

Socialist Worker

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inside:

**LATIN
AMERICA IN
REVOLT** —PAGE 8

**AN OPER
LETTER TO
SOCIALISTS**
—PAGE 4

**BUSH WANTS TO
PLUNDER AFRICA** —PAGE 5

GOTCHA!

BUSH & BLAIR'S WAR LIES EXPOSED

'Saddam Hussein sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa despite having no nuclear power programme that would require it'.

THIS is what a British government dossier declared on 24th September 2002 to justify their claim that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction.

It was a downright lie based on forged Iraq-Niger correspondence, which even got the wrong name for the minister responsible in Niger.

The US government knew the documents were false since Febru-

ary 2002. Their ambassador to Niger, Barbro Owens-Kirkpatrick had conducted an investigation and found there was no agreement for the sale of the 500 tons of uranium that was claimed in the document.

This position was subsequently backed up in another investigation conducted by a retired diplomat Joe Wilson in February 2002.

However, either the US government deliberately did not tell the British the truth—or they both conspired to manufacture the lie. With a technique known as 'hidden hand third party verification', the US government used the British government dossier to spin out the claim.

In Bush's State of the Union

Address on 28 January 2003, he said,

'The British government has learnt that Saddam Hussein recently sought uranium from Africa'.

CIA Director George Tenet has now been forced to admit that he knew this was all a lie.

However, this is only the tip of an iceberg.

Everything about the war was built on a lie that is only now coming into full public view.

During the war, it was claimed that US troops had rushed to take Baghdad airport under heavy Iraqi fire.

Now *Time* magazine has reported that the 3rd Infantry Division

deployed at Baghdad airport stole duty-free items including perfume, expensive watches and thrashed up five serviceable Boeing aeroplanes.

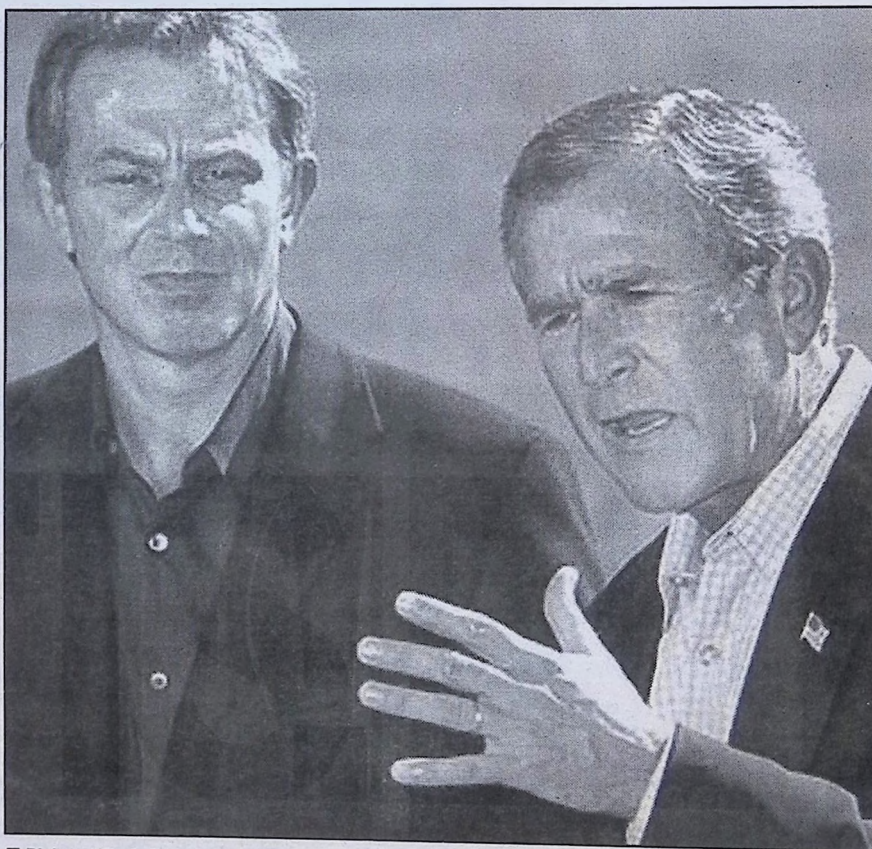
The US government has persistently refused to do a count of the number of civilian deaths.

However, the Survey of Civilian Deaths in Iraq has estimated that the numbers range from 4,000 to 7,000 deaths.

The Irish government played its own part in the lie machine.

A report commissioned by the Irish Anti-War Movement and written by Colin Coulter and Kieran Allen reveals that:

■ The Irish government lied about the use of Shannon airport until 13



■ Blair and Bush: Blood on their hands

January when stories appeared in the press about thousands of US troops with weapons.

Yet under Irish law no foreign soldiers with guns or uniforms were allowed on Irish soil.

■ They repeated, word for word, the lies about weapons of mass destruction, claiming that they were an immediate threat, which had to be dealt with.

The issue about lying is not just about the past record.

Bush and Blair want to launch new wars against Iran and North Korea.

Exposing their lie machine now will make it harder for them to do just that.

ABORTION: WHY TRAVEL?

THE High Court in the North has turned down the Family Planning Association's request to instruct the Dept of Health to issue guidelines on when abortion is legal.

But the judgement is not a victory for anti-abortionists. The ruling states that abortion is legal in the North if, in the clinical judgement of the woman's doctor, the physical or mental health of the woman is at serious or grave risk.

However a doctor could interpret the ruling in a liberal manner, that is, that forcing a woman to continue an unwanted pregnancy puts her mental health at serious risk.

The judgement also stated that the health service must provide facilities for abortion when the circumstances arise.

Northern women are THREE times more likely to have an abortion after 20 weeks than is the norm in Britain. The reason is that it is difficult to get the £6-700 necessary to travel to England.

If abortion were available on the NHS, no woman would choose to have a late abortion. Instead, there would be the same situation as in Britain where more than 9 out of 10 abortions are carried out before the 12th week of pregnancy.

Women in the North pay the same taxes and use the same health service as women in Britain. So why do they not have the same health care when it comes to abortion as in Britain?

CHILDCARE SCANDAL

FORTY percent of parents of pre-school children now use childcare, according to a survey from the Central Statistics Office.

Parents in Dublin paid an average of 6.51 euro an hour to have their children looked after.

This is the horrific reality of privatised childcare in Ireland. There are few workplace crèches and the government says it has no responsibility for the care and welfare of under fours.

However, why should free education only start after four, when some of the most important earliest learning experiences occur before that?

Tax breaks are not the solution to childcare problems. A fully funded public system of crèches is.

Now Iraqi oil flows to the US

TWO million tons of Basra crude oil left Iraq in July. It was one of the first direct oil purchases since the fall of Saddam.

The first company to move oil was BP but they are to be followed closely by Chevron Texaco.

At least three quarters of the new oil will be heading for the US.

The sales are \$ 5 per barrel below standard US crude prices.

Oil experts are predicting that exploitation of new finds, such as the huge Qurna field in

Southern Iraq and in the untapped Western Desert could see Iraq produce 8 million barrels per day by 2020.

This would give the US huge leverage over oil—weakening the hold of Saudi Arabia and Russia.

The US Coalition Authority has drawn up a budget for Iraq and oil exports are supposed to fund half of it.

They also have plans to auction off Iraq's oil for the next four years to the oil companies now to pay for re-construction.

Responsibility for reconstruction lies with the US Agency for International Development (USAID). They have issued 15 main contracts including seaport administration.

The aim is to privatise everything and allow big US companies such as Bechtel and Halliburton to grab as much as they can.

Meanwhile USAID says it could take over a year just to get the water treatment system in Baghdad functioning again.

Congratulations, Mary Kelly!

MARY Kelly has won the first round in her legal battle over damaging a US warplane at Shannon when a jury at Kildush District Court failed to reach a verdict on criminal damage.

The DPP can now either re-enter the charge or drop it. Mary was, however, convicted of a lesser charge of trespass.

Judge Moran said at times it seemed that the US government was on trial and not Mary Kelly.

Which is exactly right. In her defence Mary Kelly had the former US Attorney General Ramsey Clarke and the former UN envoy Denis Halliday testify that she was perfectly right to take action to prevent an illegal war.



Let my parents stay



NEARLY 700 people turned out for a lunchtime protest in Dublin organised by Residents against Racism to demand that the parents of Irish children be allowed to stay here.

Bertie and his government claim to be pro-family—but not when it comes to immigrants. Irish children who are born to parents who do not hold an Irish passport can be separated from them if McDowell's police choose to deport them.

This sick measure is a time-bomb ticking away and the huge turnout from mainly immigrants shows they will not stand for it.

Meanwhile, the Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC) has slammed McDowell's measure to force all asylum seekers to avail of direct provision. McDowell ordered that asylum seekers be banned from getting rent allowance in the private sector.

They have to accept a reduced payment of 19.10 euro a week and 9.60 euro for each child and live in hostel-type accommodation.

The report says that the aim of the policy is 'to make the experience of asylum seeking so unbearable that people are effectively forced to abandon their right to seek asylum'.

PHOTO: REDJADE/INDYMEDIA

They carried us out like dogs

EVERYONE has heard of the 'rescue of Private Jessica Lynch' story.

Private Lynch was actually receiving medical treatment in an Iraqi hospital.

But what about other patients who did not get the full limelight treatment from the US media?

Guardian journalist Ed Vulliamy has written a harrowing piece about Daham Kassim, who was a few doors down in the same hospital as Private Lynch.

