

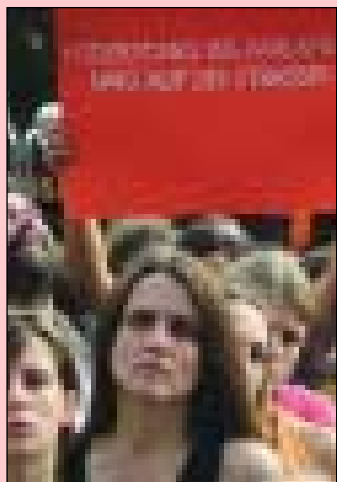
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## RELEASE OF THE ROSSPORT FIVE:

# A VICTORY FOR PEOPLE POWER

Last Friday's release of the Rosspport five was a fantastic demonstration of how people power can bring giant corporations to their knees.

The five men, Brendan Philbin, Willie Corduff, Vincent McGrath, Micheal O Seighin and Philip McGrath were set free after spending 94 days in Cloverhill Prison.

They were sent to prison when they bravely defied a court order that insisted they stop protesting against work being carried out by Shell on its proposed pipeline.

Despite coming under considerable pressure and the trauma of spending that amount of time in prison, the men refused to purge their contempt of court and did not apologise. Due to massive popular pressure Shell was forced to lift its injunction on the men.

The five men were given a rapturous welcome by the three thousand strong crowd that attended the rally on Saturday, 1st of October. Retired schoolteacher, Micheál Ó Seighin said "Feet on the ground won it. It shows that Irish people expect a higher state of democracy, and they expect more of their Government in relation to people's safety and welfare." Brendan Philbin added: "Today and yesterday was our fight but tomorrow it could be yours, sadly the system has let us down." Willie Corduff joked and



Part of the march in Dublin after the men's release

Photo: Paula Geraghty

said "if they can't run this country then we'll have to have a go at it".

Let no one be under any illusion, this is just the beginning of the campaign.

Mark Garavan, spokesperson of the Shell to Sea campaign said, "Shell said, firstly, they would not lift the injunction, and then they said they couldn't lift it, but in the end they had to.

"They dropped it because of

public pressure. It was people power that did it and people power must continue. The release of the five is not the end but just the beginning. The campaign must continue and it will succeed".

Dr Owens Wiwa, brother of Ken Saro-Wiwa, said at the rally, "this has been a victory-a big victory. If you protest against Shell in my country you get locked up. If

you keep protesting you get hanged like my brother and eight of my friends were in November 1995.

"We said to Shell that you will never, ever, drill one drop of oil from the Ogoni land. In the same way you must say 'no to Shell-Shell to sea'".

**>>Story continues on page eight**

## Irish Ferries plan super-exploitation of workers

By DEIRDRE CRONIN

Irish Ferries, who made €26 million in profit last year, are trying to sack existing workers and replace them with low paid agency staff from Eastern Europe.

Staff members were given until October 2 to accept voluntary redundancy terms or to stay on with vastly inferior conditions and rates of pay.

Irish Ferries want to dump 543 workers in favour of the super-exploitation of a more vulnerable workforce.

Early this year, the story of a Filipina worker employed on the Irish Ferries vessel, Isle of Inishmore, hit the headlines.

Hired by an agency to work as a beautician on board, it emerged she



Irish Ferries, €26 million in profits last year

was paid just €1 per hour for working a 12 hour day seven days a week,

with three days off per month.

Since then the scandal of out-

sourced labour on MV Normany which sails from Rosslare to Cherbourg has been highlighted.

On RTE's Prime Time, the case of a Latvian worker was covered. She worked an 84 hour week for just €3.53 an hour.

This is the future for the routes from Ireland to Britain if Irish Ferries manages to have its way.

It also has wider implication for work standards in Ireland.

By undermining minimum wage legislation and established rights and protections, it offers an attractive opportunity to other employers to look to greater exploitation of its workforce to boost profits.

**>>Continues on page 4**

# PROTESTING FOR A HOME: Antoinette Tate's inspiration protest

By Rory Hearne

'Bertie-where are you sleeping tonight?' read the banner pasted to a barrier outside the Dail last week. While the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern sleeps warmly in his house on Griffith Avenue over 200 men, women and children will sleep on the cold and wet streets of Dublin. In towns and cities across Ireland increasing numbers of people are visible covered by blankets and sleeping on cardboard shoved into doorways, on benches and other places they can find. 5,581 people were homeless in 2002, an increase of 3,000 on 1996. Three people died on Dublin streets two weeks ago. The two adults and a 17-year-old youth died within a 48-hour period. The 17 year old suffered a drug overdose.

At a time of unprecedented wealth in Ireland it is an outrage that people are left without the basic right of a roof over their head and health and other support services. According to the UN's Human Development Report, Ireland is now the second wealthiest country in the world, but we are also one of the most unequal, with the third-highest level of poverty out of the industrialised countries.

No where is this poverty and inequality more evident than in the area of housing and homelessness.

A number of protests have been organised outside the Dail and in Dun Laoghaire in the past few weeks.

