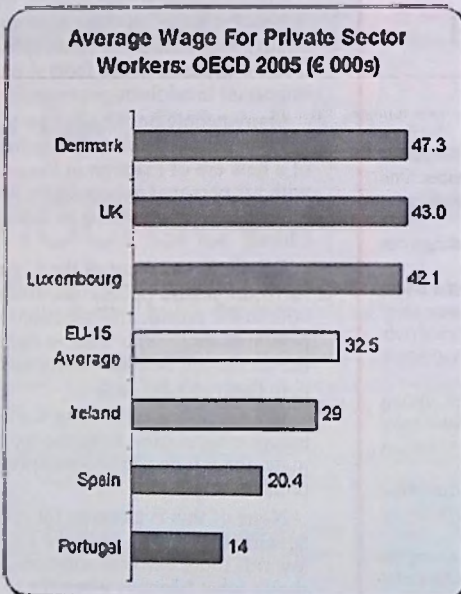
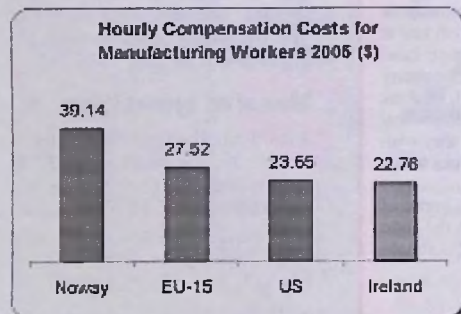
Irish labour costs are nearly 7 per cent below the EU-15 average.

Claims that our international competitiveness is being undermined by high wage levels have no basis in fact.3

### US Department of Labor figures

This measurement is taken from the US Government's Bureau of Labor Statistics used by American multi-national firms.

Once again, we see Irish wages in the manufacturing sector are over 17 per cent below the EU-15 average.



## A rich country built on poverty wages

GOVERNMENT MINISTERS proudly point out that Ireland is one of the wealthiest countries in the EU and, indeed, the world. In terms of wealth per capita we rank 2nd in the EU-15..

When we compare ourselves with our peer group, those countries with similar levels of wealth we find Irish wages come dead last, lagging behind by an average 25%.

The median wage is the level at which 50 per cent of workers earn below and 50 per cent earn above the half-way point in wage distribution. The CSO calls it a more robust measurement than the average because average wages can hide huge disparities.

In 2006, the median wage for the private sector was €13.82 per hour. That's €553 per week. Or less than €29,000 per year. That's nearly 9 per cent below the average industrial wage.

Half of the entire private sector workforce - over 600,000 workers - earn substantially below the average industrial wage. Women and young people are especially exploited:

Half of women, who make up nearly 40 per cent of the private sector workforce earn less than €500 per week.

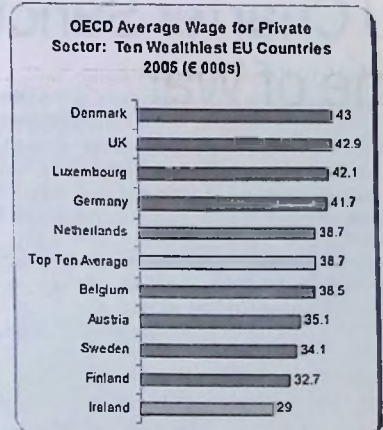
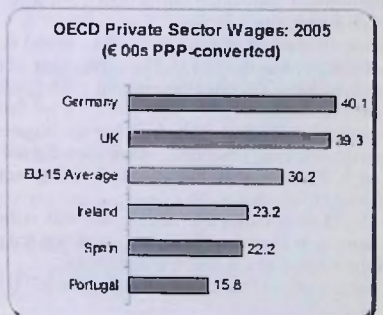
Half of young people (below the age of 25) earn less than €10 per hour.

Irish wages, when measured in terms of purchasing power, are among the lowest in the EU-15. We know that €100 goes a lot further in Spain than in Ireland.

