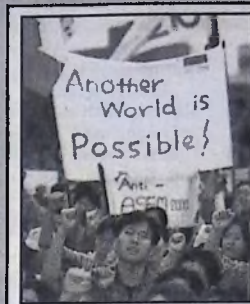


Socialist Worker

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For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism

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POLITICIANS TO GET A £10,000 PAY RISE...

BUT THEY EXPECT US TO TAKE PEANUTS

"We're expecting a public furore when this gets out, considering the industrial unrest at the moment"

— Government spokesperson on the proposed Td's pay rise

No to NATO

THE IRISH Army are joining a Rapid Reaction Force that is linked to NATO.

The force which is formed by the EU is made up of 60,000 soldiers that can be sent to trouble spots at two months notice.

The Irish army is making an initial deployment of 850 soldiers.

According to the Irish Times correspondent

Denis Staunton, the force 'involves an intensification of the relations with NATO'.

Reporting on activities of the force is limited by the Solana Rules, which put a 'top secret' embargo on anything to do with NATO.

Claiming

The force will use standardized NATO equipment and will be dependent on the US for

transport and logistics.

The government are claiming Irish troops will only be used under a United Nations mandate. But the Gulf War was fought under a UN mandate and the US is well able to twist arms at the UN Security Council to get a cover for its colonial operations.

The new moves will also mean an increase in defence spending - taking money away from hospitals and schools where it is badly needed.

Interest in rezoning

BOVALE DEVELOPMENTS, the company at the centre of Flood tribunal investigations, paid out more than £1.4m to the Revenue as "interest in respect of the late payment of tax" Socialist Worker can reveal.

Bovale is the company that paid Ray Burke £30,000. It is owned by

builders Michael and Tom Bailey.

The high flying Fianna Fail supporters that run the company are not too worried.

Selling

The bill won't make much of a dent on the whopping £45 million they made from selling land in North Dublin last month. All of it rezoned for development of course.

Wolf in India

THE PRESIDENT of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, stuck his foot in it recently on a tour of India, the bank's largest single borrower nation. Protesters met Wolfensohn just about wherever he went.

One of the charges made against the bank was that it only lends money to those Indian states with leaders who will do

as it says.

As a result World Bank loans to India are concentrated in only a few states.

Focus

"What we are trying to do is focus on programmes," Wolfensohn told the Financial Times.

"But you need an individual to make it work.

There is no getting round the fact that you are backing the jockey as well as the policy."

Minister for landlords

MINISTER FOR the Marine, Frank Fahy owns a fancy Florida apartment that he forgot to declare in the register of members' interests.

The property is in Daytona Beach. This is the county at the centre of the ballot fiasco in the American election.

In addition to the Florida pad he owns property in Gort, a house and apartment in Galway, properties in Athlone and Dublin and a house north of Naples, in Italy.

No wonder Fianna Fail are against rent controls.

CIE fat cat pension

CIE GROUP chief executive Michael McDonnell will receive an annual pension worth over £90,000 on his departure from the transport group.

His salary was increased from about £100,000 to £181,952 earlier this year.

Nice to know there is plenty of money available for pay rises in the CIE coffers.

Elves on the line

THE ELVES are organising this Christmas.

The elves in question are workers for Amazon, the e-commerce giant.

Low pay and harsh conditions have encouraged a union drive in Seattle by the Washington Alliance of Technology Workers.

Jeff Bezos, the firm's chief executive officer, likes to call his staff "elves" as "a mark of affection".

But it's not Christmas every day for the workers who face sudden shift changes and mandatory overtime.

If the unions can crack Amazon it would be a big step forward. And as every elf knows, Christmas is the time to strike.

Cover up on BSE crisis continues...

Poisoned for profit

IRELAND HAS the third highest rate of BSE in Europe. But the government is colluding with the media to cover up the scale of the crisis.

The press have not reported that the British Food Standards agency are sending officials to Dublin to assess the BSE controls.

This arises because of worries about Irish beef which currently supplies 40 percent of the British market.

Produced

Most reports on the issue are written by agricultural correspondents who believe must protect the beef industry.

Ireland has just produced its worst monthly BSE figures ever.

There were 25 cases of the disease confirmed during November.

This brought the number of cases since January to 129, making 2000 the worst year on record for the disease. One person has already died from new variant CJD, the human form of BSE.

According to the Labour Party spokesperson, Mary Upton, if the carcass of one infected cow enters the food chain, as many as 400,000

people can be put at risk.

This occurs because BSE is located in tiny particles known as prions which are very difficult to destroy.

Government measures against BSE have been extremely lax

- Up to now, there has been no ban on feeding poultry, pig and sheep on animal remains.

Yet there are growing scientific worries that the disease could spread into these species.

Food Minister Ned O Keefe, has been using this animal feed on his massive pig farm which supplies Galtee.

This is despite the fact that Galtee Meats uses a quality assurance label that is supposed to assure customers this is not done.

- There is no provision for BSE tests on all slaughtered animals.

- There has been no systematic policy of slaughtering herds where an infected cow has been found.

- Little care has been taken with the disposal of BSE infected cattle. Recently an uninfected cow was buried in Galway in open ground - even though the prions could get into the local water supply.

There is nothing unpatriotic about pointing out the scale of the BSE crisis.

It is simply a matter of putting the health of people above the profits of the beef industry.



More hospital beds slashed

DONAL O'SHEA, the Chief Executive of the Eastern Regional Health Authority, has revealed the scale of the health cuts in the Celtic Tiger.

According to O'Shea, Ireland has

- The lowest number of hospital beds per head of the

population in Europe.

- Only 3.7 acute beds per 1,000 people compared to an EU average of 6.6.

Dublin has suffered the most from the health cuts because there was no local resistance to hospital closures. 30 percent of beds were slashed between 1980 and 1997.

Just another cost of pampering the rich with the lowest tax rates in the EU.

CIA's Chilean coup

THE US is being forced to admit the role it played overthrowing democracy and establishing a dictatorship in Chile nearly 30 years ago.

Secret documents released by the US government recently show that US president Richard Nixon did what- ever he could to overthrow left wing president Salvador Allende.

The evidence is so clear that even the White House issued a statement last week

saying, "Actions approved by the US government during this period aggravated political polarisation and affected Chile's long tradition of democratic elections, and respect for the constitutional order and the rule of law."

Blocking

Henry Kissinger, then US Secretary of State, headed the "40 committee", which oversaw covert action aimed at blocking Allende coming to power.

The documents also provide clear evidence of the Chilean dictator General

Pinochet's personal involvement in the assassination of exiled Chilean socialist Orlando Letelier in a car bomb in the US in 1976.

Pinochet telephoned the dictator of Paraguay to request false passports for two Chilean agents to travel to the US to kill Letelier.

One of the men convicted of the bombing was Pinochet's secret police chief, Manuel Contreras, the second most feared man in Chile after Pinochet. Contreras was also an informant on the CIA payroll in 1975.

The CIA destroyed its file on Contreras in 1991.

Unequal exchange

ONE SIGN of the divide between the powerful and the less powerful at The Hague climate change conference last week was the size of the delegations.

The US had 150 delegates who stayed at the luxury Bel Air hotel.

Mozambique, which earlier this year suffered terrible loss of life and damage from floods linked to global warming, had three delegates sharing a dormitory at a youth hostel.

what we think

Crumbs are not enough

CHARLIE McCreevy's budget surplus meant that he had £2,000 to give to every worker in the country. But instead we have gotten peanuts.

The employers have also only given a tiny percentage wage increase to compensate for inflation.

But it does not even match the real price increases because these have been underestimated by a Consumer Price Index that does not take full account of the cost of accommodation.

We are supposed to feel grateful for the new round of tax cuts in the budget.

Insignificant

But these cuts are insignificant compared to what the rich have gained.

In 1987, tax on profits stood at 50 percent but soon it will be only 12.5 percent.

Yet the banks and big business were not asked to show any of the restraint that has been demanded of workers.

More than that the union leaders have again done a deal with the government to further restrict our right to strike.

A joint monitoring committee of IBEC and the ICTU will intervene in potential disputes to tell workers how they can behave.

But why are there no moni-

toring groups to look into companies who make super profits and do nothing for their workers?

Why is it always workers who have to be controlled when virtually everything else in the Celtic Tiger is deregulated?

Growing

The truth is that union leaders are as terrified of the growing militancy of workers as the government.

They see the bosses as their friends and want a cosy life. Retired union leaders in Britain used to end up in the House of Lords. But in Ireland they are increasingly making it on to the Board of Directors. No wonder they do not want to rock the boat.

For the rank and file it is a different story. The Celtic Tiger has brought high inflation, more job insecurity and more stress at work.

We need a new ballot over the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.

There is no way we can have new conditions imposed without a vote.

