

BAILOUTS FOR THE RICH CUTBACKS FOR WORKERS



WOULD ANY sane person bail out a bank in order to take control of its debts but not its profits? No. Yet that's exactly what Brian Cowen is currently doing.

The collapse of Irish bank shares panicked the Irish government into announcing that they will guarantee the debts of the banks.

Initial headlines were about the guarantees of people's savings but something more fundamental and dodgy is going on.

The deal shows how bailing out the banks causes as many problems as it solves, while transferring money from the public to the bankers.

Most households have either no savings at all or savings of less than a few thousand Euros. Guaranteeing banks is simply another way of transferring public money to the rich.

Irish banks get about a third of their funds by borrowing from foreign banks. What precipitated the crisis was that overseas banks stopped lending to them.

The Irish housing boom was fo-

cused extremely heavily on building development. That construction boom has shuddered to a halt. Ireland was the first country in Europe to officially go into recession and unemployment is rising fast.

Property speculation

Irish banks are currently owed €110 billion by builders and developers. Of every €100 that Irish residents have deposited in banks, €60 has been lent for property speculation.

In particular, very little of the €25 billion lent to builders to construct the new estates and apartment blocks – that will now not be sold – will be paid back.

To put these numbers in perspective, €20 billion is twice the market value of Bank of Ireland shares; while €100 billion is the approximate value of all public deposits with Irish retail banks.

Between them, the Irish banks owe their depositors, other banks and bondholders almost €400 billion. That's more than twice the value

of Ireland's total annual economic output and 10 times the total Irish national debt.

The Irish government has guaranteed the banks without knowing the full scale of their debts. Everything the banks say about the debts they possess is being taken on trust.

By insuring the borrowing of banks with toxic assets the Irish government has taken up where the collapsed US insurer AIG left off. It was by guaranteeing to cover any losses to institutions that lent to client banks, what was called monoline insurance, that the world's largest insurance company went bankrupt.

The most likely scenario is that the Irish banks will now bundle their bad debts and sell them backed by a guarantee from the Irish government. When the debt isn't repaid the Irish government will have to pay the bill.

The end of the Irish boom has not seen the end of pay restraint or government's backing the rich and the budget has announced more at-

tacks on the public sector.

In this context the protection for depositors is a red herring. Of course each bank wants as much money going into their coffers rather than their rivals. In a climate of panic there will be a flow of rich individuals putting their spare cash into Irish Banks but this will be nowhere enough to cover the toxic debts the Irish government has just guaranteed.

Complaining

Other EU banks are complaining about not getting the same deal as the Irish not because they are that worried about savings accounts but they see the scam the Irish banks have pulled off.

Instead of bailing out the banks they should be nationalised and their assets seized. The Irish banks were the most profitable in Europe for over 20 years. They made billions from low taxes and high charges. The wealth of the rich has not disappeared, they just ant workers to pay for their crisis.

Nationalisation for the public good would involve nationalising to protect jobs and to stop repossessions. It would involve using the huge amounts of cash held in the banks to build affordable council homes. Those properties bought up to rent by speculators and that are now being bailed out, should be allocated to people on the housing waiting list.

For three decades we've been told by politicians that the way of the market was the only way. Socialism was simply off the agenda. But as banks crash and shares collapse it's clear that the way of the market is to make working people pick up the bill. We should refuse to pay.

The immediate battle is to beat Cowen's attempt to impose below-inflation pay limits on public sector workers.

But we also need to argue that a system based on the working class deciding what is spent and what is invested – real socialism – is the only solution to this mess.

Mugged by the budget: Vote no to the pay deal

By KIERAN ALLEN, SIPTU Education Branch (per/cap)

BRIAN LENIHAN has introduced worst and most anti working class budget in decades

■ His 1% levy on all PAYE workers is taken from gross pay. He could have hit those with incomes of greater than €100k harder not those instead

to attack those on lower pay.

■ VAT increases: Ireland already has one of the highest rates of VAT in Europe. The VAT hike will hit working class with yet more price increases.

■ He has increased class sizes but cut back book allowance for disadvantaged children.

Why should we be "partners" with

this government?

Huge debate in unions

The is a massive debate in taking place in the trade union movement. This is reflected for example with the country's largest union, SIPTU.

The SIPTU NEC was set to recommend the national agreement the day following the budget. But

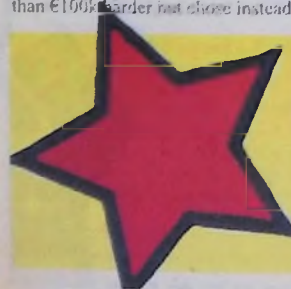
they deferred a decision while they tried to persuade the government to remove the income levy on those earning less than €23k

At a recent Consultative Conference of SIPTU delegate after delegate rose to denounce the agreement. In one example a delegate from Waterford told the conference that a meeting of shop stewards in

Waterford only one spoke in favour of the agreement with the rest against.

The SIPTU leadership is so worried by opposition among rank and file members that it is making a show of trying to extract extra concessions from government.

Continued on page three



Marxism 2008 Conference
7,8,9 November Royal Dublin Hotel
Turn to page 8 for full details

Victory for Mount Carmel strikers

By KIERAN ALLEN

NEARLY SEVENTY SIPTU members at Mount Carmel private hospital have won their strike against their jobs being outsourced.

The catering staff provided a regular menu of up to five freshly cooked dishes to the wealthy patients that used the hospital.

But in a cost-cutting move, their owners Harlequin Healthcare handed over their jobs to a subsidiary of Campbell Catering.

No agreement was reached with the staff and no guarantees were given. Instead the staff was simply told that the number of patients they would service would have to double. Every attempt by the workers to get answers to simple questions about their future met with a 'we don't know' response.

Harlequin was founded by

Jerry Conlon, who made a fortune during the boom years by selling land in Kildare. His board of directors included Richard Conroy, a staunch Fianna Fail supporter who runs a number of oil, gold and diamond exploration companies.

Harlequin began life running St Joseph's Hospital in Sligo and the Aut Even Hospital in Kilkenny but then took over Mount Carmel, which as originally an exclusive private maternity hospital.

The hospital had been sold by a group of nuns who specified that it had to remain as a hospital for at least five years. It is believed that Harlequin incurred considerable debt in taking over the hospital and thought they could recoup it through property development on the site.

After the property crash, however, they changed strat-

egy and now seem intent on attacking conditions of their staff.

As soon as the strike began, Harlequin turned to a recruitment agency Noel Recruitment and 3 Q to provide agency workers to scab on the strike.

SIPTU members responded immediately by placing pickets on the office of these 'recruitment' agencies.

Then, bizarrely, the boss of Campbell Catering tried a new tactic. He turned up on the picket lines with Mars Bars and sweets to urge the staff to return to work.

The 'let then eat cake' approach didn't work. The workers won their case in the Labour Court to defend their jobs and conditions. The strike shows that outsourcing and job cuts can be stopped by strong trade union action.



Health Protest in Dublin in October

pic: Paula Geraghty

No bright lights in the Dail

By NIALL FARRELL
PRO Galway Alliance
Against War

SO IN order to counter climate change the Minister for the Environment and Green Party leader, John Gormley, will ban the humble light bulb.

At the same time, he and his government colleagues facilitate the gas-guzzling US war machine as it wages a resource war via Shannon airport. The Irish Government also capitulated to the big powers on nuclear non-proliferation that will see India, which has refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, engage in nuclear trade.

Am I missing something or are light bulbs more dangerous to the environment than resource wars and nuclear proliferation?

Trade unionists call for NO vote to pay deal

By OWEN MCCORMACK

A PANEL of leading trade unionists outlined the reasons behind their opposition to the proposed national pay deal at a press conference in mid October.

The conference was hosted by Jimmy Kelly, regional secretary of Unite, whose union has recommended a NO vote.

Jimmy Kelly has stated that this deal has failed to address any of the concerns of unions on pay, pensions or workers rights.

Also speaking was Denis Keane, a former president and current executive member of the CPSU which represents thousands of low paid civil servants.

Christy Glynn from ASTI also spoke about his unions members concerns about this deal.

Other speakers included a number of SIPTU shop stewards from the transport and fire services. John Kidd (Fire fighter) and John McCamley (bus driver) represent workers at the front line of public services.

There is growing concern among trade unionists that accepting this deal means agreeing that workers should shoulder the costs of the recession and economic crisis.

More info: www.NoDeal.ie

Six women cleaners sacked from European Foundation to escalate their protests

SIX WOMEN cleaners at the EU funded and run, Eurofound, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions in Dun Laoghaire were sacked and had their jobs out-sourced in a case reminiscent of Irish Ferries.

The Eurofound is funded directly by the EU commission to monitor working and living conditions in Europe.

The six women, who had worked at the foundation for between 16 and 20 years, were sacked and then replaced with four Lithuanian workers after they complained about mistreatment and poor working conditions at the hands of the contract cleaning company who had recently taken over the cleaning contract for the Foundation premises.

It is precisely, this practice of outsourcing work to cow-boy contractors that is leading to a race to the bottom in terms of rights, conditions and pay for workers across Europe. During the Lisbon treaty debate we were told that the EU was committed to guaranteeing workers rights. Yet here we have an EU organisation, charged with exactly that task, employing contractors that are blatantly abusing workers rights.

Although working for many years solely at the foundation, the women were not directly employed by the Eurofound itself but



The six cleaners and their supporters outside the European Foundation's premises

by a series of contractors.

Eighteen months ago, a company called AFM based in Blanchardstown, took over the contract and became the women's employer. Immediately, the working conditions of the six women began to deteriorate.

Over the next 18 months, wages were not paid on time or were incorrect, holiday pay was incorrect; cleaning equipment was faulty, repeated promises by AMS to deduct union dues were broken.