When we compare real Irish wages with real wage levels in other

Countries using OECD purchasing power parities (PPP) figures we see Ireland ranks 11th in the EU-15, lying firmly in the bottom half of the table. Real Irish wages are over 20 per cent below the EU-15 average. Real Irish wages are not that much higher than real Spanish wage levels.

Not only are Irish workers penalised by



receiving low wages, they are penalised again by Government policies that increase living costs.

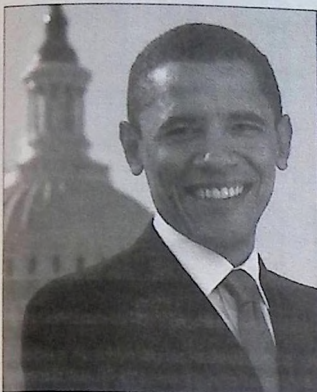
To read the full report go to [http://www.tgwu.org.uk/shared\\_asp\\_files/GFSR.asp?NodeID=94219](http://www.tgwu.org.uk/shared_asp_files/GFSR.asp?NodeID=94219)



COLUMN

# The substance of Obama's liberalism

By John Pilger



NONE OF the candidates for US President represents so-called mainstream America, which has made clear in poll after poll that it wants the normal decencies of jobs, proper housing and health care, and U.S. troops out of Iraq.

In this season of 1968 nostalgia, one anniversary illuminates today. It is the rise and fall of Robert Kennedy, who would have been elected president of the United States had he not been assassinated in June 1968.

Having traveled with Kennedy up to the moment of his shooting at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles on June 5, I heard The Speech many times. He would "return government to the people" and bestow "dignity and justice" on the oppressed.

Kennedy's campaign is a model for Barack Obama. Like Obama, he was a senator with no achievements to his name. Like Obama, he raised the expectations of young people and minorities. Like Obama, he promised to end an unpopular war, not because he opposed the war's conquest of other people's land and resources, but because it was "unwinnable."

Should Obama beat John McCain to the White House in November, it will be liberalism's last fling.

In the U.S., where unrelenting propaganda about American democratic uniqueness disguises a corporate system based on extremes of wealth and privilege, liberalism as expressed through the Democratic Party has played a crucial, compliant role.

In 1968, Robert Kennedy sought to rescue the party and his own ambitions from the threat of real change that came from an alliance of the civil rights campaign and the anti-war movement then commanding the streets of the main cities, and which Martin Luther King had drawn together until he was assassinated in April that year.

Kennedy had supported the war in Vietnam and continued to support it in private, but this was skillfully suppressed as he competed against the maverick Eugene McCarthy running on an anti-war ticket.

Using the memory of his martyred brother, Kennedy assiduously exploited the electoral power of delusion among people hungry for politics that represented them, not the rich.

Obama is his echo. Like Kennedy, Obama may well "chart a new direction for America" in specious,

media-honed language, but in reality, he will secure, like every president, the best damned democracy money can buy.

AS THEIR contest for the White House draws closer, watch how, regardless of the inevitable personal smears, Obama and McCain draw nearer to each other. They already concur on America's divine right to control all before it.

"We lead the world in battling immediate evils and promoting the ultimate good," said Obama. "We must lead by building a 21st-century military...to advance the security of all people." McCain agrees. Obama says in pursuing "terrorists" he would attack Pakistan. McCain wouldn't quarrel.

Both candidates support Israel. Obama was first to oppose a UN Security Council resolution implying criticism of Israel's starvation of the people of Gaza.

Like all the candidates, Obama has furthered Israeli/Bush fictions about Iran, whose regime, he says absurdly, "is a threat to all of us."

On Iraq, Obama the dove and McCain the hawk are almost united. McCain now says he wants U.S. troops to leave in five years (instead of "100 years" his earlier option). Obama has now "reserved the right" to change his pledge to get troops out next year. "I will listen to our commanders on the ground," he now says, echoing Bush.

