

Socialist Worker

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For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism

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PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT



In Brazil (left) and Switzerland (right) thousands took to the streets to protest against global capitalism

GLOBALISE



RESISTANCE

Belgium and CIA on trial

ROLAND LUMUMBA has opened legal proceedings to charge the CIA and the Belgian government with the murder of his father Patrice Lumumba. Congo's first elected President.

Patrice Lumumba was a left wing postal worker who led Congo's fight for independence in 1960. He united a huge country that had been riven by ethnic and tribal conflicts which were stoked up by Belgium.

But the Belgian government encouraged the diamond rich province of Katanga to secede.

They then worked with the CIA to kidnap Lumumba and executed him in a villa guarded by Belgian troops.

New warning on global warming

AN INTERNATIONAL group of scientists have confirmed the worst fears of environmental campaigners: the Earth's atmosphere could soar by almost 6C by the year 2100 — a rise unprecedented in the past 10,000 years.

The UN report is predicting temperature rises that are 2°C high-

er than any previous predictions.

They are also predicting that sea levels could rise by 88 centimetres by 2100, making millions of people homeless in China's Pearl River delta, Bangladesh, the Nile delta of Egypt, and other low-lying regions.

The 1990s was the warmest decade for 1,000 years said the report.

Temperatures rose by an average of 1.6°C during the last century, with an increase in

floods and droughts. Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere have risen by 31 percent since the beginning of the industrial revolution.

Reckless

Scientists have long blamed the reckless burning of fossil fuels by big business for the global warming.

Yet governments, the US in particular, under pressure from these very businesses,

have failed to act.

At a summit last November in the Hague, Western governments couldn't even agree on a minute 5.5 percent reduction by 2010 — well short of the 60 percent cut scientists are saying is needed.

Ironically this latest UN report was launched on the day George Bush junior came to office. Bush says he is not convinced climate change is really happening.

Epidemic used by Pfizer for drugs test

GIANT DRUG companies like Pfizer have refused to supply cheap drugs to Africa to deal with the AIDS epidemic.

But they used an outbreak of meningitis in Kano, Nigeria in 1996 for a gigantic drug test.

As soon as news of the epidemic broke out, Pfizer flew in doctors to test a new antibiotic Trovan on 200 children. Verbal

permission was obtained from panic stricken parents.

Pfizer claimed that the drug helped to save 189 lives.

But 15,000 other Africans died in the same epidemic.

Epidemic

The company did not show the slightest humanitarian concern.

It only wanted a few children to use as an experiment to help boost its profits.

Microsoft accused

MICROSOFT has recently been hit with one of the largest discrimination suits in US legal history. Seven black Microsoft workers have accused the company of open racism and a "plantation mentality".

Black workers say they have been repeatedly passed over for promotion, paid less than white employees and subjected to harassment and retaliation when they complained.

Workers have pointed to 1999 US government statistics that showed that only 2.6 percent of Microsoft's 21,429 workers are black.

According to the US Bureau of Labour statistics, black Americans make up over 11 percent of the workforce as a whole but only 6.3 percent of computer and software workers.

Government racism on the increase

ONCE AGAIN the Irish state has shown the reality of its racist immigration policy. If you are a white American, Canadian or Australian you can sail through immigration but if you have a black face you are immediately pulled aside and interrogated.

When 19 Moldavians came to Ireland recently, with valid passports, visas and documentation they were immediately detained.

Immigration officials said their jobs in the meat trade were no longer available following a downturn in the industry caused by the BSE crisis.

The men were held in Mountjoy for almost a week.

Atlantic tax haven

A BUSINESSMAN with links to the Russian Mafia has been using Irish front companies to salt away his money.

According to the *Financial Times*, Boris Birshtein, has hosted a top meeting for Russian Mafia

When they finally appeared in court they were led in, in chains and handcuffs even though they were not facing any criminal charges.

Late last year a similar case happened involving seven Pakistani businessmen.

The seven men were detained in Mountjoy for three nights before being released.

Treated

They also had valid visas and passports.

One of the men said he was "treated like a slave" following his imprisonment.

Even after the case against the men had been thrown out of court the state refused to admit any wrongdoing and claimed their actions were appropriate.

bosses. He has taken control of assets of state banks in the former Soviet Union and was given special permission to move them 'off shore'.

He chose Ireland as the location for his front companies because of its reputation for tax dodging. Must have heard it was once led by a man called Charlie Haughey.

The government has launched a major crackdown against refugees.

They have prevented immigrants from entering Ireland via the Cherbourg-Rosslare ferry route and in effect is asking port workers to act as immigration officials.

Meanwhile the government's own National Development Plan, launched last month, said that almost 340,000 people would have to immigrate into Ireland between now and 2006 if there is not to be a serious labour shortage.

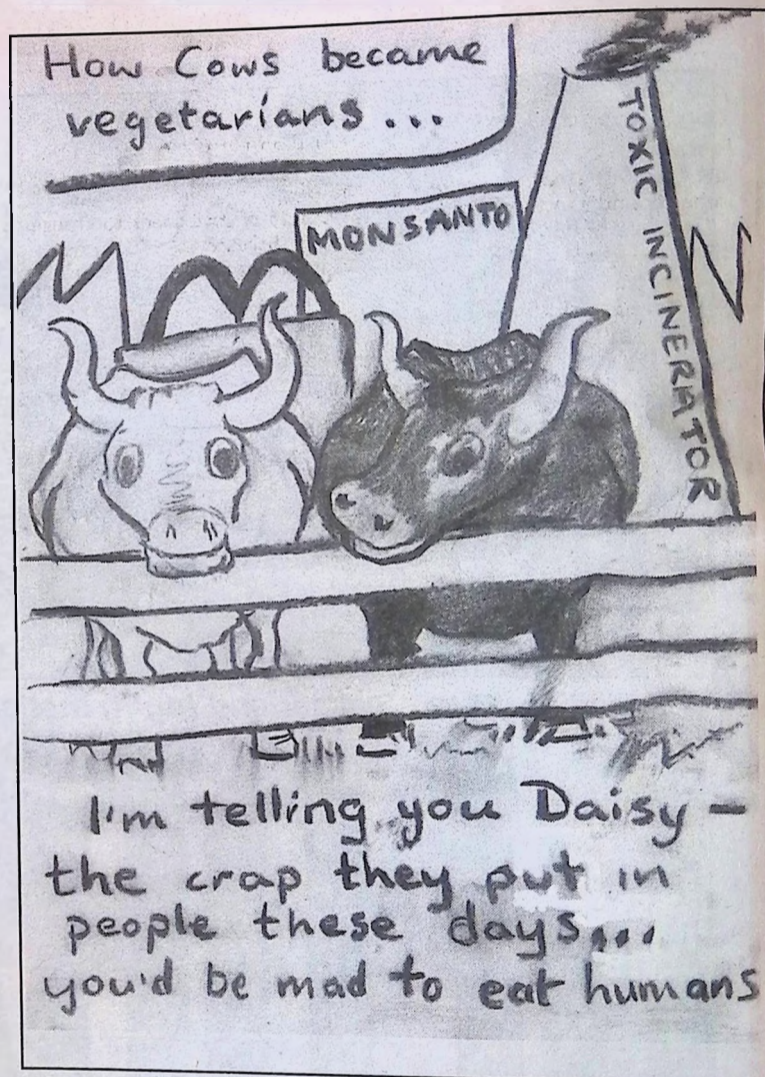
Sisters of Charity cash in

THE SISTERS of Charity have made an estimated £35 million from the sale of lands at St Mary's School and Home for the Blind in Merrion Dublin.

But they are not giving any of the money back to help fund services for the blind.

Services

At present these services are so bad that blind secondary school girls are travelling to Northern Ireland for their educa-



BSE danger grows

A QUARTER of Irish abattoirs have supplied beef containing BSE specified risk material. This shocking figure was revealed by the Food Safety Authority.

BSE is transmitted by a tiny particle called a prion. There is evidence that even one BSE infected carcass could increase the danger of brain disease to many people.

Yet many Irish abattoirs have been putting profit before people's health.

And they have been let get away with it by successive governments who have tried to play down the BSE crisis in Ireland.

tion. The nuns originally got the land in Merrion as a donation from William Yore in the nineteenth century. Yore understood the nuns would be caring for the blind. But the school was closed down five years ago and now the land has been sold off at top prices. The profits are being moved to the Sisters of Charity's commercial arm which runs St Vincent's hospital and the Caritas Convalescent home.

★ THE NEWLY appointed Cardinal Desmond O Connell has some strong views on sex. "Contraception has deprived women of a fundamental protection for their feminine personal dignity". But when it came to clerics in his diocese abusing children there was a less than forthright response. Fr Ivan Payne adjudicated on cases of 'annulment' for the Dublin diocese and asked couples the most detailed questions about their sex lives. But in his capacity as a parish priest he sexually abused Andrew Madden and other boys in the Cabra area. The church authorities were informed but Payne was only moved to the Sutton parish where he abused other boys. When matters came into the open, O Connell gave Payne a £30,000 loan to make an out of court settlement. But he later denied paying out any compensation in case other claims against the Catholic Church would come flooding in. Strange type of morality from one who now describes himself as a Cardinal of the Christ's Church.

what we think

As US multinationals plan job cuts...

We need a union recruitment drive

IN DECEMBER, Motorola laid off 750 of its workers. It was the first sign that the growing recession in the US is likely to hit the Celtic Tiger hard.