The six workers made repeated complaints to their AFM supervisor and the company's head office but were brushed off or simply ignored.

The situation came to a head when new cleaning chemicals supplied by the company began to cause serious coughing

and respiratory problems among a number of the cleaners. The women's complaints on this issue were, again, ignored or laughed off.

The women informed their supervisor that they would not continue to work under such conditions and gave her until the following Friday to address their concerns.

On that Friday, the supervisor arrived at the workplace and made it clear to the women, that she did not intend to address their concerns and no longer considered them employees of AFM.

The contractor, AFM, have a record of mistreatment of employees. AFM had to make an out of court settlement to the tune of tens of thousands of euros to a former director of the company, who took

a case against AFM for constructive dismissal.

The People Before Profit Alliance and the UNITE trade union are now assisting the six women cleaners in their campaign for reinstatement.

Richard Boyd Barrett of the People Before Profit Alliance said, "This is an absolutely blatant case of profit-hungry contractors, abusing the rights of workers - both those of the six women cleaners and the migrant workers."

It is unbelievable that this could happen to workers, working in a foundation that is funded by EU taxpayers and run by the EU commission, specifically to monitor the conditions of workers.

However, these women are absolutely determined that their rights are not going to be trampled on."

WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

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

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

REVOLUTION

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

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

greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

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

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

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

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

working class.

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

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

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

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

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

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

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

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

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

Join the Socialists

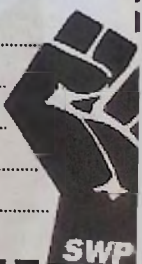
Fill in the form and send to
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Name.....

Address.....

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Bin tax campaign resists council bullying and privatisation

By BRID SMITH and HUGH LEWIS

DUN LAOGHAIRE county manager Owen Keegan has announced plans to close down the Council bin collection service and fully privatising waste collection in the County.

The plans were discussed at the Council meeting on Monday October 13th.

If the service is fully privatised, the private waste companies will be able to charge what they like, hiking up charges as they have everywhere else in the Country. Wages and conditions for bin workers will also be attacked.

The government and local council's all over the country will then prepare to re-introduce water charges.

This move explains the recent use of bullying tactics by the Council, leaving bins uncollected and employing debt collectors to send out threatening letters.

The Council were trying to squeeze the last bit of money out of ordinary people before closing the service altogether.

Dublin city threats

Dublin City Council has also engaged a debt collecting company to try to force anti bin tax supporters to pay their arrears.

In Ballyfermot the campaign against the bin tax responded by

organising two meetings. Both meetings were very large and voted to resist the threats from the council.

The campaign organised a lively protest outside the Ballyfermot Civic Centre condemning the council's bullying and submitted over three hundred letters to the Waste Management Department.

The letters informed the council of the householders opposition and declared that they are opposed to receiving a third bin "Brown Bin".

While fully in favour of the maximum amount of re-cycling, the people in Ballyfermot don't agree with having to pay for a third bin.

Instead they are calling for the option to compost their own organic waste and for communal organic composting facilities.

In the last week letters from a debt collecting company were sent out to thousands of householders.

Ballyfermot will once again respond collectively with protests and hundreds of letters objecting to the bullying.

There is an outstanding legal case on the issue of bin charges for 2001 to 2004 and until that Supreme Court case is heard, the campaign will oppose any attempt to force people to pay the arrears.

Council residents mount fight back



O'Devaney Gardens residents' protest

Photos: Paula Geraghty



Company caught oogling young customers

By NIALL SMYTH

THE CAMPAIGN for Commercial-Free Education has condemned Internet giant Google for their "Doodle 4 Google" promotion which seeks to make their corporate logo the focus of art lessons for school children as young as 5 years of age.

In an unsolicited approach to schools, Google explain how "Doodle 4 Google" involves school children from Junior Infants to Leaving Certificate designing a version of the corporate logo around the theme of "My Ireland". The entry guidelines read "Please ensure that the Google logo is clearly visible and recognisable."

Teachers, who must register and submit all entries from the school, are offered a free laptop as a reward for bringing this scheme to their students. The winning pupil will see their Google logo appear on the website on St. Patrick's Day 2009.

The company's "lesson guides" for teachers state: "Write the word 'Google'

on the board and show the pupils a print out of the logo template. Explain that Google helps us find information when we are using the computer" and "Identify all the letters and colours in the Google logo."

Campaign for Commercial Free Education chairperson, Joseph Fogarty said, "This marketing scheme is in clear breach of the guidelines adopted by the Irish National Teachers Organisation. It is an exploitative and brand-driven exercise and one which no school child should be exposed to."

On Friday 26th September the Campaign for Commercial-Free Education and INTO conferred "Commercial-Free" status upon 13 primary schools at an awards ceremony in Dublin. Each of these schools has an established policy to filter out commercial marketing including branded lesson materials such as "Doodle 4 Google".

Further Information from: Joseph Fogarty, Chairperson Campaign for Commercial-Free Education chairperson@commercialfreeducation.com Ph: 086 3220688.

'Reclaim Shannon' time

By FRED JOHNSTON

"SHANNON TOWN Council has passed a motion calling for inspections for suspected rendition flights passing through the State.

The motion, proposed by Labour Cllr Greg Duff and seconded by party colleague Cllr Tony McMahon, was unanimously passed. The council also called upon other Councils to follow suit.

This constitutes a major Irish awakening to the fact that {a} local US investment depends solely on whether the region is viable in financial terms, and no amount of

goodying up to the US military prevents US companies from leaving if their accountants say they should and {b} old threats from US representatives that the local economy will feel the heat unless protesting about US military at Shannon ceases are offensive rubbish and should be treated with contempt.

One can only feel proud of Shannon Town Council for acting patriotically and with valour.

Councils should now concur with their Shannonside colleagues and call publicly for inspections of suspect flights. It's 'Reclaim Shannon' time.

By HELENA MCNEILL

THE DAILY Mirror labelled the people of O'Devaney Gardens "animals" after a "riot" took place in the housing estate. The disgraceful underlying message of that label is that there is no need to re-house the people of O'Devaney Gardens, or provide decent living conditions for them, because they simply don't deserve it.

Residents live in conditions that many people thought were long gone after 15 years of boom. Wayne and Donna and their family of four are crowded into a cramped two bedroom flat where chronic dampness and condensation has forced the dumping of clothes, curtains and bedding. For months now sewage has been spilling out of drains around their block and there is regularly a bad smell from their drinking water supply.

The residents have waited almost 10 years for the estate to be regenerated, only to have their hopes dashed by the collapse of the Public Private Partnership (PPP) set up to rebuild the run-down estate. Billionaire builder Bernard Mc Namara decided that the bigger homes demanded by recent government policy, cut too much into his profit margin and pulled out to concentrate on more lucrative projects.

Empty boarded up flats at-

tract bored teenagers, criminal elements and drug users. The police 'tar everyone with the same brush' and harass and sometimes goad young people into confrontation.

One resident argued that the regeneration board seem to have spent more money on their own offices on the site than they have on the estate. This office, a large metal bunker surrounded by fencing, was erected on one of the few suitable spaces for children to play.

One resident, Wayne, says "all Mc Namara's done is make a mess, we should be suing him!"

In August a group of 16 mothers and 20-30 children occupied the estate manager's office. Their action provoked immediate response. The press, politicians and the Lord Mayor all turned up. The Lord Mayor, dressed in an expensive suit, promised that people would start being rehoused by September 1st.

This shows that it is only when we organise together and take strong action that anyone in power actually listens. Residents are rightfully sick of false promises.

Their struggle highlights the complete failure of the Governments policy of PPP to provide for peoples housing needs. Thousands of people await the regeneration of their

estates, thousands more rot on the housing waiting lists and in substandard rented accommodation. Still more are up to their necks in mortgage debt. After years of boom when property developers became obscenely rich, the government and employers now argue that we must pay for the current recession, that we must accept the pain of

Vote no to the pay deal

Continued from page one

This is not good enough Even before the budget, the deal was rotten and needed to be rejected.

Reasons to oppose the Deal

The deal contains the following poison pills:-

■ Pay freeze for public sector worker for 11 months of the 23 month proposed agreement.

■ Private sector employers have been given even bigger opportunities to get out of paying through the "inability to pay" clause

The agreement explicitly states "many private companies will not be able to pay rises" and in a new development, a new clause allows employers to get out of paying part of the agreement.

This is a recipe for endless manoeuvring by the employers to get out of

cutbacks 'for the good of the country'.

Instead the Government should embark on a public housing building programme now. The work of the Dublin Housing Action Campaign in the 1970's and the recent actions of the mothers in O'Devaney Gardens show how they can be forced to do so.

paying phases as they become due.

■ Even before the Budget, the agreement offered rises well below rate of inflation, meaning in effect a real pay cut for workers.

But Lenihan's budget means that a couple on €60k a year will lose €2,300 a year.

What is the alternative?

Jack O'Connor says there is no alternative to this agreement, but they said that about the Lisbon Treaty but are now moving to negotiate it again.

What we need is a Pay-Only Agreement that adequately compensates working class people for the massive rises in the cost of living that we face.

To achieve this we need to fight through co-ordinated action.

SHELL TO SEA

Another battle won in the 21st Century Irish Resource War

By MAURA HARRINGTON

AS I write, it appears that the *Solitaire*, contracted by Shell to lay the offshore section of the Corrib Gas raw gas pipeline, has left Clyde en route to a port near Gibraltar; Brian Lenihan has announced his budget (don't mention the gas!) and here in north Mayo we're in our eighth year of the Irish Resource War.

Many people in the country think the Corrib mess is over - far from it!

Local people, together with national and international supporters have, to date, resisted what Shell and their Government lackeys arrogantly thought of as a *fait accompli*.

