

## Prices:

**Food +7.3%, ESB +17.5%,  
Mortgages +17.2%, Gas +40%**

# NO TO A PAY FREEZE

THE GOVERNMENT says inflation is running at 5% but in reality it's much higher.

THE ESB are hiking their prices 17.5% from August. Bord Gais is planning to increase its prices 40% in the autumn and food prices are racing ahead at over 7%. Interest on mortgages has increased 17.2% in the last year.

In this situation workers need a pay increase not a pay freeze. Its not wages that are driving prices up, instead we need to increase our pay to catch up with prices.

Bosses and the government are demanding workers accept a pay freeze 'for the sake of the economy'.

There is ominous talk of 'going back to the 1980s' with rising unemployment, but there is no talk of

freezing profits or the cost of living.

The average Irish company makes €45,800 profit per employee – compared to British companies who make only €22,500. Irish bosses also pay the lowest PRSI in Europe.

The boss's answer to the recession is to make workers pay for the hard times through wage cuts. The small firms association is campaigning for a €1 cut in the minimum wage.

The government is backing the boss's agenda by targeting the unemployed and attacking benefits. One example of this is making people sign on at the post office every week.

Another is the talk of 'welfare fraud', but where is the heavy hand of the law when it comes to corruption at the top?

The government and the Health Service Executive are cutting half a billion from the health budget this year with more cuts to follow next year.

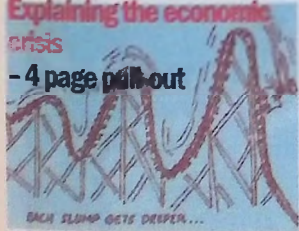
This is another way of cutting working class living standards, by attacking the essential services that we rely on like healthcare.

The answer to these attacks is to make our unions fight. Last month 650,000 public sector workers across Britain and the North went on strike for better pay. This is what our unions should be doing here.

Every trade union member should phone their union to tell them we will not settle for wage increases that are less than inflation.

Tell the union to raise the demand that wages should be indexed to inflation so our pay won't fall behind again.

**Explaining the economic crisis**  
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w: www.swp.ie

Contact the SWP in your area:

# Renewed battle against Shell in Mayo

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

SHELL OIL plans to start laying its offshore pipeline in Mayo shortly. The Soltaire pipe laying ship is currently anchored off the coast of Donegal.

However Shell have hit a hitch with the Erris Fishermen who organised a protest to object to where Shell are placing their waste outflow pipe. Fisherman Pat O'Donnell said "We've been fishing these waters for generations and we all have licences to fish them. So let the Minister for Justice and the Government protect our rights now the way they brought in the Gardaí to protect the workers on the gas refinery."

He added that if Shell wanted to remove his crab pots from the route of the pipeline, they would have to get a court order. "And I won't heed the court order so they'll have to send me and other fishermen to jail".

Maura Harrington from the Shell to Sea Campaign said, "Shell have begun working on a new



compound in Glengad in order that work will be able to begin on the offshore pipeline. This is a Special Area of Conservation

and the work is almost certainly illegal as planning permission has still not been granted for any of the onshore pipeline. Shell has

even put netting on the sand dunes to stop sand pipers nesting. But the powers that be are ignoring all attempts to highlight the situ-

ation and letting Shell operate as they wish. Twelve people were arrested in the in mid July on the site but were released without charge".

"Shell has employed a new security firm to spy on and intimate local residents which includes filming families and children on Glengad beach. Now anyone who visits the area and goes for a swim will be filmed".

However it seems even these heavies need protecting. Maura said, "The Gardaí escorted them off their bus when stopped by locals for failing to display any tax or insurance. But this infringement was as usual ignored by the Gardaí".

"Mayo County Council is building a road through the area specifically for Shell against the wishes of the local people. So far council threats have only swayed two of the landowners and the local residents are fighting the road upgrade through legal channels".

For the latest campaign news go to www.shelltosea.com

INBOX: email editor@swp.ie

## Father and four children face eviction

JOE KINNANE and his four children are facing eviction from their family home in Cherrywood, Dun Laoghaire on August 1st.

Joe moved into the Cherrywood home after his partner died suddenly in 2006.

Rent allowance that had been allocated for his previous address under his deceased wife's name was then denied, despite the family surviving solely on unemployment assistance and children's benefits.

The HSE and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council refused to intervene to support them.

Joe has been left with no other option but to squat with his children to prevent his family being thrown out onto the streets.

Dun Laoghaire Housing Action Campaign and local People Before Profit Alliance has organised a campaign to help ensure the safety and well-being of Joe and his children.

It is wholly unacceptable that the HSE would deny this family their right to rent allowance and their right to adequate housing.

There are over 4000 people on the housing waiting list in Dun Laoghaire.

Joe and his children are yet another example of the council's appalling record

on providing social and affordable housing.  
*Hugh Lewis, Dun Laoghaire*

## Tobin Tax needed

IN THE last edition of Socialist Worker there was good front page information on how much wealth there is in the country.

In the face of austerity workers are not going to fight the cuts unless they believe the resources are there to pay for services.

A lot of people may agree that Larry Goodman has millions. But won't make the connection on how this can resolve the problems in the health service.

I believe that the concept of the Tobin Tax needs to be popularised until it becomes a household name and as common a concept as the minimum wage.

Maybe you can cover it in the next addition. The trade unions need to lobby for a Tobin tax in the pay talks.

The Tobin Tax shows a practical way how we can get our hands on the cash.  
*Peter Homan, Dublin*

## People's Inspection teams

AIRCRAFTS LANDING at Irish airports, such as Shannon, are suspected of regularly travelling to and from countries where torture is used. Such aircraft though usually

owned by commercial companies are actually operated by the CIA.

Since the beginning of the 'war on terror', the Irish government has merely accepted 'diplomatic assurances' from the US that Irish airports are not being used as stop-over points for aircrafts carrying victims of kidnapping. Thus, requests to search suspected airplanes have been refused.

In April, the Council of Europe's special rapporteur on secret detentions, Dick Marty, said, 'The United States made a choice...to fight the war on terror using illegal means, but they at least made it openly and defend it. European governments, on the other hand, have been entirely hypocritical since their complicity has been clandestine'.

"Governments must stop hiding behind the hypocrisy of diplomatic assurances... They are not worth the paper they are written on, and it is to be complicit in torture to accept them... European governments are not merely involved in violating human rights', they are even embroiled in the 'process of trying to sabotage efforts to find out the truth'.

A diverse groups and individuals living and working in the west of Ireland and elsewhere - have now decided to form People's Inspection Teams (PITS). We are

undertaking thorough and meaningful inspections of all aircrafts suspected of involvement in 'extraordinary renditions' landing at Shannon.

The campaign has been endorsed by:

Rhuhel Ahmed (Former detainee, Guantanamo Bay), Tony Benn, Richard Boyd Barrett, Noam Chomsky, Rev. Canon Patrick Comerford (President of Irish CND), Dr. Saber Elsafty (Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, Ireland), Dennis J. Halliday (Former UN Assistant Secretary-General), Jimmy Kelly (Regional Secretary, UNITE), Ken Loach, Donal Lunney, Patricia McKenna and others.  
*Detta McLoughlin, Galway*

## What next - a tent at the Galway races?

THE GREEN Party held a major fundraising dinner in Galway on Saturday 28th June in the plush surroundings of the Radisson Hotel with party leader John Gormley. As the 'dignitaries' pulled up in their Mercedes, dressed in their fancy suits and expensive dresses, it all seemed a long way from what I thought the Greens were supposed to be about. In fact all the glamour made it seem more like a Fianna Fail event rather than an environmentalist and supposedly left wing party event.

15 members of the anti-

war movement in Galway gathered outside the hotel to protest at the Green Party's changing its stance on the use of Shannon by American troops and the CIA and also to highlight the newly launched Peoples Inspection Teams (PITS).

The Green Party, who before going into government would not have trusted the words of the American government are now saying that their assurances are enough, and are not following through on their election promises to take action on the situation at Shannon.

They held a public meeting in Galway where four members of the anti-war movement asked a question on Shannon, but Gormley did not answer. Instead he looked forward to the American presidential elections this coming autumn saying that this would bring change.

As pointed out though this ignores the suffering and murder that would take place before then while also taking the naive view that the elections will have a significant impact on American military policy. These two events showed the changes that have come over the Green Party.

A party that previously called itself left wing and was an important part of the anti-war movement as well as other left wing campaigns has abandoned that stance in its quest for power. The Galway anti-war movement will

continue to put pressure on the Green Party to get it to revert to its original principles.  
*Kiran Emrich, Galway*

## Donegal Stonemasons get organised

THE FIRST formal meeting of the Donegal Stonemasons Association took place in Gortahork on Wednesday July 16th. The meeting elected a Steering Committee and decide on the programme for 2008.

Stonemasons from all over the County participated in a lively meeting which unanimously agreed to set up the County Donegal Association affiliated to the Independent Workers Union.

The meeting discussed the need for quality work which members could support with the introduction of a professional Quality symbol ensuring high standards. The many advantages of working together in support of developing Stonework using locally sourced stone were outlined.

At the moment most stone used for masonry in Ireland is quarried in China. It was also agreed that the Association would welcome the support of interested individuals as associate members.

*Owen Curran, Donegal Branch IWU mobile 086-3122784, landline (074) 9735968*

## 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 workers 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.....





# Public sector strike over pay

By GERRY CARROLL

WEDNESDAY 16TH and Thursday 17th July saw over 650,000 public sector workers take strike action across Britain and Northern Ireland in opposition to the below inflation pay deal offered by the government in Westminster.

The government is offering what they call an increase in pay of 2.45%. However when you consider that the rate of inflation is running at 4%, by conservative estimates, it becomes obvious that Gordon Brown is effectively asking workers to take a pay cut in a climate of rocketing prices.

The government's offer of a 2.45% pay deal doesn't reflect the reality of rising prices in society - a typical weekly food bill now costs over 10% more than it did this time last year.

The public sector workers who took industrial action in July are among some of the most underpaid in society and it is precisely they who are hardest hit by the pay cut being put on the table.

Despite the fact that the strike took place during the middle of the '12th Week' - the week where most people take their holidays in Northern Ireland, the effects of the strike could still be felt. 15,000 local government workers took strike action, including bin collectors, library staff, leisure centre workers and members of the housing executive.

There were picket lines all across the North and most public facilities had to be closed because of the strike action including leisure centres, libraries and most notably Derry City airport.

On the picket lines workers expressed anger at the governments hypocrisy of huge pay cuts but at the same time expressed a willingness to fight them.

David Cowieson, Unite Shop steward in Belfast, said in response to the pay offer, 'We don't need to be told by politicians to tighten our belts - our belts cannot get any tighter.'

He went on to say 'Many workers now find themselves in a position where



Nipsa pickets outside Belfast city library

they have to search through bargain bins in supermarkets to hunt for cheaper essentials'.

At the picket line in Adelaide Street, Belfast Susan Mc Donald NIPSA assistant secretary stated that 'offering a pay rise less than inflation is scandalous and it is forcing more and more people out the streets.'

'I am out today with my daugh-

ters, nieces and granddaughters to tell the government this pay deal is unacceptable.

'The government should stop fighting wars and use that money instead to pay the workers'.

Following the picket lines across the city a rally was held at Transport House bringing together hundreds of Unison, NIPSA and Unite members.

Tony Alwell a worker in the Olympia leisure centre told Socialist Worker at the rally how he felt about our politicians. 'It's a charade and we are not prepared to accept it.'

Politicians are among the highest paid people in the country and currently they are trying to increase their own wages.

It's a case of giving to the greedy

as opposed to the needy'.

Many people on the picket lines made references to the victorious protests of the lorry drivers only last month, which led to a 14% increase in their wages.

Through continued and united activity the public sector workers can receive a similar victory as they seek to reject the government's pay offer.

## Still fighting for equality

By KIRAN EMRICH

ON THE 28th June a rally and march was held in Galway calling for full civil marriage rights for gay and lesbian couples.

This was held to coincide with the publishing of a bill on civil partnerships which many people feel does not go far enough.

The civil partnership bill introduces civil partnerships as a separate and inferior institution to civil marriage in both name and content. The bill also makes no mention of adoption rights for same sex couples which is an essential prerequisite to equality.

The government has used the old argument that they would need a referendum to legislate for civil marriage for same sex couples and that this wouldn't be passed. This contradicts all the polls which suggest that a majority of people would support civil marriage rights for gay couples.

Instead, the government is ignoring general public opinion

and is pandering to right-wing elements within its own ranks. These have been led by a Wexford TD who is saying that marriage according to Christianity is only for opposite sex couples.

This ignores the fact that civil marriage is a secular institution anyway and has nothing to do with religion, and nor should it. Gay Rights movements will continue to press for full civil marriage rights for same-sex couples.

Disappointingly, none of the major parties have made a commitment to this as they all talk merely about civil partnerships. People must continue to put pressure on politicians to change this stance.

