

Socialist Worker

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inside

THE FIGHT AGAINST PRIVATISATION

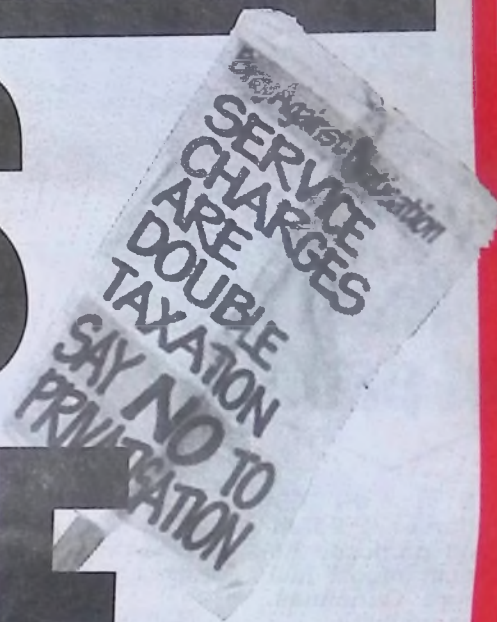


page 5

McQuaid and DeValera: A Catholic state for Catholic people pages 6-7

Keep Thatcherism out

STOP THIS MAD DRIVE TO PRIVATISE



Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats have embarked on a drive to privatise every public service they can.

They are trying to copy Thatcher's discredited strategies, nearly ten years after she was booted out of office.

Transport Minister Mary O'Rourke says she wants private bus operators in Dublin.

But these will only cherry pick the most profitable routes and so worsen the service to poorer areas.

She also wants businessmen to take over the running of some of the trains.

In Britain, privatisation has led to more

accidents, higher fares and worse conditions for commuters.

But Fianna Fail's drive to privatise could be stopped dead by a major battle that has broken out in Bray.

Waste

The local council in Bray has removed the refuse service and are trying to force people to pay £150 a year to a private company, Noble Waste.

But people are not taking this Irish form of Thatcherism lying down.

One thousand people turned up outside a council meeting and forced the council to vote

to reverse the decision to privatise.

The now have to force the unelected council officials to respect the democratic vote.

Bray council workers have gone on strike and are determined to spread their struggle throughout the whole of County Wicklow.

Every worker should get behind this struggle.

If privatisation is defeated in Bray, it will stop other councils removing basic services.

That is why their union, SIPTU, should organise national collections for the strike and co-ordinate industrial action across any counties affected.

Climate change kills

STORMS AND gales wreaked devastation in Latin America and Europe at the end of 1999.

Floods in Venezuela killed up to 30,000 people and made over 200,000 homeless.

In France over 80 people were killed as gales ripped through the country.

These disasters are not 'natural'. They're a direct result of the way the capitalist system is destroying the environment.

In particular global warming, caused by soaring carbon dioxide emissions pumped out by the world's giant firms, is

having a devastating effect on weather conditions.

The two chief meteorologists in Britain and the US issued a joint statement just before Christmas.

They attacked governments and businesses for saying that global warming is exaggerated.

Studies

The two scientists say that studies of global temperatures "confirm that our climate is now changing rapidly.

"The rapid rate of warming since 1976, approximately 0.2 degrees per decade, is consistent with the projected rate of warming based on human-

induced-effects."

The Red Cross calculates that 57,513 people died and 335 million people lost their homes in 1998 because of climate related disasters.

Peter Walker of the Red Cross says that the figures for 1999 could be even worse.

In 1999 there were over 75 major disasters, including earthquakes in Turkey and Taiwan, the Orissa cyclone in India, avalanches in France and Austria and hurricanes in the US.

It is the poorest in the world who suffer the most. Millions are forced to live in makeshift shanty towns and some 500 million people now live within range of potential volcanic eruptions.

Juvenile execution

CHRIS THOMAS, now 26, was due to be murdered by the US State of Virginia early this month for a crime he committed while he was only 17.

He is one of 4 juvenile death row inmates due to be executed in the United States this month.

There have been a

total of 70 executions for juvenile offenders since the death penalty was returned in 1976.

There have been widespread protests by human rights groups and even the president of the American Bar, concluded that "the execution of people for crimes they committed while children is unacceptable in a civilised society".

Wort worry

THE HERBAL anti-depressant St John's Wort has been used by thousands of Irish people suffering from mild to moderate depression.

It has been greatly praised by users for its effectiveness and lack of side effects - which make it markedly different from pharmaceutical products like Prozac.

Cheap

It is also cheap and users save the cost of a visit to the GP.

No wonder then that the conservative Irish Medical Organisation and the Irish Pharmaceutical Union have decided to make over-the-counter sales of the remedy illegal. From now on you will need a prescription to receive St John's Wort.

Many GPs receive bonus gifts such as golfing holidays for the prescription of drugs manufactured by pharmaceutical giants like Eli-Lilly and anti-depressants make up a large proportion of these sales.

Anti-racism day

THE RESIDENTS committee and the Rathmines branch of the SWP are organising an anti racist day for refugee and local children in Tom Kelly Flats Community Centre on Saturday 29 January.

The activities combining an educational and a fun element will help to integrate refugee children living in local accommodation with the community.

The events will include painting, designing a website, drama workshops and a kids international disco and they will be led by experienced teachers, artists etc. all of them committed anti racists.

Food will be provided and there will be a light buffet for parents after the events at 7pm. All kids between 6 and 16 are welcome to attend. To register or for programmes please ring Jackie at 086 8661248.

Revenue Commissioners rent from Ansbacher man

THE REVENUE Commissioners are leasing an office from a business associate of Charlie Haughey who has been caught up in the Ansbacher scandal.

The business man involved is John Byrne who owns Carlisle Trust, a company that uses an offshore address to avoid tax.

Byrne had nearly £6 million in the notorious Ansbacher account.

Closely

He worked closely with Charles Haughey for over twenty years.

One of the directors of his companies used to be Haughey's bagman, Des Traynor.

Byrne has built up a fortune by persuading the state to rent some of his high priced property.

One of the properties involved is D'Olier House in Dublin for which tax payers are currently paying a staggering



John Byrne

£375,000 a year.

Overall Byrne's companies gets £1.5 million a year in rent from the state.

Byrne has often been well looked after by the state.

As soon as Haughey became Taoiseach in 1980, he appointed Byrne - who used to be known as his 'silent partner' - to the

Irish Horse Racing Authority.

Byrne was big into horses and invested in the Simonscourt Stud. Haughey then introduced a special scheme so that no taxes were paid on stallion stud farms.

Byrne has also benefited from tax breaks given under the Urban Renewal schemes.

In one case his hotel, the

Mount Brandon, was included in an Urban Renewal Zone even though the local Tralee council had never requested it.

So it is probably not all that surprising that instead of providing a full public disclosure of those involved in the Ansbacher accounts, the Revenue Commissioners are actually renting an office from one of them.

St Ultans victory

THE PURCHASE of St Ultans flats on Charlemont Street by Dublin corporation was concluded recently.

The flats will now be used to provide accommodation for people on the housing list.

This represents a massive victory for ordinary people in the area who successfully mounted pickets preventing the eviction of residents last June.

Ford's Nazi past revealed

RECENTLY DISCOVERED documents in the American National Archive have thrown light on the extent of the Ford motor company's involvement with Nazi Germany.

Henry Ford, himself a supporter of Hitler, eagerly collaborated with the Nazis and greatly enhanced its business prospects.

Ford's German plant made millions producing vehicles of a strictly military use.

Following Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939 German Ford became one of the largest suppliers of vehi-

cles to the German Army, police and the SS.

By 1941 they had stopped manufacturing passenger vehicles and devoted their entire production capacity to military trucks.

For the entire duration of

the war Ford relied on slave and forced labour to meet their production quotas and increase profits.

Ford gave Hitler a birthday gift of 35,000 Reichmarks in April 1935. Also the company's in-

house publication couldn't have been more fanatically pro-Nazi if Josef Goebbels had edited it.

The new information about Ford's collaboration with Nazi Germany comes at a time of growing atten-

tion to corporate collaboration with the Nazi's.

In 1998 Swiss banks reached a settlement with Holocaust survivors and agreed to pay \$1.5 billion.

That set the stage for a host of new Holocaust-related revelations as well as legal claims.

In Germany, about fifty companies employed slave and forced labour during World War II including Bayer, BMW, Volkswagen and Daimler-Chrysler.

In mid December they were forced to establish a \$5.1 billion fund to pay victims.

Opel, General Motors' German subsidiary, announced it would contribute to the fund.

Ford continues to refuse to participate in any settlement talks.

Modified protest

GENETICALLY MODIFIED food giant Monsanto paid people to picket United States government offices in Washington.

Members of a Washington Baptist church, dressed up as butterflies and sweetcorn, carried signs saying "Biotech saves children's lives" and "Biotech equals jobs".

The church is based in one of the poorest areas of Washington.

The public relations representatives of Monsanto claimed the payments were merely "reimbursements" for lunch and the bus ride down to the poorest area.

But many of the protesters had a different take on the event.

When one kid dressed as a sweetcorn was asked by a TV reporter why he was protesting, he yelled "My mum said we needed the money".

World of pain

THE UNITED Nations Children Fund produced its annual report just before Christmas. It found that :

★ Every DAY 30,500 children under five die from mainly preventable causes.

★ Every MONTH another 250,000 children and young people become infected with the fatal HIV/AIDS virus.

★ Every YEAR 585,000 women die of complications of pregnancy and childbirth that could have been prevented.

★ **THE COSMETICS giant Johnson and Johnson is in hot water.**

The makers of one of it adverts have banned black women from appearing in it. Agents for the makers of cotton buds and baby oil insisted on using only white women in an ad for face cream.

