

Socialist Worker

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GROWING RESISTANCE

U.S. TROOPS OUT OF SHANNON!

OVER half a million people demonstrated against the occupation of Iraq outside the Republican Convention in New York at the end of August.

This is one of the largest demonstrations seen in the city for decades and shows the strength of anger among masses of ordinary Americans at a war that has cost nearly a thousand US lives and perhaps thirty times that many Iraqi lives.

Despite massive police intimidation, New

Yorkers crowded the streets around Union Square to begin their march.

Addressing the crowd as the march assembled, one father whose son was killed in Iraq, said "Bush lied, and my son is dead. Bush lied and thousands of Iraqis are dead. Stop this War! Pull the troops out now!"

Bombings

Meanwhile the resistance in Iraq is growing despite an intensification of the brutal bombings by US troops.

Mass resistance and demonstrations across Iraq have forced a climbdown by US-led forces in Fallujah and Najaf.

But disgracefully US troops and war materials continue to make use of Shannon airport.

We need to continue to build a vibrant anti-war movement in every town, in every college, and in our unions to fight this bloody occupation and Irish Government complicity.

■ **Turn to page three for full reports and analysis.**

Save Our Seafont

Dun Laoghaire gets moving

ON Sunday September 5th residents from the Dun Laoghaire area will participate in march and carnival calling for the re-opening of Dun Laoghaire Baths as public water amenity.

A demonstration through Dun Laoghaire Town will be followed by a carnival on the seafont with free live music from King Sativa, Gavin Moore, Ma Samba Domanha, Shah Smooth, Aggressive Brocoli and Psychotherapy as well as other carnival events.

The event has been organised by Save Our Seafont (SOS), who have been campaigning for a number of years to prevent the privatisation of the Baths and other parts of the seafont.

Last year Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co Council decided to support developer's proposals for either a 19-storey office block or 104-bedroom hotel on the site of the Baths.

The proposals were shelved at the last minute after SOS organised a protest that brought hundreds of residents onto the streets and collected several thousand signatures on a protest petition.

Councillors then agreed there would be proper public consultation on any new plan for the site. The public consultation never happened.

Recently, the council did vote to include a 25-metre pool in any new

development. However, no action has been taken. There is also concern that if the council is left to its own devices, some other large-scale commercial development will be attached to any new proposal and public access will be restricted.

Without any public consultation the council also voted to demolish the old façade of the Baths. Many residents feel that the site must be modernised but should still maintain a link with the 19th century Baths by retaining the old façade.

Privatising

Richard Boyd Barrett, SOS convenor and local SWP rep said: "Because the council and developers did not get their way in privatising the site they have done nothing."

"They probably hope the campaign will go away and that the public will get fed up with a derelict building and accept anything at some point further down the road."

"This protest and carnival has been organised to send a clear message to the council that we will continue to fight until the Baths are re-opened as a fully public amenity."

"A derelict site or some exclusive development is not acceptable."

The march and carnival will also be a protest against plans by the Dun

Laoghaire Harbour Co. to build over 200 private apartments on the site of the Carlisle Pier in Dun Laoghaire Harbour.

According to Richard Boyd Barrett and SOS: "The Harbour Co plan will mean the effective privatisation of a substantial part of the harbour. It will make the way for more exclusive developments and privatisation on the seafont."

"The new County Development Plan has also removed a number of important environmental and heritage restrictions on development in the area."

"Bulloch harbour is now also under threat. It is clear the council and developers are in cahoots with plans to carve up the seafont and public services for profit."

"We are protesting to say the needs of the public must come before the greed of developers and that the seafont belongs to everyone not a wealthy minority."

SOS supports the Maritime Institute plan for the Carlisle Pier to be developed as a location for a National Maritime Museum and a planetarium.

They are also calling for other harbour related and youth amenities to be located on the on the site.

■ For more information contact Richard Boyd Barrett 087-6329511 or Nicola Sarat 087-4115015



■ Padlocked: Dun Laoghaire Baths

Iraqi Sports Stars Attack Bush

The Iraq soccer team came in a very credible fourth in the recent Olympics and their players cautioned US President George Bush not to use their success in his re-election campaign, according to the US monthly *Sports Illustrated*.

Fox News has touted the success of Iraq's under-23 team as it beat Portugal 4-2 and Costa Rica 2-0 and sailed through to the semi-finals after bringing Australia down 1-0 on 21 August.

However, the sudden interest in the team from the US Republican re-election campaign platform has irked some of its members.

"Iraq as a team does not want Mr. Bush to use us for the presidential campaign," Iraqi player Salih Sadir told SI.com.

"He can find another way to advertise himself."

Some players went further. Midfielder Ahmad Manajid told the monthly sports magazine: "How will he meet his god having slaughtered so many men and women? He has committed so many crimes."

"I want to defend my home. If a stranger invades America and the people resist, does that mean they are terrorists?"

"Everyone [in Falluja] has been labelled a terrorist. These are all lies."

Falluja people are some of the best people in Iraq."

According to *Sports Illustrated*, one of Manajid's cousin was a resistance fighter who was killed by US occupation forces. He allegedly told SI.com that he would have become a resistance fighter had he not been on the Olympic team.

"My problems are not with the American people," Coach Adnan Hamad told the sports monthly. "They are with what America has done in Iraq: destroy everything. The American army has killed so many people in Iraq. What is freedom when I go to the [national] stadium and there are shootings on the road?"

Military fears another Vietnam

The prospect of the occupation getting bogged down for years in a Vietnam-style quagmire is now being openly admitted by senior US military figures.

"If we have the political will and stamina to stay, I could see this going on for ten years," says Randolph Gangle, who heads the US Marines' Centre for Emerging Threats & Opportunities.

The Iraqi resistance is not under the control of any one political faction or leader, making it harder for the Americans to put it down.

"It is not classical guerrilla warfare in the sense there is no one in charge of it," says US colonel Larry Brown, who recently returned from a tour of duty in Fallujah.

"There is no pressure point. There is no rebel leader that you would find in a Central American guerrilla war."

Palestinian political prisoners:

Thousands on hunger strike

By **SÍOFRA NÍ CHONGHAILE**

"THEY can strike for one day, one month or even until death but we will not concede to their demands"—Israeli Internal Security Minister, Tzahi Hanegbi.

On August 15, 2,269 Palestinian political prisoners began a hunger strike. Another 6,500 political prisoners are expected to join their mass protest against their continuing maltreatment and the denial of their most basic human rights.

They are demanding that they be treated in accordance with international law (the Fourth Geneva Convention) and that their fundamental human rights be respected.

None of the prisoners' complaints are new. Just last month, Israel's Public Defender's Office criticised prison conditions in Israeli detention centres. It found centres overcrowded, violent and unsanitary with many prisoners having to eat and sleep on bare floors.

They demand that legal documents and prison policies be made available in Arabic; family visits be allowed; an end to searches of children under 14 years; detention of prisoners in facilities near their family home; and the restoration of the right to retain their own clothing.

They want permission to make handicrafts; permission to join Arab universities and to receive newspapers; re-opening of



■ Palestinians protest the occupation of Gaza City

libraries; treatment of emergency medical cases; permission to send out art works such as novels, poetry and memoirs with visiting family members; and non-interference in the Friday sermons.

The Committee for the Families of Palestinian Political Prisoners has designated September 4th a global day of solidarity. The families are appealing to the international community to pressurise Israel to respect human rights.

Israeli response

As soon as the strike was announced, Israeli authorities responded harshly. All visits by families and lawyers were prohibited indefinitely. Fluids and salt were removed from prisoners' cells. (Salt and

water are essential to keep hunger strikers from deteriorating too rapidly). Attempts were made to break the strike by isolating the leaders and replacing their cells with common law prisoners.

Prison guards are attempting "psychological warfare" to break the strike, by cooking meat and baking bread directly outside prison cells.

Officials have said they may resort to force-feeding in the coming weeks. In 1980, Ali Ja'fari and Rasem Halawi died as a result of lung damage due to force-feeding by Israeli prison guards.

Who are the prisoners?

The majority of political prisoners are young and

have been detained illegally, without charge or trial. Frequently, they are the most active members of their local community who have been detained for non-military activities.

Internment

Approximately 770 Palestinians are currently held in administrative detention (internment without trial), used when Israeli authorities no evidence to charge them. Those arrested under administrative detention can be held indefinitely and their families are often not informed if or where they are being detained. Since 1967, Israel has arbitrarily detained over 630,000 Palestinians.

Since the outbreak of the second Intifada, over 28,000 have been arrested.

They are incarcerated in three types of prison: central prisons, military detention compounds and interrogation centres, including the notorious facility 1391 known as Israel's "Abu Ghraib". Children as young as 13 are held in Israeli prisons and the estimated 8,000 political prisoners includes 370 children (under 18 years) and 103 women and girls.

What are the prisoners' demands?

In February 2003, the International Federation of Human Rights declared that Israel was in "flagrant violation" of, among others, the Universal Human Rights Declaration and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

Israeli human rights organisation *B'Tselem* has previously reported that 85% of Palestinian detainees have been systematically tortured during interrogation.

What can we do to help?

The Ireland-Palestine

Solidarity Campaign is asking you to support the hunger strikers by:

■ Demonstrating – 11am Saturday 4 September at the Israeli Embassy.

■ Writing a letter of support to Palestinian prisoners. Email palprisoner@yahoo.com or fax to 00 353 1 928 752 8355. These will be forwarded to the prisoners' families.

■ Voicing your protest to the Israeli Embassy on telephone 01 230 9400, fax 01 - 230 9446, email info@dublin.mfa.gov.il, post Carrisbrook House, 122 Pembroke Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

■ Contacting the Department of Foreign Affairs and demanding that the Irish Government calls for a suspension of the Euro-Mediterranean Association Agreement (whereby Israel receives preferential trade terms with EU states) until Israel abides by international law. 01 4780822, email: library1@iveagh.gov.ie

■ Boycotting all Israeli produce. Unlike Apartheid South Africa when many Irish businesses refused to stock apartheid goods, Irish supermarkets sell a large amount of fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs produced by Israel (often produced in illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories).

□ Visit: www.electronicintifada.org; www.al-awda.org; www.ipsc.ie

Support the Palestinian Hunger Strikers
Saturday 4 September
International Day of Solidarity
Demonstrate at the Israeli Embassy from 11am

editorial

US and its Allawi puppet forced to climb down in Najaf

Iraq resistance grows

THE US is facing the very real prospect of defeat in Iraq as internal and international opposition mounts.

