

# Socialist Worker

For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism €1.00 / £0.70 STG

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## AIB, ELAN, & ENRON: Crony capitalism starts to crumble?

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### Abortion referendum

# VOTENO

# FIGHT FOR A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE!



★20,000 protest at the WEF in New York  
★70,000 meet in Porto Alegre  
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## Illegal dumping and open sewers

A STARTLING report prepared by a court-appointed water keeper and submitted to the Department of the Environment and the European Commission claims that toxic waste is making its way into the domestic water supply in Dundalk, Co Louth.

Asbestos and diseased carcasses are being ploughed into land and medical waste has found its way into human sewage tanks which are then pumped into the Irish sea at Blackrock in Co Louth.

The allegations in the report focus mainly on a company, Killencoole Garden Compost Ltd. Louth Co Council granted planning to Killencoole Garden Compost Limited on January 27, 1999.

### Complaints

The report says: "Louth County Council have been recklessly dismissive of complaints from the public concerning air pollution, water pollution and soil pollution and the disastrous

effects upon the affected public".

The report states that there are "polluted toxic wells, open toxic sewers, and buried toxic materials all over the adjoining lands".

In addition "toxic water is being withdrawn from a toxic sewer which was once an open stream and used to irrigate crops which then enter the human food chain".

The company received a Department of Environment grant of £104,000 in 1997.

# Garda tyre man promoted

**THE CIVILIAN fleet manager at the centre of the Advance Pitstop controversy has been promoted and given overall control of the Garda Transport Section.**

Oliver Hanlon, a Department of Justice employee, went to Spain, Italy and Portugal for all three of the expenses-paid

trips laid on by Advance Pitstop between 1998 and 2000.

Pitstop overcharged the Gardai by €264,000 during the same period. In addition, the taxpayer lost an estimated €444,000 because the Garda Síochána chose Pitstop in preference to tyre suppliers which made considerably cheaper bids for the garda contract.

Hanlon claimed the trips provided the setting for "brain-storming ses-

sions" about the tyre business.

In a recent shake-up, Hanlon was given overall control of the Transport Section replacing Supt Michael Murray, another officer who went on the trips.

### Soccer

Hanlon and three gardai visited the European Ryder Cup golf course in Valderama, a Manchester United soccer match, the

set of Coronation Street, and several foreign entertainment clubs. Hanlon labelled the voyages "fact-finding trips" — although he admitted no tyre facilities were visited.

## Cover up in White House

US ATTORNEY General John Ashcroft is a key figure in the war against "Islamic fundamentalism". Ashcroft knows a thing or two about fundamentalism himself. He leads his staff in a Christian prayer meeting every day, regardless of their faith.

And he has had two statues at the Department of Justice covered up because he felt their limited nudity offended decency.

He was just the man to take on the Taliban and their insistence on covering up the human form.

## Legal eagles rake in our cash

GOVERNMENT departments have paid out more than €45 million in solicitors' and barristers' fees over the past three years and have made some of them millionaires.

In one example, the Department of Agriculture ran up a legal bill of almost €10m in the past three years.

More than 10 years after the Beef Tribunal ended, the Department is still paying out costs to lawyers.

The largest amount, €5.8 million, was paid out in 2000.

United Meat Packers got €4.7 million back from the Department in legal costs, while Goodman International got €1.45 million.

Former Labour leader Dick Spring and former Minister Barry Desmond, represented by Daniel Spring and Company, got €1,052,211 in legal fees while former PD leader Des O'Malley's solicitors were paid €393,812.

# POLITICIANS PLAY THE RACE CARD...

# FF are the real spongers and conmen

**OPPORTUNIST politicians have begun playing the race card ahead of this year's general election.**

Cork North Central TD, Noel O'Flynn accused asylum seekers in Cork of being "spongers, freeloaders" and of "screwing the system". This speech was made three days before Zhao Liu Tao was murdered by racists in Dublin.

Even after this murder, O'Flynn continued to stir up hatred on the issue, defending his remarks both in the Dail — where he cannot be prosecuted under the Incitement to Hatred Act — and in the media.

O'Flynn's disgusting remarks were designed to prop up his failing career by blaming asylum seekers for the frustration felt at the poverty and lack of services left over at the end of the Celtic Tiger.

Following in the footsteps of Enoch Powell, he

demanding compulsory health testing for immigrants, whom he described as "putting disease control programmes at risk".

O'Flynn also accused them of having chosen a life of criminality. That's rich coming from a man whose party has sheltered the real crooks in Ireland for years.

One Cork local quipped, "He sits in a plush mansion on a TD's salary and god knows how many donations, so he should know all about scroungers."

In the last year, 450 asylum seekers moved to Cork — that's 0.21 percent of the population.

Of the 25,000 people who entered the state since 2000, about three quarters were returning Irish emigrants, British, American or EU citizens.

### Protests

Some 100 people demonstrated outside a £130 a plate fund-raising dinner

of steak and salmon for the racist TD.

A noisy crowd chanted slogans. One of the banners read, "Haughey, Lawlor and FF are the real spongers and conmen".

Under Garda protection Flynn and Charlie McCreevy had to slip in through the back door to get to dinner.

### Guest

McCreevy was guest speaker at the dinner and said he was not worried about being seen supporting O'Flynn's stance on immigrants. He tried to excuse O'Flynn saying when one makes comments about these issues one is liable to be misinterpreted.

★ **THE government claims incinerators will save money. Yet research done for Connaught reveals that setting up a zero waste system in Cork would cost a fraction of the price of an incinerator.**

A zero waste system for Connaught would cost in the region of £14 million for the whole region. The proposed incinerator for Connaught alone will cost £46 million. To this must be added the cost of services charges and dumps.

Not only is recycling the safest and most sensible option it's the cheapest



Over 600 people marched through Dublin in protest against the racist murder of a Chinese student.

Recent statements by O'Flynn have come quickly on the back of recent outpouring against refugees by SIPTU official and former Labour councillor

Joe O'Callaghan. O'Callaghan is a discredited politician who has been calling for a referendum on citizenship.

Cork North Central contains some of the poorest wards in Ireland such as Knocknaheeny and Churchfield, wards which have seen massive unemployment and hospital closures in recent years.

When it comes to defending working class interests in the area

O'Callaghan has a disgraceful record.

He even refused to vote against service charges.

■ **Bertie Ahern was recently quoted in the Irish Times saying he would not tolerate anti-racist remarks in the run up to an election — it must have been a misprint!**

# Docklands Authority to blame for flooding

**RESIDENTS of Ringsend and East Wall in Dublin had their homes devastated by flooding in early February and must now fight for compensation from insurance companies who won't pay up and from the state.**

The flooding in Ringsend is directly linked to the private development of the area by the Dockland Authority (DDDA).

There used to be a flood wall between the housing and the River Dodder.

Four years ago, luxury apartments were built on the other side of the river, an exclusive community that erected steel gates to keep local people out.

The apartment owners complained about the flood wall, which they considered "an eyesore" and it was removed.

### Destroyed

This allowed up to four feet of water to spill into the homes of residents in Stella Gardens.

This completely destroyed the bungalows on the road, in which many elderly people were housed.

Others were left without any electricity for days.

Flooding began at two

o'clock in the afternoon and just one fire truck and one ambulance were sent to aid the residents.

The crews could do nothing as the Dodder burst through what remained of the flood wall and poured into the streets.

Despite having been called three times, no police arrived for three hours.

Local resident Laura Kinsella told *Socialist Worker* how she and three other women had to stand and direct traffic away from the area to allow the fire brigade to try pumping the water.

"They had three hours to prevent this happening and no one came near us.

"And what's happened

since has been a joke.

"There are still people without power, and there's empty flats and maisonettes in the area that should be used to re-house them.

"No one has given us a definite answer about compensation either.

"Just wait until they come knocking on doors for votes in Ringsend at the election. I'll be ready to give them a piece of my mind!"

Local *Socialist Worker* Activist Shay Ryan said, "For two long ordinary people in this area have come second to the developers.

"The flooding was a result of putting developer's profits before people."

## FF after pensioners

**THE government has a plan up its sleeve to deny thousands of elderly people the right to nursing home care from the state.**

Under the 1970 Health Act, any person in need of nursing home care has a statutory entitlement to be provided with this service by their Health Board.

Correspondence between the Finance Minister, Charlie McCreevy and his counterpart in health, Micheál Martin seen by *Socialist Worker* shows

McCreevy proposing to Martin "a statutory amendment be made to the 1970 Health Act so as to clarify that nursing home services are provided on a different basis".

If implemented, this would remove the duty on health boards to find nursing home beds for elderly people if there were not enough beds in public hospitals.

Last year it was revealed that the department illegally withheld €6m in payments from elderly patients in nursing homes.

findings of late, dirty and overcrowded trains.

This month workers on Connex trains Melbourne Australia took strike action to beat off vicious pay cuts.

Connex got the contract because they were the only one of the bidders not to guarantee to pay workers rates at the same level of CIE and have made no commitment to deal with Unions.

## Anti union firm gets LUAS

**THE LUAS contract has gone to controversial French firm Connex but the Department won't announce the deal.**

Connex is an operator of privatised trains in Britain. In December 2000, the firm was fined £2.38 million by the rail regulator. Six months ago, it became the first rail operator to lose its licence since privatisation following repeated

# Crony capitalism starts to crumble

**THE TWO biggest companies on the Irish Stock Exchange are mired in sleaze and scandal.**

Not to be out done by US corporations, the AIB managed not to notice it had lost \$750 million dollars. Elan Corporation is on the verge of collapse as its accounts were revealed to be a work of fiction.

It is just like the collapse of Enron, the giant US energy company. This cost thousands of workers their jobs and savings. Enron bankrolled US politicians – the AIB has long been a major donor to political parties here.

Another huge US company has just gone bankrupt. Global Crossing is the second biggest after Enron. The two were involved in dodgy accounting – both were audited by Arthur Andersen.

Global Crossing had a contract with the government here to lay telecommunications here as part of a PPP project.

These companies – American or Irish – were not exceptions in the way capitalism works. They all made it big by lying and cheating.

In the same week as AIB and Elan fell from grace, Ryanair's €160m share issue was oversubscribed by Irish capitalists and made yet more cash for Michael O'Leary and the Ryan clan. When one company gets caught, the rich are left free to simply switch investments elsewhere.

But it is a different story if you are poor. Each year over 2,000 people are jailed for non-payment of debts or fines. That is nearly a third of the whole prison population.