Bombers

Kassim had tried to get out of Nasiriyah on 24 March as US bombers approached. He got to the outskirts of the city where he

was stopped by two US tanks.

He stopped his car 60 metres away and described what happened.

Silent

'Less than a minute passed. I saw no one. It was silent. I could see their guns moving down.'

'There was a terrible noise, and my car was buried in shooting. I saw my eldest daughter, Mawra, die.'

'She was nine; I saw it with my eyes: she took the first shot, opened her eyes, and closed them again.'

Guffran, his second daughter, was also killed immediately.

'But my son, Mohammed, he was six and in the first year of primary school, he was still breathing.'

'And my Zainab, she is five, was also alive, although she had been shot in the head.'

The wounded were brought to an American field hospital but on 27 March, 'there were some Americans wounded, in the fighting.'

'Maybe they needed the beds.'

'So they told us we had to go outside. I heard the order "put them out" and they carried us like dogs, out into the cold, without shelter, or a blanket.'

'It was days of the sandstorms, and freezing at night.'

'And I heard Zainab crying "Papa, Papa, I am cold, I am cold. Then she went silent. Completely silent".'

Galway attempts to ban leaflets

GALWAY City Council is trying to ban distribution of leaflets.

The city's huge anti-war movement developed mainly from networks, which were established through street leafleting.

Under the guise of litter bye-laws, the city manager is proposing to ban leaflet distribution except for the period during elections.

Democracy is now to be confined purely to

conventional politics at the ballot box.

A similar attempt to introduce a bye law in Dublin to ban protests from O Connell Street under the guise of environmental concerns was defeated when 500 people turned up outside a city council meeting to protest.

Galway also needs 'people power' to stop this new attack on democratic rights,

CHEAPER TO LAY THEM OFF

A SURVEY by the redundancy section of the Department of Trade, Enterprise and Employment found that it is much easier for employers to lay off Irish workers than British workers.

In Ireland an employer would pay 1,200 euros to lay off a worker with ten years service—their British counterpart would have to pay 3,568 euros.

SHOP TILL YOU DROP

'We don't want Soviet style price freezes here' says Mary Harney. 'Competition and more privatisation will reduce prices.'

It doesn't seem to be working, though. Pubs are putting on huge mark-ups; VHI prices have jumped 50 percent since BUPA arrived; and mobile phone charges are the highest in EU.

So, Harney's answer is, consumers must shop around more!

Maybe they could if they could borrow a helicopter to check out their local off licence.

editorial

Ulster Unionist Party in disarray

THE TWO wings of the Ulster Unionist Party, having torn the party apart in recent years, now seem ready to ditch David Trimble and go for the 'dream ticket' leadership of Reg Empey and Jeffrey Donaldson in an attempt to pull the Party together.

But the causes of Unionist disunity are too deep to be fixed by a change in leadership.

Unionism has lost its economic and social base. The collapse of traditional manufacturing means Unionism can no longer pretend to do Protestant workers a favour by giving them poorly paid jobs ahead of Catholics.

More and more Protestant workers realise that all the 'benefits' of Unionism have been one way—straight into the pockets of those now living in the leafy suburbs of North Down and its like.

But from a socialist point of view, the biggest problem is the lack of an alternative for Protestant workers who have seen through traditional unionism.

Most who want a more open society simply don't bother voting in elections or vote for the least objectionable candidate on offer.

The official debate has been all about which policy best represents the interests of 'the Protestant/Unionist community'.

Community

However, when it comes to politicians talking about the 'Protestant/Unionist'—or the 'Catholic/Nationalist' community—you can be sure that there is nothing in it for the working class section of that 'community'.

While Unionist politicians quarrel about whether or not support for the Good Friday Agreement is good for the 'Unionist community', they are not concerned with the way in which the Agreement is being used to impose the neo-liberal agenda of privatisation,

We need an alternative that puts class ahead of community

low pay and cuts in public services. These are the issues, which affect working people and their families, whether Protestant or Catholic.

Whatever the outcome of the squabbles within the Unionist Party, it will make no difference to the lives of Protestant workers. Because, as socialists have long argued, there is no way of improving the lives of people living in poverty on the Shankill that does not also involve improving the lives of those living in poverty on the Falls.

What Protestant—and Catholic—workers need is a socialist alternative that will put class ahead of community.



■ At loggerheads: David Trimble and Jeffrey Donaldson

After boom years, employers stick in boot

NEARLY every day brings news of redundancies. Between 20 June and 9 July, nearly 1,500 workers lost their jobs.

At the first sign of difficulty, the employers reach for the redundancy notice. They made huge profits in the boom years, but they want to load the cost of the recession onto workers now.

For years, the employers and the government have preached the doctrine of 'flexibility'. Workers had to show restraint,

to be more productive, to accept weakened unions, in order to get the Celtic Tiger going.

In reality, the Celtic Tiger developed because US capital needed a platform inside the EU to invade its markets. They choose Ireland mainly because it was a virtual tax haven.

Conditions

Accepting lower pay and conditions has never guaranteed workers security—as thousands are now finding.

Irish workers are now saddled with huge level of personal debt due to fantasyland mortgages. They live in one of the dearest countries in the EU. In addition, they now often find their jobs on the line in an economy that is over-reliant on US investment that is concentrated in the volatile electronics sector.

The workers' movement desperately needs a new direction. Up to now its leaders have preached two messages; that they must operate as 'social partners' with the

employers, and that efforts to build independent militant unions were futile because of globalisation.

Message

The message had an appeal as long as Irish capitalism looked like a success story. But as Aer Rianta and Dublin Bus workers are finding there is now a need for a new strategy of resistance.

As we move into this era, it is vital that we clear out the organised defeatism in our own

ranks. This has come primarily from union leaders who have failed the test of virtually every struggle from Ryanair to the closure of Irish Glass Bottle.

They may not want or be able to lead real struggles. But across the world, there is more than enough evidence that new generation of working class militants is emerging alongside the anti-capitalist movement.

The challenge now is to bring that message into the heart of the Irish labour movement.

ON OCTOBER 20th, the World Economic Forum will descend on Dublin for a conference on 'Competitiveness'.

The WEF has been described by Time Europe as 'probably the closest thing globalisation has to a world headquarters'. Companies can only join the WEF if they have a turnover of more than \$1 billion dollars and annual membership costs \$12,500.

The aim of the WEF is to pressurise politicians to pursue the neo-liberal agenda of privatisation, de-regulation and 'flexibility'.

The WEF conference in Dublin is a forerunner to the EU summit. At the WEF there will be a scorecard to see how each EU country has

progressed on items such as de-regulating its postal service, privatising its rail freight service, imposing an 'open skies' policy.

An Irish Social Forum has emerged in recent months and has taken on the task of facilitating protests against this summit.

Expressions

The aim is to turn the protest in huge 15-February-style expressions of anger at corporate globalisation. Unions, community groups and campaigning bodies will all come together to argue that 'Another world is possible'.

The days of protest will begin with an alternative summit when many of the leading

figures of the anti-capitalist movement will present their alternative.

There will be a huge street carnival on the theme of co-operation.

There will be a 'Ring around the Castle' to call for the shutting down of the WEF on Monday morning.

In addition, there will be a massive demonstration in the evening.

The aim is to turn O20 into Ireland's Seattle—to pull together all the strands of resistance into full-scale opposition to the neo-liberal policies that have guided this country for so long.

Socialist Worker appeals to all its readers to throw themselves fully into building for these events.

**O20:
When we
pull the
resistance
together**

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

■ Order leaflets about the WEF and O20 from the Irish Social Forum or Socialist Worker. Contact us at 01 872 2682.

■ At every protest meeting, distribute the leaflets and get a resolution passed to mobilise everyone for the protests.

■ Organise an educational meeting in your area on the activities of the WEF. There is plenty of back-up material to support you.

An open letter to socialists

Dear Comrades,

Over the last four years a new movement has risen across the globe to challenge neo-liberal globalisation and corporate capitalism.

In Seattle, Prague, Genoa, Barcelona, Melbourne, Florence and most recently Evian tens and hundreds of thousands have gathered to protest against the corporate and political elites responsible for poverty, war and environmental destruction.

This new movement reached its highest point in the global movement against war on Iraq which saw over ten million people take to the streets on 15 February this year. The 150,000 people who took to the streets of Dublin and over 20,000 in Belfast on 15 February proved that Ireland is no exception in the growth of the new global movement.

A new generation of activists is emerging in Ireland and across the globe that wish to challenge a system that puts profit and war before the needs of people.

As our own rulers and rulers across the world seek to deepen the attacks on working people and drag us further into militarism and war, so too the resistance to capital and war is certain to deepen.

This growing global movement of resistance to the system opens up exciting opportunities for socialists not seen since the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many have identified capitalism as the problem—even if they are not yet convinced that socialism is the solution.

One of the key strengths of the new movement, seen most dramatically on 15 February was the new spirit of co-operation and unity between different currents of socialists and anti-capitalists.

Relatively small numbers of activists from different organisations or from no organisation at all came together to spectacular effect. Crucially these organisations and individuals coming together proved to be more than the sum of their parts.

The anger against the war is now spilling over into enormous anger against the lies and betrayals of the Ireland's neo-liberals.

In the South, thousands see that Fianna Fail and the PDs have torn up their election promises and are pushing privatisation and cutbacks as their alternative to the death of the Celtic Tiger. Labour, the Greens and Sinn Féin claim to offer this alternative but leave open to possibility of coalition with Fianna Fail or Fine Gael which are all openly capitalist parties. At some future time, they will seek to manage the system rather than overthrow it.