But the real solution is to continue with the pay revolt. The Celtic Tiger is running out and workers need to get as much as they can before it finishes.

The crumbs that McCreevy and the employers have thrown the ICTU are just not good enough.

Climate conference farce



US chief negotiator Frank洛伊 gets his just desserts at the Climate conference

THE US once again scuppered attempts to tackle the enormous threat of global warming. The US is the world's biggest polluter, responsible for 25 percent of toxic emissions, but has only 4 percent of the world's population.

US negotiators did not want to cut their emissions but to buy up

carbon dioxide quotas given to Third World countries.

The European Union states were unhappy with this plan, and are trying to pose as the defenders of the planet. But they are doing nothing to tackle the fundamental problem—that business puts profits before environmental safety.

Like the Earth Summit of 1992 and the 1997 Climate Change Conference, the Hague summit was high on lofty rhetoric but low on positive action.

Few politicians attempt to deny the reality of climate change any more. Ten of the warmest years on record have been since 1985 and the Arctic ice shell is thought to have thinned by 40 percent, with drastic consequences for the sea level.

Yet since the 1997 Kyoto summit, US emissions have risen by 1.3 percent per year. As a result increasingly volatile weather threatens people all around the world.

We need to stop capitalism before it destroys the planet.

Deterring democracy

THE US has often intervened in other countries under the pretence that it is 'defending democracy'. But the shambles of the US Presidential election shows how this is pure hypocrisy.

Even though Al Gore won the majority of votes, an Electoral College looks set to hand the election to George Bush.

The voting system was established after the American Revolution to make sure that slave owners had a strong say in the running of the country. Originally the US constitution guaranteed them extra votes for their slaves.

But it also set up an electoral college to allow 'wise men' to restrain the urges of the masses. One of the architects of the US constitution, James Madison claimed there was a need for institutions, which were 'a

defence to people against their own temporary errors and delusions'.

The US electoral system also systematically places obstacles in the way of black people voting. According to Human Rights Watch, 31 percent of African-American men in Florida are disenfranchised.

Appeared

On the day of the Presidential election police check points appeared all over Dade County, Florida to intimidate black voters. The Governor of the State is Jeb Bush, brother of George.

Business Week concluded that "the reality is that electoral misconduct goes on in every American election. Political shenanigans are as American as apple pie."

The next time the US marines arrive to teach anyone a lesson on democracy, tell them to go back to Florida.

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Defend Ebi Ojoh

This is how to fight racism

On Saturday, Oct. 25th, the town of Tramore put down a key marker in the fight against racism when 150 marched in support of a local refugee Ebi Ojoh who was faced with deportation.

Ebi is a member of the Ijaw tribe in Nigeria.

Two of her brothers have been killed and her partner and elder son have been taken from her house. Human rights monitors attached to Mary Robinson's office in Geneva have verified that she has a serious case. Yet Ebi's appeal to stay in Ireland was turned down.

A Pro-Refugee group, led by Tramore resident Alison Tuohy, organised a demonstration for Ebi. Alison's children go to the same school as Ebi's and when she heard her story she decided to act.

Now more than 3,000 signatories have been collected in Waterford to appeal for Ebi to be allowed stay in Ireland on humanitarian grounds.

No scapegoating of refugees

TRAMORE IS a model for how a whole town can be mobilised to push back the racists. Racism is coming from the very top of Irish society - from a government that wants to scapegoat refugees for the problems it created.

Here are some recent measures that have been taken against refugees

★ Every asylum seeker over the age of 14 will now be fingerprinted. If they refuse they will be thrown in prison.

★ The gardai have been given new powers to detain asylum seekers entering the country. If a garda even suspects you are "a threat to public order" you can be detained indefinitely

or until your application is processed.

★ Airlines and ferry companies will be forced to pay thousands of pounds in fines if they allow people to arrive in Ireland without proper travel documentation. This means that low-paid airline workers will be effectively forced to act as immigration officials.

★ Asylum seekers now have only 14 days to bring their case to the court as opposed to the normal six-month period afforded an Irish citizen who wishes to apply for any type of judicial review.

★ Any journalist wishing to name an asylum seeker who is campaigning to stay in Ireland must now get the consent of the Minister for Justice. This law has been strongly condemned by the NUI.



Ebi Ojoh marching with supporters in Tramore

Invited

The petitions were taken into factories and the Waterford Institute of Technology. Ebi was invited to meet the Waterford Crystal Shop Stewards and after she put her case petitions went around the factory.

"We are not going to allow people to be targeted because of the colour of their skin. We are going to stand with our refugees in Tramore", the ATGWU Convenor told the 150 strong march that braved appalling weather.

Ebi also addressed the local Trades Council and won support of students at the Waterford Institute of Technology.

"It is incredible the support that has come in. We have just opened a Pro-Refugee office in Tramore because many people are fund raising for this campaign."

"We want a space where refugees can talk openly and freely. And we hope to eventually turn the whole centre over to the refugees themselves." Alison told Socialist Worker.

★ There are not 'floods' of refugees coming to Ireland.

Germany has a population 22 times the size of Ireland's and has well over 100 times more refugees.

There are over 11.7 million refugees in the world today. Ireland is home to 0.065 per cent of them

Instead of being abused they should be welcomed with open arms.



news of the world

ISRAEL STEP UP TERROR

THE PALESTINIAN revolt against Israel has rarely made the front page of the newspapers over the last few weeks.

But Israeli violence against Palestinians is becoming more brutal two months into the new intifa-

da, or uprising.

Some 280 people had been killed by the end of November. Over 90 percent of the victims were Palestinians. The Israeli army bombed the village of Kfar Shouba in southern Lebanon with at least 100 shells.

This was Israel's biggest attack on Lebanon since May, when it was forced to withdraw after 22 years of military occupation. The military and economic blockades that the Israeli forces have put up throughout the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip mean that around 1.5 million Palestinians will go hungry.

In Gaza hundreds of thousands of refugees are penned into concrete warrens, a third of the workforce have been thrown out of their jobs in Israel, and the area is collapsing economically. "They do not have any stocks. It is really hard to mouth, and every day finds the situation more tense in the camps," said Karen Koning Abu Zayd of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees. Israeli forces have destroyed at least 625 acres of palm, olive and citrus

SHOOT TO KILL

ON A typical day Israeli helicopters and gunboats shelled cities in the Gaza Strip throughout the night. Yet when young Palestinian demonstrators went out on to the streets to protest the Israeli soldiers attacked them again.

The soldiers targeted the upper bodies of demonstrators, who were aged between 12 and 19 years old. The Israeli soldiers aimed to kill. In Rafah soldiers seriously wounded three Palestinians with live bullets. One of them, 17 year old A'ahed A'adel El-Bayyoumi, was shot in the chest. In the village of Borqin, Israeli troops shot 25 year old Mohammed Lufti Massad through the heart and killed him.

They had already killed his brother, Mahmoud, in October. Mohammed was trying to help a friend who had been shot in the foot by Israeli soldiers.



Burying the victims of Israel troops

groves in Gaza since the beginning of the intifada.

US support means Israel is a heavily militarised state with massive economic power over the Palestinians. The Palestinians have very little

power. Their supposedly autonomous Palestinian Authority is completely overshadowed by Israel.

The only weapons many Palestinians have to challenge Israeli troops are rocks.

★ SINCE THE beginning of the peace process in 1993 the number of Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories has doubled to 200,000. The increase in the number of settlers is part of Israel's plan to keep control of most of the West Bank and Gaza.

The settlers carry out violent attacks on Palestinians without concern as the Israeli authorities turn a blind eye to them. These attacks have increased over the last few weeks.

On 20 November the Jaber family was attacked by hundreds of settlers who threw stones at the houses, destroyed fields, pulled up plants and pipes, and broke irrigation sprinklers while shouting, "Death to the Arabs!" In Hebron Israeli settlers attacked the students. The Israeli military then arrived, and shot gas canisters and live ammunition into the school.

MY NEIGHBOURS "Um Ra'ed, Ibrahim and Firas come over so I can show them the latest graphic photos of martyrs.

They're dumbfounded by the sight of the ripped open hands, heads and arms, the torn flesh, the visible bones, the bright red blood.

I wonder if the people that I care about will still be here in the next days and weeks. I wonder if I will be here too.

The first and second graders at school are too terrified to walk home from school.

They think the soldiers will shoot them like they shot 12 year old Muayars Jawirish the other day.

One of the kids in my class saw him as he laid there on the pavement with his brain spilled out on the street.

My husband, his cousin Maher, his wife Marina and I get in the car and drive to Beit Sahour.

We were watching a town engulfed in darkness as Israeli Apache choppers fired away. Nothing moved.

There was no panic, no screams, no people running away.