The US and the US puppet government of Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi were forced into a humiliating climbdown last month.

U.S. troops in Najaf were engaged in a bloody assault around the Imam Ali Mosque, the holiest shrine to Shiite Muslims. They were attacking resistance fighters belonging to militant Shiite cleric Moktada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.

This sparked rebellions in town after town throughout Iraq, with rebels staging attacks on U.S. troops and Iraqi police.

The crisis began when U.S. soldiers and forces from the Allawi government violated a two-month-old ceasefire agreement with Sadr's forces—by arresting Mahdi militia fighters and launching a raid on Sadr's home.

U.S. forces then surrounded Najaf and began launching rockets from helicopters and jet fighters at suspected outposts of Sadr's militia.

The rain of death destroyed homes and killed untold numbers of civilians in a city of half a million people.

Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets of Baghdad, Kufa, Samawa, Nasiriya and other cities to express their anger at the U.S. assault.

Despite US attempts to play on tensions between Iraq's Sunni and Shiite Muslim populations, large crowds in the Sunni town of Falluja—where U.S. troops were driven out by rebels in May—held a demonstration, chanting "Long live Sadr, Falluja stands by Najaf against America."

In Diwaniya, demonstrators at a large rally attacked and occupied the offices of Allawi's party, and called for his resignation. The demonstrations in support of Najaf spread outside Iraq—to Iran, Bahrain, Pakistan and Lebanon.

Eventually a deal was brokered by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most powerful religious leader in Iraq.

This saw troops withdraw from Najaf and the guerrillas leave intact, free to reform, having given up some of their weapons – which in any event can be easily replaced.

The brutal US occupation has not even permitted the puppet government to enjoy control of much of Iraq. As Robert Fisk reported recently in the *London Independent*: "The American-appointed 'government' controls only parts of Baghdad - and even there its ministers and civil servants are car-bombed and assassinated. Baquba, Samara, Kut, Mahmoudiya, Hilla, Fallujah, Ramadi, all are outside government authority. Iyad Allawi, the 'Prime Minister', is little more than mayor of Baghdad."

Even Allawi's forces are throwing in the towel. In mid-August, more than 100 Iraqi National Guard troops and a battalion of Iraqi soldiers had thrown down their rifles in Najaf and refused to attack their fellow Iraqis. Fisk reports that outside of Baghdad, police posts stand abandoned.

Bush's hopes of establishing a pliant regime amenable to US interests took another hammering in August, when a national conference of 1,100 Iraqi delegates that was supposed to organise national elections in January descended into chaos as delegate after delegate denounced Allawi for collaborating with the U.S. assault on Najaf.



Half a million New Yorkers protest

WHOEVER wins the American presidential election in November, it is clear that the US will continue to seek to dominate the Middle East.

Republican and Democrat politicians have been overwhelming in their support for war in Afghanistan and Iraq and in backing Israel's crimes against the Palestinians. US control of the region's oil through pliant pro-Western regimes is crucial to keeping their rivals – particularly Japan and China – in check.

Over half a million New Yorkers demonstrated before the Republican National Convention at the end of August against the war. Despite an enormous presence of armed police and the refusal of the city authorities to issue a permit to the organisers –

United for Peace and Justice – to hold a rally in Central Park, the turn out was twice that expected by the organisers.

It is growing resistance in Iraq and the international movement against the war, of which the New York protest was a magnificent example, which are the means by which Bush, or his possible successor Kerry, will be deprived of an imperialist victory.

The anti war movement here in Ireland needs to be stepped up. The next major national and international anti-war focus will be at the ESF in London in October.

The war will be a central feature of the ESF and will culminate in a massive anti-war demo. This will be European movement's intervention in the US elections.

● There's an information pack, sponsorship form etc available from the IAWM office - contact 087-6329511. Distribute these to as many groups / people as possible.

● Get delegates from local groups / campaign to go to the national ESF mobilising meeting hosted by the IAWM on Saturday September 11, 2pm Wynns Hotel.

● Distribute leaflets for the ESF to local community groups/trade union branches/campaigns and build towards a local united front meeting mobilising for the ESF for the end of September.

● Register for the ESF today at www.fse-esf.org

● Visit the Irish Anti War Movement website www.irishantiwar.org for news, info and resources.

Ten years after the IRA ceasefire

TEN years after the first IRA ceasefire, working class people in the North are still waiting for their 'peace dividend'.

Instead, we have seen sectarianism intensify and spread.

When the Assembly was up and running, it was characterised by dour stalemate and acceptance of conservative economics. While the parties argued about policing, decommissioning and which flags to fly, they had no problem in agreeing to implement neo-liberal policies of privatisation and 'the race to the bottom'.

The result has been a growth in inequality, with the gap between rich and poor in the North now worse than the South or Britain. Public services, even the Civil Service, are being privatised at every turn, rates increased and now water charges are being introduced.

The political parties' response to water charges is typical. Sinn Fein and SDLP accuse each other of being responsible for their introduction, while both point the finger at the DUP. In fact, all the parties in the Executive agreed to water charges and there are minutes to prove this. But none will say whether, if the Assembly is revived, they will refuse to implement the charges.

Socialist Worker has always been for the peace but against the process. As we predicted, the Belfast Agreement has institutionalised sectarianism. The number of

'peace lines' and 'interface areas', where sectarian tensions and violence are high, has grown since 1998.

The level of disillusionment and alienation in many working class areas cannot be underestimated. The result is seen in the number of Protestant as well as Catholic families that have been forced out of their homes this summer and in the growth in racist and homophobic attacks.

Socialists want to offer an alternative to this alienation. We want to turn the anger against the government and political parties and bring some hope back.

There is much more uniting Catholic and Protestant working class communities than divides them. The challenge is to present a real alternative, through campaigns – like against the water charges – that show that unity in action.



Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet. A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

REVOLUTION

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy. To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much greater political and economic democracy.

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.

Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the working class. We are for full social, economic and political equality for women. We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government. Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction' We want to see an Irish workers republic where all workers gain. Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

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. We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc. We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

Join the Socialists!

To join the Socialist Workers Party or for more information:

Fill in the form and **Send to:**

RO: SWP PO Box 1648, Dublin 8, Phone (01) 872 2682

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

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

Name.....

Address.....

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Eamonn McCann

Clinton's fans



ONE OF the staples of socialist comedy over the past couple of years in Ireland has been An Phoblacht's report of Bill Clinton's "lap of honour" around Ireland just before he left office in December 2000.

The account of Clinton's climactic meeting in Dundalk has provided no end of merriment at fund-raising socials and the like.

How did Clinton appear on-stage? "He basked in the moonlight."

And what feeling did this engender in the audience? "We had come into the light."

How did the Shinners say cheerio to the pudgy Arkansas sax-abuser? "So long Bill, it was a truly excellent adventure".

And so on.

Some Shinners fail to see the funny side. Those who regard themselves as Left-wing point out that the next edition of An Phoblacht carried letters from other Sinn Fein members objecting to the tone of the Dundalk article: it didn't represent the party's real attitudes, they insist.

Well, Clinton was back last month, so we have had a chance to check out the real attitude.

Clinton, let us remind ourselves, is the man who ordered the bombing of a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan on August 20th 1998—the day of Monica Lewinski's testimony to a grand jury. On December 16th the same year, he sent his ambassador to the UN, Peter Burleigh, to order chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler to withdraw his team from Iraq so that the US and Britain could start bombing. December 16th was also the day Senate impeachment hearings into Clinton's perjury began.

George W. Bush may be a repulsive character on any number of counts. But, as far as we know, he never ordered people killed for a reason as trivial as covering up perjury or a semen stain on a dress.

Or consider Clinton's reaction when he arrived in office in January 1993 to discover the US adventure in Somalia falling apart. Chief spin-doctor George Stephanopoulos recalled in his memoirs: "We're not inflicting pain on these fuckers," (Clinton) said softly at first. 'When people kill us, they should be killed in greater numbers.' Then, with his face reddening, his voice rising and his fist pounding his thigh, 'I believe in killing people who try to hurt you, and I can't believe we're being pushed around by these two-bit pricks.'

These are but a tiny selection of actions by Clinton which would alienate utterly anybody wanting seriously to be seen as Left-wing. It comes as no surprise that none of this rated a mention in mainstream media or political circles during Clinton's visit. What ought to be surprising, but actually isn't, is that none of it was mentioned either by any Sinn Fein figure. Instead, Sinn Fein efforts were devoted to manoeuvring themselves into the picture any time a camera was pointed at Clinton.

Gerry Adams straight-faced described Clinton a "a man of peace." MP Michelle Gildernew claimed that Clinton's presence in the North "will provide a much-needed boost for the peace process." And so on.

A search of the web reveals not a single statement from a Sinn Feiner critical of Clinton during his visit.

People within Sinn Fein who regard themselves as socialists should give over twisting themselves into knots trying to reconcile their party with their political philosophy. They should get out, and join in the effort to build a serious socialist organisation as an alternative to the sort of opportunist nationalism exposed yet again during the Clinton visit.

DON'T PAY TWICE FOR WATER

THE start of August saw Minister John Spellar announce plans to privatise water and sewerage services and make them 'self-financing' by 2008/09.

The statement was very misleading: it announced the establishment of a 'wholly-owned government company', which, he claimed, did not amount to privatisation.

Only when you read the small print do you realise that this Government Owned Company, or GoCo, is in fact privatisation.

The company will be set up the same as any company, with all or most of the shares owned by the government.

But the shares can be sold off to private companies whenever it suits the government, without any need for further legislation.

Indeed, the Minister says that he intends to investigate the role that the private sector can play in the new water company which, he says, will 'help deliver value for money in the delivery and financing of services, and to 'reduce the level of charges borne by customers'.

But all the evidence from England is that the involvement of the private sector pushes up the level of charges, since the private sector is only interested in profit.

Meanwhile, over 700 jobs will be lost to the public sector.

Workers whose jobs have been privatised will know what that means – worse wages and working conditions and lower pensions on retirement.

Across England, Scotland and Wales, water charges have risen so that those living on low incomes have to spend as much as 15 percent of their income on water.

Evidence to hearings of the Dept. of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee showed widespread levels of water poverty.

The accepted proportion of household income which should be spent on water is 3



■ John Spellar, driving through privatisation

percent. Anything above that means households are suffering water poverty.

