

# Socialist Worker

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**BRING KUNLE HOME!**



**Page 3**

## M19: GLOBAL ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT RETAKES THE STREETS

### Bush, Blair and Ahern hide behind media lies



Photo: Paula Geraghty

**M 19 London: BBC claimed 20,000 Over 150,000 marched**

**M 19 Dublin: RTE claimed 500 Over 2,000 marched**

### OPPOSITION ALL OVER THE WORLD

- ★700 protests across the United States
- ★Athens 15,000
- ★Rome 100,000
- ★Seoul 15,000
- ★Istanbul 25,000

- ★South Korea 3,000
- ★Brussels 50,000 protest against the anti-labour policies of the European Union
- ★Buenos Aires 10,000
- ★Sao Paulo 10,000

- ★Carazinho (Brasil) 2,500
- ★Riot police fired teargas at peaceful protestors in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur: support Coalition against War-Malaysia: [malaysiaantiwar@gmail.com](mailto:malaysiaantiwar@gmail.com)

**Catherine Murphy TD talks to Socialist Worker**



**Page 4**

**Eoin O Broin (Sinn Fein) debates Brid Smith (SWP)**

**Page 9**

**Tariq Ali on Resistance in Iraq**  
**Pages 6&7**

**Socialists debate: Is it time for an alternative left in Ireland?**  
**Page 9**

## Now end Irish collusion with Bush's war: US military out of Shannon

IT IS clear that our movement has broadened its support base and it is now beginning to seriously undermine the Bush gang and their international backers. 14 countries have now announced that they are leaving Iraq, including crucial countries like Spain and Italy.

This is down to the mass anti war movement. Our task is now to end our government's collaboration with Bush's war. While we are doing that lets copy the Spanish and use our people power to force a regime change in Ireland too.

Last year, 158,549 US troops came through Shannon airport- compared to 125,855 in 2003.

The US army has even been assigned a special gate—Gate 42 which is closely guarded by the Irish army and surrounded by special elec-

tronic sensors.

The government is trying to suppress information about the US troops by banning photographs of their movement. The mainstream media have also colluded in the silence.

**The truth:**

① Shannon has been used to transport people to Guantanamo Bay and to secret torture centres in Egypt under a special 'renditions' programme. One particular Gulf Stream jet which has been sighted at Shannon has made over 50 trips to Guantanamo.

② Shannon has replaced Frankfurt as the main re-fuelling station for transporting US troops to Iraq, turning Ireland into a vital covert ally for George Bush.

Originally the Irish government claimed that it has to co-operate in

order to 'preserve jobs' at the airport. But as the troop movements have increased the number of jobs has declined. Half of the Shannon airport workers may lose their jobs in the near future -if current management plans are implemented. A mere €18 million is earned from this military traffic.

That figure has to be reduced even further when account is taken of the US government's refusal to pay €3 million in air traffic control charges. The anti-war movement intends to turn the spotlight on this airport of death in the coming months.

They will be organising a major peace festival at the airport at the end of the summer with music and centres for meetings and discussion. The festival is modelled on the Carnsore Point festival of 1979 which brought thou-

sands to the small Co Wexford village to halt plans to develop a nuclear power plant in Ireland. Socialist Worker urges activists to prepare for this festival by forming local anti-war war groups now.

**Voices from the protest**

**ROGER COLE** from PANA said "The US Empire is losing; it is only a matter of time before they have to get out."

**MICK O'REILLY** Secretary of ATGWU said "No-one should be down about the turnout, I remember walking up O'Connell Street on a protest against the Vietnam War in the sixties with only 13 people on it.

"But by the end of that war were had thousands on the street."

**TREVOR SEARGENT** Green Party said "The Irish government is currently breaking its own word and its own law."

## SWP STATEMENT

# Recent events around the IRA

**SOCIALISTS have no truck with the hypocrisy of Bush, Blair and Ahern when they lecture Sinn Fein and the IRA about criminality and violence.**

Even if the IRA was responsible for everything it has been accused of in recent weeks, it would still be a minor offender compared to the real criminals who are responsible for the slaughter of tens of thousands of Iraqis.

For decades, the SWP has publicly opposed IRA 'punishment squads'. But Blair and Bush have sanctioned the kidnapping of people charged with no offence that are taken secretly and in chains across the world to be tortured. Hundreds are caged in Guantanamo Bay without even knowing why they are there.

No evidence at all could be found against the men recently released from Guantanamo and Belmarsh.

### State violence and collusion

The SWP has campaigned for truth and justice alongside the Bloody Sunday families and other families of those murdered

by state violence and collusion. We stand also alongside the McCartney, McGinley and Robinson families as they seek truth and justice from the IRA.

While refusing to join in ritual condemnations of violence by hypocritical politicians, socialists believe that mass action rather than paramilitary organisations offers the way forward.

Secret armies, of their nature, operate behind the backs and out of sight of the people in whose name they act. They proclaim that they, the secret army, will deliver freedom.

They belittle the role of the mass of the people in their own liberation. They put themselves above the people, while claiming the people's allegiance.

### Role of the IRA

This characteristic of paramilitary organisations is one of the keys to understanding the developments which led to the McCartney, McGinley and Robinson killings and the role of the IRA in the aftermath.

We challenge the right of the establishment parties to set themselves on a moral pedestal above Sinn Fein and the IRA.

The wealthy and powerful can always 'legalise' their own fund raising operations because they write the laws and appoint the judges. They can call for support for the police because they know that the police support them in turn.

We share the concern of many in working class areas, Protestant as well as Catholic, that the grief of the McCartney and other families is being used to legitimise the police and fool working class people into supporting the laws and priorities of the ruling class.

All police forces are anti-working class. Even if all of Patten's reforms were implemented to the letter, the PSNI will still operate to protect property and privilege above all else.

### Since 1997

Ever since 1997, the republican movement has been adapting to the system while still maintaining the IRA. Its leader-

ship was on the point of recommending that republicans sit on police boards. They wanted to join with Ian Paisley in government in the North and, in future, with Fianna Fail in the South.

But before being let into the corridors of power, the political establishment suddenly increased the price of the entry ticket. This is what lies behind the current campaign against Sinn Fein.

### Break with paramilitarism

Ahern, Blair and Bush say—'end your struggle and then you can join the system'—to encourage the working class to accept privatisation, poverty wages, water charges etc.

We say—'break with paramilitarism in order to help build the campaign of resistance to what Ahern, Blair and Bush represent'.

Working class unity can be forged from mass resistance to their imperialist and neo-liberal agenda. The united Ireland we want can only come through their overthrow—not through joining them in government.

# Strikes off as New Labour retreats on pensions

THE THREAT of a strike by 1.25 million workers across the UK and Northern Ireland on Wednesday 23rd March has forced a climb down by the New Labour government over pensions.

But the trade union leaders have missed a chance to secure an outright victory over a crucial issue.

The government had said its across the board attack on public sector pensions was set in stone. But deputy prime minister John Prescott wrote to local government unions on Friday of last week to say he would revoke changes to council workers' pensions that were due to come in soon.

Fresh talks were proposed for unions across the various public sector schemes, where the government had planned to impose a rise in the pension age from 60 to 65.

Had the strike gone ahead, the government could have been forced into total retreat over pensions.

Most of the union leaders eagerly grabbed the first concessions on offer and called off the strikes because they did not want confrontation with Labour in the run-up to the election.

Socialist Environmental Alliance (SEA) candidate for



Public sector workers lobbying on pensions in March

Picture: Carlo Morelli

Belfast Andrew King said "the breathing space created by the government climb down on pensions must be used to create a political alternative to New Labour's neo-liberal agenda, an alternative that will not put the interests of Tony Blair before the interests of workers".

Ryan McKinney, Chairperson Branch 8 NIPSA

said (in a personal capacity), "Most workers understand that this in an election ploy by New Labour and there is a strong feeling that while we may have secured victory for now we cannot let our guard down and it is essential that the unions are ready for a fight after the election.

"It is another example that workers are willing to take

industrial action in defence of their terms and conditions. It is essential that rank and file networks such as Uncivil Servant are built up so that it is more difficult for union leaders to capitulate before workers' demands are achieved".

For information on the Uncivil Servant group contact Ryan at 07789756994

## IN BRIEF

### Corporate greed: workers lose jobs while Bank profits reach €1.3 bn

The Irish Bank Officials' Association (IBOA) has said that they will resist Bank of Ireland's plans cut to 2,100 jobs (20 per cent of its workforce) as part of a major cost-cutting drive.

Some non-core activities are to be outsourced to other companies. Workers went on strike two years ago when the bank's information technology activities were outsourced to the US group, Hewlett Packard.

IBOA's Larry Broderick said "staff are extremely angry and furious at the Bank's proposals to seek over 2,100 redundancies at a time when the bank is recording historic profit levels of in excess of €1.3bn".

### Money for Bush but not Airport workers' jobs

More than 500 SIPTU members who work at Shannon Airport are to be balloted next week with a view to an all-out strike.

The new airport authority is planning to outsource the currently profitable catering operation and aspects of security without consultation or agreement.

The union has already expressed opposition to any job cuts, given that staff were given assurances about job security in the wake of the break-up of Dublin, Shannon and Cork airports into separate entities. Job cuts are the result of the privatisation agenda of FF and the PDs.

The government found €10 million to spend on Bush's security when he visited Clare last year and can give free use to the US military to refuel

at Shannon Airport. So why can't they find money to keep the workers' jobs? SIPTU should support strike action by staff in Shannon and not back down like last year.

### AN POST: Labour Court finds on SDS

The Labour Court recently issued its recommendation on the dispute in SDS.

The An Post parcel depot was due to close in February but as the union moved to engage in industrial action the National Implementation Body (set up under social partnership) intervened. The dispute was referred to the Labour Court under binding arbitration.

This recommendation deals with eight issues brought forward by the union. Seven of the eight issues have been received very favourably by union members.

They include a deal on an Income Continuance scheme, a 12½% change allowance to be paid to all staff (this will eliminate differing wage rates) and a voluntary severance package to be offered across An Post.

Socialist Worker spoke to one shop steward in SDS: "The result looks very good for us but it depends on how the management will read it.

"We still have no response from the company to the recommendation and we still have to deal with how these changes will be implemented. So it is a dangerous time now.

In the long run this place will be closing but certainly not yet. Next week we will be holding general members meeting when we have a response from the company.

"It isn't usual for the Labour Court to give so much in workers' favour and it is binding on the company. We still have a way to go on this."

## 'We deserve to know the truth about the safety of our prescription drugs'

**Petition to government by nurses in Cork University Hospital**  
The Irish Medicines Board is funded 100% by pharmaceutical companies. This needs to change to get independent regulation of drugs in this country to prevent further harm.

Consumers have a right to

expect full and impartial information about the potential risks and adverse effects of prescription medication. We are calling for a new robust independent regulatory framework. We are concerned that the government has too cosy a relationship with the industry it is supposed to regulate! We believe this is costing

innocent lives for financial gain.  
1. Full publication of clinical trial data.  
2. A central position for the experience of consumers in the licensing and regulation of prescription drugs, taking proper account of reports of adverse reactions by consumers.  
3. A state-funded,

independent authority be set up to regulate medicines. It should be free of influence from pharmaceutical companies and act only in the public interest.  
<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/444384374>  
Sign and circulate the petition  
Contact 0868386726 for details

# Bring Olunkunle home No more deportations



Kunle's school friends demand his return to Ireland

Picture: Sara O'Rourke

By SARAH O ROURKE

OVER 300 people protested at the Dail on Wednesday, March 23rd against the deportation of a leaving Cert student of Palmerstown Community College, Olunkunle Eluhanla.