While workers have been tied to wage restraint through "social partnership" the fat cats have been making a killing in tax avoidance and fraud.

## MONEY MADNESS

The AIB scandal has opened a door onto the murky world of currency speculation. Millions of dollars are gambled on the currency markets.

The man at the centre of the AIB scandal bet a hundred million dollars in one transaction that the yen would rise in value against the dollar in six months' time. Unfortunately for Rusnak and AIB it fell in value.

The foreign exchange transactions that Rusnak was hired to perform had nothing to do with arranging payments for international trades in goods and services. It was simply a bet.

A major part of the US boom over the past few years has been the rich and financial institutions speculating on stocks and currencies. Although this do not produce goods, the lives or masses of people can be affected by the resulting

## Crooks and bankers

**THE FORMER auditor of the AIB, Tony Spollen, has said, "The commercial fraud that comes to the public eye is just the tip of a very large iceberg."**

While the banks easily forgot about their taxes or where they left their cash, they always remember to pay off the politicians.

For instance, the average payment from the AIB in 2000 was £40,000.

All the main political parties got money from the AIB, including the Labour Party.

The ties between politicians and the bankers are even closer than these donations suggest.

★ Peter Sutherland was chairman of AIB when the DIRT scam took place.

He was also a political advisor to the Fine Gael leader John Bruton and is a former Attorney General.

★ Miriam Hederman O'Brien sits on the board of AIB.

She was also the chairperson of the Government

upheavals in the capital markets.

Dublin's capital market – which is dominated by three stockbrokers, owned by three banks and their investment banking arms – means scrutiny of these parasites is non-existent.

Inside the Financial Services Centre hundreds of companies play with billions on the money markets.

Some of the money that Elan and AIB were playing with came from the pension funds of workers. The rest came from profits taken off the backs of working class people.

The cost is that money that could be used to improve services or help pull people out of devastating poverty in the developing world is the plaything of crooks.

## COOKING THE BOOKS

Price Waterhouse Coopers are the auditors for Allied Irish Banks. They failed to spot the \$750 million missing from the company books.

Arthur Andersen are the accountants to Elan, Enron and Global Crossing. In the Enron case they shredded documents to cover up the company's scams.

The same Arthur Andersen are also consultants on a number Public Private Partnership ventures in Ireland. Price Waterhouse Coopers produced the

sponsored Commission for Taxation which was supposed to look at unfairness in the tax system.

Strangely, it didn't recommend increasing taxes on the banks or mention offshore accounts.

## Threatened

The links to politicians help explain how the AIB was saved from bankruptcy in 1987.

One of its subsidiaries, the ICI, ran up huge debts by speculating on the London insurance market.

When this threatened to bring the whole bank down the government organised a special £600 million rescue scheme which was financed by PAYE workers.

In return the AIB wrote off Charlie Haughey's and Garrett Fitzgerald's overdrafts.

The AIB was the main player in the DIRT scandal.

As much as £10 billion was hidden in illegal bank accounts.

When the bank was final-

ly caught by the Revenue a deal was struck that allowed them to avoid £86 million in tax.

The other company mired in sleaze is the pharmaceutical giant Elan.

Elan was the darling of the Dublin stock exchange and Ireland's corporate media.

Donald Panoz, who moved to Ireland to take advantage of tax breaks for businesses, founded Elan.

The company's board includes the Bank of Ireland's governor, Laurence Crowley, and former US attorney general Richard Thornburgh.

The latest inquiry, which caused the company's share to collapse, is the second in three years into the companies "aggressive accounting".

Aggressive accounting meant \$1bn was channelled into three Bermuda-based companies.

Aggressive accounting also meant not paying any tax. In 2000 Elan paid out a mere 2.6 per cent on its £150.3 million profits in tax.

The year before they paid less than 1 per cent.

blueprint for the use of PPPs in Ireland. Are we supposed to trust any of these firms with our public services?

There is plenty of wealth in the world, which could benefit

the whole of human kind. Socialists say it's time we took the wealth off these crooks and parasites and broke the power of their corporations and governments.



Some 200 people protested at the US embassy in Dublin against the continued bombing of Afghanistan and in solidarity with protests at the WEF. Contact the Irish Anti War Movement at 087-9890330

## Socialist Worker Appeal

### Help us raise €20,000!

The *Socialist Worker* appeal is aiming to raise €20,000. This money will be used to help *Socialist Worker* become a weekly paper.

We don't get any financial backing from big business. We rely solely on our readers and supporters to help us build a revolutionary party with its own paper, independent of the establishment media. Our readers and supporters are responding very enthusiastically to the *Socialist Worker* Appeal.

So far we have raised over €5,000. We would like to thank all our members and readers who have so generously donated so far. €200 was collected at a public meeting in Dublin on Bloody Sunday. The Rathmines branch of SWP raised €150 at a social last weekend. Donations have been coming in at a steady rate. And the *Socialist Worker* appeal has launched a national raffle.

Tickets are available from your *Socialist Worker* paper seller and cost €1 each. There are several money prizes and the draw will take place on Easter Monday 1st April.

I want to support the *Socialist Worker* Appeal and help keep *Socialist Worker* at the centre of the struggle for a better world. Please find enclosed the following donation:  
 € \_\_\_\_\_ /£ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Donations in Republic of Ireland should be made payable to: *Socialist Worker*, AIB, 37 O'Connell Street, Dublin 1 Account Number: 85173030 Sort Code: 93 11 36 Donations in Northern Ireland should be made payable to *Socialist Worker*, First Trust Bank, High Street, Belfast Account No: 00812073, Sort Code: 93 80 92 Return slip to: SW Appeal, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8.

€5000.00

€0.00

SWP

# Another world is possible

# Porto Alegre

# 20,000 confront the rich 70,000 plan a new world

YOU WOULDN'T have known it from the news, but some 90,000 people took part in protests at the beginning of February against capitalism. Some 20,000 hit the streets against the World Economic Forum in New York, while 70,000 gathered in Porto Alegre in Brazil to debate an alternative.

ALEX CALLINICOS and MIKE GONZALEZ report from the Porto Alegre. HELEN SHOOTER reports from New York.

THE MOVEMENT against capitalist globalisation is alive, growing and truly global.

Some 70,000 people here in Porto Alegre, Brazil's southernmost state, are giving the lie to Clare Short's dismissal of the movement as well meaning white middle class people who have no support in the Third World. The World Social Forum first met in Porto Alegre a year ago. Then, between 15,000 and 20,000 people took part.

The numbers at this second forum are three or four times as big. 15,000 young people from all over Latin America and the rest of the world are staying in the Youth Camp alone. The opening day of the forum proper saw over 3,000 people, mainly Brazilians, listening intently to an hour-long lecture by Noam Chomsky. Chomsky was given a rapturous welcome when he addressed a teach-in on the

theme of "A world without wars."

To enthusiastic cheers he told his audience, "If one looked at the official definition of terrorism, it would be identical to the official definition of US foreign policy." Chomsky's unremitting but often very lonely fight against US imperialism over the past genera-

most exciting opportunity for the workers' movement and the left to build a real internationalism". Chomsky argued that the movement was not against globalisation as such: "We want globalisation in the interests of the world population. They want globalisation to be their particular form of

corporate globalisation."

The forum has mainly taken the form of conferences, seminars and over 1,000 workshops.

It started

**"Yesterday 40,000 children died of hunger around the world. Today 40,000 children will die of hunger, preventable hunger around the world. Tomorrow 40,000 children around the world will die of hunger. There are no headlines about this."**

● ODED GRAJEW, Porto Alegre Organising Committee

tion has made him one of the great symbols of the new movement. He acts as both a source of information and analysis, and as a model of political integrity.

In his speech Chomsky was very clear in his recognition of the movement's significance, calling it an "unprecedented" challenge to the capitalist "masters of the universe", and "the

with a demonstration.

On Thursday 50,000 people marched through Porto Alegre. The march was dominated by local organisations. The banners and slogans of the Brazilian Workers Party (PT), the left trade union federation CUT, and the landless labourers' movement the MST were everywhere.

But if most demonstrators



came from all over this country, their consciousness was global. Banners connected the fight against neo-liberalism with the struggles in Argentina and Palestine.

The official sound truck constantly blared out slogans denouncing imperialism and war. The popular rising against neo-liberalism in Argentina has captured the imagination of the

movement throughout Latin America, and indeed the world. It was completely unanticipated when the forum was planned, but Argentina brings into focus many key issues facing the movement.

Around 2,000 Argentinians came to Porto Alegre, along with many others from the rest of the Americas — for example 400 from Uruguay, which lies between Brazil and Argentina. But there are also many from far further afield. 1,500 came from Italy, reflecting the enormous radicalisation produced by Genoa.

The speakers' panels reflect the global nature of the forum. The mood at the forum is one of

both celebration and struggle. Both during the breaks and even while meetings are in session impromptu demonstrations — about Palestine, abortion, the rights of the disabled — compete for space with Brazilian popular bands and dance groups.

Minar, from Focus on the Global South in India, said, "I am here to basically show that there is an alternative to the globalism which has been done, which has been forced on people today.

"What I expect from all of us is to build good solidarity to counter locally, regionally and globally the effects of capitalism, and to create a people's alternative system of governance and economics."

## Which way for the movement?

THE DEBATES at the World Social Forum have underlined the polarisation that is beginning to develop within the anti-capitalist movement.

Undoubtedly Porto Alegre has witnessed a determined effort to co-opt the movement.

When Noam Chomsky spoke, sitting next to him was Olivio Dutra, governor of the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. Both Rio Grande do Sul and Porto Alegre, its capital, are controlled by the Workers Party (PT).

Lula, the national leader of the PT, stands a good chance of winning Brazil's presidential elections later this year.

Association with the global movement represented at Porto Alegre won't hurt the PT's electoral chances. Brazil's election isn't the only presidential election in which the forum is a factor.

### Devoted

The Parisian daily *Le Monde*—which devoted an eight-page supplement to Porto Alegre—said the

French presidential election had begun there. Six ministers belonging to Lionel Jospin's "plural left" government have come to Porto Alegre.

Even Jacques Chirac, the right wing incumbent, sent a member of his staff.

This official attempt at co-optation isn't entirely unwelcome to one wing of the anti-capitalist movement.

Bernard Cassen, a key figure in ATTAC, the French movement against financial speculation, is close to Jean-Pierre Chevenement, a former minister under Jospin.