His adviser on Iraq, Colin Kahl, says the U.S. should maintain up to 80,000 troops in Iraq until 2010. Like McCain, Obama has voted repeatedly in the Senate to support Bush's demands for funding of the occupation of Iraq; and he has called for more troops to be sent to Afghanistan.

His senior advisers embrace McCain's proposal for an aggressive "league of democracies," led by the United States, to circumvent the United Nations. Like McCain, he would extend the crippling embargo on Cuba.

Despite claiming that his campaign wealth comes from small individual donors, files held by the Center for Responsive Politics show the top five contributors to the Obama campaign are registered corporate lobbyists.

Seven of the Obama top 14 donors are Wall Street firms implicated in bundling fraudulently made mortgages. Americans of colour were disproportionately hit by the subprime crisis.

What is Obama's attraction to big business? Precisely the same as Robert Kennedy's. By offering a "new" young and apparently progressive face of the Democratic Party--with the bonus of being a member of the Black elite--he can blunt and divert real opposition. That was Colin Powell's role as Bush's secretary of state. An Obama victory will bring intense pressure on the U.S. antiwar and social justice movements to accept a Democratic administration for all its faults. If that happens, domestic resistance to rapacious America will fall silent.

FILM

## The Spectre and the Sphere



Jesse Jones: *The Spectre and the Sphere*, Project Gallery, 16 May - 14 June, 2008, Free Admission

A SOLO exhibition and new 16mm film work by Irish artist Jesse Jones, *The Spectre and the Sphere* evoke the ghosts of history. Filmed in two theatrical locations, and charged with an eerie interpretation of the Internationale by Lydia Kavina on Theramin, the film is further steered towards the ghosts of Marxism by a choral arrangement which has been commissioned as one of the main 'texts' of the film. While panning through an empty Belgian socialist market-castle, which is now a thriving art venue, the voices of a 30-strong choir produce an eerie and at times transformative experience.

NEW DVD RELEASES:

### Films to make you laugh, sing along and cry



Lindsay Anderson and Malcolm McDowell during the making of *O Lucky Man!*

FOUR VERY good films have recently been released on DVD. Director Tim Burton's Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street is a masterful adaptation of Stephen Sondheim's Broadway musical.

It stars Johnny Depp as the hairdresser whose lust for revenge leads him to commit murder, and Helena Bonham Carter as Todd's partner in crime. Burton's characteristic gothic direction lends itself brilliantly to the dark humour and beautiful music.

In *The Valley of Elah* is one of the many films that have come out of the

US over the last few years exploring the issues arising from the "war on terror".

Hank Deerfield's soldier son is reported missing while on leave after returning from Iraq. Hank decides to find out what has happened to his son in the face of military hostility. Lindsay Anderson's *O Lucky Man* has just been re-released on DVD.

It is the 1973 follow-up to Anderson's classic 1968 film *If*, about a revolution in a British public school. *O Lucky Man* follows Malcolm McDowell as Mick Travis and his rise and fall in the world

of business.

It is a surreal look at the madness of capitalism. The Palme d'Or winner, *4 Months, 3 Weeks And 2 Days*, is set during the last days of the Communist regime in Romania. Gabita is pregnant and needs an abortion.

She turns to her roommate Otilia for help and a meeting is arranged in a downtown hotel with Mr Bebe, who is only in it for the money.

This film is a harrowing portrayal of what happens when women do not have abortion rights.

BOOK

### Ronan Bennett's *Zugzwang*

By ESMÉ CHOONARA

SET IN 1914 in St Petersburg, Russia, the novel conjures up a city rife with plots, double-crossing and revolutionary ferment.

In the background is the looming threat of the First World War. The Tsar's secret police are everywhere and anti-Semitism is rife - with Jewish people uniformly regarded by the state as potential terrorists.