Better known as Kunle to his friends, he had been attending the school for two years and was deported back to Nigeria on Tuesday March 15th.

The message to the government was loud and clear from the chants of his fellow students, "Bring them Back! No Deportations!" and "What do we want? Khunle back!"

In the words of his classmate Amy Whelan, "They just took him there and then, didn't even give him a chance to go home and get his clothes and money."

"They just took him, locked him up in Clover hill prison, left him for a few hours, took him to the airport that night and just deported him straight away. He was in his school uniform".

Amy and other

classmates had harsh words for Minister MacDowell.

At a meeting with the class the previous night they said that the minister had "told lies in front of our faces."

"He told us that Khunle was in his track-suit and we actually have a photo of him here (on their placard), it's actually in Nigeria, him in his uniform."

Jane O'Callaghan, also a classmate said the Minister, is "not looking into anything, he doesn't read the files, of personal problems and that."

"He didn't look at the fact Khunle was seeking to appeal. Khunle was taken as a number and that was that".

Also protesting was Athlone group Communities Against Injustice formed in response to the deportation, also last week, of two Nigerian women.

Elizabeth Olunzi and Iyabo Nwanz, both mothers, were deported leaving children behind ranging in age from 11 to 17. These children

are now in hiding.

Toyin, from Nigeria and living in Athlone is a friend of the women and is worried about the psychological effects on the children, that "separating mothers from their children so suddenly will have very serious bad effects".

This protest is a clear indication that McDowell's racist policy on immigration does not have popular support.

Extending the protests can force the Minister to bring Khunle and the others back. Check [www.swp.ie](http://www.swp.ie) for details of upcoming protests.

## Belfast Love Music Hate Racism gig

By CHARLOTTE DRYDEN (organiser of Love Music Hate Racism)

IT'S HARD for me to believe that Belfast was named the most racist city in the world by a German Newspaper.

A real problem exists in Belfast and in Northern Ireland. It's time to do something about it.

That's why the Love Music Hate Racism gig was so relevant. It came on the back of another attack in West Belfast. I wanted to be part of showing that there is another side to Belfast.

A side that isn't well enough reported.

A side that says Belfast is a city that welcomes people.

The venue filled up comfortably with more than one hundred people who were rewarded by stand out performances from Tin Pot Operation, with ska and Irish rock and others.

This was a blow to the racists and the first of a series of gigs under the Love Music Hate Racism banner.

For more info contact: 00447742531617

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: Protests, music and debate

By SÍOFRA NÍ CHONGHAILE

Despite the post-feminist myth that women's liberation has arrived, several events in Dublin on and around International Women's Day reminded us of the need to celebrate women's lives and struggles.

Over 300 marched to the Dáil in a colourful demonstration organised by Amnesty Ireland calling for an end to violence against women. Despite the level of violence in Ireland support services for victims are often badly under funded and many women are unable to get the help they need. Amnesty will be continuing its campaign over the coming months.

Straight after the march, the Alliance for Choice hosted a discussion on back street abortions. British pro-choice activist, Ann Rossiter, gave a moving account of her experiences of a back street abortion while Ivana Bacik and Sinéad Kennedy talked of the urgent need for safe and legal abortion in Ireland. Over 20 women shared their experiences and discussed the urgent need for the government to legislate on this vital issue.

While the reproductive rights discussion was in full swing, another 300 women gathered at Wynn's Hotel to celebrate the lives and struggle of women in the communities. The event, organised by the St. Michael's Family Resource Centre, brought together women from 10 community groups across Dublin to share their stories of struggle and celebrate the positive impact which community organisation has on women's lives.

The following Thursday an SWP-hosted Marxist forum gathered together some of Dublin's leading women activists in a discussion on 'women & globalisation'. Rita Fagan (Director: St Michael's Resource Centre), Councillor Joan Collins (Campaign against the Bin Tax), Ailbhe Smith (Women's Education Research & Resource Centre, UCD) and Sinéad Kennedy (Alliance for Choice & SWP) joined some 30 others to discuss the creeping inequalities of neo-liberalism both locally and globally.

That we still have a long way to go was evident from the discussion that evening, but so too was the fact that all over the world women are fighting back and winning. Ailbhe advised us not to get depressed about sexist images or right-wing journalists, but instead to get angry and to do something about it. While Rita said that those in power are only there because of our obedience, so it's up to us to disobey. It was said that rather than celebrating on one day, women's lives and struggle should be highlighted every day.

## FG Councillor wants poster free zone and prayers

In Blanchardstown a local GP and Councillor Leo Varadkar of Fine Gael has made some unusual proposals.

Firstly he has proposed, "that Castleknock Village and Blanchardstown Village be made poster-free zones."

Secondly, the Dublin 15 Councillor has recently proposed that time be set aside for prayers to be said at the opening of each Council meeting of Fingal County Council in Swords. We await with interest how the other councillors vote on these proposals!

## Victory for Viking Waterford campaign

The save Viking Waterford Action Group forced the Minister for the Environment to give a written commitment to a full excavation of Woodstown.

Dr. Catherine Swift, chair of the Save Viking Waterford Action Group said, "This is wonderful news. It seems clear from the Minister's words that there is no intention to abandon the site without further investigation....we can look forward to an ongoing programme of research on and about the site. It is time now for the Minister to follow through on this commitment and provide funds for the excavation".

[www.vikingwaterford.com](http://www.vikingwaterford.com)

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## TEACHER UNION CONFERENCES

# Unions must take on the government

THIS YEAR'S three teacher union conferences will discuss important issues in education.

We will all agree on the need to reduce class sizes to bring us into line with the rest of Europe and crucially to increase funding for education as a whole.

However, while all three union leaderships will make demands on the government, not one of them will propose action to ensure delivery.

The issue of pensions highlights the problem. Teachers who enter teaching after the 1st April 2004 are now required to work until the age of 65.

While all three unions were vociferously opposed to these changes in pension entitlements, they came in without so much as a single day of action.

The INTO did involve members of branch committees in contacting public representatives but this was not success-



ful in forcing an abandonment of the attack on new teachers.

## Time for a fight

Instead of calling on all members to take some form of action to force the government to back off, our union leaders have given in without a real fight.

The idea of taking any form of action, short of lobbying, is just not considered.

The no strike clauses of the partnership agreements, added to the cosy relationship between unions and governments that partnership fostered, has taken the teeth out of the trade union movement.

But it is not the type of union that many of the members want.

At last year's INTO conference a motion directing the Central Executive Committee to refuse to sign up to any no strike clauses in future partnership agreements was overwhelmingly passed.

The TUI has a similar motion on its agenda for this year.

We need activists in all three unions to increase the pressure on our executives to fight on issues of concern.

We need to build confidence among trade unionists that we can, and sometimes need, to take action.

The building of activist networks across the three teaching unions is very important.

As this government increases the intensity of its neo-liberal policies we will face more attacks on our conditions and more privatisation in education.

We need to get organised now to resist them.

Deirdre Cronin is a member of the INTO

**If you are interested in any of the issues raised here contact Niall at 087 6988540**

## Underfunding, privatisation and the growth of commercialism in schools

By NIALL SMYTH

Despite the "Celtic Tiger" boom, Ireland's education system suffers from leaking roofs, crumbling buildings and overcrowded classrooms.

Education, like other public services such as health, has been chronically underfunded and present investment is only playing catch-up.

Recent figures released by the INTO indicate that funding to education hasn't changed in the past fourteen years. In 1990, Gross Education Expenditure as a percentage of GDP stood at 4.8%. In 2004 it was still only 4.6%.

If in the midst of a booming economy there is a failure to invest in education, we can be sure the Government has no intention of ever doing it in the absence of a boom.

A major consequence of the underfunding is that schools are becoming

dependent on companies to provide much needed resources.

### Commercial enterprises

Kenway and Bullen, in their article "Consuming Children", state that "more and more commercial enterprises without an educational dimension are giving themselves an educational gloss and targeting schools, promoting goods... not necessarily designed to meet the specific needs of the school environment."

For example, Mc Donald's sponsor a "Catch and Kick" programme, containing an assortment of items: bibs, pumps, balls, etc. plastered in their big golden arch 'M' logo.

This is disgraceful given the health implications of eating their food. Another example is Tesco's "Computers for Schools" scheme, where children end up pressurised to

collect vouchers to help supply their school with computers.

### Motives

We should never be under any illusion as to the motives of these companies, despite claims that they are simply charitable donations.

Indeed, some are quite explicit about their intentions. US classroom magazine Teen Network proclaims to its advertisers that it reaches "an audience of 23 million kids... Readership of your advertising message is virtually guaranteed because (our) magazines are welcomed, purchased, and used in the classroom—your most uncompetitive environment—by students and teachers."

And companies gain far more from the process. According to Curran in the Journal of Consumer Marketing,

"Corporations are well informed of the schools' need for revenue, yet school administrators do not comprehend the value of exclusive access to the children..."

Targeted adverts shown to US school kids by Channel One, a daily classroom news programme, generate gross annual revenue in excess \$100 million for the company. In Britain, Serco, a private contract company whose main business is in military contracts, now runs the education departments of two city councils and is contracted to carry out hundreds of schools inspections. They are also a leading provider of courses for teachers.

### Future for education

This is the type of future education in this country will face under the neoliberal agenda of the World Trade

Organisation's General Agreement on Trade in Services.

It is part of the global trend towards the introduction of the market and market principles into education via Public Private Partnerships, teacher training (for example, Hibernia) and corporate patronage and sponsorship.

We need to defend public education and secure adequate funding. Trade union activists should have every confidence that we can fight and win.

Just this week, threatened strike action by local government workers in Britain has forced the government there to back down on plans to increase the retirement age from 60 to 65.

We in our unions need to begin to organise to fight this trend in education and pressurise our union executives to fight on these issues.

Niall Smyth is a member of the INTO

## Independent defeats Fianna Fail in by-election

*Socialist Worker spoke to Catherine Murphy following her election as an Independent TD for North Kildare.*

### Why do you think you won the election?

Hard work on the issues that are important to people, keeping my feet on the ground. I've been a public representative for 17 years.

I did very well in the local elections last year, I got a surplus on the County Council and built a decent base.

### What did the election result mean for the FF/PD government?

It's the first time since 1920 that FF doesn't have a representative in the constituency.

It will clearly impact on them. It will make it a very competitive seat at the next general election. I hope to keep them focussed on the issues that came up at the election—school places for children, public transport, quality of life issues.

We have an economy that is the envy of Europe. I want our health and transport to be the envy of Europe. It is a nation of consumers—we are an economy rather than a society. Charlie McCreedy viewed the economy as the goal, I think society is our goal.

### On the Labour-FG election pact

It (the pact) was inappropriate. Fianna Fail and Fine Gael have more in common than FG and Labour.

### On the low turnout

The real protest was in the low turnout. People have switched off political parties.

The Party votes were down. The disconnection between the Dail and the people is obvious. People are not interested in the closed clubs and spin-doctors. People are interested in having their footprint being there. That's why I like the campaigning approach. Children are being denied school places because they are not in the catchment area. It energises people being involved in a campaign, in demanding issues.

### What role do campaigns such as the bin tax, anti war movement, health service protests etc have in bringing about change?

These add a different dimension to politics. They give a relevance (to politics) and make an obvious connection between people and politics.

This was important at the invasion of Iraq. But it must do more than complaining. They are an important component in the political system.



Catherine Murphy, the new TD for North Kildare

There are far more politics going on in the campaigns and politics with a small p than those with a big p.