A memo sent to theatrical agents looking for suitable people to appear in the film stated, "this commercial is being shown across Europe and eastern Europe so we are only looking for white actresses."

No to privatisation No double taxation

LOCAL AUTHORITIES are putting a gun to people's heads - accept either increased service charges or privatisation.

In Waterford, the local council has introduced a new charge for every bag of rubbish. In Bray, Wicklow and Drogheda the council is contracting out the refuse service to private businessmen.

Policies

Privatisation means that Fianna Fail get a chance to award contracts to their fat cat friends. It means job losses and worse conditions for workers. It is also more inefficient because businessmen want to cherry pick the lucrative contracts for commercial waste disposal while providing a poorer service when there is little profit.

If privatisation goes through there will also be increased charges once local monopolies are established.

So the choice between privatisation and increased charges is a false one. The reality is that this right wing government is cutting back on the funding for the local authorities and is forcing working people to pay more.

Instead of tackling the crooks who swindled the country of millions in the Ansbacher affair, they want workers to pay a double tax. All of this makes a mockery of the claim that the budget will give tax breaks to the low paid.

Yet the real question is why are the union leaders not leading a fight? In Bray, shop stewards took the initiative and made their own strike official. They have garnered huge support from the townspeople - giving the lie to the idea that privatisation is automatically popular and nothing can be done about it.

But Bray cannot be left to fight alone. SIPTU should have walked out of partnership talks until the threat of privatisation is removed.

Instead of trying to put off industrial action in other areas, they should coordinate strike action across the areas that are affected.



BRAY protests showed privatisation is not automatically popular

Farmers know how to fight— what about the unions?

THE HIGH Court fine on the IFA was a disgraceful attack on everyone's right to protest.

The judges talked about respect for the law. But Larry Goodman was never brought before the court even though fraud in his companies cost the country a major EU fine.

The meat barons operate a cartel to pay farmers artificially low prices. But they also have casualised their workforce and pay low wages.

Note

The IFA are no friends of workers. But we should still note how they behaved.

When he appeared before the court the IFA leader Tom Parlon leader said that he could not "sell out" his members and so he had to break the law.

The government rushed into holding negotiations - even while the open defiance of the High Court continued.

Now there must be a lesson for workers in all this. If the IFA can stand up for its class and fight, then why can our unions not do the same?

The next time the law is used against workers, the union leaders should be sent into court and instructed to tell the judge,

"Sorry, me lord, we cannot sell out our members. I am afraid the law will have to take second place".

And if they have to give up their cushy jobs for a while, let them do that as well.

Rosemary Nelson — RUC get away with threats



What was the RUC's involvement in Rosemary's death?

THE DECISION not to prosecute a single RUC officer for the murderous threats made to Rosemary Nelson is a scandal. Its shows that even while Sinn Fein members sit in a cabinet, the sectarianism at the heart of the state still remains.

Rosemary Nelson was a thorn in the side of the RUC. She represented the Garvaghy Road Residents Association in their opposition to Orange marches.

She took up the case of Robert Hamill and pursued the RUC for sitting in a van while he was kicked to death in Portadown.

She exposed their attempt to frame Colin

Duffy, a leading republican in Lurgan.

In early 1996, one of her clients was told by the RUC to pass on a warning, "We'll tell Billy Wright your solicitor's address". Rosemary Nelson, who knew how the solicitor Pat Finucane had been murdered, took the warning seriously and notified Amnesty International and the British Irish Rights Watch.

In 1997, she helped the New York based Lawyers for Justice in Ireland to compile

a dossier of other threats made against her by the RUC and subsequently testified to the US Congress.

Six different witnesses all signed statements detailing the RUC threats made against Rosemary Nelson. But nothing has been done.

Instead a charade of an investigation took place where RUC officers were allowed to read out prepared statements.

In one case, an RUC officer turned up drunk and did not disguise his hostility.

Just as the British police were exposed as racist after the Stephen Lawrence case, the failure to

prosecute a single officer shows that institutionalised sectarianism still runs very deep in the RUC.

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It's cash not 'flu which caused the NHS crisis

THE NHS is in crisis - a crisis which has everything to do with cash and very little with the 'flu.

It is the result of decades of underfunding by Tory and Labour governments.

Patients pay the price — sometimes with their lives.

In England, Mavis Skeets has had her operation for cancer of the oesophagus postponed four times because no beds were available. Now the cancer has become inoperable.

Her daughter said: "My father and mother have paid their taxes all their lives. They feel utterly let down by the NHS and the government."

Ferried

In Northern Ireland, patients were ferried from hospital to hospital in search of a bed.

A Belfast woman was driven 90 miles to Coleraine for an intensive care bed.

A Belfast man had to be brought to Altnagelvin Hospital in Derry. In the NHS, only one per cent



of all beds are dedicated to intensive care - in France it's five per cent.

Patients in the Royal Victoria were forced to spend up to 14 hours on trolleys. Routine operations in the Northern, Western and Eastern health boards have all been suspended until late January.

As a result, the waiting lists will grow even

longer.

Each year, health trusts have to make three per cent 'efficiency savings'.

The National Prescribing Centre wrote to health service managers last year, warning them that a flu drug called Relenza was expensive at £24 a dose.

Vast numbers of people weren't told about the

'flu vaccine. Stanley Miller of the Western Health and Social Services Council, which lobbies for better health service provision, says less than half the people who were entitled to the job actually received it.

Nurses and doctors continue to be overworked and underpaid. Junior doctors are expected to work 60

hours a week.

The NHS needs a major cash injection for the long term.

But Tony Blair's alternative is to bring in private companies.

Finance

Under the Private Finance Initiative, businesses will finance hospital buildings and lease them back to the health trusts — and that's only the beginning.

The British Medical Association has warned that the NHS could "shrink to a rump service for the poor".

It is also worried that private companies are unaccountable and that there's "generous scope for corruption".

Bairbre de Brun and Mark Durkan, the Minister for Finance, should demand more cash for the health services here.

But not one party at Stormont is seriously opposing Blair's attempts to cut public sector spending to the bone.

It's up to health sector unions and patients' groups right across Britain to come together to force Tony Blair to reverse the years of cut-backs in the NHS.

Loyalists split in Mid Ulster

THE MURDER of Portadown loyalist Richard Jameson last week is a sign of the deepening crisis of the paramilitary groups. Jameson was associated with the UVF and is believed to have been killed by elements of the LVF, who broke away from the UVF in the mid-1990's.

The killing appears to have been in revenge for a fight in a Portadown social club before Xmas when 12 people were seriously injured.

A number of those taken to hospital were LVF prisoners on Xmas leave. But it is also likely to be linked to control of illegal drug supplies by the paramilitary groups.

The LVF, under the control of notorious loyalist killer Billy Wright, opposed the UVF ceasefire and the peace process.

In rural and semi-rural areas like Portadown their opposition was based on a particularly virulent brand of religious fundamentalism and opposition to the UVF's talk of left-wing politics.

The LVF was particularly associated with the Drumcree stand-off and Ian Paisley's opposition to the peace process.

In contrast, the UVF ceasefire and development of the PUP, especially in urban areas, reflects a deep disenchantment with the politics of Paisley-type unionism.

In urban areas especially they have gained ground through a support of the peace process and a focus on community activism.

On a number of occasions the UVF leadership have attempted to move against the LVF. In 1997 car loads of loyalists travelled from Belfast to Portadown in an unsuccessful attempt to attack a bar used by the LVF.

But there is little doubt that the tension also reflects attempts to control the illegal drugs trade in the North, which has become a major area of activity for the paramilitary groups since the ceasefire.

Richard Jameson's brother said "The people who have carried out this killing were drug pushers. They go under the banner of the LVF.

"The Drug Volunteer Force they should be called because they deal in drugs and destroy people's lives."

The killing of Richard Jameson is unlikely to be the last. There are similar tensions between loyalist paramilitaries in Derry and throughout Antrim.

Eamonn McCann

Anyone but the left

"BEWARE these Cuban comrades, who come like carrion to feast on the flesh of the Irish people".

The speaker in unusually eloquent form was Neil Blaney, on a platform in Letterkenny in August 1969. His target was a small group of socialists from Derry who had been chanting "Tories out, North and South" while, Blaney, a minister in Jack Lynch's Fianna Fail Government, strove to whip his audience up into nationalistic fervour over RUC attacks on Catholic areas of Belfast and Derry.

Blaney was gung-ho for "defence of the ghettos", but would tolerate no talk of socialism.

The exchange illustrated, in a small way, the fact that the split which created the Provisional IRA was not merely, as today's Sinn Fein would have it, between, on the one hand, those who had left Catholic areas defenceless and those who couldn't be counted on for the future (the "Officials") and, on the other hand, the Provos, who said "Never Again!". The split was also along Left-Right lines.

Official papers released at the beginning of the year under the "30-year rule" throw new light on some of these events — although much remains in the shadows.

No minutes of cabinet meetings have been published, for example, making it difficult to trace the internal arguments within Fianna Fail in any detail.

Darkened

What we do know is that the instinct of the majority of Lynch's Government and of the Fianna Fail party when the flames from the North first darkened the sky was to stand idly by.

Papers already in the public domain have revealed telephone calls to Downing Street in which Lynch pleaded for action to restore calm in Belfast and Derry — not out of concern for the people living in terror, but lest anger in the South threaten political stability.

One fascinating detail comes from the archive of Dr. Kenneth Whitaker, Governor of the Central Bank at the time and the Southern State's main economic strategist. It turns out that Whitaker was Lynch's closest adviser on Northern policy throughout this period and wrote a key September 1969 speech in which Lynch advocated a "moderate" line on the national question.

Whitaker had also been active behind the scenes arguing for changes in Articles Two and Three of the constitution.