Chevenement is running for president on a platform of defending "national sovereignty". Some other leading figures in ATTAC are increasingly hostile to mass mobilisation.

Susan George repeated her claim that the violence of the anarchist Black Bloc at Genoa threatened to wreck the movement by making future demonstrations impossible.

Others have echoed the same argument. The Filipino writer and activist Walden Bello has in several meetings portrayed the movement as "struggling to regain the initiative" since Genoa and 11 September.

This analysis completely ignores the radicalising impact that Genoa had in Italy, Britain and Greece—the three countries in Europe that have seen the strongest anti-war movements develop.

Where the movement has confronted the issue of the war it has grown. In France, by contrast, the ATTAC leadership formally opposed the war but did not make any real effort to mobilise against it.

For Bello and George the struggle against neo-liberal economic policies belongs in a separate compartment from the struggle against militarism and war.

But many activists understand the connections between the military and economic faces of capitalist globalisation.

Not surprisingly, the strongest challenge to efforts to co-opt the movement has come from Italy.

On Friday of last week the Genoa Social Forum mounted a demonstration against the MPs in Porto Alegre who had supported the war.

The MPs were forced to pass a resolution condemning neo-liberalism and war. Vittorio Agnoletto, chair of the Genoa Social Forum,

attacked the MPs trying to ride two horses, saying, "There are only two choices—to be with the World Bank or with the people of Porto Alegre."

Other voices have been raised against the reformist wing of the movement. Naomi Klein in a session denounced "doubletalk and co-optation".

Susan George's obsession with violence was challenged by Petros Constantinou from the Greek Genoa 2001 campaign and the Russian socialist Boris Kagarlitsky.

The movement at Porto Alegre is much more radical than many of its leaders. There is a desire for real debate that often does not find expression, especially in the larger sessions that offer few opportunities for discussion from the floor.

Porto Alegre has done two things. First, alongside the demonstrations against the World Economic Forum in New York, it has removed any doubts over whether the movement is still in business.

Second, Porto Alegre has brought into focus some of the strategic issues that anti-capitalists will have to address to make real the "other world" for which we are all fighting.

## Facing both

**OPEN LETTER TO GERRY ADAMS**  
THE WORLD Economic Forum which recently met in New York brings together a global elite for an annual gathering. Its membership is made up of the 1,000 largest corporations who pay an annual fee of \$30,000 a year.

According to the Australian academic Peter Goodman, who wrote an article entitled 'The WEF -Capital's first International', it has been the main think tank that has promoted the neo-liberal agenda and has been the inspiration behind the establishment of the World Trade Organisation.

The WEF agenda has already led to a world where 19,000 children die in the developing world each year. Meanwhile the world's richest 200 people have doubled their wealth in the last five years.

We were dismayed, therefore, to find that Gerry Adams, who has been associated with radical policies in Ireland, attended this forum instead of the Bloody Sunday commemoration. We note that Yasser Arafat, whose people have suffered appalling suffering at the hands of Israel, was excluded from the gathering.

We appeal to the Sinn Fein leader to align his party firmly with the anti-globalisation movement that has made had a huge impact in questioning and resisting the corporate domination our world.

■ Jim Keys, John Meehan, David Carlin, Des Boyle, Joe Moore, James Davis, Brid Smith among others.

# New York

## 'They're Enron, we are Argentinians'

THE 20,000 people who took to New York's streets in a loud, joyous march left no doubt that the anti-capitalist movement is back.

Young people from across the US protested against the meeting of the World Economic Forum—a private club for business and political leaders—in the city.

The protestors knew the significance of their march.

This was New York, the site of the attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11 September.

The US media had attacked the march organisers. Another World is Possible, for daring to hold the demonstration.

"New York needs protest like it needs another airplane attack," declared the *New York Times*.

But the marchers were determined to show their protest against George W Bush's war and against the power of multinationals.

Julia Steinberger, a student from Boston, explained, "It's more important than ever to protest. There is a tough climate here. The government is trying to get rid of our civil rights since 11 September."

"But I think the World Eco-

nomics Forum is about a bunch of thieves who are organising the best way for them to plunder even more. People should resist and do it openly."

Ben Weinkove had come along with ten other students from the local Columbia University to march behind a banner that read "Stop the war—end terrorism by ending injustice".

**"It's not just Enron—it's us too. I see those rich people meeting behind closed doors. I just think some of those bosses should be locked up in jail."**

● **RUSSELL SHEFFLER, member of the United Steelworkers of America, New York**

"We decided to come here with the banner to say we're against the war and the media's reaction to it," he said.

Despite the press witch-hunt the marchers did not face any hostility from passers-by. Some waved in support from tower block windows. The marchers took up the chant "George Bush is a terrorist" as they reached the final rally.

The giant energy corporation Enron was a key focus for people's anger.

Its collapse last November drove thousands out of work and opened up a political scandal linked to President Bush.

A group of marchers carried giant images depicting Bush as a Frankenstein's monster of Enron, and his defence secretary, Rumsfeld, with the words "3,000 Afghan deaths" written across his face.

The marchers also showed their solidarity with the people of Argentina who have fought back against the impact of the IMF's crippling debt.

At the front of the march several giant placards read "WEF—they are all Enron, we



are all Argentinians".

The *New York Times* was forced to admit the day after demo, "The mood was festive, with cheerleaders belting out anti-capitalist ditties, and a drum corps banging away on old pots and plastic drums."

"We've scored a victory today," said one marcher proudly as she left the demonstration.

The marchers were prevented by a heavy police presence from getting close to the World Economic Forum cosseted in the luxury Waldorf-Astoria hotel.

But they had shown that the movement against the rich and powerful could take over the streets of New York.

Even before the demo, students and trade unionists had held two mobilisations of thousands of people.

Some 2,000 trade unionists and protesters joined a demonstration against sweatshop labour outside a Gap store in the centre of New York.

Jeff Crosby, a member of the IUEWA electrical workers' union, made the link between workers' conditions in the US and around the world:

"We are all victims of the

global economy. General Electric, where I work, wants to move to Mexico, where the costs are cheaper.

"Many workers' jobs will go. Then in Colombia I hear about workers there fighting back against companies and even being killed.

"The common thread is these multinationals. They threaten workers everywhere.

"We have to say 'Another world is possible,' just like they are talking about in the conference in Porto Alegre."

Some 1,500 students attended a two-day conference in Columbia University organised as an alternative to the World Economic Forum. The students eagerly listened to a wide range of speakers.

Ricardo, a construction worker from New York, got a standing ovation when he said, "They tell us history really started on 11 September, but I think it started with the protest in Genoa last year and with the struggle in Argentina.

"That's because we are showing there is an alternative to neoliberalism and the corporations' vision of the world."

## ways or selling out?

WHILE 20,000 protested outside the World Economic Forum in New York, political leaders from Northern Ireland were swanning around inside the bosses' summit.

Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams, SDLP leader Mark Durkan, Unionist Party leader David Trimble and the DUP's David Ervine all took part in the WEF.

Gerry Adams cancelled his attendance at the Bloody Sunday commemoration in Derry.

Adams replied that the WEF summit was a meeting he "had to attend."

The Sinn Fein website boasted that the WEF meetings would

also be attended by US military chief Colin Powell and British foreign minister Jack Straw.

The political leaders participated in a forum on the peace process, alongside Richard Haass, a director of the US state department who is also George Bush's envoy to Ireland.

### Irony

Durkan and Trimble later held meetings with Bush's advisor Condoleezza Rice.

The irony of discussing peace with senior US state officials only days after George W Bush threat to spread the "war against terrorism" to Iraq, Iran and North Korea appeared lost on the Northern Ireland leaders.

Durkan and Trimble

made a great show of laying a wreath at the wreckage of the World Trade Centre but no mention was made of the murder of innocent people in Afghanistan or US and British support for Israel's bombing of Palestinian areas.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was specifically excluded from attending the WEF. Gerry Adams also took part in a WEF forum on "Hunger and Poverty in the Third World".

In his speech he appealed to the IMF and World Bank to cancel the Third World Debt and noted that developing countries were also forced to introduce policies that made poverty worse.

The World Economic Forum has been the main think tank that has promoted the neo-liberal, Thatcherite agenda

that has been a disaster in both developing and Western countries.

### Message

The real message of the visit by Adams, Durkan and Trimble to the WEF was that they can all be trusted to administer the same neo-liberal policies in Northern Ireland.

Only days after the WEF visit, Peter Robinson, the DUP transport minister in the Stormont executive, announced a new transport plan which included channelling a third of all new investment straight into the private sector using the Private Finance Initiative.

Privatisation of transport has been a disaster in Britain and New Labour's plans to privatise the London

tube is facing mass opposition.

But there was not a word of criticism from any of the parties in the Northern Ireland Executive against Robinson's plan. Nor could there be.

All the ministers, from Martin McGuinness and Bairbre de Brun, to Sean Farren and Peter Robinson have enthusiastically endorsed the privatisation of schools, colleges and hospitals.

In fact, they boast that £356.7 million in public contracts have already been awarded or tendered to the private sector in Northern Ireland.

This figure does not include extra millions given to consultants—including Arthur Andersen—the accountants who cooked the books for Enron—in the process of promoting PFI schemes.

# Eamonn

# McCann

## They all back N.I. transport privatisation

A DECENT-sized row erupted across the water on February 6th when New Labour transport secretary Stephen Byers gave the go-ahead for the effective privatisation of the London Underground.

This was in sharp contrast to the response—or lack thereof—two days earlier to the announcement by Stormont regional development minister, Peter Robinson of the DUP, that the Executive had decided to flog off the North's rail and road systems to the private sector.

So does nobody in Belfast or Derry share the concern of Londoners about allowing the fat-cat entrepreneurs to dictate the future of the rail and road networks?

The row over Byers' plans for a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) to run the London Tube was predictable. Opinion polls have consistently shown a majority in Britain for taking the rail system back into public ownership. Even conservative newspapers like the London *Evening Standard* have been carrying nostalgic features lamenting the loss of the old nationalised British Railways.

A report from an all-party committee of MPs had rejected the PPP proposal for the Underground in scathing terms. Mainstream commentators like New Labour ideologist Will Hutton had warned of a bitter reckoning to come.

Even senior union officials, reflecting the pressure from below, had begun to speak out.

John Edmonds of the GMB, the very model of a union moderniser, announced that his union will cut its contribution to New Labour by £2 million over four years and in future will not sponsor individual candidates who support private finance schemes for public services.