Ireland is more dependent on the US dollar than virtually any other country in the world.

US investment per manufacturing worker is a full seven times above the EU average. When the US boomed, the Celtic Tiger followed.

But the reverse also applies. In the past it was argued that when England caught a cold, Ireland got pneumonia.

Now when the US gets a chill, the Celtic Tiger will grind to an abrupt halt.

Global

The signs are already there. All the major computer companies which have fuelled the Irish boom are announcing global job cuts. Gateway was held up during Clinton's visit as a model firm but it is cutting 10 percent of its staff world-wide and has already sacked 130 in Dublin.

Hewlett Packard pretends to care for employees who 'follow the H-P way' but after a slight drop in the market, it announced that 2 percent of its global workforce would be cut.

All of these US multi-nationals refuse to allow trade unions. They

have been let get away with this by a lazy ICTU leadership who described them as 'non-union' rather than 'anti-union firms'.

The union leaders were so concerned not to rock the social partnership boat that they decided not to antagonise the government on the issue.

But all of that needs to change quickly because the 72,000 workers belonging to Ireland's computer sector are now wide open to union membership.

In the past, US companies pretended they looked after their workers by giving them share options.

But the shares today are plunging as the US stock market implodes.

All the old talk about everyone being 'on the one team' is shown to be a nonsense when workers are terrorised with the sack while the company directors keep their super salaries and profits.

The unions should be hiring special recruitment organisers to unisonise these plants.

This is what American unions have done and it should be followed here.

They should establish special information stalls outside the large computer factories such as Intel, Dell, and Hewlett Packard.

And they should tell this government there should be no more grants to multi-nationals who refuse to give workers their right to be represented by a union.

French workers fight back



TENS OF thousands of French workers took to the streets (left) in series of strikes and protests against attempts by the bosses to attack pension rights. Fire-fighters doused riot police with foam as part of the protests (above right).

Call the companies bluff

US MULTINATIONALS can be forced to accept unions — if they are taken on.

General Electric was one of the first big US companies to come to Ireland in the sixties. When 380 workers joined the Irish Transport and General Workers Union at their El plant in Shannon, the company would not negotiate with them.

In March 1968, the union members went on strike and mounted strong pickets. Flying pickets were placed on petrol stations that supplied the scabs

and the company. A CIE bus used to hire scabs was withdrawn under union pressure. Aer Lingus workers in the nearby airport refused to handle goods.

The company claimed that the unionisation would put off other US companies coming to Ireland.

A Fianna Fail Minister George Colley agreed saying that they could not tell foreign investors they could grudgingly come in but that they would have to behave themselves.

But the ITGWU threatened a national strike of its entire membership if the issue was not resolved. The union

was finally recognised and it later became official government policy that multi-nationals would only get grants if they agreed to accept unions.

It showed US multi-national can be taken on — and have their bluff called.

**Work in a Call Centre?
Or computer Company?
YOU NEED A UNION
Contact Socialist Worker
on 8722682 for advice and
application forms.**

**Rank and File Trade
Union Conference**
**SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP:
CLAIMING
BACK OUR
UNIONS**

Timetable:

11.00 am Registration
11.30 - 12.30

The Celtic Tiger — How Workers Are Losing Out
Introduction by Kieran Allen (Author of the *Celtic Tiger & the Myth of Social Partnership*)

Benchmarking & Performance Related Pay
Introduced by Maureen Watson — Executive Council Member (Personal Capacity) Educational Institute of Scotland
12.30 - 1.30

How We Break Through the Deal
Introduction by Pat Cahill — Member of Standing Committee, ASTI and George Whelan, Shop Steward Dublin Airport
1.30 - 2.30 Lunch Break
2.30 - 4.00

How We Build a Rank & File Movement?
Jimmy Kelly — ATGWU Convenor, Waterford Crystal
Owen McCormack — Chairperson Busworkers Action Group
Terry Kelleher, Activist Rank & File Group - CPSU
4.00 - 5.00

Resolutions/Elections/ Sum - Up

**Saturday, February 10th
2001, Teachers Club,
Parnell Square, Dublin 1**

I want ___ tickets to Social Partnership: Claiming back our Unions (£5 each to cover cost of building the rank and file network) and I enclose £_____

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone..... Workplace.....

Email.....

Union..... Position.....

Do you need a creche?___
Ages of children

Return to: Campaign Against A Partnership Deal
105 O'Hogan Road Dublin 10. Tel (01) 878 8170



news of the world

— Philippines —

This is how to get rid of corrupt politicians

MASS DEMONSTRATIONS forced the resignation of the president of the Philippines, Joseph Estrada. Over 200,000 people took to the streets of the capital, Manila, for several days after court proceedings against Estrada over corruption effectively collapsed.

He stood accused of accepting tens of millions of dollars in kickbacks from illegal gambling and shady bank deals.

The decision by senators hearing the case not to accept evidence damaging to Estrada triggered the protests.

People gathered at the shrine to the 1986 protests which brought down the pro-US dictator of the Philippines, Ferdinand Marcos.

At first politicians tried to take over the protests.

They managed to call off a general strike, but could not stop all of the stoppages or demonstrations.

"I think it's a realisation of the people that each of them is a leader on his own," said one demonstrator. "They do not need anyone to follow."

"They just had to make up their own mind if Estrada was fit to govern this country. It is clear they decided the answer was no."

Offered

Estrada offered to hold a snap presidential poll.

But with one voice the hundreds of thousands of demonstrators immediately shouted: "Snap election no! Snap resignation yes!"

"It wasn't just a delaying tactic," said one man. "He would've just looked for a way out if we accept this. He can't

be trusted, so we have to get rid of him now."

Millions of ordinary Filipinos communicated with each other via mobile phone text messages to organise the

protests. The messages read simply: "Be angry - Come outside at 11 [pm] and make noise." - over 250,000 did so in Manila alone.

A spare wheel for the IMF

THE PROTESTS threatened to go beyond the limited aim of getting rid of Estrada.

That is why the chief of the army, Angelo Reyes, and the other key state officials moved rapidly to dump Estrada and give the Presidency to the opposition leader Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Big business and the army want Arroyo to restore stability.

She is a US-trained economist, a friend of Bill Clinton and daughter of a former president of the

Philippines in the 1960s, Diosdado Macapagal.

She is wealthy and has the backing of the country's "old money"—centrally the Spanish business dynasties such as the Ayala family, which owns one of the country's biggest corporations.

Arroyo also received a boost from leaders of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The IMF managing director, Horst Koehler, said the fund was encouraged by Ms Arroyo's first policy pronouncements.

The World Bank president, James Wolfensohn, backed Arroyo's promise to



Thousands of people celebrated the fall of Estrada

restore good government and pledged the bank's "continued support and cooperation".

But Arroyo could also go the way of her predecessor.

Estrada, a former movie star, was elected in 1998

largely on the back of votes from the rural and urban poor.

But he failed to deliver on promises to help the poor such as lower rents.

Big business, had calculated that his populist image as a "champion of the poor"

could be exploited to push through the IMF's programme of economic deregulation. It wasn't just Estrada's corruption that brought people to the streets but his commitment to the IMF cuts.

Arroyo is trying to use

popular opposition to corruption to try the same trick.

But a people who sense their own power will not be conned so easily.

As the text message doing the rounds when Estrada resigned said, "I guess we've won again."

— Turkey —

Hunger strikes in Turkey's F-blocks

OVER 1,200 political prisoners are currently on hunger strike in Turkish jails, in protest at the authorities' attempts to put political prisoners in the notorious "F-type isolation cells." Some of the prisoners have been on strike for some 90 days.

A British and Irish delegation has just returned from a fact-finding mission to Turkey.

The mission was organised following the violent storming of 20 jails by the mil-

itary on 19 December in which 30 prisoners were killed and hundreds more severely injured.

Leaders of the national Human Rights Association in Turkey told the delegation that a large number of the country's 10,000 political prisoners had received heavy sentences under anti-terrorist laws for such simple things as handing out leaflets and taking part in marches.

The prisoners are trade unionists and left wing activists.

Some of the prisoners are as young as 13 and 14 years of age.

Those in the F-Cells were denied all human rights and

many of those on hunger strike were now near death.

Jimmy Kelly from the ATGWU Executive was part

of the delegation "We met the families of some of the prisoners who are currently on hunger strike and you could

sense the fear that the military authorities has installed in these people," said Jimmy Kelly.

"They were dis-

traught some of their children would be very near the late stages of their hunger strike.

"We met the

Secretary of the Health Workers Union who had been in a Turkish jail and she told us some horrific stories.

One step from madness

"THE POLITICAL prisoners are against these cells because like political prisoners the world over they believe they should be treated differently to criminal prisoners," Jimmy Kelly told Socialist Worker

organisation by putting the political prisoners in these horrific isolation cells, but the prisoners are fighting back. "The prisoners see these cells as one step away from madness."

Isolation

According to Jimmy anybody involved in a public protest against the F-type isolation cells runs the very

real risk of finding themselves behind bars in the barbaric Turkish prison system.

The Turkish prisoners also see their struggle as part of a wider more historical fight.

"We were told by one journalist in Turkey that a prisoner had told him that 'Bobby Sands was not dead — he was alive and well in a cell in Turkey'" said Jimmy.

"Another pris-

oner told the journalist that 'the only place a man should be in isolation is alone in his grave.'