We can read too much into such details: but it's interesting nonetheless that it was the State's chief banker who had the ear of the Taoiseach on the North at that juncture. Socialists can sometimes seem to be dealing in abstractions when we argue that it's the interests of capitalism which ultimately determine State policy, even in areas which, on the face of it, have little to do with economics.

But Lynch was signalling his practical priorities clearly enough when he summoned Whitaker to his side in August 1969.

The 1970 Arms Crisis in Fianna Fail arose from the rejection of the Lynch-Whitaker line by Blaney and Haughey. They were aware that the anger of the Catholic section of the North's working class had reached boiling point.

Stormont MPs including Paddy Devlin of the NI Labour Party had been to Dublin looking for guns. Haughey and Blaney reckoned that if the Southern ruling class didn't grab a share of the upcoming action by arming "dependable" elements, the Falls and the Bogside might turn even more decisively to the Left.

This was the context in which Blaney and Haughey helped form the Provisional IRA. Contrary to the line of "revisionist" commentators today, they didn't create the Provos.

The Provos were generated from within the areas subjected to terror by the Northern State. What the intervention of Haughey and Blaney did was to ensure, as far as they could, that militant feeling was channelled to the Right and not to the Left.

Viewed in that perspective, the split in Fianna Fail was not about fundamental principle at all but about the best strategy for ensuring that one section of the working class on the island didn't infect the class as a whole with its anger.

BRAY COUNCIL WORKERS AND PROTESTORS: This is how we can beat privatisation

OVER A thousand people attended an angry protest against privatisation in Bray.

by SIMON BASKETTER

The anger and sheer scale of the protest forced the council to vote to restate the bin service withdrawn by the local council.

The demonstrators were also showing support for the fifty-five workers in the council who have taken strike action to defend their jobs and conditions and oppose the privatisation of services.

Unelected

Yet despite the democratic decision of the council, unelected officials kept insisting that privatisation would go ahead.

During the Christmas period the Council got rid of Bray's two refuse trucks and handed refuse collection over to a private contractor.

The workers walked out when they returned after the holidays to find the council's two bin lorries had been returned to a leasing company.

The council's 10 refuse collectors were joined by the UDC's other 45 outdoor workers on picket lines at six

sites.

The collections ceased on 31 December and since then people had only had the option of going to Noble Waste.

Noble Waste has become one of the fastest growing companies in Ireland since the policy of privatisation began.

But if the council thought they could force all this through without opposition they got it wrong.

In one estate local women blocked Noble trucks entering the area and took part in the huge protest bringing their refuse along.

"It's a joke, we already pay a £85 service charge but now they want us to pay more to a private contractor," one protester told Socialist Worker.

As councillors tried to get into the meeting another protestor said, "Those lads should get their jobs back straight away. Sack the council not the workers. That lot in there need to get out of the K Club and start paying attention."

The protest continued for almost four hours and the jeering and shouting



Protesting at Bray UDC

could be heard clearly at the council meeting upstairs. Crowds barred the councillors on their way in and out of the meeting.

The Bray Urban District Council meets above a McDonalds — they have even gone so far as to privatise the Town Hall.

A spokesperson for Bray Against Privatisation said, "The turnout was brilliant, we've collected over 6,000 signatures on a petition.

"It shows not just that people are furious over privatisation but that they are determined to stop it".

In response to the protest the council was forced to pass a motion which looks at bringing back a public service.

Fianna Fail's Michael Lawlor, the only councillor to vote against bringing back a bin service, had suggested the council would provide 10 bags a year for old-age pensioners as "they have very little rubbish".

After the vote Town Clerk, Tom Murphy, and the assistant Wicklow county manager, Hubert Fitzpatrick, claimed that the council can't take back the service because of legal advice they received.

Advice

But everyone knows that you can get different advice depending on what solicitor you go to.

This blatant attempt by unelected officials to subvert local democracy must be resisted.

Their other argument is that the council in order to compete with private operators would have to subsidise the service by £200,000 a year.

But that's the amount the councillors received in expenses last year.

As one striker told *Socialist Worker*, "If that's not enough then they can tax the rich, not ordinary people."

Thacherite lies about privatisation

"IT IS definitely the way of the future." This is how a spokesperson for Wicklow County Council described their plans for privatisation.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Privatisation is a discredited policy that has caused chaos to Britain's transport and local services. It is about cutting back on services and increasing profits for Fianna Fail's friends in business.

At national level, businessmen like Haughey's friend Dermot Desmond made a fortune by winning lucrative contracts to privatise state assets. Now the small time hatchet men in the local authorities want to do the same for their business friends.

Privatisation means that working class people pay at least twice for services that are theirs by right. PAYE work-

ers already shoulder huge tax burden — they are entitled to free local services because of the money they already pay.

Privatisation also means that there is not even the pretence of democratic control over the service.

There is nothing to stop the private contractors doubling their prices at will, because councils have handed them over a ready-made monopoly.

It also leads to a squandering of resources.

Bray urban council have already hired a private investigation firm to trace any bags of rubbish dumped. "If anybody thinks they can get away with dumping they will be caught and fined or go to court. Four hundred fines were handed out last year and we have now got 60 authorised officers as well as every police officer," a spokesperson warned.

A struggle that must be won

THE STRIKE and protests in Bray show the best way to fight the profiteers.

Following the action in Bray, SIPTU and ATGWU workers at Drogheda Corporation have balloted for strike action in protest at the local authority's decision to privatise its refuse collection service.

Workers in Wicklow and Arklow are also set to ballot while it also appears that another threat of privatisation is looming over Dun Laoghaire workers.

The stakes are high in this struggle. If Bray is defeated, the government will co-ordinate a national campaign to remove basic services from the local authorities and force through increased charges.

They will see it as a way of recouping the money they lost after they were defeated in the battle over water charges.

Victory can be achieved in Bray but only if the most militant and determined action is taken against the hatchet men who want to make a name for themselves as the new Thatcherites of Ireland.

Crucially, the struggle needs to be spread throughout the whole of County Wicklow.

Collectors

Refuse collectors in Wicklow and Arklow are already set to lose their jobs and need to be brought into the struggle immediately.

Tragically the local SIPTU official has attempted to defer action in these areas, risking the defeat of Bray because they have been left to stand alone.

This policy must be immediately reversed and strike action should begin in these areas, if necessary on an unofficial

basis.

★ The scab firm Noble is trying to profit from the suffering of workers by pressuring customers to sign up with them while the strike is on.

The dump they are using should be closed down by mass pickets. SIPTU should instruct its members working there to pull out immediately.

Wicklow Council have already taken out an injunction against pickets on this dump.

But workers should take a leaf out of the farmers book and defy the court because their direct livelihood is at stake.

★ The workers need financial support so they are not starved back to work.

The South East Region of SIPTU have taken a good initiative by calling for collections.

But these need to be organised now at workplace level so that the money is flowing in to sustain this strike.

Caspian Sea

More blood for oil

THE RUSSIAN invasion of Chechnya saw a brutal attempt by Russia's rulers to assert their authority in the Caucasus.

by SIMON BASKETTER

The Russian ruling class wants to show its power over the countries of the former Soviet Union. It also wants to grab as much as it can of the vast oil and gas reserves of the region around the Caspian Sea.

Like NATO in the Balkans, the Russian ruling class is prepared to slaughter countless civilians and destroy the whole of Chechnya in order to try and preserve its rule and its profits.

President Putin put it clearly. He said, "This is about how to bring about the end of the break-up of Russia." He says he wants to restore Russia as a "great power" and to reverse the fortunes of the Russian army, which was decimated when it lost the war it fought against Chechnya in 1994-6.

In the short term at least, an economically weakened Russia isn't in a position to stage another Cold War. Nevertheless, it can re-establish its position as the main imperial power in what it calls the "near abroad" - surrounding regions such as the Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia. The US has been extremely active in these areas.

It has, for example, promoted the establishment of a pro-Western bloc of former Soviet republics called GUEAM. Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze, one of the leaders of this group, said recently he would be "knocking very hard" on NATO's door to demand admission.

These moves aren't just about boxing Russia in strategically. Central Asia and the Caucasus have recently become of major economic importance with the discovery of major oil and gas reserves in the Caspian Sea.

Recently at an Istanbul summit Bill Clinton attended the signing of an agreement between Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Kazakhstan over the planned Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. This will transport Caspian oil to Europe, bypassing Russia.

The *Financial Times* commented "The signature ceremony underlined Russia's isolation at the summit, with leaders of the former Soviet republics of the Transcaucasus and Central Asia - Moscow's traditional 'backyard' - welcoming the reduced dependence on Russian energy and export routes the pipeline would

bring". Amoco, Chevron and other US companies have already spent over a billion dollars on developing the Caspian oil resources. But according to the US State department "Exploitation of this precious resource faces considerable obstacles: ethnic conflicts, unpredictable neighbours, and the sheer distance to markets."

According to US military advisor Eugene Carroll "US commercial and political interests are leading America into significant involvement in regional affairs there, often in ways challenging to Russia. Most of our actions appear to be driven by a US desire to ensure access to oil by American corporations."

Russia would like the oil to continue flowing from Baku to Novorossiysk but this pipeline goes through Chechnya.

Many former Soviet republics also do not want Russia to have control over the oil flow. Azerbaijan and the United States would like the pipeline to go through Turkey, a NATO ally. The shortest route to Turkey leads through Armenia. But Azerbaijan and Armenia broke off all relations after a brutal war over the disputed Nagorno Karabakh region.

When the fighting stopped in 1994, the Armenian forces controlled not only Nagorno Karabakh, but also large parts of surrounding Azerbaijan. Over a million people were made homeless and today 12 percent of Azerbaijanis live in exile, many in camps for displaced people.