Shell has spent millions on what may yet be a white elephant (which only concerns Shell shareholders); the Government has spent €15million in having us beaten, battered, crippled and criminalised and every Department and regulatory body involved with Corrib is now compromised by complicity with Big Oil.

We have survived this State/Corporate onslaught through the 'Tiger' years when greed ruled supreme but this has come to a 'shuddering end'.

Now the solution offered by Lenihan *et al* is to make us pay for the mistakes of what I call Shits in Suits. Why should we??

According to Eamon Ryan's own Department, there's between €450 and €800 BILLION in recoverable reserves of oil/gas off our shores.

Ray Burke gave away our 50% share of this in 1987 and abolished royalty payments; in 1992 (oil at \$10 a barrel) Bertie Ahern set out the fiscal terms in the Finance Act which have never been changed since.

This summer, Pat O'Donnell (The Chief), his son Jonathan and other fishermen who didn't take the Shell shillin' bravely upheld their right to legally fish under the jaws of the *Solitaire* guarded by

nearly half the Irish navy and cop boats; I went on hunger strike until she left Irish waters and Shell to Sea supporters mobilised in force.

It is past time that we, the people of this country, let the gobshites who have sold us out know that it's now payback time - for us!

If we continue to accept a €400 BILLION bail-out for the banks and the continued oil/gas giveaway of €450/800 BILLION then we're the gobshites!

It's up to you and me to win this war; our children and grandchildren will thank us if we do and curse us if we don't.

Shell to Sea budget response: Nationalise our natural resources

IN THE current and future severe economic conditions there can be no excuse for allowing oil/gas exploration companies to continue making obscene profits immune from taxation while ordinary people are expected to take all the pain.

Shell to Sea called on

Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan to re-introduce royalty payments on all oil/gas exploration companies operating in Ireland as the only way of ensuring a consistent flow of Revenue to the State from this activity.

This would be the first step in the process

of regaining control over our own natural resources.

Future liquidity of this country depends on the proper control and management of its assets.

Now is the time to regain control and ownership of the country's oil and gas for the benefit of everybody

living in Ireland.

Any change in Corporation Tax rates for exploration companies (as recently introduced by Green Party Minister Eamon Ryan) can and will be neutralised through exploration programmes, transfer pricing and entity splitting.

Afri Hedge School/Scoil Chois Clai 2008
A unique blend of conversation, debate, art, film, fun and food.

Pipelines and Profits:

People Under Pressure



Begins:
October 24th 8.30pm
with film screening in
McGraths, Pullathomas.

Conference sessions on
Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th
in Glenamoy
Community Centre,
Erris, Co. Mayo

Afri



News from the People Before Profit Alliance



THE PEOPLE Before Profit Alliance in Dun Laoghaire recently held a very successful launch of its campaign for the local elections to be held in June of next year.

Over 65 people attended the meeting, which was addressed by Cllr Joan Collins, Jimmy Kelly (Regional Secretary, UNITE) and Richard Boyd Barrett (People Before Profit Alliance).

All the speakers outlined how the current financial and economic crisis gripping both the Irish and world economy resulted from the insanity of a system that was based on ruthless competition for profit.

The speakers said that it was already clear that ruling elites here and abroad were intent on making working class people and the most vulnerable pay for the crisis created by Bankers, developers and the super-wealthy.

Against this background all at the meeting agreed on the urgent need to build the People Before Profit Alliance as a viable national political alternative to challenge the existing political establishment and support the resistance of working people against imminent



Part of the People Before Profit contingent on the health protest on October 11 in Dublin pic: Paula Geraghty

attacks and cut-backs.

The meeting agreed to begin immediately the work of campaigning to secure Council seats for Richard Boyd Barrett in the Dun Laoghaire ward and Hugh Lewis in the Ballybrack ward, who both have a very good chance to be elected as a result of the ongoing work and grow-

ing reputation of the People Before Profit Alliance in the area.

The meeting also agreed to actively seek out suitable candidates to run for PBPA in other wards such as Blackrock and Ballyogan.

The meeting was also attended and addressed by the six women clean-

ers recently sacked from the EU funded European Foundation after they protested about a deterioration in the working conditions under a new cleaning contractor at the Foundation in Loughlinstown.

The meeting agreed to help launch a major campaign in support of the six women over the com-

ing weeks to secure their reinstatement.

Hugh Lewis said: "It was a really great meeting. There was huge enthusiasm to build PBPA as fighting organisation, standing up for the rights of ordinary people in this area and to win at least two seats in the forthcoming local elections."

People Before Profit Alliance Public Meeting in Cork

OVER 30 people attended a public meeting at the end of September organised by the People Before Profit Alliance in Cork on the theme "Recession, Financial meltdown... What is the Solution?"

The meeting was addressed by: Richard Boyd Barrett of People Before Profit Alliance, Cllr Joan Collins and the Prominent Cork Environmentalist, Derry Chambers.

Both Richard Boyd Barrett and Joan Collins condemned the recent moves by the government to give an unconditional bail-out of the Banks in this country, while at the same time claiming that no money was available to address the growing crisis in the health service and other vital public services.

Joan Collins explained how the Crumlin Workers Action Group, which she helped establish had developed from opposition to bin charges but had moved

quickly into becoming a local political and campaigning organisation that took up many issues the community in the Crumlin/Kimmage areas.

She informed the meeting of the recent decision by CWAG to join the People Before Profit Alliance because of the urgent need for local campaigns of resistance against social injustice, cut-backs and attacks on workers to link up at a national level into serious national political alternative.

Richard Boyd Barrett argued that nationalising the banks, building land and Ireland's natural resources, and taxing wealth, were the only way to begin addressing the current economic and financial crisis.

Speakers from the floor said that the basis existed to develop a strong People Before Profit Alliance in Cork and that it was urgent that this happened over the coming months.

As Westminster debates fertility bill, Northern Ireland women demand...

We want abortion rights now

By GORETTI HORGAN

THE VOTE at Westminster on the amendment to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill calling for the extension of the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland is set to take place around the 22nd of October.

In preparation for the vote, socialists, trade unionists and other pro-choice activists have been stepping up the campaign to ensure women in the North finally have access to abortion on the NHS.

As part of the campaign, 40 women from NI travelled to Westminster on 7th and 8th Oct to speak at a public meeting in the House of Commons and to lobby MPs.

The 40 represented the 40 women who leave NI every week to obtain abortions in Britain and, increasingly, Holland and Belgium. The 40 also pointed up the fact that women in the North are 40 years behind women in Scotland, England and Wales in terms of the right to control their fertility and access abortion when they need it.

Despite the fact that anti-abortionists are again trying to reduce the time limit on abortions and pro-choice activists are trying to modernise the law in Britain, the meeting was dominated by discussion of how to get the Act extended to NI.

Some MPs seem to see the North as some kind of bigoted backwater where women are chained to the kitchen with a chain long enough to reach the bedroom.

They were clearly shocked to hear some of the facts about NI women's lives, that we have the same sex lives as women in Britain, and the extent to which people here want to see abortion available on the NHS.

Before the 1967 Act, working class women in Britain had to risk their lives in the backstreets while wealthy women got their abortions safely in Harley Street.

Today in the North, working class women may not be forced to backstreet abortionists, but they are forced to backstreet moneylenders as they try to get the money together to get to England for abortions that they would get free on the NHS if they lived in Britain.

Some women, those living on benefits or in the lowest paid jobs, simply cannot get the money together and are forced to continue intolerable pregnancies – even when the pregnancy is the result of rape.

Lately, poorer women have been going on the internet and getting the abortion pill which causes an abortion up to nine weeks of pregnancy. If something goes wrong and they are caught by the authorities, they face life imprisonment.

While obtaining the abortion pill from the www.womenonweb.org site is relatively safe and includes an email consultation with a doctor, other websites have been shown to be selling fake tablets that could put the woman's health and life



Alliance for Choice extend the abortion Act campaign from Northern Ireland hold a symbolic protest outside London parliament to represent the 40 women who travel from Northern Ireland every month for abortions in Britain. Pic: © Jess Hurd/reportdigital.co.uk

in danger.

New Labour says "leave it to the Assembly" to sort out the abortion law. What a joke! The Assembly has shown itself unable to deal with any contentious issues.

Even fairly 'normal' issues like education, poverty and planning have been put on the backburner because the DUP and Sinn Féin are unable to agree a position.

So, these issues are left in limbo. The Executive has not met for over four months and few commentators expect it to meet this side of Christmas. This is because the DUP and Sinn Féin cannot agree on an Irish Language Act and on the devolution of policing and justice.

So, it is laughable to think that an abortion law could be brought forward in the Assembly which could satisfy both those who believe that women have a right to abortion under at least some circumstances and those who think abortion is never acceptable.

It is a scandal that Sinn Féin has gone along with the fundamentalist approach of the DUP on this and other equality issues.

Sinn Féin MLAs have refused to answer questions on the abortion issue, or to make any comment on the debate except to say that "there is no demand for abortion" here.

And they have refused to call for the resignation of Iris Robinson (see box) as Chair of the Assembly's Health Committee despite her views making her incapable of doing that job.

Don't leave our health in Iris's hands

IRIS ROBINSON is a DUP MP, MLA. She caused uproar in June when she told a BBC radio programme that homosexuality is a "disorder" and recommended that gays see a psychiatrist.

Later, it emerged she had told a House of Commons committee that "there can be no viler act, apart from



Iris Robinson

homosexuality, than sexually abusing innocent children".

She tried to deny this but Hansard confirmed that these were, indeed, her words.

In July, she told another radio programme that it is the duty of the Assembly "to implement god's law".

Yet she remains the Chair of Stormont's Health Committee and so has some

responsibility for the health needs of lesbians and gay men and, of course, the abortion issue.

This is a disgrace and should not be accepted in a society where there is supposed to be separation of church and state.

It's time we took the streets to demand her resignation.

Why not 'leave abortion to the Assembly'?