### What do you hope to achieve now that you are a TD?

Deliver on the things that I campaigned on such as school places, quality of environment; there is only one playground in the whole constituency.

People should not be just commuter drones whose only

function is to go to work and return to sleep. People require

A quality of life. What's the point of building an economy if its not there to support peoples' quality of life?

Secondly, I want to address the total picture such as the inadequacies in health care and education.

Such as providing public transport—giving people a choice—invest in public transport. We need to invest in a system that gives people the option of leaving the car at home.

The situation with the crisis identified in the Travers report will happen in ten years with a crisis of CO2 gases.

We can do it. I have great faith in people to do things better and differently.

We have to work with people to get that energy that we saw in the special olympics and we see with the Irish football fans—who have an automatic understanding of how to behave—we have to let that genie out of the bottle—we built half of Britain and the US—it doesn't have to be the way it is. I'm very optimistic and positive.

Their campaign for the Maynooth rail line extension was a direct example of people power. I worked on a document

with CIE and other campaigners arguing for the line.

We lobbied with the document, demanding what wanted and were successful. It was not just about protest but about action. The public demanded and won.

### You worked with a number of independent TDs in the election campaign. There have been discussions of uniting a new alternative left with bin tax activists, socialists, independents, trade unionists and others to focus on campaigns and a real political alternative. Do you see yourself linking in with this?

There were seven independent TDs that supported me. I would be left of centre. I want to focus on similarities rather than differences—to co-operate on issues.

I've no desire to drive around in a Mercedes. I've been described as everything from a housewife to radical left to the most powerful woman to come out of Kildare.

I believe change is needed in this country and that change has to be about getting our priorities right, about getting it from the bottom up. I will co-operate with progressive forces to achieve that.

# Crisis in the health service

*The health service crisis is a result of the cut backs in the 1980s and 1990s. Mary Harney's solution is the imposition of a new privatised American model. It's now time to protest*

By MARY O BRIEN

AFTER MORE than a decade of the spectacular profit rates of the Celtic Tiger economy, we have a Health Service which plummets daily to new depths of crisis.

While there are many problems in the Health Service, the core problems are private medicine and a massive shortage of beds and staff. The Government attempted to deflect the debate by telling us that funding the health service is like trying to fill a bottomless pit – the famous “black hole” theory. In 2001, Deloitte and Touche, sent in to reveal the black hole, reported the need for more funding.

The report was quietly put aside. However, while ignoring the inefficiency of private medicine, the Government's Health Strategy recommended 3000 additional acute beds over the following ten years.

## Bed deficit

The bed capacity deficit has its origins in the cutbacks of the late 1980's and early 1990's when 5,000 acute beds were cut back. They have never been replaced. The health service, slashed to the bone by that onslaught, has been thrown into today's utter chaos by the increasing demands put on it by the growing population of the Celtic Tiger.

In the overcrowded Accident and Emergency Departments (A&E Depts) – growing queues of sicker and sicker patients wait for days on trolleys, without even a semblance of privacy, unable to get rest in the chaos of what could be a war zone.

Three years ago, in the Spring of 2002, nurses in A&E departments took national industrial action in protest against what had become intolerable conditions for both patients and staff in their Depts. Much was promised but what, exactly, was done?

Just months after that action, after the General Election the same Government placed an embargo on recruitment in the public sector, including the Health Service, and closed almost 300 more beds in the Dublin area alone.

## A&E Depts.

Predictably, the result has been catastrophic. In the A&E Depts the situation has reached such calamitous proportions that late last year, patient's relatives, in their distress, frustration and anger, spontaneously set up ‘Patients Together’ and came on to the streets of Dublin to try and get something done to alleviate the horror in our A&E Departments.

These problems are now affecting every A&E Dept in the country, all year round, causing patients and their relatives to take to the streets in protest from Letterkenny to Wexford and from Naas to Galway.

The situation is now worse than it was three years ago and under the slogan ‘Enough is Enough’ the A&E nurses voted to take action again on Feb 22nd this year. This action, howev-



Glossy images from private hospitals disguise chaos in the public hospitals

## Socialist Worker spoke to a nurse in Cork on the conditions in the Cork Emergency Department

*“In the Cork Emergency Department things do not seem to be improving since the implementation of Mary Harney's plan to relieve the crisis either, after reaching breaking point last week having to close the department for few hours for the health and safety of patients and staff...sometimes you feel that things can only get better from now on.*

*“This horrific situation we hope would be eased soon by the opening of our new facility in Cork with extra staff and better surroundings for our patients sometime in April. It is about time that we should get a chance to provide the service that our patients are entitled to and we so badly want to provide in our department.*

*“Although this new facility would not relieve the bed crisis that we still have to face as part of our daily duties and we'll continue to face for the foreseeable future.”*

er, was deferred by the INO Executive on a promise from Mary Harney that things would be measurably improved in a month i.e. by the end of March. So what's her plan?

## A new Shift in Government Policy

Since January Mary Harney has repeatedly stated publicly that the additional beds required to solve the capacity crisis of the Irish health service could be provided by the private sector. The plan involves the provision of both acute and non-acute beds, including step-down facilities by the private sector – this is a major step in the creeping privatisation of the public health service.

This is taking place as multiple new private hospitals are opening up or being planned. For instance the new private hospital in Waterford is planning the development of the much-needed Radiotherapy Department. It insists that if it cannot treat public patients this Department will not be viable – i.e. profitable. Harney is reportedly ‘interested’. This new unit, much-needed in the area, will be a private one then, infused with huge amounts of taxpayers' money to pay its shareholders their dividends. And for how long will a government be willing to fund public patients for treatment in such a place? This will become a very real question in the future.

**For the A&E crisis the plan broadly involves:**

■ **The transfer of up to 100 people from acute beds to high dependency beds in PRIVATE nursing homes.**

■ **The transfer of a significant number of people (up to 500) into intermediate beds in PRIVATE nursing homes.**

■ **Setting up Minor Injury Units in PRIVATE hospitals so private patients can skip A&E queues but still be transferred to A&E if needs be.**

However desperate we are for relief from the daily horror, it is crucial that both staff and patients see this plan for what it is – the running down of the publicly funded health service and the imposition of a new privatised American model on a demoralised staff and desperate population. Privatisation will mean staff cuts and speed-ups resulting in a worsening of conditions for both staff and patients except for a small elite with the top insurance policies.

This is no solution. The coffers are bulging with our taxes. We are at a crucial moment in time. As nurses we must insist that a publicly funded health service delivered on the basis of need, not on how much money you can pay, is the only solution. The protests by Letterkenny A&E nurses have led the way. Now is the time to spread it to the rest of the country and force the government to act.

Mary O'Brien is a nurse working in a Dublin city centre hospital.

■ **Contact Health Workers Action Group at 087 9879489**

# Campaign against the Bin Tax entering new and challenging phase

By BRID SMITH

Dublin City Council management have indicated that they intend to ignore a motion passed by councillors calling for the collection of all bins as a matter of public health.

This is what so-called Democracy looks like!

In the north side of Dublin the council have left un-registered bins behind.

They are trying to pressurise people into entering into a contract with them so they can pursue the policy of pay-by-use.

The campaign is still urging members not to register their bins.

## Challenge in April

But the real challenge will come to our estates in April/May. In the second week of April all Dublin city householders will receive a bill for

their arrears (already very substantial), the €80 flat charge which will be broken into four payments of €20 and a charge of €5 for each time their bin was collected between January and March.

We must not only maintain the non-payment campaign but increase it.

Many people paid some of the charges over the period of 2001 to 2004, primarily because they were intimidated by court threats and debt collectors. But the opposition to this stealth tax is mounting.

## Stealth taxes

Almost every week now new statistics reveal the astronomical rises in indirect taxation.

Bin charges have increased overall by 114% since their introduction. ESB, gas, parking, toll roads, car tax and other have all risen dramatically.



Indirect tax disadvantages the less well-off and whatever small pay rises have been gained under partnership deals are being wiped out.

In a recent report commissioned by Dublin City Council, further increases in bin charges are being recommended and the waiver system will be reviewed.

As already reported in this paper, the waivers are not protected where the service is privatised and in Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown the council has slashed the annual waiver from €360 to €80.

## Re-organising

The Dublin City Campaign is reorganising its structures so that all areas fighting the bin tax will have a co-ordinated strategy.

A newsletter will be published for April which will give all the arguments against payment. Major public

meetings are being organised all over the city for late April, after the bills go out.

The key objective is to maintain and intensify the campaign of non-payment.

Each area will organise to respond to non-collection by a combination of civil disobedience and political pressure.

Meanwhile, the campaign is regularly visiting the depots where the council workers are being faced with threats to their jobs.

The role of the unions in fighting back against this tax is very important. And the campaign will be organising to intervene at union conferences over the next few months.

As the days get longer and the weather better, now is the time for this campaign to hit the streets and get all our communities on board for this fight.



# The lies behind Bush and Blair's crusade

## Dahr Jamail on his experience of the Iraqi resistance

One of the few independent journalists still reporting from Iraq, Dahr Jamail's work has been published across the world. He spoke to Socialist Worker.

I first began reporting from Iraq in November 2003 after seeing the disparity between the mainstream media and independent reports coming out of the country. I had done so much reading before my first trip that I felt I knew what to expect.

But the reality was much worse than I imagined. I was shocked by how brutal the occupation was and how intense the anti-American sentiment was among so many Iraqis. I saw how there was no reconstruction taking place. Every building was in a complete shambles.

Six months into the occupation, Iraqis were talking about how even under sanctions they were able to rebuild power stations and services, while here was the most powerful army in the world and they had achieved nothing. Billions of dollars had been allocated to reconstruction, yet no work had been done.

I was struck by the growing poverty among ordinary people. Before the invasion the jobless rate was 30 percent. By November 2003 it had risen to 40 percent. Now it is well over 50 percent. Jobs are so hard to come by now that many Iraqis have been reduced to begging or selling little bits and pieces.

### Heritage

The occupation has also degraded and brutalised Iraqi society. The British medical journal the *Lancet* estimated that over 100,000 Iraqis have been killed since the occupation began.

There are probably five times that number who have been wounded and maimed. Lives have been destroyed, the infrastructure has been destroyed, and Iraq's rich cultural heritage is under threat.

Even the ancient city of Babylon has been turned into a US military base, and thousands of years of history and priceless artefacts are being crushed under the tracks of US tanks.

On so many different levels Iraqi society and culture have been shattered by the occupation, and continue to be as it drags on.

Many Iraqis I have spoken to are desperate for their lives to improve, but after two years this hope is dying.

After the January national elections many Iraqis are waiting to see if the national assembly will bring some positive change, yet it is already apparent that the security is no better and the infrastructure is no better.

The elections have raised the focus on sectarianism primarily because the politicians, the Western media, and even the media in Iraq have made it an issue.

But if you ask an Iraqi if they are Sunni or Shia they answer they are just Muslims and Iraqis. The biggest danger is not sectarianism but ethnic strife between the Kurds and the Arabs, especially in the north.

The general consensus among Iraqis is that they all want the occupation to end, even if they disagree on when the US troops should leave.

Some want the US to leave immediately, others would be content with a timetable setting out a withdrawal. Iraqis want the raids on their homes to stop, they want an end to the patrols and—more than anything—they want an end to the heavy handed tactics.

The Western media claim the resistance is made up of Baathist diehards and foreign jihadists. Although these groups do exist, the majority of those who take part in the



Dahr Jamail

resistance attacks are just average Iraqis. These are people who have had family members detained, killed or humiliated by occupation forces and want revenge.