Yet, in England where the private sector runs the water services, an average water and sewerage bill for South West Water in 2003-04 was £342 which represents 12 percent of the income of a single person on Jobseekers Allowance, and 6 percent of the income of a single pensioner receiving Minimum Income Guarantee.

Petrol Bombs

£342 is considerably less than what water charges bills are expected to be here.

A letter from Minister Spellar, leaked to the papers in June, said that those on benefits here will be given a 25 percent reduction on their water charges.

That will still amount to £6 or £8 a week

that people will have to find from their benefits.

The Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network says 'if water charges are not stopped, many more children will be going to bed hungry in order to pay for water'.

Everyone in the North is already paying for our water through the rates. Over the coming weeks and months, socialists will be working with Communities Against the Water Tax to organise meetings on every housing estate, in every local area.

These meetings then need to organise each area on a street by street basis to resist the charges and ensure that no one is frightened into paying them.

We will also be arguing within the unions for a determined fight to save the 700 jobs in the Water Service.

Stop the deportation of the Somasundrams

THE Somasundram family have lived in Northern Ireland since September 2001.

They fled from persecution in Sri Lanka under threat from both the army and Tamil Tigers.

Soma, the father, and his eldest son were forced to transport goods for the Tamil Tigers.

The son was murdered by the army and when Soma arrived to collect his body, he was arrested, detained and tortured.

The family managed to pay a bribe and Soma was released.

However the Tamil Tigers, suspecting he'd become an informer, issued a death threat to the family.

Application

The Somasundrams fled and after a torturous journey arrived in the North.

An adjudicator upheld their application for asylum but this was reversed on appeal from the Home Office.

It argued that peace talks and a ceasefire in Sri Lanka meant the threat to the family was diminished and that as a young, active hard-working family they could contribute to the rebuilding of Sri Lanka.

However the talks have broken down and the ceasefire is regularly broken - four people were shot in the last month in the fam-

ily's home town. Their fear of returning is real and justified.

A campaign has been launched to defend their right to stay.

We are calling on people to raise the case in their own work place, college, church or community.

Also to circulate the petition

and distribute campaign material, available from: Save the Somasundrams Campaign, c/o: 12-24 University Ave, Belfast, BT7 1GY, <http://somasundram.net>.

Families flee after sectarian harassment

AS THE North's politicians head to Leeds Castle in England for talks on bringing back devolved government, people living on sectarian interfaces are experiencing what the political process has brought – continued sectarian harassment and intimidation.

In what was supposed to be a 'quiet marching season' sectarian attacks on both Catholics and Protestants took place in East Belfast, Ballymena, North Belfast, Derry and North Antrim.

The Torrens estate, close to Belfast's Ardoyne, has been particularly badly hit with ten Protestant families forced to flee their homes.

DUP MP for North Belfast, Nigel Dodds, says that Protestants are being 'ethnically cleansed' from North Belfast.

Dodds built a political career exploiting the housing crisis in North Belfast and has sought every opportunity to create fear amongst Protestants that Catholics are 'taking over'.

As a result, the location of a new house or someone from a dif-

ferent religion moving into an area can be endowed with huge political significance.

Recent events in Ballymena show how the current situation contains the possibility both of continued sectarian conflict but also of working class unity and resistance.

Petrol Bombs

In August, Ballymena was the scene of sectarian violence as Nationalists from Dunclug estate threw petrol bombs and stones at Protestants.

A Catholic was admitted to hospital after being beaten with iron bars by a Loyalist gang.

But in June, the Dunclug estate was the scene of a different kind of politics as locals united to defend the Dunclug post office from closure. Dunclug Resident's Association, made up of Protestant and Catholics, mounted a campaign to keep the post office open.

One hundred people from the estate packed a meeting in the local Community Centre and

heard powerful speeches from the members of the Residents Association calling for a fight to save the post office.

But then the DUP and SDLP (Sinn Fein representatives were also at the meeting but did not speak) politicians steered the meeting away from action and towards a meeting with Post Office bosses.

At this meeting the Post Office announced its final decision – the local branch is due to close in September. Orange and Green Tories turned what could have been a successful campaign to save the local post office into a defeat.

Despite the politicians' sabotage, Socialists take inspiration from the fact that in Ballymena, known as the citadel of Paisleyism, one hundred Catholics and Protestants can join together to wage a self-consciously anti-sectarian campaign to defend public services.

This is the kind of action that can recast Northern politics.

Chavez victory is a rout for rich

Reforms to improve life for the poor made the Venezuelan president powerful enemies - **MIKE GONZALEZ** says that last month's referendum result shows he has millions of powerful friends



■ Thousands of Chavez supporters greet failure of the recall referendum

PRESIDENT HUGO Chavez has won a resounding victory in a referendum designed to topple him and the government of Venezuela—a government hated by the rich and powerful in both Caracas and Washington.

After the threats and ultimatums, nearly five million Venezuelans, just over 58 percent, backed Chavez in the referendum of 15 August. In 2000, 3.8 million first elected Chavez president. In 2004, that number increased by over a million.

The referendum was the latest attempt by the right to unseat Chavez.

An attempted coup in April 2002 failed when the masses took to the streets in support of the "Bolivarian Revolution".

Eight months later oil executives and business people launched a "bosses' strike", supported by the big media moguls (the so called Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse). The "strike" failed.

The next stage was the collection of two

million signatures to call a referendum.

Under the new Venezuelan constitution framed by Chavez himself, a president can be removed from office when half his term has run.

The condition is that the vote for his resignation has to be a majority and greater than the number of votes cast for him in the original presidential elections.

Confirmed

Despite all the efforts of the oligarchs who control much of the Venezuelan media, and despite the entreaties of CNN, the right failed miserably to win a majority.

Now, of course, the right wing is crying "fraud". But former US president Jimmy Carter and the other international observers don't agree.

They have confirmed the results, and the turnout of over 90 percent. (It's worth comparing that with the 40 percent who voted for Bush or Gore in 2000.)

Their deep hatred of Chavez comes from

the fact that he provided free education for a million of the country's poorest children—many from the shanty towns—and attempted to tackle illiteracy.

He also began providing healthcare and university education for the poor—modest steps, but enough to make the right wing seek to unseat Chavez by any means necessary.

Of course, the right will not give up. For years they enjoyed the gravy train of oil profits at the expense of Venezuela's poor. For years these same people ran political life through graft and corruption.

On the other hand, their US government friends have been making some unexpected noises recently, having supported the enemies of Chavez for several years.

It is oil that is making them change their mind. Venezuela's oil reserves are only slightly less than Iraq's. It exports 1.4 million barrels a day to the United States.

In recent weeks, as the Iraqi resistance has successfully and repeatedly stopped the flow of oil and as tensions grew in Venezuela, the price of oil kept on rising. The current \$46 a barrel is the highest it has reached in over 20 years.

Whatever Bush's plans might have been, the reality is that Iraq is a quagmire where the US military will be stuck for a long time to come. The US economy is far from healthy, and the November elections are likely to be dominated by a growing disillusionment with Iraq.

The last thing Bush needs now is rising petrol prices.

The referendum has shown beyond any doubt that the vast majority of Venezuelans want oil profits to be used to improve their lives—to finance health and education programmes, and transform the miserable housing so many of them live in.

Their support for Chavez is based on the promise that his "Bolivarian Revolution" will bring those changes, and in turn change the face of Venezuelan society.

Up until now the Venezuelan national oil company was virtually a state within a state. Its managers are as rich as any oil executive, and growing richer as they make deals with multinational corporations.

This vote was much more than simply an expression of support for Hugo Chavez himself. His revolution has up until now produced a lot of promises but only limited changes. And, after the vote became known, Chavez's first declarations offered open doors to the opposition.

The US government for its part is suggesting that it will have to learn to work with this oil-rich country. And Chavez himself is very keen to build alliances and coalitions with other Latin American states, to lobby and negotiate with the international financial agencies.

For those on the ground who mobilised to win, the referendum victory is a major step forward. But it should also demonstrate that in the end it is what those masses do that will shape the future.

After the failed coup of 2002 Chavez thanked the people and asked them to return home while he continued making the revolution. This time they should build on what they gained on 15 August and drive the "revolution" from below.

Their allies are in the movements in Bolivia, Ecuador and the popular assemblies of Argentina. Their victories against imperialism were won by mass struggles and mobilisations.

That will be true of Venezuela too, though this referendum victory should give a huge boost of confidence. For now the right are on the run—they should be forced to keep on running.

The spirit of 1989 in Germany



■ German workers strike to fight welfare cuts

BY BRID SMITH

OVER the last four weeks 140 cities in Germany have seen thousands march on the streets every Monday night to demand an end to the Hartz IV plan. Hartz, the boss of Volkswagen, was commissioned by Schroeder's government to devise a plan to crush the welfare state.

The Hartz law is at its root a massive attack on unemployment benefit. Instead of receiving benefit as a percentage of previous earnings, all Germany's unemployed will be expected to live on a basic income of €346 per month.

To receive this benefit workers will have to show how much savings their children have, they may have to sell off musical instruments belonging to their kids, their flat cannot be above a certain size so they may be forced to move.

"People are really frightened by Hartz IV. They are worried about their homes, their kids, the few bob they have saved", Chritine told SW.

The biggest anger is erupting in the former East German states where unemployment can be as high as 20 – 30%. Many of the East German cities were de-industrialised after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 1989 workers all over Eastern Germany took to the streets on the Monday Night demonstrations which led to the fall of the Wall and the ushering in of capitalism.

"We are the People" was the slogan of '89 and now people are using the slogan and the Monday nights to organise against a system which has massively disappointed them.

The protests are growing by the week. They are calling for the tradition of the Monday protests to be re-established and say "We will march every Monday until the law collapses".

In the East the protests are the biggest with up to 20,000 coming out. In some smaller towns the demos have been huge and are effectively undermining the neo-Nazis who try to blame the immigrants rather than the system.

After the fall of the Wall, instead of capitalism bringing in a promised new prosperity it has brought desperation and anger at

the political system.

This anger is fused with a crisis in the German politic system which is run by a Green/Red alliance and is implementing neo liberal policies, attacking workers and unemployed rights.

In the Northern region of the country which is the heartland of German capitalism, the SPD have always had a stronghold. Now their support is collapsing. In a local election campaign SPD candidates are afraid to use their party's name and logo because they know they will be beaten.