To this end the Marriage Equality group are calling for everyone to talk to their local politicians about it and tell them you want full equal marriage rights for same-sex couples. It is only through pressure like this that change will happen.

## Serious pollution in Cork harbour

By JIM BLAKE

PEOPLE IN the Cobh area of Cork have been hit over the past few years by the closure of Verolme Cork Dockyard, Nitrigin Eireann Teoranta (NET) and in 2001, by Irish Steel. At the height of their production these places employed five thousand people. The days of heavy industry have passed and recession has hit like a hammer blow.

As if unemployment and recession were not bad enough, the clean up of these industries, especially at Irish Steel, has become a real nightmare.

There are 500,000 tonnes of Industrial waste spread over twenty seven acres on Haulbowline Island in the middle of Cork Harbour right next to the Irish naval base and opposite Cobh on one side, and Ringaskiddy on

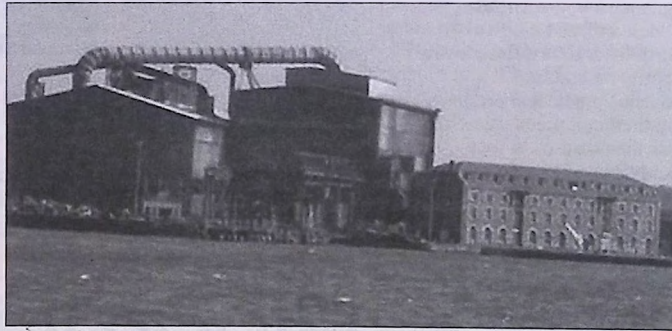


Photo shows former furnace hall which was demolished in 2006 causing a huge dust cloud which spread over much of Cobh and the lower harbour.

the other side. The waste is said to contain serious contaminants such as lead, zinc, mercury, PCB's and most deadly of all, Chromium 6, all materials used in steel production. Chromium 6 was the contamination shown in the film 'Erin Brocovich'. It can cause lung cancer, deep ulcers

on the hands, damage to liver and larynx.

The authorities responsible for the clean up, Cork County Council and Ministry of the Environment John Gormley, keep repeating that there is no cause for concern but people on both sides of the harbour are worried.

There is evidence locally of increases in eye infections and skin rashes which people blame on the dust from the waste. Some 100,000 tonnes of waste has already been removed and shipped to Germany. The German Company processing the waste wrote to contractors

in April 2008 expressing concern about high level of Chromium 6 contained in the material.

Cork Harbour Alliance for a Safe Environment have published their concern on the Web [www.chase.org](http://www.chase.org).

Mary Hurley of Cobh Action for Clean Air has said, cost should not be as issue where public health was at serious risk.

John Gormley has mentioned "budgetary concerns" and clean-up contractors have been taken of the site pending "further assessment".

John Gormley also said in June 2008 that he was committed to transforming the site from "an environmental liability into an asset for the Region".

The people of the Cork Harbour Region want action, not words, for the sake of themselves and their children.

## PCS WORKERS TAKE STRIKE ACTION

By SEÁN MITCHELL

MEMBERS OF the PCS union in the passport and identity service recently took a 3-day industrial action against the employers.

The workers in the IPS are being faced with job cuts within a so-called restructuring scheme.

Craig Mc Allister, a PCS

Rep in the IPS in Belfast explains;

"Restructuring is actually a euphemism for job cuts. Hundreds of staff across the UK are set to lose their jobs through the governments plans of 'efficiency'.

Part of the reason for the government ploughing ahead with these plans is so that it can introduce the ID card scheme

amongst the wider public.

We are coming to a stage where we are reaching an atmosphere of discontent, there has been widespread support for action galvanised amongst our members."

Local politicians, he said, "are selling the public down the river with these schemes. Private industries don't care at all about confidentiality amongst people,

we seen that recently with the loss of huge amounts of data at the hands of the private sector. For them its all about making money as opposed to offering a service to the public"

Stephen Farrelly a group organiser for the PCS explains the role of management;

"Workers have had no choice but to take industrial action. The Union has been

trying to negotiate with management about pay deals and performance management systems - , the management have totally ignored previous ballots in which members have strongly voted against both these measures."

There is a further ballot on a pay deal upcoming in the PCS. Socialist Worker will have further coverage on this.



## COMMENT

## Bigots want to restrict abortion pill

by GORETTI HORGAN

**Question: On what list will you find Northern Ireland sitting alongside Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Saudi Arabia and Zimbabwe?**

**Answer: On a list of countries which ban or severely restrict access to abortion, of course!**

*The BBC in July reported:*

*Some women in countries where abortion is restricted are using the internet to buy medication enabling them to abort a pregnancy at home, the BBC has learned.*

*Women in Northern Ireland and over 70 countries with restrictions have used one of the main websites. Women on Web.*

*A British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology review of 400 customers found nearly 11% had needed a surgical procedure after taking the medication.*

The anti-abortion camp predictably responded that the existence of such sites was "very worrying indeed". Quite right, I thought, almost believing for a moment that an anti-abortion group was actually exhibiting sympathy for the fact that hundreds of women have been so desperate they've had to resort to potentially risking their lives in order to end their pregnancies. But of course it's only worrying because, according to Josephine Quintavalle, "It represents further trivialisation of the value of the unborn child."

Precious Life Director Bernadette Smyth further demonstrates just how much of an afterthought women are in the abortion debate with her comments in the Belfast Telegraph:

"We must do everything we can to protect unborn babies and, of course, the women themselves."

Quite how this odious woman manages to get quoted every single time the abortion issue comes up is beyond me. Precious Life are about as legit as Iris Robinson's psychiatrist friend. They manipulate and mislead women, use children as pawns in their agenda and have a long history of aggressive and bullying behaviour. Even Bernadette Smyth's comments to the Telegraph regarding the abortion pill are inaccurate:

"There are great psychological and physical dangers in turning to a chemical abortion, whether it is through a clinic or bought off the internet," she said. "Women in this position have to deliver the foetus alone at home which is very distressing. They deserve much better than this."

Of course it's potentially dangerous for women to be purchasing pills off the internet without proper medical assessment, but the abortion pill (actually two pills - which cause a medical abortion) is very safe. It can only end pregnancies in the earliest stages so using the word "deliver", as though a woman is going to give birth to, and then flush away, a fully grown baby is blatantly dishonest.

Most women who experience medical abortions without complications find them not much worse than a bad period, and some less than that.

Distressing? Yes, probably, but a hell of a lot less so than being forced to carry and give birth to a child against your will.

Precious Life now plan to lobby the assembly to tackle this issue, presumably with the intention of trying to get the site shut down.

Now, I can believe that the assembly is capable of successfully blackmailing the British government, but it shows a rather astronomically flawed knowledge of the internet to believe that it can simply shut down a website which is operating legally.

Maybe they could try shutting down the postal service. Or the airports!

Clearly this is a service women want - 58% of the women surveyed said they were grateful to have been able to have had an abortion in this way, and 31% had felt stressed but found the experience acceptable.

Only 8% chose not to go through with the abortion. Anti-abortion groups consistently choose to ignore the fact that when women are determined enough to end pregnancies they don't want, they find ways to do so.

Shut down one (reputable and reasonably safe) website and women will simply buy from others. But with 11% of women needing medical treatment after taking the abortion pill, it seems to me to be only a matter of time before at least one goes horribly wrong.

And when the "pro-lifers" are bleating about what a "tragedy" it is, it won't be the woman they're thinking about.

# 2,700 PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE JOBS CUT SINCE SEPTEMBER 2007

## HSE €500m HEALTH CUTS

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

THE HSE will cut public health service expenditure by over €500 million this year. IMPACT national secretary Kevin Callinan said "It was still unclear where the knife would fall, but said cuts on this scale would inevitably further undermine existing and promised services, despite ministerial assurances. He added that unions were led to expect more cuts in 2009".

Health is the biggest victim of the Government's €440 million public service cuts announced in July.

The additional health cuts total €144 million, including €85 million from the deferral of spending under the Fair Deal nursing home scheme, €38 million from claw-backs of planned new services in areas like disability, mental health, cancer services and elder care, and a further €21 million planned cuts in administration, advertising and agency funding. The HSE share of these cuts is €129 million.

"When you add the €129 million worth of new cuts to those being implemented because of the €300 million shortfall, then add another €72 million for the value-for-money shortfall, you are facing cuts of over half a billion Euro in public health services this year.

"That's well above the headline figures published last week and you simply cannot do that without hurting patients and community services," he said.

Mr Callinan added that cuts were already biting, including the recent announcement of ward closures in Galway, the closure of Blanchardstown Hospital outpatients for August, 100 job losses in Crumlin children's hospital, and scores of unfilled vacancies for social workers, clinical psychologists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, physiotherapists and health promotion staff across the country. The union says more than 2,700 public health service jobs have disappeared since the HSE introduced recruitment restrictions last September.

IMPACT is currently in dispute with the HSE over its staffing



Flashback: Nurses taking action earlier in the year

policy, which says no vacancy can be filled unless another job disappears. Earlier this year, the Labour Court found that the HSE had breached the Towards 2016 national agreement by unilaterally implementing staffing cuts from last September.

IMPACT are in negotiations

in the Labour Court and union members are refusing to undertake reporting procedures for HSE management.

Niall Shanahan, IMPACT Communications Officer said, "These cuts put more pressure on an already stretched workforce. Instead of cuts we need to be ex-

panding to meet the demand from an expanding population".

The Dublin Council of Trades Unions has called another national demonstration for a decent health service for Saturday 11 October in Dublin. IMPACT has asked all its members to support the demonstration.

## Hibernian vote to strike

STAFF AT insurance group Hibernian voted overwhelmingly for industrial action over the company's plans to transfer more than 500 jobs to India.

Most of the workers threatened by the outsourcing scheme are based at the company's offices on Hatch Street, Dublin, which only opened fully just over two years ago.

The trade union Unite said there would be no co-operation with the company on its proposals to transfer work or to move jobs.

Unite national officer Jerry Shanahan said the union was also mandated, if required, to organise one-hour stoppages "to bring the message home that these proposals in their current form are not

acceptable".

Mr Shanahan also said the revelation that Hibernian's parent company Aviva had sold its Indian operation to Mumbai-based services giant WNS put a new twist on the

controversy surrounding the transfer of the jobs to India. He said the transfer of the jobs from Ireland had been a part of that deal.

■ Unite's recently published

report entitled 'The Truth about Irish Profits' revealed that in the Irish banking sector gross profits have risen two and a half times greater than personnel costs since 2000.

## ILLT fight continues

By DAVNET COTTER

THE CAMPAIGN to secure the future of staff and students at Integrate Ireland Language and Training continues.

Staff, with the support of SIPTU, have mounted a legal challenge against the Department of Education to

demand redeployment after the VEC advertised for ESOL tutors to refugees.

To make matters worse, the conditions of these new posts are significantly worse than those currently in place for ILLT workers: contracts are fixed-term and offer an hourly rate of pay which is one of the lowest paid by the VEC.

A ruling is expected from the Rights Commissioner in early August.

In the meantime, staff and students have organised a number of events over the coming weeks, including an open day to mark the EU Year of Intercultural Dialogue and a fundraising gig at Liberty Hall.



AFTER LISBON:

# The rise of a new Left



Over 100 people joined a lunchtime protest against French President Nicolas Sarkozy's visit to Ireland outside government buildings in Dublin. Protestors from the NO to Lisbon campaign were joined by hundreds of fisherman protesting about their livelihoods being wiped out for the sake of giant EU corporations at the WTO talks.

The Irish and euro elite want to re-run the referendum but they face a real prospect of an even higher NO vote if they dare put another referendum. Sarkozy's visit further enraged sentiment about the referendum result being ignored.

Richard Boyd Barrett from People Before Profit said, "The protest today is not only against Sarkozy, it's also against Cowen. The only reason Sarkozy can keep Lisbon alive is because Cowen refuses to respect the referendum result and declare the Lisbon Treaty dead".

Photos: Paula Geraghty



COMMENT

## Martin McGuinness: How not to help Iraq

By SEAN MITCHELL

Martin McGuinness's recent visit to Iraq was another indicator of just how far he, and Sinn Fein, have gone in their pursuit of acceptance and respectability within bourgeois circles.



Mc Guinness, the new global "peace broker" for Britain and the US, the ANC and some other international figures travelled to the Al-Rashid hotel within the occupation controlled Green Zone, to chair peace talks between various Iraqi factions. These negotiations resulted in a deal whereby each group committed to disband unlawful armed groups, respect the independence of the judiciary, and support the constitution.

Despite what Martin McGuinness believes, this deal has zero hope of solving the problems faced by Iraqis. This can be seen by his own highly flawed and dangerous approach to the question.

In a recent edition of Sinn Fein's newspaper, An Phoblacht, McGuinness was given space to explain to us all "How can we help Iraq". The piece is a little hard to follow at times and is full of Blairesque rhetoric, which can be difficult to stomach. For example, we are told that we should "not pontificate nor teach, or preach. We talk, we share, we explain". What use this is to the Iraqis I'll never know, but it sure sounds good.