The ruling National Party has its root in fascist movement of the 1970's,

"Turkey is currently trying to become a member of the EU. But with a human rights record like they have they should not be seen as a respectable candidate. The Turkish

government have also just received the approval from the EU for a 380 million euro grant."

Jimmy is to make representation to Irish MEP's over the issue and is pushing for trade unionists everywhere to send messages of protest to the Turkish Embassy. ★ SEND Protests to Turkish Embassy, 11 Clyde Rd, Dublin 4 and copies to Socialist Worker.

Eamonn

McCann

New Labour's man in tail spin

THE QUESTION of why Peter Mandleson intervened improperly to help the Hinduja brothers obtain British passports is reminiscent of the question once put by spoof TV chat-show hostess Mrs. Merton to the 22-year-old new bride of has-been magician Paul Daniels: "What was it first attracted you to the millionaire Paul Daniels?"

Mandleson has long been fascinated by the sheen of rich celebrity, hanging out with Prince Charles and the Parker-Bowles woman, hob-nobbing with Rupert Murdoch's daughter, trousering a third of a million from dodgy industrialist Geoffrey Robinson and so forth. All a far cry from the life of the average Labour voter.

The contrast was exemplified in the old story of Mandleson in a chippy in his Hartlepool constituency noticing a basin of mushy peas on the counter and asking the dumfounded snoco-assistant for "a portion of the guacamole, if I may..."

The fact that he oozes class-eyed at the whiff of wealth had made him a target for such ridicule long before his latest, and likely his last, crisis. But to concentrate on the personal aspects of his fall from political grace is to miss the main point.

Mandleson was one of the main architects of the New Labour "project", the point and purpose of which has been to cut ties with the trade unions and drop all thought of class conflict. Or, to be more accurate, to switch sides in the class conflict.

Blair and Mandleson set their faces against the idea of challenging the priorities of British and world capitalism on behalf of working people—the old Labour Party's notional reason for existence. Instead, they set out to lead working people into acceptance of capitalism's priorities.

Flogging

This has meant harping on about "modernisation" while continuing the creaky Tory agenda, flogging off the public sector while propping up private squalor, cracking down on social welfare while boosting subsidies to the rich, being gung-go for the World Bank while denouncing the anti-capitalist movement.

What is Mandleson's fascination with the super-rich other than an expression in his personal life of New Labour's political association with the British and world ruling class?

Once cornered over the Hinduja passports, Mandleson had nowhere to turn. He couldn't ask the mass of Labour voters for backing on the basis that he was on their side against the media moguls who had set the pack on him. He'd have been laughed at even louder.

This illustrates the reason Mandleson followed Mowlam in proving a failure in the North. On the face of it, they were two totally different characters. But politically, they were peas in a pod.

Lacking any class perspective to counterpose to the sectarian division, and with no vision other than to manage the system more efficiently than the Tories, they both strove for a balance between the Orange and the Green, leaning one way and then, when the other side complained, bending in the opposite direction.

The result has been continuing unsteadiness at the centre, and each side convinced that the other has the advantage.

On policing, for example, Mandleson assumed that the solution lay not in implementing the anodyne and inadequate bourgeois prospectus produced by Chris Patten but in finding the exact mid-point between what the Unionists and the Nationalists were demanding, and then trying to reconcile the result with Patten's proposals.

So he produced a hotch-potch which preserved major elements of the institutional sectarianism of the RUC but didn't satisfy even the pro-Agreement wing of Ulster Unionism.

Will the new man make a difference? The fact that John Reid is a unionist Celtic supporter will provide the press with fresh storylines for a while.

But his approach won't differ from his predecessors. It wasn't Mandleson who failed, either in the North or in his own career, but the New Labour project which he had come to personify.

In that regard, John Reid is just more of the same.

Sectarian attacks on the increase...

Now we need united action

THE GAP between the promise and the reality of the Belfast Agreement has been spelled out clearly over the past two weeks as sectarian thugs have launched a wave of assaults against nationalists throughout the North.

In recent months police have looked the other way while attacks on Catholics and mixed families in Larne assumed the proportions of an organised pogrom.

Their inaction has now allowed the bigots to spread their attacks to Coleraine and Derry, into besieged nationalist ghettos in North and East Belfast.

There has even been a return to pipe-bombing a house in the Carnany housing estate in Ballymoney, where the three Quinn brothers were burned to death in 1998.

Upsurge

The recent upsurge in violence follows directly a split in the ranks of the UDA.

Nearly one third of its leadership has left over opposition to the Belfast agreement.

The reaction of the "respectable" elements of David Trimble's UUP has been to claim that the latest wave of assaults are tit-for-tat, that there are "head-bangers" on both sides anxious to stir things up.

But it is doubtful that even their own constituency can swallow such a bare-faced lie.

On the right, Ian Pais-



The peaceful left wing of loyalism?

ley's DUP use statistics to show that Protestants are being forced out in Larne.

But they fail to add that many of these are partners in mixed marriages, themselves victimised by loyalist thugs.

The reaction from the so-called left wing of unionism has been equally abysmal.

When children in an East Belfast primary school had to be evacuated after pipe bombs were found stored on the premises, PUP leader David Ervine refused to condemn the UDA.

He instead endorsed the ludicrous theory that republicans might be responsible.

This is typical of the tra-

jectory of the PUP in recent months, which rather than take a stand against rising sectarianism has been drawn into proving themselves better equipped to defend the loyalists than the psychopaths of the UDA/UFF.

That the politicians have been whipping up bigotry is no surprise.

Their positions in the Assembly depend on maintaining the divide.

The real danger now is that many ordinary people from both communities, who looked to the Belfast Agreement for a break with the past, accept the return to sectarian violence.

Break

But there is an alternative like in the Carnany estate, where residents — both Protestant and Catholic — expressed outrage after the latest attacks.

It is time for the trade union movement to speak clearly and give expression to that anger.

Socialists need to build every struggle that brings confidence to those locked out by the politicians and the militarists.

Detention without trial

A REPORT from the Law Centre (NI) on the detention of asylum-seekers in the North indicates that the authorities there are locking people up first, ask-

ing questions later.

The report examines the cases of 75 individuals imprisoned under immigration legislation between January 1999 and June 2000. Asylum seekers

were held in prison from one to 235 days, with the average 35 days. They have the right to apply for bail, but are not entitled to Legal Aid for representation at bail hearings.

Join the union!

ON MARCH 8th, a new law comes into force giving workers the right to union recognition whatever their bosses say.

Managers will no longer be able to threaten workers with the sack for joining a union. The new law gives special protection against this.

The new laws are full of restrictions and loopholes. New Labour watered down the legislation to favour the bosses. Nonetheless, it is a

major opportunity to win back and extend union rights everywhere — if we organise.

The TGWU, GMB and Communication Workers Union are planning recruitment and recognition drives, especially in call centres.

Encouraged

All such official moves are excellent and should be encouraged. But ordinary activists should seize the initiative too.

WHAT THE NEW LAW SAYS:

• WORKERS trying to organise a union cannot be victimised by management;

• IF a union can show it has a membership of 50 percent plus one in a workplace, the boss has to recognise the union.

• IF a union can show it has at least 10 percent membership in a workplace, that is enough to trigger a ballot. In the ballot, it has to win the support of 40 percent of the entire workforce to force recognition.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

FIND OUT which union to join. Phone the ICTU on 028 90681726

Join yourself, ask for leaflets and recruitment forms, and ask if others in your workplace are already members.

Ask people to join and get supporters to hand out leaflets outside the workplace. Inside, be creative. There are private places everyone uses. Leave leaflets there!

Call a meeting off work premises, in a local community centre or pub, and get a union official to speak.

If you want help getting your workplace organised, phone the SWP 07771 781958

Safety

Death at Cork steelworks

AT SOME point between 1.15am and 1.30am on Monday January 15th a fire broke out at the ISPAT steel plant on Haulbowline Island, Cork.

Staff trying to get assistance from the onsite fire-engine found that it could not be moved as the engine would not start.

Having failed to deal with the fire using hand held appliances they rang the part-time fire-fighters at Carrigaline who arrived at 2.20am.

By this time the three storey building, which contained a laboratory, was firmly in the grip of the flames. The Cork City fire-brigade were called at 2.35am, over an hour after the fire had begun. They brought ten tenders to the scene.

Meanwhile horrified onlookers saw a man on the third floor attempt to get away from the flames through the windows.

The building had no fire escape. But the glass windows had been replaced with Perspex that proved impossible to break.

Nowhere could a ladder be found that could reach up to the third floor to aid Thomas Mulcahy (aged 53). Helpless, those at the building watched him die.

Questions

In the aftermath of the fire a number of questions are being asked.

Ever since the 'Stardust' tragedy, fire safety regulations have been very strict in Ireland. Yet how is it that a building in the dangerous environment of a steel plant was allowed not to have a fire exit?

Why didn't the Chief County Fire Officer use their powers to close the building?

Why didn't the Health and Safety Authority use its statutory powers to prevent this unsafe practice?

The answer, according to Derry Chamber of the Cork Environmental Alliance, is that "there is one overriding thought that is shared by everyone concerned with the plant, and that is that it must stay open at all costs, even if that means sacrificing health and safety."

The background to the tragedy is one of an accident waiting to happen.

by CONOR KOSTICK

Health and Safety was under question when Irish Steel owned the company.

An electrician was killed in January 1993 working in an area that was not supposed to have been live.