But a very significant alternative to the SPD is being formed across Germany. Trade union officials previously loyal to the SPD have left the party to form a new party called Election Alternative Labour and Social Justice. They plan to mount a serious challenge to the SPD in the 2006 Federal Elections. These union activists have joined with radical elements of the anti capitalist movement from ATTAC Germany and Linksruck to build an alternative to the sell-outs of Schroder and have organized packed meetings throughout the country.

Members

Already some branches of this new formation have got off the ground with regular meetings of 30 to 40 people. These include young students along with older workers and shop stewards.

Some of the workers have been loyal members of the SPD for most of their lives but are now centrally involved in building an alternative to Schroder.

This new party has been welcomed by Oscar La Fontaine (the former radical Finance Minister) and will have its founding conference this November.

The big challenge for socialists today in Germany is to build the movement against neo-liberalism and war. The Monday protests are the main focus and are now beginning to involve the unions.

But also socialists have to work with others to build an electoral alternative to the SPD. In this way they can provide a focus to push opposition in a more radical direction and begin to eliminate any influence from the neo-Nazis.



■ Chavez as his victory is announced

EDUCATION

Underfunding short-changes our children

The annual Education at a Glance report from the OECD confirms that year after year Ireland spends less than almost every other country in the developed world on education.

Primary education in particular is severely underfunded.

The results of this neglect are clear for all to see. Last month the *Irish Times* leaked the results of an unpublished study. It revealed that a shocking 30 per cent of primary school children in disadvantaged areas experience severe literacy problems.

This comes as no surprise to teachers working with children in areas that have suffered years of neglect. According to one teacher who has worked in a designated disadvantaged school for almost thirty years: "Up until the mid eighties we had 40, even 50, children in a class. Those kids lost out in educational terms. The adult literacy rate, it's about 25 per cent, is a legacy of those years."

"It is true that today class sizes are half that but it's not enough. Many children need intensive and very focused help. With behavioural and emotional problems at higher levels than I've seen before they need a whole range of supports that they just don't have access to at the moment".

Another teacher continues: "This year we had six children in our school assessed through the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). A child needs a recommendation from a psychologist before they can have access to resource hours, which involves help in a small group with another teacher outside of their own classroom. We needed assessments for at least four times that number. And the problem is that without access to assessment you have no access to extra help for some of the most needy children."

"The Minister pays lip service to the issue of special needs and disadvantage. But until there is a real expansion in the psychological service it will all remain just empty words".

Disadvantage: The failure to act

The Minister for Education has done nothing to tackle disadvantage. Committees, reports and meetings are held on an ongoing basis but when it comes to what really matters—resources—nothing is delivered.

Since the mid 1990s a number of pilot schemes have been in operation in schools. Though successful they have never been extended. Some have in fact been discontinued.

Breaking the Cycle reduced the pupil teacher ratio to 15:1 in junior classes in a small number of schools. It also gave extra funding to buy resources for the classroom, to bring children on trips and to facilitate more education in the arts. It was a great success.

Teachers in those schools were very happy with the results. After 5 years as a pilot programme, however, the scheme was discontinued in the year 2000. Those schools allocated Breaking the Cycle resources have been allowed to keep them for now.

The reason for failing to extend the scheme is a spurious one. The Minister initiated another review of disadvantage in Irish schools.

The Early Start programme provides pre-school education for under-fours in disadvantaged schools. Despite its obvious benefits it has never been extended beyond the initial schools chosen to participate in the scheme.

All but a handful of schools have been forced over the years to abandon a three-year infant cycle, which again can be of massive benefit to children experiencing difficulties right from the start of their school experience.

★ A number of very simple initiatives from the Minister could go a long way towards alleviating some of the problems experienced by primary school children in disadvantaged areas:

■ Reduce the pupil teacher ratio to 15:1



in all classes in disadvantaged schools Give all children access to pre-schooling and a three-year infant cycle

■ Provide easy and immediate access to assessment for children about whom teachers raise concerns.

■ Provide nutritional school meals/snacks and extend and increase the Back to School allowance to cover the real costs of educating a child (€500 a year at primary, €1000 a year at secondary level)

■ Double the capitation grant for schools immediately - this grant covers basic running costs. It is among the lowest in Europe and forces schools to scrimp and save

■ Ensure an adequate school building in which children are warm and safe in a suitable learning environment



Educational underperformance is a symptom of a wider malaise in society. The levels of inequality in Ireland are now second only to those in the US.

A quarter of all children in this state live in households that have an income less than 50 per cent of the national average. 1,405 families are homeless and about 50,000 households in Dublin alone languish on local authority housing lists.

Small-scale investment in local areas on drugs projects and community centres has been beneficial in some communities but it is inadequate. Resources need to be flooded into areas most in need to give children a real chance at succeeding in education.

Compulsory testing

The Minister for Education announced in mid-July his intention to introduce compulsory testing of all primary school children at first and sixth class and one other point. This is an appalling prospect.

Lots of money has been spent on devising a revised curriculum for primary schools. Teachers are receiving ongoing training in it. It is child-centred and encourages active and creative learning. It is based on the very worthwhile belief that children learn best through a hands-on approach. It encourages lots of play, lots of project work and introduces new subject areas. It is all about making learning fun.

The Minister's proposal completely contradicts this philosophy. Now children will be made sit down with a pencil in their hand, an hour on the clock and an exam

booklet in front of them. Testing literacy and numeracy skills in such a formal way will inevitably lead to an overfocus on the exam itself. Children will be judged and labelled at the age of seven.

We already know what the results will be. Children in affluent areas where parents have high literacy skills themselves will perform very well. Children in disadvantaged schools with some exceptions will perform poorly.

Teachers have been using diagnostic testing for years. They also assess and evaluate the child's all round performance through observation and informal assessment. All this information is available in schools already. This is a red herring from the Minister. It is yet another reason to delay funding solutions to the problems we all know exist.

Teachers are concerned that this type of exam system will ultimately lead to league tables and unfair comparisons between schools. It may also be an early precursor of a performance related pay system where teachers in "good" schools would get extra financial rewards.

Private education and inequality

The growth of a private sector in education has accelerated over the last decade. It has increased the levels of educational inequality. It is possible to buy a good Leaving Cert by attending a "grind school".

Geared specifically towards success in the Leaving Cert they are exclusively exam orientated. There is no place in them for the student who wants to do the Applied Leaving Cert or a vocational course. They feed off the need to get points and do little to produce well-rounded individuals. But they increase the pressure on all other students.

It was recently revealed that up to 70 per cent of Leaving Cert students take grinds. For those who cannot afford these extras the prospects of doing well enough to get some of the most highly regarded courses are bleak.

The state funding of secondary schools is grossly inadequate and all the problems seen at primary level are reproduced and amplified. 2,000 pupils drop out before their Junior Cert, 13,000 young people never do their Leaving Cert and 1,000 children never even make the transition to secondary school.

It's now obvious that even those who stay in the system feel they have to supplement it in the private sector. In this way education is beginning to mirror health. It is a very serious indictment of a society that has experienced unprecedented growth rates in recent years.

What we think

Tax the rich and fund education. A 12.5 per cent corporation tax rate is substantially lower than elsewhere in Europe.

By increasing this rate even by a couple of percent we could begin to tackle some of the biggest problems in our education system. The rich in this country have benefited massively from our well-educated workforce. They should now pay their

Debates within the Forum-ESF 2004 London

The movement and political parties

by RORY HEARNE

ONE of the heated debates within the alter-globalisation movement is over the issue of political parties and their involvement and role within the movement.

At the ESF in Paris last November thousands of people squeezed into hear a debate over party and class versus the multitude.

The social forums originated as a space to debate, with decision making only through consensus and the banning of political parties at the forum in Porto Alegre.

This new form of organisation is a response to the perceived failure of political parties to represent the new movement of resistance, a distrust of hierarchies, the betrayal due to the compromises and sell-outs of the reformist/labour/social-democrat parties and failure and defeat of the traditional workers parties (in particular the Communist Party).

We must begin by acknowledging these problems and working enthusiastically with this new movement in the new forms of organising such as consensus decision making etc in order to build the resistance against war and neo-liberalism. At the same time there is a need to engage in debate with the movement over many issues. In order to make "another world possible" we need especially to discuss the role of political parties in resistance movements over past and recent years.

Within the movement diversity is rightfully celebrated and promoted. However, sometimes this uncritical worship of diversity makes one blind to the real differences of ideas, strategy and influence that exist within the movement.

For example, ATTAC—the international campaign for a tax on the profits made from currency speculation—campaigns for the reform of the World Bank, the IMF etc rather than their complete abolition. Or take Oxfam and Christian Aid who see change coming about through lobbying governments and multinationals to make trade rules fair.

The forums are not unique in this. Within any movement or protest, union, campaign or strike there are various and often competing view points and strategies put forward.

These differences are not simply alternatives of the same general perspective but a

real difference in strategy of how to change the world, how much change is desired and possible.

The strategy of reformist/labour/social democrat parties and organisations is to encourage the movements and protests until they get elected to parliament and then to leave them bring about change through the institutions.

This was very visible with the Brazilian PT party's involvement with the World Social Forums in Brazil. For the first forums they were all over them, very much supporting them with their flags and speakers and enthusiastic organisation.

However once Lula got elected, the WSF in 2003 had a very different feel with the PT less visible. The movement had helped get him elected but Lula was now putting in place those very policies the movement was against.

The problem is that when your perspective is to try to use the existing structures to bring about some modest reforms of the system then protests and movements that challenge and threaten the institutions that you are part of should not be encouraged.

Consequently organisations such as ATTAC (which has close links to the French Socialist Party) constantly argue that the social forums should be educative and informative rather than struggle or protest based.

Struggle

They were central to organising the ESF in Paris last year where it was felt that the meetings were too academic orientated and there was little input from those representing real struggle.

They also argued very strongly against the movement making opposition to the Iraq war central. This was because putting opposition to the war as central puts them in a difficult position when they believe that institutions like the UN and the EU rather than the anti war and Iraqi resistance movements will bring peace.

Fortunately the revolutionary parties of the SWP and the Italian PRC won the argument to have the protests on Feb 15th 2003 which were so successful. Indeed organisations such as ATTAC and the NGOs (with close ties to the big reformist parties) support the exclusion of political parties because they fear the influence of the radical left that argues for

change on the basis of mass mobilisation and principled opposition to war and privatisation. The exclusion of political parties hits the small revolutionary parties the hardest.

The argument against the involvement of political parties ignores this reality that there is a raging debate and a myriad of groups and organisations attempting to influence the direction of the movements. It also ignores the reality that the majority of people still see reform of the system as the main possibility of change and therefore misses the question of political representation.