Edmonds spelled out the reason for the remarkably widespread opposition.

The various privatisation schemes have this in common: they involve private companies borrowing money for investment at rates substantially higher than the State could itself negotiate; the companies then pass the cost of these borrowings on to the tax-payer; they then add on the costs of their State-guaranteed profits; and charge that to the tax-payers, too.

The companies which are envisaged taking over the running of the London Underground will be guaranteed a whopping 18 percent profit a year, which passengers and tax-payers will have to cough up between them.

Even in conventional business terms, the schemes make no sense—unless, of course, you are one of the aforementioned fat-cats or a member of a government bedazzled by the notion that there can be no basis for any economic activity that nobody makes a profit from.

At any rate, there's a debate on the issue under way in Britain. But not in the North, or at least not among the Executive parties.

On the day after Robinson launched his "10-year plan to improve transport", the other main party spokespersons—Joe Byrne of the SDLP, Pat McNamee of Sinn Fein and Esmond Birnie of the UUP—gave their considered responses.

Byrne's only criticism was that "the strategy does not give sufficient consideration to transportation policy within an all-Ireland context".

McNamee complained that Robinson "has failed to adequately address the issue of a health impact assessment". Birnie was worried about the absence of a residents-only parking scheme in "large areas of inner Belfast which serve as open car-parks for commuters".

None of them had a single word to say about the fact that road and rail in the North was being handed over to the private sector. All of the Executive parties, including those which like sometimes to present themselves as "socialists", have fully embraced the privatisation policies pioneered by Margaret Thatcher and continued by Blair.

The idea widely promoted a few years back that once the Executive was up and running "real politics" would come to the fore has proven an illusion.

"Real politics" hasn't even reached the level of south east England. It's clear that if there's to be any chance of advancing working class interests, even in as basic a matter as public transport, there will have to be a clean break with the politics of communal identity.

# Class and choice key to winning referendum

by GORETTI HORGAN

THE IMMEDIATE priority for socialists and pro-choice activists is a NO vote in the referendum on March 6th to ensure that the most desperate women, particularly those pregnant as a result of rape, can get abortions.

But socialists and most pro-choice activists who knocked on doors during the Anti-Amendment Campaign in 1983 and the 1992 referendums know that it is not the hard cases but the argument for a woman's right to choose that will win the NO vote.

### Influx

Ireland has changed immensely over the last 20-30 years.

Economic development and the influx of women to the workforce has brought a much freer attitude to sex.

In 1974 three out of four people thought sex outside marriage was always wrong. In 1997, 21-24 year olds had had on average 13 different sexual partners. There's a lot of people having sex these days.

Contraception is widely used but for those who have little money and don't have medical cards, it can be expensive. Anyway, contraceptives sometimes fail.

As a result, people who really can't afford to get pregnant—in terms of where their lives are, as well as financially—do become pregnant.

Many people who start off saying they are anti-abortion to NO canvassers then say that they had given money to a daughter, or sister or friend who had to go to England.

But, they explain, in her case it was the right thing for her to do.

At least 150,000 women from Ireland have had abortions in England over the last 30 years.

The Women and Crisis Pregnancy research in the South and the Other Irish Journey in the North found that most women told 2-3 others about her trip.

Most women in the Northern study knew at least one other woman who had had an abortion, some knew as many as twelve.

These figures suggest that some half a million people here have had an abortion, or supported someone in having one.

The realities of people's lives, especially as the cost of a decent

place to live soars, combined with more sex and unplanned pregnancy, means more people accept it should be for the individual woman herself to decide if she can continue an unplanned pregnancy.

And increasing numbers of people are realising that whether or not a woman who decides she does not want to continue gets to have an abortion is usually down to money.

It's yet another example of a society that has one law for the rich, another for the poor.

If you have enough money, getting an abortion need not be a problem. Once you've made the decision, you book the flight on your credit card and write a cheque at the clinic.

For most women, even those with relatively decent jobs, getting €1,000 or £600 sterling together is difficult. For those surviving on benefits or low pay, it can be impossible.

### Needed

Individual women are now far more open about their experience of abortion, in private if not in the media. As more people know more people they agree needed and had a right to an abortion, the argument for a woman's right to choose is effectively won.

As more people realise the dreadful position of a woman who needs an abortion but is having difficulties getting the money together while the pregnancy gets more advanced, the argument that abortion should be available here makes more sense.

Many trade unionists, North and South, have backed calls for abortion to be legalised, sometimes in spite of being personally opposed to abortion.

They recognise that abortion in Ireland, as elsewhere, is a class issue. They accept that all the other equality rights they have fought for and won for women mean little if a woman cannot decide for herself if and when to have children.

As the fact that the present abortion law means one thing for the rich and another for the poor becomes ever clearer, the opportunity must not be lost in this referendum campaign to raise on doorsteps the realities of women's (and men's) lives today and the necessity of abortion for many Irish women.

Relating to the way people live their lives today, not a concentration on 'hard cases' or on stale arguments about the morality of abortion, is how the argument for a NO vote—and for a woman's right to choose—will be won.

# It's a woman's choice

**THIS YEAR over 7,000 Irish women travelled to Britain for abortions. The real figure is almost certainly higher as many women give British addresses to avoid detection or save money by avoiding the obligatory overnight stay for women outside Britain.**

The vast majority of women will travel for abortions for reasons other than rape or suicide. We may not always

know their names or faces but they are our mothers, partners, sisters, girlfriends, and our friends.

As we face into another referendum once again moral and legal arguments are displacing the voices of women who have had abortions.

*Socialist Worker* spoke to two women who have had abortions for very different reasons and their experience.



## Siobhan was 39 when she found out she was pregnant for the fourth time

**"IT WAS the one thing that I never expected to happen again. I had three children already, the youngest was only six. I had felt that when he went to school the year before that I would finally get my life back.**

"I had just returned to work the year before and had a job I liked. More importantly than that, with my husband's redundancy, what I earned was going to have support us till he got another job. I honestly didn't know what to do and I didn't think that women my age had abortions.

### Relate

"When I finally told a friend, she told me that the same thing had happened to her and that she had gone to Britain for an abortion. I was so glad that someone could relate to what I was going through.

"I thought the worse part would be telling my husband that first I was pregnant and that then I wanted an abortion but he was great, really supportive.

"He said that he agreed with me that we loved the three we had, but that we just couldn't afford to have another one. That made a big difference.

"My friend said that she'd come over with me for the abortion as my husband had to mind the kids.

"Luckily we had the money from the redundancy to pay for it, otherwise I don't know what we would have done.

"The worst part was the whole secrecy involved, having to make up an excuse for my boss about why I'd be away, try-

ing to explain to the kids.

"My youngest son just couldn't understand why I was going away and not bringing him.

"But eventually we sorted it out and I went away and had the abortion.

"I often think about what it would be like if I had had the baby.

"I know I did the right thing and I don't feel guilty about it.

"But I do feel angry that me and my family were made hide away and pretend we didn't exist.

"I met lots of Irish women just like me in the clinic, some older, some younger.

"But we all had the same in common, we all had to leave our own country to travel to another for something we should have gotten in our own."

## Cathy was 20 in her final year

**"I WAS the first person from my family ever to go to university. All my family were so proud of me. I had just started my final year when I found out I was pregnant.**

"I knew if I had the baby it would be due right in the middle of my exams so I'd have to drop out. I knew if I did that I'd never go back.

"I had been with my boyfriend for four years and when I told him what happened he was brilliant. He said that he would support me no matter what I wanted to do. If I wanted to have the baby, he got another job at night so that we could get a place together or he'd get me the money if I

wanted an abortion.

"We talked about it and decided that an abortion was the best choice. It wasn't that I didn't want to have children, it was just that I didn't want to have one right now.

### Advised

"Once I decided what I wanted to do I realised that I didn't have the first clue how to go about it. I finally confided in a friend who advised me to go to the Well Woman.

"They were really great and for the first time since all that happened I didn't feel lost. I got the name of a clinic in Britain and organised an appointment.

"The next problem was getting the money. It was going to cost £700, much

more if my boyfriend came with me.

"Because he had a job we managed to get a loan with the Credit Union. I worked at weekends and we felt that together we'd probably pay it back over two years.

"I was so glad that we managed to borrow enough so that he could come with me. It would just be so lonely to have to travel over there all on your own. I don't think I could have done that. But there were lots of Irish women in the clinic with me who did.

"All I remember feeling after was relief, that it was all over, that I had got my life back. I never regretted my decision. It was the right choice for me at that time in my life. I hope that when the time is right I'll have another baby."

**New Socialist Worker pamphlet:  
Abortion: Why Irish women must have the right to choose**

by Goretti Horgan  
€2.50 from SW sellers



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# Woman's right to have an abortion



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## Choice is fundamental to women's rights

by DR JULIET BRESSAN, a member of Doctors for Choice

I WORK as a GP in inner city Dublin. Like most doctors who trained in Ireland, I had no idea how many women in Ireland need abortions, nor how to look after these patients, until I started working in General Practice.

Because abortion is illegal here, medical students and trainee doctors are led to believe that we don't need to know anything about these mysterious matters. We are taught that abortion is for fallen women, and is not the concern of good doctors.

Until 1992, abortion wasn't even discussed in the media, other than to say that all abortions are evil, and that women must be prevented from aborting pregnancies, no matter what.

The X-case changed all that. People saw the horrific reality—a little girl wanted to kill herself, because she was raped, and the so-called pro-life judges couldn't care less. They changed their minds when they saw the compassion of thousands of people on the streets.

I think that despite official ideas, I was always pro-choice on abortion, because being able to choose whether or not to have a baby is so fundamental

to every woman's right to a decent life.

When I started to work as a doctor, I came across increasing numbers of women who are going for abortions.

Some young, some older, many married, most were in relationships, many had serious health issues, many had had several children already.

I also came across women in hospital having abortions here in Ireland, because their pregnancy was making them so ill.

The doctors and nurses who did these abortions are brave and ethical practitioners, who know how to put a patient's life before the idiosyncrasy of the law.

These abortions are always in secret, and the pro-lifers in the medical profession try to pretend that they never happen.

What is consistent about Irish women who go for abortions is their bravery, and their sincerity.

Many of the women who travel to England do so at extreme personal sacrifice, spending money they don't have, hiding post-op pain, hiding their guilt and covering up their tracks when they get back.

Most women don't take time off work, they put their own health at risk by travelling post-op.