I have interviewed many members of the resistance, and they say that there are people coming to fight from other Arab countries, but they are a minority. The majority of resistance fighters are ordinary Iraqis who just don't want their country to be occupied and are going to keep fighting the occupation forces until they've gone.

The ranks of the resistance are growing day by day. More people have been enraged by the occupation and are joining the resistance.

There are so many groups taking part in the resistance that it is wrong to think of it as being one organisation.

Many have different strategies, and even different political agendas, but the one thing they all have in common is they want an end to the occupation. There is no cohesive unified plan or ideology driving the resistance beyond the desire to end the occupation.

### Victims

I visited Fallujah many times before the US assault last November. I was there during the first US siege in April 2004. Fallujah has come to symbolise Iraq under occupation.

Here was a town that did not like Saddam Hussein — the people saw themselves as victims and opponents of the old regime.

But after the US troops gunned down 17 people during a protest in the first months of the occupation, the city became radicalised and was transformed into a centre of resistance.

There is a saying in Iraq, "Fallujah is Iraq and Iraq is Fallujah." This is because the pattern of attacks and raids is repeating itself across the country. Fallujah personifies what has happened to Iraq since the invasion.

I refuse to be an embed (embedded journalist), so my only contact with US troops is on checkpoints, or if I meet them when they are on patrol. What I have found is that morale is very low, and the longer they have been in Iraq the lower their morale is.

Many arrive believing they are protecting America, but after a short time they begin to see this as a lie.

Unfortunately I have also found that many of them are becoming brutalised by the occupation.

Because they are fighting a brutal guerrilla war, a survival mode kicks in and they start doing things that they will have to live with for the rest of their lives, like killing civilians or brutalising captives.

The bottom line is this occupation is not going to end soon. There are already permanent US military bases in the country.

The danger is that the US could end up at war with Iran and Syria and also facing a huge uprising among the Shia.

■ You can read Dahr Jamail's reports from Iraq on his website. Go to <http://dahrjamailiraq.com>

By DAVE LORDAN

Bush and Blair's latest buzzword is "democracy". According to the new spin, the invasion of Iraq can be justified, despite all the lies and the corpses, by the January elections, which have ushered in a new era of democracy.

Furthermore, apparently, the "liberation" of Iraq has inspired the "cedar revolution" that is demanding Syrian withdrawal from the Lebanon. With no sense of irony, the US is calling for "freedom from foreign influence" for Lebanon — but not for Iraq or Palestine! World opinion is being softened up for more wars with talk of the lack of democracy in Syria and Iran.

But there is no genuine democracy in Iraq. The January elections did not transfer power to the representatives of the Iraqi people. Real power remains in the hands of the American colonial administration.

The key sectors of the economy have already been handed over to US multinationals like Halliburton. Freedom of expression and association are severely curtailed.

The elections were actively boycotted by at least 40% of the Iraqi population; an alliance made up not only of the Sunni religious minority, but of women's, workers' and students' groups too.

The Shia coalition that won the election campaigned explicitly on the basis of calling for immediate withdrawal of foreign troops.

They have since reneged on this campaign promise, but an estimated 80% of Iraqis remain in favour of the US leaving their country immediately. The latest opinion polls in the US show that 57% of Americans also want the occupation ended.

### Corrupt regimes

The truth is that the empire-builders couldn't care less for democracy. They will do deals with any rotten criminal regime, no matter how brutal, as long as their interests are looked after.

Saudi Arabia is the West's major Arab ally, and one of the world's most vicious dictatorships. Less than 1% of the Saudi Population control more than 80% of the country's vast oil wealth. Vicious police repression keeps the resentful population in check. Women have no rights whatsoever. Public executions are commonplace and torture is routine.

In another much-vaunted example of his commitment to 'democracy', Bush is claiming to have pressurised the Egyptian dictator Mubarak into allowing free elections. But for thirty years the American government has been supplying Mubarak's 200,000 strong police force with the plastic bullets, pepper spray, and electrified batons required to keep the Egyptian populace cowed. In reality Bush and Rumsfeld fear that the



Up to a million people took to the streets in Beirut in March against US policies

Iraqi resistance is inspiring a growing revolt against their client regime in Cairo. They want stage-managed elections to take the wind out of the Egyptian opposition.

The west's support for regimes like Saudi Arabia and Egypt is no aberration. It is tied in with the history of global capitalism. As capitalism developed in the late 19th Century, industry and the military became much more reliant on oil. The arms race and the First World War accelerated this process. After this war, the defeated Turkish empire collapsed and the victorious powers rushed in to take its place. Britain occupied Iraq, Jordan and Palestine. Syria and the Lebanon became part of the French "Mandate".

### Anti-colonial movements

Popular uprisings, along with declining economic and military strength, forced Britain and France to retreat from the area shortly after the Second World War. By this time the US had taken over as the leading Western power.

Together with Britain they sponsored the setting up of the state of Israel at the expense of tens of thousands of massacred Palestinians. A million more were driven from their ancestral homes.

The strength of anti-colonial movements made direct occupation of other Arab nations impossible for this whole period. Instead the strategy was to rely on Israel as a "watchdog state" and to prop up brutal client regimes like the Iranian Shah and the Saudi Royal family.

When the Iranian revolution overthrew the Shah in 1979, threatening western oil interests, the US and Britain backed Saddam Hussein's murderous eight-year war against Iran. When dog bit master and Hussein annexed Kuwait, he too had to be chastened. But the Americans held back from overthrowing him in 1991 for fear of bringing to power an Iran-supporting Shia government in Baghdad. A weak Saddam, no matter how cruel he was to his own people, was preferable to an emboldened Tehran.

## Tariq Ali talks to Socialist Worker

**The Iraqi resistance is demonised by Bush and Blair as terrorists, supporters of Saddam Hussein, Islamic fundamentalists and so on. Tell us what you think of the resistance.**

Every resistance movement against imperialism has been categorised as terrorist — the Mau Mau in Kenya were demonised and brutally tortured by the British; the Algerian FLN by the French; the Vietnamese by the French and the Americans.

Today Israel's Ariel Sharon refers to Palestinians as terrorists, Russia's Vladimir Putin crushes the Chechens in the name of fighting terror and Tony Blair is assaulting traditional civil liberties in this country in the name of fighting terror. It's hardly surprising that the Iraqi resistance is characterised in the same fashion.

Obviously the means used to drive out imperial occupiers are determined by the nature of the occupation. The brutality of the US troops and systematic torture they have used has been well

documented. So how can the resistance be beautiful?

During the Algerian war a leader of the national liberation front, the FLN, was asked about using terror against French civilians in cafe bombings in Algiers. He replied, "If we had an air force I promise you we would only target French barracks, but till then..."

**How does the struggle between imperialism and the resistance in Iraq compare with the struggles against French colonial rule in Algeria or against the US in Vietnam? Have the techniques of empire changed? Is the nature of the resistance different?**

The techniques of empire have not changed at all. The tally in Vietnam was two million Vietnamese dead and 50,000 US soldiers. The tally in Iraq today is over 100,000 Iraqis dead and 1,500 US soldiers. The proportions don't change.

What has changed is the world in which we live. With the collapse of the traditional left there is a big vacuum. In

Vietnam and Algeria the movement was led by people who were either communists (Vietnam) or secular nationalists (Algeria).

In Iraq today the heirs of the Iraqi Communists — whose leaders were hanged by the British empire — are crude collaborators on every level.

The armed resistance is led by religious groups, ex-Baathists and in certain areas by Iraqi nationalists. The political failure to create a national liberation front is the Achilles heel of the resistance.

Zarqawi's al-Qaida group only entered the country after the US occupation. It is a tiny minority whose tactics are denounced by most Iraqis opposed to the occupation.

There is also the political resistance of Moqtada al-Sadr and his faction, which is based in the Shia slums of Baghdad and the poor sectors of Basra and other cities in the south of Iraq. He will demand the withdrawal of all foreign troops and say no to permanent US



# Trade for democracy in the Middle East



Photo: Hisham Ashkar/hishmish@caramail.com

down a rising of the Palestinian and Lebanese left. But after Israel's bloody invasion of Lebanon in 1982 the Syrians began to support the Shia resistance movement Hezbollah, which eventually drove Israel out of Southern Lebanon in 2000. Since then, Syria has refused to support the American occupation of Iraq and has recently signed mutual defense treaties with Iran.

After the unsolved assassination of the Lebanese billionaire Rafiq Hariri, the US moved swiftly to gain advantage against the Syrians and Hezbollah. The American ambassador helped disaffected sections of the Lebanese political establishment to organise demonstrations calling for Syrian withdrawal. While socialists do not support the Syrian occupation, it is clear the anti-syrian protests in Beirut's Solidere square are being used by the US backed opposition to garner support. The leader of the opposition, Walid Jumblatt, has confessed in the past to "ethnic cleansing".

The US is also calling on Hezbollah to disarm. But most Southern Lebanese see Hezbollah as their guarantee against Israeli occupation. Hezbollah are not terrorists. They are a legitimate resistance movement supported by the vast majority of Lebanon's - mostly working class - Shia population. They run schools, hospitals, and social centres and have nine MP's in the Lebanese parliament. They are being targeted only because they are a symbol of a successful resistance admired by tens of millions across the Middle East.

## Building the resistance

Hezbollah is refusing to disarm in the face of US intimidation and is mobilising its support in enormous militant demonstrations. Meanwhile, in Iraq, the resistance is inflicting serious damage on the US military's ability to carry out the mission of the neo-cons.

All across the Middle East revulsion at the actions of the US military - in Fallujah, Abu Ghraib and elsewhere - is ripening into a widespread mood of revolt. A regional explosion is possible if the Americans attempt an invasion of Iran and Syria.

The outcome of the confrontation between imperialism and the Arab masses could decide the future of world politics for many years to come. If the US succeeds in crushing resistance, it will tilt the balance of power in favour of the forces of reaction everywhere. If, however, they are defeated - and given the ferocious persistence of the growing Iraqi resistance, this currently looks the more likely scenario - it may inspire a worldwide anti-imperialist movement that could topple much more than statues with moustaches. This is why activists must be 100% behind the resistance to imperialism in the Middle East and why we must build the largest possible revolutionary movement in our own country.