The recent failure of the radical left to influence the elections in Argentina shows this up very clearly. The country had been engulfed in a revolt that went from the unemployed masses to the recently impoverished middle classes. Factories were occupied, regional peoples assemblies were set up and the mood of resistance was rising. However a failure of the anarchist/autonomist influenced *piquetero* movements and the revolutionary left to challenge the Peronists in the elections meant that the mood of resistance was channelled into electing a moderate into government and now the movements are being attacked by that government.

Which direction are the movements to go in? Will they go down the path of being simply a space for debate and say nothing on political representation?

They will then be in effect a building block for different reformist parties to get elected and end up putting in place the same policies of neo-liberalism that they supposedly opposed.

Or will they begin to see the necessity of building a political alternative that genuinely represents the concerns and needs of the movement and working class, a political alternative that places mass struggle and protest as the central strategy to bring about radical change?

Or will another potential situation for radical change in the system be lost? This is the challenge for us in the build up to the ESF 2004—for the movement to see that we need a real alternative political organisation that will take on neo-liberalism and imperialism and not betray those who support it like Lula in Brazil and Blair in England have done.

DEPORTATIONS:

McDowell's crackdown after the referendum



■ Flashback: Anti-racist demonstration in Dublin

By COLM O RIAIN

EVENTS at the end of August show this government's contempt for the rights of asylum seekers and refugees.

They managed to get the referendum through by telling the electorate that it was tying up a loophole, that it wasn't racist.

The reality is different. Since the referendum the government has begun deporting asylum seekers who have had a child born in Ireland.

There is an idea that this is necessary to stem the "flood" of applications that has been described in cataclysmic terms in the media in the past year.

Again the truth is far from what you read in the *Evening Herald*.

The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) suggests that there are 22 million people fleeing persecution, war and famine in the world today.

They are described as "people of concern". A number of years ago the UNHCR estimated the number to be 12 million.

The world has become a much more dangerous place and more people are trying to flee persecution.

At the same time applications to Ireland have, in fact, fallen. According to the *Sunday Business Post* 1/8/04, the number of applications for asylum in Ireland fell by 55 percent in the first five months of this year, compared to the same period last year.

They also fell by 32 percent on the previous year.

So at a time when the need for asylum is greater Ireland is closing its doors tighter. Deportation figures also rose last year. 590 were deported last year, compared to the four previous years, which averaged 353 per year.

As well as that the government treats those seeking asylum disgracefully.

■ From May 1st asylum seekers have been denied child benefit payments.

■ They have begun deporting the parents of children born in Ireland.

■ The numbers granted refugee status is minimal. In 2001, only 4 per cent of all applications were granted refugee status.

In the first 6 months of 2004, a total of 566 were accepted as refugees. Of these, 353 were won at appeal stage having been rejected at the first attempt. Ireland has been less than welcoming to those seeking refugee status.

While deporting asylum seekers the government have no difficulty with using the work of immigrants to shore up our underfunded health service.

McDowell's 'Caring Society'

FIFTY to 70 failed asylum seekers from Nigeria were detained in Dublin Airport for deportation on a charter flight to Lagos.

The mother of a seven month old child who was born in Ireland was deported, while the child was left with her partner. On the same flight a heavily pregnant woman was deported.

These mass deportations usually involve deportees being taken in the middle of the night, followed by overnight detention.

Grace Efe Afekhai, a woman from Nigeria is facing deportation Grace fled Nigeria to escape female genital mutilation.

This gruesome mutilation was due to take place in April 2002, even though she was 7 months pregnant. She escaped to Ireland.

Grace has cancer of the ovaries, and her son, Daniel has been diagnosed with sickle cell anaemia, and without

proper medical care is unlikely to live beyond 20.

The government is deporting those with psychological problems and trauma. According to a community worker in Dublin's south inner city, one asylum seeker in his area was given notice to quit, in spite of the fact that he received a medical report from a psychologist stating that he was suffering from trauma as a result of what he saw in the country he was fleeing. The psychologist stated that he was

not fit for deportation. The Department of Justice ignored this letter.

The case of Kate Banidele. Kate escaped Nigeria after she was sentenced to death by stoning under shari'a law in 2002 for having three children out of wedlock.

The Irish government is fighting a legal case to deport her to Nigeria, where she will face death. *Ireland on Sunday* on August 22nd attempted to demolish her claims to stay in Ireland.

They quote Nigerian officials, who have an interest in denying her claims, and the paper states "most tellingly of all Ms Banidele is one of at least six asylum seekers who claim they face death or imprisonment for breaching shari'a law".

They try to rubbish her case, and tar all the other cases with the same brush. The underlying message of this article is: "Throw all those lying asylum seekers out".

BRENDAN DONOHUE, a community worker in Rialto explained the latest government crackdown on asylum seekers:

"We set up a group in Rialto to build up links between asylum seekers and the local community. Rialto has a big non-national community and we felt that we should try to get somewhere where people could meet and get to know each other.

Recently though, a lot of the people who are here have been sent letters from the Immigration Department.

Before the Referendum they gave birth

to a child in Ireland, and so they dropped their asylum cases, thinking that as their child would have citizenship they would be allowed to stay.

Since the referendum their children don't have any citizenship, and as their asylum claim has lapsed they've been given notice to report to the Immigration Department within 14 days.

We call our group the rainbow neighbourhood project, the idea being that people of all different colours can come together. The government clearly doesn't want that."

The racism of the Government

THE government's latest assault on asylum seekers is designed to whip up racism.

The government paints this very needy group as scroungers in the main who are taking advantage of our generosity. Denying them the right to work feeds the impression that they are here to take money from the State.

Politicians are also happy to encourage the view that 'these people get everything'. Bizarre stories about asylum seekers getting socialising money and free mobile phones are spread in the tabloid press. The health service is supposedly swamped by them. Michael McDowell used this argument during the recent referendum when he claimed Irish maternity hospitals couldn't care for Irish patients because so many asylum seekers were giving birth here.

It is all untrue. It is designed to divert anger away from the government. They want us to blame asylum seekers and not underfunding for the state of our public services.

The poor election results for the government parties have frightened them. They know people blame them for the inequality in Irish society. We should not let them off the hook. Let's fight racism and keep our anger directed against the politicians who deserve to be on the receiving end.

WHY ASYLUM SEEKERS FLEE NIGERIA

THE vast majority of Asylum seekers in this country come from Nigeria.

In the six months to June 2004 the number of Nigerian refugees were more than ten times any other country's applicants. The Irish government has signed an agreement with the Nigerian Government to allow speedy deportation. Nigeria is considered a safe country - yet reports on Nigeria by Human Rights Watch make clear that the opposite is true.

Nigeria constantly ranks as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

The police continue to operate using killings, torture, ill-treatment, arbitrary arrests and extortion.

In July 2003, during massive public protests at an increase in the price of fuel, police shot dead at least twelve and possibly more



■ Defying repression in Nigeria

than twenty protestors, in Lagos, Port Harcourt, and a suburb of the capital Abuja.

In the April-May 2003 elections more than 100 people were killed in political violence. Many more were killed in the preceding months. Much of the violence and

killings were organised by supporters of the Governing Party, the PDP, who hired and armed groups of young men to attack and intimidate their rivals.

Shari'a law, the strict Islamic law is in force in 12 states in Nigeria. Shari'a

courts have the power to hand down brutal sentences, from floggings to amputations to executions. Although no execution or amputations have been carried out, those found guilty have been imprisoned indefinitely as they await their possible sentence.

Under Shari'a the accused rarely has access to a lawyer and are not informed about their rights. Floggings for a variety of offences remain common, with the defendants flogged immediately after their trial without being given time to appeal.

When we see that the government is complicit in violence against opponents, that police violence and corruption is rife in Nigeria and that Shari'a law denies people basic rights how can we accept assurances from government officials guaranteeing the safety of deportees?

US imperialism and the quest for oil

By **DAVID LYNCH**

'No Blood for Oil' was the slogan that was inscribed on hundreds of banners on the great anti-war marches across the globe over the past year and a half. Sadly however, much blood has been spilt in Iraq since the US/UK invasion last March principally in the pursuit of oil.

While there were a number of different reasons behind the US-led imperialist conquest of Iraq, control of the significant oil reserves in Iraq was undoubtedly a crucial factor.

The central importance of this natural resource makes the US war in Iraq different from previous conflicts such as the Vietnam War. Because of the high stakes involved the US cannot afford to leave Iraq, no matter whether Bush or Kerry wins the election in December.

The war was also about more than oil. The wider US ruling class would not allow Bush to launch a costly and hazardous war simply to boost the profits of Chevron and Halliburton. Access to oil is of central importance to the whole economy. The US is self sufficient in, or able to produce synthetic substitutes for, almost every other raw material.

But, like most other major economic powers, the US is heavily dependent on oil imported from some of the most unstable regions of the world. Shortly after Bush came to power his vice-president, Dick Cheney, drew up a report into the US's oil needs called the National Energy Plan.

The report revealed that the US consumes more than twice as much oil as it produces. This is set to rise, with the US importing two thirds of its oil by 2020.

In fact, modern industrial civilization depends on petroleum and its products; the physical structure and way of life of the suburban communities that surround the great cities are the result of an ample and inexpensive supply of petroleum.

The governments of the richest countries across the world have encouraged the increased use of oil. In Britain for example since 1997 the cost of rail travel has gone up twice as much as car travel, and bus and coach travel has gone up by three times as much as car travel. These costs have helped fuel the rise in air travel over short distances, where-greater amounts of fuel cause more pollution, and boost the profits of such companies as Ryanair.

But the US's rulers are painfully aware that they are



increasingly dependent on oil from Middle Eastern regimes, especially Saudi Arabia.

The country is the world's biggest supplier, with one quarter of the world's proven reserves of oil.

It is currently the only country with significant spare capacity to increase oil supplies.

But the war has deepened the crisis in Saudi Arabia, where there is already growing bitterness over the wide gap between rich and poor.

The nightmare scenario for world rulers is a terrorist attack

that seriously disrupts the flow of oil from the country. Repeated wars and growing instability in the Middle East have led the US to look for alternative sources of oil.

Distributed

The US business paper the *Wall Street Journal* wrote at the time of the 1991 Gulf War: "It is possible to see all these countries [in the Middle East] as imperialist creations that allow the West to play one against the other in the interests of cheap oil."