Mummies, daddies, babies, boys, girls and grannies sat in their homes and endured the shelling.

There is no other place to go, and if you're lucky, you're not hit, and if you're unlucky, you're hit."

■ Muna Hamzeh-Muhaisen, Dheishish refugee camp, Palestine

Eamonn

McCann

Sinn Fein — which way next?

November was a worrying month for workers with illusions in Sinn Fein. Hopes that the party in government would shift the balance towards the less well-off were put to the test at Stormont.

On November 22nd, child care workers in the Foyle Trust area asked Derry council to support them in a dispute over the funding of residential homes.

They weren't looking for higher wages or better conditions for themselves, but for more resources to look after the children in their care. They had held two half-day strikes and were on a work-to-rule which was dragging on.

The meeting agreed to make the council minibus available to take a delegation of workers to Belfast on December 6th to lobby the Minister to release the extra funds.

Councillors, including at least one from Sinn Fein, will accompany the delegation. The Minister they will be lobbying is Health and Social Services *supremo* Bairbre de Brun.

This raises a couple of obvious questions. If it's Sinn Fein policy to support the workers' demands, how come the Minister has to be lobbied at all? On the other hand, if de Brun isn't in a position to deliver, what's the point of her being a Minister in the first place?

Then there's Education Minister Martin McGuinness's response to pleas for the restoration of holiday-time pay to school support staff.

The issue — reported elsewhere in *Socialist Worker* — concerns catering workers, class-room assistants, technicians etc., who have gone without income over school holidays since social security entitlement was withdrawn. The matter came up in the Assembly on November 29th.

Some speakers, like the DUP's Sammy Wilson, ranted irrelevantly about switching money spent on translating Executive papers into Irish. But most made straightforward arguments based on the justice of the case.

Inadequate

Astonishing as it would have seemed just months ago, the only speaker opposing the workers was Minister McGuinness. Any money used to meet the workers' demands would have to be taken from other deserving areas of education, he explained. "The education budget is already inadequate to meet the many pressures we face".

Then there was the budget debate on November 14th. Sinn Fein's John Kelly (Mid Ulster) blasted SDLP Finance Minister Mark Durkan for bringing in a budget which would have "no impact on the problems of the health service".

In a hard-hitting speech which drew headlines in local newspapers, Kelly declared that the Assembly must devise a "strategy to deal with the crisis of waiting lists, cuts in acute services and the prospect of winter bed shortages. The historic and ongoing underfunding of the NHS here at all levels of our health care has to be addressed".

But the budget Kelly was attacking had been endorsed by the two Sinn Fein Executive members. And the department he was demanding more money for is run by one of them.

All this might be taken as just another example of cynical politicians wanting to have their cake and eat it. Labour in Britain, Fianna Fail in the South, social democratic parties of one sort and another on the continent have been playing both sides against the middle for years.

But Sinn Fein has presented itself as something different, as a movement rather than a mere party, pursuing ideals, not office.

Thousands of activists have given their time, and more, to the movement on this basis. As the smoke and sulphur which helped obscure reality clears, we can see it was all an illusion.

Sinn Fein emerges as a populist-style party of the centre, trying to keep Left-leaning rank-and-file supporters sweet even as the government it is part of shores up the status quo.

It is, incidentally, a measure of how shallow the proclaimed "socialism" of some Republican "dissidents" is that the abandonment of working class interests is scarcely mentioned in their never-ending denunciations of Sinn Fein leaders for selling out.

1,000 postal workers strike in Belfast, saying ...

No to bullying management

A HUGE strike has hit Belfast after postal workers walked out over bullying management tactics.

The strike began when postal delivery workers in Tomb Street were told to do extra work without receiving extra pay.

Normally, the walkmen and women as they are known come to Tomb Street and sort out their own frames for the areas they deliver to.

Delivery

But suddenly management told them to sort other frames for outside areas and even for future delivery days.

"They told us that it was dead time and we just had to do what we were told.

"You would think workers have no rights or that there are no unions about the place.

"If they want extra productivity from us, they have to negotiate



Postal workers march against poverty wages and management intimidation

and pay for it" one The Mail worker said.

One worker was suspended for refusing to take on the extra work but the rest of the staff immediately walked out and set up a picket line.

Soon the drivers who serviced sub post

offices stopped work.

When workers at the giant Northern Ireland Mail Centre in Mallusk heard what was going on they waited for a while to see if management were going to negotiate properly.

But at 3 o'clock

when they got word that there was no walk out in sympathy with the staff at Tomb St.

Solidarity

It was a magnificent demonstration of

working class solidarity; in complete defiance of the Tory laws, which try to make strikes illegal.

Suddenly the motto of the union movement, an injury to one is an injury to all was again inspiring Belfast workers.

'Treat us like human beings'

THE BRAND new mail centre in Mallusk was opened at the cost of £41 million last October. But the management do not treat their staff with any respect.

"We walked out in sympathy — but we have lot of our own grievances we wanted sorted. As soon as we came out, we drew up a list" one union activist said.

Top of the list is bullying.

Talking

"You got managers here that lay hands on workers. They come up to people and tell them to stop talking.

"They even follow people out on break times.

"There is one particular character on the late shift and you could not

print what workers say about him.

"We are not taking this stuff any longer."

The Royal Mail also tries to intimidate the union by casualising the staff.

"We have seventy people employed on a daily or weekly basis.

"They give others three-month contracts but keep you hanging on to see if it is renewed.

Disgrace

"The casual staffs are earning about £2 an hour less than the permanent staff.

"It is a real disgrace."

The bosses had hoped that the casual staff would break the pickets. But the magnificent solidarity means that the strike is 100 percent solid.

"There are lots of other things we want sorted.

"They built this centre and did not put lumber support on the seating — and that is important if you are doing six or eight hour stints.

"They privatised the food service to a compa-

ny called Quadrant and the quality has really gone down hill."

"There is all this pressure for more speed ups.

"We are supposed to be 40 percent more productive than the old

office at Tomb St but they never let up on the pressure.

"We are going to stick it out until these issues are sorted and we are treated like human beings."

DEFY THE 'TORY' LAWS — ESCALATE

THE STRIKE in Belfast is unofficial because the leaders of the CWU have not got the guts to defy the Tory laws, which prevents effective action.

But across Europe workers are recovering from the defeats of the eighties. It is time to defy these laws because there is

no way the RUC can jail or fine 1,000 workers for standing up for their rights.

Spread

The best way to win is to hit hard and spread the action quickly so workers do not suffer in the run up to Christmas.

■ Delegation of strikers should approach

other post offices throughout Northern Ireland to spread the action.

The same conditions are affecting every postal worker and the Royal Mail is vulnerable in the Xmas rush.

■ Solidarity collection needs to be organised immediately.

Rush donations to the picket lines at Tomb St and Mallusk.

EU summit

Who gains from the EU?

IT IS tempting to think of the European Union (EU) as a benevolent institution. Many people on the left look to the EU as a counter to unbridled capitalism.

Thus former German finance minister Oskar Lafontaine, in his book *The Heart Beats on the Left*, argues that European institutions can impose a degree of democratic control on the anarchic workings of global finance markets.

But Lafontaine's own exit from office shows this hope is illusory. After the German Red-Green coalition took office in October 1998 he pushed for a cut in European interest rates to stave off a recession.

The European Central Bank, unelected and unaccountable, rubbished Lafontaine's views, and waited till he had been driven from office by a concerted campaign on the part of German bosses before it cut rates.

We see the same picture on other fronts as well.

This is the first anniversary of the great protests that helped cause the collapse of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) summit in Seattle.

Instrument

The WTO serves two main roles. First of all, like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, it serves as an instrument to open up the economies of the Third World and ex-Stalinist countries to Western multinationals.

Secondly, it acts as a forum in which the conflicts among the leading trading blocs—the United States, Europe and Japan—can be fought out in a reasonably non-disruptive way.

Seattle was about launching a new round of trade talks.

The aim was to dismantle national barriers to the operations of the multinationals in key areas. In particular, services including health and education were being eyed up lustfully by corporate lobbies like the Transatlantic Business Dialogue and the European Services Leaders' Group.

The protests in the streets of Seattle gave representatives of Third World governments the confidence to defy the pressure being put on them to sign up to a new round, especially by Charlene Barshefsky, the arrogant US trade representative.

Recently, however, Pascal Lamy, the

by ALEX CALLINICOS

European trade commissioner, gave a speech in Geneva where he reaffirmed the EU's support for launching a full round of trade negotiations.

His speech revealed the extent to which the EU is committed to the same neo-liberal agenda as the US.

At the top of his list of "magic elements" for a new trade round is "further liberalisation of markets for goods and services".

In other words, just like the US, the EU wants to push back the boundaries that currently stop the multinationals from controlling every aspect of economic life.