LEAVING ABORTION to the Assembly is like leaving it to the Taliban to sort out women's rights.

The Assembly voted in autumn 2007 to reject guidelines allowing abortion when a woman's mental or physical health is in 'grave' danger of 'serious and permanent damage' as being too liberal.

A new set of guidelines, allowing abortion only if a woman's life is in immediate danger, was issued during the summer months.

However, the anti-choice brigade is unhappy even with these and Iris Robinson has called an emergency meeting of the Health Committee to try to throw them out.

Part of the reason that there is so much urgency to get the Act extended now is that the DUP have been promised – in

return for their 9 MPs voting for 42-day detention of terror suspects – that abortion will be devolved along with justice

and policing.

But abortion is clearly a health issue, not one for crime and policing and it's not

devolved to Wales or Scotland, although Scotland has control over its own policing and justice.

What you can do to help get the Abortion Act extended.

EMAIL AS many MPs as possible; give your name, address and post code or they will ignore the email.

Tell them why you support abortion rights for women in NI.

If you have travelled to have an abortion or have helped a friend to get the money together etc, tell them that also.

Alliance for Choice can send you a full list of emails for MPs who have voted consistently for a woman's right to choose and one email can go to hundreds of them at once. Email equalchoice@aol.com if you want the list sent to you.

Sign the Family Planning Association e-

petition on the Number Ten website:

<http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/abortionNI/>

Get involved in Alliance for Choice and help organise this vital fight for women's rights.

Email equalchoice@aol.com and we will put you in touch with your nearest group.

Why are we witnessing and

Why are we witnessing a re-run of the Wall Street crash of 1929?

Because the system is out of control and is not working.

It started with a property crash in the US, in the 'sub-prime market'. Originally, the bankers wanted to prolong the property boom so they lent money to poor people, by creating a 'sub-prime market'.

People were given 'teaser' mortgages whereby they paid a low mortgage for the first few years but later these jumped massively.

The banks 'sliced and diced' these loans and spread them throughout the financial system to reduce their own risk.

The result was that major finance houses around the world suddenly found themselves with mountains of bad debt or 'toxic assets' and became too frightened to lend to each other.

Soon the whole financial system began to spiral out of control as the rich realised that they were sitting on a mountains of debt and speculative assets everywhere.

At the beginning of October, for example, the fall in the market prices for company shares was the largest nose dive since the Great Crash of 1929.

What do you mean that there is a 'mountain of debt and speculative assets'?

It is incredible and sometimes difficult to grasp. But let's try a few illustrations.

An increasing proportion of the profits made in the US economy now come from FIRE – Finance, Insurance and Real Estate, a polite acronym for speculation.

These make up 40 percent today compared to 15 percent in the 1960s. Some of these profits are fictitious because they are based on inflated assets – but a proportion also comes from real labour, which has been hoovered up and re-cycled into a great casino.

Speculation has expanded dramatically in almost every single area of the capitalist economy.

Most people buy food to eat. But food can also become a commodity to be speculated on. So you have hordes of people working at computer screens 'taking positions' (bets) on, for example, the price of Argentinean wheat in 2012 in Japanese yen.

They have not the slightest interest in making bread – they treat wheat as a speculative commodity they can bet on.

Each day, more than €3 trillion is spent on buying and selling currencies. You may need a different currency to go on holidays or to buy goods from different countries.

But it is estimated that only 15 percent of currency transactions are linked to this sort of real activity. The rest is pure speculation.

Or look at credit default swaps. These are a form of insurance against losses made in speculation.

But finance houses like Lehman's or insurance companies like AIG firmly believed that defaults were only a theoretical possibility and would never happen.

So they placed the money they got on insurance premiums back into the casino to underwrite risks from speculation!

Today the credit default swap market is €61 trillion dollars.

To get some idea of scale of that, think of a middle sized African country such as Kenya, which has a population of 40 million.

The market in credit default swaps is 300,000 times the size of the Kenyan



Above: Panic on Wall Street; Right: 1930s Depression; Below: EU leaders meet to plan bail-out of the rich

economy!

Does this mean that the whole crisis has been caused by a handful of 'spivs and speculators' who care only about themselves?

That is what supporters of the system would like you think. But, in fact, you cannot draw a clean line between greedy speculators on one hand and good clean capitalists on the other.

Take a company like Danone. Everyone knows it makes yogurt but Danone is also a major speculator. In the past five years it spent €4 billion buying 31 million of its own shares.

Exxon Mobil produces oil – but it is also a major speculator. Last year, it spent \$108 million buying back its own shares.

A share is a piece of paper that allows you a cut in the profits that workers make.

But the piece of paper can also become an object of speculation because you can bet on its future value. In the nineties, the super-rich became fanatical followers of new cult that went under the slogan 'shareholder value'.

Corporations were to be judged by their ratings on the stock market and the dividend they paid to their shareholders.

So the CEO's – who were also paid in stock options – thought of a new

scam: they could buy up their own shares and so push up its price. It was a bit like an aspiring musician who bought their own CDs to push it up the play lists.

Except that vast sums of the surplus value created by workers was involved.

In the 1930s, attacks on 'financiers' was popular on the left and the right. But today the whole of the capitalist class is involved in both exploitation and speculation. You cannot challenge speculation without attacking the system itself.

Does the crisis show that Marx was right all along?

Yes. Most conventional economists have become propagandists for the system so you have to go back to Marx.

Try a simple thought experiment: Have you ever heard an Irish economist advocate a cut in profits rather than wage restraint?

Conventional economists deny that the boom-slump cycle is an inevitable feature of capitalism. They claim it is due to either accidental factors or due to irrational sentiments.

Marx, however, argued that the system was prone to suffer from two key problems.

One was that over-accumulation. Each capitalist sought to make the maximum profit and to re-invest that profit in creating ever more goods.

But to be competitive they also sought to cut the wage costs of workers – through employing younger workers at lower rates; though reducing pension payments, overtime rate or holiday entitlements.

But at some time these two imperatives clash.

If the wage share of an economy shrinks, people cannot buy the amount of goods that are produced.

Or else the unplanned nature of capitalism chokes off a boom, leading

to the type of disruption which triggers off a recession.

So there is a rush into areas like the housing because profit rates are higher there.

But this causes both an eventual oversupply and rising prices because no plan was drawn up beforehand to train extra bricklayers or provide more raw materials or land supply.

A few firms initially go bankrupt but this then triggers off a chain reaction that creates a recession.



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Is there another 1929-style crash?



the type of disruption which sets off a recession. There is a rush into areas like housing because profit rates are high there. This causes both an eventual supply and rising prices because an area was drawn up beforehand to extra bricklayers or provide more materials or land supply. Few firms initially go bankrupt but when triggers off a chain reaction creates a recession.



The second feature that Marx pointed to was a tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

As the entry level for capital investment in any one industry increases and fewer workers are taken on, the rate of return on investment drops.

This occurs because labour is the source of profit.

Different studies have come up with somewhat varying estimates but two French writers, Duménil and Lévy state that "the profit rate in 1997"

was "still only half of its value of 1948, and between 60 and 75 percent of its average value for the decade 1956-65".

Capitalists respond to falling rates of profit by intensifying work effort or by cutting costs further but this only exacerbates the problem of over accumulation.

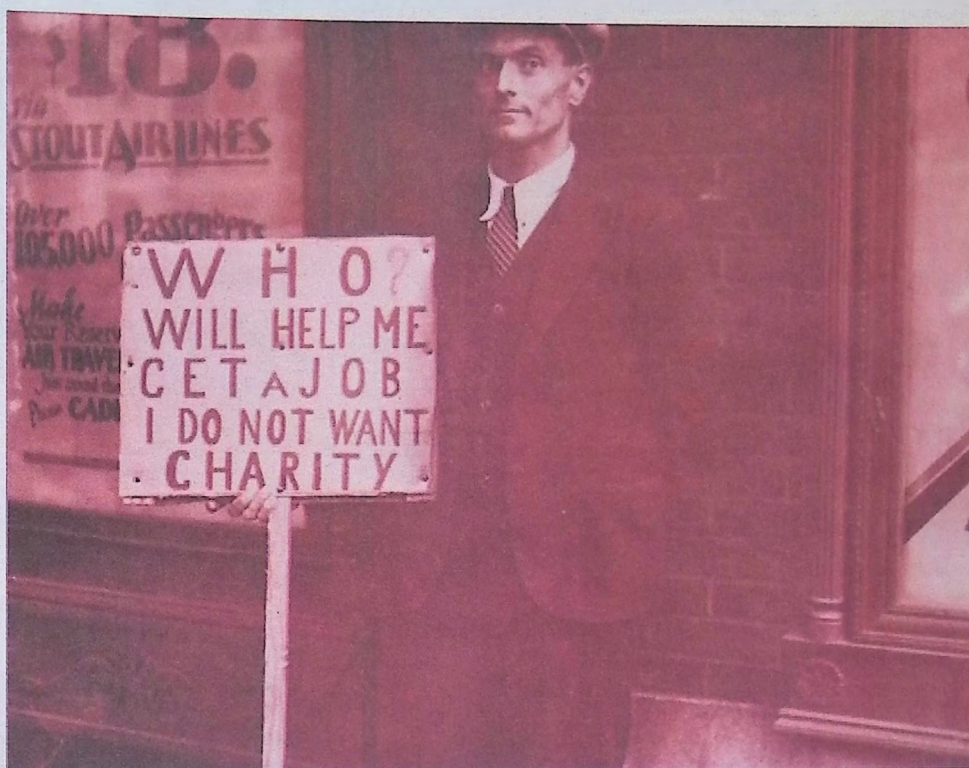
What role has debt played in these developments?

Late capitalism is characterised by rise in all sorts of debt – household, state and corporate debt. Rising levels of debt give the system an elasticity by allowing for an expansion in the market for goods. But it is also intimately linked to speculation and creates even bigger problems for the system.