The world's proved reserves of crude oil are not distributed uniformly: 65 per cent of the world's oil is located in the Middle East, notably in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait.

The second-largest reserves of crude oil are located in Latin America, with Mexico and Venezuela jointly contributing some 12 per cent of the world's reserves.

But while the Bush led war was an attempt to secure an alternative supply of oil for the medium future, things have

gone badly wrong.

The growing resistance in Iraq has made US imperialist plans for the country difficult to carry through.

The 'sabotage' of oil pipe lines has made it chronically difficult for the US companies to steal the oil and make the massive profits they had first wanted.

The resistance to the US occupation proves that not all Iraqis are happy to let the imperialist US come and rob their country of its most important natural resource.

Oil Prices

HYSTERIA gripped the press last month over rising oil prices and the prospect of new fuel protests.

A rise in oil prices doesn't just have an impact at the petrol pumps. The effects on the Third World are far more devastating. Across Africa and Latin America millions of people will suffer as heating and cooking fuel costs rise and the price of food shoots up.

This means more disease, starvation and death for people who are already living on the brink.

If the price of oil stays high, it will force some governments to borrow billions more from the World Bank and IMF to meet the rising cost of imports.

All this is a far cry from a year ago, when "experts" predicted the war in Iraq would solve problems over oil.

A year ago the *Financial Times* revealed what the war was really about. "The US and UK's early achievements have made a significant dent in the price of oil, with traders expecting a short war that will do little more than temporarily halt Iraq's 2.5 million barrels a day of oil production," said the paper. Oil prices plummeted to just \$27.20 a barrel.

Yet today the chaos caused by the war and occupation, and the attack on the residential compound in Saudi Arabia, were enough to send the price of crude oil rocketing to nearly \$50 a barrel.

The world's rulers are in a state of panic.

Wherever the oil is—the US intervenes

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is the world's number one producer of oil, providing 12.5 per cent of global production each year.

Saudi Arabia's proven reserves of petroleum exceed 250 billion barrels. Production in 2001 was some 3.19 billion barrels of oil.

The US backs Saudi Arabia both militarily and politically helping to prop up the hated Saudi Royal Family. As Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9-11* exposed, there are deep and longstanding links between the Bush family and the House of Saud.

Saudi Arabia is a dictatorial absolute monarchy. It has no separate legislature or political parties. Laws are issued by the king and his ministers.

Saudi Arabia has several modern, Western-style hospitals used by the Royal Family, but primary medical



care is still basic. In 1995 there were 612 people per doctor. 4.7 per cent of the country's GDP was spent on health care. The infant mortality rate was 48 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2003. 14 per cent of GDP annually is spent on the military, with most of the arms coming from the US.

Venezuela

Venezuela is the third most important provider of oil to the United States.

Nationalized by the country's government in 1976, Venezuela's petroleum industry is highly mechanized. Crude and refined oil production drives the economy, accounting for about 80 per cent of Venezuelan revenue from exports.

Recently the President Hugo Chavez survived a third attempt by right-wingers (who want to privatise the oil industry) to overthrow him. An attempt that was supported by Bush and his gang.

The Bush gang backed two previous right-wing attempts to get rid of Venezuela's elected government. It has pumped military aid into neighbouring Colombia to ensure that oil keeps flowing from the region.

Iraq

Oil is Iraq's most important natural resource.

The country has perhaps the largest oil reserves in the Middle East.

These are cautiously estimated at 100,000 million barrels—enough for almost 100 years of production.

The oilfields are located in three main regions: in the south-east around the Persian Gulf, near Basra; in the north-central part of the country, near Mosul and Kirkuk; and in the east-central part of Iraq, near the town of Khanaqin.

This is the principal reason that the United States invaded Iraq and why it keeps hundreds of thousands of troops there as an occupying force.

web site

This is what democracy looks like

BY DAVID LYNCH

IT is not everywhere that you expect to see Bill Clinton asked hard questions on his bombing and sanctions campaign on Iraq, or former US UN Ambassador Madeline Albright asked to defend her comment that it was "worth it" when thousands of Iraqi children had died because of the sanctions, or even a debate between Naomi Klein and other activists about the nature of the anti-war protests at the Republican Party Convention.

But this is the typical fare that is served up on the excellent democracynow.org daily TV news and radio service.

The show is broadcasted every night for an hour on over 225 stations in North America and can be either watched or listened to on the web in Ireland.

The program is hosted by radical award-winning journalists Amy Goodman and produced in New York City.

It is an excellent resource for following the anti-war movement in the United States as well as bringing radical and enlightened coverage of the up-coming US Presidential race.

Gore Vidal, Robert Fisk, Naomi Klein, Ralph Nader, Michael Moore, Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali and other well known activists working in the States are regularly featured.

Coverage

The coverage of the antiwar movement in America is truly excellent with speeches from the protests outside both the Democrat and Republican Party Conventions given extensive coverage.

According to Amy Goodman, "the last two decades have seen unprecedented corporate media consolidation.

"The U.S. media was already fairly homogeneous in the early 80s. In the year 2000, just six corporations dominated the U.S. media.

"Democracy Now! is funded entirely through contributions from listeners, viewers, and foundations. We do not accept advertisers, donations from corporations, or donations from governments. This allows us to maintain our independence."

In the weeks coming up to the Presidential Elections democracynow.org will be an indispensable source of information on the Ralph Nader campaign that has been totally ignored by the major US TV networks.

A perfect antidote to the drivel coming from Fox News and others, democracynow.org deserves to be watched and supported.



■ Amy Goodman

Cinema

Che's Motorcycle Diaries

By COLM O RIAIN

CHE Guevara is rightly seen as one of the icons of the twentieth century, as someone who raged against inequality and exploitation around the world. Walter Salles' film the *Motorcycle Diaries* captures why he was so admired.

We are introduced to a young Ernesto Guevara, preparing to travel with his friend Alberto Granada around South America. The young Che has almost qualified as a doctor and leaves Argentina on their adventure in 1952.

Watching this film I was filled with an urge to jump on a motorbike myself and explore Latin America. The landscape shows a beautiful region, which has been ransacked by invaders, originally by Spain and Portugal, and later by the United States.

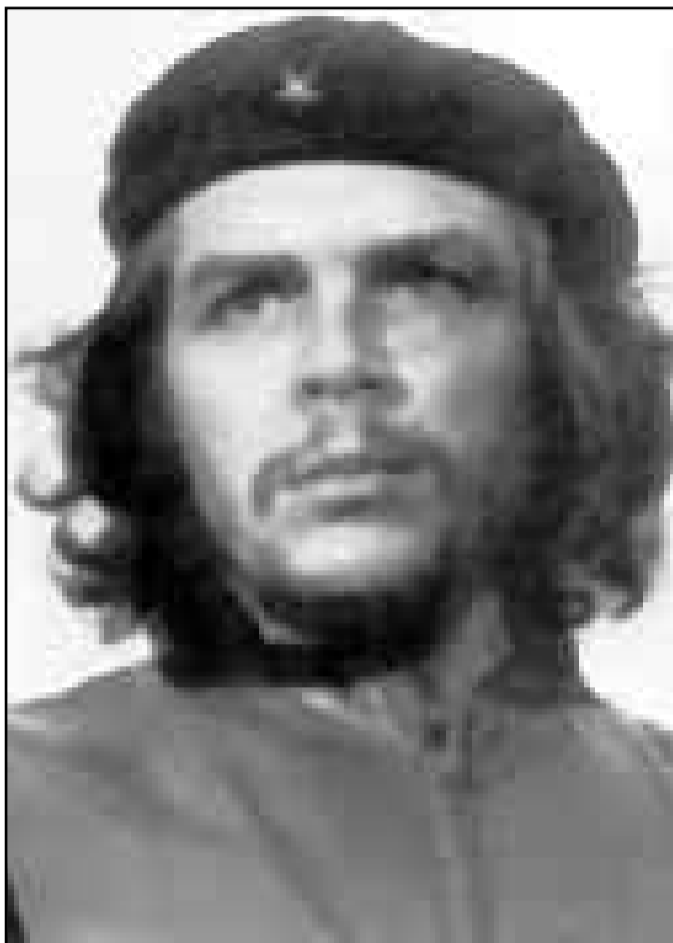
One of the caricatures of revolutionaries is that they are humourless, cold individuals, hell-bent on taking power for their own ends. In the *Motorcycle Diaries* we see how the reality is very different.

Che is an ordinary young man who starts to question why he sees so much human suffering. He sees the poor as he travels, and becomes both touched by their dignity and angry at their treatment at the hands of the rich and powerful.

The film really takes off when we see him talking to people he encounters on his journeys.

These discussions take the form of documentary type scenes as the locals speak about their life and how their land was taken off them by the landowners. Ernesto writes to his mother telling her of how he met a couple who lost their land and who were being chased by the police because they were communists.

The two friends join with the



■ Che Guevara

couple as they go to a mine seeking work. They feel that they can get a job there, as it's "so dangerous they don't care what party you're in".

He is struck by their stories and is enraged at what he sees as they try to get a job in the mine. Those seeking work wait like cattle as the mine manager selects who gets to work like slaves.

Che begins to look for some way of improving the lives of the people he meets. He wonders

why the suffering and the inequality without a conclusion as to what to do.

The final section of the film takes place as Che and Alberto spend three weeks working in a leper colony run by doctors and nuns, where immediately the two disobey the mother superior's rules.

They refuse to wear gloves the nuns insist on when shaking the patients' hands. They are refused food as they did not attend mass

on Sunday. It's great entertainment and a real show of the humanity of Che and Alberto.

On the night of Che's 24th birthday he swims the river that separates the leprosy sufferers from the healthy because he wants to share his time with them.

The same night he makes a speech to the staff of the colony calling for a different type of Latin America - one where the oppressed are liberated and where a continent is free.

The real strength of this film is that we see the young Ernesto coming to terms with what he sees as he tries to make sense of it all.

Because the film is shot realistically and the characters speak to Che, we go on the journey with him. We see the inequality, and we are forced to look for a way to fight it. At the end of the screening that I attended the audience began clapping. Fantastic. See it in the cinema,—you'll regret it if you don't.

I, Robot

By LUTFUL KHAN

WHEN Isaac Asimov talked about Robotics in 1950, some people took it seriously as a future alternative of cheap and easy labor; on the other side some people took it as a normal concept of science fiction.