In the North, the frustration caused by the Belfast Agreement means that there is a rise in low-level sectarian conflicts. But there is also a substantial minority who are now looking for an alternative to communal politics, with a recent poll indicating that 17 percent want an alternative to the old communal parties.

All of this indicates that there is a clear need to start constructing a viable socialist alternative that rules out deals with the parties of big business and bases itself on 'people power' and the struggles of workers.

The Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party are the two major radical socialist parties in Ireland. Along with a number of smaller groups and non-aligned individuals they have played the leading role in mobilising people in the

anti war movement, anti capitalist protests, the campaigns against the bin tax and in support of striking workers.

However, on their own, neither the SWP, SP nor any of the smaller socialist organisations can offer a viable alternative at a national level.

But as part of a united socialist block the SWP, SP and others could create a credible pole of attraction for people looking for a genuinely radical left alternative.

We believe such a block could work on a whole series of fronts within the trade unions, as part of local campaigns, within the anti-war and anti capitalist movements, and at elections.

Specifically,

■ We should form joint left caucuses in unions, which hold open regular meetings. We acknowledge there are differences between us on tactics but there is far more that unites us. As long as we debate such differences openly and in democratic structures, they can be a source of strength not weakness.

■ We should hold regular discussions between both our organisations to agree on campaigns that we can initiate together and to work on joint strategies for how the campaigns we both work in can win.

■ There should be a socialist block, which advances a common programme in the coming elections. The first such election will occur in Northern Ireland for the assembly sometime, probably, after the summer. After that there are the local elections and the Euro elections in the South. We believe that a socialist block should be fielding candidates in both. The exact nature of this block should be a matter for discussion.

We have raised this proposal informally and have heard two objections. The first is that it is 'premature'.

We fail, however, to see how the objective conditions are 'premature' in light of the threat of war, the growing stagnation of the world economy, the rising working class opposition to neo-liberal politics, the continued vibrancy of the global anti-capitalist movement.

Even in terms of the existing membership of both organisations a socialist block would start with about one thousand members and supporters. It would be up to us to build quickly on this base.

The second objection follows from the first—that it is necessary instead to support 'independent' working class candidates, such as hospital campaigners, as a first step. However, without any ties to an explicit, minimal socialist programme and block there is no guarantee how these candidates will vote on wider issues—such as racism, women's rights or on sectarianism.

As with the anti-war movement, we believe that a socialist block could be more than the sum of its parts and offer a political home to thousands of activists looking for a real alternative.

We call publicly on the members of the SP and other socialist organisations to join us in serious discussions with a view to establishing such a block. The global anticapitalist movement was achieved by establishing a new unity. A global socialist movement will require the same.

**Richard Boyd Barrett,
Socialist Workers Party**

Bush wants to plunder Africa

U2 singer Bono has threatened civil disobedience over the plight of Africa. He is right about civil disobedience but he is hanging out with the wrong people.

Instead of turning up for photo-shoots with G8 leaders, he should be on the barricades outside.

Here MANNY TANO, from Socialist Worker's sister organisation in Ghana, explains that anyone who cares about Africa would stay far away from George Bush.

Life expectancy in Africa now stands at 49 years in sub-Saharan Africa.

One in three of the population do not have enough food. One in ten are living with HIV or AIDS.

George Bush used the suffering in Africa to masquerade as a man with a conscience. His visit is about strengthening the US military and economic presence.

Bush wants a series of alliances with a number of African states, whose leaders will accept US imperialist goals in return for very little influence.

The extra AIDS funding Bush is offering is largely money already promised. It is tied to the involvement of US pharmaceutical companies.

It means accepting their stranglehold on the fruits of research in return for a limited exemption from the rules on copying drugs.

That exemption can be withdrawn by the companies at any moment. It is a lever which can be used against every government in the region.

Linking

Bush is also linking the funding package to the spread of genetically modified organisms, which will make farmers even more dependent on the multinationals.

He is pushing these agreements one to one with various African governments rather than going through the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Individual states are even weaker face to face with the US than they are at the undemocratic WTO.

Bush's economic policies have brought economic collapse.

This in turn has encouraged rival groups to use brute military force to grab wealth. It is military capitalism, a micro-version of what Bush is practising on a world scale.

There is a new feeling of resistance which is growing and becoming

more coordinated. It is part of the international movement against war and capitalism.

Those in the movement know that we have to confront our own corrupt rulers.

And that our allies in the West are the workers and the poor not the warmongers in Washington and London.

Amount spent on US military budget: \$390 billion; Amount spent on G8 aid to Africa: \$13 billion



■ Protesters hold a sign up for Bush's passing motorcade criticising the high cost of HIV medications as Bush arrived in Entebbe, Uganda

Liberia: They want oil

THE tragedy of Liberia is being used by Bush to extend the presence of the US military.

Established in 1847 by wealthy Americans determined to rid the US of slaves, Liberia functioned as a virtual American colony, ruling by a tiny elite of descendants of former slaves.

Known as Americo-Liberians, they worked with US companies like Firestone, which established the largest rubber plantation there in 1926, while the indigenous population were impoverished.

During the Cold War, Liberia was a key outpost for the CIA and was used

to undermine national liberation movements.

In 1980, Samuel Doe took power in a coup against the Americo-Liberian elite.

However, he did a deal with Reagan and received millions of dollars in exchange for trying to destabilise nearby Libya.

Cut loose

Once the Cold War was over, the US cut him loose and he was assassinated by rebel forces in 1990.

The power vacuum was filled by Charles Taylor, an Americo-Liberian who used ethnic tensions to mobilise support for his tyrannical rule. Key to his success was control of the

diamond trade and his manipulation of regional alliances.

Taylor sponsored an insurgency by the Revolutionary United Front in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

The RUF seized the former British colony's diamond mines and smuggled the gems to Liberia.

Like Taylor in Liberia, the RUF were brought into the government of Sierra Leone with the blessing of the USA and Britain.

When the 'power sharing' deal threatened to collapse, a British-led contingent moved in to prop up the government, while RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, a Taylor ally, was awarded control of the

ministry of diamonds.

Taylor's sponsorship of war and instability in the region eventually led the Western powers to turn against him.

The US worked with Guinea to support the main anti-Taylor rebel group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy.

Brutality

However, LURD has also an atrocious record of brutality.

According to Human Rights Watch, LURD forces have been involved in kidnapping, summary executions and forced recruitment of young people.

So, while Bush has

called for the ousting of Taylor, his aim is to replace one warlord with another.

The real reason for Bush's new concern about Liberia is that the country sits near substantial oil reserves in the Gulf of Guinea.

US oil companies are expected to invest more than \$100 billion in African oil this year.

The US has taken a new interest in countries like West Africa because it is also seeking to undermine the influence of French imperialism in the region.

Just as in the nineteenth century, we are back to a 'scramble for Africa' between rival Western powers.

French strikes: We'll be back!

THE STRIKES in France during May and June were amazing. Some people have compared them to the public sector workers' strikes of December 1995. In many ways they were better.

On 13 May this year, for example, there were at least eight million on strike.

The feeling, the energy and the rank and file organisation were incredible, especially among the teachers who were the heart of the movement.

The teachers started fighting over the issue of decentralisation in education.

From the beginning they were organised, with what we call AGs (general assemblies), and rank and file committees in each school.

Then the issue of the conservative government's attack on

pensions came along, which brought other people out and the spirit of the teachers inspired the whole movement.

The teachers' contingent in Paris on 13 May was the spirit of the anti-capitalist and anti-war movements coming into the heart of the workers' struggle.

There is a young, new generation taking the lead.

Mass Assemblies

At the end of every demo in Paris there was a mass assembly of teachers from different schools.

It was completely democratic. People went through the crowd at the end of the demo announcing that an AG would be held in a university nearby

and it was open to everyone.

There were assemblies with people from over 200 Paris schools.

In some places parents occupied the school in support of the teachers.

There was a huge politicisation. The revolutionary left, organisations like Lutte Ouvrière and the LCR, played an important role.

Some strikers are looking to them now.

During a big meeting in Marseilles, Thibault (the CGT union leader) could hardly speak because people chanted "General strike! General strike!"

It was a rank and file movement on a large scale, involving tens of thousands.

Of course there were limits too. The core of the movement was restricted to teachers who

were learning for the first time how to organise strikes.

That meant they didn't know how to deal with the union leaders trying to control and then restrict the movement.

The union leaders however could not control the teachers and knew if they called a general strike it could escape all control. It certainly wouldn't have just stayed on the issue of pensions.

Dynamic

A few days of a general strike and a new dynamic would have been unleashed. This terrified the union leaders, and they were determined to stop it.

Among many groups the union bureaucracy had enough

strength to hold back workers. After 13 May the CGT sent teams to railway workplaces telling people not to come out on indefinite strike.

The rank and file, despite all its impressive qualities, didn't have enough of a structured organisation to be able to offer the whole movement an alternative leadership to the union leaders.

That's why the government was able to push through its pension plans.

But the people active in the strikes don't feel it has been a total defeat because they know that this is part of a wider assault by the government that they are fighting.

The feeling among the French workers is much more "we'll be back" after the summer. And they will.

George Monbiot's new book has sparked a debate among anti-capitalists

The limitations of localism

by DAVID LYNCH



■ George Monbiot

WHEN a new book by George Monbiot is reviewed prominently in the mainstream media, it shows very clearly how much the anti-capitalist movement has grown over the past four years.