## Neo-cons' hollow democracy

By KIERAN ALLEN

**Forget about Weapons of Mass Destruction. George Bush is now fighting wars to bring democracy to the world. The people of the Middle East cannot win democratic rights for themselves—it has to be imposed by the barrel of a gun.**

**You can only believe this latest lie if you turn the world upside down. The reason why there is no democracy in many Arab countries is because their regimes have forged a 'brutal friendship' with the US.**

**Take Egypt, for example. Its President, Hosni Mubarak, has never faced an opponent in elections since he took power in 1981. Yet Egypt is the second largest recipient of US aid in the world—after Israel.**

### Bahrain

**Or look at Bahrain. After it became independent in 1971, its elected representatives dared to criticise Shaikh Isa Khalifa as a result its assembly has been dissolved since 1974. Yet Bahrain is the headquarters of the US Navy's Fifth Fleet.**

**If the people of the Middle East had their say, they would oppose Robbery of their resources by the oil companies. They would probably elect Islamic governments, as they did in Algeria before France encouraged the military to stage a coup.**

### Promoting change?

**Western powers have traditionally backed dictators in the region. Is this now about to change? Is the US, for its own reasons, about to promote change?**

**Here the case of Egypt is instructive. Mubarak has just announced that the next election will be "through direct, secret balloting, giving the chance to political parties to run.."**

**That change has occurred, however, because masses of people have done what the US neo-conservatives claim they were incapable of. They have gone onto the streets, protested and fought for democratic rights.**

**Since the second Iraq war, a coalition demanding democratic rights has emerged in Egypt composed of the Muslim**

**Brotherhood, old style Nasserite nationalists and the left. They are winning big support and so Mubarak has been forced to make concessions.**

### Real cause of change

**This is the real cause of the change—rather than any mission statement from George Bush. The neo-conservatives do not promote democracy as a form of rule by the people. Rather they aim to sell a new technique for rule over the people. Sometimes they do this through locking institutional mechanisms which protect American interests. So in Iraq, there is a triple lock system so that Kurdish, Sunni and Shia politicians have to agree on major decisions. But as the Kurdish politicians have hitched their fortune to America, this in turn means that the US gets a veto.**

### Neo-cons' democracy

**More broadly, the neo-conservatives advocate a form of democracy that mirrors the model of the consumer market. Just as you can choose between Persil and Daz, so too can you choose between parties that do exactly the same e.g. the American system where two parties compete for money from the rich and then pulverise atomised voters with PR spin.**

**This form of democracy goes alongside severe repression and more Bureaucratic control. Marches and meetings remain prohibited. Political parties that do not conform -such as Islamic or socialist -are banned. The security forces gain greater power. Decision-making by elected representatives is extremely constrained**

**US rhetoric about democracy can back fire. After the events in the Ukraine, the people of Kyrgyzstan have risen up and taken control of many of the Southern provinces.**

**The US has been conspicuously silent about this particular democratic revolution. The reason: Kyrgyzstan allows US combat aircraft to be deployed on its territory.**

**So much for democracy when US interests are at stake!**

## The neo-con strategy

The coming to power of Bush and the Neo-cons signaled a further shift in strategy. They wanted to tighten control over world oil supplies in order to guarantee the smooth functioning of the US economy and to allow the US to remain in pole position ahead of China, the EU and other economic rivals.

This meant wiping out any potential opposition to the US in the region. The invasion and occupation of Iraq are part of this strategy. So is the total and unquestioning support for Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, as well as integrating Israel's regional ambitions into the neo-cons' overall plan for the region. Forcing Hezbollah to disarm, and regime change in Teheran and Damascus, are next on the list.

The Bush gang have been fine-tuning the (for them) extremely useful technique of corporate-sponsored revolt. In Georgia, and more recently in the Ukraine, they poured huge amounts of

money and expertise into backing carefully selected factions within the broad opposition.

Their aim was to manipulate the genuine desire of people for democratic change in order to bring to power a ruling group who would implement favoured policies of economic liberalisation while aligning themselves militarily with the West. This technique has the added propaganda advantage of making the Western rulers look like the good-guys. This is the framework we need in order to understand the recent US interference in Lebanon.

## Lebanon and Syria

Lebanese sectarianism is a legacy of Imperialism. France created Lebanon after the First World War, drawing the borders to ensure a country divided along religious lines, and with a slim majority for their main supporters, the Christian Maronites.

In 1976, with the support of the US and Israel, Syria invaded Lebanon to put

# War about empire and those who fight against it

bases in the country.

If the leading figures in the United Iraqi Alliance, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, and Shia cleric Ali Sistani - not to mention the fraudster Ahmed Chalabi - cave in, the resistance will spread to the south of Iraq.

In my opinion, to demand and accept an election under the protection of an occupying imperial army could only lead to further collaboration. Sistani models himself on Gandhi, but India had a very different history to Iraq and Gandhi called on the British to quit India at the height of the Second World War.

The US administration was split over who should lead Iraq. The first option was Iyad Allawi, the second option is Sistani/al-Hakim/Chalabi. But the house of cards could collapse quickly if a Sistani regime cannot deliver a rapid withdrawal.

**Since 2003, we have seen the two assaults on Fallujah, the rebellion in Najaf, the elections and the installation of another interim**

## government. How has the Iraqi resistance developed and changed since 2003?

Fallujah is the Guernica of the Arab world. A city was destroyed, its people killed, tortured, dislocated, its children orphaned. Tragically, in contrast to the first assault on the city, Sistani remained silent in November.

In other words the bloc he heads acquiesced in the destruction of Fallujah in return for power sharing. This event marks the first serious breach in the unity of Iraq.

The elections were initially regarded by Washington as a concession, though US journalist Thomas Friedman argued strongly for them in the New York Times on the grounds that it was best that Sistani crushed the insurgency rather than the Americans. Just like it's best if Abu Mazen crushes the Palestinian resistance rather than Sharon.

In an occupied country imperialism always divides and rules - India, Africa, Vietnam, Korea, Cyprus, Ireland and the



Tariq Ali

Arab east are examples from the past. The American empire will want a client regime in place and it will use each group against the other.

Allawi against Sistani; armed resistance groups against al-Sadr. That is why some elementary unity on a political level is vital. If Sistani, as the voice of the majority community, had denounced the destruction of Fallujah, it would have created the basis for some form of unity. So the resistance, in my opinion, has progressed little over the last two years. This is a tragedy for Iraq.

**There are several elements to what the US is doing in Iraq - military, political and economic. To what extent is the resistance countering in these three areas?**

Militarily the resistance has made the country ungovernable, including Baghdad, a city of several million people. Economically the targeting of foreign companies and the pipelines has been effective. Oil firm Halliburton is welcomed in Basra, but not Baghdad.

This is the first serious neo-liberal occupation and the third largest presence - after US and British troops - is the privatised armies run by firms.

A few months ago a South African mercenary was shot dead. It later emerged that he had been one of the torturers of Steve Biko. I was in South Africa at the time and many people rejoiced.

**Can the resistance win - and what would this mean?**

The withdrawal of all foreign troops, no military bases and Iraqi control of Iraqi oil would constitute a victory. But will the US allow this to happen?

Henry Kissinger has called for the Balkanisation of Iraq. The only grouping ready for this are the Kurds, provided they get the oil wells. Neither Turkey—for its own vile reasons—nor the rest of Iraq will accept this willingly.

So it's a mess, but the lack of an overall political project on the part of the military and political resistance is a very serious weakness.



# Socialist Worker

## Another robbery of the poor and little noise from the opposition

**Robbing pensioners is made legal and medical card funding is slashed—but not a sound from “the opposition”.**

Last week the Dail passed into law the Health (Amendment) Act, 2005. This provides for charging medical card holders for nursing home and hospital care. Now the state can charge up to 80% of the non-contributory old age pension to anyone in a public nursing home bed or after 30 days stay in hospital. This will leave pensioners with only €30 a week “pocket-money”.

But it didn't end there. Thousands of new “doctor-only” medical cards were announced too. This is a cutback. The new “yellow-pack” cards will cost only €250 a year for the state compared to €1000 for the full medical card. The difference is prescription drug charges of up to €85 a month and in-patient charges of up to €550 a year. Up to €1570 a year! So the poorest are, again, hit the hardest. Since Mary Harney has been minister, 10,000 full medical cards have been lost.

While this Act passed through the Dail the media and opposition were focussed on the Travers report and the rightful demand for the resignation of Minister Micheal Martin who stood over the robbery of billions from old age pensioners. But they raised no opposition to the legalisation of that same theft from now on. For that is what these charges are.

TD, Joe Sherlock stated Labour's position: “The Labour Party does not object to charging elderly people through deductions from their pensions”. 29 of the state's top earners pay no tax according to the Revenue Commissioners. A genuine left opposition would have opposed this Health Act and would have insisted the rich be taxed properly to pay for free health care for workers, the elderly and the poor. But then that is not in line with FG policy.

Rabite instead lashed out at left-wing trade unionist Mick O Reilly. He had simply pointed out the reality that the FG-Labour voting pact left Labour trailing in fourth place in the by-elections and gave a seat and a big boost to neo-liberal Fine Gael.

These are the reasons why we urgently need to build a real left alternative.

## Oil prices hit the roof: How stable is the global economy?

Economists are worried about the possibility of a crash of the dollar triggering a broader panic like the Asian collapse in 1997. With globalisation the international economy is more interconnected than ever before.

The US economy will only continue to boom as long as foreign bankers continue to invest their wealth in dollars, oil prices remain low and there are no international shocks.

Yet oil prices reached unprecedented highs of \$57 a barrel last week and the US trade deficit reached \$665 billion in 2004, a 25 percent increase on 2003. It is now 5.7 percent of GDP (Argentina collapsed when its trade deficit hit 4 percent of GDP). As a result of this weakness in the American economy, central banks around the world are hinting at selling the US dollar. In late February the Bank of Korea said it might shift foreign exchange reserves away from the dollar with the result that not only did the dollar fall but the US stock market index, the Dow, dropped 174 points.

This is why access and control of oil supplies is so important for the US. It was one of the key motives underlying Bush's “Project for a New American Century”. An 85% increase in daily petroleum output is deemed essential by 2020 to avoid US and international oil shortages and massive oil price hikes. The Persian Gulf region is home to two-thirds of the world's known oil reserves. The desire to control this oil led to the war on Afghanistan, Iraq and, if Bush has his way, on Iran and Syria next.

Newsweek commented: “What's especially unnerving is that no one knows how to disarm the dilemma”. This demonstrates that globalisation has not removed the intermittent, uncontrollable crises that Marx identified as being inherent to capitalism. With the most open economy in the world, Ireland's Celtic Tiger is particularly vulnerable to an international shock triggered by oil, dollars or war. Another system is urgently required before capitalism destroys us and the planet.

## DEBATE

# Is it time for an alternative left in Ireland? What is the role of political parties in the movement?

By DERMOT CONNOLLY, COLM BREATHNACH, DES DERWIN

THE MISTRUST of political parties by many of those involved in the struggle against imperialist wars and global capitalism is perfectly understandable.

Fear that the movement can be channelled into a safe parliamentary opposition and of bureaucratic control from the top is entirely justified by the history of the past century.

It is not just undemocratic political parties who should be mistrusted. Bureaucratically controlled trade unions, so called non-governmental organisations, (NGOs), and especially so-called non-political campaigns or movements, which are actually controlled by people with political connections, all attempt to do the same thing.

Nobody who wants thorough change can give any degree of support to the elite political structure, bought and paid for by big business, which promotes the tweedledum/ tweedledee politics of Bush versus Kerry, Blair versus Howard, Ahern versus Kenny.

### No real opposition

Despite the many sincere activists in their ranks, parties such as Labour, Sinn Fein and the Greens, which claim to be on the left and anti-war, offer little or nothing in terms of a real opposition. Their aim is to get into a pro big business government led by either Ahern or Kenny. Both such governments will be pro-imperialism and pro-war in real terms.

Many young people rightly recoil from these ‘politics’. However, large numbers of these same young people are interested in a serious struggle against global capitalism, environmental disaster and unjust wars. To adopt an anti ‘party politics’ stance to maintain ‘street cred’ with these young people is to do them a disservice.

To build a serious movement



Fianna Fail are laughing at a divided left

to oppose/end global capitalist domination and imperialist wars requires a serious discussion on what we are for and against, how we are to organise, what method of struggle should be used.

### Meetings and forums

This means having meetings, forums, setting up groups in different countries, cities. To do this it is necessary to engage in some form of organisation. This is a political discussion and therefore its organisation implies a political organisation of some sort.

Within that, discussion groups will come together with definite political views. To argue their view, they will organise to produce leaflets, journals, a website, meetings to discuss their ideas and work. They will have some method of political organisation.

Whether they call themselves parties, groups, movements or alliances is not fundamental. They are political organisations.

Far more important are questions like: are they democratic in their structure and relationship to the broader movement? What is their political programme? What method of struggle do they advance? Do they connect with ordinary people? Do they wish only to control, or can they learn from the wider movement? What do they actually do in practice as opposed to what they say about themselves?