However, what is extraordinary about the article is not what is said, but what is left out. In telling us how we can help Iraq, he fails to mention the US, Britain or the fact that Iraq has been under a brutal occupation for five years.

One would think that calling for this occupation to end, or even acknowledging its existence would be more helpful to Iraqis than what McGuinness has suggested. In his eyes, we need not try and expose the torture of prisoners by US troops, highlight the massacres they have perpetrated or point out their role in creating sectarian strife.

The truth is, that Martin McGuinness would not have been in Iraq if he couldn't be trusted by Imperialism to say the right thing. These talks have the full backing of George Bush. Anything that suggests that the disaster in Iraq isn't caused by his invasion is welcome news. For Bush, it is even more welcome if this comes from the mouths of former anti imperialists like McGuinness and the ANC.

It was only recently that McGuinness stood shoulder to shoulder with the Warmonger at Stormont. We were told that he would be raising the issue of Iraq with the President. No such thing happened. Instead we had the sight of the two smiling and laughing, the Deputy First Minister praising Bush's apparent role in the Northern Ireland peace process.

The key question in Iraq is that of the occupation. It is a farce to suggest that talks between Iraqis could be successful while this goes on. You can't expect people to freely express themselves while the worlds biggest superpower watches over your every move.

Bush himself is currently trying to force though a deal, against the will of the majority of Iraqis that would see US troops staying in the country indefinitely. This wasn't put to the Iraqis for negotiation, "outside interests" shouldn't be factored in according to one representative from the ANC.

If there is to be any real solution in Iraq, withdrawal of all occupying forces has to be the key component

In Basra, in southern Iraq, when the British troops pulled out of the city, violence and strife dropped significantly. If this were repeated countrywide it would have similar results.

Those of us who really want to help the Iraqis should continue to build a mass anti war movement that calls for this. However, we now have another task, to expose the role of our own politicians and their role in ensuring the misery of the occupation continues.

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

SINCE THE Lisbon Treaty NO victory the "disconnect" between the political establishment and the people is growing.

The ruling elite in Ireland is in crisis and are desperate to make us vote again. There's now a real 'Them and Us' feeling in the country.

The Labour Party and the Greens are also completely out of touch with their own support base, as we saw from the Lisbon Treaty, and they no longer believe in Left policies generally.

The People Before Profit (PBP) Alliance is setting out to fill the gap for a real left alternative. At a large meeting of over 100 people in Dublin independent councillor Joan Collins, from the Community Workers Action Group, endorsed the call for a new left and the PBP alliance, and

called for people to join it.

Joan said, "The train is leaving the station and it is now time to get on board with the new left. We can see from elsewhere in Europe the danger of right wing

and racist politicians picking up on the anger about the economic crisis and we don't want to see that happening here."

The meeting also heard from the Workers and Unemployed

Action Group from Tipperary who have 3 elected councillors. Paddy Healy said, "We are glad to see this development on the left in Ireland and we will work closely with it."

## Congratulations from France

CONGRATULATIONS TO all the Irish parties, movements, associations and coalitions which have been involved in the campaign against the Lisbon Treaty and the pathetic attempt of the elites of EU to ignore the increasing resistance of peoples against their politics only devoted to defend the interest of globalized capitalism.

It is a success for the Irish people, of course. But it is also a success for all the European peoples, especially those which

never had the opportunities to give their opinion. After the Danish, the Dutch and the French "No vote" deeply rooted in the most popular sectors of society, the bosses and the pro euro-capitalist parties are facing a big problem of legitimacy. And we are sure of that: it will be a powerful support for new waves of resistance, all across Europe.

It's also a challenge for the anti-capitalist Left in each country and on a European

scale. In France, the LCR is now involved in a process to build a new anti-capitalist party able to challenge pro-capitalist politics implemented either by right wing parties or parties of the traditional left. And it is very important for us to develop links with all those in Europe who share the same aims.

Once again: congratulations for the No vote  
Yours in solidarity  
For the LCR National Leadership, Olivier Besancenot

## People Before Profit established in Waterford

A LOCAL branch of People Before Profit has been established in Waterford.

Addressing the gathering in the Granville Hotel Jimmy Kelly, Regional Secretary of Unite said, "The Government, IBEC and official Ireland are all demanding working people shoulder the burden of the recession with wage freezes and cuts.

The rich who made a killing during the boom should make the sacrifices. We will support all workers who fight to

protect their standard of living, facilities, services and quality of life"

Dick Roche, who chaired the meeting, explained that "the People Before Profit organisation was established by activists from a wide range of national and local campaigns all committed to achieving real democracy and the reversing neo-liberal policies that put private wealth creation for the few before the wellbeing of communities throughout Ireland." PBP

Waterford can be contacted on 087-7523464

### People before Profit in Tralee

Thirty people attended a meeting in Tralee on 16 July on "After Lisbon: Time for a New Left" that was addressed by Francois Duval, of France's new anti-capitalist party.

The interest in a New Left, and in People Before Profit, has increased locally after defeating Lisbon. Radio Kerry

contacted the PBP group in Tralee and interviewed us about Lisbon, the New Left, and the possibility of standing candidates for Tralee Town Council and/or Kerry County Council.

A PBP stall the following Saturday featuring leaflets with a cartoon of Sarkozy with a baseball bat drew much amusement, matched only by anger at his visit and bitterness at the possibility that the people had had their say but were now going to be ignored.



# Turkey: coup plotters forced out into open

By **RON MARGULIES**, A Turkish socialist activist

THERE IS an almighty struggle going on in Turkey, involving bombings, court cases, declarations by the military, assassinations, plots against the government, the arrest of retired generals, the discovery of secret arms dumps and more.

It started in earnest in 1997, when the military forced a coalition government led by the Islamic Welfare Party (WP) to resign.

The WP had been elected on a document called A Fair Order, which had nothing to say about religion, but much to say on unemployment, poverty and privatisation.

Its overthrow was followed by years of instability and weak coalition governments.

In 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP), a breakaway from WP, won a general election to form the first coherent majority government for 20 years.

The AKP is a conservative, staunchly neoliberal party with a very slight Islamic tint. In its six years in power, it has not passed any legislation that could be interpreted as "Islamic".

It has implemented everything dictated to it by the IMF and Turkey's bosses.

It emerged last month that the military has prepared an "action plan" consisting of steps against the government "responsible for religious/reactionary movements".

These plans were hatched by the military chiefs of staff in 2004 and 2005 for a takeover. They were only prevented because the chief of staff was against it.

Last year, a memorandum

published on the chiefs of staff website attempted to stop the foreign minister, a leading AKP member, from being elected president of the republic. This was dubbed the "virtual coup".

It forced an early general election. As so often when they are given the chance, the people did the exact opposite of what the military wanted. The AKP had polled 34 percent of the vote in 2002 and they were re-elected with 47 percent.

These attempts by parts of the state to cripple and overthrow the government have been accompanied by the clandestine activities of what is known in Turkey as the "deep state".

This is the murky world of semi-amateur plotters of coups, fascist youth organisations and hit squads. They have all been brought together by retired generals.

They parade as patriotic associations out to "defend the republic". Where the "deep" state ends and the "visible" state begins is often hard to tell.

The fight going on is now very visible. The government has started rounding up the plotters. Prominent names have been arrested, although these do not go all the way to the top.

A case is also making its way through the Constitutional Court, in which the AKP has been accused of being "the focus of anti-secular activities".

There is no doubt that AKP will be closed down next month. This will plunge the country into political instability.

People are asking why the state mechanism is trying to overthrow a government that is a docile servant of big business and enjoys its support?

Because the AKP comes from a different tradition to the Turkish nationalists, who have run the state under the ideology of Kemalism – named after the founder of modern Turkey Kemal Ataturk – it can take steps which no other party can.

It has been willing to tackle such issues as a peaceful solution with Kurdish rebels and open discussion on the Armenian question – relating to accusations of genocide in the early 20th century.

It is also trying to resolve the ethnic division of Cyprus, challenge the role of the military in politics and liberalise a great deal of legislation.

These are all challenges to the sacred cows of Kemalism.

The AKP does this not because it is democratic or progressive. It does it because big business wants Turkey to join the European Union and these issues are a block to that.

The AKP wants to reform and liberalise the state machine and exclude the military from politics, but it cannot afford to weaken them.

It's not in the business of abolishing the state. It just wants to bring it in line with current ruling class interests.

This vicious struggle at the top opens up great possibilities for revolutionaries. Alas, much of the left is taken in by the rhetoric of "defending the secular republic".

The leader of the Communist Party even wrote an article titled "I am not against all coups."

Some on the left are. And it brings us together with a large number of people who we can work with, first to defend democracy and then more.



A Turkish student is interviewed outside her university. An attempt by the government to lift the ban on women with hijabs entering university helped trigger the latest crisis

## Stop the show trial of Egyptian protestors

A PETITION has been launched in solidarity with 49 Egyptian citizens who are being threatened with heavy prison sentences by the Egyptian government.

The Mubarak regime has decided to prosecute in an Emergency High State Security Criminal Court.

The workers are from Mulhalla in Egypt's industrial belt. The town was central to the recent wave of strikes that swept Egypt earlier this year.

There was a two day uprising in the Nile Delta town of Mahalla in April. On the 6th and 7th April, Mubarak's troops occupied, Ghazl el-Mahalla, the biggest textile mill in the Middle East, home to 27,000 workers.

This action was to stop a strike announced by the independent Textile Workers' League in protest at spiralling food prices and to demand a raise in the minimum wage which has remained stagnant since 1984.

The troops used live ammunition, tear gas, water cannons and sticks against the peaceful protestors who took to the streets after the crushing of the strike.



Workers in Mahalla fight back against security forces during the 6-7 April uprising (Pic: Nasser Nouri)

At least three were killed, and hundreds were injured and detained. The 49 detainees face a list of trumped up charges, to which some have confessed under torture. They will be tried in an exceptional court, systematically denounced

by human rights watchdogs for lacking the international standards for a "safe and just trial."

The Petition is organised by the Cairo Conference Committee. The Cairo conference is a major event held

in Cairo where anti-imperialist activists from across Europe and the Middle East meet to discuss and co-ordinate activity.

For more information about the campaign contact [cairoconference@stopwar.org.uk](mailto:cairoconference@stopwar.org.uk)

## Plan to close mosque highlights anti-immigrant bias of Italian government

by **CHRIS BAMBERY**

THE ITALIAN home affairs minister, Roberto Maroni, a member of the hardline, anti-immigrant Northern League, has ordered the closure of Milan's largest mosque. The Jenner mosque attracts 4,000 worshippers each week.

Maroni said that the site is overcrowded and causes problems for local residents. He went on to say that anybody found praying in the street outside the mosque will be arrested. The city council has offered the use of a local stadium but has said it can only be used four times each week and that each person will be charged on entry.

The president of the mosque, Abdel Hamid Shaari, has said he is happy to pay rent but that its members "won't be treated like nomads".

"We are Milanese and we are not going to accept the solution that's being offered," he added.

Meanwhile Italy's highest court of appeal has published the grounds on which to overturn the conviction in March of the mayor of Verona, Flavio Tosi, and four other members of his Northern League party, for racially discriminatory propaganda. Tosi had written a petition in 2001 calling for the demolition of all Roma camps in Verona, later adding The Gypsies must be ordered out because, wherever they arrive, there are

robberies."

The court declared that "discrimination based on diversity is different from discrimination based on somebody's criminality." In plain language they were saying it is perfectly acceptable to brand all Roma as "thieves".

Maroni has ordered a "census" of Roma camps involving the police taking photographs and fingerprints of children as well as adults. These will be collected on a database – a racial register – and anyone found guilty of even a petty offence will face immediate deportation.

These measures have been ordered under war time laws enacted by the fascist dictatorship of Benito Mussolini.

This denial of fundamental rights to Italian residents and citizens comes on the 80th anniversary this month of Mussolini's Racial Laws which stripped Jews of their citizenship and which barred them from education and much employment.

The urgent task facing the Italian left and social movements is to build a mass campaign in defence of the Roma and immigrants who face harassment by the police and attacks from Northern League "vigilantes". Millions of people uphold the tradition of the war time anti-fascist resistance and can be won to opposing the return of racial laws which, eight decades ago, had murderous consequences.



## Explaining the Crisis



# How deep is the crisis?

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

THE SIGNS of a spreading global slowdown are becoming more and more visible. The turnaround in Ireland has been especially sharp.

Ireland has been the euro-zone's miracle economy, averaging growth of 7 percent a year for the past decade. In the first quarter of 2008, the economy shrank by 1.5 percent.

A month or so ago we were being told that any housing recession would be easily containable, that the 'fundamentals' of the Irish economy were sound. The mood has shifted sharply, with comparisons being made with the mass unemployment of the 1980s.

The unemployment rate is growing at the fastest rate in the history of the state.

In the US treasury secretary Hank Paulson had to launch a rescue plan for the two giant US government sponsored mortgage companies, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Paulson announced they would get access to cheap credit and asked Congress for the power to take them over.