A decade ago, an intellectual and activist like Monbiot would have been almost universally ignored and widely criticised for not understanding that free-market economics was the only way that the global economy could be organised.

But Monbiot, who is one of the leading intellectual lights of the anti-capitalist movement, has been named by the *Independent on Sunday* as one of the forty international prophets of the twenty-first century.

Monbiot's new book *The Age of Consent* comes only three years after his influential volume *Captive State*. That book charted the corporate take-over of Britain's public services and the growing influence of the private sector in the everyday life of people living in Blair's Britain.

The Age of Consent sets its eyes very much on the international sphere. The global sweep and scale of the book is one of its strongest characteristics.

Essentially a manifesto for global change, the book attacks the neo-liberal agenda and the global pillars of international capitalism the WTO and the IMF. In its place Monbiot proposes a new form of global democracy and equality.

Turning his back on much of one strand of thinking in the environmental movement, which sees local activism as the only effective form of political change, Monbiot proposes taking control of globalisation and making it work for the world's poor. 'Our task is not to overthrow globalisation, but to capture it, and to use it as a vehicle for humanity's first global democratic revolution.'

Autonomist

Monbiot has now rejected the narrow type of environmentalist politics which sees the only hope for the world in the building of local autonomist zones.

'Localisation insists that everything which can be produced locally should be produced locally. All nations should protect their economies by means of trade taxes and legal barriers.'

'The purpose of the policy is to grant nations both economic and political autonomy, to protect cultural distinctiveness and to prevent the damage done to the environment by long-distance transport.'

'Yet, when you examine the implications, you soon discover that it is as coercive, destructive and unjust as any of the schemes George Bush is cooking up.'

Traditional local-bound societies often produced petty tyrants who use their extra capital to squeeze free labour from others. The term 'gombeen' in Ireland was a term of abuse for precisely the petty capitalist who grew out of local trading networks. A return to a new version of DeValera's Ireland is clearly a dead end.

Monbiot argues that to help improve the world's economic system there will have to be major reforms. Firstly Monbiot seeks to make the UN more democratic, with the creation of a free global parliament.

However this really is a non-starter under capitalism. The UN has proved itself impossible to reform over the past 50 years with the major imperialist countries having veto votes at the all-powerful Security Council.

His second proposal is for a new International Trade Organisation to replace the WTO and IMF. The organisation would bring in provisions to control imbalances between poorer and richer countries.

Monbiot's argument against globalised capitalism is weakened by a rather short, sharp and shallow attack on Marxism in the space of a few pages. Writing off the *Communist Manifesto* as essentially a charter for dictatorship, Monbiot ignores the democratic and libertarian elements of socialism.

The result is that Monbiot sees no clear agency for revolutionary change on a world scale. While praising various resistance movements, Monbiot offers no coherent strategy to overthrowing capitalism even though he views himself as a revolutionary.

While he may not give any credence to Marxism, socialists should not be put off by Monbiot's writings. *The Age of Consent* has its flaws but overall it is an angry, coherent and very readable attack on the global system.

Monbiot's attempt to view the struggle on the global scale rather than through the prism of extreme localism is also something that many in the environmentalist movement could also learn from.

Warning: Privatisation damages you



■ Privatisation would make traffic chaos even worse

Ireland's cities are congested with traffic. High house prices have forced thousands to commute to Dublin from as far away as Dundalk and Portlaoise.

When they reach the city they can only hope that they are not caught in ferocious traffic jams that snarl up the capital city's streets at all hours of the day.

The Minister responsible for delivering a proper transport service is Seamus Brennan. But instead of taking his job seriously, he is about to vandalise the already weakened public transport service.

'There may be a summer of discontent but I am pressing forward with my plans' Brennan has warned.

Operators

His plans are to privatise two of the biggest state operators, Dublin Bus, Bus Eireann and Aer Rianta.

Brennan does not like to use the word 'privatise' because it sounds too Thatcherite.

He talks about 'competition' and 'franchising out' and even denies he wants to privatise.

But nobody should be fooled. Brennan's aim is to hand over the running of not only Dublin Bus but also the airports to private companies so they can make a profit.

He wants to turn a service—which recognises some social rights, such as a free transport for the elderly—into a commodity.

One reason is that Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats are mouthpieces for big business and they want new opportunities for profit.

Ryanair boss Michael O

Leary has donated 60,000 euro to the PDs.

He has a direct interest in getting Aer Rianta out of running the airports—because he wants to pay no landing charges. So too has Ulick

McElvaddy—they want to build a new terminal at Dublin airport and want Aer Rianta out of the picture.

Another reason for Brennan's actions is that the Irish state wants to avoid pro-

viding public services. Ireland has the lowest tax take in the whole of the EU, with government revenues making up 36 percent of GDP compared to Sweden's 60 percent.

The main reason is policy of

Rich pickings for profiteers

CIE carry 320 million passengers a year—this is an enormous market which private companies and multi-national corporations want to cash in on.

The privatisation of Dublin's bus service will mean that each route will be handed over to a single operator who will enjoy a monopoly. However, the smaller local companies in the UK were quickly gobbled up by multi-nationals.

This has already begun to happen here.

Non-union Aircoach, which operates a private bus service to Dublin airport, is owned by a company called Last Passive Ltd. Its two directors are John O'Sullivan and Mary Leane.

It was set up in 1999 by

O'Sullivan who was a senior manager with Bus Eireann. Aircoach now employs 130 drivers and claims to transport 3,000 passengers a day. Turnover has grown to €7 million this year and it recently announced some new routes. Aircoach, however, has recently linked up

A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME

All new Dublin Bus buses must be of the low floor type to facilitate disabled passengers.

However, private operators are allowed to start up services using ordinary buses including the recently introduced 613 route.

with the giant British-based National Express group.

Airlink and Cityline are two other companies which operate a number of routes.

They are subsidiaries of Metroline which has lost routes in London due to poor performance.

Metroline is in turn owned by the world's fifth-largest land transport company, Singapore based DelGro Corporation. Metroline entered the Irish bus market two years ago when it bought out the Burke bus company of Galway.

The inter-city bus market is estimated by business insiders to exceed €65 million a year. Metroline has announced it hope to take 50 per cent of this within three years, once routes are franchised out.

Britain: Do you want Virgin?

Bus fares have increased by eighty-seven percent in real terms since 1974 in Britain.

The average age of buses increased by 30 percent as the private companies reduced investment.

Off-peak and evening services were cut back or

withdrawn as companies cherry-picked the profitable times and routes.

The Director of Transport 2000, a conventional think tank, has said that buses are infrequent in the evenings and at the weekends.

Not only were passengers getting a worse deal

but conditions for workers declined dramatically. Jobs were slashed and real wages declined relative to other manual workers.

On the railways in Britain, privatisation has been a disaster. Subsidies and bail-outs to railway companies leapt from 1989-1990 when they were

Privatisation Your transport



ices. Ireland
take in the
with govern-
making up 36
compared to
cent.
on is policy of

tax-cutting or, more accurately,
tax subsidisation of the rich.

Operators

The cost of these hand-
outs is an inadequate public

service.

Finally, this government
wants to use the oncoming
recession to weaken the
unions once and for all.

Over seventy per cent of
trade union members are

concentrated in the public
sector.

By pursuing a policy of pri-
vatization, the FF/ PD govern-
ment reckon they can help
push down wage levels and
workers' expectations of a

decent living standard in the
whole economy.

These are the reasons for
the new offensive on privati-
sation—even though experi-
ence now shows it has been
a disaster in other countries.

DISCREDITED IN BRITAIN: WELCOME IN IRELAND

Connex was awarded
the franchise for the
Luas tram system by
the Railway Procurement
Agency (RPA), which is man-
aging the construction of
the €675 million system. It
is part of giant conglomer-
ate Vivendi, which has mas-
sive media and other inter-
ests.

Connex had a global
turnover of €3.1 billion last
year from operations in 21
countries.

It sees the Luas contract
as an opening move in grab-
bing a huge slice of the priva-
tised Irish transport market
that is opening up.

This company was one of
the first to powerfully lobby

the Department of Transport
for the running of bus and
rail services in Ireland.

Its chief executive Mr
Antoine Frerot declared, "We
hope to develop the busi-
nesses as a big private oper-
ator for public transportation
system in Ireland."

However, Connex's record
is appalling.

Following years of bad ser-
vice, cancelled and danger-
ously overcrowded trains, the
company recently had its
contract to operate train ser-
vices in the South East of
England cancelled by the
UK's Strategic Rail Authority
(SRA).

The accountancy firm,
Price Waterhouse Coopers,

found that the company had
misused €58 million of a
state subsidy.

Earlier in the year, Connex
let it be known that all its
London bus routes were up
for sale.

This followed new regula-
tions in that city which meant
it could not reap the massive
profits it expected.

Therefore, it just upped
and left.

This followed a debacle in
Australia when the company
simply walked away from its
services in Melbourne
halfway through the contract
when its demands for more
money from the city were not
met.

Even the World Bank says so!

Fintan O'Toole recently
reported in the *Irish Times*:

Even the World Bank,
which has pushed
privatisation programmes
in many parts of the world,
acknowledges that the
policy just doesn't live up
to the claims made for it.

A 1999 World Bank
report, *Buses in Great
Britain: Privatisation,
Deregulation and
Competition*, makes grim
reading for those who see
private ownership as a
solution to public
transport problems.