In 1996 the struggling Irish Steel was sold to an Indian company, ISPAT. Greenpeace warned that this company had a record of asset stripping small foundries.

ISPAT promised £30m investment to improve safety, but there is no evidence of anything like this amount being put into the plant.

In fact matters have been getting worse. About three years ago a man died falling from a crane, for which the company was absolved.

But standard practice should have prevented him from being aloft without a harness.

The CEA has written to the Environmental Protection Agency concerned about reports of emissions of lead and dioxins which are a hundred times over EU standards.

The EPA has cited ISPAT for 15 incidents since June 1st, 1999. In the last four years some 30 to 40 workers reported in sick each month.

More sombre is the issue of the long-term health of the workforce. Many of the workers take early retirement, but they are not living to see the old age pension.

The exact figures have not been released, but one estimate is that in the last ten years 178 retirees have died before the age of 60.

The company has been quick to try and defend itself, taking out a full page ad in *The Examiner*, to answer the worries about a missing canister containing radioactive material.

There should be a full enquiry into health and safety practices at the plant.

The steel plant should stay open and the jobs should be kept.

But this company should not be allowed to blackmail anyone into accepting poor safety standards.

Corporations make a fortune

THE GREAT AND GAS

SOME OF the world's largest multinational companies are set to make huge fortunes from Ireland's resources.

Ireland contains hundreds, if not thousands of oil and gas bearing zones in the 650,000 square kilometres of water immediately off the coast.

But most of the Irish population stand to gain practically nothing from any exploration, development and production of natural resources.

Since 1992 an oil tax regime has been put in place that is described by the oil industry as "the best in the world" - for them.

In 1992 Bobby Molloy, the then Minister for Public Enterprise, brought in an oil tax rate of 25 percent.

Lowest

This is one of the lowest tax rates in the world as all the

costs of exploration are deductible against this percentage.

This compares with Norway which has a tax rate on oil profits of 78 percent.

After extensive "lobbying" Molloy also abolished all royalties and all other production related levies. This means that oil companies can sell us back our own oil and gas — tax free.

The oil companies are even able to claim back tax on petrol they sell in Ireland against exploration costs.

Deal

The tax deal was meant to be an 'incentive' to encourage oil and gas exploration. But, since 1992 only a small number of wells have been sunk.

The vast bulk of licences and drilling options/leases are so called 'Frontier Licences' that the oil companies can sit on for up to 20 years.

Oil companies are now sitting on the rights to a huge wealth of natural resources that they paid next to nothing for.

Privatised profits

ENTERPRISE OIL UK, the oil company, which along with Statoil, control the Mayo gas field, has made a massive gas discovery, which could be one of the biggest in European waters.

But this is not enough. They want Bord Gais to build a gas pipeline from Mayo to Dublin to sell the gas to the ESB for their new gas fired power station — at Irish taxpayers' expense.

Then they want an interconnector gas pipeline laid to the UK to export surplus Irish gas, that is really Enterprise's, into Britain and then onto Europe after that.

All this is after Ireland has bought its domestic gas needs off Enterprise Oil!

According to Michael Cunningham, a Mayo-based international offshore gas and oil exploration consultant who used to work for Statoil and Enterprise, "The fact is

that the multinational oil and gas companies pick up the phone and the Government comes running, when it should be the reverse."

The plan to privatise the ESB is linked to this scam. The plan is for electricity generation from gas to be run by a 'joint ventures' with Statoil 'contributing' towards the construction of power stations such as Ringsend.

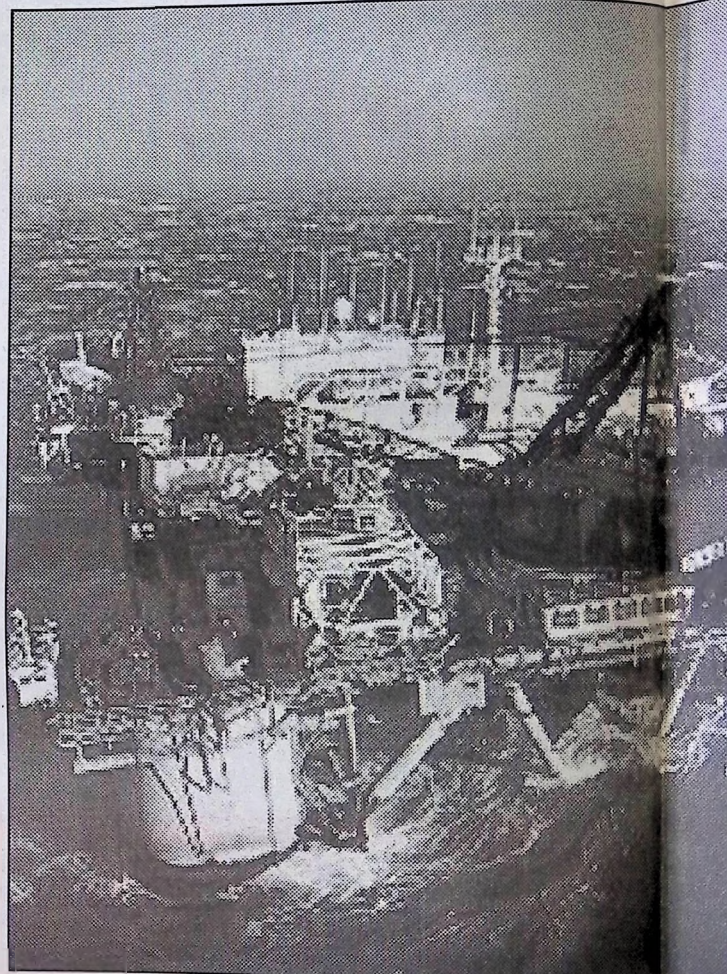
The ESB will then buy back Irish gas from Statoil's Alliance Company.

Drilling

Last year contractors for Enterprise were paying Filipino and Mauritian workers 81p an hour for drilling in the North sea.

Enterprise appear confident they can do as they please, safe in the knowledge that there would be little if any State pressure on them.

Not surprising really as Enterprise Oil UK hosted a major fund raising event for Fianna Fail during Galway Races in 1998 and 1999!



OIL RIGS of this type will plunder Irish oil reserves without any benefit

£500 for co

THE MAIN area of exploration is the Atlantic Margin which stretches from west of the Shetlands, west of Scotland and right down along the western seaboard of Ireland. The lucrative licenses were sold for a pittance.

For instance, the license that effectively handed over control of all of Ireland's south coast was granted to giant American company Marathon Oil for a mere £500.

Marathon has discovered natural gas in large quantities in the Celtic Sea.

The Government even went as far to privatise the only oil refinery and storage facility in

Ireland. Whitegate and Whiddy Island on the South coast were sold off to the big American oil refiners TOSCA for £100 million.

According to Pádraig Campbell, of SIPTU's offshore oil and gas committee: "Not for the first time have we given away what we should be protecting for future generations of Irish people. It's tantamount to handing over the family jewels."

Easy

"The attitude has been that the exploration companies are the experts and we should not only let them get on with it, but we should make it as easy as possible for them to do so."

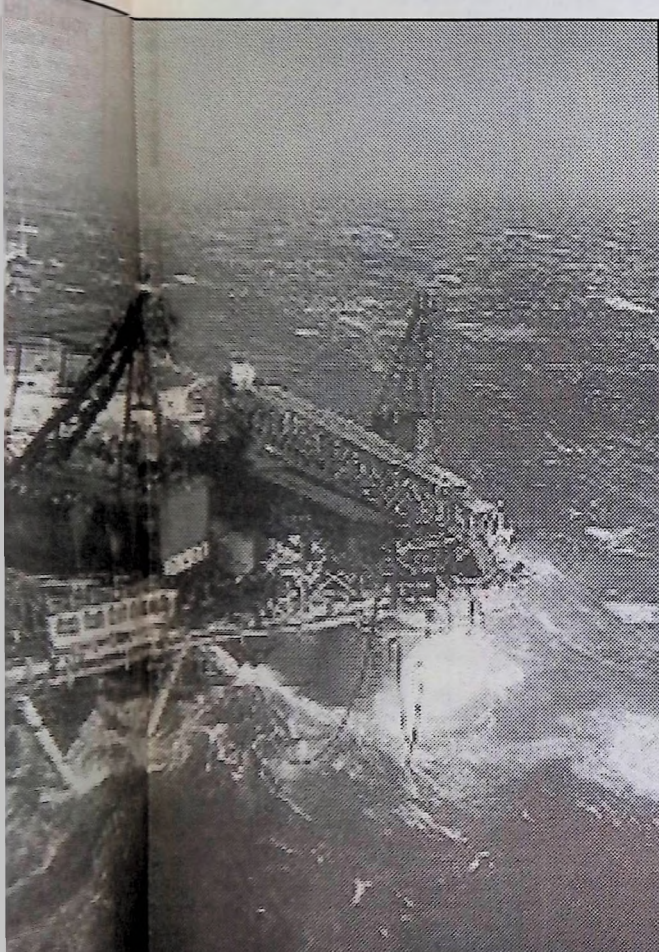
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EAT OIL S RIP OFF



Irish oil tycoons

Ireland's rich are trying to cash in on the offshore sell off. Providence Oil is involved in gas finds off the Irish coast. It is owned by Tony O'Reilly and run by his son. O'Reilly has been quietly looking to exploit the Irish coast since the 1980s.