Most Irish women have to have late abortions, and abortions under general anaesthetic. Irish women are all sent home on antibiotics, because of the risk of the surgery involved.

Further serious risks occur because vital medical information is not available to the abortion service in England, because doctors are forbidden from referring patients.

If abortion were legal here, we could offer abortions at six weeks, with the abortion pill (mifepristone) only. The abortion pill, in fact, works to provide a safe abortion for up to 20 weeks.

### Unethical

We could do abortions up to 12 weeks, when there is no foetus yet developed, using a simple syringe, even in a GP surgery.

This is what doctors in Holland and France are doing. But because of the law here, all of the women have to go to much later gestation, at greater medical risk, as well as social misery. This is what I find to be medically unethical.

The abortion counselling services here, such as the IFPA, and Marie Stopes, are a very important help to GPs, who are often very isolated in providing

medical advice to abortion patients. But doctors do need to be able to refer patients to local services, especially where there is foetal malformation, psychiatric illness, physical illness, or where the pregnant woman is herself still a child.

To only be able to provide abortion abroad is just medically unacceptable.

The current proposed amendment is medically unethical, as every doctor knows. It specifically legislates to ban abortion for women with psychiatric illness, allowing abortion only to women who are already dying.

No doctor would be able to practice under this law, without losing patients, and the danger of the anti-abortion law here has been proven time and time again: In the X-case where a 14 year old almost killed herself; in the C-case where a 13 year old almost killed herself; in the Waterford case where a dead woman was put on a life support machine against the will of her husband; and in the case of Sheila Rodgers who died because doctors refused to treat her for cancer during pregnancy.

Because of the ban on abortion, infanticide is still a regular event in Ireland. What will happen if the amendment is passed, is that women at suicidal risk, who can't travel, will go ahead and kill themselves. No doctor could stand over that.

## WHAT DO SOCIALISTS SAY

# Afghanistan — What victory?

THE UNITED States may have won an easy military victory in Afghanistan. The Taliban is defeated and US casualties are slight. But the world hardly looks a better place as a result and Afghanistan is a mess.

Aid agencies complain that US troops are driving around in civilian clothes, endangering genuine aid workers who will be targeted by bitter Afghans believing them to be US forces in disguise.

Poppy production has doubled in the areas the Northern Alliance has taken over. The whole country is littered with unexploded cluster bombs.

the US presence in Afghanistan." In Kandahar, equipped by Iran, forces loyal to Hekmatyar have prepared to stage a showdown with Karzai loyalists.

### Equipping

Bush has now threatened Iran for equipping commanders in Herat and Kandahar against US interests. (Of course, Iran has ambitions to become again a regional power.)

In his State of the Union address to Congress last month, Bush singled out Iran, Iraq and North Korea as forming an "axis of evil," threatening pre-emptive strikes against the counties.

Defence minister Admiral Ali Shamkhani hit back, "Iran is neither Afghanistan nor Iraq."

"Iran is a historical and strategic country with a legitimate, well-founded system of government".

US ally Israel has stepped up its war against the Palestinians and has itself begun threatening Iran, especially its nuclear power installations, developed with assistance from Russia.

This is no idle threat. Some years ago Israeli bombers destroyed an Iraqi nuclear power station. Shamkhani said any Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear reactor would be met with a military response.

Bush's threat to extend the "war on terrorism" to Iraq, Iran and North Korea is opening up divisions among governments which have so far supported the US.

### Culling

Suzanne Goldenberg reported in the *Guardian* from Siya Sang: "Here, as in nearly all the 380-odd villages of Jawand, hunger and disease ravage the population, culling babies, women, and the elderly. The living stagger on, coughing their lungs and their lives out with tuberculosis. People are so weakened by hunger that even flu can kill."

And behind the human tragedies, politically and militarily, nothing has been settled.

The new government of Hamid Karzai installed in Kabul on the back of the massive US bombing campaign is torn by rivalries. The civil war that raged in the country before the Taliban took over has started up again.

In Gardez in eastern Afghanistan, Karzai's nominated governor, Haji Bacha Khan Zadran and his men have been fighting troops loyal to Haji Saifullah, a tribal council chief, using artillery, mortars and heavy machine guns. After days of clashes at least 61 fighters were reported killed.

And around the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif scores have died in the past month as soldiers loyal to Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord, and Atta Mohammed, a Tajik commander, have clashed outside the city.

### Indiscriminate

B52 bombers are still flying sorties and US commandos are still mounting indiscriminate ambushes. In February the US was forced to admit that its commandos had killed 21 soldiers loyal to Hamid Karzai—the so-called "good guys"—in a gun battle at a high school in Uruzgan province.

Later CIA operatives were seen going round giving \$1000 a piece to the victim's families.

Legendary commander Ismail Khan, a hero of the resistance against Russian occupation, governs Herat province. When the US war began the Taliban pulled out their forces and allowed Khan to take over.

Writing in the *Asia Times* Syed Saleem Shahzad comments: "It is said that Khan is still in touch with the Taliban. He receives arms, money and supplies from Iran and speaks openly against Karzai's interim government. He also denounces

### Splinter

"If Bush goes ahead in even a limited way, it will splinter alliances such as Nato and could have deeply damaging consequences in terms of trade and financial stability.

"And that is not to mention the possible military fallout in respect of Israel, for example, or Japan and South Korea."

The US is already increasing its activities in parts of the world where it claims groups have links to Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaida network.

It has sent "advisers" to the Philippines to help the Filipino army track down the Abu Sayaff Islamist guerrilla group, which is opposed to the government.

The US is giving 30,000 M-16 rifles, night vision equipment, eight helicopters, a coastal patrol boat, 650 personnel and \$100 million to the Filipino army.

All this is to hunt down a rag-tag bunch of less than 100 guerrillas! In fact the real reason behind the intervention in the Philippines is to regain the US's position in the South East Asian region.

Bush's war is still on and the world is an even more dangerous place as a result.

by KEVIN WINGFIELD

# 1932 Belfast Unemployed Relief Riots...

by CONOR  
KOSTICK

# When the Falls and the Shankill united

**"Belfast in revolt. Workers shot down by police. As we go to press there is a fierce conflict in progress. Already there has been one striker killed and many wounded by gunfire. All the signs of revolution are there: barricades, trenches, and – at last – organisation."**

—An Phoblacht, 15th October, 1932.

**O**VER THE last hundred years Belfast has witnessed a number of great social upheavals in which thousands of workers, Catholic and Protestant, have stood shoulder to shoulder.

The outdoor relief riots of 1932 were one such example, and perhaps the instance with the most lasting political legacy due to the existence within the movement of a small revolutionary organisation.

The Revolutionary Workers Group had barely fifty members, working under very difficult conditions. Nevertheless they devoted their energies to organising the growing number of unemployed workers.

The sharp recession that followed the Wall Street Crash of 1929 hit Belfast particularly hard, because of its dependence on shipbuilding orders from around the world.

By 1932 nearly 74 percent of shipyard workers and about 40 percent of engineers were unemployed in Northern Ireland. Out of a population of 1.25m more than 100,000 were without work.

Although mass unemployment can breed despair and demoralisation, the RWG were able to turn anger into a powerful fighting spirit.

Some unemployed married men were given work on corporation schemes – such as repairing roads – to pay their dole.

By 1932 about 2,000 men were on this scheme, earning from 8 to 24 shillings a week for those with four or more children.

They had to turn up several days a week for what was often meaningless work but this gave the RWG a focus for organisation.

Every scheme was encouraged to elect a representative who then met with the other delegates and representatives of trade union branches in an Outdoor Relief Workers' Committee. This Committee called a mass meeting

for September 30th, 1932, at which all 2,000 of the relief workers turned up.

The unemployed workers demanded an end to task work, an increase in payment and an end to payment in kind.

They also agreed two demands that brought in support from across the Belfast working class.

The demand for benefits for unemployed single men and women won them support among the city's youth. And they demanded all outdoor work be paid at the proper full trade union rate.

This helped reassure employed workers that the unemployed were not going to allow themselves to be used to undermine the conditions of those with jobs.

October 3rd was set for the start of the strike if their demands not be met and a revolutionary socialist, Thomas Geehan, was elected as chair of movement.

On that day, not only did the 2,000 relief workers refuse to work, but 20,000 workers joined them on a demonstration. Right from the beginning of the strike solidarity between employed and unemployed was established.

Worried by this display of organisation, the Mayor and the Board of Guardians met with the Committee and offered to increase the amount of work available.

This was far from meeting the demands of the movement and was overwhelmingly rejected at a mass meeting on October 7th. The same meeting decided to escalate the action by appealing for a school students' strike, a rent strike and a massive demonstration for four days time.

Members of the Labour Party and trade union officials at the meeting grew anxious at the militancy.

They attempted to channel the enthusiasm of the strikers into the slogan 'wait for the June elections', by which they meant that the unemployed should look to getting Labour members onto the Board of Guardians.

This approach would have dissipated the movement altogether, but the workers' own sense of confidence and the strong presence of socialists meant that the slogan was rejected.

Instead many workers shouted that there should be a general strike on that day and the Trades Council members present were only able to head off what to them was an unacceptably revolutionary action by pretending that they would hold a special meeting to discuss issuing the call.

**■ In the build up to the big day, the Committee called mass meetings around the North, including special meetings for the wives of the strikers and working women of the textile industry.**

The Northern Ireland government decided to step in and crush the movement. It declared that



Workers from the Shankill Road marching at Bodenstown in 1934

the coming demonstration would be illegal and issued 4,000 rifles to the police. They called armoured cars into Belfast and considered mobilising the B Specials only to find that the force was unreliable as so many of them were unemployed and sympathetic to the strike.

The massive march went ahead and was fiercely attacked by the police. Workers responded by defending themselves with stones, ripping up paving stones, building barricades and digging trenches to block the armoured cars.

The *Irish Press* report of the day reads:

*"Cordon around Belfast. No entry without permission. Street fighting in widely separated areas. Revolver and rifle firing by police on huge crowds of unemployed in many districts; especially in Falls and Shankill areas. John Geegan, Millfield shot dead. Samuel Baxter, Regent Street, died of wounds received in Cullingtree Road, Falls, where an attack was made on an armoured car that had become trapped in a trench."*

Throughout the day Protestant and Catholic workers fought side by side and ran from district to district helping and encouraging one another. This was the feature of the events that most worried the *Belfast Telegraph*:

*"It was significant that for once the religious question did not enter into the trouble. Youths from Protestant areas were to be found in Catholic districts and vice versa."*

The unity of workers and unemployed, men and women, Protestant and Catholic was sealed with blood. As well as two men killed, about 100 workers were wounded by rifle fire.