This makes the Northern Rock saga seem like a tea party. It held mortgages worth £100 billion, while Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac between them owe or guarantee debt worth \$5,300 billion.

What would otherwise have been headline news, the second biggest bank failure in US history, by California-based IndyMac, was overshadowed by this crisis.

Until recently, the euro-zone in general and Germany in particular boasted that they would ride out the crisis in the Anglo-Saxon economies.

But the latest figures show sharp falls in industrial output in May right across the euro-zone.

According to the Financial Times "the change in mood has been sharpest in Germany, where the economy is thought to have contracted in the three

months to June after an exceptional growth spurt at the start of the year".

Even China's trade surplus in June was a fifth lower than it had been a year before.

Other commentators are also drawing parallels between today's global economic crisis and the crash and depression of the 1930s.

The chief similarity is in the role of credit in intensifying the crisis. During the 1920s the US was at the centre of a massive economic boom.

Capital from all over the world flowed into US industries through the medium of the New York stock exchange.

The result was rising share prices on Wall Street. Investors started buying shares on tick, with brokers effectively lending the money to buy shares in the hope of being paid back by future profits.

It looked like a perpetual money making machine.

But when the crash occurred, the credit mechanism went into reverse. As share prices fell brokers demanded their loans back. Investors sold their shares to pay back the loans – thus ensuring share prices fell further.

The result was a vicious cycle. "Each spasm of liquidation therefore ensured that another would follow," wrote the economic historian JK Galbraith.

## Consumer spending

Soon the crisis had burst out of the financial markets and created a fire-sale in the wider US economy.

"Liquidate labour, liquidate stocks, liquidate the farmers, liquidate real estate," declared the US treasury secretary Andrew Mellon (himself a banker and industrialist).

The Wall Street Crash was a particularly acute symptom of wider underlying problems in the world economy that had been building up over the previous few years.

The huge flows of global investment

into the US were concentrated mainly in heavy industry, and this sector was already gripped by a slump two months before the crash hit.

Like the 1920s, the economic growth we've seen in recent years in the US is built upon a credit bubble.

As bonds fall in value, so called "leveraged investors" that have borrowed money to gamble on bond markets are being asked by their creditors to stump up more cash.

Just as in 1929, they raise this cash by selling their bonds – thus pushing prices down yet further.

The result has been a wave of hedge funds going bust, which in turn undermines the banks that lent money to them.

The use of credit to buy consumer goods – and so help to generate profits to boost the economy – is another parallel between 1929 and today.

In the 1920s credit facilities such as hire-purchase were only available to the richest. The top 5 percent of households accounted for one third of total consumer spending.

But today widespread consumer debt is at massive levels. Real wages have been more or less stagnant, so people have had to get into debt in order to buy consumer goods, or even just to make ends meet.

The average household debt in the US is now almost equal to disposable income.

And unlike in previous decades, this consumer credit bubble has been engineered as a necessary measure to keep the economy growing.

Companies didn't want to raise wages and wouldn't accept lower profits. So a credit bubble centred around housing was the only means left to encourage people to buy stuff.

## Systemic freeze

That is one reason why the current credit crisis has sent the ruling class into a panic.

On the one hand it wants to control credit more tightly and only lend money to those who are likely to repay.

But on the other hand, such a credit squeeze would dampen demand for consumer goods and threaten to send the whole economy into recession. We could see a repeat of the dynamic that took place in 1929.

A crisis that breaks out in one financial sector – US stocks in 1929, the US subprime mortgages today – spills over into other financial markets, then freezes up the financial system more generally, before bleeding out into the "real economy".

The threat of systemic freeze is already here. Fears of bad mortgage debt have led to banks refusing to lend money to each other – the so called "credit crunch".

Of course today's crisis won't necessarily pan out in the same dramatic fashion as the 1930s recession.

A banking crisis in Japan in the early 1990s led to slow burning recession that gripped the country for a decade.

But like the crisis of the 1930s, today's financial turmoil is a reflection of deeper problems in the economy – in particular a long term crisis of falling profit rates.

The capitalist class has tried a number of ways to escape this problem – making workers work harder and more recently through the expansion of finance and credit. None of these can resolve the underlying problems in the economy.

And credit acts as a double edged sword in this situation, as Karl Marx noted in the third volume of his book Capital:

"The credit system accelerates the material development of productive forces and the establishment of the world market.

At the same time, credit accelerates the violent eruptions crises and thereby the elements of disintegration of the old mode of production."

**Commentators are also drawing parallels between today's global economic crisis and the crash and depression of the 1930s.**



# What's behind the global economic crisis?

**Jacob Middleton looks at what lies behind the current crisis**

THE ROOT of the problem lies in the failure of profits to recover to the levels seen in the decades after the Second World War. From the early 1970s onwards, the world economy, which had for years grown, began to slow down.

Growth slowed, profits slumped, and unemployment returned to the heart of the system. The tendency of the rate of profit to fall, a long term feature of capitalism that Karl Marx had identified 100 years previously, reasserted itself.

The response of governments throughout the world, tentatively at first but gathering pace over the next 20 years, was to introduce the measures we now know as neoliberalism.

First, great chunks of the state itself were broken up and sold off, releasing huge sums into private capitals' hands – one estimate suggests that around one third of all the value in all the world's stock exchanges comes from privatisation.

Second, controls on the movement of goods, services and – especially – money from country to country were removed, allowing capital to move more freely around the globe.

Third, and most fundamentally, attacks were made on working class standards of living. Capitalism makes profits from paying workers less than the value of what they produce. Often the quickest and easiest way to restore profits is to pay workers less – either directly, in their pay packages, or indirectly, through attacks on the welfare state.

In the US this assault on the working class was successful – between 1975 and 1995 average real wages for full-time male workers in the US stagnated, or even declined slightly. Elsewhere the attacks were less thoroughgoing, but in Europe the welfare systems that had been the social democratic parties' proudest achievements were whittled away, and job insecurity was increased.

These attacks had some success in boosting profits. Growth returned to

some areas of the system, but was unevenly distributed – the US economy boomed in the late 1990s and early part of this century, while those in what is now the eurozone in general remained stagnant. Growth was not generalised throughout the developed world.

The picture was even more mixed in the underdeveloped economies. While a few – China being the most spectacular example – were able to hook themselves into the global economy, many, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa, went into steady decline.

There was no return to capitalism's post-war "golden age". But the relative underlying weakness of the recovery was masked by the explosive growth of the world financial system.

Financial markets and financial institutions play a very specific role under capitalism. They help coordinate the system, moving capital to wherever it can make the greatest profit.

An individual capitalist may not be able to see where the best profits can be made, anywhere in the world, but the financial markets, collectively, can do this, taking money and redistributing it according to the returns it can make.

Theoretically, financial markets make capitalism work "better" – they will hunt the places where highest profits can be made, and so (theoretically) boost profits throughout the system.

However, the financial system carries two great risks. First, it can misjudge real profits and simply indulge in speculation, with financial markets talking themselves into a frenzy of ever increasing share prices, based on not much more than the whims of traders. These are called "bubbles" and the consequences, when they burst, can be dramatic.

Second, the speed and flexibility with which the financial system can find profits may also turn it against capitalism as a whole, rapidly transmitting a crisis in a single economy into others. This is known as "contagion" – the crisis in one region spreading very rapidly to others.

Money can be moved round the world at the press of a button. Financial institutions are able to scour the globe

looking for profitable opportunities for investment, moving into and out of markets, buying and selling shares, with incredible speed.

Moreover, the expansion and growing sophistication of the financial system created an intriguing new possibility for capitalism. It is in every individual capitalists' interests to pay workers as little as possible to boost profits. But if every capitalist did that, workers would not be able, collectively, to afford what the capitalists, collectively, are selling. What is good for one capitalist is not necessarily good for the system as a whole.

However, by offering cheap loans to workers, capitalists could simultaneously pay workers less and still sell their goods and services. The expansion of the financial system allowed them to do that, tying workers into global finance with cheap loans and easy credit.

The gap between weak wage growth and rapidly rising consumer expenditure was closed by consumer credit.

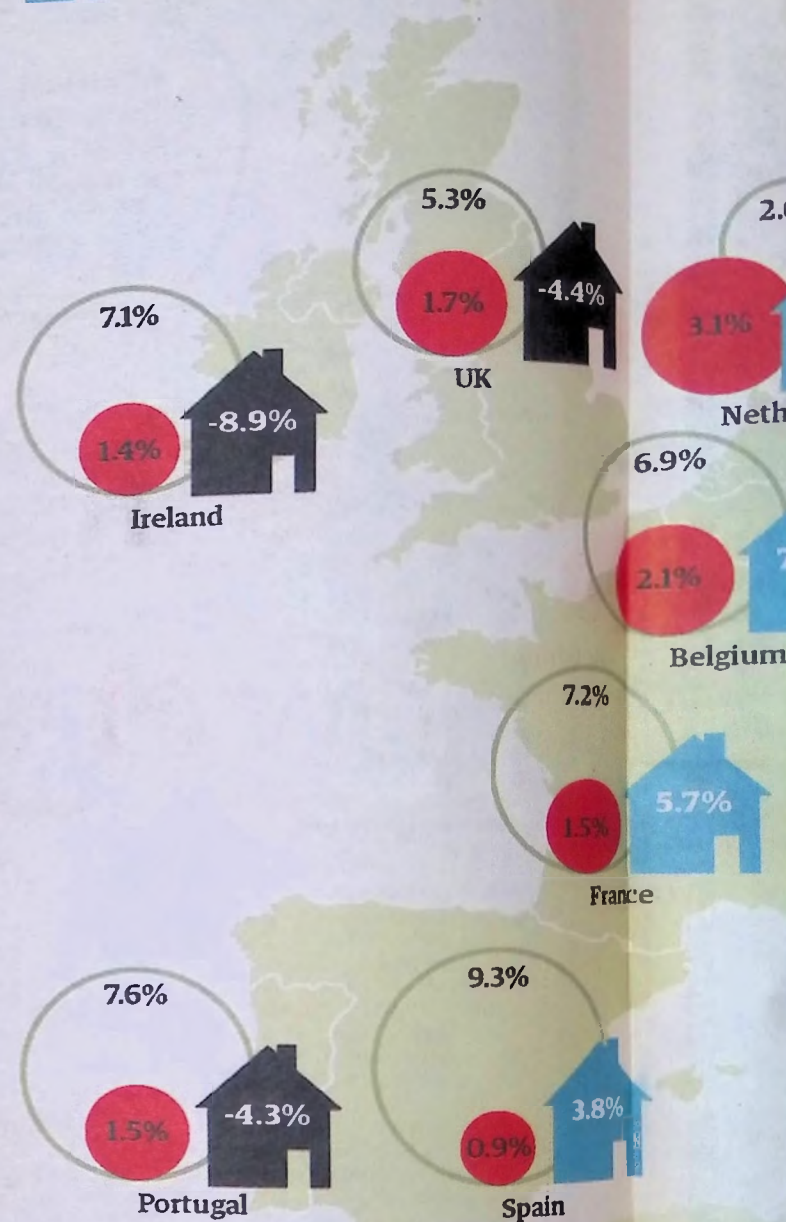
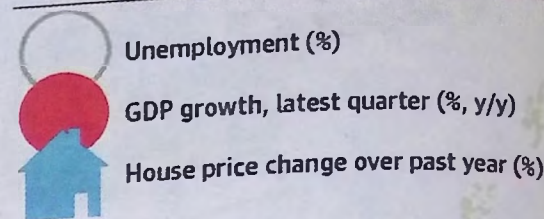
But because the underlying rate of profit, though somewhat recovered, remained too low to produce a generalised expansion of capitalism, this new high speed financial system actually rested on very rickety foundations. It could shuffle money around the globe at breakneck speed, but the flow of real profits into the system was much less dramatic.

Capitalists could make more by gambling on the stock exchange than investing in production. This gambling created speculative "bubbles" and the last 20 years have seen a succession of these, inflating and bursting – from the dotcom to the current property bubble.

The system relies more on workers getting into debt to keep running. So a crisis developing in the financial system has the potential not only to hit capitalists' investments – it can hit workers' consumption.

The only real way for the bosses to deal with this crisis is to boost profits by hammering workers. They want workers to pay the price for the capitalists' crisis.

## How the credit crunch has hit the economy



SOURCE: THE ECONOMIST, HM TREASURY, REUTERS

## Wage increases do not cause inflation

By KIERAN ALLEN

WORKERS ARE being crucified by price rises – and there is worse to come. Food prices have increased dramatically and the price of electricity and gas are set to go increase by 17.5% and 30% respectively.

Inflation hits the poor far harder than the rich because you have to spend a higher proportion of your income on necessities like food and heating.

We need decent wage increases to stop falling behind. The bosses and the political establishment tell workers that wage rises cause inflation – and so we must take a pay cut. It is a blatant lie.

■ The rise in food prices has nothing to do with wages.