### Campaign for a broad political alternative

In our view, what is needed to advance the social and anti-capitalist movement, and the political left, is a campaign for a broad political movement/alliance/party (we are not hung up on the title), based firmly on the working class, to involve young people, anti-war and anti-racist activists, anti capitalists and all those who are interested in a struggle to oppose and end global

capitalism and its effects.

It should stand not only to the left of Labour, Sinn Fein and the Greens but a core principle must be that it is always independent from the bosses' political establishment. It must be democratic in its internal life and controlled from the bottom up. Such a party would be member-centred with a vigorously participatory internal life instead of the failed model of a self-perpetuating leadership immune from challenge or debate.

We believe that within such a political movement or formation all forces on the left, whether they describe themselves as socialists, anarchists, revolutionary marxists, or none of these, should have the right to organise as political platforms, with a duty to respect the rights of others and to fight for the organisation's overall aims.

The principles outlined here, for the relationship of socialist organisations to the new ‘anti-capitalist’ and anti-war movements, should also govern the relationship to the trade union movement, community organisations, single-issue campaigns, the women's movement, struggles on the ground, participation in elections, etc.

Finally, while recognising the sincerity of those who argue against political groups in the social movement, such exclusion is no guarantee against the movement being dominated by elements with a hidden political agenda. While strictly maintaining the organisational independence of the movements from any one political party, an open and honest exchange of political views and platforms is the best way to guarantee that such covert manoeuvring fails.

Dermot Connolly is chair of Dublin Campaign against the Bin Tax, Colm Breathnach is in the ISN and Des Derwin is active in SIPTU, views expressed are in a personal capacity)

## The most important task facing the social movements in Ireland is the formation of a real left alternative

By RORY HEARNE

DERMOT CONNOLLY and others are calling for an alternative left. The SWP agrees with that call.

The so-called ‘left’ political parties have failed to articulate any clear opposition to the right-wing government parties of FF and the PDs.

Labour is actively pursuing a coalition with right-wing Fine Gael, and neither the Greens nor Sinn Fein have ruled out coalition with the right.

We believe that the “anti-neoliberal” left faces both challenges and exciting opportunities.

New struggles against neo-liberalism and war have emerged in the last five years e.g. in Bolivia, Venezuela and Iraq.

### New opposition

While obviously not nearly as vigorous as the revolts in Latin America or the resistance in the middle-east, the new opposition is visible at home.

We see it in local and national campaigns around bin-tax, childcare, housing, healthcare, immigrant rights and the anti-war movement to name but a few.

The new opposition was visible in the protests on Feb 15th 2003 (100,000 against Iraq war), June 2004 (30,000 against Bush's visit), May Day 2004 (4,000 marched for another Europe), the health protests and the An Post workers' strike in December. It was also shown in the hammering of FF candidates and the votes for independents and socialists in the local elections last June and the election of Catherine Murphy in Kildare.

The real challenge for the left is to create alliances and organisations that can involve the new movements, strengthen them, help them to gain victories and offer those movements a representative voice.

This is where we completely agree with Dermot and others, when they say “what is needed to advance the social and anti-capitalist movement, and to advance the political left itself is a campaign for a broad movement/alliance/party”.

We all agree that it is an urgent but achievable task. In order to do it however we must acknowledge that our main hurdle is the age-old sectarian splitting which dogs the left. The anti-neoliberal left is united on many issues. Therefore we have a responsibility to focus on what unites us rather than whatever tactical differences that divide us.

**Building trust**

This requires building up trust. It also requires looking outwards rather than in, opening up to all those active within the various movements. It requires getting involved with and learning new ways from the new move-

ments, from the immigrant community, community activists and the ‘new’ working class: migrant workers and non-unionised workers in low-pay jobs.

Such alliance building and radical left unity is happening across the world—Respect in England, the Scottish Socialist Party, the Left Block in Portugal, P-SOL in Brazil. Why should we be any different here in Ireland?

There are numerous campaigns in which we can work together, such as campaigning against McDowell's attacks on civil liberties and immigrants, the EU constitution, the bin tax, use of Shannon by the US military, the partnership agreements, mobilising for the G8 in Scotland, defending public services, many other local campaigns, and most importantly the upcoming general elections of 2006 or 2007.

Unity is strength. Now is the time to actively take those first steps towards creating a real alternative—a left alliance.

Rory Hearne is Campaigns Officer with USI and a member of the SWP



## DEBATE

# THE LEFT, SOCIALISM, REPUBLICANISM AND SINN FEIN

Everyone has seen the media and mainstream politicians unleash a ferocious and hypocritical attack against Sinn Fein. What does this all mean for Sinn Fein and republicanism? What do socialists have to say on these issues? **Brid Smith**, a member of the Socialist Workers Party (who was imprisoned as part of the Bin Tax Campaign) and **Eoin O Broin** (Sinn Fein Director of European Affairs) took part in a debate by email which we print below.

## Opening question put to Eoin O Broin:

Everyone has seen the media and mainstream politicians unleash a ferocious and hypocritical attack against Sinn Fein. What does this all mean for Sinn Fein and republicanism?

Will it push Sinn Fein towards accommodating with the establishment or will they present an alternative to the real criminals in FF and FG?

If the move towards the establishment is to remain on the Sinn Fein agenda how do you see an island of equality for the working class coming about? Does the fight against global war and poverty fit into the party's perspective?

**Eoin:** The political onslaught against Sinn Fein is nothing new.

The scale and depth of the recent wave of attacks are an indication of the growing concern among the Irish political establishment at Sinn Fein's growing political and electoral strength.

They hope that by criminalising our party's voters they will limit that growth. The Meath by-election is an indication of the failure of such a strategy. Our vote rose from 9% to 12% despite all the allegations.

What do such attacks mean for Sinn Fein? In one sense they are sign that the establishment is worried. On the other hand it clearly indicates that the more successful we are the more ferocious the attacks will become.

So we are in for a turbulent year. I don't believe that any of this will have a meaningful impact on Sinn Fein's own political project.

Our political direction is very clear. We want to offer a radical left republican alternative to the Fianna Fail and Fine Gael led status quo in the south, while working to implement the Belfast Agreement in the north.

Clearly, in terms of political and electoral strength even a broad left coalition of Labour, the Greens, Sinn Fein and the progressive independents does not have enough support to form an alternative government in the south.

This raises important questions for the left in terms of whether a real alternative to the current status quo is possible in the short term.

If not then where do we go and what do we do? Equally the forces blocking the full implementation of the Agreement are currently greater than those pushing for real and meaningful change.

How to overcome such an impasse is a question of real and urgent significance.

These are Sinn Fein's primary concerns, and our agenda is set in relation to these rather than the media hype and spin of our opponents.



Top: Opposition on the streets, Above: Eoin O Broin of Sinn Fein and Brid Smith of the Socialist Workers Party

**Brid:** The right-wing onslaught of criticism on Sinn Fein is the height of hypocrisy.

The FF/PD Government has presided over the biggest robbery of working class people in history – stealing the pensions from the elderly and the mentally ill in institutional care.

These same hypocrites slam republican violence and yet have no problem opening up our airports for use by Bush's regime of terror in Iraq. Socialists stand with Sinn Fein against the attacks of the right.

The huge disillusionment with the Government was reflected in last year's local elections and in the recent election of Catherine Murphy in Kildare.

Masses of people are looking for a political alternative. But what does the crisis for Sinn Fein tell us about the direction of their politics?

The objective of providing "a radical left republican alternative in the South and the implementation of the Belfast agreement in the North" needs to be spelt out.

Sinn Fein can only honestly do this by opposing privatisation on both sides of the border, by having a clear unambiguous policy against stealth taxes on working people, by building the movement against global war and by opposing coalition with the right at every stage.

A historic opportunity exists in Ireland to build active grassroots and

electoral opposition to Blair and Bertie.

An alliance of all the forces on the left, built on opposition to privatisation and Bush's war, is necessary. The project for socialists is to build such a movement and we believe Sinn Fein would better serve the cause of "An Island of Equals" by joining in this project, not by bending over to get back into the establishment.

**Eoin:** Brid is right when she says that there is massive disillusionment with the present FF/PD government.

However both by-elections paint a more complex story than she suggests.

Catherine Murphy's vote notwithstanding, the majority of voters chose to stay at home, not vote for an alternative, and a majority of those who did vote chose parties who represent the status quo, not a politics of change.

Those of us seriously interested in radical change need to understand this reality if we are to build an effective constituency of support across Ireland.

In Meath the combined strength of Sinn Fein, Labour and the Greens was less than 30%.

In Kildare North the combined figure of Labour, the Greens and Murphy was, at 46%, a more positive sign, but unlikely to hold in a general election.

Thus the most urgent question for the broad left in the south of Ireland is how to build popular democratic legitimacy and support for an alternative political programme inside and outside of government.

At the same time progressive forces across the island need to refocus on the full implementation of the Belfast Agreement to replace both direct and unionist misrule with a more accountable form of government, and through the all Ireland agenda work to undermine partition and unite the political and economic life of the island.

Sloganising about "historic opportunities" and "bending over" for the establishment may be reassuring for some.

What is needed, however, is some serious and honest debate about the opportunities which are available, in order to assist us in building a popular movement for change.

That is what Sinn Fein is about. The only crisis at present is with the establishment, who see the threat posed by Sinn Fein and are working overtime to block our path.

**Brid:** Eoin has not actually answered the question of whether the current crisis will push Sinn Fein further towards the establishment.

The pressure is on the republican movement to break from paramilitarism. But that break should not mean that Sinn Fein stay with a foot in both camps.

Specifically, is Sinn Fein intent on keeping in with the friends of George Bush like Peter King? Will they genuinely lead a fight against privatisation of services and not repeat the mistakes of their MLAs on PFI's in the North?

Will they oppose water charges by actually calling for non-payment of the charges?

Will the party keep the door open for a coalition with Fianna Fail sometime in the future? Why would you want to enter into an arrangement with such gangsters?

Is Sinn Fein actually prepared to build the movement against Bush's war and not just lend its name to it? Will they work with others on the ground to build up the campaign against bin tax?

Can we look forward to Sinn Fein joining the call for a boycott of Coca cola?

If the goal is "an island of equals", then surely socialism has to be high on Sinn Fein's agenda. The establishment will raise a high price for Sinn Fein's entry.

What is needed is a radical left alternative, building opposition movements from below. How such an alternative is shaped is the challenge facing all anti-capitalists.

The debate continued at a public forum organised by the SWP on Thursday March 24th in Dublin.

## REVIEWS

# Hotel Rwanda: The terrible role of the Western powers in genocide

By WILLY CUMMING

THE HOTEL des Milles Collines in Kigali, Rwanda, could be any four-star luxury hotel in almost any country in the world.

There is the same entrance porch, the same marbled lobby; the same uniformed staff.

Yet for a few terrible weeks in 1994 it provided a refuge for over a thousand women, men and children. That story is the story of the film *Hotel Rwanda*.

Outside the oasis of relative calm that is the hotel, an atmosphere of threat hangs over the country.

The local radio station spews out a constant barrage of filth calling on Hutus to exterminate the Tutsi 'cockroaches'.

The Interahamwe militia hangs threateningly around the streets.

## Colonial power

Rusesabagina is Hutu and his wife, Tatiana, Tutsi. He tries to explain to an American journalist the role that the colonial power played in formalising the differences by giving one group, the Tutsi, a favoured position over the other.

When the journalist asks two women what they are and finds that one is Tutsi and the other Hutu, he comments that they could be sisters.