The attempt to repress the movement had backfired, instead creating even greater determination and solidarity amongst the workers of Belfast. When the funeral of John Geegan and Samuel Baxter took place tens of thousands marched and all of working class Belfast turned out to line the streets.

Afraid of the movement that they had awoken and unable to wrest it from the leadership of revolutionaries into the safer hands of the Trades Council, the government and the Board of Guardians gave in.

On October 14th a mass meeting heard that they had won an increase in the basic weekly take home pay from 8 shillings to 20 shillings a week. Single men and women also won a victory – they would receive benefit for the first time, at a minimum of 10 shillings a week.

The demeaning process by which workers had previously had to humble themselves to get on the schemes was now scrapped.

Thomas Geehan addressed a jubilant crowd:

*"The last two weeks would be recorded as two of the most glorious in the history of the working class in Belfast. First of all they saw Protestant and Catholic workers marching together; and*

*Tuesday they saw them fighting together. The terms now offered constituted a magnificent victory."*

**F**or once, the lesson of workers' unity was not lost. Although the RWG was small entering the struggle, it now blossomed, obtaining hundreds of members, Protestant and Catholic.

Many of these found their way into the Communist Party which grew out of the RWG but there could have been an even greater revolutionary legacy but for the confused state of socialist politics in the South.

In 1934 the Republican Congress movement appeared in Ireland and quickly rallied radicals across thirty-two counties. Very impressive support for the new organisation came from experienced, militant, trade unionists and from republicans moving away from the conservatism of the IRA.

Branches were quickly established in the North, which included hundreds of Protestant workers. They were clear enough about the direction that the new movement should go in. It should combine opposition to the British Empire with opposition to capitalism.

They came in a hundreds strong contingent to the Wolfe Tone Commemoration in 1934 and on the banner of the Shankill Road branch was written "Break the connection with capitalism" and "James Connolly Club, Belfast. United Irishmen of 1934".

The IRA leaders ordered their

men to cordon off this contingent and prevent them unfurling their banners, which led to fighting as with the cry of "up the Shankill!" the Belfast contingent fought its way through to lay a wreath on Wolfe Tone's grave.

This magnificent spirit of socialist and anti-imperialist politics was lost to the Republican Congress after their Rathmines Congress that year.

At that meeting the Congress adopted the disastrous perspective that the national struggle had to be the priority and come first.

It was a classic 'stages' theory that meant the movement looked to form a block with other, conservative, nationalists rather than seeing the working class as the key to both social revolution and the destruction of sectarianism.

*The Republican Congress pushed republicanism to its limit, but did not break from republicanism.*

Because they considered class struggle to be premature, the Republican Congress had nothing to offer Protestant workers. The chance for a major turning point in Irish politics was wasted.

But the 1932 struggle provides an inspiring example of the possibilities for unity between Catholic and Protestant worker. It shows how a revolutionary organisation can abruptly find itself in a position to shape events, and in turn be reshaped into a significant force.



# in my view

## Muhammad Ali joins in Bush's crusade

REPORTS THAT Muhammad Ali's great grandfather was Irish reminded me of an Irish building worker called Paddy Monaghan.

At the time Ali was stripped of his world championship for refusing to fight in Vietnam, Monaghan was living in London.

As a protest Monaghan set-up a picket in front of the US embassy, stayed there for three years and collected over 20,000 signatures demanding Ali be reinstated.

That was the solidarity that Ali inspired.

Ali's life must be seen in the context of the movements against imperialism and racism that grew up in the 1960s.

The intensely political nature of Ali's contribution was first announced to an outraged white America when he declared in 1966, "I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong."

### Outraged

He was expressing sentiments that were shared by many people all about him, his sensitivity heightened by his closeness to the black revolutionary Malcolm X.

"Once liberated from its parochial prison," writes Mike Marqusee in his book on Ali, *Redemption Song*, "the sixties [were] about the growth of global consciousness from below. For people all over the world Ali embodied that consciousness. It was Ali's transgression of American norms - in an American idiom - that enabled him to build his global constituency."

Ali emerged alongside the anti-colonial movements throughout Africa and Asia and the civil rights movement in America. His political consciousness developed as part of the radicalisation of Black Power and the anti-Vietnam protesters.

Asked by one commentator what kind of champion he intended to be after he beat Sonny Liston in 1964, Ali replied: "I don't have to be what you want me to be. I can be what I want to be and I'm free to think what I want to think."

It was a statement that found meaning in Mississippi, where civil rights workers would risk, and sometimes lose, their lives fighting segregation; but equally in the newly independent states in Africa and the Caribbean.

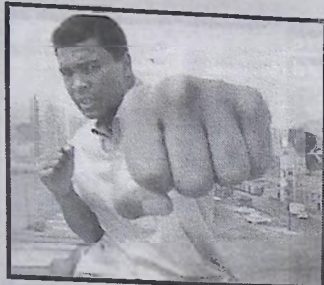
He made his comment in the year Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life imprisonment for opposing apartheid.

Ali was far more popular outside the US than within. Here was an American celebrity who had explicitly rejected his national identity in favour of a global one.

By refusing to "go 10,000 miles from home and drop bombs and bullets on brown people", he had put his money, and much more, where his mouth was.

When Ali opposed the draft he was offered an easy option if he would agree to join the army he could fight exhibition matches, to entertain the troops. He refused and within an hour he had been stripped of his title and had his boxing licence suspended. Later he was sentenced to five years in prison and fined \$10,000 (in the end they didn't have the nerve to jail him).

When a heckler at a meeting



Ali in his prime: "I ain't got no quarrel with them Vietcong."

offered to take his place in the army for \$1,000, Ali responded, "Your life is worth more than a thousand dollars, brother. Damn the money. Damn the heavyweight championship."

"I will die before I sell out my people for the white man's money."

The wealth of America and the friendship of all the people who support the war would be nothing if I'm not content internally and if I'm not in accord with the will of Allah."

At the time the New York Times, rejecting Ali's right to change his name, editorialised in favour of jailing "Cassius Clay."

But now much-loved by the establishment Ali has been asked to sell US policy abroad, especially in Muslim countries. According to the New York Times who now will use his name, "Mr Ali will have special credibility with an audience believed to be deeply suspicious of the United States."

This won't be the first time Ali has acted as an overseas representative of the US government. In 1980 he toured Africa in a doomed attempt to drum up support for the US boycott of the Moscow Olympics, a protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Then, as now, Ali's value for the US establishment lay precisely in the widely known fact that for some years he had spectacularly defied that establishment, risking jail in the process.

Ali's politics declined in the 1970s as those of the movement around did. And he spent the next decade fighting and being patronised by the establishment who despised him.

### Despised

Such is the way of boxing as he himself noted: "There is this nightmare image I always have. Like in the old slave days on the plantations, with two of us big black slaves fighting, almost on the verge of annihilating each other, while the masters are smoking big cigars and urging us on, looking for blood."

The ageing process, Parkinson's disease, and capitalism's endless capacity for containment and co-option have taken their toll of the legendary fighter.

As around the world a movement grows against the system grows again it is shame he isn't with it. But there is much to remember and admire.

"In his heyday," wrote Mike Marqusee, "Ali was like a computer virus, reversing polarities, short-circuiting connections, infiltrating the marginal into the mainstream."

Corporate capitalism may have neutralised the virus: but it can't eliminate the challenge that Ali so eloquently represented.

by SIMON BASKETTER

## Film

# Snobs & knobs in Altman's new class act

— HUGH O'CONNOR

ROBERT Altman's new film, *Gosford Park* shows the British aristocracy of the 1930's at their parasitic best.

The film is a fairly standard murder mystery with a dose of heavy satire.

The story centres on a truly wretched bunch of gentry on a shooting weekend—and their staff downstairs.

Their relationship and parallel worlds form the central theme.

### Servant

Nothing is shown in the film without a servant being present.

This is a clever play on the complete reliance on those upstairs on their servants and valets.

The more senior aristocrats are completely dismissive of anyone who actually made their money, such as a film director and actor who visit to research a film about, oddly enough, a murder in a large stately home, or a minor lord who married a wealthy "commoner".

Their sheer arrogance and contempt for those they believe to be inferior to them is laid on thick.

As relations get strained between the aristocrats, someone gets bumped off (twice!) and the murder mystery begins.

While Altman parodies the strict class structures, he offers no comment on it.

The class rigidities are reinforced by the staff downstairs, they are called by their masters name and sit according to their masters rank at dinner.



Tough at the top

The staff gossip about the party upstairs, and most are wholly immersed in their employers' world.

Altman shows their devotion to their posts and how, by and large, they simultaneously despise their employers.

### Subplots

There are some throwaway comments about the employers by younger members of staff, but no analysis of substance.

It feels like a missed opportunity. Altman makes the film confusing, especially at the start, where the

viewer is bombarded with gossip, you struggle to match it to any of the characters.

There are a myriad of subplots and themes that are difficult to follow.

While the performances are good, *Gosford Park* falls between stools.

The *Financial Times* commented, "It's also the film Trotsky might have made if handed a camera, a cast and an English stately home."

Perhaps, but in the end it isn't dramatic enough to be a good murder mystery or sharp enough to be a good satire and it shies away from its own politics.

## book

# Coffee table anti capitalism

HILARIOUS quotes from George W., powerful images and countless statistics exposing the gross inequalities of global capitalism almost make Anita Roddick's book *Take It Personally* a tempting purchase — almost.

Introducing articles from dozens of NGOs and anti-capitalist activists, Roddick calls on us all to make a difference by promoting fair trade, consumer boycotts and ethical investment. Fair enough. But when she suggests that these

along with a 12-point moral business code, a sprinkling of Keynesianism mixed with a little Buddhism are powerful ways to challenge global capitalism, she's either incredibly naïve or she thinks her readers are incredibly stupid.

### Selling

The problem is that far from being anti-capitalist, Anita Roddick is doing pretty well from the system with a Body Shop stake of £55m and products selling every 0.4 seconds.

And while she may compare capitalism to cancer, she sees "business" as something altogether different—as a victim of globalisation.

Her book and website inform us that she wants to smash the WTO, was opposed the Gulf War and—if you believe it all—almost single-handedly liberated the Indians of Amazonia—not to mention the two children in Nepal she supports!