It is all the more remarkable that Lamy is a member of the French Socialist Party appointed by prime minister Lionel Jospin. Jospin has made great play of his opposition to Tony Blair's and Bill Clinton's Third Way.

Yet in practice he too is pressing ahead with neo-liberal policies.

The same is true of the EU as a whole. The Lisbon summit last spring embraced a package of proposals calling for European labour markets to be made more "flexible".

The EU is thus not a bastion against neo-liberalism.

The conflicts it has with the US concern narrow differences of economic interest.

Both are united in imposing free market policies on the rest of the world, and the EU is busy dismantling barriers to these policies within its own borders.

That is why anti-capitalists are protesting against the EU summits in Nice on 6-7 December—not out of the narrow, xenophobic nationalism that motivates some of the right-wing opposition to the EU, but to help build a world that is no longer in the stifling grip of global capitalism.

Seattle 1999 — Nice 2000

THE RESISTANCE GLOBALIS

IT IS one year since a 60,000 strong demonstration in Seattle united environmentalists, anti-debt campaigners and trade unionists in a battle against global capitalism. It closed down a World Trade Organisation meeting and sparked off a world wide anti-capitalist movement.

Now whenever world leaders meet, a hail of protests has greets them. In April, 40,000 people laid siege to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank when they met in Washington.

In September, 10,000 protesters blockaded the meeting of the World Economic Forum in Melbourne Australia.

Closed

In the same month, 20,000 people from across Europe converged in Prague against the IMF and the World Bank and forced them to close their conference a day early.

The anti-capitalist movement has achieved a lot in just one year.

Before November 1999 few people knew about the activities of the three main pillars of world capitalism, the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank.

Now, many more know that these institutions are run undemocratically



Global resistance from Seattle ...

by people who are fronts for corporate lobbyists.

Some 4 million people have died of HIV because US drug companies have used the cover of 'intellectual property rights' at the WTO to stop South Africa manufacturing cheap drugs to slow down the disease.

The protests have also stopped the latest round of trade liberalization. This was supposed to open up the

world's forests to logging companies and to pave the way for the privatization of services. For now, these moves have been stopped.

The US Congress has also even voted to oppose any 'user fees' in future loan programmes. 'User fees' means having to pay for basic primary education or health services.

Most importantly, the anti-capitalist movement has destroyed Maggie

Thatcher's famous message — There Is No Alternative.

Since the defeat of the world movement in the eighties, many can no longer believe that capitalism was the permanent way of organising human society.

Intellectual think tanks in every country came to accept the Washington consensus whereby privatisation, weakened unions

Is it a rerun of the sixties?

THE ANTI-CAPITALIST movement has often been compared to the big protests of the sixties. That movement helped to defeat the US war in Vietnam and popularized left wing ideas.

The general radicalization led to the creation of the Women's Liberation Movement and groups like the Black Panthers who challenged racism.

The anti-capitalist movement has not yet reached that depth of radicalization but it is going that way.

As in the sixties it has pulled together people who

have fought on single issues into a more general opposition to the 'the system'.

But there are also big differences.

In the sixties capitalism was still in its golden age. John F Kennedy could boast that 'a rising tide lifts all boats' and while this was an exaggeration, millions saw their living standards improve.

Movements

As a result, the protest movements were often centered on students and in the US workers were sometimes openly hostile.

Today the system is in far

greater trouble. The booms are more precarious and there is no 'trickle down' effect. In the US, the average wage of today is equivalent to what it was seventeen years ago even though productivity has grown by 58 percent.

The result is that the anti-capitalist movement starts off with a huge working class involvement.

The Seattle protests were spearheaded by the 12 million strong American Federation of Labour.

The huge demonstration in Nice has been organized by the two main French trade unions.

The movement of the sixties

was sold out by large reformist parties that had a base in the working class.

The French Communist Party de-railed the May 1968 movement by shunting it back into simply a demand for extra wages.

But today these parties are much weaker.

The French Trotskyist organisation Lutte Ouvrière will probably poll more votes in the next Presidential election than the Communist Party.

These two factors mean that the anti-capitalist movement, potentially, poses a far more dangerous threat to the system than even the movement of the sixties.

RESISTANCE



her's famous message — There is an alternative. The defeat of the workers' movement in the eighties, many came to believe that capitalism was the only permanent way of organising human society. Intellectual think tanks in every country came to accept 'the Washington consensus' whereby privatisation, weakened unions and

ties?

sold out by large reformist parties that had a base in the working class. Communist the French Communist Party de-railed the May 1968 movement by shunting it back to simply a demand for extra wages. But today these parties are much weaker. The French Trotskyist Organisation Lutte Ouvrière will probably poll more votes in the next Presidential election than the Communist Party. These two factors means the anti-capitalist movement, potentially, poses a far more dangerous threat to the system than even the movement of the sixties.

reduced social welfare were the key to economic growth. Globalization was the code word for these policies and it was seen as inevitable.

Now that myth has been broken. Last May, the *New York Times* noted that the opposition had "made globalization a naughty word," while Business Week conceded that there is no longer any point "denying that multinationals have contributed to labor, environmental, and human rights abuses".

The anti-capitalist movement has only just begun.

But it has already changed the political landscape and radicalized millions.

From anti-capitalism to revolution

EVERY genuine mass movement has many different ideas. When it starts out, this is a great source of strength.

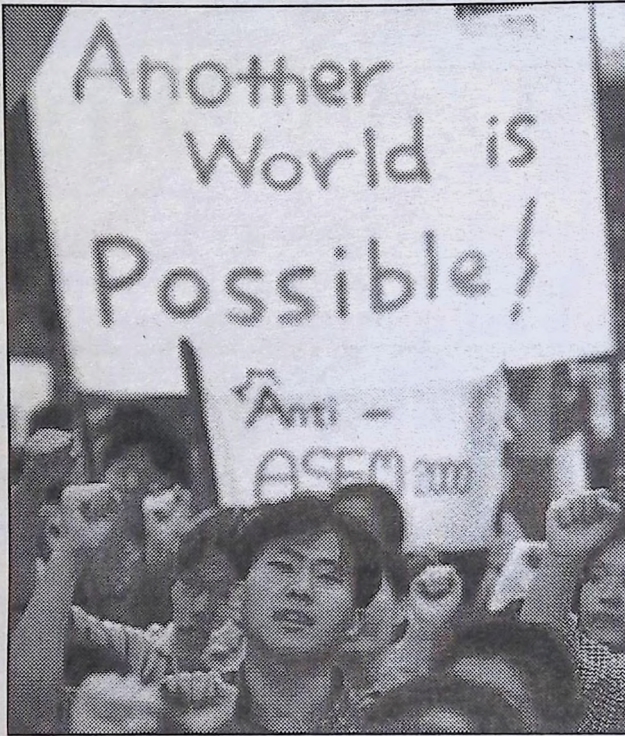
But as the movement grows, there is pressure to clarify ideas and make strategic decisions on where it is going.

Some of the movement believe that the three pillars of the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank can be reformed and even turned

into forces for progress. But others argue you cannot reform these institutions, when, as Walden Bello puts it "corporate crime against people and environment has, like the Mafia, become a way of life".

Others such as Susan George and Pierre Bourdieu believe there can be a return to a more regulated capitalism where the nation state re-asserts itself.

But the reason why there was a neo-liberal rev-



...to South Korea

Protests spread east and west

ONE OF the myths pushed by the media and governments is that the anti-capitalist demonstrations have only taken place in rich Northern countries. In fact there have been protests East and West, North and South.

In October some 20,000 South Koreans protested against government and business leaders in trade talks at the Asia-Europe summit (ASEM) in the South Korean capital, Seoul.

Most were workers from the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions. Up to 30,000 security forces, armed with riot shields and batons, and backed up by helicopters and armoured riot vehicles, surrounded the conference centre.

But with fists in the air thousands of workers chanted, "We oppose neo-liberalism," and, "No globalisation,"

and demanded that workers' hours were shortened.

"Globalisation is a main cause of worsening labour conditions," protesters said. "ASEM, which was established to overcome American supremacy, has been following in US footsteps only for the sake of capitalistic gains, destroying the lives of labourers and people in Third World countries."

In August police killed four people taking part in a demonstration against the World Bank in the city of Hyderabad in India.

The anti-capitalist movement is much more than a series of protests. It is connected to a wider struggle against the effects of IMF and World Bank policies around the world.

This year from Bolivia to South Africa, from Ecuador to Zambia-workers, peasants, students and the poor have fought back against privatisation, and welfare and job cuts imposed by the IMF.

olution was because this form of capitalism reached a dead end.

The gigantic corporations are now run like a tyranny where unelected boards of directors have more economic power than nation states.

They can buy and sell the politicians who run parliaments.