It is caused by the US government turning land over to bio-fuels; by obscene speculation on future commodity

prices and by changing eating habits in the world.

■ Higher inflation is also caused by companies like Tesco who do not pass on the benefits of falling sterling prices to their Irish customers.

■ Electricity and gas prices are rising because of government policy – as well as the rise in price of energy.

The privatisation of parts of the ESB network is costing domestic consumers and cheapening the price of energy for big business.

If the Irish government had taken control of the Corrib gas field rather than handing it over to Shell, we could have had lower gas prices.

■ Ireland has one of the highest rates of VAT in Europe and this pushes up prices far more than any wage rise.

The truth is that wages only follow price rises that have already taken place – they are not the cause of these

risers.

Pay cuts don't make us 'competitive'

We are always told that we are in competition with Chinese or Eastern European workers. But once you accept this argument there is no end to it.

The average Polish worker earns less than €800 a month while the Chinese worker gets less than €200 a month. Do the political establishment want us to accept wages that are below these figures!

Talk of 'competitiveness' is just blackmail to get workers to do without wage rises.

The average Irish company makes €45,800 profit per employee – compared to British companies who make only €22,500.

■ The pay roll costs (PRSI) of companies in Ireland are the lowest in the EU.

■ Figures from the US Department of Labour show that Irish wages in manufacturing are over 17 percent below the average for the older EU fifteen countries.

Companies in Ireland already enjoy huge advantages and if they are so worried about competitiveness, THEY should take a cut in their profits. We just NEED a decent pay rise.

### Social Partnership

Our union leaders know this – but they are so wedded to the idea of social partnership with the bosses that they could settle for less and then tell us 'there is no alternative'.

The national talks on pay will soon come to a close.

So workers need to pile on the pressure and tell our union leaders that we will not settle for wage increases that are less than the rate of inflation.

## Wages, exploitation

THE TERM "exploitation" typically conjures up images of horrendous working conditions, perhaps sweatshops in China or India, or the child labour used by Western clothes manufacturers. We think of people working long hours for little pay in terrible conditions ruthlessly bullied by unscrupulous bosses or gangmasters.

Such "exploitation" is presented to us as exceptional – and contrasted with the "normality" of working life for most people, particularly in countries such as Ireland.

Karl Marx had a different understanding of exploitation. Rather than seeing it as exceptional, he argued that exploitation is fundamental to capitalism.

For Marx, exploitation was not just about the level of wages received,

or working conditions, but about the very process which creates profit or surplus value.

Marx argued that the source of profit is the surplus value created by workers. But Marx went further than that, arguing that the amount of profit is determined by the amount of surplus value extracted from workers.

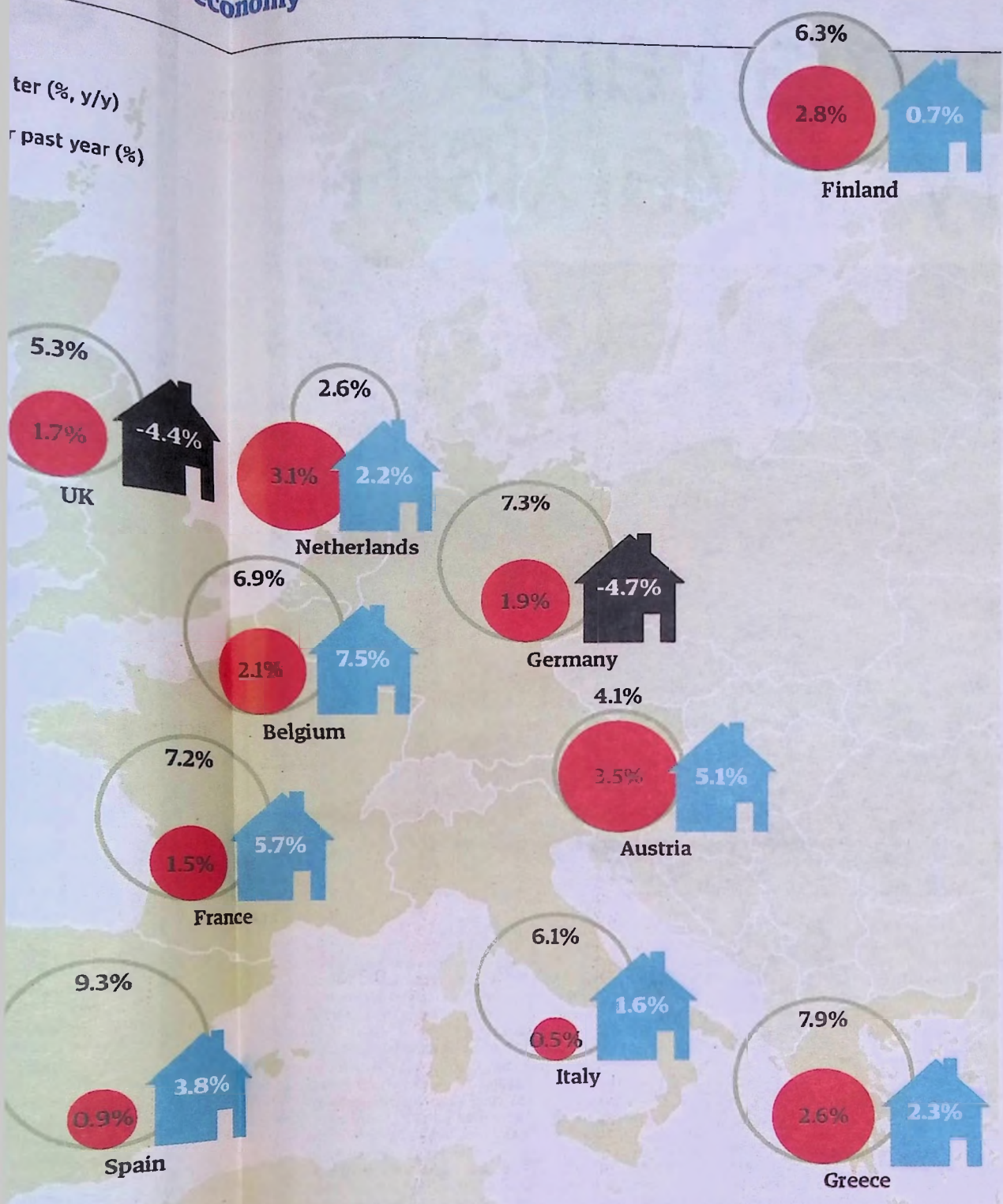
Therefore the demand for higher wages is not a demand for a "fair" share of profit, but a demand for a larger share of the surplus value.

If anything, workers are being exploited because they demand a share of the surplus value that is being taken from them.



It has hit the economy

ter (% y/y)  
past year (%)



# The Credit Crunch and Globalisation

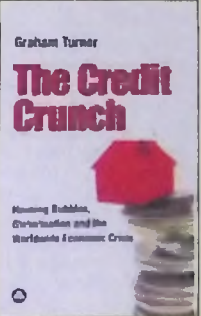
**Economist Graham Turner has written a new book about the credit crunch. Anindya Bhattacharyya spoke to Graham about his analysis**

*ECONOMIC CRISES* are unpredictable. In periods of economic growth there is a powerful ideology at work that insists the good times will last forever. Voices that point to problems ahead tend to be marginalised.

The current "credit crunch" that has hit banks such as Northern Rock and Bear Stearns is no different in this regard. Most economists and politicians did not see it coming and struggle to explain how it has come about.

Graham Turner is an exception to this rule. He is one of the few economists who warned of impending problems in the global economy back when house prices were still rocketing and credit was flowing easily.

His new book, *The Credit Crunch: Housing Bubbles, Globalisation and the Worldwide Economic Crisis*, sets out his views on what is happening, why it has happened and what – if anything – can be done about it.



"The current crisis is an inevitable result of trying to squeeze wages, stemming back to the Thatcherism and Reaganomics of the 1980s," Graham told Socialist Worker.

"What I try and do in this book is to cast the current debt bubble in a historical context. So I go back and talk about the attack on organised labour in the early 1980s onwards as a means of holding down inflation.

"Labour was weakened and capital was strengthened. Corporate dominance emerged, particularly from the early 1990s onwards, as the predominant economic force."

This meant that a larger proportion of the wealth generated by society went to profits for capitalists, rather than wages for workers.

But holding down workers' wages created another problem – they did not have enough spare money to buy all the goods that corporations were producing. The solution to this quandary was to encourage a massive increase in debt, argues Graham.

Workers were encouraged to take out personal credit for their day to day expenditure and mortgages for their housing – all in order to make up for an underlying shortfall in their wages.

This context of wages being held back leading to falling consumption gets omitted from most discussions of credit, he adds.

"There are right wing economists who say it was 'irresponsible lending' to have a housing bubble. Well, maybe – but just to isolate the last five years and forget everything that led us up to that point is incomplete.

"You also hear moralistic arguments that say those in debt need to be 'taught a lesson', and that if you help them out that will just encourage them to get into debt again.

"But the people who have got into debt are often very low income people, or people who have had loans shoved down their throats by the banks. So it's the whole culture that led to this. People wouldn't be borrowing so aggressively if their wages could cover their needs."

Graham stresses that while the collapse of the subprime mortgage market in the US triggered the present crisis, the underlying credit bubble is a worldwide phenomenon – and that is why the crisis has spread so fast.

The popular image of economic cataclysm remains the 1929 Wall Street crash, which ushered in the Great Depression of the 1930s.

But Graham points out that the way that crises play out need not be quite as dramatic. He cites the Japanese banking crisis, which started in the early 1990s and staggered on for over a decade, as an alternative scenario that can be just as damaging.

"Japan was arguably the first demonstration of what happens when you have corporate dominance and a bubble bursts," he says. In Japan's case the initial trouble was when land prices dropped in 1989. This spread to a crash in the property market – and the problems steadily spread out.

"In the early stages people claimed the wider economy wasn't affected. But every year there would be some kind of financial crisis. It started with the small lenders and the more speculative lenders, but then worked its way through the financial system.

"Eventually in November 1997 one of the big city banks, Hokkaido Takushoku, failed. The following year two more major banks went under, then a large life insurance firm. The problems just migrated up the chain."

This led to what Graham calls a "debt trap" – institutions defaulting on their debts, forcing others to mark down the price of their loans to them, which makes them more vulnerable to defaulting to their creditors."

The Japanese institutions reacted to this crisis by cutting wages – and were encouraged to do this by the US. But this triggered further collapses in the stock markets and elsewhere.

Ultimately Graham calls for more rights for workers and trade unions, combined with aggressive cuts in interest rates that he argues could work to "rebalance" the system. He acknowledges that this is a difference he has with Marxist economists.

"Some people would argue you can never get that balance right because the system is fundamentally unstable. I'm not sure whether that is true or not, but what I would say for sure is that you're not going to find out by doing nothing".

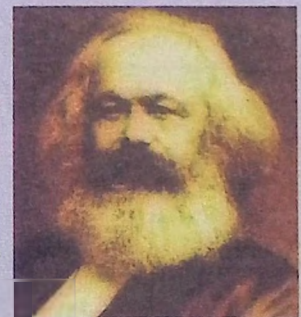
The Credit Crunch by Graham Turner is published by Pluto Press.

## Wages, exploitation and capitalism

THE TERM "exploitation" typically conjures up images of horrendous working conditions, perhaps sweatshops in China or India, or child labour used by Western clothes manufacturers. We think of people working long hours for little pay in terrible conditions ruthlessly exploited by unscrupulous bosses or slave masters. Such "exploitation" is presented as exceptional – and contrasted with the "normality" of working conditions for most people, particularly in countries such as Ireland. Karl Marx had a different understanding of exploitation. Rather than seeing it as exceptional, he argued that exploitation is fundamental to capitalism. For Marx, exploitation was not just about the level of wages received,

or working conditions, but was the very process whereby capitalism creates profit out of the work we do. Marx argued that human labour is the source of all value. At the time many economists agreed with this. But Marx went further – he argued that the amount of value created by people when they work is greater than the amount they receive back in wages. Therefore the capitalist is stealing from workers some of the value that their labour has created. This "surplus value" forms the basis of profit. If anything, we are told that workers are being "greedy" when they demand pay increases over and above what is considered "fair". Such "selfish" pay demands risk the "health of the whole economy", they claim.

But for Marx, this ideology of "free and fair exchange" masks the exploitation built into the capitalist system. It hides the exploitation that goes on every day in a society where a tiny minority of people make vast profits out of the work done by the majority. For example, it may only take four hours of society's total labour to produce the things you and your family require. So by lunchtime, you have covered your wage and by rights you should go home. But you do not stop work then. You go back to work in the afternoon and perhaps do an eight hour day. If four hours of your labour has created enough value to pay your wage, then the capitalist takes the next four hours of work from you for nothing. So exploitation is not an anomaly under capitalism – it is part of the



Karl Marx: Analysed capitalism

normal workings of the system. There is a continual struggle over wages, or the cost of labour power. Battles over pay break out regularly, especially at times when the real cost of living is going up. If exploitation is crucial to capitalism, the logical conclusion is that an end to exploitation would require an end to capitalism.