The assassination of President Habyarimana is the signal for the start of the killing of Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Rusesabagina flees with his family to the comparative safety of the hotel.

Over the next few days hundreds come to the hotel for refuge. Rusesabagina has to use all his accumulated favours to maintain the hotel as a safe haven.



*Hotel Rwanda* leaves many questions unanswered, but must be one of the best political films of the year.

## Role of Western Powers

The film brilliantly depicts Rusesabagina's realisation of the enormity and scale of what is happening.

His minibus stops in fog and he finds himself surrounded by dead bodies.

Back in the hotel he changes out of his shirt but, in a complete panic, is unable to properly tie his tie.

There are some indications of the terrible role of the western powers in the lead-up to, and throughout the genocide. Colonel Oliver, loosely

based on Canadian UN General Roméo Dallaire, cannot act to stop the killings because of his restricted mandate.

A military expedition by Belgian troops refuses to take anyone but their own nationals to safety. Rusesabagina tells all those with influential contacts abroad to contact them.

He himself contacts his boss, the Director of Sabena in Brussels, who in turn contacts the French Foreign Ministry.

The Interahamwe militia is immediately called off. France had been directly involved in training and arm-

ing the militia.

Over the next two months over 800,000 were massacred, a rate of daily killing five times that of the Nazi death camps.

The film doesn't moralise and leaves many questions unanswered, but it must be one of the best political films of the year.

For further reading:

**Philip Gourevitch: We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families (1998)**

**Gérard Prunier: The Rwanda Crisis - History of a Genocide (2002)**

## Unoccupied Minds: The weaponry of the dispossessed

Reviewed by SARAH O'ROURKE

Brian Friel in his play *Translations* describes words as the weaponry of the dispossessed.

In *Unoccupied Minds* a collection of anti-war poems published by the Irish Anti-War Movement, the poetry is the language, not just of occupation, but also of resistance.

By refusing to be silenced, they show the read-

er powerful personal images that are not just metaphors representing whole nations, but rather metonymies of fragments that stand for the whole.

The poets are protesting against occupation.

By allowing the reader into scenes that we will never see on the 6 o'clock news their poetry stands defiant.

Most powerful in the work of Baghdad born May Muzafar are the images of

loss and silence as in her poem 'The Voice' where

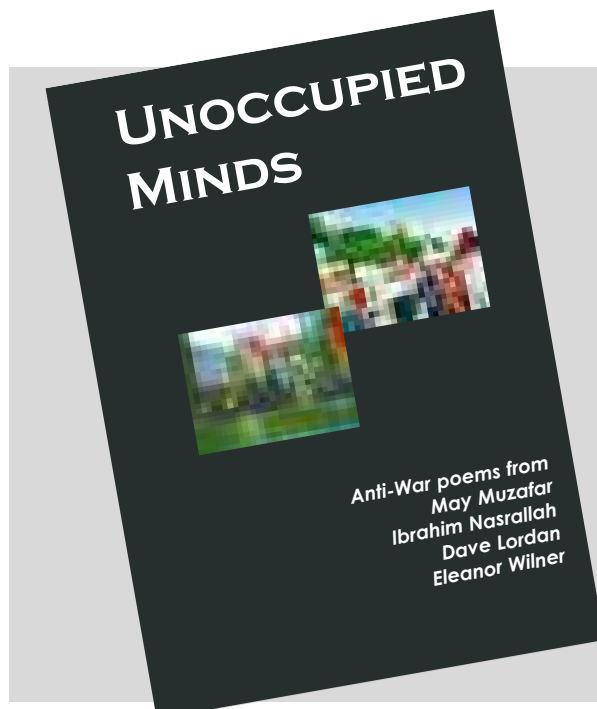
'All the doors of the stories close up, and the walls double up on their people-the streets empty...', vivid reminders of what war leaves in its wake and how a people can lose their voice.

In contrast Ibrahim Nasrallah from Jordan's poem 'Thresholds Trying To Enter' is a noisy poem where war is all around, where 'the thresholds are trying to enter' and 'the streets were spilling along.

Ten black rifles peered just from beyond'. Loudest of all is the image of a tank rolling over a boy's body.

US poet Eleanor Wilner on the other hand introduces us to death (in case we were in any doubt) in her poem 'Establishment'. The White House has become 'his natural abode' and 'his power seemed their own, body counts at their command.'

Finally, Irish poet Dave Lordan tells of an Iraqi father forced to send his two



daughters out to sell their bodies and his son to beg while resistance occurs elsewhere. Wearing the hijab on Dame Street, 're-tracing

Bloody Sunday's route with thirty thousand' and on the streets of Genoa 'Un altro mondo é possibile'. Another World is possible.

## Damien Dempsey New Album: If only this were taught in school

By NIAL SMYTH

Damien Dempsey is quite literally one of the most exciting voices in Ireland today. Having witnessed the delight on the faces of the young people in the crowd at Vicar Street on St. Patrick's night and enthusiasm with which they all (and I stress all) sung his lyrics word for word, one cannot but recognise the importance of the ideas contained in his lyrics.

Damien Dempsey is a breathe of fresh air in an otherwise sterile Irish music scene. His music documents the everyday lives of many working class people in 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland, the human dilemma we all face and the rat race we all seem caught in. He is a social commentator, whose work is infused with the politics of struggle. Speaking in 2000, Dempsey admitted that he'd "like to see like a socialist Ireland... James Connolly had the right idea, he would have liked to see the workers from north and south come together and fight for better standards and I'd like to see that myself...I'd like to see ordinary people getting a better deal for themselves and standing up to the fat cats."

This fortnight saw the release of the Donaghmede singer's third studio album "Shots" and two sold out shows in Dublin's Vicar Street on the 16th and 17th of March. Despite the new album containing tales of unemployment, poverty, oppression and drug abuse, it is ironically still filled with a great deal of hope and optimism. Nowhere else is this more evident than on "Sing all your cares away". This song, most likely inspired by the post-pub singsongs at his childhood home, is an account of the daily slog of working class life and the role of music as an escape for many from the drudgery of their lives. The song "Patience" is aimed squarely at the corporate music industry and Dempsey 'favourites' like Louis Walsh. It deals with the commercialisation of music with record companies pushing their "Mac Donalds music" and pumping money into pop "to keep the real singers far away from the top, so folks are never told what these corporations do, fuckin up the planet, exploiting me and you".

One of the album's personal highlights is "Not on your own tonight". A celebration of the goodness in humanity "shining out to greet me from within bone and blood" as he wanders the apparently lonely streets of Dublin. The album also contains a re-recording of the track "Colony", dealing with occupation and European Colonialism. Dempsey dedicated the song to George W. Bush, to much applause during the Vicar Street gig. Although I feel the album may not match "Seize the Day" musically, the sheer passion and feeling throughout on songs such as; "Chocktaw Nation" and "Hold Me", more than match "Seize the Day" and they make this an outstanding album. 'They Don't Teach This Shit In School', but I for one wish they would.

□Damien Dempsey "Shots" (Clear/Sony) available from €17.99



## International Socialism

Media coverage of the Iraqi election has thickened the fog of lies and misinformation about the Iraqi resistance. In the new *International Socialism*, Anne Alexander and Simon Assaf counter the myths and provide the fullest account of the resistance yet to appear.

They argue that it is a movement for national liberation that deserves the support of anti-imperialists everywhere.

The journal also interviews Iranian activist Elahé Rostami Povey about workers and women in Iran.

It also looks at how the 1905 Russian Revolution affected Marxist theory, and talks to the people behind the Marxists Internet Archive.

Available for 8 euro / £5 stg To order write to SW Books PO Box 1684 Dublin 8, e-mail info@swp.ie or phone (01) 872-2682



## FIRST PERSON ICTU are privatising for the government: Business unionism Irish style

By OWEN McCORMACK

THE IRISH Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) have proposed that the government set up a State Holding Company (SHC) to run and control the semi-state companies.

They claim that such a body would solve the questions of privatisation and political interference in semi-state industries. The proposal has met with approval from business and media pundits

There is one slight problem with the idea—far from avoiding the issue of privatisation it effectively means privatising a portion of all the semi-states in one go.

The SHC would raise money for say, Aer Lingus or CIE, by selling off a portion of its assets to private pension funds.

ICTU would give over control of the SHC to a mixture of investment experts, transport department officials, private pension investors and some of the social partners (of which the trade unions are only one).

Investments would only be made if “strict business criteria” were met—that is cutting conditions to make profits. The proposal speculates that €700 million could be raised by selling off 10% of a semi-state’s assets, and they could even sell off up to 25%!

How to stop the SHC from selling even more isn’t raised, nor how you ensure it is only pension funds that buy in. The ICTU seem to have an almost child-like innocence about how the market operates if they believe they have found some new, business solution to the problem of privatisation.

### Business Unionism

The term “Business trade unionism” was coined to describe US unions who, in the eighties, gave up trying to fight the employers or government, but instead sought to do sweetheart deals with “no strike” clauses.

Members were told they were now part of a professional organisation, which gave them cheaper insurance deals or discount booklets. The US working class in general have paid the price for this with a catastrophic fall in wages, conditions and standards of living.

In Ireland Begg and Co are taking it further by arguing that EU rules and laws mean that government cannot invest in state companies. Therefore you need some form of private investment to keep the companies going. If this was the case you might have expected that Begg and the unions would have campaigned against the EU treaties that brought in these rules—in fact they have supported them at every step.

But as Paul Sweeney points out in his recent book, this simply isn’t the case—governments can invest in state companies. German steel workers and French transport workers in state companies have fought for and won state investments to keep their industries going and stopped attempts to privatise.

### Aer Rianta

The ICTU proposal follows on from SIPTU’s acceptance of the break up of Aer Rianta—a move clearly designed to lead to the eventual privatisation of the Airports. SIPTU officials halted resistance by cancelling strikes against these government plans as “political” strikes.

However the SIPTU leadership are prepared to raise up to €20 million from its members at Dublin Airport to invest in a scheme with the multimillionaire McEvaddy brothers to build the terminal—rather than give the contract to the non-union Ryan Air.

The McEvaddys’ own the Omega aircraft leasing company, which won a big contract with the US military to use its old fleet of DC9s and DC10s as airborne refuelling tankers.

### Sell out

Privatisation has never been an issue of how best to organise nationalised industries or how to inject investment into them. It is about shifting wealth and power toward big business and away from workers.

By first accepting the gobbledygook that the issue is “how to invest” and then trying to find a solution to it, the ICTU has taken yet another step away from even pretending to fight for workers.

It is time ordinary trade unionists began to fight our treacherous leadership and tell Begg and Co to go where they belong, to the bosses union, IBEC. The alternative is to watch as our unions cosy up to millionaire war profiteers or act as advisors to big business.

Owen McCormack is convenor of Bus Workers Action Group

# 200 ATTEND END OCCUPATION CONFERENCE: When injustice is law, resistance is duty

By DALILA ROSLAN,  
Federation of Student  
Islamic Society (FOSIS)  
Ireland

From the 21st to the 22nd March 2005 an historic international human rights conference “End The Occupation Conference (ETOC)” was held at the University College of Dublin, Ireland.

The conference was organised by the Federation of Student Islamic Society (FOSIS) Ireland in collaboration with the Islamic Human Rights Commission, Friends of Al-Aqsa and the UCD Islamic Society. It attracted over 200 delegates.

Prominent speakers from all over the world; Dr. Ilan Pappé (Palestine), Imam Achmad Cassiem (South Africa), Yvonne Ridley (United Kingdom), Massoud Shadjareh (UK), Danny Morrison (Northern Ireland), Vincent Durac (Ireland), Muhammad Al-Asi (USA) and Rabbi Yisroel Weiss (USA) and many more were gathered in one event making the aim of the conference a reality.