So a real alternative has to try to overthrow the system itself.

Every movement that tried to reform capitalism ended up managing the sys-

tem and attacking its own supporters.

A strategy of revolution has to base itself on the working class because the romanticism about guerrilla tactics has long died.

The only group that has the power and interest in taking on big business are workers.

Forging the link between the anti-capitalist movement and the type of struggles that are now breaking out in the Celtic Tiger is the key to the future.

what do socialists say?

Why we support the taxi drivers

IF YOU believed the press, then nobody with an ounce of sanity would support the taxi drivers. Articles and news reports have called them "thugs" and "bullies". They are allegedly a clique of well-paid tax dodgers. And according to the Sunday Times, they "smell".

Now there is obviously something odd about papers owned by Tony O'Reilly complaining about tax dodgers since the man lives in the Bahamas to avoid tax.

When the media go on a propaganda blitz, most socialists would start to wonder. But when cops attack peaceful marchers on their way to the Dail and injure a couple of children in the protest, it should be obvious which side of the barricade we stand on.

The only counter argument seems to be: "Well I had to stand in the rain for two hours waiting for a cab — so to hell with them."

Yet most people distinctly remember having a miserable time in school from the odd obnoxious teacher. But it wouldn't stop any trade unionist worthy of the name supporting the teachers' fight for better pay.

Workers

The same applies to the taxi drivers. Taxi drivers aren't millionaires.

Some are self-employed but many are also workers who are employed by somebody else. Cosys, as they are called, pay up to £400 a week for the privilege of driving a cab.

One thousand of them are members of SIPTU and see themselves as part of the trade union movement.

The vast majority are ex-workers who used their redundancy money or took out huge mortgages to buy a taxi plate. According to a report by Anderson Consulting, the average income of a taxi driver who doesn't own a plate is £12,000 a year.

The average income of a driver who owns a plate and rents it out to someone else as well is £19,500.

The plan for deregulation is clearly madness. De-regulation of taxis means that the market is flooded for a brief time.

The small people are driven off the roads and eventually large taxi firms arrive which hike up prices.

It won't mean more taxis on the roads — it will mean less in the long term.

So for instance in Orlando in the US after deregulation virtually all the taxis are owned by one company.

In the US, over 20 cities have had to re-regulate the taxi service because of the chaos caused by de-regulation.

Issue

The real issue is not how many taxis there are on the road but rather how do taxis supplement a decent public transport service.

The reason why people queue in Dublin on weekend for a taxi is because there are not proper Nitelink facilities to take them home.

Melbourne, for example, has roughly the same number of taxis as Dublin even though it has three times the population.

But it does not have the same problems because it has a better public transport system.

Fianna Fail and the PDs attack on the taxi drivers is part of a broader strategy of pushing privatisation. It is a type of Thatcherism by stealth.

They hoped that by picking on the easy target of the taxi drivers they could then move on to privatise the bus and rail service.

Yet the real solution to the transport crisis is obvious -- a properly regulated taxi service and a huge extension of public transport. Dublin has the lowest public subsidy for a bus service in the whole of Europe.

State subsidies make up only 4 percent of the total revenue of Dublin Bus, compared to 75 percent for a city like Rome.

The taxi drivers also have shown the type of tactics that are needed across the union movement: direct action rather than just pitiful pleas to government Ministers.

That they have resisted attempts by their union leaders to stop their strike is further to their credit.

This is why they should receive the support of all organised workers as part of the fight against privatization and for a decent public transport system.

by SIMON BASKETTER



THE IMF, GLOBALISATION AND RESISTANCE

A Socialist Worker pamphlet by Chris Harman

Price £1 from Socialist Worker sellers or Po Box 1648, Dublin 8.

The 1913 Dublin lockout:

The divine gospel of discontent

IN 1913, the conditions of Dublin workers were appalling. Nearly 40 percent of the population lived in slums. Infant mortality was the highest in Europe. Many worked a 70 hour week.

From 1910 to 1912 there was an increase in strikes and especially in sympathetic strikes.

The Irish Transport and General Workers Union grew from 4,000 members to 22,000 by 1912 and sympathetic strikes had won wage rises for many workers.

Larkin's paper The Irish Worker sold 95,000 copies a week and was distributed by the Irish Independent paper sellers after Larkin recruited them to the ITGWU.

The bosses had organised too. They banded together in the Dublin Employers Federation.

Their leader was William Martin Murphy, owner of the Irish Independent, Evening Herald, and Irish Catholic newspapers, the Dublin Tramways Company and holder of big interests in hotel and drapery businesses.

Murphy wanted to use the weapon of starvation to break the union. On August 21st nearly 200 men and boys in the parcels office of the Tramway Company received the following notice: - "As the directors understand that you are a member of the Irish Transport Union, whose methods are disorganising the trade and business of the city, they do not further require your services.

The parcels traffic will be temporarily suspended. If you are not a member of the union when traffic is resumed, your application for re-employment will be favourably considered."

AT 10 a.m. the following Tuesday, trams around the city stopped and drivers and conductors walked from them.

That evening Larkin addressed the ITGWU tram workers at Liberty Hall: "This is not a strike, it is a lock-out of the men who have been tyrannically treated by a most unscrupulous scoundrel... We will demonstrate in O'Connell Street.

It is our street as well as William Martin Murphy's. We are fighting for bread and butter. By the living God, if they want war, they can have it."

Larkin had announced that he would speak to a meeting in O'Connell Street on Sunday, August 28th, but the meeting was promptly banned. He made it clear that he would make an appearance.

And he did. Heavily disguised, he spoke briefly from a balcony window in the Imperial Hotel owned by William Martin Murphy, before being arrested. Then, before the crowd had even recovered from their surprise, the RIC fell on them with a brutal

baton charge.

Men, women and children were felled and beaten as they lay in the street. Hundreds were admitted to hospitals that evening.

The brutality was repeated all over the city. One of the most scandalous incidents was a police attack on Corporation Buildings, in the city centre. James Nolan, a young union member, was beaten so badly that his skull was smashed in. John Byrne also lost his life at the hands of the RIC.

A young striker Alice Brady was travelling home with her food parcel from the union office when an armed scab shot her dead. Michael Byrne, secretary of the ITGWU in Dun Laoghaire was tortured in a police cell and died shortly after release.

THE BOSSES stepped up their offensive. 400 of them issued a statement for all workers to sign: - "I hereby undertake to carry out all instructions given to me by or on behalf of my employers, and further, I agree to immediately resign my membership of the ITGWU (if a member) and I further undertake that I will not join or in any way support this union." Some 20,000 workers were thrown out of work.

Murphy used his newspapers to print all manner of lies and slanders against Larkin.

For instance, The Irish Catholic of September 6th: "They are poor and have naught, but if they were rich tomorrow, debauchery would soon have them in poverty again... by folly or malice of their so-called leader, they have been placed in deplorable straits... all this to gratify the vengeful whims of an adventurer who has been battering on their credulity."

The Catholic Church opposed trade unionism and the strikers. Dr Walsh, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, attacked a plan to take the children to stay with trade unionists in England. "They can no longer be worthy of the name of Catholic mothers if they so far forget that their duty as to send away their little children to be cared for in a strange land."

He also said that it was unacceptable because sending children to comfortable homes with three meals a day would make them discontented with their slum homes when they returned.

As children were taken to the boats and trains, gangs of thugs led by priests and the Ancient Order of Hibernians attacked them.

Soon the "first red army in the world" the Irish Citizens Army was set up to defend the strikers and their families. As the advert for the ICA first meeting said: "Let the workers keep clear



“This is not a strike, it is a lock-out of the men who have been tyrannically treated by a most unscrupulous scoundrel... We will demonstrate in O'Connell Street. It is our street as well as William Martin Murphy's. We are fighting for bread and butter. By the living God, if they want war, they can have it.”

— JAMES LARKIN

of the politicians who will simply use the workers as a means to their own security and comfort.

Let others who may prate about 'the rights and liberties common to all Irishmen'. We are out for the right to work and eat."

AT THE time of the lockout the 'national movement' was growing fast. Some, such as Tom Clarke and Countess Markevicz, took the side of the workers. But the majority refused.

Arthur Griffith, the leader of Sinn Fein, denounced the workers claiming, that "whatever causes the area of manufacturing to contract in Ireland dangerously affects the future as well as the present prosperity."

The more radical Irish Republican Brotherhood refused to involve itself in the dispute. When, at a meeting of the Irish Volunteers in the Rotunda on November 25th, ITGWU members challenged this they were

attacked with hurley sticks and thrown out.

The response of trade unionists in Britain was far better. On September 16th railway workers in Liverpool began to black all traffic to Dublin.