# Henryk Grossman and the recovery of Marxism

**Rick Kuhn** author of a new book on Henryk Grossman looks at the life and work of an economist who developed Marx's work in capital

HENRYK GROSSMAN was the first person to systematically explore Marx's explanation of economic crises in terms of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

He developed a systematic argument about how capitalism has a tendency to break down, writing in 1929 his book *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System*.

Grossman was born in 1881 to a family of prosperous and assimilated Jewish businesspeople. But he joined the socialist movement in Krakow while still at school. At university he played a prominent role in setting up the Jewish Social Democratic Party (JSDP) that split from the Polish Social Democratic Party (PPSD) because of its increasing nationalism.

The JSDP led a series of strikes which drew a new layer of workers into the socialist movement and in some mixed workplaces organised both Jewish and Polish workers into unions.

## The theory of crisis

Grossman was the first to highlight and endorse Marx's method in Capital. In volume one of Capital Marx emphasised how 'the monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production which has flourished alongside and under it', paving the way for the 'expropriation of the expropriators'. In volume three he explained the specific mechanisms involved.

In their competitive drive to make profits by increasing the productivity of their workers individual capitalists invest a larger and larger proportion of their resources in machinery and equipment (constant capital) and a smaller proportion in wages (variable capital). But it is workers, living labour, not machines that is the source of new value and hence profit. Although more commodities are produced, the rate of profit, that is the ratio of newly created value to bosses' total outlay, tends to decline. Eventually many bosses will stop investing and there will be a crisis.

Of course there are 'counter-tendencies'. Marx and Grossman both identified these. In the course of crises bankrupt capitalists sell their machines off cheap. On the basis of the lower cost of these means of production, their new owners can produce at a profit.

New cheaper sources of raw materials are sought, this explains the drive to imperialism. Bosses can increase the rate of exploitation, by cutting wages or intensifying work or raising the share of profits in total output.

The very process of increasing productivity reduces the value of the food, clothing, shelter and the other commodities workers consume. So, in value terms, employers can pay workers less and still expect them



**Grossman saw his contribution to Marxist economic theory as underpinning his commitment to the idea of working class self emancipation.**

to turn up to work properly nourished, clad and educated. Higher productivity also reduces the value of means of production and thus slows the fall in the rate of profit.

If large amounts of profits are invested in unproductive industries—those that do not produce commodities that go back into the production process as means of production or workers' consumption goods, such as the manufacture of armaments—then this will have a similar effect. Grossman and other Marxists have explained how the effects of these counter-tendencies are short-term fixes. Grossman has demonstrated that no given rate of accumulation can be sustained indefinitely.

Grossman saw his contribution to Marxist economic theory as underpinning his commitment to the idea of working class self emancipation.

Although he ceased to be an active member of the JSDP's leadership in 1908 when he moved to Vienna, he became a member of the Polish Communist Party in Warsaw in 1920.

He became a professor at the Free University of Poland where he was one of the main organisers of the People's University. This was a very important front for the

Polish Communist Party because police repression forced it to operate underground most of the time.

Grossman was arrested five times and spent periods ranging up to eight months in prison. Eventually he was forced into exile in November 1925 and moved to Frankfurt.

Here he produced his best known work on Marx's method and Marxist economics in the period leading up to the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. In his preface to *The Law of Accumulation* Grossman wrote, 'While Marxists have written extensively on the political revolution, they have neglected to deal theoretically with the economic aspect of the question and have failed to appreciate the true content of Marx's theory of breakdown. My sole concern here is to fill this gap in the Marxist tradition.'

Grossman also commented on the relationship between economic crises and class struggle in the final section of his book. This is missing from the English translation, reinforcing the myth that he was a theorist of automatic capitalist breakdown in which the working class played no part.

But a further study by him of Marx's place in the history of economic thought reaffirmed Grossman's longstanding view that 'no economic system, no matter how weakened, collapses by itself in au-

tomatic fashion.

It must be "overthrown"... So called "historical necessity" does not operate automatically, but requires the active participation of the working class in the historical process.'

He also reassessed the sectarian Communist strategy which had prevented a united working class fight against the Nazis in Germany. For a period he was sympathetic to Trotsky's explanation of the 'German catastrophe' and the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. But he swung back to a Stalinist position as the Comintern adopted its 'popular front' strategy and particularly in response to the civil war in Spain.

In 1949 Grossman left New York to take up a chair in political economy at the University of Leipzig in the Soviet zone of Germany. But he continued to stand by his contributions to economic theory, although they were heretical.

Grossman's essays, *The Law of Accumulation* and his study of dynamics were eventually reissued in the 1960s and early 1970s as a new generation of young German revolutionaries began to relate to rising levels of class struggle. Today Grossman's works are more relevant than ever in describing why the system goes into crisis and what role the working class has in offering a solution.

Henryk Grossman and the Recovery of Marxism, University of Illinois Press €20

Further reading  
 • *Economics of the Madhouse*, Chris Haman (€5).  
 An accessible introduction to Marxist economics  
 • *Capital*, Karl Marx.  
 Various editions are available new or second hand  
 • *Marx's Capital*, Ben Fine and Alfredo Saad Filho (€13).  
 The best short account of Capital available



## THE 1930s

## Decade of political polarisation

Matthew Cookson looks at the decade of economic turmoil and political polarisation

**T**HE CRISIS in the financial markets has sent bankers, media and politicians into panic. Many of them have compared the current problems to the economic crash of 1929, which heralded the Great Depression of the 1930s.

"There is a whiff of 1929 about all this," the Financial Times said about the recent fall of the Bear Sterns investment bank in the US.

"This is clearly the worst financial problem we've had since the Great Depression," said Joseph Stiglitz, the former chief economist of the World Bank.

This talk conjures up images of the world heading towards a huge slump with millions of people thrown into unemployment, hunger and poverty.

While no two crises are the same, it is certain that today's bankers and politicians will attempt to make ordinary people bear the load of capitalism's problems, just as they tried during the 1930s.

But the 1930s show that these plans can be resisted. It was a decade of huge struggles across the world. In city after city the forces of hope and despair fought on the streets.

The 1929 crash ushered in a decade of political and economic turmoil. Thousands of banks and companies went bust and millions of lives were torn apart.

By 1931 almost one in three workers in the US were unemployed, while in Germany even more than one in three workers were out of work.

By the end of 1932 world industrial output had fallen by a third.

The US, where the recession began, also saw some of the most inspiring resistance. The pressure on millions of people's living standards provoked a fightback.

Socialists played a crucial role in this resistance, which often met repression from the state and the company bosses.

Farmers fought the police to stop their land being sold off. Unemployed workers protested against the state and the bosses, demanding jobs and funding. School children demonstrated to demand the school system provide them with food.

There were 300,000 members of unemployed self-help organisations in the US. They took part in huge demonstrations across the country.

Workers also joined in the revolt. There were strikes across the US against wage cuts, including a 150,000 strong strike by North Carolina clothing workers in 1932.

There were mass strikes in San Francisco, Toledo and Minneapolis.

On 30 December 1936 over 3,000 workers occupied General Motor's Flint plant in Michigan for union recognition. Their 40-day strike inspired workers in other plants to strike and forced the company to recognise the union.

Workers in other companies followed suit. In 1936 there were 48 of these "sitdown" strikes. In 1937 there were 477 such actions.

These struggles played a crucial role in improving workers' conditions in harsh circumstances, and deterred US bosses from making further attacks on their living standards.

In many parts of the world ruling class attempts to stabilise the system meant coups – including in Japan and many countries in Latin America.

In Germany, the crisis reached such a height that the ruling class invited Nazi Adolf Hitler to form a govern-



ment in January 1933.

The ruling class was terrified of the workers' movement, whose revolution had stopped the First World War, and who still had the power to resist the bosses' attacks.

The Nazis had grown from a small, isolated party in 1928 to the largest party in the German parliament in 1932.

The economic whirlwind had thrown a section of big business – along with millions of people broken by the crisis – into Hitler's arms.

**T**HERE WAS deep polarisation in German society as the crisis hit. The combined support and force of the two left wing parties – the Social

Democratic Party and the Communist Party – was always bigger than that of the Nazis.

But the two parties refused to join forces to resist Hitler and allowed him to come to power with barely a murmur of protest.

The resulting disillusionment of the working class allowed Hitler to crush any resistance and force through a one party state, with the support of Germany's ruling class.

The ultimate result of this was the smashing of the strongest working class in the world, and the nightmare of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

Hitler's victory boosted the confidence of the right across Europe.

French fascists tried to emulate Hitler in 1934. On 6 February a fascist demonstration became an attack on the recently formed "left of centre" government.

The prime minister resigned the



On 30 December 1936 over 3,000 workers occupied General Motor's Flint plant in Michigan for union recognition.

next day.

But workers responded to the fascist rising. Five million workers joined a general strike. Separate demonstrations by the Socialist Party and

the Communist Party converged in unity.

This threw the fascists back and boosted the support for the left. In 1936 a left government was elected,

which included Socialists.

A strike wave greeted the victory, including the occupation of Renault's plant at Billancourt in Paris. This helped win real gains for workers – such as a 40-hour week and two weeks paid holiday.

Spain saw the highest point of resistance in the 1930s – and also showed the possibility of running society differently.

A general strike in 1931 helped to abolish Spain's monarchy and establish a republic. In 1934, 20,000 Asturian miners rose up against a right wing government taking office.

They occupied their valleys and fought the military for two weeks before they were defeated.

**W**ORKERS RESPONDED by electing a left wing Popular Front government in 1936. But the military, led by general Francisco Franco, launched a coup against the government.

It wanted to smash the new republic and all resistance. But workers rallied to the cause of the republic and stopped the coup.

For a short time workers in many parts of the republic took over their workplaces and peasants took control of the land.

Ordinary people across the world were inspired by the Spanish people's anti-fascist war. They fought to defend the isolated republic for three years, before the Nazi-armed forces of Franco finally won.

In Britain there was grassroots opposition to the wage, pension and welfare cuts. Unemployed workers rioted, and there was a mutiny by sailors at Invergordon in response to the attacks.

The Communist Party launched the National Unemployed Workers Movement, which at its height mobilised demonstrations of 250,000 people.

The slump increased the tensions between states as well as between classes, leading to the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939.

Capitalists wanted to grab resources beyond their national borders. Countries without empires, such as Hitler's Germany, looked to expand their influence.

This brought them into conflict with the dominant powers such as the US, Britain and the Soviet Union.

The war, and the massive state investment needed to conduct it and rebuild afterwards, was the means by which capitalism finally escaped from the Great Depression. But capitalism's recovery had come at a huge human cost.

The crisis today is not yet as deep as in the 1930s. But the system is facing major problems.

A global recession will intensify existing tensions between states.

The last decade has been marked by US imperialism leading to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

These have been driven not by the strength of the US but by its underlying economic weakness.

Economic crisis is built into capitalism – a system based on the competition of corporations who put profit above all.

A crisis can lead to devastation for millions, but it can also lead to a huge anger and resistance to the system.

Socialist ideas, which expose the madness of capitalism and point towards a different society, can play a large part in this resistance.



"They Are Slaughtering Somalis Like Goats"

# Bush's Rampage in Somalia

By MIKE WHITNEY

WHILE GEORGE Bush was breezing through photo-ops at the G-8 summit in Japan; his Ethiopian proxy-army in Somalia was grinding out more carnage on the streets of Mogadishu.

On Sunday, Osman Ali Ahmed, the head of the UN Development Program in Somalia, was shot gangland style as he left a mosque after prayers. He died before reaching the hospital with wounds to the head and chest. Ali Ahmed is just the latest of the peace-keepers who have been killed in the ongoing battle between Bush's Ethiopian occupiers and the Somali guerrillas.

US foreign policy in Somalia has resulted in disaster. Millions of Somalis have been forced to flee their homes and relocate to tent cities in the south to escape the fighting.

The latest surge in violence has been the worst in a decade and the security situation continues to deteriorate despite the arrival of 2,600 troops from the African Union and a tentative truce that was signed in June between some of the warring factions.

The western media has stubbornly refused to report on the rising death-toll in Somalia, choosing instead to focus all of their attention on America's "villain du jour", Robert Mugabe. Mugabe appears to be next on the neocon's list for regime change. (Paul Wolfowitz even composed a postmortem for Zimbabwe's president in a recent Wall Street Journal editorial "How to Put the Heat on Mugabe")

In 2006, the United States supported an alliance of Somali warlords known as the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) who established a base of operations in the western city of Baidoa.

With the help of the US-backed Ethiopian army, western mercenaries, US Navy warships, and AC-130 gunships; the TFG was able to capture Mogadishu and force the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and their allies to retreat to the south.

But, much like Iraq and Afghanistan, the resistance has coalesced into a tenacious guerrilla army which has returned to the capital and resumed the fight making it impossible for their Ethiopian adversaries to govern.