Reductions in the levels
of public subsidy after
privatisation in the mid-
1980s were largely offset
by a substantial fall in the
number of passengers,
making each journey
actually more expensive to
the taxpayer.

The number of buses
did increase on the
already well-served routes,
but fell by 11 per cent in
areas where the
commercial return was
unattractive.

July 22nd Boycott Coca-Cola

by AOIFE BRESLIN

**THIS YEAR's World Social
Forum declared 22nd July as
an International Day of Action
against Coca-Cola and the
start of a global boycott of
Coca-Cola products.**

Boycott actions will be primarily
taken in solidarity with SINAL-
TRAINAL, the National Union of Food
& Beverage Workers, which repre-
sents workers in Colombia's 20
Coca-Cola bottling plants.

On 22 July 1986, Hector Daniel
Useche Beron, a Nestlé worker and
SINALTRAINAL leader, was assassi-
nated in Bugalagrande.

From this day on, terror and vio-
lence have been the principle tool
that food and drink multinationals,
supported by the Colombian state,
have used to destroy the trade
union.

As a result of this terror, 19
SINALTRAINAL leaders have been
assassinated (8 from Coca-Cola
plants) and 48 more union activists
have been forcibly displaced by
death threats.

Trumped-Up

Workers and union leaders have
been incarcerated on trumped-up
charges and workplaces have been
militarised with paramilitaries forc-
ing trade unionists to renounce their
membership at gun-point.

This has resulted in a more than
50% decrease in SINALTRAINAL
membership. Union officials say
that Colombia holds the "terrible
distinction of being ranked number
one in the world for the number of
trade union leaders murdered each
year, and that Coke plays a key role
in maintaining that distinction".

The evil reach of the Coca Cola
corporation spans the globe. In
Africa workers at Coke have criti-
cised the company for not funding
AIDS treatment programmes for
workers' children.

Despite netting some \$621 mil-
lion in profits across Africa last year
alone, funding for the Coca Cola
Africa Foundation is minimal and
covers only 35% of Coke's African
workforce.

In India's Kerala State, thou-
sands of indigenous people contin-
ue to protest at Coke's indiscrimi-
nate mining of groundwater which
has dried up many local wells and
contaminated the remainder.

The Hindustan Coca Cola factory

in Plachimada, set up three years
ago never even obtained clearance
for putting agricultural land into
non-agricultural use.

According to local estimates,
Coke's water mining has parched
the lands of more than 2000 people
residing within 1.2 miles of the fac-
tory.

Coke's theft of water also looks
set to continue into Chiapas
Biosphere in Mexico.

Chiapas contains 40% of
Mexico's fresh water supply which is
currently a prime target for privati-
sation and Coca-Cola is poised to
seize this lucrative new market.

In the United States, the
American Academy of Pediatric
Dentistry has outraged health group
with the announcement of its latest
partnership with Coke. In Georgia
high-school student Mike Cameron
was suspended recently for wearing
a Pepsi shirt on "Coke in Education
Day".

The "Coke in Education Day" was
part of the school's effort to win a
\$500 local contest run by the Coca-
Cola Bottling Co. in Augusta, GA. The
prize is awarded to the school that
comes up with the most creative
method of distributing promotional
discount cards to students.

The students have the chance to
win up to \$10,000 in the same
national contest. After he was
caught, Mike was sent down to the
principal's office to talk about how
important that day was to the
school and how he could have cost
the school good advertising dollars.

Neglects

Lurking behind the glossy Coca-
Cola label and the charitable sound-
bites, is a company that neglects its
workforce, sickens children and
contributes to massive environmen-
tal damage on a global scale.

Whether you're a trade unionist,
an environmentalist, a secondary
school student or just someone
who's pissed off that you couldn't
buy a bottle of Club lemon at
Witness hit back at this corporate
killer on July 22nd.

SINALTRAINAL is asking you to
join their campaign by passing mes-
sages of solidarity in your union,
throwing Coca-Cola vending
machines out of your school, college
and workplace and refusing to buy
the products of this merchant of
death.

ers

ritish-based
group.
Cityline are
anies which
r of routes.
sidiaries of
has lost
due to poor

turn owned
fifth-largest
company.
ed DeGiro
Metroline
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eed €65 mil-
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Virgin running your trains?

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railways has
aster. Subsidies
uts to railway
leapt from
when they were

£885 million (in real prices)
to a massive £3.8 billion in
2003-4.

Ticket prices soared to
some of the highest in the
world.

In addition, the
Strategic Rail Authority
announced that unprece-
dented delays and cancel-
lations would continue for

years to come.

As well as this, the will-
ingness of the railway com-
panies to cut corners has
resulted in a number of rail
crashes and fatalities.

Seamus Brennan says
he dislikes monopolies and
de-regulation will bring
more choice.

This was not true in

Britain and it won't be true
here.

In Britain, four major
multinational companies,
Arriva, Stagecoach, First
Group, National Express
now control the bus indus-
try and have parcelled out
most of the routes between
themselves to operate as
monopolies.

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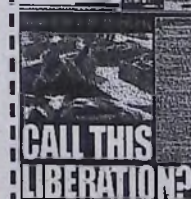
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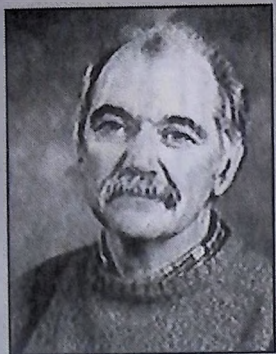
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Return to SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

MIKE GONZALEZ is the author of several books and articles dealing with art, socialism and Latin America.

He is a member of the Scottish Socialist Party and a supporter the Socialist Worker Platform inside it.



■ Mike Gonzalez

Earlier this month he visited Dublin to address a public meeting on the new left in Latin America.

Over 150 people turned up to hear him.

Afterwards, *Socialist Worker's* DAVID LYNCH spoke to him about the main themes of his meeting.



■ Landless peasants occupy ranch outside Brazil in July

Latin America in revolt

What are the main differences between the political situation in South America in 1993 and now ten years later in 2003?

Yes, when you look at the early nineties there was the first strategic part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (Nafta) introduced in South America.

Coinciding exactly with what was in effect the first completed stage of the incorporation of Latin America into a global capitalist order was the Zapatista uprising.

Its symbolic power was extraordinary, and echoed through the emerging anti-capitalist movement.

Its symbols and slogans from 1994 were central to the Seattle protests, for example and even the other anti-capitalist protests that have taken place since.

At that very moment when the Right attempted to impose neo-liberalism, the Zapatista rising in Mexico in 1994 was a type of starting point for the anti-capitalist resistance movement which would reach the high point of the huge anti-capitalist protests in Seattle five years later.

Not in the sense of an organised centre of resistance because the uprising was isolated in many ways including geographically, but it was an important stand against the right wing economic agenda and it has been taken on by the anti-capitalist movement since 1994.

Lula's victory in the Brazilian presidential election last October represented the hopes of millions of workers. But straight after speaking to cheers at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, he jetted off to Davos to the World Economic Forum. Will he live up to his promise?

You have to be pretty clear about what Lula's election victory means first.

Lula more than probably anyone else represents the struggle undertaken by the Brazilian working class since the 1970's.

He is symbolic of that struggle and is absolutely identified with the labour movement.

His militant working class credentials which he has gained over the years are second to none. But already because of his politics he is coming into confrontation with some sections of the organised Brazilian working class.

While his language has been very radical he is attempting to work within the confines of the capitalist system.

One of the first actions he did when he came into power was to bring people in from the banking sector into his cabinet.

Since then he has clashed with municipal workers who have had a wage freeze for a long number of years, who he is not paying.

Also the landless peasant organisation which has supported Lula, has kept its political independence and the strain is beginning to show in his government between these groups. This has all happened very quickly.

Chavez too offered a new kind of state reformism in Venezuela as a solution to the protests that exploded in the early 1990s.

That too appears to have reached its limits.

But the most trumpeted solution of this kind which is Lula's government has now come face to face with the realities of a global system, within months of coming to power.

You have first hand experience of the popular assemblies that have sprung up in Argentina since the popular uprising in late 2001, tell us about that?

Well you have to look at the background first. With the economic crisis that brought down the de la Rúa government in December 2001, Argentina witnessed the birth of a new kind of politics.

As banks closed their doors and unemployment rose, supermarkets were looted by the poorest sectors, the middle classes marched through the streets, the trade unions joined them, and the unemployed came in from the intercity highways.

In the major cities people's assemblies were created spontaneously in late 2001 as the local populations gathered to discuss what should be done and build their protests.

These are reflections of the nature of the Argentinean class struggle which has been different than other South American countries.

The popular assembly I visited had 70 people in attendance from the

working class district. The first thing that stood out for me was the internal discipline that was in place.

Nobody was allowed to turn up to the meetings drunk, anyone who was being abusive was thrown out. There was liveliness to the discussion and much debate about general politics.

But then the man beside me in the assembly I attended said that he did not want to sit with me because he found out I was British. I asked why? He said because of the Falklands War.

We had a long discussion and I was able to tell him where I was during the Falklands, campaigning against the war and my own government.

It shows you that there is much that is progressive about the assemblies, but there are also some of the old nationalist ideas still swirling around in people's heads.

Looking into the future would you be positive about the potential political developments in South America?

I think that we have to celebrate the rise of resistance. But as I said at the meeting last night there is defi-

nately now three forces in South America.

There is the old order, who want a return to the neo-liberal agenda.