For much of the time he was involved with Ireland's own JR Ewing, James Stafford. In 1980, they founded the speculative oil exploration company, Atlantic Resources. At the Moriarty tribunal it emerged that in 1988 Stafford advised Conor Haughey on the setting-up and subsequent flotation of Feltrim Mining and that he invested £100,000 in the exploration company.

In 1989, he was one of the founders of Century Communications, the company which won the licence for the first national independent radio station. After having given payments to Ray Burke of course.

Investigation

Perhaps there should be some investigation of how Providence and Atlantic got their exploration licenses. The other major Irish oil company is Bula Resources. Bula Resources hit the headlines when it "lost" about £12 million in dubious oil deals in Russia.

The current head of the company is former FF Taoiseach Albert Reynolds.

reserves without any benefit to the taxpayer

Control of the sea

ained in the 1992 Finance Bill which was a gift in all but name to the big companies. In terms of returns, the taxpayer has benefited very little by the arrangement.

Neither have Irish industry or Irish workers — the winners have been the oil exploration giants. "Now, a whole new era of oil and gas exploration is about

to unfold along the west coast and elsewhere around the Irish coastline. "It does not make much sense. "What is needed is an urgent

review of the terms under which our reserves have been handed over in what I believe is the greatest scandal in modern Irish history."

Oil sharks' greed

The top five oil companies made over £40 billion profit last year. All bought territory off the Irish Coast at rock bottom prices. They all own parts of the exploration companies, like Enterprise, making the current finds. ★ TEXACO made profits of \$1.19 billion in six months last year. Peter Bijur, Texaco chief

executive, grabbed \$4.2 million in pay and exercised \$2.9 million share options last year. Texaco have a deal with the Revenue which means they can write off petrol sales against exploration costs off the Irish coast. ★ EXXON MOBIL profits were \$7.03 billion for first six months of this year, over double the same period a year earlier. Lee Raymond, the company's chief executive, pocketed a huge \$24.7 mil-

lion last year. ★ BP profits in 1999 were \$6.206 billion, and it is now the world's biggest petrol seller after a series of mergers. BP has made over \$4 billion profit every year for the last five years. ★ SHELL made \$6.27 billion profit in the first half of last year. ★ TOTALFINAELF made \$3 billion profit in 1999, up 93 percent on the year before.

what do socialists say?

Are teachers middle class?

'A revolt of the middle class' is how some newspapers have characterised the recent fight of teachers for better pay.

It is an argument that misunderstands the whole nature of white-collar employment today. Traditionally white-collar employees were not supposed to be as exploited as manual workers. Male office workers in particular, were encouraged to believe that they had a 'career' based on steady promotions. They were supposed to earn more than factory workers and have greater job security.

But all of that has been changing in modern capitalism. The wages of skilled manual workers overtook those of office workers in the 1930s and by the 1960s the average factory worker was earning more.

In 1971, for example, the Marxist researcher Harry Braverman found that the median wages of white-collar employees in the US were lower than almost every type of so called blue-collar work.

Job security is no longer a perk of white-collar employment, as part time contract work has grown enormously. In 1994, for example, the Sunday Times found that 35 percent of its middle class readers were worried about losing their jobs in the coming twelve months.

Gap

As more women took up white-collar jobs, the promotion system has shrunk. There can be movement between particular grades but the overall gap between management and routine white-collar employees has grown.

All of this means that the term 'middle class' is particularly confusing. It includes teachers who earn relatively low salaries — and also top managers who are on super-salaries and perks. It includes those who have a right to hire and fire and those who suffer from job insecurity.

In other words, the term middle class is a piece of camouflage that lumps together different types of jobs in order to convince people that they have a real stake in the system.

The reality is that jobs formerly regarded as being 'middle

class' are being proletarianised - to use a term invented by Braverman. They are being made subject to the same disciplines and rigours of the capitalist labour market that have traditionally affected blue-collar workers.

Take the case of bank officials. In the 1960s, people were 'called' to the bank to take up a highly respectable post. But no one says they are 'called' to a contract job or to put up with low wages. Today bank officials are scrutinised by their managers and forced into meeting all sorts of 'performance targets'.

Or look at teachers. A teacher in rural Ireland in the past ranked close to the parish priest in the local hierarchy. They were trusted citizens who conveyed the most conservative ideas about Irish society. Inside their own classrooms, they were virtually autonomous, making their own decisions on what they taught.

Dictated

Today the ruling class no longer relies primarily on teachers to convey their ideas but uses a centrally controlled media. The system needs mass literacy and so every minute of a teachers working life is now dictated by a national curriculum that specifies what and how to teach.

Even though the system wants mass literacy, it wants it on the cheap without undue taxes on the wealthy. The result is an under-funded education system with teachers used as scapegoats for its failures.

The arguments about 'benchmarking' may seem obscure to most people. But it is a term drawn from the Japanese car industry where companies were supposed to continually 'benchmark' their own unit costs against their rivals — in order to get below them.

The attempt to 'benchmark' teachers stems from the same philosophy. They are to be subjected to 'competitive pressures' probably in the form of some performance related payments systems. In brief, they are to be treated with the same economic whip as car workers or other manual grades.

Some revolt against this with great clarity. Others shelter behind terms like 'preserving a professional ethos'.

This is not a 'middle class' revolt but a rebellion by white collar workers against the dictates of a system that puts profit before people.

by KIERAN ALLEN

The Celtic Tiger and the myth of Social Partnership

£13.60 plus £1.50 p+p Available from SW Books, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.



by SIMON BASKETTER

With the peace process in crisis...

Can the RUC be reformed?

UNIONIST politicians, led by David Trimble, have been fighting a rearguard action against reform of the RUC. They claim that any change to the RUC, even its name and symbols, is an affront to the honourable role the RUC played during the Troubles.

Nationalist politicians take a different view. The SDLP and Sinn Fein argue that the Patten proposals must be implemented in full in order for Catholics to give their allegiance to a new police force. They are currently delaying their nominees to the new Police Board until this happens.

Retreat

Much of the public argument has centred on the name of the RUC and symbols such as the design of the police cap badge. Even on these seemingly minor issues, the British government has caved in to Unionist demands, such as not requiring existing RUC officers to take the new oath committing them to uphold human rights.

But some of the points of disagreement are much more significant. The new Police Bill is a retreat from plans for greater public accountability, giving the Chief Constable and the Secretary of State the power to stop any inquiry into police behaviour.

It gets rid of local policing boards and also prevents the newly created Police Ombudsman from investigating police policy and practice. She will only be allowed to investigate individual officers.

THESE ARE major issues because of the revelations of widespread collusion between the RUC and loyalist paramilitaries, and repeated examples of RUC cover-ups, such as the killings of Pat Finucane, Rosemary Nelson and Robert Hamill.

The power to investigate the police is urgently needed. In 1997 only one complaint from a civilian was upheld out of a total of 5,500 complaints against the RUC.

These examples only hint at a much deeper problem with the RUC, which the Patten reforms do not even begin to address.

For Patten the sectarianism of the RUC is primarily caused by its make up. The RUC has always been an overwhelmingly Protestant force. Currently only eight per cent of full time RUC officers are Catholics. The central proposal of the Patten commission is to encourage more Catholics to join the police.

To do this, it focuses almost exclusively on getting Catholic community leaders, priests, teachers and politicians, to encourage young Catholics to join. In particular, it urges the GAA to get rid of its rule 21 which bars RUC officers.

But the focus on getting Catholics to join the police ignores the roots of sec-



Serving the community?

tarism in the RUC, which flows from its role in protecting the Northern Ireland state.

The Patten report borrows heavily from the MacPherson report, prepared after the Stephen Lawrence case, which revealed the systematic racism of the London police.

MacPherson argued that racism in the Met arose because white police officers simply reflected the widespread racism in society more generally. The way to redress this, he argued, was to recruit more black and Asian police officers.

Harassment

Yet more than a year after the MacPherson report, black people are still three times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police in London. A report in the *Observer* newspaper in January this year revealed a massive level of racist harassment of black and Asian police officers.

Patten refers positively to the New York police's efforts to recruit more black officers. Yet the number of police shootings of black people has soared in the recent years since they were given new powers under Mayor Giuliani's 'zero tolerance' policy.

SECTARIANISM IN the police, like racism, flows from their role in a class divided society. The primary aim of the police is to protect the capitalist class and its property.

All police forces focus on the crimes of the poor. Shoplifters are jailed, while factory owners who sack thousands of people are never arrested.

People who are on the dole are targeted for benefit fraud, but the massive levels of white-collar fraud and tax evasion are rarely investigated.

The police are in the front line of protecting the state and its institutions. Anyone who watched the police attack anti-capitalist protestors in Seattle, Prague, Melbourne and elsewhere last year, could be left in any doubt as to that role. What Patten would call 'normal police services' used tear gas, rubber bullets and pepper spray against peaceful protestors.

Time and again, the police are the ones who implement racist immigration policies or who break up picket lines and attack militant demonstrations. As a result, they invariably develop a condensed form of the most rotten reactionary prejudices in society.

In this respect, Northern Ireland is no different to the rest of the world. At the same time as beating Catholic protestors off the Garvaghy Road in 1997, the RUC were being used each morning to break the picket lines at the Montpet factory in Dunmurray, near Belfast.

Last December, RUC men in full riot gear were called to a postal workers picket line at Mallusk, near Belfast.