Debt was encouraged as a way of overcoming the restraints caused by reduction in real wages. Personal debt in Ireland has risen from 43 percent of disposable income in 1995 to 113 percent today.

As in the US, people were encouraged to borrow on the basis of their rising property prices. While it lasted, more debt encouraged consumer spending.

Corporate debt has also risen as new financial instruments have appeared which allow for even greater speculation. If you find, for example, that you can make a fortune in speculating on share prices, you



borrow more because you think you will soon pay the debt off.

As Rosa Luxemburg pointed out, credit can help to lubricate the system but instead of solving its problems it only magnifies and concentrates them.

Naomi Klein has argued that the fall of Wall Street should do for neoliberalism what the fall of the Berlin Wall did for communism. Do you agree?

At one level this seems an obvious point. For thirty years, we were subjected to a dogma that was endlessly repeated: the market solves everything. Now its own advocates are calling for more regulation.

But there is also a weakness in Klein's analysis. She sees neo-liberalism as a set of ideas developed by think tanks that sprung up to advocate an economic strategy developed by Milton Friedman.

In 1963, Friedman wrote a book, *Capitalism and Freedom*, which became the bible of the neo-liberals.

Friedman's ideas certainly helped to energise a layer of fanatical supporters of capitalism who felt that their argument for the free markets had an austere intellectual logic.

But Friedman's arguments also had a utopian quality because he wanted to cut the level of public spending to less than 15 percent of GNP. In the real world of capitalism, it has rarely dropped below 30 percent.

Klein neglected how Friedman's ideas could only appear to take hold because of the type of structural crisis within capitalism that Marx had pointed to.

Neo-liberalism was an intellectual approach that helped capitalists to intensify the rate of exploitation of workers and dismantle social rights that were won during the long boom from 1948-1973.

The present crisis, however, does not therefore simply arise from an intellectual doctrine developed by Friedman – the problem is the system itself.

Many people claim that the US has been forced to adopt 'socialist' measures to solve the crisis. Shouldn't

you welcome this greater government intervention?

There is a vast difference between state intervention and socialism.

Unless there is a major movement of workers to challenge what is happening, the present crisis will lead to a new form of state capitalism where the political and the economic elite become even more integrated as they try to manage the system.

Socialists want to take the banks and the finance houses into public ownership to take the wealth off a tiny minority and re-direct an economy away from the insane logic of capitalism.

We advocate public ownership and control of the credit system in order to put an end to speculation and to use the money the banks control for the benefit of society.

The nationalisation that Bush advocates is designed to use public funds to bail out the system.

We also should not be fooled by calls made by the right wing French prime minister, Sarkozy, for return to 'regulated and regular capitalism'.

Capitalism used to be quite a regulated system. Up to 1979, for example, you could not take any more than £300 out of Ireland without seeking written permission from the Central Bank.

That was seriously strong regulation but it was undermined because corporations found tax havens and 'offshore locations' to transfer their money away from areas controlled by the state.

Today they frequently use an accountancy system of 'transfer pricing' to make it appear that a greater proportion of their wealth is made in countries with low tax rates or light levels of regulation.

On top of that they buy and bribe politicians who do their bidding. Where that fails, they engage in economic blackmail where they threaten to move funds if any regulation affect their profits.

A return to a 'regular and regulated capitalism' is as likely as turning a wild tiger into a domestic cat.

Will the depression be as deep as the 1930s? What are the likely scenarios ahead?

The difference between the 1930s is that the national states intervene more quickly. But the sheer scale of the problem is also much bigger.

State intervention protects the system from collapsing completely – but it also prevents a clearing out that allows the natural laws of economic cannibalism to prevail.

Capitalism moves from slump back to boom only by allowing the survivors to gobble up the bankrupt at cheap prices.

So the most likely scenario is that we will find ourselves somewhere between a Japanese style recession which has prevailed for 10 years and the great depression of the 1930s.

The one certainty is that this will cause social suffering on a scale not previously seen. The rich have only one major dogma: - make the rest of society pay for the crises they have caused.

This new era can produce massive swings to the left – or, unfortunately, to the right. For the past decade, the SWP has argued that we have entered an era that can be characterised as 'the 1930s in slow motion.' But now the film sequence is being speeded up.

We can either face a situation like that in Austria recently where the far right took nearly 30 percent of the vote – or one where the left makes massive gains.

But clearly, we have reached a stage where our political activities, with both its successes and failures, carry important political consequences.

This is why the SWP is currently engaged on a major recruitment campaign. We want to see hundreds more revolutionary socialists who are committed to ending capitalism through a mass upsurge from below.

We are also working in the broader alliance of People Before Profit because we think that the forces of left must come together to offer an alternative for a variety of people who are not yet fully convinced of revolution. Such an alliance can help fill the vacuum left behind by Labour, the Greens and now Sinn Féin, who incredibly voted to bail out the bankers.

We have a big task on our hands – but the stakes have also risen dramatically.

Marxism 2008 Conference

7,8,9 November Royal Dublin Hotel



2008 has seen a crisis of capitalism not seen since the 1930's.

The workings of the market, once universally worshipped, have imploded and are wrecking people's lives across the globe.

Alongside this, the so called "war on terror" pursued by the same market fundamentalists, has brought

death and havoc in Iraq and now, in Afghanistan, it threatens to spill over to new and deadlier frontiers.

Never has it been so important to develop alternatives to the madness of the system.

■ **Marxism 2008**, on the weekend of November 7th-9th in Dublin, could not be more

timely.

The weekend will bring together activists, trade unionists individuals and campaigners to discuss the issues that confront us – recession, war, racism, social inequality, Ireland post-Lisbon – and debate how we can change the world.

Radical writers, journalists, socialists and

activists will talk about a range of other subjects – the US elections, the new sexism, the distortions of the media, Beckett and Shakespeare, the 1930s in Belfast and China today, crime and young people, climate change, Alternative Ulster, and much more.

■ **The Culture Zone**, a new addition to the

event, will offer screenings of independent films, documentaries and photographic exhibitions and special participatory workshops.

All these will be taking place in the Parnell Room. At the back of this room will be the **Marxism 2008 bookshop** with a wide selection of left-wing books, and many titles

relevant to the subjects covered in the meetings.

■ **On Saturday evening** there will be live Roots and Blues music in the Parnell Room from 9pm onwards.

Highlights of Marxism 2008



Hossem el Hamalawy

■ **Hossem el Hamalawy** Cairo based journalist on the recent food riots and strike waves in Egypt



Nick Davies

■ **Nick Davies**, Journalist of the Year and columnist with the *Guardian* newspaper. His new book *Flat Earth News* exposes the falsehood, distortion and propaganda of the global media.



Richard Boyd Barrett

■ **Richard Boyd Barrett**, People before Profit will talk on the opportunities, post Lisbon, for the left in Ireland. He will also join other speakers to discuss, after the events of Georgia in the summer, whether we are seeing a new cold war reemerging.

Andrzej Zebrowski will discuss US militarisation in Poland and Europe. He will also be introducing a meeting in Polish for Polish speakers



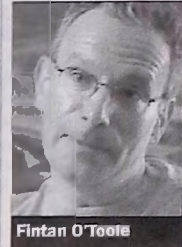
Eamonn McCann

■ **Eamonn McCann** well known socialist from Derry, and one of the Raytheon 9 who recently won their battle against a major US arms company, looks at the spirit of 1968.



Patricia McKenna

■ **Patricia McKenna**, leading No to Lisbon campaigner and **Kieran Allen** from the SWP join a panel of speakers to discuss the political significance of the victory of the no vote in the Lisbon Treaty.



Fintan O'Toole

■ **Fintan O'Toole**, Irish

Times columnist, investigates corruption within the Irish political elite.

Feminist and activist **Ailbhe Smyth** will be asking whether gay marriage is an issue for the left

■ **Chris Bamberg**, SWP Britain, looks at the present crisis of the Italian left. At another meeting he will be taking on some of the myths around the Russian revolution and asking *Was Lenin a democrat?*



Debbie Ging

■ **Debbie Ging**, writer on Bratz culture and



Goretti Horgan

Goretti Horgan, abortion rights activist discuss why the new sexism has such a hold and how it can be challenged.

■ **Prof Helena Sheehan** and researcher **Seamus Sweeney** give an illustrated talk on the American TV drama "The Wire" and will argue that it is a tv series with a difference.