When a suspected activist is found dead with a card in his pocket from psychotherapist Dr Spethmann,

the doctor's quiet life is drastically disrupted as his daughter and a number of his clients are implicated in events surrounding the death.

The title of the novel comes from a chess term in which a player is reduced to state of helplessness, with each move making the situation worse.

The motif of chess runs throughout the book - evoking the sinister and determined manoeuvring by the central characters. There are even diagrams of the final moves of a chess game that punctuates the action

- and an invitation to consider what the next move should be.

Some readers may balk at a few details of the depiction of the Bolsheviks, but this shouldn't detract from what is a predominantly sympathetic portrayal.

And the story has an extra edge in that it is set in the shadow of the revolution we know will happen just three years later - an event that will break the Tsar's repressive hold and usher in a radical new society

*Zugzwang*, Ronan Bennett, Published by Bloomsbury



# NO WELCOME FOR GEORGE BUSH

GEORGE BUSH is a dangerous and desperate man – and now he is coming to Northern Ireland.

The US president is expected to visit Belfast on Monday 16 June as part of his European tour. The Belfast Anti-War Movement is organising a protest to make him feel as unwelcome as possible.

Bush's adventures in the Middle East and Afghanistan have left behind a trail of death and growing instability. Now he is on the warpath again, desperately attempting to rally his allies for an attack on Iran.

On his recent trip to Israel, Bush said, "Some seem to believe that we should negotiate with the terrorists and radicals, as if some ingenious argument will persuade them they have been wrong all along."

Fearing the continued defiance of Iran and Syria, Bush declared that, "Every peaceful nation in the region has an interest in stopping these nations from supporting terrorism."

This fanciful speech to the Israeli parliament failed to hide the realisation that US strategy in the region is fast unravelling.

No sooner had Bush finished his speech than the Israelis revealed they had been holding secret peace

talks with Syria – which the Bush administration has described as a "state sponsor of terror".

## Resistance

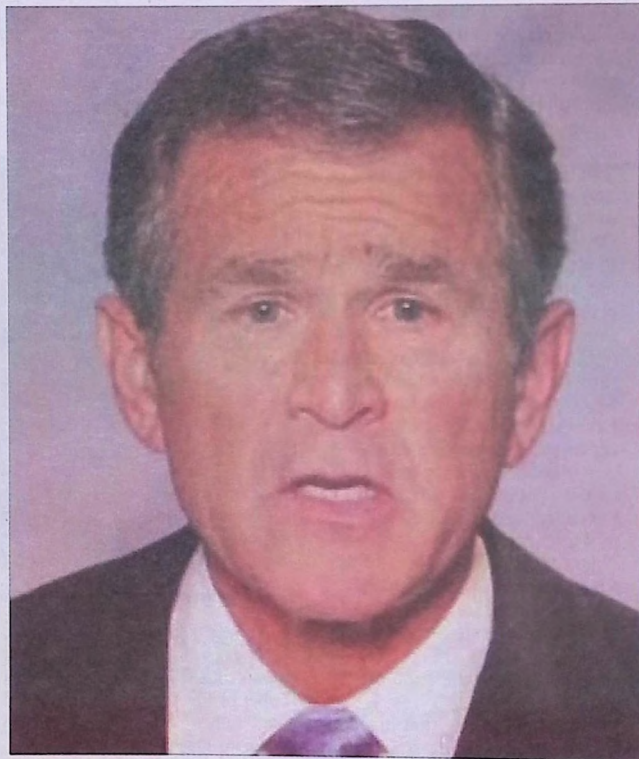
In the past it was easy for the US government to delude itself that its project for the region was on course. But events in Lebanon, Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq have exposed the limits of US power to the world.

As Bush was touching down in Egypt to attend the economic summit at Sharm el-Sheikh, the Lebanese resistance swept away the US-backed militias in Lebanon, ending Bush's dream of the "young democracy born out of the Cedar revolution".