Operating on the



On the March 19 Dublin protest Photo: Paula Geraghty

basis of the motto of the conference—when injustice is law, resistance is duty—delegates were informed of the importance of their responsibility as to what is going on around the world today. Be it Palestine, Iraq, Chechnya or Kashmir where there is occupation of self-interest there is also oppression and injustice.

Many topics pertaining to this issue were discussed in the confer-

ence and the participation of delegates and interaction with the speakers was overwhelming.

Through a series of lectures, films and workshops, delegates were educated and motivated and hopefully activated to join the resistance in whatever capacity they could and to recognise the right of victims of oppression to resist by any means necessary.

Workshops sessions

were conducted to train delegates in skills related to media, lobbying, economic warfare and assisting prisoners.

The conference will serve as a powerful platform from which the public especially students in Ireland can rise and show support for resistance against any forms of oppression and injustices.

FOSIS being the Federation of Islamic Society in Ireland wishes to bridge the gap with all other student and non governmental organisations and movements and to reach out not only to the Muslim students as the issue of injustice and human rights does not just concern only the Muslim but is a matter of humanity and social liberty.

According to the inspirational Imam Achmad Cassiem ‘To acquire knowledge one needs doubt, to act one needs certainty.’

We have learnt the lesson from the conference.

It is now time to act, to make changes and to stand up against injustices and oppression, wherever it may be.

## EVENTS

### Making Poverty History: Mobilise for the G8 Protests

**7.30pm Wednesday April 6th**, Room 302 Peter Froggatt Centre, Queens University  
Speakers: Angela McCormick—Anti-poverty activist, G8 Alternatives Committee, Scotland  
Goretti Horgan—Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Anti Poverty Network

**7.30 pm Thursday April 7th**, ATGWU Hall, 55 Middle Abbey St  
Speakers from G8 Alternatives, Scotland, Make Poverty History

Ireland, Irish Anti War Movement, SP, SF, Labour Youth  
**Film Showing and social Venezuela and the struggle against the IMF and US imperialism**  
Followed by DJ music- Hosted by the SWP  
7.30 pm Sat April 16th  
Toners Bar, Baggot St, Dublin 2

**Mayday Legal Support Benefit** (next time it could be you!)  
8pm Thursday March 31st  
Benefit for the legal support fund from Mayday '04.

Boh’s Bar, Dalymount park. Phibsboro.

### April 10th to 16th 2005 -Global Week of Action on Trade Justice

Saturday 16th April.  
<http://www.debtireland.org/>  
<http://www.chomlamh.org/>

NO to the rich and powerful imposing unjust trade agreements, indiscriminate liberalisation and privatisation on the poor.

YES to everyone’s right to food, a

livelihood, water, health and education.  
<http://www.april2005.org>

**Saturday 2-9 July Protest at G8 summit, Gleneagles, Scotland.**  
[www.g8alternatives.org.uk](http://www.g8alternatives.org.uk)

**Thursday 7-11 July Marxism 2005 conference, central London. Five days of discussion and debate hosted by the Socialist Workers Party. For more information go to [www.marxism2005.net](http://www.marxism2005.net)**

## WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

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

Fill in the form and send to  
SWP PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Name.....

Address.....

Email.....

Phone.....



# MAKE POVERTY HISTORY in 2005

## If we don't start this year, when will we?

*Trócaire, (part of the MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY Irish Campaign) responds to Rory Hearne's article on poverty and debt (Socialist Worker February 22nd) and looks at the campaign against poverty in 2005.*

By **LARA KELLY**,  
Campaigns Officer, **Trócaire**

IN THE words of Nelson Mandela at a recent UK MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY rally:

"Massive poverty and obscene inequality are such terrible scourges of our times ... that they have to rank alongside slavery and apartheid as social evils. Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural – it is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings."

Are the root causes of this poverty also man-made? Essentially, yes. The deadly trio of the debt burden, unfair trade and undelivered aid combine with conflict, human rights abuses and environmental degradation, resulting in 1 person in 5 living on less than US\$1 per day.

Overcoming poverty and promoting justice are core concerns for Trócaire, in our work overseas and in our campaigns and advocacy work in Ireland.

Our main campaign – [www.KeepOurWord.org](http://www.KeepOurWord.org) – puts pressure on the Irish and UK governments to honour the commitments they made to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – 8 internationally agreed development targets.

### Millennium Development Goals

The MDGs were agreed to by world leaders in 2000 and are an important first step in dealing with hunger, poverty, gender inequality, child and maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and the environment.

They also refer to the need for rich and poor countries to work together to build a "partnership for development". If the Goals are only an important first step it is because they aim to "halve the number of people in poverty" – only total eradication of poverty would be truly compatible with Trócaire's understanding of social justice.

Nevertheless, the Goals are a move in the right direction. Most of all, the MDGs offer an opportunity to put development issues back on the global



The struggle to survive amidst crippling poverty

agenda, at a time when security issues dominate.

For campaigners, the Goal that we can most work with is MDG 8, on "partnership". In signing up to this Goal, world leaders committed to making improvements in the areas of governance, debt cancellation, trade justice and increased aid.

### Debt

As Rory's recent article stated, debt cancellation would go a long way towards the fight against poverty. In 2002 low-income countries paid out \$39 billion in debt repayments to rich country creditors – the equivalent of \$100 million every day!

That year, despite the billions living in poverty, they received only \$17 billion in grant aid. There have been recent proposals that IMF gold stocks be sold to finance debt cancellation.

This will be discussed at the spring meeting of the IMF/World Bank, so we will have to watch and wait to see if this suggestion is seriously considered.

Until debt is tackled the Millennium Development Goals will remain a mere wish list.

However, debt cancellation alone will not solve a situation that sees 24,000 people die each day of hunger.

Trade and Aid are the two other issues that must be addressed.

The rules of international trade are stacked in favour of the most powerful countries and their businesses. We need trade justice not "free trade". This means ensuring poor countries can feed their people by protecting their own farmers and staple crops and it means ensuring trade rules do not undermine core labour standards.

### Eradicating poverty

For poverty to be eradicated, an immediate increase in aid is needed. For 35 years the United Nations has been asking for rich countries to spend 0.7% of national wealth (just 70 cent in every €100) on overseas aid. Ireland committed in 2000 to reaching the target by 2007. In December 2004, the Irish gov-

ernment decided to renege on this promise.

This year, our key task as campaigners must be to pressurise the government to restate their commitment to 0.7%, to set a new target date and to enshrine this commitment in legislation so it does not become just another broken promise.

2005 is seen as a turning-point year. It marks the start of the ten-year countdown to 2015, the target year for the MDGs. In July this year, the UK will host the G8 summit and in September world leaders will meet in the UN to assess progress towards the Goals.

It is also a year that has seen campaigns against poverty come together across the globe, under the banner "Global Call to Action Against Poverty". 335 international and local NGOs in developed and developing countries have joined the call.

The symbol of solidarity for 2005 is a white band, to be worn on key dates – "White Band Days" – around the time of the G8, UN Summit and WTO Ministerial.

Rather than disengaging from international institutions like the IMF, World Bank and WTO, Trócaire believes that as they are multilateral structures, they are preferable to situations where powerful blocs make unilateral deals with developing countries. We are urging campaigners to tackle them in a bid to make them more accountable and democratic.

While the MAKE POVERTY HISTORY Irish Campaign will bring the message of "Trade Justice", "Drop the Debt" and "More and Better Aid" to Edinburgh for the G8, there are also key opportunities before these institutions meet when we will ask for support in influencing decision-making.

For the Millennium Development Goals to become a reality we need to create public support and push for the necessary political will. 2005 is our best chance to really begin to make poverty history – if we don't start this year, when will we?

Find out how you can help by logging on to [www.makepovertyhistory.ie/involved](http://www.makepovertyhistory.ie/involved)

## Counter-summit and protests:

### Dates for your diary this July

**Saturday, July 2nd:**  
**Make Poverty History demo in Edinburgh**

For more details go to: [www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org)

**Friday July 1st to Sunday July 3rd:**

**G8 Alternative Summit Edinburgh**

Organised by G8 Alternatives. Speakers include: John Pilger, George Monbiot, Susan George, Haidi Giuliani, Bob Crow, Dita Sari (Indonesia), Walden Bello (Focus on the Global South), Trevor Ngwane (South Africa)

**Monday July 4th:**  
**Blockade Faslane nuclear base**

called by CND, supported by G8 Alternatives. [www.cnduk.org](http://www.cnduk.org)

**Tuesday July 5th:**  
**"Refugees are welcome here"**

**Demonstration at Dungavel detention centre**

**Climate change day of action**

**Wednesday July 6th:**  
**"Another World is Possible" Demonstration at G8 Summit, Gleneagles**

Assemble 12 noon, Gleneagles station [www.g8alternatives.org.uk](http://www.g8alternatives.org.uk)

## Protest at G8 Summit – Stop Bush wars – Cancel the Debt – Make Poverty History

By **RORY HEARNE**

**BUSH**, the world's no 1 terrorist, will be at the G8 Summit in Scotland in July. He will see it as another opportunity to gain public support and legitimacy for the global war agenda.

That's why it's vital that those who oppose the occupation of Iraq get there and show Bush that there is a global movement against his agenda.

The G8 includes the countries that are at the centre of imperialist domination across the world. France, Italy and Germany are the dominant countries enforcing debt.

When we protest at the G8

we will raise all the building blocks of poverty, all the elements which go to keep billions in such desperate situations.

It is good that people like Tony Blair are forced to talk about AIDS, debt and trade. But we should not forget that Blair, and those like him, stand with the system of

capitalism, which is itself the root problem.

There are three major issues facing humanity today – war, climate change and global poverty.

Everyone who cares about these issues needs to come to Scotland in July. A broad organisation based in Scotland called "G8 alternatives" will

### Capitalism makes the rich get richer and the poor...

Last week *Forbes* magazine showed that 2004 was another good year for the global billionaire's club. Their ranks grew to 691, up 17 percent from the previous year. Collectively, the wealth of the world's billionaires reached \$2.2 trillion, up more than 57 percent over the last two years.

But last week *Time* Magazine showed that it's the poor that are losing. *Time* reported that nearly half of the world's 6 billion residents are poor. Over one million of them subsist on less than \$1 a day. In the U.S. the number of impoverished Americans rose 3.7 percent in 2003. The number of children living in poverty rose 6.6 percent.

be running an alternative summit, with speakers including George Monbiot, Susan George, Mark Curtis, Haidi Giuliani and John Pilger.

They are expecting somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 people to make it to the "Make Poverty History" demonstration.

The Irish Anti-War Movement is encouraging people to attend the protests against the G8.

They are trying to unite with other groups in order to build the biggest mobilisation possible from Ireland against the G8. Come along to the meetings (see box) and find out more about the G8 and the protest plans.

### The fight to Make Poverty History

7.30pm Wednesday 6th March

Room 302 Peter Froggatt Centre Queens University  
Speakers: Angela McCormick (G8 alternatives committee Scotland); Goretta Horgan (Anti-Poverty Network)

### Make Poverty History-mobilise against the G8

Thursday April 7th

7.30pm ATGWU Hall 55 Middle Abbey st, Dublin

Speakers  
Angela McCormick (Organiser of G8 alternatives' summit and protests in Scotland)  
Eamon Stack (Debt & Dev. Coalition, Make Poverty History); Richard Boyd Barrett (Eyewitness of Cairo Middle East Anti- War Conference)  
Trade Unionist, reps from SP, SF and others