Timetable of meetings

Friday	Parnell Room	Culture Zone (Syndicate 1)	Syndicate 2
2.00-3.15	The crusades and the origins of the war on Islam Conor Kostick	From 'The seduction of the innocent' to 'The dark night' – popular culture and politics Conor McVarnock	Che Guevara and revolution Hugh Lewis
3.30-4.45	Beckett and the politics of modernism Sinead Kennedy	<i>Film shorts on Migration</i> Intro-Steve Loyal	Rosa Luxemburg and the battle against reformism Melisa Halpin
5.00-6.30	Crime, class and young people Michael Collins	<i>John Pilger film</i> Diego Garcia	The crisis of the Italian Left: how did it happen? Chris Bamberg
7.00-8.15	Opening rally: Economic turmoil – building resistance to a world in crisis Richard Boyd Barrett (People before Profit) Jimmy Kelly (UNITE trade union) Hossem el Hamalawy (Egyptian Socialist) and speaker from Die Linke (Germany)		

Saturday	Parnell Room	Tara Room	Culture zone (Syndicate 1)	Syndicate 2	Syndicate 3
10.00-11.15	Marxism, religion and Islam Brian Kelly	<i>Bratz culture, lap dancing and the new sexism – can it be challenged?</i> Debbie Ging & Goretti Horgan	<i>Film</i> "Rosa Luxemburg"	Corruption and The Irish Political elite Fintan O'Toole	Afghanistan and the New Imperialism Donal McFhearraigh
11.45-1.00	Is China the new superpower? Simon Gilbert	Debate: Northern Ireland – towards a society of equals?	<i>Community made film</i> "Women with balls"	Marx and ideology Marie Holborow	Charles Darwin's Big Idea Peadar Ogrady
2.00-3.15	The militarization of Europe Andy Storey & Andrzej Zebrowski	Resistance in Egypt Hossem el Hamalawy		<i>The film "Hunger"</i> The 1981 hunger strike and the making of a mass movement Brid Smith	Is gay marriage an issue for the Left? Ailbhe Smyth
3.45-5.00	Flat earth news; lies and distortion in the media Nick Davies	After Lisbon; how do we build on our victory? Patricia McKenna & Kieran Allen	<i>Film</i> "Death in Gaza"	Class divided: the underfunding of Irish Education Deirdre Cronin & Christy Maginn	Shakespeare and the bourgeois revolution Richard Boyd Barrett
5.00-6.45			<i>"Violence Couch"</i> Interactive installation Lisa Marie Johnston and Tina MacVeigh		
7.00-8.30	Debate: Economic crisis – what is the solution?	The US elections: can Obama make a difference? Brian Kelly	<i>Film</i> Lebanon Paula Gerraghty	Yes, we have no Bananas – The Belfast Outdoor Relief Riots of 1932 Matt Collins	Stop Global Warming – change the world Owen McCormack
9 onwards	Bar open and roots & Blues music by Dermot Byrne				

Sunday	Parnell Room	O'Connell Room	Culture zone (Syndicate 1)	Syndicate Room 2	Syndicate Room 3
10.30-11.45	Wages, fightback and the recession Panel of Trade Unionists	The spirit of 1968 Eamonn McCann	<i>Exhibition</i> Interface Gino Kenny	Karl Marx and the Communist Manifesto Helena McNeill	How do we fight racism? Rory McDaid & Sara O'Rourke
12.00-1.15	Alternative Ulster Fiona McCausland & Sean Mitchell	Russia vs NATO: A new cold war? Raymond Deane, Richard Boyd Barrett, Andrzej Zebrowski	<i>Exhibition</i> Palestine Fidelma Bonass	Why are people unhappy? Pat O'Sullivan	The politics of the SWP Kieran Allen
2.00-3.15	Talk with video: Another tv drama is possible: It's called The Wire Prof Helena Sheehan & Seamus Sweeney	Was Lenin a democrat? Chris Bamberg	<i>Meeting for Polish Speakers: Jakiej nowej lewicy potrzebujemy (What sort of new left do we need?)</i> Andrzej Zebrowski	What has caused the recession? Brian O'Boyle	The real legacy of Jim Larkin Paul O'Brien
4.00-4.45	Concluding session Kieran Allen & Sean Mitchell				

Registration Form

Tickets €28 waged, €15 unwaged. Tickets include all meetings and entertainment for the weekend. Please phone 087 9889244 or visit swp.ie for tickets and further details.

Name

Address

Number of tickets:

_____ waged €28/£20

_____ unwaged €15 /£10

Makes cheques/POs payable to: **Socialist Worker Post to Marxism 2008, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.**

Instability in Afghan war grows as the US bombs Pakistan

By JONATHAN NEALE

THE RESISTANCE to the occupation of Afghanistan is growing, spreading and winning. In response, a frightened US military is edging closer to war with Pakistan.

To understand why this is happening, we have to go back to the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. A strange thing happened. Almost no one fought to defend the Taliban.

But the US's allies inside Afghanistan would not fight either. By 2001 Afghans had lived through 23 years of first war with the Soviet Union and then civil war. People longed for peace – any peace.

And they expected the US to bring money to their country.

There was almost no resistance to the occupation for three years. Then it began to appear. One reason was that Afghans had expected reconstruction and it didn't happen.

The money from the US was meagre – and much of it went on foreign NGO workers who made between \$30,000 and \$200,000 a year in a country where the average income per person is less than \$300.

The other cause of the resistance was the actions of the Western forces in the Pashtun speaking south and east. They kicked in doors, beat people up and shot them.

Resistance

When the Afghans shot back, the US and their Nato allies called in airstrikes to bomb villages. Then whole communities joined the resistance.

In 2005 the resistance began building, at first in the Pashtun areas. It was a popular uprising, a people in arms. They looked around for national leadership.

The left, the liberals, the secularists and the Islamists from the north of the country were all, in one way or another, working with the occupation.

The only national force that has called for total opposition to the occupation was the Taliban. So the villagers decided they supported them.

About half of Afghans are Pashtuns, as are most Taliban. But from 2007 the resistance has been spreading across the country.

The NGOs produce maps showing their people where it is safe to travel. In 2006 the south and east was



Occupiers facing increasing resistance

unsafe. Now most of the country is unsafe.

The US is worried that the capital Kabul could be cut off.

The resistance now controls two of the three main roads into Kabul. If they can cut the third, the US would have to airlift in enough food to feed two million people a day.

In response, the occupation forces have been escalating bombing of villages. But Hamid Karzai's Afghan government relies on a level of support inside the country. And its supporters cannot tolerate the current bombing.

Karzai has called for an end to Nato bombing. More importantly, he went to a village near Herat where the warplanes killed 60 children, and sat with the villagers.

The occupation forces cannot stop bombing. It is the only way they know to fight. They cannot tolerate a fair fight, as they would lose it.

And the US military has begun bombing Pakistani villages. The

people on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border are mostly Pashtuns. The Pashtuns on the Pakistani side feel sympathy with the Afghan resistance.

In the last few years they have organised what the Pakistani media call "local Taliban" in solidarity.

The Pakistani army responded by invading the traditionally autonomous "tribal" areas along the border to suppress the Pakistani Taliban.

The Taliban killed many hundreds of Pakistani soldiers. Fighting its own people put great stress on the Pakistani army.

This is particularly so because 30 percent of enlisted men and 30 percent of officers in the Pakistani army are Pashtuns.

Earlier this year one unit of 300 men surrendered to the resistance, and other units simply retreated without firing.

Moreover, Pakistani public opinion is heavily opposed to the government's alliance with the "war on terror".

The recent elections and the removal of president Pervez Musharraf, the US-backed dictator, mean that the government now has to pay some attention to public opinion.

Border

But the US sees that the Afghan resistance now has safe areas in Pakistan to retreat to, rest and arm, and that they can raid across the border.

Because the US generals are losing in Afghanistan, they are frantic to do something to break the resistance. This increases the risks to the troops. Recently one US unit lost nine men in one day, and a French unit ten men.

They are screaming for more troops. And the US has launched the regular bombing of villages inside Pakistan using unmanned drones.

It has begun sending special forces across the border to attack Pakistani villages.

The US military also say there are now regular firefights along the border between Pakistani army units

and US troops.

In one recent fight, US forces called in bombers that killed 11 Pakistani soldiers.

In any normal country, this would count as a declaration of war. The Pakistani army and ruling class are terrified of losing US support. But the generals and the politicians, except the US's pet President Zadari, have condemned the attacks.

The consequences of a US war with Pakistan would be horrific, so both sides hold back.

It may not come to that. But the rising power of the resistance in Afghanistan is pushing the occupiers towards extreme solutions.

Terrible suffering waits in the wings, certainly for the Afghans, maybe for the Pakistanis.

And for the US and British soldiers sent to the meat grinder? Bring them home.

Jonathan Neale has written a major article on Afghanistan for the forthcoming International Socialism journal. Go to www.isj.org.uk

John Pilger: This conflict is repeating the historical patterns of imperialism

Veteran investigative journalist John Pilger is warning that the extension of the Afghanistan war into Pakistan has grim echoes of the past.

"THERE ARE striking parallels between US actions in Afghanistan and Pakistan with spread of Vietnam war into Cambodia and Laos," he told Socialist Worker.

"Indeed, there is an historical pattern – whenever an imperial power gets stuck in one region, it will try to attack another, often disastrously. Caesar and Napoleon did just that.

"The Americans in Vietnam, deeply frustrated by a resistance they never bargained on, sought an easy conquest in Cambodia on a flimsy pretext. That was in 1970.

"The US invasion and carpet bombing of Cambodia acted as a catalyst for the rise and rise of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge forces. Without US secretary of state Henry Kissinger and president Richard Nixon, Pol Pot would not have succeeded."

The Khmer Rouge emerged out of the chaos of the US war on Cambodia. Their rule was marked by brutality and mass murder. John Pilger warns that the US and its allies could do the same to Pakistan today.

"What George Bush and Dick Cheney are likely to achieve in Pakistan is the rise and rise of the Taliban and the rapid radicalising of 'mainstream' Islamic forces within the country."

Pilger says the impact of these new wars is "likely to favour tough guy John



Protest against NATO occupation

McCain". But he adds, "The longing for relief from war and insecurity in the US cannot be underestimated – and Barack

Obama is likely to be the beneficiary of that, however undeserved."

John Pilger's has made a

new film about Afghanistan, *Breaking the Silence*.

One reason why John made a film about Afghanistan was the difficulty of getting serious documentaries onto TV these days.

"In every survey of what the public wants from TV, the one constant is the demand for documentaries that make sense of the world," says John.

"But TV bosses inevitably perceive 'public taste' in relation to 'the market'. Big Brother may be mortally wounded in the ratings, but successors are being planned that are mutations of that form.

"That said, there are some marvellous documentary makers coming up, bypassing TV and heading straight for the cinema – which is where documentary began."

Slave revolts in antiquity

Theresa Urbainczyk, whose new book *Slave Revolts in Antiquity* has just been published, writes about how resistance and rebellion were part of Ancient Greece.

YOU WOULD be correct in assuming that there's not much evidence from antiquity about slaves. You'd also be correct in assuming that there's even less about slave revolts.