As the struggle continues, the hu-



Students in Addis Ababa protest against fraud in Ethiopia's elections in June 2005. The protest movement was gunned down by the army (Pic: Andrew Heavens)

manitarian situation has gone from bad to worse. At least 2.6 million Somalis are now facing famine due to acute food shortages spurred by a prolonged drought, violence and high inflation. UN monitors have warned that the figure could hit exceed 3.5 million by the end of 2008.

The UN Security Council has helped facilitate the violence by failing to condemn US support for Ethiopia's invasion and by promising to send peacekeepers to mop up after fighting ends.

They've shown no interest in stopping the bloodshed or threatening sanctions against the aggressors. The UNSC has become little more than an accomplice in Bush's rampages.

In an interview with Amy Goodman on Democracy Now, Salim Lone, a

columnist for the Daily Nation in Kenya and a former spokesperson for the UN mission in Iraq explains the UN's role in providing the "go ahead" for the US invasion:

"The lawlessness of this particular war is astounding; the most lawless war of our generation.

"You know, all aggressive wars are illegal. But in this particular one, there have been violations of the UN Charter and gross violations of international human rights. But, in addition, there have been very concrete violations by the United States of two Security Council resolutions.

"The first one was the arms embargo imposed on Somalia, which the United States has been routinely flaunting for many years now.

"But then the US decided that that

resolution was no longer useful, and they pushed through an appalling resolution in December, which basically gave the green light to Ethiopia to invade.

"They pushed through a resolution which said that the situation in Somalia was a threat to international peace and security, at a time when every independent report indicated that the Islamic Courts Union had brought a high level of peace and stability that Somalia had not enjoyed in sixteen years.

"So here was the UN Security Council going along with the American demand to pass a blatantly falsified UN resolution. And that resolution actually was a violation of the UN Charter. You know, the UN Charter is like the American Constitution and the Security Council is not allowed to pass laws

or rules that violate the Charter. And yet, who is going to correct them?" (Democracy Now)

The Bush administration has predictably invoked the "terrorist" hobgoblin to justify its involvement in Somalia, but no one is buying it. The ICU is not an Al Qaida affiliate or a terrorist organization despite the absurd claims of the State Department. It is true that the ICU was trying to enforce Sharia Law, but a much milder form of Sharia than America's ally, Saudi Arabia.

The ICU was the first government in over a decade to restore security and order to Somalia and--generally speaking--the people were supportive of the new regime.

Political analyst James Petras summed it up like this:

"The ICU was a relatively honest administration, which ended warlord corruption and extortion. Personal safety and property were protected, ending arbitrary seizures and kidnappings by warlords and their armed thugs. The ICU is a broad multi-tendency movement that includes moderates and radical Islamists, civilian politicians and armed fighters, liberals and populists, electoralists and authoritarians. Most important, the Courts succeeded in unifying the country and creating some semblance of nationhood, overcoming clan fragmentation."

The real motives behind the invasion were oil and geopolitics. According to most estimates 30 per cent of America's oil will come from Africa in the next ten years.

Bush's new warlord-friends in the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) have already indicated that they are ready to pass a new oil law that will encourage foreign oil companies to return to Somalia.

The same oil giants that are now lining up in Iraq will soon be making their way to Somalia as well.

The Horn of Africa is also critical for its deep-water ports and its strategic location for future military bases. It's all part of the Grand Schema for reconfiguring the region to accommodate America's hegemonic ambitions.

Regrettably, neither the United Nations nor the establishment media are at all interested in Bush's war crimes in Africa. All they care about is Mugabe.

## Humanitarian Catastrophe: 'The Ethiopian invasion has destroyed all the life-sustaining systems'

HEAVY FIGHTING and artillery fire have reduced large parts of Mogadishu to rubble. More than 700,000 people have been forced to leave the capital with nothing more than what they can carry on their backs.

Entire districts have been evacuated and turned into ghost towns. The main hospital has been bombed and is no longer taking patients. Ethiopian snipers are perched atop rooftops across the city.

Over 3.5 million people are now huddled in the south in tent cities without sufficient food, clean water or medical supplies. It is the greatest humanitarian crisis in Africa today; a man-made Hell entirely conjured up in Washington.

Just weeks ago, Amnesty International reported that it had heard many accounts that Ethiopian troops were "slaughtering (Somalis) like goats." In one case, "a young child's throat was slit by Ethiopian

soldiers in front of the child's mother."

In another Democracy Now interview, Abdi Samatar, professor of Global Studies at the University of Minnesota, had this to say:

"The Ethiopian invasion, which was sanctioned by the US government, has destroyed virtually all the life-sustaining economic systems which the population have built without the government for the last fifteen years. And the militia that are supposed to protect the population have been looting shops. For instance, the Bakara market, which is the largest market in Mogadishu, has been looted repeatedly by the militias of the so-called Transitional Federal Government of Somalia, supported by Ethiopian troops. And the new prime minister of Somalia, Mr. Hassan Nur Hussein, has himself announced in the BBC that it was his militias that—who have looted this place. So what you have is a

population that's hit from both sides--on one side, by the militias of the so-called Transitional Federal Government, which is recognized by the United States, and on the other side, by the Ethiopian invaders who seem to be bent on ensuring that they break the will of the people to resist as free people in their own country.... What you have is really terror in the worst sense of the word, a million people have been displaced that the Ethiopians have been denying humanitarian aid, and the United States which seems to just watch and let it happen.

It's like there's has been a calculated decision made somewhere in the world, maybe in Washington, maybe in Addis Ababa, maybe in Mogadishu itself, to starve these people until they submit themselves to the whims of the American military and the Ethiopians, who are acting on their behalf."

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# Afghanistan's history of invasion and resistance



Afghanistan was a pawn in the Cold War between US and Russia

**The US and NATO lead occupation of Afghanistan is facing growing resistance. Increasingly bold attacks on US and NATO forces have forced them on to the defensive and analysts say coalition forces are now stretched to deal with deteriorating fronts both in the south and the east.**

**In mid July 200 resistance fighters overran a US base in the East of the country. There is also increasing tension between the US backed Afghan government and Pakistan.**

**Imperialist invasions have scarred Afghanistan's history over the last three centuries.**

**Here Simon Basketter writes about how the great powers' plans have been thwarted by resistance**

In March 1836 Lord Auckland, the British governor of India, wrote to the Afghan ruler Amir Dost Mohammed with no apparent sense of irony, "You are aware that it is not the practice of the British government to interfere with the affairs of other independent states."

Afghanistan would be a far better place today if he had been telling the truth. Afghanistan's entire history is one of attempts by imperial powers to dominate it.

A kingdom of Afghanistan was founded in 1747. Under the auspices of the East India Company, Britain made repeated attempts to force Afghanistan under its domination throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

France and Russia planned a combined invasion of India in 1807. This threat induced the British to come to an agreement with the Afghan rulers.

In 1809 the British government covered up the East India Company's influence over the outbreak of war in Afghanistan, even producing false documents to justify the war.

As the revolutionary Karl Marx noted, "Palmerston [the British prime minister] had undertaken war without the knowledge of the parliament. The Afghan war was mitigated and justified by forged documents."

The British described what developed, arrogantly and preposterously, as "the

great game".

It was a rivalry over who controlled India. And Afghanistan was the route to India.

Russia and Britain were in competition over who dominated the region. The arrival of a Russian diplomatic mission to Kabul in 1868 saw the British return.

They sent an ambassador with an escort of 300 soldiers.

The Afghan army had not been paid for months. The rumour spread that the British would pay the army.

Some of the troops marched all the way from Herat at the other end of the country and presented themselves at the gates of the British embassy for their pay.

Wiped out  
They were refused and then wiped out the 300 soldiers, and so began the Second Afghan War.

The British invaded with force and considerable brutality.

They were met with a general uprising in Kabul. At the decisive battle of Maiwand near Kandahar, they were defeated.

They negotiated their withdrawal in 1881, recognising Abdur Rahman as the new king. The British gave him a generous subsidy for the next 20 years until his death.

Henry Mortimer Durand, a secretary of foreign affairs of the British government

in India, arrived in November 1893.

A huge British force assembled on Afghanistan's eastern and southern borders.

Abdur Rahman agreed to a new frontier of Afghanistan. The new border was what is called the Durand line and it deprived Afghanistan of about one third of its population.

The British redrew Afghanistan's borders so that they excluded any fertile land.

They created a poor state, and by giving their clients cash and guns enabled them to shape that state.

Afghanistan remained a British protectorate until the Third Afghan War of 1919.

After the workers' revolution in Russia in 1917 the Bolshevik government made clear that it had no imperial designs on Afghanistan.

In 1919 King Amanullah took the throne and led the country into war with British India.

The British were exhausted by the First World War and losing their grip on India.

As Afghan fighters shot at British planes from the mountain tops, the British capitulated within days and Afghanistan won a level of "independence" in foreign affairs.



**AFTER THE** Second World War and the independence of India, Britain declined as an imperial power and the US replaced it.

The Cold War saw both the US and the Soviet Union try to gain influence in Afghanistan. By now Stalinist Russia bore no relation to the revolutionary country of 1917 that had no imperial designs on other states.

During the 1950s and 1960s Afghanistan had one of the highest rates of aid per head in the world. The government remained neutral, emphasised the country's strategic position, and raked in the cash from all sides.

The Afghan airforce flew Russian MIGs, but the pilots were trained in the US. The government used the planes and army to bomb and shoot Afghan people who took part in a whole series of local rebellions.

A left grew through the 1960s and 1970s but it lacked a base and found itself looking to change from above.

In 1978 a Communist coup led to a civil war. The government carried out some limited measures that benefited women and the poor, but it brutally repressed all opposition.

This pro-Russian government collapsed in 1979 after 18 months in power, and Russian leader Leonid Brezhnev sent in troops. They occupied the country, took over the government and fought a colonial war.

The Russians invaded to ensure that Afghanistan remained friendly to them.

Their motives were exactly the same as those of British imperialism and the US today – to protect their imperialist interests.

Russia had four Central Asian republics bordering Afghanistan – what are now the countries of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. If Afghanistan fell to insurrection, they might follow.

The Soviet invasion was a disaster for the people of Afghanistan. There were eight years of bitter war.

Because the resistance had the support of the people, the Russians could only fight back with repression.

They used bombers, hundreds of thousands of land mines, helicopter gunships and napalm. Roughly a million Afghans died, out of a population of 25 million.

Opium production in Afghanistan took off in 1979 as the whole economy collapsed. The US supported elements of the Afghan resistance in the 1980s to destabilise Russia as part of the Cold War.

The superpowers kept the war going until 1989, when Russian troops were finally forced to leave. Around six million Afghans had been forced to flee to refugee camps in neighbouring Pakistan and Iran.

The US government had poured billions of dollars of military aid in the 1980s and then cut it off in the 1990s after the defeat and collapse of Russia.

It wanted nothing more to do with a country that was no longer any use after the end of the Cold War.

Local powers encouraged civil war and in 1994 the Taliban, which had grown up in the refugee camps, invaded from Pakistan, supported by the US. Pakistani military support and Saudi money followed.

While the country was ravaged by famine and war, the US could not leave Afghanistan alone. In 1998 Bill Clinton bombed the country.

And then after 9/11 the US chose the weakest, least defended and most desperate place to attack – Afghanistan.

Seven years on imperial occupation has further destroyed the lives of the Afghan people, and the Afghans are again resisting an imperial occupation.

Afghan society can only be transformed in the interests of the mass of the people by workers and peasants taking their lives into their own hands.

Achieving this will require the final expulsion of all imperialist forces from the country.



# Muqtada: The next leader of Iraq?



Followers of Muqtada al-Sadr in Iraq

By SARA O'ROURKE

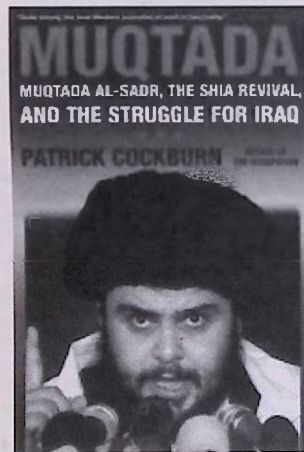
THIS OCTOBER will see elections across Iraq. The recent invasions by Al-Maliki government troops, backed by the US, of the working class estates of Sadr City in Baghdad and of Basra in southern Iraq were an attempt to smash the Al-Sadr movement.

Al-Sadr fighters didn't rise to the bait, instead they simply melted away which to a large extent explains the success of the US 'surge'.

The US and its puppet government fear the Al-Sadr alliance will be the clear victors in October elections and could ignite a new wave of resistance in Iraq.

Muqtada: Muqtada al-Sadr, the Shia Revival, and the Struggle for Iraq by Patrick Cockburn examines the history of the man and the movement.

The book is somewhat misleading in its title as it is not just the story of rebel leader Muqtada Al-Sadr but the



story of the Iraqi peoples' long history of oppression and resistance.

While there are many books on Iraq

and the Middle East this one is unusual in its portrayal of the people who resist day to day and those who form the organised and disorganised popular base of the resistance movement.