Soon some 13,000 were locked out or on strike as far afield as Birmingham, Sheffield, Crewe and Derby. British workers paid for ships to bring thousands of boxes of food to Dublin — £150,000 was collected, a massive amount at the time.

But the response of the trade union leaders was different.

They came to Dublin not to bring solidarity but to resolve the dispute.

As the TUC leaders attempted to make a deal, Larkin was re-arrested and sentenced to seven months for sedition.

But protests across Britain and Ireland and strikes in South Wales forced his release after seventeen days. Afterwards he toured Britain on his "fiery cross" tour. Some 24,000 people turned out to hear him in Manchester to preach "the divine gospel of discontent".

Eventually the leaders of the

TUC sabotaged rank and file support for the Dublin workers.

They met on December 9th at a special conference and offered themselves as mediators. They allowed the transportation of scabs to Dublin.

ONE IMPRESSIVE exception were 150 shipyard workers in Belfast who struck at the end of November against imported scabs.

But without backing the workers were starved back to work. On December 14th the ITGWU ordered a return to work of those workers who could. By January many had resigned from the union to get their jobs back.

A month later there were still 5,000 brave men and women sticking it out in circumstances of the direst poverty.

The last group to accept defeat and return to work were women of Jacobs who held out till mid-March.

Although the ITGWU was

not destroyed, it was severely disrupted and financially crippled. But the struggle forged a memory of militant class action that survives to this day.

A new book by *Irish Times* industrial correspondent Padraig Yeates, provides the first full account of the lockout.

But it is severely marred by Yeates' argument that social partnership is the only possible route for modern times as 'extremist' figures like Larkin and Murphy have disappeared.

Yeates forgets that there are plenty of William Martin Murphy's still about. In Ryanair, Tara Mines, the Irish Independent there are bosses as vicious as those in 1913. But there are no union leaders who have an ounce of Larkin's courage.

Instead of fighting, their ambition is to join the boards of companies after they retire. And that is why a rank and file movement needs to take over where Larkin left off.

● Lockout: Dublin 1913, by Padraig Yeates. Gill & Macmillan £25.00.

in my view

Nothing cuddly about Capitalism

CAPITALISM IS being challenged in away not seen since the sixties. Instead of starting small, various groups have taken on the big boys of Nike, Reebok, Shell and Phillip Morris Tobacco.

The class war has a material and a cultural dimension. There are the day-to-day struggles for the bare essentials, like workers taking on their company for decent pay and conditions, and there is also the ideological battle to challenge the reactionary ideas of the system. The two cannot be separated in practice.

How can you lead a workers' movement without having a clear understanding of how capitalism works? Likewise, how can you really understand the ideology of capitalism if you have never been engaged in the struggles against it.

Wasteful

Central to the ideological battle has been undermining the mass marketing of gigantic corporations. The most frustrating thing about capitalism is the waste it produces, and, apart from war, advertising is about as wasteful as it gets.

Total spending on marketing in the US has risen from around half a billion dollars in the early 1960's to over \$200 bn today. In 1997, Nike alone spent \$500m promoting its sweatshop shoes. To put this staggering figure into perspective, compensating Nike's Indonesian workers for the inflation caused by the massive recession in 1997 would only have cost \$20m. Interestingly, that is precisely the annual amount they pay Michael Jordan for his soul!

The system has always needed a messenger for its products. It has always wanted to hide the reality of where goods come from. It can sometimes appear as if products just came from nowhere, as if no-one had actually stitched that swoosh logo to the shoes for \$2 a day, as if cigarettes just rolled themselves.

Marx called this 'commodity fetishism' and in his lifetime, the world saw the first large-scale piece of commodity propaganda, the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851. This massive glass pyramid in London looked a bit like the Square in Tallaght, only harder to park at. It hosted commodities from all around the world, or at least the bits that Britain had conquered.

The idea behind the exhibition was not much different from the strategy used by today's marketing departments: To dazzle people with the possibilities for fulfilment that the market creates, when in fact, such luxuries were beyond the reach of most of the people who thronged into the Exhibition.

The bosses magazine, *The Economist*, gushes about the internet today. But a hundred years ago it found a piece of heaven, looking forward to the day when "the land will be everywhere adorned with crystal palaces."

Play Station

Every Christmas, the queues at the checkouts of Ireland's Crystal Palaces get longer, as do the shopping lists of children. And every year, there is one product that normally sane adults will stoop to increasingly insane levels to get to.

A few years ago it was the cuddly Furby, that told the proud owner how much it loved them. Well, at £49 a go it would want to. Before that it was the doll that cries and needs to have its nappy changed, that had mums and dads queuing outside Arnotts at 7am. There is something disturbing about giving your six year old daughter a doll that wets itself every few hours.

This year, it is the turn of of Play Station 2 to cause panic among parents. Not content with ripping us off for £150 for a lump of plastic three years ago (Play Station 1), Sony expect to sell over 10 million units in North America this year. At \$300 each, that's enough to fill the stockings of the greediest executive on the block.

"Welcome to the Third Place" is the slogan for the oh-so-cleverly surreal ad for the PS2. In my view, the most surreal thing of all is that people are prepared to part with their wages for a games console that will be obsolete by this time next year.

PS2. I'm not playing.

by PAUL MCCARTHY

film

Scourge of the ruling classes

BRENDAN BEHAN is one of Ireland's most famous literary figures. But his socialist politics has always been played down.

Now his autobiographical book *Borstal Boy* has just been made into a film by Peter Sheridan.

Behan was a man who confounded critics. He became a media sensaton after the success of his first play *'The Quare Fellow'* but it was his frequent bouts of alcoholism and questions around his sexuality that tended to interest the critics who were always uncomfortable with his socialist politics.

Dismiss

Ulick O'Connor's 1970 biography goes to great lengths to dismiss Behan's revolutionary activities.

Behan was born in the slums of Dublin in 1923. His father was a house painter who had been imprisoned as a republican towards the end of the Civil War.

Behan was reared in a family active in revolutionary and left-wing causes against the British. He later recalls how much of his childhood involved heated discussions on Marx, Lenin and Connolly.

Behan himself was active in politics from the age of five. By the age of fourteen he was a full member of Fianna Eireann, the youth organisation of the Irish Republican Army, and a contributor to *The United Irishman*.

When the IRA launched a bombing campaign in England in 1939, Behan was sent to England after being trained in explosives.

However he was arrested the day he landed in Liverpool and sentenced to three years' in Borstal prison for young offenders.

Borstal Boy is an account of his experiences there.

It tells the sad stories of the young men there who endured daily brutality and cold indifference at the hands of prison officers. But it also tells of deep friendship and solidarity that emerged among the inmates. Behan moves beyond republicanism to

see what he has in common with young British working class inmates.

By the age of thirty he was a literary figure of international renown. His two most famous works are *The Quare Fellow* and *The Hostage*.

The Quare Fellow is the story of a condemned man in prison.

Explosive

His imminent execution touches the lives of the other prisoners, the warders and the hangman, and the play is in part an explosive protest against capital punishment.

It is also tells of the tragedy and comedy that underlines the survival of the prisoners' humanity in their inhumane environment.

The Hostage, however, is considered to be his masterwork, in which ballads, slapstick, and fantasies satirise social conditions and warfare with a personal gaiety that emerges from anguish.

As before Behan's tragi-comedy deals with the prison world, in this case a Dublin brothel where the IRA imprison an English soldier in order to save one of their own.



Brendan Behan

Like O Casey, there is an unease about the bombastic rhetoric of nationalism and a real feel for the working class

of all countries.

Behan died at the age of 41, his life cut short by alcohol and diabetes but his work remains as

compelling and political as the live he lived.

— SINEAD KENNEDY

Film

21st Century sexism

THE ORIGINAL Charlie's Angels, was a corporate response to the women's movement. The dim series that ran from 1976-81, was one of those early backlash pieces against uppity women.

Three women were given inane assignments by their creepy protector, the rich, unseen Charlie and solved the crime by adopting disguises which usually required the wearing of bikinis and seducing the bad guys.

Despite some guff in the press about girl power the reality is the 21st-century version is the same old sexism, just with better marketing.

Most of the movie is made up of slow motion shots of the bodies of the stars.

It is the same type of nonsense that clutters up MTV or Baywatch but with a worse plot.

At one point the trio go after a sinister bad guy to the



accompaniment of the Prodigy's *Smack My Bitch Up*.

The film does not turn sexism on its head — it knowingly wallows in it.

With some of the worst fight scenes in cinema history, the movie doesn't so much pay homage to other films as just steal bits from them out of laziness.

The film is the directorial debut of a music video maker

called McG who got the job because he did those infuriating commercials for sweatshop labour employer, the GAP.

If it wasn't dodgy sexist rubbish it would still be a very early contender for worst movie of the millennium. As it is, dodgy sexist rubbish — avoid at all costs.