There are the new kind of state reformers, but I think that these are coming to a bit of a cross-roads.

Chavez tried to bring a new kind of reformism in Venezuela as a solution to the problems in the country but that seems to have entered a problematic stage despite his ability to face down two ring wing attempts to oust him.

But there is a third force which we have to look towards and support. It is the militant working class and the landless peasantry who still make themselves felt in the politics of South America.

From the Zapatista uprising to the popular committees established in Argentina it is the creative force of the militant working class and the landless who hold the key to the future struggles.

It is the battles between these three forces in the coming years which will decide the future of South America.

The movement in Argentina in particular represents that third force. It is more than just another wave of protest.

The popular assemblies show that the solution must be popular and democratic—that a capitalist state will always protect the interests of the few against the needs and interests of the masses.

That such an alternative system must be international and socialist is an argument that now has to be won within the movement.

I gave the example last night at the meeting of something I witnessed in the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre.

At Porto Alegre a debate on what should replace capitalism was placed on the agenda, to the annoyance of the more reformist Social Democratic politicians and spokespeople.

The MST unfurled a banner at the final meeting it said, 'A better world is possible, but only with socialism.'

That is something that we support and that is the argument that has to be won in South America at the moment.



■ School students protest at end of free school transport in Brazil

movie

Seeing red and turning green...

by **THERESA URBAINCZYK**

WHY would any right-minded, thinking, intelligent person, such as the regular reader of the *Socialist Worker* paper, want to go and see a Hollywood blockbuster based on a strip from the Marvel comic?

Especially when the story sounds so incredible.

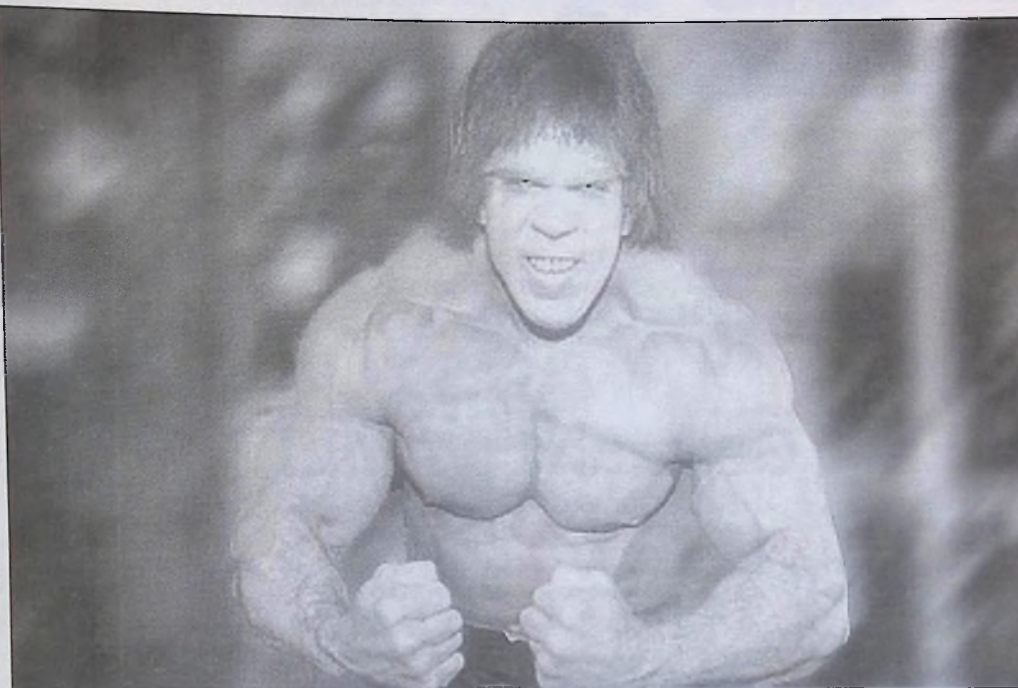
A scientist, Bruce Banner, for reasons too complicated to explain here, when he gets angry turns green, expands and bursts out of his clothes (usually managing to keep his underpants on) and destroys all in his path.

impressive

But 'The Hulk' is no ordinary blockbuster.

Its director is Ang Lee who made 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' and 'Ice Storm'.

Although this film is fast moving, entertaining,



■ The Hulk feeling a little off-colour

and with very impressive special effects, it also works on other levels.

Lee commented that it is more about repression than rage which is one

way of looking at it, but he also remarked of the main character that 'Rage sets him free'.

When Banner turns into a monster there is no

power on earth that can stop him.

Inciting his rage is therefore extremely dangerous.

Of course this has

political consequences and one of the most exhilarating aspects of this film is that Lee is not frightened to point this out.

books

Words of resistance

by **KEVIN WINGFIELD**

INDIAN writer Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her novel *The God of Small Things*. Her latest book, *War Talk*, is a collection of short essays and lectures.

She begins with the crisis of Kashmir and the nuclear stand off between India and Pakistan last year.

'While India and Pakistan bay for each other's blood, the coalition [of US and Britain] is quietly laying gas pipelines, selling us weapons, and pushing through their business deals.

'Britain, for example, is busily arming both sides. Tony Blair's 'peace' mission a few months ago was actually a business trip to discuss a one billion pound deal ... to sell sixty-six Hawk fighter-bombers to India.

'Roughly for the price of a single Hawk bomber, the government could provide one and half million people with clean drinking water for life.'

She exposes how the BIP state government

orchestrated a pogrom against Muslims last year with up to 2,000 people murdered and 150,000 driven from their homes.

'Women were stripped, gang raped; parents were bludgeoned to death in front of their children' as Muslim cultural shrines were systematically desecrated and destroyed—not by a maddened mob in a spontaneous outburst following the attack on Hindu worshippers on a train, but directed by state forces

with mobile phones and computer print-outs of the addresses of Muslim homes.

Speech

In the text of a speech she gave at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January she said: 'As the disparity between rich and poor grows, the fight to corner resources is intensifying. To push through their 'sweetheart deals,' to corporatise the

crops we grow, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the dreams we dream, corporate globalisation needs an international confederation of loyal, corrupt, authoritarian governments in poorer countries to push through unpopular reforms and quell the mutinies.'

But this is more than a moving account of the horrors of capitalism—it is a call to action. Roy celebrates and encourages the movement of mass oppo-



■ Arundhati Roy

sition that has emerged against corporate capitalism, war and imperialism.

This is an excellent and very readable short book.

■ *War Talk*, by Arundhati Roy, South End Press

publications

Weapons for anti war activists

TWO recent publications are useful for anti-war activists. *The Irish Republic, The US and the Iraq War: A Critical Appraisal* is a dossier produced by the Irish Anti-War Movement to expose the lies used to justify Ireland's involvement.

Written by Kieran Allen and Colin Coulter, it demonstrates how the government first tried to cover up what was happening at Shannon and only moved after January

13th to 'regularise the irregular'.

Fifty thousand troops passed through Shannon as the Irish government broke its own laws and then tried to criminalise opponents of war.

The dossier takes apart the lies that Cowan and Ahern re-cycled from US sources about weapons of mass destruction.

It shows how the Irish government did not make a whimper of protest about

the new colonisation of Iraq—even after talk of 'respect for Iraqi sovereignty' proved fraudulent.

International Intervention and Conflict in Macedonia is a detailed case study of EU foreign diplomacy produced by Afri.

The EU want to build up a Rapid Reaction Force and often use the pretext of 'humanitarian intervention' to justify this.

One of their supposed success stories was Macedonia.

However, Marianne Osborn shows that the wider imperialist intervention in the Balkans de-stabilised Macedonia.

EU intervention was motivated mainly by self-interest rather than any genuine attempt to grapple with ethnic divisions between ethnic Albanians and the Macedonia majority.

A good read for anyone tempted to believe that we need an EU superpower to balance the US.

book

Tigers of the Mountain

by **GINA HAY**

JUST over 50 years ago, in June 1953, two men, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, were the first people to climb successfully to the pinnacle of Mt Everest, just in time for Queen Elizabeth's coronation.

The sun may have started to set on England's Empire, but the English could still beat every other nation when it came to climbing Chomolungma, otherwise known as Mt Everest, the highest mountain in the world.

It was not an unmitigated success for the Empire, however. Two Englishmen, Charles Evans and Tom Bourdillon, had been given the first chance to attempt the summit, but had failed to make it.

And so it was that Edmund Hillary, a New Zealand beekeeper of humble origins, and Tenzing Norgay, a Nepalese Sherpa made the first recorded ascent to the peak of Mt Everest.

British climbing, like much of British society at that time was heavily class-ridden, and it would have been preferable had the two Englishmen, with the right class background, been able to reach the summit first.

At the time, neither Hillary or Norgay would say who had actually reached the summit first, despite pressure to do so, with Norgay only revealing the truth many decades later in his book.

Hillary was subsequently offered a knighthood, although Norgay was not, and has spent much of the last 50 years helping the Sherpas of the Khumbu region.

His Himalaya Trust has built schools, hospitals and bridges over the years, with Hillary and some of his friends helping to build schools with their own hands.

Since 1953, over 800 people have successfully reached the summit of Everest, with over 1700 expeditions. It is now a race to break a new record—the oldest, the youngest, the first black person, the first disabled person.

A US reality TV show is searching for contestants willing to attempt Mt Everest for prize money of \$250,000.

This ongoing interest in Everest has had valuable side-effects for the people of Nepal. Today, wealthy tourists can spend their holidays attempting to climb Everest, for their own pleasure or for some worthy charity. It's a good moneyspinner for the Nepalese Government, who charge \$70,000 for a team of seven people, and \$25,000 for an individual climber.