Robots and their uses are not new subjects for scriptwriters and movie directors. Fritz Lang was the first person who presented a robot as a character in a movie called "Metropolis" in 1927 and the appeal has not worn off. The latest movie about robots is now in the theatre called "I, Robot". Directed by Alex Proyas, the movie is about an old-fashioned detective who is hunting down a robot.

Will Smith plays the detective called "Del Spooner" and Alan Tudyk played the Robot corrector called "Sonny".

The film is a good story while also addresses about the problem of cheap labor as it could be presented by robots.

Del Spooner is naturally suspicious of robots. When Dr. Alfred Lanning, the so-called father of robot technology, is found murdered in his office, his suspicions grow.

As the story goes on, Spooner meets a robot psychologist who supports robots as helpful and non-violent. The story continues from there.

Spooner is not the regular happy go-lucky character that Smith plays; he's a character full of emotion and trauma. Mr. Proyas adds "Spooner is an old-fashioned guy in 2035".

I have to say it's a fantastic movie, but there is a question: if robots were to take all of the work from humans, what would happen to society? Would workers become obsolete? Could robots be used to ease our workload? What would happen then?

music

The Revolution Starts Now

By GORDON HEWITT

Steve Earl's "The Revolution Starts Now"

"The most important election of our lifetime was less than seven months away and we desperately wanted to weigh in, both as artists and citizens of democracy," and weigh in he does with a raucous, Tennessee country rock anthem, "The Revolution Starts Now."

Any misgivings, any preconceptions anyone has about country rock, will be destroyed by this album.

The opening track bursts through the speakers (my ears are still bleeding)

"When you rise above your fear And tear the walls around you down

The revolution starts here Where you work and where you play Where you lay your money down What you do and what you say The revolution starts now"

It's loud and it's sharp. "Home

to Houston" has a truck driver with "ice blood in his veins" declare that he doesn't get paid enough to conquer the fear of the resistance driving trucks as part of the US war effort in Basra.

In "Rich Man's War", "Jimmy joined the army cause he had no place to go. There ain't nobody hiring round here since all the jobs went down to Mexico", sung with an intonation similar to that of Springsteen on the "Ghost of Tom Joad". "Rolling into Baghdad wondering how he got this far, just another poor boy fighting a rich man's war."

The artist who wrote "John Walker Blues", the song about the American who joined the Taliban, is part of an extremely diverse group of artists—Miss Dynamite, George Michael, The Libertines, the Black Eyed Peas and the Dixie Chicks to name but a few who firmly commit themselves to fighting the occupation in Iraq.

In Earl's case, despite the pos-



■ Steve Earl

sible lapse in the song "Condi, Condi" (please tell me it's not Condoleeza Rice and another Condi he declares his love for), if this is the soundtrack to the election, Bush hasn't a chance.

news from the struggle

the fight against cutbacks and privatisation

AER LINGUS:

Stand up to Walsh's bullying

AER Lingus chief executive Willie Walsh is attempting to strip the airline of over 1300 jobs.

This follows the 3,000 jobs lost in the "Survival Plan" of three years ago. Now the company is profitable, management and the government wants it cut up and privatised.

Willie Walsh has his hat in the ring as a major player in a management buy-out and stands to make a killing from any privatisation.

In late August, unions threatened a stoppage if their concerns over the redundancy package were not addressed in a meeting with the company bosses. Eventually management agreed to meet the unions and a "facilitator" was to be appointed for talks to conclude by mid October.

However Walsh's team let it be known that they would not budge on redundancies.

Even as talks were taking place, Aer Lingus management took an extremely provocative measure. Catering on Flight 133 from Dublin via Shannon to Chicago was set to be transferred to from Aer Lingus catering to Aer Rianta in Shannon on September 1.

Tranferring

As one Aer Lingus worker told *Socialist Worker*, "The move will cost the company more using Aer Rianta, but that doesn't worry Walsh. He wants to show that talks or no talks, outsourcing is going ahead."

The redundancies amount to transferring work from ground staff in unionised Aer Lingus to

outside companies like Sky Handling and Service Air on worse conditions.

Pat another Aer Lingus worker told *Socialist Worker*, "There are four ground handling firms in Dublin Airport and they all pay 10-20 less than Aer Lingus. The headline figure of €40,000 redundancy sounds a lot. But any worker taking it will be getting a lower paid job and in a few years will be a lot worse off."

SIPTU members had previously voted by over 90 percent to oppose redundancies and for strike action. That mandate needs to be put into action in the face of Walsh's dictatorial bullying.

Pat said, "Working class people are getting hit left and right. Now it's time to make a stand and fight!"

Waterford Music Centre: the fight against privatisation

A CAMPAIGN group has been formed in Waterford following the decision of the management at Waterford Institute of Technology to close the WIT Music School.

The Waterford Music School Action Group, comprised of teachers, students and parents, was formed at a public meeting attended by over 200 people. The WIT Music School has been in existence for 25 years and currently caters for 850 primary and secondary students.

It's the only facility of its type in the south-east and has a reputation as one of the best schools in the country. Should the school close, young music students will be left stranded and over 30 teaching jobs will be lost.

Union

The Teachers Union of Ireland has fully backed the campaign and WIT branch secretary of the union, Colm Long, has promised full industrial action by all 400 TUI members in the college should the college close and teachers be made redundant.

Initially it was believed that the decision to close was made for financial reasons, and that funding had been re-assigned within the college. It has now been discovered that there had been no cut in funding and the decision was to force the privatisation of the school.

WIT director, Kieran Byrne floated a proposal for an academy of music – to be privately run. This suggestion was made 4 weeks before the start of the academic year.

When this was rejected out of hand by the action group, Byrne made a 'conciliatory' offer of increasing the fees for the current academic year by 75 per cent and closing the school after 12 months.

At a further public meeting this proposal was put to the vote and rejected unanimously by parents. A second offer, increasing fees by 20 per cent was also rejected by the parents and the TUI. The attempt to force the music school into private hands is part of the creeping privatisation of the education system.

Force

The action group plans to call protests and organise "impromptu concerts in awkward places" to force the college to back down.

Gerry Kelly, who spearheaded the campaign for a new building for the Cork Music School, is backing the campaign, and calling for major public protests, utilising the strength of the trade union movement.

A parent told *Socialist Worker*: "My son is doing the Leaving Cert next year. He has been in the school for three years. If it closes now he will be left stranded. We haven't even been informed by the college that the school is closing. I know some parents have already paid the fees for next year. There's no way we can let this happen. I think we can make Byrne and the college back down on this. Everybody supports us and with the TUI on board threatening to go on strike, we can win this and keep the school open". To contact the action group e-mail: wmsag@hotmail.com

Roy Hassey, Waterford Branch SWP

Protest At CRH

SOCIALIST Workers Party members organised a lively demonstration outside the Cement Roadstone Holdings office on Cookstown Road in Tallaght.

Over twenty people came to the demonstration, protesting at CRH's involvement in the building of the Apartheid Wall in Palestine. Cement Roadstone hold a 25 per cent stake in the Mashav group, an Israeli company involved in building the wall for the Israeli government through the West Bank.

The wall has been the condemned by a vote at the United Nations General Assembly and has been declared illegal by the International Court of Human Rights. It encircles Palestinian towns and villages, cutting communities off

from some of the best agricultural land in Palestine.

Gino Kenny, An SWP member from Clondalkin commented:

"CRH should not be making profits from human misery. This demonstration is exposing the shameful collusion that CRH is endeavouring to commit in Palestine in the name of profits.

CRH has never been a friend of workers. This company has been neck deep in the corruption scandals seen in the recent tribunals. CRH is a friend of the rich, of the oppressor and of the Israeli government."

Representatives from Sinn Fein, the Green Party and the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign spoke out against



CRH's involvement in the Palestine Wall. The protest finished as demonstrators blocked the road into the CRH retail entrance with a wall of our own blocking lorries from exiting and then toppled the wall.

There are plans to leaflet customers entering CRH in the coming weeks, calling for CRH to stop helping the building of the wall in the West Bank. For more information contact Gino at 085 7211574.

National Monuments Act - Information

IN JUNE, the Minister for the Environment and Local Government, Martin Cullen, published the National Monuments (Amendment) Bill 2004.

He said it was being introduced to deal with the situation at Carrickmines where the construction of the M50 had been halted since last year.

The Bill would give him the power to decide what level of protection a national monument needs, if any, and to order the completion of projects even if they impinged on

national monuments.

Mr Frank Callanan SC, who won a Supreme Court action against D/L-Rathdown County Council last year preventing the demolition of the Carrickmines site, criticised the Bill, saying it would not be limited to Carrickmines;

"In what is by any standards a frighteningly primitive piece of draft legislation, the Minister seeks to piggyback a licence to destroy other national monuments on the back of completion of the motorway at Carrickmines," he said.

Dr Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin, of the Celtic

Department of Studies Maynooth, said the Bill, if enacted, would allow the completion of the M3 motorway which would "plough through the archaeological complex at the Hill of Tara which dates back to 4000 BC and destroy 28 archaeological sites".

Despite the opposition, the National Monuments Act 2004, became law. In the *Irish Times* August 17th, Vincent Salafia of the Carrickminers, and PRO of Save Tara Skryne Valley Group (www.taraskryne.org), said the Act was "not designed to preserve monuments, but to facilitate road building and real

estate development in an unsustainable manner."

The Act enabled other tolled motorways and commercial real estate developments to proceed without fear of legal challenges on heritage grounds.

A section of the Act is now being challenged in the High Court by Mr Dominic Dunne. On Thursday 19 August, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council gave an undertaking to the High Court to cease all but essential work on the site for a week, pending a full High Court hearing.

Woodstown Viking Site

A MAJOR archaeological discovery, the Woodstown Viking Site, has been discovered just outside Waterford City during preparations for the Waterford bypass.

The site has been described as "the most significant new find in Viking studies in perhaps a century" by Professor Donnchadh O'Corrain, historian at UCC, and "Ireland's equivalent of Pompeii" by archaeologist John Maas.

Although the excavation has now halted because the license to carry out work has expired, over 3,000 artifacts have been successfully excavated. The Viking town remains virtually intact with streets and dwellings believed to be just underneath the soil surface.

Aerial photographs and evidence uncovered have convinced archaeologists that up to 120 Viking ships once occu-

piated the town, which is located on the banks of the River Suir. The site began as a longport, held up to 120 boats, and was a base for shipbuilding. No other longport discovery in Europe comes close to matching the scale and significance of the Woodstown find.