— 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 here.

news & reports/politics/industry/the unions (01) 8722682 /fax (01) 872 3838 e-mail swp@clubi.ie

PHONE REPORTS ABOUT STRIKES/LOCAL CAMPAIGNS/PROTESTS

Teachers

ASTI grassroots hold firm

TEACHERS ARE growing in confidence as their strike begins to bite. On December 5th there was a huge gathering of teachers outside Dail Eireann.

Before that regional meetings of the Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland heard many calls for escalating strike action. In Galway, Mayo and Kerry there was strong support for all out action in the New Year.

sought to restrict picketing to schools where there were at least ten ASTI members.

But this has now been lifted so that in community and comprehensive schools where there was even one ASTI members, pickets appeared on December 5th.

Scores of teachers are also applying to join the ASTI because they are seen as the most determined union.

Meanwhile support is growing in other unions for the ASTI position. The Dublin Post Primary Branch of the Teachers Union of Ireland held a joint meeting with ASTI where there was support for united action on pay.

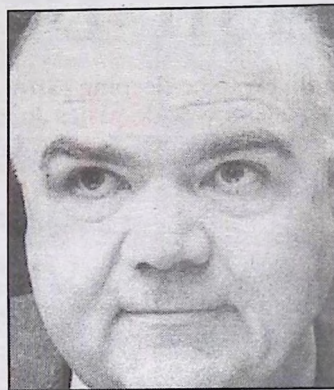
A rank and file group, Teachers United, is organising meetings across the three teachers unions to build support for the ASTI strike.

"The grassroots understand the need for unity. They want to show their solidarity with the ASTI. That is why we circulated a leaflet in the schools calling on other teachers to join the demonstration on December 5th. We know that solidarity wins," said Deirdre Cronin, a Teachers United activist.

Determined

The members are very determined. Many said they are in for the long haul. They were not going to be deflected by adverse publicity. "Any strike causes hurt. But we have to stick it out to bring about a better education service in the long run," one teacher told Socialist Worker.

One reflection of the growing militancy has been the decision to extend picketing. A conservative element in the ASTI leadership grouped around the full time officials in head office had



ASTI General Secretary Charlie Lennon wants compromise but the members want 30%

Don't let them isolate the ASTI

THE LEADERS OF the INTO and the TUI are working with the government and the ICTU to isolate the ASTI.

Evidence of the secret manoeuvring emerged when INTO leader Joe O Toole put down a resolution in the Senate to compliment McCreavy's budget for saving the Programme for Prosperity and fairness — even before the formal negotiations between the ICTU and McCreavy concluded.

ICTU leaders have hatched a deal to bring forward the 'benchmarking process' and to offer workers a tiny increase to deal with rising inflation.

Co-incidentally, the TUI leaders also called a ballot for strike action on issues they knew the government would concede on. The ballot was for bringing forward the benchmarking.

Manoeuvre

The aim of this manoeuvre was to head off the growing pressure to join the ASTI on the picket lines.

However these union leaders are not having it their own way.

A special congress of the TUI has been called for January 27th because of pressure from the grass roots.

Rank and file activists are already pressing for a resolution to rule out benchmarking and to press a claim for higher

pay. The INTO is in the midst of an election for General Secretary as O'Toole leaves to seek his reward in higher places.

Crea Ryder, an activist

with Teachers United has entered the race on the basis of full support for the ASTI.

Nominations take place at branch meetings in January.

ESCALATE THE ACTION!

THE ASTI can win if they escalate the action and get solidarity from the other two teachers' union.

But to do that the rank and file will have to take control of the strike. The General Secretary of the ASTI, Charlie Lennon did not originally want strike action. He has tried to keep the door open to benchmarking. Co-incidentally, he is the brother of Bertie Ahern's press officer, Jo Lennon.

The Central Executive Council of the ASTI, which is a very democratic body, should press for increased action in the New Year. Activists are

already talking of extended regional strikes and more national stoppages. No concession should be made on the issue of the Leaving Cert oral exams — as the government are prolonging this dispute by refusing to negotiate.

The ASTI should also openly call on other teachers to join the strike. They should call regional demonstrations on the weekend to build solidarity at grass roots level. They should appeal to the rank and file at the special TUI conference on January 27th.

They should aim for co-ordinated strike action from the three unions from February onwards.

NO TO BENCHMARKING

'BENCHMARKING' means that all jobs in the public sector will be evaluated in relation to private sector jobs. A committee of six people is supposed to carry out this task.

But the six include 'neutrals' like Jim O Leary, a stockbroker who backs the privatisation policy and Paddy Mularkey former Secretary of the Department of Finance who was responsible for cutting public sector.

There are no criteria about how this 'evaluation' will take place. There is no guarantee it will bring extra money.

The whole aim is to introduce 'performance related pay' into the public sector. This puts workers in competition with one another and increases stress and demoralisation.

SWP branch meetings

- **ATHLONE:** Contact 01-872 2622 for details
- **BRAY:** Meets every Wednesday at the Mayfair Hotel at 8.30pm
- **BELFAST CENTRAL:** Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in Kichen Bar, 15 Victoria Square, near Cornmarket
- **BELFAST SOUTH:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Queens Students Union
- **BELFAST WEST:** West Belfast Branch meets Dilis Halls Community Centre Falls Road, Monday 7.30pm.
- **CORK:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.00pm in O'Donoghue's Pub, Droicheadis St.
- **DERRY:** Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Bedford Bar upstairs, Orchard St.
- **DUNDALK:** Contact 01-872 2682 for details
- **DUN LAOGHAIRE:** Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in the Christian Institute
- **DUBLIN ARTANE / COOLOCK:** Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in Artane / Beaumont Recreational Centre (opp. Artane Castle)
- **DUBLIN NORTH CENTRAL:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Conways Pub, Parrnell St.
- **DUBLIN KILLBARRACK:** Phone 087 6235071
- **DUBLIN CABRA:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in

- Aughrim St Parish Hall, Prussia St
- **DUBLIN BALLYMUN:** Phone Kevin at 8622209
- **DUBLIN DUNDRUM:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Dundrum Family Recreation Centre
- **DUBLIN RIALTO:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in St. Andrews Community Centre, SCR
- **DUBLIN RATHMINES:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Tom Kelly flats community centre, Charlemont Street.
- **DUBLIN HAROLDS X:** Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Innon the Park Harolds Cross
- **DUBLIN SOUTH CENTRAL:** Phone: Simon 087 6561455
- **DUBLIN TALLAGHT:** Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in Jobstown Community Centre
- **ENNISKILLEN:** Phone 01-872 2682 for details
- **GALWAY:** Meets every Wednesday in Currane Hotel, Eye Square (beside Cobas)
- **LIMERICK:** Phone 01-872 2682 for details, fortnightly on Saturdays, phone 087 6329511 for details
- **TRALEE:** Phone 087 6329511 for details
- **WATERFORD:** Meets every Thursday at 8pm in the ATGWU Hall, Keizer St.

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Taxi Drivers

Huge vote to stay on strike

THOUSANDS OF taxi drivers took militant action following the government's deregulation of the industry. Harney and Molloy announced that they would make available an unlimited number of taxi licences and anyone with a clean driving licence could buy one.

The drivers, members of SIPTU, the National Taxi Drivers' Union and the Irish Taxi Federation immediately stopped working and mounted protests.

In Dublin taxi drivers blockaded the airport and Leinster House in an angry series of actions against the attack on

their livelihoods.

Drivers' wives organised a 4,000 strong march on the Dail to demand the government make concessions.

One taxi driver told *Socialist Worker*, "We work long hours just to pay off the loans to get taxi plates. Now the minister has made those plates worthless.

"This year the vehicle test was £350 for two years. Now Molloy is more than doubling it to £500 for just one year.

"He has demanded we get new meters which give receipts which cost over £800 and by 2003 all taxis must be special wheel-chair accessible vehicles. They cost more than £30,000.

Service

"If deregulation goes ahead large numbers of drivers will be forced out of the industry and then the service will be worse than ever."

Another driver added,



Taxi drivers picketing in Dublin

"We are the whipping boys for the state of public transport.

"In Dublin, for example, buses bring thousands of people into the city for the evening but it is left to taxis to bring

people home.

"We all accept there should be some increase in the number of taxis, but it should be phased in and there needs to be a big expansion of buses.

"What the government is trying to do is to flood the place with taxis so it won't have to deal with the lack of public transport."

As *Socialist Worker* went to press union leaders called on the drivers to return to work and instead place their faith in talks and legal action.

Drivers in all three unions rejected this and voted overwhelmingly to maintain the strike.

Equality

Term time workers are 90 percent women, so this is a basic issue of equality.

If they have to go on strike to get a year round living wage, McGuinness will be shamed.