But there is an extra factor, which has made the RUC even worse. From the beginning, the RUC was formed to protect a state built on systematic discrimination against Catholics. The Catholic population was viewed as 'the

enemy within'.

Containing and repressing them was the main purpose of the RUC's existence. The RUC were given a raft of 'special powers', which enabled them to avoid even the most basic adherence to the rule of law, and arrest and detain suspects without charge. They routinely attacked Catholic marches with impunity, rarely facing investigation.

SUSPECTS WERE held without trial, and routinely beaten in interrogation centres. The RUC Special Branch developed strong links with the undercover Force Research Unit in the British Army and loyalist paramilitaries.

The Special Branch operated a shoot-to-kill policy against republicans and a massive cover up in the early 1980s. The RUC were a law unto themselves.

The current chief constable, Ronnie Flanagan, who is presented as the new, reasonable face of the RUC, was a senior officer intimately involved in both Castlereagh and the Special Branch during the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Special Branch has consistently refused to co-operate with inquiries into its activities. Even if Patten was implemented in full, the Special Branch is only to be merged with the CID.

According to the Patten report, the RUC have fired 41,657 plastic bullets since 1981. Sixteen people, including children, have been killed with plastic

bullets.

Yet Patten does not recommend that they be banned.

The Ulster Unionists, together with the DUP, are championing the RUC. But there is little enthusiasm for the RUC among working class Protestants. All attempts to set up 'Save the RUC' campaigns have been a dismal failure.

The SDLP and Sinn Fein are likely to give their endorsement to the new police service eventually.

Sinn Fein chairman, Mitchel McLaughlin, praises the united campaign by the SDLP, the Catholic hierarchy and the Southern government to get Patten implemented.

But this is hardly a charter for serious change. At best, it is buying into the illusion that a police force exists to 'serve the community'. At worst, it avoids any serious attempt to deal with the sectarianism of the RUC.

Illusions

Socialists do not share those illusions. Every movement that aims at fundamental transformation of society, will find the police a barrier to such change and must aim at the disbandment of any separate police force.

In the meantime, socialists should fight for every means of democratic control and scrutiny of the police and the limiting of their powers of repression, such as the banning of plastic bullets, independent inquiries into complaints against the police and the scrapping of any so-called 'emergency legislation'.

The Patten reforms do not even come close to recommending this.

in my view

The glen that time forgot

A DEATH sentence has just been passed on Ireland's longest running soap, *Glenroe*.

Much to the fury of the actors involved and the large number of fans, and the delight of the equal number of people who love to hate it, RTE have announced that this is to be the last series.

No more Miley and his Tess of the D'Urbervilles style antics with Fidelma in the cow shed. No more of Biddy's homely wisdom — they killed her off in a car crash last year, leaving actress Mary McEvoy free to concentrate on making ads for Surf. No more rural Ireland.

According to the producers, it was becoming almost impossible to sustain the illusion of a rural idyll, when Kilcoole, the Wicklow village where *Glenroe* is filmed, is gradually becoming yet another suburb of Dublin, complete with 7am gridlock, faceless estates and not a happy peasant to be found in the place.

They're too busy starting up dot.coms to milk the cows anymore. It's hardly a 'land of frugal home-steads', is it?

Bizarre

In one way it is sad to see RTE axing one of the few programmes it actually makes itself, to make way for another drab American sit-com or British quiz show. It also seems bizarre for a station that just lost its most popular programme (*Coronation Street*) to TV3, to cut its second most popular.

Soaps just seem to sprout out of the woodwork every time you turn your back for five minutes. You have the hilariously repetitive Australian soaps — kids get fostered a lot, only to be re-united with deadbeat dad/alcoholic mum. There are the poorly lit American melodramas — women wear bad jewellery and fall for rich exotic men called Juan (who turn out to be their half-brothers).

And then there are the working class English dramas, all falling over each other to look like the latest Vinnie Jones gangster movie. No cliché is too hackneyed, with Cockney wide-boys, gruff Yorkshiremen and Lancashire lasses who like white wine spritzers with their hot-pots. Anyone who has ever been unemployed or had a protracted illness will be only too familiar with the stereotypes and interchangeable plot lines.

That was what gave *Glenroe* its appeal. Dinny seldom imported cocaine on a yacht and Miley is yet to strike oil under his turnips. The whole thing had an air of a 1950's radio programme.

Controversial

But recently, *Glenroe*, like *Fair City* and the English soaps, has started to deal with 'controversial' issues in society. Racism and teenage pregnancy have featured in the past year. On *Fair City*, a woman was forced into the position that thousands of other Irish women have found themselves, of having to travel to England to abort a child she knew to be brain-damaged. The father was an ex-Catholic priest.

In a rare case of art imitating *Socialist Worker*, local tenants organised a campaign against evictions. The landlord was a local politician from an unnamed party implicated in the tribunals. The lawyers must have been watching that one.

Sometimes, even soaps pick up on the mood of their audience and the political climate. Although they generally tend to reflect conservative ideas in their conclusions to the 'moral dilemmas' of their characters, they have to reflect in some ways the lives and experiences of their large working class audiences — if they want to hold on to them.

And sometimes they are not at all bad. The early *Brookside* series was written by a socialist and tackled a host of issues that mainstream programmes shied away from.

So some advice to RTE. Don't go off again and buy a cheap, wall to wall piece of television that repeats meaningless banalities. *Glenroe* at least deserves a worthy successor.

by PAUL McCARTHY

film

Cast away this film

THE FIRST of this years Hollywood blockbusters has arrived in Ireland. *Castaway* stars the annoying Tom Hanks and is directed by Robert Zemeckis.

The last time this pair teamed up they came up with the dreadful and reactionary, not to mention nauseating, *Forrest Gump*.

This time they have followed up their previous 'success' with a giant two-hour, twenty-minute advertisement for FedEx.

Tom Hanks plays a driven, work-obsessed systems engineer for FedEx helping them to expand triumphantly around the globe.

Crashes

We first see him first haranguing the workers in the Moscow branch — a picture of Lenin is being unscrewed from a wall in one shot — and generally imbuing them with the beat-the-clock values of the service economy.

Then his FedEx plane crashes and he's stranded on a desert island for four years with nothing to do but grow a beard.

But if you thought that this was going to be some sort of comment on the absurdity of global capitalism and the ever-expanding imperatives of the market, be prepared to be sadly disappointed.

The FedEx packages washed ashore help Hanks to survive and even — finally, to find love.

Playing

Instead of growing skeletally thin, becoming deeply traumatised by solitude, unable to communicate properly for months and at the very least in need of some type of psychiatric care after spending four years without any human



Tom Hanks responds to seeing his own movie

socialisation, Hanks thinks he's playing Tarzan, remaining robustly cheerful throughout.

His keeps his good humour and sanity thanks to a volleyball, which is washed ashore, courtesy of

FedEx of course, which he names Wilson after its manufacturer (more product endorsement).

The film shows no interest in any of the serious personal or social implications involved in being a

modern day Crusoe.

Hanks makes his transition back to society without blinking an eye.

The film ends as it begins with a homage to FedEx as the real-life boss of the company Paul Smith

(billed as himself) turns up to welcome Hanks back into 'the FedEx family'. Avoid at all costs.

— SINEAD KENNEDY

book

A Classic for who?

WHEN DECLAN Kiberd released *Inventing Ireland* in the early 1990's, it was widely acclaimed as a great textbook and an enjoyable read.

It placed Irish writing in

the context of the European movements it was connected with and satirised the smug attitude of the Irish rich and their culture industry, for whom writers are just logos to be put on t-shirts and tea towels.

Kiberd examined the

political conditions that produced Joyce and Beckett and the way that the massive social changes since the 1960's have influenced the writers of the last thirty years.

He also criticised the cultural establishment for their conservatism, with institutions like Aosdana, founded by Haughey to flatter his own ego and keep at least a section of Irish artists in the pay of the state.

Follow-up

Irish Classics is an attempt to follow-up on the success of his first collection but sadly it doesn't come anywhere near it.

It covers much of the same ground, from the Gaelic bardic poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth century through to the middle of the twentieth century, stopping with Patrick Kavanagh.

All the (mostly male) authors covered are dead, because according to Kiberd, a classic is something that has stood the test of time.

In other words, a classic is something the educational and cultural establishment have agreed is a classic for a sufficient number of years.

There are however some things to be said in favour of *Irish Classics*.

The sections on the seventeenth century show how the spread of British imperialism influences the works of that time. And how the colonial ruling class almost exterminated native Irish culture.

Currently at No. 3 in the bestsellers, this hefty tome will cost you an equal hefty £25.

No doubt the paperback will be ready soon. *Irish Classics* Grantham Press £25 — SEAN REED

Preview

● Beckett on Film IFC 2nd February

If you are to go to one cultural event this year, it has to be the Beckett Film Project, Beckett on Film, which opens at the Irish Film Centre on Friday 2nd of February.

All 19 films will be screened over one week.

The Beckett Film project is one of the most ambitious projects in the world of film and theatre

involving some of the world's best actors and directors.

For more details contact the IFC at 01-679 3477

● Bad Day at Blackrock Network 2 9.35 Monday

An interesting new comedy series from the pen of Gerry

Stembridge begins on Network 2 at 9.35 on Monday night.

'Bad Day at Blackrock' is a drama depicting the reaction of the inhabitants of an Irish village to the news that 30 asylum seekers are to be placed there.