Some of the pipelines go through the Republic of Georgia, another potential flashpoint in the Caucasus. The government there fought twice in the 1990s to prevent South Ossetia and Abkhazia from seceding.

This patchwork of regional conflicts is at the mercy of the big powers and their oil interests. Nationalist leaders in the region move from siding with which ever big power is the most dominant in their area. The assassination of the Armenian president late last year was an indication of the instability of the region.

The danger is that for the sake of profit, the Chechnya war will be the start of a whole series of horrific wars purely to the rush for oil money.

How McQuaid and DeValera

A CATHOLIC STATE A CATHOLIC STATE

WHEN FIANNA Fail came to power in 1932, their aim was to create a Catholic state for a Catholic people.

In one celebrated case de Valera supported the decision of the Mayo County Council not to appoint Letitia Dunbarr Harrison, a graduate of Trinity and a Protestant, to the county library.

De Valera argued that the post had a "propagandist educational character" and "as 98 percent of the population are Catholic they are justified in insisting on a Catholic librarian".

In his 1935 St. Patrick's Day broadcast De Valera declared Ireland to be a Catholic nation. "Since the coming of St. Patrick 1500 years ago Ireland has been a Christian and a Catholic nation... she remains a Catholic nation".

The Fianna Fail leadership made a point of attending Church functions and of getting bishops to open housing estates and factories.

In 1935 the sale and importation of contraceptives was outlawed. They responded to the bishops' obsession with the evils of dance halls by passing the Public Dance Hall Act. These 'occasions of sin' could only happen with a licence.

The alliance between McQuaid and De Valera was probably the



McQuaid and DeValera - architects of a sectarian state

most extraordinary partnerships of twentieth century Ireland. And it was to the mutual benefit of both.

When Fianna Fail came to power, McQuaid was the headmaster of Blackrock College, the school

that de Valera's sons attended.

During this period McQuaid and De Valera developed a close friendship and soon McQuaid had become one of the key intermediaries between the hierarchy and De Valera.

When he was only 45 years old, he was appointed Archbishop of Dublin in an highly unusual fashion. A series of top secret telegrams were communicated between de Valera and the Vatican to ensure McQuaid's selection.

The messenger had become the

Master of the McQuaid correspondence is now a piece of the external relations.

In 1919 McQuaid noted that the D did not have teaching hospitals as pres-

He used de Valera's Commission should be considered the which is paramount. The National Hospital, Holles Street, The B7 Constitution

Keeping workers "in their place"

MCQUAID HAS sometimes been presented as being a fanatic about sex but still a friend of the poor. Nothing could be further from the truth.

He lived in a mansion in Dun Laoghaire. He insisted that three articles be inserted into the constitution that deemed private property to be a natural right. This article is still used by big landlords to claim there can never be rent control in Ireland.

McQuaid was also highly preoccupied by the question of strikes which he acknowledged to be "the most potent form of social agitation". McQuaid hated unions and the power he felt they possessed. He sacked two waiters and a hall porter in Blackrock College after he learned they joined the Domestic and Household Workers Union.

The union placed a picket

on the college as McQuaid was barely even paying the men a living wage for 75 hours a week work. McQuaid had 20 picketers and union officials arrested and charged. McQuaid won, declaring it to be a victory over communist infiltration of the Irish state.

McQuaid was also a huge fan of the FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover. In particular he admired the FBI's espionage work against suspected trade unionists.

But McQuaid had little to learn from Hoover. In fact he probably could teach him a lot because he ran his own spy system during his 32 year reign as Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland.

Like Hoover, McQuaid used fear as his essential instrument for conformity. He received covert information from his 'Holy Joes' informants and kept a grip on everything that went on in Ireland.

During the 1940s, McQuaid used the *Catholic Standard* to

witch hunt socialists in the unions.

He denounced the Mother and Child Scheme as 'socialist medicine' because it would have given free medicine.

He even drafted John A Costello's (the Taoiseach of the day) acceptance speech of Church condemnation of the scheme.

The Mother and Child Scheme not only showed McQuaid's power but also the failure of the Labour Party and the trade unions to defend the scheme.

The Labour Party was never prepared to take on the power of the Church even though many workers wanted a free medical.

Later the leader of the Labour Party, Brendan Corish, declared that he was "an Irishman second, I am a Catholic first... If the hierarchy gives me any direction with regard to Catholic Social Teaching, I accept without qualification".

Decline of

DESPITE McQUAID'S power, his influence crumbled in less than a decade.

McQuaid was unable to accept the Church's attempt to modernise with Vatican II.

In particular he hated the fact that he was being told by the Vatican to develop an ecumenical relationship with Protestant Churches.

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Revealed

FBI / Irish revealed that percent of them were church teaching

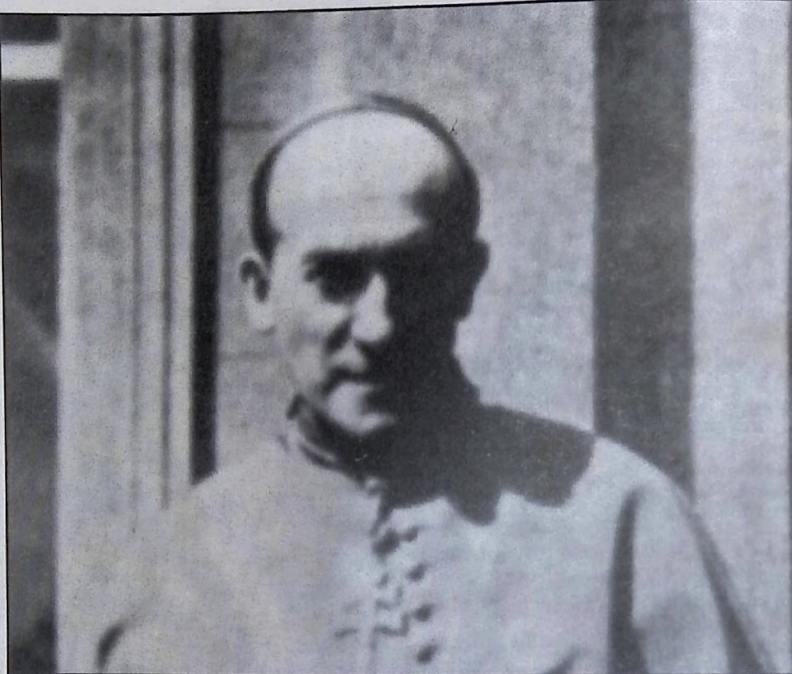
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McQuaid and DeValera - architects of a sectarian state



FOR ALMOST forty years Ireland was dominated by two major figures - **JOHN CHARLES MCQUAID** and **EAMON DE VALERA**. Between them they controlled the lives of ordinary people even at the most intimate level. **JOHN COONEY'S** biography of McQuaid explains how together they created what came to be known as a Catholic state.

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that De Valera's sons attended. During this period McQuaid and De Valera developed a close friendship and soon McQuaid had become one of the key intermediaries between the hierarchy and De Valera. When he was only 45 years old, he was appointed Archbishop of Dublin in an highly unusual fashion. A series of top secret telegrams were communicated between De Valera and the Vatican to ensure McQuaid's selection. The messenger had become the Master. The McQuaid-de Valera correspondence is now public giving some idea of the extent of the relationship. In 1934 McQuaid noted that students in UCD did not have access to teaching hospitals as prestigious as the Protestant run Rotunda. He advised De Valera that the "hospital commission should take into consideration the Catholic Position which is paramount" and upgrade the National Maternity Hospital in Holles Street. The 1937 Constitution was the

culmination of this Catholic-State alliance. McQuaid had enormous influence on education and family sections but his triumph was the recognition of the "special position of the Catholic Church". "The most Holy Trinity" was deemed to be the source of all authority. Divorce and contraception were banned. Women were defined solely as homemakers and mothers. De Valera even sent McQuaid his proofs of the constitution for his approval before they were presented to the cabinet. The framework of a state for a Catholic people well and truly in place. Both of society created had an enormous human cost. Young men and women refused to stick to the strict rules on pre-marital chastity harshly dealt with. Young women were sent to or placed in Magdalene Asylums where they were slaves to the National Catechism. The National Catechism was published in 1951 and its dangers to the national

Keeping workers "in their place"

MCQUAID HAS sometimes been presented as being a fanatic about Catholicism but still a friend of the poor. However, he could go further from the truth. He lived in a mansion in Laoghaire. He insisted that three articles be inserted in the constitution that protected private property to be a natural right. This article is used by big landlords to ensure there can never be rent control in Ireland. McQuaid was also highly occupied by the question of strikes which he acknowledged to be "the most potent form of social agitation". He hated unions and used fear as his essential instrument for conformity. He received covert information from his 'Holy Joes' informants and kept a grip on everything that went on in Ireland. During the 1940s, McQuaid used the *Catholic Standard* to

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Decline of the church

DESPITE McQUAID'S power, his influence crumbled in less than a decade. McQuaid was unable to accept the Church's attempt to modernise with Vatican II. In particular he hated the fact that he was being told by the Vatican to develop an ecumenical relationship with Protestant Churches. In 1971 after 31 years as Archbishop McQuaid was finally pushed aside as a

dinosaur. But even after he departed, the decline of the Church continued. In 1970 there were 750 new entrants to the priesthood but by 1992 this had declined to 92. **Revealed** A 1998 MRBI / *Irish Times* polled revealed that only 21 percent of Catholics said they were guided by Church teaching. The expansion of the economy meant that thousands of women went into paid employment and wanted to control their own bodies. At first the ruling class tried to halt the tide of change and made huge concessions to fundamentalist Catholics.