He paints a series of pictures. Thousands on pilgrimage on the road to Kerbala, answering Muqtada's call to commemorate a battle fought 1400 years ago where the Shia Martyr Imam Hussein was killed by invaders from Damascus. In his own words "It is a tale too, of a righteous minority against a powerful but evil government authority."

He describes Shias as having as religious commitment, solidarity as a community and ability to mobilise vast numbers and this is the theme or central question in the book- Muqtada's appeal to such huge numbers willing to answer his call to fight which is not merely the power of an individual but the power of the history and culture of what came before him, particularly

his father.

There is much detail and analysis of the Shia uprising of 1991 when over 100,000 people died. He sets the scene describing battles and quoting ordinary Iraqis he meets on his travels just afterwards. His belief is that the gap between Shia and Sunni widened immeasurably following a savage retaliation by Saddams's government. For Cockburn the differences are political rather than religious. Interestingly he says that the Shia were not trying to break-up Iraq along religious lines as many other commentators have claimed but were just fighting for their fair share of power within it. At the time the US claimed to be preventing the break-up of Iraq and did not intervene when Saddam massacred thousands. This of course was code for supporting the Sunnis and Saddam and is more than ironic when you consider all that has happened since.

It is interesting how he portrays the

movement of Shias as something that both Saddam and the US feared more than any other force in the Middle East. He claims that it was the mass impoverishment of the Iraqis and the Saddam governments failure to anything about it which was the essential pre-condition for the rise of Muqtada's father Muhammad Sadiq in the 1990s and Muqtada himself after the US invasion.

My main disagreement is that is that he is not critical enough of the US and he sees no hope for the future of Iraq, saying it will disintegrate into a loose federation.

This book is worth reading to gain an insight into a movement that is often labelled terrorist and it shows Muqtada as a skilful political leader and not the firebrand cleric the US would have us see him. While Cockburn is pessimistic I find the portrayal of the resistance against the US inspiring. It is still strong and growing stronger despite five years of occupation.

## Wall-E: A robots' eye view of love, rubbish and Earthly crisis

by SIAN RUDDICK

THIS FILM is about a small, rather mucky robot called WALL-E whose main purpose is to compress and stack cubes of rubbish.

The corporation Buy N Large that dominated the lives of humans on Earth has fulfilled its promise of taking humans far away from the mess they created.

It has transported civilisation onto a space ship of corporate overkill - where the same logo that pokes out, rotting and rusty from the mounds of garbage on Earth, flashes from every part of the spaceship.

The film taps into widespread concerns about

the planet and environmental destruction.

Buy N Large advertisements still flicker in the gloom on Earth boasting how "there's plenty of space in Space" to dump rubbish.

The film also nods to the idea that we are living in a world of disposable over-consumption.

So as WALL-E sorts the junk each day, things that catch his robot eye are stored in his shed. Among these are circuit boards he uses to repair himself, bubble wrap, rubix cubes and an ipod.

This shows both the virtues of recycling and a critique of the society that creates all this stuff.

When EVE, a smooth modern robot, arrives to scan

for life on Earth, WALL-E is for a short time terrified, then swiftly falls in love - inspired by the repeated clip of Hello Dolly that his video player shows.

When the humans, floating in corporate space, hear that EVE has discovered a tiny plant, they set out back to Earth.

While this film certainly captures the danger the current system poses to the planet, it doesn't say who's to blame or what to do about it.

But it is a very enjoyable film for children and adults alike, with a fantastic soundtrack and animation. I highly recommend it - and I don't even like cartoons!

WALL-E At cinemas now

## CSNY Déjà Vu

by NICK GRANT

THIS DOCUMENTARY follows the US Freedom of Speech tour by 60-something rocker Nell Young in autumn 2006, supported by his legendary chums David Crosby, Stephen Stills and Graham Nash who comprise CSNY.

It was intended to showcase Young's Living With War protest album about Iraq, but was augmented by some of the back catalogue of songs about Vietnam.

So the title Déjà Vu refers not only to CSNY's 1970 album, but also to a sense of having to revisit Vietnam-era protests.



The highlights are the interviews with fans who show the kind of radical politics so rarely represented in the US mainstream media.

Musically, however, this is a frustrating and sad movie. We never get to hear a complete tune and, especially in Stills' case, the unquely harmonic

voices are shot.

Young may have done better not to have called in his old mates. He's doing just fine on his own.

Young's website showcases thousands of anti-war songs and articles, graphs, photos and video links. Go to - [www.nellyoung.com/lwtoday/Index.html](http://www.nellyoung.com/lwtoday/Index.html)



BOOK

REVIEWS

# The Road Home

Matt Cook reviews *The Road Home*, Rose Tremain's prize winning novel about a migrant worker's life



MIGRANT WORKERS make a huge contribution to life in Ireland and Britain, keeping public services, industry and agriculture running.

Yet they are generally depicted in the media as a burden on society - "undesirables" who clog up resources and hog public services.

So it is a relief to see the sympathetic depiction of migrant workers contained in Rose Tremain's latest novel *The Road Home*, which has just been released in paperback.

*The Road Home* has attracted praise from the critics and won this year's Orange Prize for women's fiction. It tells the story of Lev, a 42-year old man from an unnamed eastern European country who comes to England to look for work.

The novel begins with the quote "How can we live, without our lives?" from *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck's 1930s novel about economic migrants. Like Steinbeck's great work, *The Road Home* empathises

with its main protagonists.

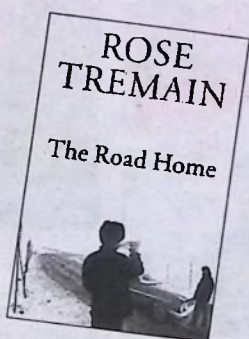
Lev is leaving behind the desolation of his village. The sawmill he worked at has closed down, because all the trees in the surrounding area have been cut down. This mirrors the devastation in his own life after his wife Marina dies of leukaemia.

Still in mourning for her, Lev comes to London to earn money to send back to his mother Ina and daughter Maya. Lev's desperation to provide for them conflicts with his feelings of guilt at being away from home.

Tremain skilfully uses Lev's viewpoint as a stranger in England to analyse the problems of our society - celebrity culture, individualism, greed and materialism.

London is nothing like Lev imagined it would be before he came. He finds few friends and allies among British people. But he is helped and befriended by other migrants, recent and not so recent.

Lev grows close to Christy



Slade, an Irish plumber who becomes his landlord, through their joint loneliness in the strangeness of London. Both are distanced from their young daughters and struggling to begin a new life.

*The Road Home* is beautifully written, like all of Tremain's previous work, most of which are historical novels. It is impressive that she has decided to explore the life of a migrant worker. Lev's internal life and personal history are rendered

convincingly. But where the novel does fall down is in its depiction of the lives of migrant workers in Europe. Most face harsh treatment from gangmasters and ruthless employers who want to squeeze as much from them as possible.

Lev's experience is very different to this. With the help of his friend Lydia, who is a fluent English speaker, he finds a job as a kitchen porter at a trendy restaurant.

There he meets Sophie, who works in the kitchen at the restaurant and they embark on a tempestuous relationship. She reawakens his sexual desires, which had lain dormant since the death of his wife.

Lev is thrust into the world of Sophie's friends, who are incredibly successful playwrights and artists. His angry and violent reaction to a play about incest by one of Sophie's friends leads to the end of both his relationship and his job at the restaurant.

But Lev's time at the restaur-

ant has given him the idea of becoming a chef and opening up a restaurant in the city near his hometown. He attempts to redeem himself and to save his family and friends from a life of dispossession and poverty.

All this tends towards accepting the notion that migrants can earn huge amounts of money through sheer hard work - and extreme good fortune in Lev's case. Lev can return to his home country and realise his dreams in a society being transformed for the better by capitalism - although some people have to pay the price for that.

But perhaps it's overly critical to be disappointed in a work of fiction for being unrealistic. In spite of the frustrations I had, the underlying tone of sadness and emotional authenticity of the novel won me over. *The Road Home* is a captivating read that draws you into Lev's life and loves. Tremain is to be credited for that.

*The Road Home* by Rose Tremain £7.99 (Stg).

ALBUM:  
Work And  
Dignity - Ned  
Ludd



WORK AND Dignity (Lavoro e Dignita) is the debut album from Italian band Ned Ludd and is now available in this country. It fuses radical politics with folk traditions and punk rock attitude.

The band comprises over 20 performers, including musicians from Ireland, Scotland, and Canada. They cite Scots folk singer Dick Gaughan as an inspiration, alongside The Clash, Public Enemy, Bruce Springsteen and Pete Seeger.

Work And Dignity can be ordered from the Four Dogs Music website at [www.fourdogsmusic.co.uk](http://www.fourdogsmusic.co.uk)

JOURNAL:



## International Socialism

THE NEW issue of *International Socialism Journal* is now available from Socialist Worker. Militant atheism has never enjoyed much popularity in Ireland. But two vehemently anti-religious books have found their way on to the bestsellers lists - *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins and the other *God is not Great* by Christopher Hitchens.

In a major article John Molyneux outlines the Marxist view on religion.

Price increases, inflation, and a falling stock market indicate the level of crisis that capitalism faces. Jin Kincaid writes on the dynamics of capitalism, and explores some of the reasons for the crisis, which should be of interest to everyone on the left today.

Soaring prices have sparked the biggest food crisis for 35 years, with starvation threatening a hundred million people across the world. Carlo Morelli locates the roots of the crisis in the policies of the IMF, speculation and the effects of capitalist agriculture on small and medium farmers throughout the Global South.

Plus articles on Zimbabwe, the election results in England and Italy, the wave of strikes and student struggles in Greece, together with reviews on climate change, Russian history, the absence of a US labour party, ancient Rome, and the CIA and George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Copies are available from SWP, Box 1648, James St., Dublin 8. €8.50 (incl. p & p).



€1.00/£0.70

NO 288 : AUGUST 2008



Iris Robinson: Bigot

# MAKE BIGOTRY HISTORY

by SEÁN MITCHELL

IRIS ROBINSON'S MP for Strangford and chair of the Northern Ireland's health committee has revealed her true colours in recent weeks.

She disgustingly said that gay people repulse her.

On the Nolan show she suggested that she knew a "lovely psychiatrist" who could "cure" gay people.

Horrifyingly she was to go further, suggesting that homosexuality is an abomination on a comparable scale

to child abuse.

Iris Robinson has no place in progressive society.

She's sees it as governments duty to uphold "God's law" as she put it.

She is motivated only by hatred and bigotry.

What message does her comments send out to young people, gay and straight about their absolute right to have partners of their own choosing and about the validity of those choices?

When Robinson was making her original remarks she was in fact responding to horrific attack on Stephen Scott who suffered multiple broken bones in an attack.

What message does she send out to those bigots who think it is acceptable to attack gays and lesbians?

She is fuelling the fans of hatred, if not perpetrating them.

The reaction from other politicians in the Assembly was equally as reprehensible as Robinson's comments.

Whilst some criticism was leveled,

her colleagues all failed to call on her to resign.

She is the chair of the Health Committee at the Assembly, it is ludicrous to suggest that she can represent everyone equally on that committee. She must go.

Thankfully, this only tells part of the story in Northern Ireland. Bigots like Iris Robinson are the minority.

The vast majority of people welcome respect for all our rights to enjoy our sexuality freely, whether it

is through better access to contraceptives and sex education or the right to civil partnership.

On Saturday 2nd of August thousands of people will converge of Belfast city centre for the annual Gay Pride event.

The day is a celebration of identity and diversity.

All of those who are against bigotry, hatred and homophobia should join the event and send a clear message hate filled figures like Iris Robinson are not wanted.

# Join the growing pay revolt

FOLLOWING ON from the two-day strike action by public sector workers, more strikes are expected throughout the summer and autumn.

Unions have warned the government that they are ready to continue the fight against Gordon Browns pay freeze.

NIPSA assistant General Secretary Brian Campfield spoke to Socialist Worker

"The Unions will be quickly considering when to step up the action. You can expect more strike action in the coming summer and autumn.

Asked if he believed members of NIPSA still wanted to fight

'I think so. If the workers accept the offer then it will be a reduction in pay.

"There is a determination to secure a proper pay increase."

Other unions are preparing to fight the pay freeze.



On the picket line in Belfast



Brian Campfield: 'Expect more strike action'



Patricia McKeown: 'Obviously the pay offer was rejected'

Patricia McKeown, Regional Secretary of Union, spoke for her members

"Obviously the pay offer was rejected by the Union members, there was an especially high turn

out within Northern Ireland. Low paid workers in particular where in favour of taking strike action - as it is mostly lower paid workers who are affected by this deal"

She said, "by next week hopefully we will find out what further action the Union is going to take"

On the 23rd of July members of the PCS union in the Identity and Passport Service also took industrial action. Belfast's passport office shut down with picket lines on site.

This came only days after coast-guard workers from the same union took action.

**Explaining the economic crisis**  
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