However, the bits left out paint a very different picture. Nothing on the Body Shop's low wages, vicious anti-union policy, lies about animal testing, or allegations of formaldehyde in baby lotion.

While 1 percent of sales goes to Community Trade, vast amounts are spent convincing women they need beautifying and paying lawyers to make

expensive libel threats and take legal actions against anyone exposing the company.

Nice pictures, good quotes but, all in all, this book is an insult—not just to the anti-capitalist movement—but an insult to the workers in the Grafton St. store who went on strike for union recognition.

The Body Shop is a brand as bad as Starbucks and no amount of gloss can hide it.

Take it personally!

## 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.

€1,250 fine for stewarding a peaceful anti-war protest

# Defend civil liberties

ON TUESDAY 29th January, Kieran Allen, a member of the Steering Committee of the Irish Anti-War Movement, was fined a total of €1,250 for his part in stewarding a protest.

He denied any wrongdoing and has protested about attempts to curb his civil liberties.

Allen was convicted under Section 6 and

Section 8 of the Public Order Act.

The convictions arose out of a protest on the US Embassy on 13th October 2001. At this protest, the Green Party TD John Gormley suggested that Britain was responsible for the war as well as the US.

This point met with some approval and the chair of the protest, Richard Boyd Barrett, suggested that there be a march to the British embassy after all the speeches were made.

When people attempted to peacefully march to the British embassy two leading members of the Irish Anti War Movement were arrested.

District Justice Brady chose to believe the evidence of Gardai rather than those at the protest including TDs.

As well as the fine he ruled that €3,500 must be put up front in cash as a surety if an appeal was to be made.

● In October 1999, the *Phoenix* magazine published the following pro-

file of District Justice Patrick Brady who handed down the draconian fine on Kieran Allen.

"The most interesting appointee to the District Court, however, is Patrick L Brady, who although a member of no political party was Mary Harney's nominee.

Brady was for many years a partner in McMahon and Tweedy solicitors, along with John Condon.

Before that Brady was a priest and ministered to his flock in the Dublin Archdiocese in the 1970s before changing vocations."

## Scrap the Public Order Act

THE PUBLIC Order Act is a draconian piece of legislation that originated from two sources.

First, in 1981 the Supreme Court declared the Vagrancy Act unconstitutional. This act allowed the police to move people on and charge them for "loitering". The removal of the vagrancy act was greeted with irritation by those who wished to increase Garda powers. They wanted a replacement piece of legislation.

### Protests

Second, in 1986 a Public Order Act was introduced by the Tory Party in Britain to curb protests in the aftermath of the miners strike. The Progressive Democrats used this legislation as a model to introduce a private members bill in 1993.

The previous year there had been large-scale protests over both the X case and the Gulf War.

Originally the Justice Minister Maire Geoghegan Quinn opposed their bill claiming that the British Act "reflects the extremely serious industrial, racial and other social tensions in Britain in recent decades.

"We do not have that background here or problems of that scale". However a few months afterwards she did an about turn and incorporated elements of the PDs' proposal into their own Bill.

Soon after the Public Order Act was introduced, workers at Team Aer Lingus were threatened

with its use during their protests over a threatened closure.

Since September 11th 2001, there has been a dramatic increase in the use of the Public Order Act against political protests.

Those charged under this act in recent months include: 2 supporters of the Irish Anti-War Movement; 14 activists from Globalise Resistance; 8 people arrested on a Critical Mass bike day; 2 anti-war campaigners who protested in Shannon; 1 Globalise Resistance supporter who was lobbying support for Irish activists detained in Genoa.

The provisions of the Public Order Act make it wide open to abuse. These provisions include:

■ Section 6: Makes it an offence to "use or engage in threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour".

Even Gay Mitchell of Fine Gael said, during a Dail Debate on its introduction, "I could envisage circumstances where political protests or trade union pickets may involve displaying words on placards which may be considered insulting or obscene".

■ Section 8: Gives the police virtually unlimited powers to move people on who are "loitering" or who use "threatening, abusive or insulting words".

Failure to comply can mean a sentence of 6 months in jail.

■ Section 14: Defines as a "riot", a gathering of 12 people or more who have a "common purpose" to "threaten to use unlawful violence"

It is "immaterial" whether all the 12 use violence—they can all be branded as involved in a "riot" which carries a penalty of 10 years in jail.

The District Court does not make case law so the police do not have a right to generalise automatically from this case.

But, as this is the first of many cases facing protestors, it also reveals the new agenda that has become visible since September 11th.

Globally, the horrific events of September 11th are being used by political elites to uproot traditional civil liberties.

In the US this process has gone furthest with the detention of over 1,000 Arab-Americans and the establishment of military tribunals.

The EU is also seeking to re-define terrorism to describe any action that impedes governments actions.

### Repressive

Typically, these repressive measures are introduced in a panic over "terrorism" or "anti-social behaviour".

But they then become a resource that is used—often largely outside the public gaze—against dissenters and poorer elements in society.

■ Raise a resolution of protest in their trade unions, students unions and community organisations.

■ Support a protest outside Old Richmond Hospital Court, North Richmond St at 9.45 on Thursday February 21st when 14 Globalise Resistance supporters face trial.

■ Donations to the Civil liberties defence fund can be made through: Globalise Resistance, Bank of Ireland, 34 College Green, Dublin 2. Account number 35247134

Two days of meetings and forums on the politics of revolution

## Students & REVOLUTION



Chris Harman (Author of *The Economics of the Madhouse*), Lindsey German (Author of *Sex, Class and Socialism*), Kieran Allen (Sociology Lecturer UCD)

Goldsmith Hall, Trinity College Dublin, Pearse Street

Friday Feb 22nd & Saturday Feb 23rd

Seattle...Genoa...Mexico...South Korea... Argentina...

## Diary Upcoming events

● 21 Feb GR protest to defend civil liberties - 9.30 outside the Old Richmond Hospital - 087 6838746

● 21 Feb Screening of Battleship Potemkin - 7pm IFC, Temple Bar, Dublin

● 21 Feb ANV fundraising gig - 11.30pm Ri-Ra, Dame Court, D2 10 tickets 087 7955013

● 22-23 Feb Students & Revolution conference - starts 22nd 6.30pm Trinity College, Dublin 087 9890330

● 23 Feb Quaker conference - Globalisation: Implications for the developed world

starts 9.30am UCD 307 13 086 3702421

● 24 Feb Screening of La Commune - 1pm IFC, Temple Bar, Dublin

● 2 March Shut down Sell-a-field protest - 3pm Central Bank Dame St., Dublin

● 5 March GR monthly activists' meeting - 8pm Doyle's, Fleet St., D2

● 6 March Abortion Referendum

● 7 March Student grant protest - 087 9890330

● 8 March International Women's Day

● 8-9 March Marxism in Belfast - starts 5.30pm QUB Students' Union - 0794 4245374

● 9 March Dublin City anti-bin tax conference - 12.30 - venue to be announced - 087 9090166

● 18-23 March Words & Images against racism - exhibition - Pearse House, Pearse St., Dublin



Upcoming event?

Tell us:

01 872 2682

swp@clubi.ie

## Abortion referendum pro choice activist groups:

- Bray (Dave 01-2304621)
- Cabra (Helena 087-9707911)
- Dublin city centre (Sinead 087-2612634)
- Tallagh (Alice 01-4539085)
- Artane (Thomas 0868295336)
- Rathmines (Mary 01-4550855)
- Dundrum (Melisa 087-2550947)
- Ballyfermot (Brid 087-9090166)
- Finglas (Pat 086353062)
- Ballymun (Kevin 0863074060)
- Blanchardstown (Jo 01-8204008)
- Rialto (Dorinda 087-6259750)
- Dublin 4 (Ann 087-2332230)
- UCD (Bernie 085-7260748)
- TCD (Aoife 087-7955013)
- DCU (Marnie 087-9889244)
- UCG (Jamie 086-3039787)
- Maynooth (Jenny 086-3600576)
- Lucan (Mark 086-4061665)
- Galway (Bernadette 091-590452)
- Waterford (Maria 086-3066594)
- Cork (Michael 086-3125465)
- Drogheda (Donncha 087-9827413)
- Dundalk (Cormac 087-9561947)
- Limerick (Leah 086-8212798)
- Dun Laoghaire (Catherine 085-7122748)

## SWP activist meetings

## Postal Workers

## Fight back starts

**ONLY weeks after post workers struck against sectarianism following the murder of Daniel McColgan, they are gearing up for a fight on pay.**

Members of the postal workers union, the CWU, voted strongly in favour of a national strike for a 5 percent wage increase without strings and pre-conditions.

Workers take home around £200 a week for a six day week, nearly all the workers have anti-social shifts that eat into family time.

One shift, for example, starts at 5.30am and not surprisingly this leaves many workers exhausted.

The vote for industrial action at Royal Mail is part of a wider fight back in Britain that is now spreading to Northern Ireland. Industrial disputes have prompted a red scare in some of the right wing press in Britain, but the action has also prompted union leaders to speak out against Tony Blair's privatisation policies.

Action here by postal workers led to the ICTU calling a half-day general strike of workers against sectarianism.

**POSTAL** workers at Derry sorting office held a one-day walkout on Monday 4th in response to a loyalist death threat.

The threat specifically named a postal worker who has a round in the Waterside area. The workers immediately stopped deliveries, but management refused to take the threat seriously.

Post office regional manager Michael Kennedy said the threat "only affected one worker", and said he would dock their pay if they didn't go on their delivery rounds. The workers then walked out for the rest of the day. Workers were docked half a day's pay.

This is on top of the day's pay docked during the action over Daniel McColgan's murder. The UDA in Derry later issued a statement saying that there was no threat against postal workers.

This action now needs to spread to the public sector which is now under continued threat of privatisation by the Stormont executive.

## Threatened

One postal worker told *Socialist Worker*, "Workers here feel threatened by what the post.com people are doing."

"In the last week they just announced the de-regulation of the Post Office, which has been on the cards since Blair got in to power."

"This means that any company can come in and operate any area, it will be like British Rail all over again."

This same policy will mean the inevitable rise in prices and lowering of wages while the standard of services will fall.

De-regulation has already been pushed through in New Zealand where three or four post boxes appear beside each other instead of one.

Another union activist in Belfast told *Socialist Worker*, "This is the most important ballot ever in the Royal Mail."

"Our fight is as much about the strings attached as the percentage pay increase."

"Management are trying to bring in increased productivity targets although it is not possible to reach the targets we already have here."