For example party in the 1990s ended the 1985 amendment to the EU protocol Maastricht ruling Ireland outlawing abortion. Yet in 1992 15 percent of people were against the decision to ban a 14-week abortion. These changes and the surrenders of a child abuse power of the But de changes in the liberal

...a created . . .

CATHOLIC STATE FOR CATHOLIC PEOPLE

by SINEAD KENNEDY



FOR ALMOST forty years Ireland was dominated by two major figures—JOHN CHARLES MCQUAID and EAMON DE VALERA. Between them they controlled the lives of ordinary people even at the most intimate level. John Cooney's new biography of McQuaid examines how together they created what came to be known as "a Catholic state for a Catholic people".



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approval before they were presented to the cabinet.

The framework of a Catholic state for a Catholic people was now well and truly in place. But the type of society created had an enormous human cost

Young men and women who refused to stick to the Church's strict rules on pre-marital sex were harshly dealt with.

Young women were sent away or placed in Magdalene Laundries where they were slaves to nuns.

The National Catechism which was published in 1951 listed the dangers to the national faith as

attendance at non-Catholic worship or schools, marriage to non-Catholics, books hostile to Church or its teaching and sex.

But Fianna Fail also got a lot out of the alliance with McQuaid.

The building of a Catholic State for a Catholic People was seen as compensation to the population for the failure of the Irish revolution.

The Catholic Church could be used to control and repress people's desires.

Its control over schools and hospitals was used to spread right wing ideas which helped Fianna Fail.

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Revealed

A 1998 MRBI / Irish Times polled revealed that only 21 percent of Catholics said they were guided by Church teaching.

The expansion of the economy meant that thousands of women went into paid employment and wanted to control their



own bodies.

At first the ruling class tried to halt the tide of

change and made huge concessions to fundamentalist Catholics.

For example, every party in the Dail supported the 1983 "Pro-Life" amendment and a special EU protocol inserted into Maastricht Treaty allowing Ireland to continue outlawing abortion.

Yet in 1992, thousands of people mobilised against the High Court decision in the X-case to ban a 14 year old girl leaving Ireland to have an abortion.

These huge protests — and the subsequent revelations about clerical child abuse broke the power of the church.

But despite all the changes in Irish society the liberal agenda is nei-

ther over nor completed

No electoral based political party will dare carry through the 1992 referendum allowing women the right to abortion, albeit in limited circumstances.

The Church still controls education and many Irish hospitals are run by religious orders.

Socialists have always argued for the separation of Church and State but as the events of the last ten years show, mass protests can break the power of those who want to run our lives.

John Charles McQuaid; Ruler of Catholic Ireland by John Cooney, O'Brien Press: £25

what do socialists say?

Why are there booms and slumps?

THE NEW year began with a fresh financial panic as share prices fell on stock markets around the world. Whatever the immediate likelihood of a major stock market crash everyone is aware that stockmarkets don't continually rise and economic booms don't last forever.

But why do economies continually go into crisis?

The underlying cause of recessions is over-production. It doesn't seem to make much sense that millions of people are periodically thrown into poverty because too many commodities are produced.

But the fact is that capitalism is not organised in a particularly sensible way.

During a boom when there are opportunities to make profits companies rush to expand their production as rapidly as possible.

Expanding production in one area produces knock on effects in other areas as the demand increases for more raw materials, machinery, workers and in turn more luxury goods for workers and so on.

The unplanned nature of this expansion stores up trouble for the economy however. The supply of raw materials, skilled workers or finance falls behind the rising demands. This

leads to shortages and a rise in prices and interest rates. This is the inflationary effect that all booms produce and which economists in Ireland are worried about at the moment

Inflation starts to hit profits in some companies, forcing them into bankruptcy.

The process that starts the boom now starts to work against it. Workers laid off in one section of the economy are unable to buy the products of another.

Goods start to pile up in warehouses and the workers who produced them are laid off as well. A vicious circle of shrinking markets and declining profits pulls the whole economy into a slump.

Slumps cause more waste than all the natural disasters in the world put together.

Natural

But economic slumps are of course not natural. The unsold goods piling up in the warehouses are still very much needed and the workers thrown on the scrap-heap are still very capable of producing much needed goods.

The only reason the brakes are put on production is because it is no longer profitable for the capitalists.

Usually, after a great deal of unnecessary suffering, capitalism is able to pull itself out of recession. Some capitalists survive the slump and by buying up goods as prices collapse and taking advantage of high unemployment to pay lower wages, are eventually able to start reinvesting in production.

Alongside this "business cycle" there is however a more omi-

nous underlying trend within capitalism that causes slumps to become more regular and booms more short-lived.

This trend is what Marx called the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

The health of the system, as we have seen, depends not on our ability to produce the things that we need, but on the ability of capitalists to make a profit from that process.

Incredibly, the more technologically advanced society becomes, the more difficult it is to make profit.

This is because profits are based on the exploitation of workers — paying workers less than the wealth they produce every week.

More money spent on machines means less workers are employed — and less workers exploited.

The capitalist might still be exploiting each worker at the same rate, but overall he is spending much more money. So the rate of profit he gets on his overall investment tends to get smaller.

Capitalists are in a catch-22 scenario though. To make profits they have to stay ahead of their competitors and this means they have to invest in new machinery.

The company with the newest technology gains an advantage to begin with, but after a short time rival companies are forced to catch up and any advantage is lost.

This drive to invest and innovate is what once made capitalism a dynamic system. But the insanity of "profit for the sake of profit" which fuels it, means that economic crisis is at the very heart of it.

by GRACE LALLY

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Classic book tells how Native Americans were ...

Massacred by Uncle Sam

by DAVE LORDAN

The physical annihilation of the Native Americans was one of the worst crimes of the capitalist system. Dee Brown's book *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* is an excellent and lyrical account of how it happened.

During the nineteenth century the United States government robbed the Native Americans of their land and murdered over 90 percent of the original population.

They wanted to deliver the virgin lands of the vast subcontinent into the hands of industrialists and magnates to be exploited for profit.

When Christopher Columbus first set foot in the Americas, he was greeted with gifts from the Arawak tribe. But he returned this generosity by writing in his log book, "They would make fine servants. With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want".

What followed was a brutal war of conquest which sounded the death knell for the native civilians of South America.

In Haiti, Columbus ordered everyone over fourteen to collect a certain quantity of gold every three months. When they brought it in, they were given a copper token to hang around their neck. Indians found without the token had their hands cut off and were often left to bleed to death.

However most of the North American Native Indians remained unconquered until the late eighteenth century. Even in colonised areas such as New England immigrant communities often lived side by side with the natives, trading and intermarrying with them.

However all of this began to change with the massive expansion of European capital that got underway from 1750 onwards.

The millions of acres of fallow land owned by the natives, and the precious minerals that lay beneath it, gave European and settler capitalists unprecedented opportunities for profit.

Tens of millions of immigrants driven from their home-



The result of the massacre at Wounded Knee

lands by poverty and unemployment would give them the labour they needed to take advantage of these opportunities. Only one obstacle stood in their way — the Native Americans.

A long series of frontier wars against the various native tribes was launched at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first stage in these wars was often the construction of a series of forts along strategic points in Indian territory by expeditionary battalions.

Next a number of senior officers representing "the Great Father" would be sent to attempt to rob Indian land by means of a Treaty. Tribes would be promised rifles, horses, and the perpetual ownership of sections of land in return for the giving up of mineral rich sections.

Those that accepted were always surprised a couple of years later when the "Great Father" signatories would return with another treaty this time robbing them of more of their land.

Those that resisted were met

with a cruelty that matches the worst barbarities of human history.

In many cases men, women and children sleeping under the "protection" of the Union army were awoken by the ominous roar of a Gatling gun and cut down without mercy. The men and children were killed and left to rot.

A worse fate often awaited women. A practice common during the Indian wars was the removal of the genitals of female corpses by soldiers who would then wear these strapped to their hats as a talisman of victory.

Dee Brown quotes a shocking account of an ambush on a sleeping Cheyenne village near Denver in the winter of 1865. As was known by the attacking cavalry, the village was mainly made up of women and children as most of the men were away

hunting.

"After the firing, the warriors put the squaws and children together and surrounded them with a blanket. I saw five squaws under a bank for shelter. When the troops came up to them they ran out and begged for mercy but they were all shot.

"There seemed to be indiscriminate slaughter of men, women and children. Every one I saw dead was scalped. I saw the body of White Antelope with the privates cut off and I heard a soldier say he was going to make a tobacco pouch out of it . . . saw a little girl about five years of age who had been hid in the sand; two soldiers discovered her, drew their pistols and shot her".

Driven from their land and with their usual source of food, the buffalo, nearing extinction due to wholesale slaughter by settlers, many tribes were forced to enter reservations.

These were often close to concentration camps in design and effect. They were presided over with an iron fist by the military and thousands died of disease, starvation and heartbreak.

But Dee Brown's book is not merely a litany of sorrow since he also provides many inspiring examples of the heroic resistance of Indians to the invaders. It was the Native Americans who first perfected the technique of guerrilla warfare that was to become the favoured method of those resisting colonial occupiers in the twentieth century.

Over mountain ranges and across the great plains, warriors such as Red Cloud and Sitting Bull led bands of Indians in running battles with the Union armies.

These could stall the enemy for years at a time as they used their superior accuracy, survival and riding skills along with their sophisticated understanding of their natural environment to gain advantage over the much better armed cavalry that they faced,

Perhaps the most famous

Indian Victory was at the Battle of the Little Big Horn where the notorious regiment of expert Indian killer, General Custer, was massacred by the Cheyenne, Sioux and Arapaho Indians. Brown's account is bloodstirring and inspiring.

Custer wanted to lead an occupation of the mineral rich Black Hills. But these were sacred ground for the Native Americans and "the center of the world".