We have no text remaining from antiquity written by slaves, and it's improbable that many, if any, wrote anything in the first place.

So all our literature was written by those belonging to the slave-owning class who had nothing to gain by celebrating or advertising the fact that slaves had taken up arms against their masters.

Two things however struck me when I started to investigate this subject. One was how much information we did in fact have. The second was how little notice anyone today takes of this information.

Initially it hadn't occurred to me to doubt Marx that:

'In ancient Rome the class struggle took place only within a privileged minority, between the free rich and the free poor, while the great productive mass of the population, the slaves, formed the purely passive pedestal for these conflicts.' (*The Eighteenth Brumaire* 1869)

even though *Communist Manifesto* started out:

'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.'

However after a day or two reading the ancient sources I understood that slave passivity was never assumed by the ancient masters.

Spartacus is the most famous slave leader from antiquity but he was not the only one by any means, nor even the most successful.

Not only were there four major slave wars in the time of the Late Republic, that is in the period just before the rise of Julius Caesar, but considerations of possible slave revolts affected the actions of all slave-holding states continually.

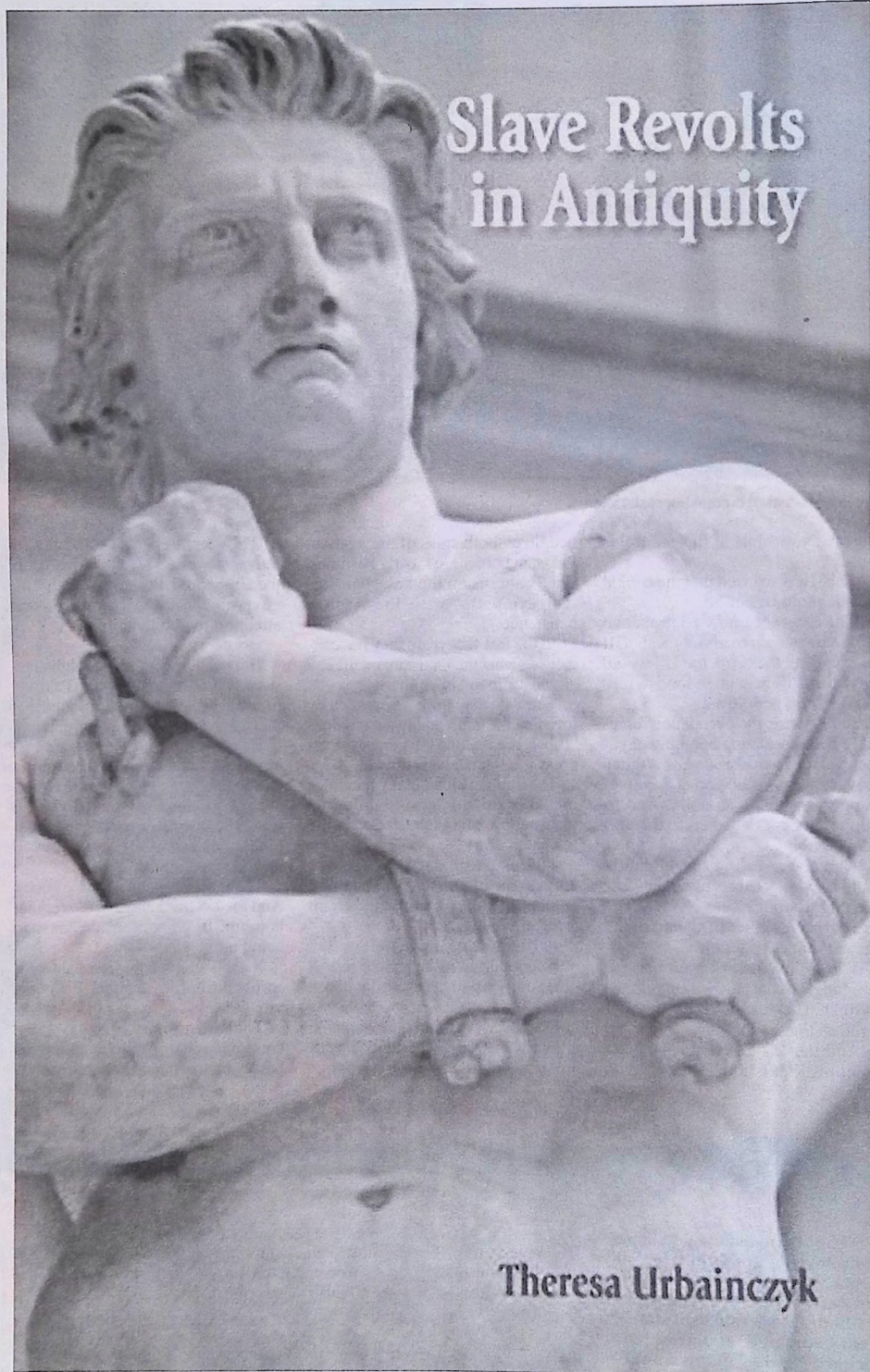
Arrogance

It is true that there was a certain arrogance towards slaves but that coexisted with absolute terror of them.

The following story in Herodotus combines these two attitudes. It's about Scythians, who were not Greeks, and in fact the Greeks considered them to be barbarians in every sense of that word.

Some Scythians had been away from home for so long fighting the Persians that their wives gave up on them and took up with their own slaves, and had children by them.

When the ageing Scythians came home, the former slaves met them with an armed force.



In Sparta we see the most open war between masters and slaves, a war that was built into the public life of the city.

The Scythians were naturally aghast especially when they found they couldn't conquer them.

Then one of them suggested: 'let's stop using spears and bows and arrows.' He carried on:

'When they [the slaves] saw us armed, they naturally felt that they were as good as we are, and were meeting us on equal terms; but when they see us coming with whips instead, they will remember they are slaves. Once they admit that, they

will never try to stand up to us.' *The Histories* 4.3

According to Herodotus, this ruse worked and when the Scythians put away their weapons and faced the slaves with whips, the latter immediately fled.

Unlikely story

Herodotus' Greek readers would have laughed with relief at this unlikely story and that at least it happened

to barbarians not Greeks, but it was a commonplace that slaves posed a threat to their masters in all sorts of ways.

It was in Sparta that we see the most open war between masters and slaves, a war that was built into the public life of the city. The main magistrates in Sparta, the ephors, formally declared war on their slaves, the helots, when they entered office every year so that they could kill them lawfully at any time.

Held out

Thucydides describes how, in 464 BC when there was an earthquake, helots took advantage of this to revolt and he says that the rebels held out for ten years with their centre on Mount Ithome on the Peloponnese.

Not only were the rebels not defeated but the situation was only resolved when they were allowed to leave the area and settle in Naupactus at the entrance to the Peloponnese.

Thucydides says:

The rebels in Ithome after ten years' fighting were unable to hold out any longer, and came to terms with Sparta, the terms being that they should have a safe conduct to leave the Peloponnese and should never set foot in it again: if any of them was caught there in future, he should be the slave of whoever caught him. *The Peloponnesian War* 1.103

It is true that Thucydides says they could hold out no longer but he does not say they were defeated. In fact, clearly the Spartans could not defeat them and had to allow them to go free, even if they threatened them with slavery if they returned.

They lived in an independent city called Naupactus and were faithful allies to Sparta's enemies, the Athenians. In fact then, this was a successful slave revolt.

However, it is never described in this way and it is interesting to see that assumptions about the inability of slaves to achieve anything means that modern scholars simply change Thucydides's words, although he is normally considered one of the best and most reliable historians from antiquity. Here is how a recent textbook described the incident:

A helot revolt did indeed break out in Messenia in 464 BC, after a severe earthquake and it took the Spartans almost four years - and a great deal of effort - to suppress it. (Blois, L. de and Spek, R. J. van der, *An introduction to the ancient world* Routledge, 1997 p.99.)

So simply because ten years is a such a long time it's reduced to 'almost four' and secondly the authors report that the Spartans suppressed the revolt. They didn't.

The Romans had an expression *quot servi tot hostes*, which can be translated as all slaves are enemies. The ancients didn't underestimate their slaves. They knew what they could do.

Slave Revolts in Antiquity by Theresa Urbainczyk, 2008, Acumen Publishing/University of California Press, ISBN 978-1844651023, €20.

REVIEWS

Cromwell's conquest of Ireland

By VASCO PURSER

WHEN THE name Oliver Cromwell is mentioned in Ireland, most people think of a cruel military oppressor, responsible for the massacre at Drogheda in 1649. Cromwell has long been the bogeyman of Irish Nationalist history, but conversely Cromwell and the English republic have been championed by many left-wing, Marxist historians in England.

As a new book *God's Executioner - Oliver Cromwell and the conquest of Ireland* by Micheál O Siochru puts it, "Cromwell spent only nine months of his eventful life in Ireland, and yet there he stands accused of war crimes, religious persecution and ethnic cleansing on a dramatic scale." This book and an accompanying two-part dramatized TV-documentary, aired on RTE, have helped re-open the debate.

But who was Oliver Cromwell? What was he doing in Ireland? What were his motivations?

Charles I, in 1640 ruled over three kingdoms - Ireland, Scotland and England. He hadn't called a parliament in over ten years. English upper classes were aggrieved suspecting he was returning to absolutist catholic rule. Then two events hit Charles. Firstly, Scottish Presbyterians revolted against Charles' attempt to impose a uniform religion in all three kingdoms. Secondly, a rebellion broke out in Ulster in 1641, led by those dispossessed by the recent Ulster Plantation. Thousands of Scottish and English settlers were massacred in the rebellion.

Charles was forced to call a parliament in order to raise money and an army to crush both rebellions. Parliament mistrusted Charles as to what he would do once he had an army and money. This led to a stand-off and eventual civil war in England between king and Parliament.