Benefits

These charges have brought some benefits, such as schools, hospitals and fresh water piped to villages in addition to those built by Edmund Hillary's Himalaya Trust. It has also provided employment for people who would have otherwise had to travel far from home for a job.

It is not all good news, however. A total of 180 people have died in attempts to climb Mt Everest in the last 50 years with problems of overcrowding becoming more common. On one day in May 2001, nearly 40 people reached the summit. In 1996 eleven people died in one day on Mt Everest after a storm blew up.

The route was too crowded for people to climb down quickly, and climbers and sherpas had to queue to descend.

People are climbing Everest not necessarily because they are interested in mountaineering, but because they want the ultimate challenge.

Recently there was a photograph in the *Irish Times* of an Australian toddler, cuddly toy in hand, being hauled up the lower slopes of Everest in a basket by a Sherpa guide.

All this has led to environmental concerns about the mountain. The slopes of Everest are covered in over 200 tonnes of rubbish, earning it the title of 'the world's highest garbage site'.

Deforestation is also a major problem, with tourists burning local trees for fuel to keep out the cold, a practice which is now illegal but still continues in some areas.

The race for Everest will continue. Too much money can be made by the Nepalese government and western expedition tours for this to change greatly.

Overall, the people who climb Everest with high tech equipment and Sherpa guides to smooth the way, are proving nothing except their ignorance.

■ *Tigers of the Snow*—Jonathan Neale, Published by Abacus 2003, £8.99

Letters

Drop a line to José Bové

Send letters to Socialist Worker,
PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, Email swp@clubi.ie

Let's have socialist unity

JUST a message to pass on José Bové's address in jail in France:

José Bové n°d'écrou 22377 Y, bloc A 07,34753 Villeneuve-lès-Maguelonne (this is a very accurate address, please write the whole thing or it won't go to José at all.

For those of you who don't know: he's been sentenced to 10 months in jail for having uprooted Genetically Modified crops

a couple of years ago.

To make a long story short, he did this because he thinks we still don't know enough about GM to start growing them, that is to say in regards to what is going to end up in our plates....

He has already served some time in jail for having dismantled a McDonald "restaurant".

Bové is the the leader of the French alternative

farmers union, the "confédération paysanne", fighting for a healthy agriculture and a fair deal for third world farmers' agriculture.

There you go, if you want to have the opportunity to taste Roquefort—and find it tasty—in future times and for more useful pieces of information, please contact www.confederationpaysanne.fr

□ **CÉCILE, France**



THANK you for your illuminating interview with Eamonn McCann in your issue No 202.

Back in 1940 the then-existing Derry Labour Party made me its representative on the Central Committee of the Northern Ireland Labour Party of those days.

I was expelled by the said NI Labour Party on account of the production by Derry Labour Party (unanimously) of its programme urging socialist unity and other suggestions for overcoming the tensions and problems of that critical wartime period.

Some years later I was expelled by the National Committee of the Labour Party in Dublin. The subsequent National Conference of the Irish Labour Party reinstated me with an almost unanimous vote.

But the country's socialists wherever situated remain divided—no wonder the country's future is so obviously uncertain.

May I end by telling you that when in the late 1920s I walked out of school and found a job as a steward in a Dutch cargo ship, in every South American port we visited as soon as I was allowed ashore some local asked me what country I was from and I replied Ireland, the immediate response was always "Ireland? Ah Harland and Wolff".

I was proud to be associated with the world's finest shipyard workers.

How were they let be shut out?

Fraternally,

□ **JOHN DE COURCY IRELAND, Dalkey**

Hidden history of East Germany wrong!

THE article "Hidden history East Germany 1953" is crying out for a response.

The strikes around June 17th involved according to GDR statistics 5.5 % and by West German ones 6.8 % of the industrial workers.

It might have happened that workers in Merseburg sang "revolutionary songs". But West

German Social Democrat EGON BAHR in his memories about his work for radio station RIAS in Westberlin: "...We (=Rias, which means radio in the American Sector) had become the real motor of the rebellion."

The American High Commissioner John Mc Cloy phoned Rias—director Gordon Ensing

and asked him: "Do you want to start a Third World War?"

At this point, don't get me wrong, I think the Communists in the GDR made terrible mistakes and so did the Soviets.

And I don't think tanks can solve problems like these.

But to portray the situation around the 17th June 1953 as a rebellion

of the good and revolutionary against the bad Commies is simply wrong and puts you right into the same corner as the Rias, the Radio Germanys and the like.

Why do you think on August 4th, just 48 days after June 17th 1953, West German parliament ratified a law which declared the 17th

"National Holiday of the German People"?

Why do you think the same WEST Germany never even acknowledged the 8th of May, the day it was freed from the fascist terror regime?

Come on, think class and you will find the answer!

□ **HERMANN GLASER-BAUR, Belfast**

Marxist Forums

Big ideas discussed in informal settings

Artane:

The WEF and Corporate Globalisation 8pm Tuesday July 29th Beaumont Leisure Centre

Ballymun:

Building the Left in Ireland 8.00pm Thursday July 24th Axis Centre Ballymun

Blanchardstown:

Contact Paul Smyth 087-9163246

Bray:

Africa, AIDS and drug company profits Thurs 17 July, 8pm in Lenihans Pub,

Main St, Bray; The World Economic Forum and corporate globalisation

Thurs 7 Aug, 8pm in Lenihans Pub, Main St, Bray

Dublin North City:

The WEF and Corporate Globalisation 8pm Wednesday 23rd July The Snug, Dorset Street

Dublin South Inner City:

The new economic Apartheid: The fight against globalisation in Africa

Thurs 24 July, 6pm in O'Donovan's Pub, townsend St

Dundrum:

Shut down the WEF: The world Economic Forum and corporate globalisation

Mon 4 Aug, 8pm in the Dundrum Family Recreation Centre

Dun Laoghaire:

Bush and Africa: Can 'Free trade' end Africa's nightmare?

Tue 22 July, 8pm in Farrells Pub, Marine Road, Dun Laoghaire

Fairview:

Stupid White Men- Who's who in the Bush Regime with American socialist JD Wilson 8pm Tuesday 29th July Smyth's Pub, Fairview

Liberties:

The World Economic Forum and corporate globalisation

Thurs 31 July, 8pm in the Parish Centre, Francis St

Phibsboro:

How Capitalism Underdeveloped Africa with Zimbabwean socialist Luke Choto 8pm Tuesday 29th July Aughrim Street

Parish Centre, Manor Street

Rathmines:

The struggle against imperialism: Palestine - is the peace process a dream or reality?

Sat 19 July, 3pm in Grace's Pub, Rathmines Village

Speakers: Dr Nazih Eddin (Independent Human rights Activist); Akil Hamilton (Independent Human Rights Activist); Aoife Ni Fhearghail (SWP)

Ringsend:

Shut down the World Economic Forum: The WEF

and corporate globalisation Wed 30 July, 8pm in The Committee Room (below Ocean Bar), Charlotte Quay, Ringsend

■ For details of other Marxist Forums contact (01) 872 2682

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NI: SWP PO Box 143, Mallusk Road, Mallusk, Phone 0774 2531617

Email swp@clubi.ie **Web:** www.swp.ie

AER RIANTA:

Workers vow to fight break-up

'WE will not put up with this Thatcherite measure' This is how worker director, Peter Dunne, described the break-up of Aer Rianta.

Aer Rianta has been described as 'the Jewel in the Crown' of state companies. It is one of the largest economic entities in the country, employing 15,000 people directly. It has contributed 300 million euros to the Exchequer over the recent years.

Transport Minister Seamus Brennan wants to break the company up into three components based on Cork, Dublin and Shannon airports. Each of these is supposed to 'compete' against each other and this, he claims, will benefit passengers.

It is a nonsense argument. Research shows that the maximum people will travel to get to an airport is 90 miles for short haul trips. How Cork and Shannon are supposed to 'compete' with Dublin then is a mystery.

However, this is only a fig leaf for the real story.

Under Brennan's plans the debts of Cork and Shannon



Time to ground Brennan's schemes

are to be loaded onto Dublin airport and from then on they are to survive by themselves.

A number of consequences flow from this.

First, Dublin Airport will be forced to sell off the Great Southern Hotel group to help service these debts.

Speculators

This means that state run hotel will fall into the hands of private speculators.

Second, the new Dublin

Airport company will not have the capital to build the second terminal at Dublin airport. Instead, it will fall to a company like the McElvaddy group or even Ryanair to build it.

Third, and this is the key factor, Ryanair will be in a better position to pit terminals against one another to enforce its demand for lower landing charges.

Landing charges in Ireland are already quite low but

Ryanair boss Michael O Leary wants to force them down further—even getting free landing costs if he can.

Fourth, the fate of Cork and Shannon will be even more precarious. With the Shannon stop-over gone, they will be forced to market themselves as low cost and seasonal airports. For the staff, this will mean more contract employment and reduced conditions.

The whole saga shows the

utter futility of social partnership. At a recent ICTU conference union leaders cautioned against any vigorous campaign in support of Aer Rianta. They argued that Bertie Ahern wanted a partnership approach with the unions and would reign in his hardliners such as Brennan.

However, within weeks of the ICTU, the opposite has occurred. The FF/DP cabinet have come in full square behind Brennan. They are determined to launch a huge campaign to open the door to privatisation fully.