This was a step too far for the tribes who had long endured humiliation and defeat at the hands of the US government. They were led into battle by the legendary warrior Crazy Horse.

"The smoke of the shooting and the dust of the horses shut out the hill...and the soldiers fired many shots but the Sioux shot straight and the soldiers fell dead.

"The women crossed the river after the men of our village and when we came to the hill there were no soldiers living and Long Hair lay dead among the rest. The blood of the people was hot and their hearts bad and we took no prisoners that day"

But this was to be the last great Indian victory and the end of organised resistance for close on a hundred years.

The military and technological superiority of the US military and the isolation of the Native Americans from the rest of the poor and exploited made their defeat inevitable — but not permanent.

It was not until the tumultuous decade of the 1960s that the American Indian Movement were to lead mass occupations of ancient Indian fishing and hunting grounds, including one on the infamous prison island, Alcatraz.

Today, indigenous resistance has once again resurfaced in Mexico and Ecuador where the working class has begun to reassert itself. It is a sign that a new wave of rebellion is washing up against the system.

The next years of economic crisis will provide many opportunities for activists to unite across ethnic barriers to bring down the system that oppresses us all.

Dee Brown's book can inspire us to organise the fight-back now.

■ *Bury my heart wounded knee* - by Dee Brown, Picador

in my view

Free speech unless you're a socialist

THEY WANTED free speech for a Nazi apologist ... but not for socialists.

When David Irving tried to speak in University College Cork in November a host of media commentators insisted that he had the right to 'free speech'.

Socialists argued that Irving was a Nazi who insulted the memory of millions who died in the Holocaust and should not be given a platform.

Evidence is now emerging at a British libel trial that vindicates what the left have long argued. Irving has been foolish enough to take a libel case against Professor Deborah Lipstadt and Penguin Books over her book *Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory*.

Irving is suing over being called a "Holocaust denier" but his own words are enough to convict him. In 1991, Irving told a German press conference that, "The biggest lie of the lot, the blood libel on the German people, is the lie that the Germans had factories of death in which they liquidated millions of their opponents".

Although the word *Holocaust* appeared in his 1977 book *Hitler's War*, it was removed from the 1991 edition. Irving said, "You won't find the Holocaust mentioned in one line, not even in a footnote, why should you. If something didn't happen you don't dignify it with a footnote".

Holocaust denial is important to modern fascism. Nazis try to pick up on the latent racism in society and try to mobilise thugs to terrorise the streets. But in order to turn racist ideas into hardened fascist politics, they have to get rid of the memory of the Holocaust.

The sheer scale of the horror is the greatest warning against fascist ideas today.

Irving has close links with these fascist organisations. In 1990, he spoke at a meeting of the German National Party, a modern day Nazi organisation.

Hatred

As a result he was indicted under German law for inciting racial hatred but failed to turn up for the trial. The German authorities now have an extradition warrant out for him.

Despite the fact that these facts are well known, none of his Irish defenders acknowledge them.

No one explained why Irving had such an important right to 'free speech' in Cork.

Yet the hypocrisy of the proponents of free speech for fascists does not stop there.

In the aftermath of the Irving protests in UCC, left wing organisation including Sinn Fein, the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party were banned from holding meetings in the college. For example Gerry Adams can no longer promote his views at a meeting of republican supporters in UCC.

In the Sociology Department, a left wing tutor was removed from his teaching position in the after of the Irving protests when a tiny number of right wing students complained about his views.

The professor who removed him has made it clear that advocacy of Marxism is not part of the sociological canon.

All of this constitutes an outrageous attack on the free speech of people who do not incite racial hatred but rather expose Nazi apologists.

A special student union meeting has voted to rescind this ban but the left wing parties still have to 'appeal' to an unelected Societies Guild composed of people who supported the Irving meeting.

Now all of this constitutes a scandal. A Holocaust denier was invited to speak in UCC but left wing parties who oppose racism are denied a right to hold a meeting to challenge fascist ideas.

Yet not a single word about the ban on the left has appeared in the *Irish Times*. Kevin Myers has not rushed to give his 'I may not agree with them but I will die for their right to say it' line.

What a touching indictment of those who defend free speech for fascists.

KIERAN ALLEN

film

Shattering the image of Dev's Ireland

AS THE film *Angela's Ashes* opens, it can be difficult to break through all the hype surrounding it.

The book has been a bestseller all over the world since it was published four years ago.

It has spawned a thriving *Angela's Ashes* industry and an *Angela's Ashes*-knocking industry too.

Limerick city, where Frank McCourt's story is based, now plays host to countless American tourists all wanting to see for themselves the miserable lanes where the McCourts grew up.

The city's Chamber of Commerce has considered running official *Angela's Ashes* tours highlighting "Limerick's social and cultural past".

This is ironic since the Limerick depicted in the book is a culturally barren, unmerciful place where the poor are ground down by the Church and by every organ of the state.

Success

Of course Limerick's Chamber of Commerce only wants to cash in on the success of *Angela's Ashes* so they're desperate to ignore the fact that the book is all about how miserable and bigoted a place Limerick was in the thirties.

There are other people who see this clearly but would rather such stories weren't told.

Since the book was published there have been a number of similar biographies published by Limerick people aimed at attacking the picture of poverty drawn by Frank McCourt.

They run along the same lines.

A synopsis would be "OK we were poor, we grew up in the lanes or the impoverished estates sur-

by EIMEAR O'MAHONY

rounding Limerick, but we were happy and we didn't go blaming the Church, the St Vincent de Paul or the government for our problems".

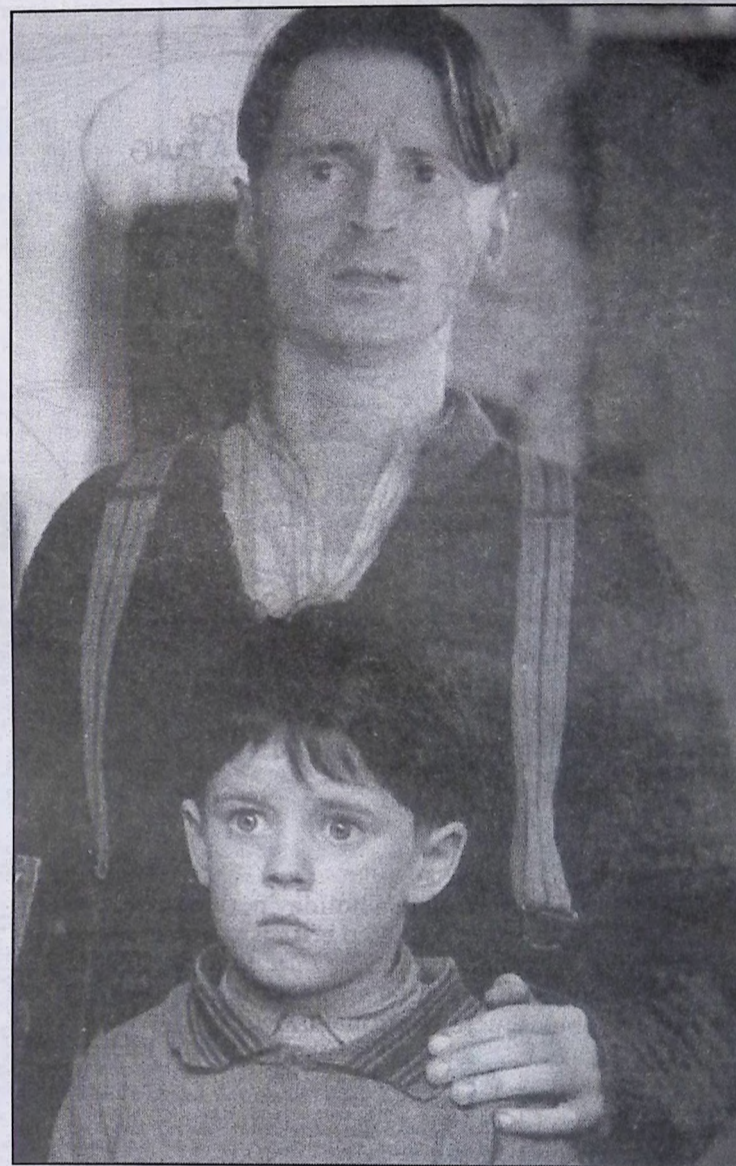
It's not surprising that *Angela's Ashes* raised such a reaction. The book is a powerful and very moving tale about growing up in hunger and destitution in the slums of New York and Limerick.

It could have been written about countless places in Ireland or the world.

It shows very clearly that the real Ireland of the thirties was not de Valera's Ireland of comely maidens dancing at the crossroads.

It was a place where poor children died of TB and typhoid; where thousands of families begged and went hungry and lived in squalor; and where the Church and the State conspired to keep things that way.

This is a picture that right wing politicians in Ireland would rather ignore or forget.



tv

It's a marketing thing

Oh my God. Oh. My. God. *Friends* is on every channel. Wherever, and whenever, you look there are episodes of the hit show. And the not-so-poor things in the cast can't get a haircut without the world's media weighing in on it.

Unlike its successful studio mate *ER*, *Friends* never causes viewers to worry that someone's chest is going to be sliced open with a scalpel.

And that in a way is the secret — safe television for a safe, but cynical world.

"What makes the show so successful is you see a little piece of your own life up there," says executive produc-

er Kevin Bright.

Well possibly it is Mr Bright's lifestyle but for the rest of us *Friends* is about relationships.

The turmoil of a bunch of angst ridden late twenty-somethings living a life of dilemmas of excruciatingly minor proportions.

But the message is a comforting one. People worry about minor hassles and major life changes with the same intensity and the same irony.

Confusing

Gee, the world's a confusing place but at least we can sit in a coffee shop and laugh about it. Reassuring to the point of banality.