Parliament was forced into ever more radical positions, eventually leading to the public trial and execution of Charles. England was proclaimed a commonwealth - a republic. As authority in England broke down, censorship ended and as the historian Christopher Hill put it, "There was a period of glorious flux and intellectual excitement." New religious and political groups emerged, such as the Quakers. They refused to



doff their hats to authority, addressed people as "Friend" rather than use titles. Others such as Ranters, Muggletonians, Seekers and numerous other religious minorities flourished. Radical political groups emerged, the best known being the Levellers, but also Diggers who attempted to establish free agricultural communes on common land, and Fifth Monarchists. As Gerard Winstanley, the Diggers' leader, put it, "The old world... is running up like parchment in the fire."

Oliver Cromwell emerged from the civil war as the most successful leader of the parliamentary army - New Model Army. By no means a revolutionary, he was however prepared to take the necessary steps needed to defeat King Charles. This led to moves that none of the parliamentary leaders had ever envisaged when the civil war broke out.

With civil war in England over,

Cromwell was ordered by Parliament to go to Ireland and crush the rebellion and avenge the massacres of Protestants in Ulster.

Meanwhile in Ireland the Ulster rebels, the Gaelic Irish, had linked up in a confederacy with old English (Catholic Anglo-Normans) and Royalist Protestants.

They held the whole island of Ireland barring Dublin, Derry and a few small ports in Munster. Based in Kilkenny under the leadership of the Duke of Ormond, the Confederacy was a very uneasy alliance.

Cromwell landed in Ringsend, Dublin, in August 1649, his expedition well-funded and equipped. £100,000 advanced by London merchants. His military campaign was swift and brutal. Cromwell's first battle at Drogheda was deliberately brutal, intended as a kind of 17th century "shock and awe" tactic to

scare the enemy into submission. This was repeated with a second massacre in Wexford. He spent the spring of 1650 mopping up resistance in Munster before returning to England, leaving his son-in-law Henry Ireton to finish the job. This, however, was not so easy. The Royalist Confederacy fell apart, most Protestants deserted to the New Model Army. What began on the Confederacy's side as an army proclaiming its loyalty to Charles, became a guerilla style army, almost exclusively Irish and Catholic. Cromwell's very brutality meant there was no incentive for the Catholic Irish to surrender. Guerilla wars like today are virtually unwinnable. Victory for the New Model Army was only achieved at enormous cost. Civilians were deliberately targeted, the countryside was laid waste and burnt, thousands were shipped to the West Indies to work in the sugar plantations. By 1653, it is

estimated that up to a quarter of the population have died of fighting, famine or disease.

17th century wars were brutal affairs, Europe had just ended 30 years of cruel wars, were Cromwell's actions in Ireland any more brutal? O Siochru contends they had an added edge, a desire for revenge for the massacre of Protestants in Ulster 1641, but above all Cromwell's conviction that God was on his side infused with zealous righteousness. As O Siochru puts it, Cromwell often wrestled with his conscience but he always won.

Surviving Catholic landowners were driven off their land and an Act of Settlement radically changed land-ownership in Ireland. The English conquest of Ireland was complete. London merchants were paid off with land, as were the soldiers' arrears in pay. This is the origin of the Protestant ascendancy.

We are left a picture of Cromwell as perhaps a good guy in England, but a bad guy in Ireland, with little more than his religious convictions and the desire for revenge to explain his actions.

If we see Cromwell as a sort of reluctant bourgeois revolutionary, a revolution of the "middling sort" against the old order - the old order symbolized in Europe by Rome and the Catholic Church - then Cromwell's anti-Catholicism is not just a personal tic. It encapsulates the political reality. England is emerging as an imperial power. Revolution and colonialism can go hand in hand.

Soon after his Ireland campaign England fought a war with Holland over control of trade with the West Indies. Just as George Washington could talk liberty and freedom while holding slaves on his Mount Vernon estate, Cromwell saw no contradiction between proclaiming religious liberty and persecuting Catholics.

The book and TV series are well worth checking out. It's a fascinating period. The first hints of modern concepts such as nationality emerge. Cromwell and his conquest of Ireland defines what both Ireland and England are to become - one a subject colony, the other an emerging European power.

God's Executioner - Oliver Cromwell and the Conquest of Ireland by Micheál O Siochru. Faber and Faber. €15.99.

Mark Thomas interviewed on his new book about the campaign against Coca-Cola

ACTIVIST AND comedian Mark Thomas's new book *Belching Out The Devil* chronicles the growing campaign against Coca-Cola's activities around the world.

This campaign is leading to big problems for the multinational drinks firm. "Coca-Cola's public relations woes started in Colombia, where campaigning brought to light the deaths of trade unionists at the hands of paramilitaries," said Mark.

"I have taken part in loads of action as part of the campaign - a stand up show, a documentary, an art exhibition. The book is the final word and the most thorough thing I've done as part of this project.

"It allows ordinary people's voices to come through - the trade unionists, shopkeepers and other people whose lives have been affected by this corporation.

"We should take on the vision that corporate culture is above and beyond democracy and criticism. We can control and shackle these things. We have to challenge the company and say, 'We're not going to stand for this'.

"We have to see past the PR of the multinationals and be armed with the facts and information to understand what it is we're trying to change.

Fighting Back

"The book shows how widespread the campaign against Coca-Cola is.

"There are ordinary people fighting back in every country. In the central American country of El Salvador a mayor is fighting Coke through the legal system. Columbian activists and trade unionists have a three-pronged approach of legal

work, promoting the boycott and campaigning.

"Strike action and even hunger strikes have taken place in Colombia.

"The campaign in India is particularly inspiring. People are furious at the levels of pollution and environmental destruction and they just want Coke out. They've had amazing results. They've shut down the Kerala plant in south India.

"The pressure on Coke over pesticides in the water has been incredible and has really laid bare the relationship between the corporation, the US and Indian states, and the political elite.

"What's fascinating is that it's a grassroots campaign. The struggle was led by Dalits - people in the lowest positions in the hierarchical caste system - and it is often women who are in the lead.

"They had a very good result in Balia - the plant was shut down.

"Many people who couldn't read and write became spokespeople for the campaign. They became very educated about the company.

"Workers in Ireland and the US also have a role to play.

Organise

"Unions and workers need to organise on a national basis. In Ireland Coke shut down a plant in the east coast that had good union membership and moved it to the west coast where there is no union.

"In the US there is a strategy to de-unionise plants. "If the company was caught putting workers into water treatment plants with no health and safety equipment or protection here, all hell would break loose."

So what should people do next?

"Organise, print flyers and find people to talk to. Get out there, do stalls and connect with other groups.

"The way things change is people getting up and doing stuff. Parliament isn't a way to do things. Some positive things can come out of it, like the minimum wage for example.

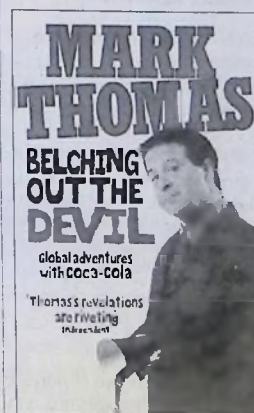
"But change starts outside parliament - in movements like Chartism in the 19th century - and parliament represents the end of a process. The most important thing is that people realise they have the power to change things.

"If we can just get to the point where we realise what is happening under capitalism, what our governments are going with industries which form the power blocks of the world then we're getting

somewhere.

"This is a hard fight, but we're getting there."

Belching Out The Devil is available now from Bookmarks, the socialist bookshop, priced £11.99. Phone 020 7637 1848 or go to www.bookmarks.uk.com





Marxism 2008 Conference

7,8,9 November Royal Dublin Hotel

Turn to page 8 for full details

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FUND OUR COLLEGES NOT THE BANKS



By SINEAD KENNEDY

FIANNA FAIL spent much of Summer "floating" the idea of reintroducing University fees.

After years of chronic under-funding Universities are facing a funding crisis that is about to be compounded by the governments call for 3 percent cuts to payroll. Just weeks into the new academic year staff and students are feeling the effects.

While education Minister Bat O'Keefe insists that fees would be restricted to those earning more than €100,000, it is clear that this is simply an attempt to bring in fees through the back door. It would only be a matter of time before, just like

in Britain, the threshold was lowered and all students are paying fees.

Even with a no fees system the average cost of a three-year college education is €34,000 (including Registration Fees, accommodation, rent, books bills, food etc). This is already out of the league of many working class families. If the Minister has his way this average cost of going to college will rise to €70,000 making higher education, in these times of recession, an unaffordable luxury.

Last month the OECD published its Education at a Glance 2008 report which showed that Ireland lags towards the bottom when it comes to spending on education.

The report showed that Ireland is close to the bottom of the international league table on education spending relative to the country's economic wealth. In fact the proportion of Ireland's GDP spent on education has dropped significantly from 5.2% in 1995 to 4.6 percent in 2005. In other words, at a time when Ireland was awash with money it actually decreased its percentage spending on education. This means that Ireland today ranks 30th out of 34 countries in terms of education expenditure as a percentage of GDP.

Contrast the government's attitude to education with their treatment of the banking sector. Just hours after the banks rang up Brian Cohen and

asked for a bailout legislation was being prepared to rush through the Dail. The banks who were raking in profits of €1 million a day during the Celtic Years wanted the Irish taxpayer to give them a handout.

The government who are al-



ways happy to oblige their rich friends gave them a €400 billion guarantee.

Instead of rescuing the banks we should be funding our education system. We need to take resources off the wealthy to fund public services like health and education. We could immediately close the tax loopholes which allow the super rich to claim tax exile status and introduce special tax on wealth and incomes over €100,000 and increase corporate tax levels.

This money could ensure proper funding for education and an adequate grant system that would allow everyone a chance at a decent and meaningful education.