A comedic look at all the bigotry and fear that the issue of refugees and asylum seekers has brought up in Ireland.



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.

Dublin Corporation bring in bin charges

We won't pay

"THEY CAN put me in Mountjoy with Liam Lawlor before I'll pay." This was the response of one Pearse Street resident to the introduction of refuse charges

by Dublin Corporation.

"They only come round here when they want votes, the next councillor to knock on my door will get my rubbish instead."

Dublin Corporation pushed through refuse charges, which will mean a charge of nearly £100. Houses sup-

plied with a large wheelie bin now face a charge of £95 a year while householders getting a small wheelie bin will be charged £65 a year.

Payment

The bills are to be issued as soon as possible and payment is

due by June 30.

Dublin Corporation is trying to justify the charge by claiming that the money is needed to deal with the country's waste management crisis. It is the same argument used to push incineration. In reality there is no recycling facilities and the people who produce the most waste don't

pay. Business produces far more waste than householders but the Corporation gave into lobbying from the Small Firms Association and the Chamber of Commerce and has frozen the commercial rate.

Workers already pay tax to fund public services, and are now being forced to pay double taxation.

When Fianna Fail abolished domestic rates they promised that local services would be paid for from central government.

The experience elsewhere in the country shows that charges will increase every year and lead to attempts to privatise refuse collection. In some parts of the country people are

already paying £300 per year in local charges.

The key to defeating this unjust tax is mass non-payment and protests. This was how water charges were defeated in the past. The major campaigns against bin charges already underway in Dun Laoghaire, Drogheda, Limerick and Cork show the potential to fight the charges. A mass campaign of non-payment can defeat the charges in the Corporation area.

The Campaign Against Refuse Charges has organised a series of meetings and protests to get the non-payment campaign started.

For information on the campaign in your area ring 087 6329511

Fax (01) 872 3838
E-mail swp@clubi.ie

or send to

letters

PO BOX 1648, Dublin 8

Can Jew and Arab unite?

TO WHOM do we look to for change in Israel? Some argue that we should look only to the Palestinians.

Others point to past occasions when Jews and Palestinians have united against their common enemy, the ruling class.

Parallels of such analysis can be seen throughout the course of the northern conflict. Not so long ago a widespread belief held that it was only from the Nationalist community that resistance to the system could arise.

These theories pointed to the existence of a "labour aristocracy" in the form of the Protestant working class. This may have been the situation under the old Stormont but today no one can seriously claim there are mansions on the Shankill Road.

Is there a reversal of this situation in Israel?

The Jewish average hourly wage is 33 percent higher than that of Palestinians and the average Israeli citizen receives more than \$500 annually in US aid. Is the Jewish working class a "labour aristocracy"?

Any analysis of the situation in the Middle East must address this important question.

GERALD CAMPBELL, BELFAST.

PAUL KINSELLA DUBLIN

No change in the North

THE NEW Northern Ireland Secretary is John Reid. This is bad news for all families campaigning for justice. As armed forces minister, Reid held meetings with campaigners supporting Wright and Fisher, the two Scots Guards who murdered Peter McBride, an unarmed man, unconnected with paramilitaries, who had just been searched by their patrol.

The two were convicted of murder but released early and then allowed to rejoin the army. Reid met their supporters on the grounds that he was the men's "employer".

But he refused to meet Peter's mother, whose son was gunned down by his employees.

J. HARDY LONDON

SWP expands

THE Socialist Workers Party is expanding across the country.

A new branch has been established in Swords and will be active in leafleting multi-national firms urging workers to join a union.

The new Drogheda branch is involved in the anti-incineration campaign and is campaigning on the streets.

Throughout the country the SWP has launched a new recruitment campaign. The growth of an anti-capitalist movement globally is creating massive new opportunities for socialists which the party is determined to capitalise on.

Over the coming weeks the SWP will be organising weekend schools in Cork and Belfast to outline the wider aspects of our politics to new members and supporters.

SWP branch meetings

- ATHLONE:** Contact 01-872 2682 for details
- BRAY:** Meets every Wednesday at the Mayfair Hotel at 8.30pm
- BELFAST CENTRAL:** Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in Anchor Bar, 16 Victoria Square, near Cornmarket
- BELFAST SOUTH:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Queens Students Union
- BELFAST WEST:** ring for details 07771 721 958
- BELFAST QUEENS UNIVERSITY:** Meets every Wednesday 1pm, Peter Froggatt Centre
- CORK:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in O'Donoghue's, Crossinville St
- DERRY:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Badgers Bar upstairs, Orchard St
- DUBLIN CENTRAL:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in: McHugh's Pub St. Lawrence's Gate
- DUNDALK:** Contact 01-872 2682 for details
- DUN LAOGHAIRE:** Meets every Thursday at 8.30pm in the Christian Institute
- DUBLIN ARTANE / COOLICK:** Meets every Tuesday at 8.30pm in Artane / Beaumont Recreational Centre (opp. Artane Castle)
- DUBLIN NORTH CENTRAL:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Corways Pub, Parnell St
- DUBLIN KILLBARRACK:** Phone 087 6235071
- DUBLIN CABRA:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Aughlin St Parish Hall, Prussia St
- DUBLIN BALLYMUN:** Phone Kevin at 8622209
- DUBLIN DUNDURM:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Dundrum Family Recreation Centre
- DUBLIN RIALTO:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm St. Andrews Community Centre, SCR
- DUBLIN RATHMINES:** Meets every Wednesday at 8.30pm in Tom Kelly flats community centre, Charlemont Street
- 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 Currans Hotel, Eyre Square (beside Cuba) 8.30pm
- LIMERICK:** Phone 01-872 2682 for details
- MAYNOOTH:** Meets Thursday lunchtime ring 01-8722682 for details
- SUGO:** Meets fortnightly on Saturdays, phone 087 6329511 for details
- WORDS:** Meets Tuesdays 8pm Senior Citizens Hall
- TRALEE:** Phone 047 6329511 for details
- TRINITY COLLEGE:** Meets Thursdays 7pm see posters for details
- UCD:** Meets Wednesdays 1pm see posters for details
- WATERFORD:** Meets every Thursday at 8pm in the ATGWU Hall, Keizer St.

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Teachers

ASTI talks begin

SECONDARY teachers have agreed to a temporary deferring of their industrial action while talks take place on their 30 percent pay claim.

For the past few months government ministers insisted that teachers could only make gains by accepting benchmarking.

The ASTI rejected this route and have now partially achieved the minimal goal on talks about pay — without accepting bench-

TWELVE building workers who are members of the TEEU are staging a picket and vigil outside the office of Mortgage Choice in Cork.

The company owns properties all over the city and employed the men to repair them.

But they were not so speedy at paying for work done. The workers are owed about £10,000.

ESB

Workers

reject 18%

NETWORK technicians at the ESB have overwhelmingly rejected an 18 percent pay offer from the company.

The groups of workers include technicians, linesmen and electricians. The pay offer has conditions attached which are totally unacceptable. They include reporting directly to site which the unions calculate to be worth 12 percent in productivity. Instead of reporting to the ESB depot each day, workers would be expected to go directly to the site and to finish from the site.

According to one of the workers, "This would have a huge impact on our working lives, particularly in rural Ireland where workers have to travel long distances from their homes. And indeed in Dublin where travel is slow and stressful."

Behind the pay offer there is also a burning issue on the question of the workers' shares in the company.

In 1996 it was agreed that legislation would be introduced within a year to allow workers hold a 5 percent share of the company. This never happened and workers believe the State are using the share option as a bargaining chip. As one worker put it "We are not agreeing to anything until everything is sorted out".

marking.

The problem is that the talks will take place under the auspices of the Labour Court, which is an anti-worker institution and is totally committed to social partnership.

The ASTI have agreed to put a time limit on these talks — but members will also have to watch their officials carefully so there is no watering down of the full claim.

They also need to make

sure that the talks are not just a manoeuvre to allow the practicals and the oral examinations for the Leaving Cert to go ahead.

These are due to start after March 5th.

Meanwhile the repercussions of the ASTI strike is still affecting the other teachers unions.

Twenty-three branches of the Teachers Union of Ireland have passed resolutions to condemn their executive over cancelling a special conference.

conference.

The move was designed to stop any solidarity developing with ASTI.

The INTO leaders have also been forced to call a special 'consultative conference' on pay but are not allowing any motions or votes.

Despite this, they will face huge opposition to their plans to ram through benchmarking rather than putting in proper pay claims like the ASTI.

National Car Test Centres

Action escalates for decent conditions

WORKERS at National Car Tester have gone on strike over an arrogant management. Their union, SIPTU, has given them official backing.

"When we started, we all thought this was going to be a good job. We worked long hours and got no overtime as we were on salaries. But we were coming home at 8pm or 7pm," one worker told Socialist Worker.

The company also refused to use extractor fans to deal with the fumes and dirt from the cars.

"You don't know what

goes into diesel engines these days. We wanted the same monitoring of air quality that the government insists on for the population at large. Everyone has heard of the dangers of passive smoking. So why should garage workers have to put up with fumes?" he said.

The company also tried to establish team-working practices with team leaders to push others around.

"It's the old story — putting a beggar in a uniform. Before you know where you are, they are tyrannising you. We were not having it."

The strike has now spread to the depots outside Dublin. Workers there were

being paid £37 less than their Dublin colleagues.