The programme has issues. When *Friends* "does" poverty, it means not being able to go to a gig but still living in an apart-

ment the size of a concert hall.

It "does" gay issues for a while with Chandler and Joey living together like Morecambe and Wise—just camper.

There aren't any black people in the show. (OK there was a black security guard at end of the last series but he was in response to protests from Afro-American TV monitoring groups).

Friends is one of television's most valuable properties. Channel 4 poached *Friends* and *ER* from Sky in a deal worth \$200m.

Its real asset is its 16-34 core audience beloved by advertisers.

The returns of previous season's re-runs generates \$1 billion in revenue.

At the end of the day it's a marketing thing.

—SIMON BASKETTER

where we stand

Workers create all the wealth in capitalist society. A new society can only be constructed when they collectively seize control of that wealth and plan its production and distribution.

FOR REVOLUTION, NOT REFORM
The present system cannot be reformed out of existence. Parliament cannot be used to end the system.

The courts army and police are there to defend the interests of the capitalist class not to run society in a neutral fashion.

To destroy capitalism, workers need to smash the state and create a workers' state based on workers' councils.

FOR REAL SOCIALISM, EAST AND WEST:
The SWP welcomed the break-up of the USSR and the end of the East European dictatorships. These states were not socialist but were run by a state-capitalist class.

We are against the domination of the globe by imperialist powers and we oppose their wars. We are for the right of all nations, East and West, to self-determination.

FOR AN END TO ALL OPPRESSION
We oppose all forms of oppression which divide and weaken the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We stand for: free contraception and free, legalised abortion and the right to divorce; the complete separation of church and state, an end to church control over schools and hospitals; an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians; an end to racism and anti-traveller bigotry.

We argue for working class unity in the fight against oppression.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH:

Northern Ireland is a sectarian state, propped up by the British Army. Catholic workers are systematically discriminated against by the state. The division between Catholic and Protestant workers weakens the whole working class.

Workers' unity can only be won and maintained in a fight to smash both the Northern and Southern states.

We stand for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. Violence will only end when workers unite in the fight for a workers' republic.

FOR A FIGHTING TRADE UNION MOVEMENT:
Trade unions exist to defend workers' interests. But the union leaders' role is to negotiate with capitalism—not to end it.

We support the leaders when they fight but oppose them when they betray workers. We stand for independent rank and file action.

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. The SWP aims to build such a party in Ireland.

SWP Branch meetings

ATHLONE:

Contact 01- 872 2682 for detail
BRAY:

Meets every Wednesday at the Mayfare Hotel at 8.30pm

BELFAST CENTRAL:

Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in the Garrick Bar, Chichester St.

BELFAST QUEEN'S UNI BELFAST SOUTH:

Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Queens Students Union

CORK:

Meets every at 8.30pm in Hairy Lemon, Oliver Plunket Street

DERRY:

Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Badgers Bar upstairs, Orchard St:

DUNDALK:

Contact 01 - 872 2682 for details

DUN LAOGHAIRE:

Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in the Christian Institute

DUBLIN ARTANE / COOLOCK:

Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in Artane / Beaumont Recreational Centre opp. Artane Castle

25th January: Marxism and Religion

Febuary 1st: PUBLIC MEETING:

Holly brook hotel, Howth Road.

How do we stop Capitalism destroying our world?

DUBLIN NORTH CENTRAL:

Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Conways, Parnell St

26th January PUBLIC MEETING:

How do we stop Capitalism destroying our world?

DUBLIN NORTH WEST:

Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in O'Mahoney's Pub, Phibsboro

(near Crossguns bridge)

26 January: How do we stop

Capitalism destroying our world?

2nd February: The revolutionay

ideas of Karl Marx.

DUBLIN RIALTO:

Meets every Tuesday at 8:30pm St. Andrews Community Centre, SCR, Rialto

DUBLIN RATHMINES:

Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in O'Connell's Pub, Sth. Richmond St.

25th January The orins of the Family

2 February: Marxism and History

DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL:

Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Trinity Inn, Pearse St

27th January Can there be a revolution in the West?

DUBLIN TALLAGHT:

Meets every Monday at 8.30pm in Jobstown Community Centre

26th January: Marxism and History

2nd February: PUBLIC MEETING

How do we stop Capitalism destroying our world?

ENNISKILLEN:

Phone 01 - 872 2682 for details

GALWAY:

Meets every Thursday in Currans Hotel, Eyre Square (beside Cuba) 8.30pm

LIMERICK:

Phone 01 - 872 2682 for details

SLIGO

Meets fortnightly on Saturdays, phone 01-8722682 for details

TRALEE

Meets fortnightly on Mondays at 5.50pm in Marty's Bar, Tralee:

WATERFORD:

Meets every Thursday at 8pm in the ATGWU Hall, Keizer St.

WEXFORD

Meets every fortnight, phone 01-8722682

New Labour frees dictator

THE BRITISH government are going to release the former dictator General Pinochet. They have found an excuse because of the general's "ill health".

Thousands of Chileans were killed in the coup led by General Pinochet, which overthrew the democratically elected government of Chile in 1973.

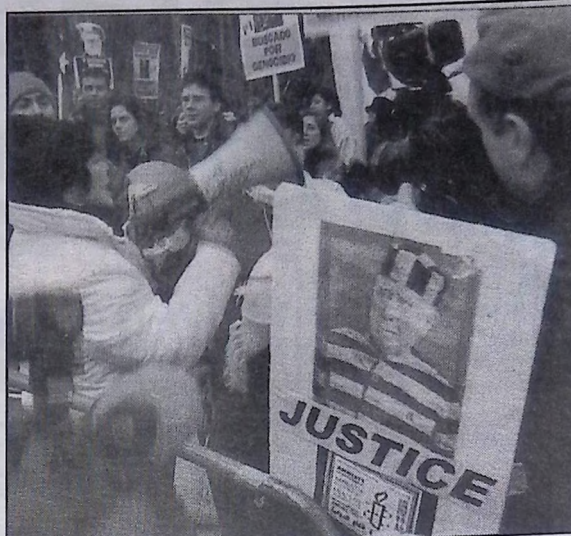
Thousands more were tortured and others simply disappeared. Pinochet was responsible for the murder of President Allende.

Grounds

Jack Straw's decision to let this butcher go on the grounds of ill health has been applauded by Margaret Thatcher, the Daily Mail & Daily Telegraph.

They applauded the 1973 coup too.

The doctor who examined Pinochet refuted Straw's claim. He said the decision about



A protest against Pinochet

Pinochet's fate was 'outside our field of competence and outside our responsibilities.'

There is no concern for the ill health of those who were tortured.

Pinochet was charged while

visiting Britain to buy a rocket system. His shopping list was also said to include "infantry support equipment", flares, rockets and CS gas canisters.

In other words equipment to

inflict more violence on working people in Chile.

A senior source within the British defence industry said, "All major purchases involving the Chilean armed forces have taken place only after the authorisation of General Pinochet, so obviously defence suppliers want to keep him happy".

All over the world the rich rallied to support Pinochet.

Release

Margaret Thatcher is one of Pinochet's main supporters in Britain, while the owner of Glen Electric, Senator Martin Naughton, has also called for his release.

The Pope's dramatic appeal for Pinochet's release also shows exactly which class his allegiance lies with.

The news was met by angry protest around the world.

As one anti-Pinochet protestor put it "blood has stained the hands of those responsible for genocide and they have to be arrested".

Letters to the editor

Agree? Disagree? write to
Socialist Worker PO Box 1648,
Dublin 8.



Fighting privatisation

WE, THE striking members of Bray Urban District Council, wish to acknowledge wholeheartedly the determined efforts of the Socialist Workers Party to assist us on the picket line as we struggle against the enforced privatisation and loss of working conditions being imposed by management in this so-called era of Partnership.

□ Owen Gallagher, Charlie Kavanagh, Tony Robinson, John Holmes, Gary Keogh, Kieran Merrigan, Danny O'Rourke, Dion Murphy, Noel Stevenson, Noel Kelly, John Martin, Con Farrelly,
SIPTU Strike Committee, Bray Urban District Council.

For a report on the Bray strike against privatisation turn to page five

Climate can damage your health

IN 1991, hikers in the Alps discovered an intact human body protruding from the ice—apparently that of a man trapped in a storm some 5,000 years ago. It was a dramatic sign of global warming.

Since that time, the signs have multiplied. The farmers in the West of Ireland have considerable justification when they blame the floods of this year are due on rising global temperatures.

The leaders of world capitalism have been unable to get to grips with the problem. Their reliance on the market and their failure to trade commercial secrets

between 'rival' nations has made the problem much more difficult to deal with.

Moreover many of them do not really care. The author of a recent report from the Worldwatch Institute put it well when he said that 'As the Dow Jones goes up, the Earth's health goes down'.

Environmental decay has always been a sign that the old ruling order can no longer take society forward. It is time that socialists took a much stronger stance on these issues. Unless we get rid of capitalism, it will destroy the planet itself.

□ Sean Hegarty, Dublin

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- ★ Lindsey German on Feminism and New Laddism
- ★ Forum on New Labour and education.

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Servisair

Workers strike a blow against low pay

THREE hundred Servisair workers in Cork and Dublin struck against low pay at the beginning of January.

Pay at Servisair is at rock bottom rate. Most workers are on £190 basic. The shift allowance was just £44.25 before the dispute.

Socialist Worker spoke to workers on the

picket line about the background to the dispute.

"Staff turnover is at a very high rate because of poor pay and conditions" said one worker. "People have to work one or often two of their days off for a decent wage".

Another worker described how the management treat the staff.

"They have no respect for the workers", he said, "there's no account taken of the flexibility staff give — the diverse shifts with 4.15 or 5am starts.