"And they say if we don't achieve our targets we cannot be part of future pay reviews!"

"They also want to divide up future pay rises between different regions so there would no longer be a single national rate."

"And most important of all, the pay rise on the table entails the union signing up to a rationalisation programme involving a review of the whole network."

"This means union-sponsored job losses—we can't accept that."

"The union now has the mandate and should call action immediately. I personally think we need all-out action. But the leadership from the union officials has been very weak."

"We are arguing for the setting up of local strike committees so the rank and file can take effective control of their strike."

**★** In the South, An Post's chief executive, John Hynes has announced plans to axe over 1,140 jobs "across all business divisions and grades between now and the end of 2003."

The CWU had earlier entered negotiations on a "recovery plan" which would concede a number of job losses but Hynes has used this concession to demand a huge redundancy programme amounting to 8 percent of the workforce.

One An Post worker told *Socialist Worker*, "The deregulation agenda—allowing private companies to carry more post and the hiving off of services to be sold off—is what is behind this move. There is a lot of anger at the aggressive attitude of management. The union should be getting out of 'partnership talks' on the 'recovery plan' and organising the defence of jobs and conditions through industrial action."

## Teachers: ASTI

**SECONDARY** school teachers have given a resounding no to the government's €34 deal on supervision and substitution.

The derisory rate along with the fact that it was non-pensionable led to rejection and the ASTI has voted to withdraw from these voluntary duties from March 4.

It is now up to the government to put in place an alternative so that schools can remain open.

The failure to deliver a decent increase to teachers has understandably exhausted the goodwill that government has exploited for so long.

Supervision and substitution were never the issue in the ASTI campaign and some members resented having to vote on it while the substantive issue remains outstanding.

The decision of Bernadine O'Sullivan, former ASTI president and one of the key activists in the union, to stand against Joe O'Toole (amongst others) for a seat in the Seanad is a sign that the fight to keep teachers pay, and the quality of the education provided to students, will remain firmly on the agenda.

With the benchmarking report due in June and a "war" promised by the INTO leadership if it does not deliver substantial increases the question of teachers pay is far from over.

**Mullingar nurses**

**ABOUT 250** nursing staff at Longford Westmeath General Hospital in Mullingar took action against overcrowding in January.

One of the nurses in the hospital told *Socialist Worker*, "We have been complaining to the management for 14 months about chronic overcrowding and no extra staff in the hospital."

"A cubicle designed for four beds would often have six squeezed in. There was not even a curtain around the patient and we couldn't do our job properly."

"These conditions meant we could not give adequate patient care and often contravened the Health and Safety regulations."

After months of having their complaints ignored, the nurses, members of INO, balloted and voted 98 percent to take industrial action.

"We organised a work-to-rule, which meant that we would not allow extra beds."

"We demanded a proper admissions/discharge policy be put in place."

"The fact is that there are too few beds. But when the beds are full up, there have still been more routine admissions causing the overcrowding."

"Obviously we will cater for any emergency, but until a new block is open with more beds and nursing staff routine admissions should be limited to what the hospital can safely take."

The nurses' action soon got results. Two days after implementing the work-to-rule, the LRC intervened and the nurses agreed to defer their action to allow the management until March to draw up a proper admission/discharge plan.

Dave told us of last years anti-poverty demonstration march organised by the NUS/USI, "I had to work. It's the same for a lot of people. It's a bit ironic and sad that we are too skint to even go on a demonstration against student poverty. I wish I did go, it would beat staying at work all day."

**★** PROBATION officers have balloted by three to one for industrial action. The probation officers will stop providing reports to the new Parole Board.

Despite the fact that the service is run down, the probation service is not spending €2.1 million of the money it has been allocated. According to one probation officer, "This is money that was supposed to go to rehabilitation of offenders but it is just sitting there."

"The specific reason for the action is that the government is bringing in a new director but want someone with a business background rather than someone involved in social services."

As *Socialist Worker* went to press probation officers are meeting to discuss escalating the action

## Bin Tax

## Stand up to the threats: Don't pay!

**THE Campaign Against the Bin Tax in Dublin City Council area is calling on all householders who have refused to pay the Bin tax, not to panic and not to pay, following the issuing of legal threats from Dublin City Council's Law Agents.**

Letters sent to thousands of households are notifying householders that they will be pursued through the

courts for costs and for payment of the Bin Tax.

Over one hundred thousand households are refusing to pay this new waste management charge which is now €120.43 for the year 2001. Bills for 2002 have yet to be issued. Brid Smith, spokesperson for the Campaign Against the Bin Tax said "This latest threat by the Law Agents is designed to frighten and panic householders into paying the bin charges."

"But we know that the vast majority of householders are still refusing to pay and none of us should be bullied by Dublin City Council."

"This charge is an unjust form of double taxation against PAYE workers who already pay the vast bulk of taxation in this country."

"We are taxed on all we earn and taxed on all we buy and on our bills. Instead of pursuing those who pay most taxes through the courts, our justice system would serve us better if the law pursued the hundreds of rich and powerful who have dodged paying their share of taxes."

"We should not forget the Ansbacher account holders, the DIRT tax account holders, the Golden Circle who owe millions in taxes to this society. It is not only Liam Lawlor who should be in prison."

The Campaign Against the Bin Tax is distributing thousands of leaflets to encourage people not to panic and not to pay.

The campaign has a legal defence fund organised for any of its members who may be pursued through the courts and will mount major demonstrations outside any Court cases which may take place.

For further information contact Brid Smith at 087-9090166

**SHUT DOWN SELLAFIELD**

**...OR SHUT DOWN DUBLIN ON MARCH 2ND**

Emergency shut down of Dublin Saturday 3pm Central Bank Globalise Resistance

e-mail: globalise\_resistance@yahoo.com  
phone: 086 4098186

## Hospitals

**MAINTENANCE** craftsmen in voluntary hospitals in the Dublin area have taken action in a dispute over on-call payments.

The employers, the Health Services Employment Agency has refused to deal effectively with the workers grievances for over two years.

One shop steward told *Socialist Worker*, "We get paid just four hours for 'stand-by'—being available to come in out of hours, all over the weekend and at night."

"The HSEA has given us the run-around, promising talks, suggesting we deal with the claim through benchmarking, all with no result."

"Last November the craft workers withdrew from on-call until the HSEA comes up with a genuine offer."

The craft group consists of BATU, AEEU, TEEU and UCAT.

"At a recent meeting with shop stewards from across the hospitals union officials tried to get us to

return to on-call. This was rejected unanimously."

"Unfortunately the union leaders have avoided public statements on the dispute, fearing the O'Reilly press

will present it as 'workers hold patients to ransom'."

"But as far as I can see all the workers are determined to see a decent offer on the table before we return to on-call"

Meanwhile AEEU members who are now part of the Amicus union have been called to separate meetings from which members of the MSF union have been excluded.

John said, "Members who formerly belonged to MSF were told we could not attend the meeting even though we are now supposedly amalgamated into Amicus."

This is a perfect situation for management. They know that they can withstand industrial action from 50 isolated workers. Poor union organisation is helping management in their effort to force workers to work harder.

If the machine shop goes it alone, the workers will be isolated and open to defeat. Union members must make this a united fight for every job. — not "every man for himself" but "one out all out".

Picture

John, a shop-steward in Shorts, paints a different picture to management. He says there's plenty of work.

"We are being pushed to make one unit in three days instead of four, and we are being told that there are more orders coming in". Workers who complain are being told that Canadair will just take their money elsewhere unless deadlines are met.

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## Disability rights

**OVER 60** people protested at the Dail against the Disability Bill. The government claims the bill will provide for the rights of the disabled. But the word "rights" is excluded altogether from the wording of the Bill.

The Bill will prevent disabled people from bringing legal action if they believe a state body has failed to fulfil their obligations.

By excluding rights from the Bill the government can continue to make vacuous sounding statements but then do nothing.

For instance, all trains are supposed to have disabled access by 2015 but train platforms are not required to be accessible till 2020! For details of future protests contact The Forum of People with Disabilities 01 878 6077

## Students

**THE NUS/USI** has called a demonstration against student poverty in Northern Ireland.

It plans to lobby the Assembly for the restoration of the maintenance grant and the total abolition of student fees.

Student fees and lack of grants mean many students are leaving university with mountains of debt over their heads.

A report out last year showed that the majority of students leave university with an average debt of £7,000 to £10,000.

Because of this many students find they cannot finish their courses. Another recent survey found that 20 percent of students drop out

of their courses, mainly due to financial reasons.

Dave, a student at Queens University in Belfast told *Socialist Worker*, "It's a matter of fact that students are treated like shit."

"We are given some of the lowest wages and crappiest housing in society."

"At the moment I'm working at a shop and am on the minimum wage."

"I seriously can't afford my education and am thinking about leaving the course I'm doing, it has got that bad."

Megan, a second year student agreed, "Me and all my flat mates work at the university during the day and find work during the night wherever we can."

"Our house is in a seriously bad condition, but the landlord feels happy enough to rip us off for what is barely a roof over our heads."

# Socialist Worker

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For a Workers' Republic and International Socialism

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★ 20,000 protest at the WEF in New York

★ 70,000 meet in Porto Alegre

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## STOP HIM BEFORE HE KILLS AGAIN

# GEORGE BUSH'S

# OBSCENE

# BILLION

# A DAY ON

# WEAPONS



**BUSH'S latest madness is a proposed military budget of \$379 billion for 2003 — more than \$1 billion a day.**

Bush wants to allocate nearly \$50 billion more to the Pentagon budget alone.

With a population of nearly 300 million, the US would be spending roughly \$1,200 per head on weapons. Yet the US has the highest number of people living below the poverty line in the developed world.

Raytheon, the arms company with a plant in Derry, is building missiles and "kill vehicles" for a U.S. Star Wars Missile Defence System. The National Missile Defence System will fire missiles at any object the U.S. military deems a threat.

Covering the basic needs of 250 million needy children around the world would cost \$8 billion, less than Bush is proposing to spend on Star Wars.

Bush admits \$2 billion a month has been spent bombing Afghanistan. Now US rulers are turning away from the carnage they left behind (see page 6), to send troops to the Philippines and threaten war against Iran, Iraq, Somalia, and North Korea.

The 20,000 people who protested against war and the WEF in New York and 70,000 discussing an alternative in Porto Alegre show there is growing resistance to the system.

And there could be no clearer reason to get organised in building resistance to the system than the Toxic Texan and his war on the world.