Bush was confident that ordinary Lebanese had tired of the resistance, and now wanted them disarmed. He pushed the US-backed government of Fouad Siniora into an ill-timed confrontation with Hizbollah and its allies.

The resistance swept away pro-US militias in a few days.

The US rout in Beirut follows a similar humiliation in Palestine's Gaza Strip in June 2007. Then the US hit on the idea that they could initiate a "hard coup" against the



elected Hamas government using Palestinian troops trained in Jordan and Egypt.

When it came to the crunch these fighters either fled, surrendered or swapped sides.

## Miscalculation

In Iraq the latest US attempt to clip the wings of rebel cleric Moqtada al-Sadr has failed, despite a seven-week siege of his stronghold in the poor Shia Muslim neighbourhoods of Sadr City.

After US troops fought desperate and unsuccessful battles to enter the area, Iran negotiated a truce with the Iraqi government that allows Sadr's followers to retain their arms.

This pattern of failure is repeated in Afghanistan. For a year the US secretary of defence Robert Gates toured European countries, begging them to bolster the occupation. Now more US troops have been sent to the border with Pakistan, threatening to engulf that country in the war as well.

The Belfast Anti-War Movement is asking everyone to turn Bush's visit into a massive display of opposition to his wars – and to our government's shameful support for them.

## The North: Open for Exploitation?

By BRIAN KELLY

DETAILS ABOUT the scale of horse-trading and corporate plunder involved in last months' much-hyped Northern Ireland 'investment conference' have begun to emerge in recent days, and it isn't a pretty picture.

Just before American CEOs touched down it emerged that Nigel Dodds' *InvestNI*, which has been marketing the north as 'culturally compatible' with US companies, had been in touch with the Culloden Hotel to 'suggest' that immigrant workers not fluent in English be kept away from contact with the guests.

Costs for wine and dining these same corporate elites are

admitted to be more than £900,000 in public funds, and this at a time when the NHS and other essential services are being starved of investment and told there are no public funds available.

But the worst is yet to come.

CBI, the main employers' organisation, has had the support of all four main parties in lobbying for a sharp reduction in corporate taxes.

Though this measure has been temporarily rejected by the British government, the business and political establishment remain committed to a neo-liberal program which, if pushed through, will see tens of thousands of public sector workers made redundant, vast amounts of public land vlogged

off for private development, and drastic cuts in public services.

The *Sunday Times* reports, for example, that negotiations are underway between Gordon Brown and the DUP which will allow the Stormont Assembly to pocket the receipts from the sale of former military bases to the private sector.

### 'Anti-terror'

In return the DUP will give its support to New Labour's attempt to push through draconian 42-day 'anti-terror' legislation.

Dodds pitched Northern Ireland to American investors by guaranteeing them a flexible workforce.

Clearly the Assembly has a two-track approach to building the local

economy and slashing the public sector: using incentives to attract a thin sprinkling of high tech jobs for a small number of university-trained workers while purging the public rolls by forcing people into low-wage, temp positions in call centres and other dead-end jobs.

Key among these incentives is the selling off of large chunks of the public sector through PFI and other mechanisms.

One of the leading American investors overseeing the New York-based 'Emerald Fund' let the cat out of the bag when he said they were looking forward to investing in the "health sector" and in "public infrastructure, such as light rail, water, and seaports." Clearly the entire public sector is on the

chopping block, and whatever else their disagreements, Sinn Fein, the DUP and all main parties are ready to sell us down the river.

The sharks are circling and the stakes are very high indeed.

The 2003 report on *Bare Necessities, Poverty and Social Exclusion* described Northern Ireland as "one of the most unequal societies in the developed world," and the neo-liberal program which the Assembly has committed to will only worsen this, laying the basis for a revival of large-scale sectarianism.

Public sector workers and working people across the North generally need to organise to ensure that the politicians are not allowed to get away with it.