"The place is like a big shed and the only place there's a heater is in the canteen.

"We work 8 hour shifts with only one unpaid half hour break and sometimes we don't even get that."

that turn around those aircraft and we're the ones that make the profits."

Bitterness against management was heightened by their organisation of a wholesale scabbing operation during the strike.

Seventy scabs were brought in from Britain and given full board in the airport hotel.

Despite company bullying of non-unionised workers at Servisair in Shannon they solidly backed the strikers by refusing to take up their work.

SIPTU officials, however, also tried to reign in the strike and attempted to force the strikers back to work on their fourth day out.

According to one

worker, the officials were "adamant" but the opposition to returning to work was so strong there wasn't even a vote on it. "It was incredible. We've never been that united before", he said.

Striking

The extra day of striking forced further concessions from the company including a £250 once off payment to cover lost wages during the strike and most workers were pleased with the result.

The shift allowance was increased from £44.25 to £50.

The strike has raised important questions though and left some issues unresolved.

"Because of Partnership", one

worker felt, "our hands were tied".

"We'd rather be able to fight for ourselves from now on", he said.

Union officials have also been called in since the strike ended to stop attempts by management to victimise workers.

The fantastic strike at Servisair showed that militant trade unionism is the only way to win concessions from the bosses.

But it also shows why we need to go beyond the constraints of partnership in order to rebuild the traditions of solidarity action and rank and file organisation which could have beaten back management for good.

Postal workers

Action over Xmas backlog

WORKERS AT Blackrock Post Office took industrial action after they were presented with a huge backlog of mail and not given enough facilities to sort it out.

The backlog had built up because of the huge increase of mail over Xmas and also because of absences due to the flu.

The postal workers union, the Communication Workers Union had reached an agreement with management to sort the backlog out.

But when they got their figures wrong as regards Blackrock.

"There were supposed to be about 3,000 items but it was more like 30,000.

"And they wanted all this sorted out with a few hours of overtime.

Knowing that the task was impossible, workers opted to continue to work as normal without taking up the overtime.

An Post however began to demand that their union discipline them and eventually issued further threats to workers.

In response workers decided to take industrial action to bring their grievances to a head.

Pickets were placed outside the depot and work came to a halt.

But instead of backing up their members, CWU officials did their best to undermine the action.

One official managed to persuade workers to return on a promise that negotiation would commence.

Negotiations

"When we got back there were no real negotiations. Instead there were a series of new offers from management.

"The root of this problem stems from the fact that the union has become distant from the members.

"When we had our own branch in Blackrock, there was a good attendance at the meeting because members knew we would be discussing items that concerned them.

"We need to get the union back to the grassroots."

★ About 25 people attended a lively protest against the Russian invasion of Chechnya held on 13 January at the Russian Embassy in Dublin.

A letter of protest containing hundreds of signatures collected locally was handed to a Russian representative.

The protest was organised by the Rathmines SWP and details of further actions against the invasion can be had by ringing 087 6429199.

Raking

The bosses on the other hand are obviously raking it in.

One striker summed up the mood against one of the managers saying "that big BMW he drives costs more to fill than we'd take home in a week".

"They say we're just shifting boxes and baggage but we're the ones

DIT

ADMINISTRATIVE staff in the Dun Laoghaire Institute of Technology recently took action in an on-going dispute with the management.

Workers are demanding that they receive the 5 extra days of holidays that all other administrative staff working in IT's around the country obtain. The dispute has been ongoing for over two years and workers, who are all members of IMPACT have finally taken action.

They began their action on

Monday 10 January by refusing to answer phones.

The following day management agreed to refer it to an Industrial Tribunal and the workers agreed to suspend their action..

"It is an absolute disgrace" one worker told Socialist Worker. "This dispute has been going on for 2 years and management have done nothing about it.

"I'm glad we took action. We have won more after two days of not answering phones than we have in the past year of discussion."

Building workers

IN THE past two years 47 building workers have died working on construction sites.

It is a damning indictment of the safety standards in Ireland's construction industry.

Even when developers are prosecuted by the Health and Safety

Authority it means very little. Last year the construction company Sisks was fined a mere £2000 for breach of health and safety after a worker was killed.

But workers are fighting back.

The Dublin Alliance of Construction Operatives have organised protest

marches and work stoppages over the past few months to highlight safety problems.

According to the Magill magazine, unofficial work stoppages on sites because of safety grievances are now running at the rate of two a week in Dublin.

SIPTU Election . . . SIPTU Election . . . SIPTU Election . . . SIPTU Election . . . SIPTU Election . . .

Vote for a rank and file candidate

ANOTHER major election takes place in SIPTU in the next few months as Des Geraghty has replaced Jimmy Somers as President, leaving the post of Vice-President vacant.

CAROLANN DUGGAN is once more standing for election to a leadership position in SIPTU.

As a shop steward and Vice-President of the Waterford Branch, Carolann is the only rank and file candidate in the contest.

Her opponents are Jack Nash, Regional Secretary for Dublin City, Jack O'Connor, Regional Secretary, Midlands-South East, and Nuala Kerr of SIPTU's Equality Unit.

Socialist Worker spoke to Carolann about her campaign.

SW: Why have you decided to contest this election?

Carolann Duggan: I see no opposition within the SIPTU bureaucracy to the fact that our leaders are in bed with the employers and the government.

The officials are all singing from the same partnership hymn sheet.

Where were SIPTU when the council workers in Bray struck against privatisation?

The general officers should have been on the picket line and on the media calling for solidarity and support.

Yet SIPTU seems to have dropped any principled opposition to privatisation.

They all turned up to Jimmy Somers' retirement do,



Carolann Duggan

where they sat down with Bertie Ahern and the head of IBEC—the very people who have tried block proper union recognition and a decent minimum wage.

SW What is your alternative to partnership?

CAD The answer is to do

what the Bray workers did—they acted independently of the officials and did not wait for clearance from a Regional Secretary. In my opinion they acted democratically and showed how to fight back.

Independent rank and file action is the key, but the present leaders often don't even support the rank and file.

I would never have gone to the government to tell them to hold the line against the nurses pay claim, as some top union leaders are reported to have done.

SW What would your role be as Vice President?

CAD Firstly I would only accept the average industrial wage—I am not in this for the trappings of office.

I would be an activist going around the country organising and encouraging union members to become active.

I would be on the picket line with workers in struggle, using the resources at my disposal to win solidarity.

Union density (the proportion of union members in the workforce) has gone down in recent years as more multinationals get away without recognising unions.

I would be out there recruiting new members.

I am completely against any form of scabbing on strikes and I will encourage defiance of anti-union laws, like the Industrial Relations Act, to make them unworkable.

SW How important is it that you are standing as a socialist candidate?

CAD Being a socialist means that I always look at the broader picture.

The unions should be taking action against corruption,

instead of just passing motions on the issue.

Above all I stand for the interests of the whole working class.

That means, for example, uniting public and private sector workers — I was appalled by statements from top officials slating public sector workers for trying to hold onto pay relativities.

I believe refugees and immigrants are welcome here and should be encouraged to join unions instead of being used as cheap labour.

It's only when black and white workers unite that we can overcome the racism that is used to divide us.

The union leaders have embraced the free market — I want to see a return to fighting unions based on real socialist politics.

Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism 50p Solidarity price £1

inside

NHS crisis caused by cash shortage not flu page 5

New Labour supports dictators page 3

Native Americans: MASSACRED BY UNCLE SAM page 8

As Scottish report slams Blair:

ABOLISH COLLEGE FEES



NEW LABOUR'S tuition fees policy has been thrown into crisis by a new report in Scotland.

The Cubie report into higher education funding, released just before Christmas, condemns Blair's education policy as "ineffective, insufficient and indecipherable".

The inquiry held public meetings with parents, students and education staff.

Broadly

It concludes that "the present arrangements are broadly discredited, add to anxieties about debt and create undue anomalies".

Blair introduced up-front student fees of £1,000 in 1998. Last year, New Labour increased the fees to £1,025 and completely abolished grants.

University students will be left with debts of up to £12,000 after they complete their degree.

The Cubie report says that students should not have to pay a penny up front.

It also recommends that maintenance grants be reintroduced for the poorest students.

It argues that students be entitled to claim unemployment benefit during summer holidays and says there should be a £1,500 allowance for lone parent students and disabled.

The Cubie report stops short of calling for free education, saying that students should only pay once they have finished university and begun to earn over £25,000 a year.

But the report's findings are a major headache for Blair.

If implemented they will mean that all Scottish students, no matter where they study, will not have to pay fees.

That means students from

England or Northern Ireland studying in Scotland will be paying fees alongside Scottish students who pay nothing.

Election

The elections to the Scottish Assembly made tuition fees a major issue.

Both the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party, as well as socialist can-

didates like Tommy Sheridan, pledged to abolish fees. Labour was only able to form a government with the Lib Dems by promising the inquiry.

But now the crisis has returned.

Labour and Lib Dem leaders in Scotland are now engaged in frantic negotiations about how to respond to the report.

Why won't the Assembly act?

MOST OF the major parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly have claimed to be opposed to students fees.

When Queen's students staged protests last year, many of them turned up to pledge support.

Now that the Assembly has been set up and we are supposed to be getting on with "normal politics" they should stick to their pledges and get rid of the fees.

But instead of doing this the SDLP's Sean Farren, the new minister for Further and Higher Education, has said that "student fees are unlikely to be scrapped".

What he means is that he does not want to scrap them!

Every time there is an unpopular decision, the North's parties shelter behind the excuse that they cannot step outside the bounds set by Westminster.

Profits

But why are they thinking about making the tax rate on company profits lower than the rest of the UK?

The Assembly members are well able to look after their own salaries. Now is the time to force them to look after working people.