When the company eventually went to conciliation, they tried to split the workforce by telling the non-Dublin workers they would get equal pay next year, if profit levels kept up.

"That was rubbish. These companies make projections for the future. They can tell what was going to happen next year — but they wanted to leave uncertainty.

"They thought they would give us a headache after the daylong talks — but it is them who got the headache. Because the workers are sticking together."

NI Postal workers

POSTAL WORKERS in Derry are standing up to chronic staff shortages at the local sorting office.

Their unofficial action comes against the backdrop of stoppages and walk-outs from Belfast to Scotland, Merseyside and southern England.

The lack of staff in Derry means that many second class deliveries are cancelled. One worker said: "Usually we would try and get out at around half past eleven to do our

second delivery. But we're being kept back doing work in the office until half past twelve, sometimes even one o'clock.

"We're due to finish at a quarter to two — so we're expected to do the work we'd normally do in two hours in one hour or less."

This latest bout of unofficial action follows management plans to bring all mail from Derry to Belfast to have it sorted at the new Mallusk office. There, workers struck for six days in December over changes in work practices.

Royal Mail has reacted to the work-to-rule with its usual hardball tactics. The postal worker said: "This morning they even cancelled our bun delivery so that our canteen break would be affected. How childish is that?"

But workers are in a defiant mood. "This office is a total mess but we've had enough," says the Derry postal worker. "That's why we've decided to work to rule, take our official breaks and not work beyond our official hours."

Derry Docks

THE LAST of Derry's dockers are fighting to hold on to their jobs.

Their unofficial action started in October when an English log boat used its own crane and labour to load logs in Derry, instead of local dockers.

When the boat arrived again the dockers protested underneath the crane to stop it being loaded. Harbour management then served a court injunction on T&G shop steward Gerry Quigley and other "persons unknown", which would have stopped them from entering the docks altogether.

The dockers and management worked out a com-

promise for a six-week period over Christmas so that the men kept working.

But the Birkenhead log boat keeps loading its cargo in Derry without the use of local labour.

In late January, the dockers picketed the boat once more.

Injunction

Harbour chief executive Stan McIlvenny then served another injunction on Gerry Quigley. Gerry says he's now prepared to go to jail if that's what it takes to defend the jobs.

"The men think this is the thin end of the wedge,"

says Gerry. "The number of jobs in the docks has gone down from more than 600 twenty years ago to 16 today.

"If they get away without using local labour that'll be the end for us."

Shamefully, the TGWU has still not given the dockers their official backing, three months into the dispute.

Other staff in the port are also T&G members. It's high time the union got its finger out and organised a harbour-wide stoppage in support of the dockers.

Airport

British Midland

Ground staff set for strike

THE GROUND handling staff employed by British Midland at Dublin Airport have voted 100 percent for industrial action.

As *Socialist Worker* goes to press strike notice is due to expire at midnight on January 31st.

The issue at the heart of the dispute is the takeover of the British Midland ground handling operation by Gatwick Handling International, trading as "Go

Ahead".

This company runs the ramp and customer services operations in several British airports.

The take-over was announced to the workers on January 11th but so far no guarantees have been given to the workers employed by British Midland over their terms and conditions of employment and there are indications that the workers may lose their flight privileges.

Socialist Worker spoke to one of the shop stewards in the ATGWU. "A lot of the staff here have between

eight and 15 years service, between us years of experience and training.

"We have worked for an airline and have flight privileges and other conditions of employment which we value.

"But so far we believe we have been treated very badly with this take-over.

"We are disgusted that no guarantees have been given over our conditions and we believe our jobs are being down-graded. As well they want conditions attached like cutting down on our sick leave — it's not just about money."

Farce

Negotiations took place last week in London in relation to the take-over and representatives of the workers in Dublin attended. One of the representatives described the talks as "a farce".

"We were insulted all day and didn't even get to discuss travel concessions. And the compensation money that was offered was a joke. At this stage we feel we are being humiliated."

If the strike in Dublin Airport goes ahead it will most likely receive massive support from other groups of workers.

One shop steward told *Socialist Worker*, "We have been given strong signs of support from airport police, fire services, Aer Lingus workers and others. In the airport everybody realises that they may be next."

One of the shop stewards summed up the mood, "We are a very united group of people out here. Of the 139 who voted 139 voted for strike. The company needs to be taught a lesson and know that we mean business".

If pickets go up on the airport they should be supported by all workers and just like during the Ryanair dispute it could unite the entire workforce in Dublin airport and give them the confidence to stand up for their rights against privatisation and greedy profiteers.

Aer Lingus cabin crew

CABIN CREW in Aer Lingus are expected to vote overwhelmingly to reject the Labour Court offer and continue with further strike action. The deal has already been rejected by the Cabin Crew Committee.

"The overwhelming attitude is one of outrage", said one worker. "We are not going to give way on conditions anymore than we had to under the Cahill Plan in 1993".

Earlier

The company are demanding earlier start times and later finishing, an increase of working days from 8 hours to 10 hours and that workers under take more than one flight a day.

"The pay offer does reduce the pay scale from 24 points to 15 points", he said.

"But this still means that it will take you 15 years to get from a basic rate of £13,000 to

£22,500. The company are also offering a long service increment of £2,500 but this increment would not kick in until you had been flying for 35 years.

"But separate discussions on pensions and the right to retire at 50 makes a laugh of this if you don't get your last increment until after 35 years service."

"The Labour Court deal is a joke", another worker told *Socialist Worker*. "I have spent the last fortnight speaking to people and I have yet to meet one person who is going to vote in favour of the deal."

"The Labour Court effectively came out in favour of the company."

"Aer Lingus boss Michael Foley has been courting the media trying to tell them that we have been offered some great deal. He tried to say that we would be offered a starting rate of £19,000, this is a complete lie. The starting rate would be £13,000. £5,000 may not be much to him but it is to us."

Iarnrod Eireann

Anger over shifts

UNOFFICIAL industrial action has returned to the railways.

Last year mainline drivers settled with the company for a pay deal giving £29,500 for a 48 hour week.

Six months later the DART drivers secured the same pay for a 41 hour week. But traditionally the two groups have parity of

pay and conditions. Effectively there is now a 15 percent pay differential between the two groups of drivers and this has sparked unofficial industrial action at local level.

The first area to be hit is the new service to Maynooth. As one of the drivers reps told *Socialist Worker*, "Feelings are running very high on this and it's not just in Connolly. Drivers

around the country are getting together on this to see how we can take on the company. There will be lots more action until we get the deal re-negotiated."

The ILDA drivers have made it clear publicly and privately that they will be supporting any action taken by SIPTU and NBRU members, particularly if pickets go up.

Socialist Worker

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50p

inside

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Solidarity price £1

TAX THE RICH TO FUND RECYCLING SAY NO TO INCINERATORS

THE MINISTER for the Environment Noel Dempsey is to get emergency powers to force incinerators on local communities.

Most local authorities have voted against the incinerators — under mass public pressure.

Cynically

But Dempsey is only happy with democracy when it means favours for the people with brown envelopes.

Dempsey cynically tried to use the BSE crisis to get support for incineration but the killing of cattle has been shown to be a market device designed to keep the price of

Incineration causes cancer

BURNING WASTE means toxic chemicals will get into the atmosphere. Incinerators emit dangerous chemicals, including dioxins.

These dioxins are poisonous. They were the active ingredients of the chemical weapon Agent Orange used by the American government in Vietnam.

According to the Ameri-

can Environmental Protection Agency, "Exposure to dioxins, even at minute levels, poses cancer risks, and health concerns, including possible damage to the immune and reproductive system".

Forced

In 1999, high dioxin emissions forced three incinerators in France to be closed down because they had contaminated 16 farms nearby and the cheese and milk from local dairies

beef high.

In Galway the council are trying to backtrack on previous decisions against incineration because of a new "waste management crisis".

But accepting the implementation of the Waste Management Plan would mean the building of a huge incinerator in Galway City, and a super-dump in East Galway.

could no longer be sold

A EU report on dioxins states that the exposure of new born infants, up to 2 months of age, could be between 27 and 144 times greater than the WHO recommended limit in countries with incinerators.

In the U.S.A. in 1990, 140 incinerators were operating but between 1985 and 1998 over 300 incinerator projects were cancelled.

Last year in Japan, dioxin emissions from incinerators forced authorities to temporarily shut down 2,046 incinerators.

Galway has led the way in fighting incineration.

Last year over 22,000 people signed a petition for recycling, and against incineration and super-dumps.

Recycle not privatise

FIANNA FAIL want incinerators as part of overall plan to privatise waste disposal. They want the harmful plants to be run for profit by a private company.

But there is no need for incinerators. Incinerators do not get rid of landfills. Every 3 tonnes of rubbish burnt in an incinerator produces 1 tonne of ash that has to be dumped.

Currently 90 percent of waste in Ireland is dumped and only 5 percent is recycled.

Yet the government's own figures say it is possible to recycle up to 80 per-

cent of all waste.

Most waste is produced by agriculture and industry. Of the 42.2 million tonnes of waste produced in Ireland each year only 1.85 million tonnes comes from household waste.

31 million tonnes comes from agricultural waste and over 8.61 million comes from industrial waste.

These business interests should be told to re-cycle.

In Galway it is commercial waste that is producing the 'crisis'.

If businesses were forced to pay for cutting down on waste from their factories there would be no "waste management crisis".

We need a properly funded recycling system, paid for by taxing the rich wasters at the top.