Students

Fees betrayal

SDLP member and third level education minister Sean Farren has dashed the hopes of thousands of students in the North by refusing to abolish tuition fees.

Farren claimed that the money needed for the abolition of fees would run into tens of millions.

However the figure would have been less than the £70 million in handouts given to arms

manufacturer Raytheon.

The announcement has been a huge disappointment for the 1500 students who attended a demonstration against the fees last November and heard the SDLP give a commitment that it would fight the tuition fees if in office.

NUS have called another demonstration in the wake of this betrayal.

Tara Mines

Strike to save jobs

MINERS AT Tara Mines are involved in a major battle to protect their livelihoods.

Some years ago, the company was held up by John O'Dowd, chair of the National Partnership Council, as a model example of workplace partnership. The workers certainly did everything to co-operate with management.

★ They increased their production targets, adding an extra 30,000 tons in March 1999.

★ They worked Saturday and Sunday without addi-

tional overtime payments. ★ They accepted a cut in bonus payments and saw their earnings reduced.

But the company tore up the partnership ethos and attacked their workforce. They broke key agreements and are now embarked on a strategy to replace permanent jobs with contract labour.

Extension

Originally, the workforce agreed to the use of contract miners from Canada to work on a new part of the mine, the South West Extension.

The company said there was not enough trained miners available but

promised to pull them out by September 30th.

They have since reneged on this agreement.

They have deprived indirect miners of a chance of being trained up to get permanent jobs as miners.

They have extended the use of the contract workers to other areas of the pit.

The company is now trying to portray the strike as anti-foreigner strike.

But it is nothing of the kind. Socialists and trade unionists oppose the use of contract labour, no matter where it comes from.

Workers have a right to permanent jobs, decent pensions, and proper holiday payments.

CIE

Signal Workers

A SERIES of one and two-day strike action taken by signal operatives in Irish Rail have been called off and workers are to ballot on an offer by Decembe 22nd.

Many of the workers believe that the reason for the long delay in the ballot is to prevent any further action by the signal operatives before Christmas.

Irish Rail have just settled the DART dispute and were anxious to settle this one which had closed down all mainline railways for at least four days.

Excessive

Signal operatives traditionally worked excessive amounts of overtime with a very low basic pay.

The new deal gives the company a 48 hour working week with five days spread over seven.

The workers will lose the overtime but have gained significantly on the basic rate of pay.

And in some depots the workers have been upgraded to bring their pay rise up even further. It this deal is accepted the basic rate of pay for signal operatives will range from £21,000 to £27,000 per year.

One of the workers in Heuston told *Socialist Worker*, "It was definitely

our action that got us this far. The company were just digging in their heels and trying to keep us on low pay. Now we have won something decent."

But Irish Rail are facing a new year of workers action.

Other grades such as shunters, inspectors, supervisors, and cabin men — are

all claiming pay increases in line with what has been secured by their colleagues.

As one of the signal shop stewards put it, "We got fantastic support from unexpected sources, like the supervisors who for the first time ever did not cross a picket line. And they are going to be depending on our support in the future."

Dart

DART DRIVERS have voted to accept the latest company offer which has averted further strike action this side of Christmas.

The offer contains pay rises well over and above partnership but also involves a giveaway on basic rates in the future.

The most senior drivers will be red-circled at £29,000 but a new rate will allow future drivers to start on a scale of £20,500 to £24,500 over five years.

This has already disillusioned some of the new drivers who are training at the moment.

One driver told *Socialist Worker*, "Some of the new drivers are already saying that they will go back to their old jobs if they don't get proper pay. This is a hugely stressful and responsible job. And as well as the new rates of pay we are going to lose our Sunday rest day status and will be rostered in for Sunday work regardless."

"We have been on our backs for over 31 year fighting against productivity increases but this job may well end up like the buses in a few years with drivers on very low pay and working harder than ever.

Fighting

"This deal was given just to stop us fighting for now and give the company industrial peace. " a driver told *Socialist Worker*

"There is no decent lead from the unions. We need to build up a strong rank and file in this and other Irish Rail jobs."

The Dart drivers deal is already impacting on mainline drivers who are working a 48 hours for the same pay as the Dart drivers working 42-45 hours.

As one of the mainline drivers told *Socialist Worker*, "We were assured that we would be kept in line with the Dart and now they have jumped ahead again.

"There has to be another claim put in for us now."

Ulster Bank

Fight 'insulting proposals'

OVER 3000 workers at Ulster Bank have signed a petition to criticise 'demeaning and insulting proposals' made by their management.

Under a new Horizon Programme, the bosses wanted to cut 20 percent of jobs at

branch level.

Worse still, they wanted workers to re-apply for their own jobs at reduced pay. Cashiers were expected to take a drop in pay from £23,423 to £19,000.

Yet the Ulster Bank has been making soaring profits in recent

years.

Last year it made £168 million.

Between 1987 and 1999, its profits rose by 365 percent.

The Celtic Tiger is supposed to be built on social partnership.

But the bosses at Ulster Bank know this is only a bad joke.

Referred

But the issue was eventually referred to the Labour Court.

However if a satisfactory answer is not forthcoming, the hotels could still see strike action before Xmas.

NI Term Time Workers

Ballot for action

Term time workers across all five of the North's Education Boards are hoping to ballot for strike action soon after Xmas.

A strike by these workers would close the schools, since they supervise lunch times and playgrounds as well as carrying out duties in the actual classroom.

Pay

News of the ballot plans came at the same time that Assembly members voted overwhelmingly to urge Education Minister McGuinness to pay the workers during holidays.

While some classroom assistants, secretaries, technicians and other support staff are paid during school holidays, the majority are not.

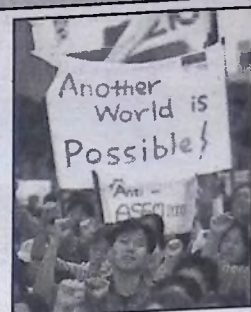
Until a couple of years ago, they were able to claim social security during holidays.

Since the Job Seekers' Allowance was introduced, they are barred from claiming dole and are expected to live on fresh air in holiday

Socialist Worker

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REVOLT
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Postal workers show how to:

STOP THESE BULLYING BOSSSES

NO WELCOME FOR CLINTON

WHEN BILL Clinton visits Ireland in December, the media will present him as a man of peace.

But the list of countries where people have been died because of his foreign policy is frightening. Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Cuba, Columbia, Indonesia, East Timor.

US support for Israel has helped them to sustain a bloody war against the Palestinians where 300 have been shot dead. Israel is the biggest recipient of US aid. It is the watchdog for the US in the Middle East, intimidating Arab countries into giving US multi-nationals control over their oil supplies.

Saddam Hussein's refusal in 1991 to comply with a UN resolution

requiring him to withdraw from Kuwait provided the "justification" for the Gulf War.

But that resolution had exactly the same force and weight as UN Resolution 242 which requires the Israelis to withdraw from the territories forcibly occupied in 1967.

Army

When Saddam thumbed his nose at the UN, the Western powers, led by the US, assembled an army half a million strong to drive him out.

But when Israel treats the UN with contempt, the US, under Clinton, responds by replenishing the Israeli arsenals so that they can slaughter more Palestinians.

Meanwhile, Clinton ensures that US and British war planes continue to drop hundreds of bombs each week on Iraq. The US insists on continuing sanctions against Iraq which, according to UNICEF, have led to the deaths of over half a million children.

Anyone interested in saving the planet from environmental destruction should also protest against Clinton.

The US pumps out a quarter of all global greenhouse gas emissions. Yet at the Hague Climate Summit, the US wanted to increase its carbon dioxide emissions, instead of cutting them by the 7 percent it pledged at the 1997 Kyoto climate summit.

Clinton should not be made welcome here. Join us in protesting against the mess he has made of the world.

SOME 1,000 postal workers in Belfast went on strike over the bullying attitude of their management.

"Managers even laid hands on some workers and pushed them about. They shouted and abused people as they pressed for more speed ups. We just could not take it any more" one worker said.

But the Royal Mail is not the only place where bullying goes on.

★ Contract staff at the Foyle Trust have been told they will not be re-employed if they back action by their colleagues.

★ Check out operators at Marks and Spencers, Sainsburys and Tescos face huge pressure to put nearly 15 items though every minute. The supervisors are constantly on their backs.

★ In Seagate a young man who had a severe headache that turned out to be meningitis was forced to stay at his workstation for 3-4 hours after he asked to go home.

When he died the next day, many of his fellow-workers blamed management bullying for his death.

The sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland gave the bosses huge power over shop floor workers.

They played the politics of divide and rule to weaken our unions. But now the postal workers have given a lead to everyone else.

We need strong unions based on good shop steward organization to take on bullying managers.

Like the postal workers we should stick together and ensure that an injury one is seen as an injury to all.