Workers at Aer Rianta have responded well by calling a huge mass meeting on the Monday after Brennan's proposal were announced.

But to defeat Brennan there will be a need to follow the example of the busworkers. They have called a series of strikes, starting with an imaginative free fares day. They are producing tens of thousands of leaflets to carry the arguments against privatisation to a receptive public.

If transport workers came together and called co-ordinated action to resist privatisation, Brennan's days would be numbered.

Racist attacks in Belfast

A BRUTAL racist attack has driven a Muslim family from their home in Craigavon. At least ten men armed with baseball bats and iron bars smashed windows and doors and threatened to burn the family out of their house.

A second family may also be forced to leave the estate rather than face further intimidation.

This latest attack follows a series of attacks in South Belfast. As in Craigavon, Nazi material was distributed in the local area. This was then followed by violent intimidation. Two South African women and an ethnic family were attacked with pipe bombs.

These attacks should come as no surprise. Both the DUP and the UUP, the major unionist parties have campaigned against the building of a Mosque just outside Portadown. Fred Crowe, Ulster Unionist alderman, and former mayor objected to the Mosque on the basis that it could lead to 'undesirable' elements gaining access to the area. He argued that groups such as Al Qaeda could use the Mosque to build a base.

Wolsey Smith, the DUP representative argued that the building of the mosque was likely to disturb the

Christian culture of the area.

These are precisely the arguments made in the leaflets distributed by the Nazi organisations.

The Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Political Research Group, the political voices of the paramilitary UVF and UDA condemned the attacks claiming that the 'rogue loyalists' responsible were not supported by the wider community.

This is undoubtedly true but there is no room for complacency. A recent report by the Equality Commission claimed that racist attacks were higher in Northern Ireland, 16.4 attacks per 1000 people, as compared to England and Wales where the average is 12.6 attacks per 1000 people, and that there had been a general increase in racist attacks in Northern Ireland.

Bush and Blair's 'War on terror' was prosecuted using vitriolic anti-Muslim rhetoric, and Blunkett's war on asylum seekers has continued the racist tirade.

As some loyalists start to look towards Nazism, the left will have to respond to the recent attacks with a campaign to expose the Nazi's and organise a campaign to fight against racism.

BALLYMUN: CONSULTATION OR ISSUING ORDERS?

THE continuing 'regeneration' of Dublin's Ballymun is causing anger and disappointment.

Dublin City Council is undertaking a major rebuilding of the 1960s Ballymun housing estate.

When it set up Ballymun Regeneration Ltd (BRL) some years ago, it promised that the much-needed renovation of the area would involve local people in consultation and promote local jobs on the huge building project.

But few of these promises have been kept.

Sold Off

Residents rehoused from flats are being offered smaller 'apartments'.

Much of the better new housing has already been sold off to landlords and speculators, while some of the housing offered to locals is gerry-built by cowboy contractors.

Anger boiled over at a meeting in the Poppintree area of Ballymun in July when 150 people met to discuss the latest BRL plans for the area.

As one resident pointed out, 'BRL want to build on every bit of green space—this will treble the popula-

tion of the area, and leave no space for children to play and other facilities.

'In the Courts a number of houses will be demolished and 263 new dwellings built but only a quarter of these will go to local families.

'Plans to open the Courts up to cars driving through where children play will result in another tragedy.'

The meeting heard calls for residents to get onto the streets. 'People power is the only thing that can get us some justice!' another resident declared.

The meeting was called by the Poppintree Forum, set up under a partnership arrangement between the BRL and local communities, to facilitate 'consultation'.

It is composed of local residents elected by their neighbours who meet with City Council and BRL officials.

However in April, the Poppintree Forum was disbanded and evicted from their office when they refused to endorse BRL's Masterplan for the area. But the elected Forum representatives will not be intimidated and are organising public meetings to keep the locals organised.

Save Dun Laoghaire baths

A COLOURFUL display of 40 angry demonstrators lined the streets of Dun Laoghaire on Mon. 7th July, following on from Saturday's 200-strong march, in protest at

the council's proposal to install either a 19 storey office block or an exclusive 104-bed luxury hotel in place of the public baths, now closed to the public.

These baths, in the view

of 'Save our Seaford' and the Socialist Working Party should be open to the public instead of being knocked down to set up another commercial enterprise.

The larger plan is to make Dun Laoghaire's

seaford into Ireland's Riviera. But it is really all about commercialising a public space.

At the moment, two consortiums have submitted plans for development. Because of public pressure they include some sea baths elements. But it is likely that these will be run for profit rather than being genuine public amenities. For example, Inchydoney Hotel Lodge and Spa, who will run the amenity under one of the proposals, charges 90 euro for spa treatment at their centre in West Cork.

Proposals

The Coastal Development Plan said that the 19th century character of the baths should be respected and no development should go over three storeys. But the proposals which are under consideration by the council breach these developments.

Richard Boyd Barrett, convenor of Save Our Seaford campaign said,

'The council is showing their utter contempt for democracy. They have ignored the wishes of the vast majority of local residents and put forward proposals that will mean the effective privatisation of a public amenity and the destruction of a unique part of Dun Laoghaire's seaford heritage'

The space could be better utilised to construct a chil-

dren's playground, a skateboarding arena or any public amenity to better facilitate the people of the Dun Laoghaire area. The battle over the baths is only part of a larger battle unfolding in the area.

'We are convinced that if either of these two developments goes ahead they will signal the start of a major programme of large scale commercial development along the seaford area and in the harbour itself. We are already gearing up for a battle to stop a similar private development of the Carlisle Pier in Dun Laoghaire harbour' said Richard Boyd Barrett.

If the people's voice is not heard, a campaign will continue to try to demolish the planned development and further larger protests will be organised.

Tralee Anti War Group



Over 60 people came to a well organised meeting of the Tralee Anti War Group on July 7th, and are now preparing for two days of action this Autumn.

Michael Birmingham, who has been living in Iraq since last October, spoke passionately about the effects of occupation on the ordinary people—a country without clean water, electricity or any form of justice. Joe Higgins of the Socialist Party eloquently described how the Irish Anti War Movement mobilised tens of thousands of people to take to the streets, demonstrating the alternative of people power to the corrupt politics of old.

Joe Carolan of Globalise Resistance finished by making the links between war and globalisation, and the upcoming World Economic Forum demonstrations in Dublin on October 20th.

The Tralee Anti War group are organising transport for this and the Sept 27th International Day of Action

SAVE THE BATHS CAMPAIGN ACTIVIST MEETING
24th July
Farrell's Pub,
7pm. Dun Laoghaire Shopping Centre

Socialist Worker

PAPER OF THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY €1.00 / £0.70p

inside:

**AER RIANTA
WORKERS
VOW
TO FIGHT
BREAK UP**

—PAGE 11

**WARNING:
PRIVATISATION
DAMAGES
YOUR
TRANSPORT**
—PAGES 6&7

UNIONS MOVE TO SAVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

STOP THE SELL-OFF!



BUS and train workers are taking action to fight Seamus Brennan's planned privatisation of CIE.

The government has announced that from early next year a quarter of Dublin's bus services will be taken away from Dublin Bus and handed over to private operators.

Soon afterwards, more bus services will disappear until eventually all public transport will be in the hands of private companies.

Privatisation will mean longer hours, lower pay and loss of job security for bus drivers as well as a worse service for the travelling public.

In Britain, where public transport has been privatised for more than ten years, off-peak and late night services

have been cut and fares have risen.

The train service is on the point of collapse as maintenance and safety are cut to bolster the profits of the multinational operators.

But CIE workers are not taking this lying down.

On 18 July, bus and train workers throughout the state were set to hold a No Fares Day to build public support for the fight.

Key Points

Mick Faherty Assistant General Secretary of the NBRU told *Socialist Worker*, 'Instead of collecting fares, staff will hand out leaflets pointing out the implications of Brennan's plans.'

'There are two key points: first these changes are not in the public

interest. It will not result in a better service.

'In fact the Minister doesn't say the service will be improved. Instead he says the private sector can reduce costs—it can do it cheaper!'

'Secondly we are concerned for the future of our members and their conditions of service.'

'This will be followed up with a Day of Action on Tuesday 29th August. This will involve protests, marches, etc. And then on 16 September there will be one day strike.'

There are more strike days planned in October and November and a two day stoppage on 8 and 9 December.

Owen McCormack of the Bus-workers Action Group—a rank and file group of Dublin bus workers—told *Socialist Worker*, 'This is a fight

everyone should get behind.

'We shouldn't rely on the ICTU—they are looking for an excuse to call off the action.'

'CIE workers need to be prepared to continue the action if that happens.'

'We need to build big anti-privatisation forums that unite bus workers and passengers.'

'We should also look to link up with Aer Rianta workers now that they too are threatened by Brennan's plans.'

Under-investment

Another bus worker told *Socialist Worker*, 'Fianna Fail told us 18 months ago there would be no privatisation. It's a different story now.'

'Brennan has just foisted these

plans on us and said there can be no negotiation on the principle of handing over routes.'

'The real problem is not lack of competition, but underinvestment in public transport.'

'The QBCs [Quality Bus Corridors or bus lanes] can be a real advantage. But most of them stop before we get into town leading to bottlenecks and delays.'

'Does Brennan ever travel by bus?'

Another bus driver commented, 'We stand to lose a lot if these plans go through. And the travelling public will also lose.'

'I think bus workers are a loyal bunch and will stick together. We have to depend on ourselves and get support from the public.'