Welcomed

Experts from around the world have welcomed the find and the site could be worth up to €200 million annually to the local economy in increased tourism revenue. A Viking site of significantly less importance in York, England is worth approximately half a billion euros per annum with up to four million visitors each year.

Despite the significance of the find, the National Roads Authority and Minister Martin Cullen waited nine months before they made it public. Cullen has said he would make a decision when he

receives a full report in September. Fears are increasing that he will only order a 'rescue' excavation, a partial digging which will not unearth the full wonders of Woodstown.

Destroyer

In just two years as Minister for the Environment, Cullen has earned the reputation as a destroyer of Ireland's heritage. The National Monuments Act 2004, which gives Cullen unlimited discretion and reduces the number of parties involved in deciding the fate of national monuments, has already seen the demolition of Carrickmines castle, threats to the Tara complex and now the Woodstown site.

A campaign to save Woodstown Viking Site will be launched in the coming weeks. To get involved or find out more contact 086-3274015.

news from the struggle – news from the struggle – news from the struggle–

Brinks Allied: Management say no deal

WORKERS AT Brinks Allied will continue their strike in the coming weeks.

The dispute centres on the introduction of new vehicles and the implementation of a drive away policy which would require a driver to leave the scene of a robbery even if their colleagues are being hurt or threatened by a gang outside of the vehicle.

Brinks have never shown much concern for workers' safety. Workers say that when a robbery happens management never ask, "Was anyone hurt?" – instead the only concern is "how much was taken?". The attitude to worker safety was summed up by a previous manager. When asked about safety regulations he said, "What's the problem? You're going to be shot at sometime anyway".

Workers work long days, often up to 17-hour shifts while no food or water is provided for the teams on the road. The company employ many Lithuanians on pay and conditions that are inferior to those of

their Irish colleagues. They get no overtime for extra hours worked and are often paid up to €8000 less per annum than Irish workers.

Workers are very angry with their employers for refusing to accept the Labour Court recommendation. They see them as grabbing the pay rises and bonuses for themselves while cutting corners – on safety, vans and workers' wages – to boost profits. The proposed new Dutch vans are designed for driving on the right hand side of the road – which makes them very dangerous to use in Ireland.

Following their rejection of the Labour Court proposals Brinks offered its own deal to workers who rejected it out of hand. Specifically unacceptable to workers were the following demands:

- Extending the trial periods of the Dutch vehicles – with a review promised after four months of operation.

- No money to be paid out for the three weeks that the workers have been locked out.

- No real commitment to dropping the contentious drive away policy.

The workers at Brinks, who are members of SIPTU, now need and deserve the support of the whole trade union movement.

All SIPTU branches should be circulated with details of this dispute. SIPTU workers just finished voting on the second stage of the Partnership agreement – Brinks Allied makes a mockery of partnership

The picket line is located at Brinks Allied in Clonsaugh Industrial Estate (straight through from the entrance, turn left at the end of the road by Easons and Brinks is on the right). Workplaces should organise delegations to go down and show support. Workers will receive only €125 strike pay a week. This may take up to a month to come through.

Donations can be made to Robbie Quinn and Frank Mulhall, shop stewards, c/o SIPTU services Branch, Liberty Hall.

send reports to **Socialist Worker**
phone 8722682 email socialistworker@swp.ie

Ryanair Pilots

Union bashing at Ryanair

THE DECISION by pilots at Ryanair to join the Irish Airline Pilots Association and British Airline Pilots Association has incensed a management that has refused to recognise unions.

Ryanair's head of personnel in Dublin, Mr David O'Brien, had flyers from the IALPA removed from the pilot's pigeonholes.

Hundreds of the airline's pilots boycotted information meetings hosted by chief executive Mr Michael O'Leary in London. The meetings warned those who attended not to join a pilots' union.

Those who failed to attend received a letter from the company stating that their absence displayed "a lack of interest in developing their careers and securing promotion in Ryanair".

The company is now threatening that if pilots proceed with their applications to join either the IALPA or BALPA it will force them to pay to be trained on its new aircraft. This could cost each pilot as much as €35,000.

Ryanair pilots work close to the maximum hours allowed under aviation regulations. Cost-cutting measures now require pilots to pay for their routine medical examinations and their uniforms in addition to their training costs.

The European Transport Workers' Federation has been examining Ryanair and will shortly launch a Europe-wide campaign against the company.

USI Campaign

Students Occupy against fees

By Rory Hearne (Campaigns Officer, USI)

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) organised an occupation of the Department of Education and Science last week over fees and the lack of financial support for third level students.

The fees that students pay at the start of the year are now €750 (increased by €80 this year) and the maintenance grant remains at a pathetic €70 per week available only to a minority of students. Over fifty students representing colleges across the country occupied the Department for over five hours from 2pm until after 7pm. The students got into the building and took over offices inside the

Department unfurling banners and placards from the second and third floor windows.

The occupation was the beginning of a campaign for free education that is planned to escalate with regional protests in October and a national demonstration and occupations in the first week of November. It was sending a signal that students will take on the government in a way that hasn't been seen for a number of years.

The Department of Education argued that the third level sector must find alternative sources of funding – they must use the private sector and charge fees from students.

We do not accept this argument. Education as a whole should get a mas-

sive increase in funding. Unions, workers and students across the education sector need to unite to fight for a better funded education system across primary, secondary and third level and organise coordinated action to fight for this. USI is calling on all education sectors to support their protests and campaign.

The entire education system is under threat from the neo-liberalism of the FF/PD government, the EU Lisbon Agenda, GATS, OECD etc. The OECD is presenting its review of third level education in Dublin on September 15th. USI will be outside protesting for a decently funded public education system. All teachers, lecturers and students should get there.

Dundrum Swimming Pool

RESIDENTS IN Ballinteer and Dundrum are continuing their campaign to get a new swimming pool built.

Their old pool, which was in a state of disrepair, was shut on July 15th and local people fear that unless they launch a big campaign they could be left with no pool.

Local politicians have consistently promised that funding for a new pool was available. Now it transpires that insufficient funding is available since John O'Donoghue capped the grants from his Department at €3.8 million.

Six local primary schools and one secondary school are located within twenty minutes of the pool.

The new PE curriculum in primary schools requires aquatic training for children. As one parent said, "what are the schools going to do now? Our kids won't get access to proper PE".

With obesity, poor diet and sedentary lifestyles becoming a big problem, more recreational facilities—not less—are required.

Local campaigner Deirdre Cronin says: "We are holding a public meeting in St Attracta's school hall on September 15th. We have invited all our elected representatives.

This is our chance to make it clear that we will not tolerate the closure of our pool. There is lots of taxpayers' money wasted on Bertie Ahern's make-up artist and electronic voting machines.

We want that kind of money spent on the people of this area. This pool will benefit both the health and education of the local population.

We will be demanding funding from across government departments to cover the costs of replacing the old pool. We want a public facility that can be used by all".

Dun Laoghaire - Recycling

George's Place Centre closes

The recycling centre at St. George's Place has been closed by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

The site will be sold to private developers. The centre was well used by locals and is a huge loss to the area. The closest centre is now Ballyogan which is quite a distance away and accessible only by car.

Richard Boyd Barrett, who stood as a candidate in Dun Laoghaire for the local elections as a SWP representative and anti bin tax campaigner, believes that the closure "makes a mockery of the council's claims that the bin tax is part of an environ-

mental policy to encourage people to recycle. This will actually make it harder for people to recycle."

"In January the so-called 'pay-by-weight scheme' is due to commence. Even if you can find recycling facilities you will still pay €150 per year and then a lift charge and weighted charge on top of that. Most people will pay as much or more than they pay now."

"The council just wants to squeeze more and more money out of ordinary people by charging us for everything and selling off a space that provided an environmental amenity."

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STAKES CAN'T GET HIGHER IN NIPSA DISPUTE



ON AUGUST 16th Finance Minister Ian Pearson tabled what he described as a 'take it or leave it' pay offer to NI Civil Servants.

The offer contained 2 options, a 12-month deal worth nothing and an even worse 16-month deal.

NIPSA's Civil Service Executive have now begun a consultation exercise throughout all branches recommending that the membership reject both pay offers and move to 'all out, indefinite strike action as the only means to winning a real cost of living increase in this dispute'.

The task now for every NIPSA activist, trade unionist and socialist is to ensure that there is a resounding vote for the Executive's recommendation.

For many activists this point couldn't have come any sooner.

It was becoming increasingly obvious that the strategy of pulling out small groups of workers over long periods of time, while causing severe difficulties to management, was never going to punch through New Labour's pay ceiling.

After 39 weeks it is now clear that only all member, civil service wide strike action, or the threat of it à la the baggage handlers in Heathrow, can hope to defeat the government.

Though there is no doubt that it would have been easier to win the majority of members to all out action a number of months ago, that doesn't mean that it's too late to win.

The enormity of this particular

dispute cannot be overestimated.

Because the civil service is the biggest employer in the North, the dispute has had a real impact on many lives.

To go down to defeat now would be a victory for the government and a blow to the confidence of workers, making them more reluctant to fight. Without question the dispute is also a test for NIPSA. The government have in their sights a number of things that we take for granted.

The most important of these is water. If the north's biggest union, and the one with most members in the Water Service, cannot be seen to win a pay dispute, the government will have undermined the ability of the union to stop the selling off of the service and the introduction of charges.

A victory, on the other hand, would give a huge boost to every campaign and every worker fed up with low wages.

But the most immediate issue is that of the poverty pay of civil servants.

If the Executive fail to galvanise enough support for its strategy, then civil servants will have to endure more misery every month as their wage rate is effectively frozen while all around them prices get higher.

The fact is that those who argue that they cannot afford to go on strike will be in even more financial difficulty come the next time we are consulted on a pay deal.

And we can win. Management were able to find ways to lessen the

REJECT THE DEALS! ALL-OUT ACTION!

blow when selective strike action took hold. However there were never more than 500 civil servants on strike at any one time.

They will be extremely worried at the prospect of 20,000 of us on strike indefinitely. On top of that, this government is extremely

unpopular. We would have the support of a public fed up with Blair's hypocrisy and lies. For now we have to deliver the support.

Activists in some Branches are leafleting other workplaces during the consultation process; we also need to make sure that NIPSA

utilises every opportunity to get the message out on how rotten the offers are.

The fight is now in the hands of the rank and file. We must tell Pearson that we are shutting down the civil service and he can 'take it or leave.'