Out in Dun Laoighre a mother of three young children has been sleeping in a tent for the past month in an inspirational protest at the County Council offices. Antoinette Tate was made homeless when a private landlord evicted her and her family for being a few days late in her rent. Since her protest began the Council housing department attempted to discredit her protest by attempting to smear her name and falsely claiming she tried to jump the housing queue. This tactic has clearly



On the protest in Dun Laoghaire

failed as over 7000 people have signed her petition, large numbers of them; people on the housing list themselves.

Socialist Worker spoke to Antoinette. "I was in private rented for the last five years. I was late with rent in the last property and the land lady told me to leave. I was on the internet, the papers-I rang over fifty places-but not one place would take three children and rent allowance. So I went to the council and they referred me to the homeless unit. I went and visited the temporary emergency accommodation they offered me but it was filthy, with no heating, totally unsuitable for children. I went back to the council and I got angry and told them that I am desperate and have nothing but they just told me to go away. I informed them I wasn't leaving until I got somewhere to stay. They threatened to have social services take my children from me if I protested.

I've been on the housing waiting list for five years. All I was looking for was temporary suitable accommodation. I stood on my own outside the council offices with a placard the whole day. Then a friend of mine gave me the contact for the housing action campaign in Dun Laoghaire. I've been there now 27 days.

I blame the system. There are 3,500 on the housing waiting list

here in Dun Laogaire. I won't stop until I get decent accommodation.

I think everyone deserves to be housed, especially those with families-children should have a home, a stable environment- we are messing our next generation-up.

"My health has deteriorated massively since being out on the streets. I have a pain in me back, a kidney infection and some times I get very tearfull, the kids are affected. I am thinking of hunger strike-I'm so desperate and I miss my kids so much".

Richard Boyd Barrett of the Dún Laoghaire Housing Action Group which is campaigning for Antoinette said, "Antoinette's case highlights the failure of public housing policy. The council and the government are happy to look after private developers but not the housing needs of ordinary people. We demand the council and government take emergency action to provide housing".

The government and council should be utterly ashamed of themselves for the appalling housing situation they have created. They should house Antoinette immediately and take emergency action to provide housing for the thousands of others on the housing list.

For more info: Contact Richard Boyd Barrett 087-6329511 / Antoinette Tate 086 4059655 / Chris Potts 085 1555224

## QUOTES OF THE FORTNIGHT

**"We the Rossport 5 would like to thank our neighbours, friends and fellow Irish citizens for the loving support we and our families have received during these 94 traumatic days. In addition we would like to thank the incoming Norwegian government for their respect, support and assistance."**

**"We remind SHELL and their Irish government partner that imprisonments have historically and will always fail as a method to secure the agreement of Irish people."**

Rossport Five press release on their release on Friday September 30

**"This is an exercise in greed, it is nothing but greed. What Irish Ferries is saying is that we can get workers to work for three euro an hour, 12 hours a day and for three months continuously and this can engender massive profits"**

SIPTU's Paul Smith on Irish Ferries announcement to seek 543 voluntary redundancies and to recruit from employment agencies across EU instead

**"I've achieved more than any man ever achieved in this country. We've exposed so much in the last 2 1/2 years. Our family now have a strong voice, we are highlighting injustices and have begun a campaign and are being contacted by people who have been wronged by the State."**

Frank McBrearty Jnr after reaching a settlement

**"We have lost control, that was his [Alan Greenspan's, chairman of the US Federal Reserve] expression."**

French Finance Minister tells reporters after recent meetings between G8 nations and the IMFAn irritated US Treasury source replies:

**"Things can get lost in translation."**

**"We have maintained that it is a scandal that Monaghan people should have to sit on chairs and lie on trolleys in other hospitals, when they could receive treatment in their own local hospital. Of course international research shows that hospitals like Monaghan can deliver safe, economic and quality care to over 85 per cent of patients who present at A&E. What madness prevents this happening?"**

Peadar McMahon from the Monaghan Hospital Community Alliance comments on the demand by a number of surgeons working in the northeast to put Monaghan General Hospital back on call for surgical emergencies.

**"As one who refuses to align with the cosy consensus, he can still be an important voice in society. The questions raised by his actions are as relevant today in the lower strata of society as those raised by Hobbs on behalf of the consumer"**

Michael Clifford, Sunday Tribune journalist on Brendan Ogle, branded public enemy number one by some in the media for his role in the recent ESB strike

**"Stuff them. If progress is evicting people from their homes, then stuff progress. It's all about greed and business money and we don't count."**

One of the York St tenants who is refusing to leave her flat. Demolition of the flats was due to begin shortly

**"Ruairi Quinn as finance minister, myself as commerce minister and Richard Bruton a industry minister settled on that issue in 1997 and the Labour Party has no intention of departing from it. The reason is we believe that as an instrument of industrial policy it has conferred some advantage on Ireland"**

Pat Rabbitte rules out raising the 12.5% corporation tax rate

**"Health isn't a thing that should be bought and sold"**

Hugo Chavez, Venezuelan President

**"I just feel it's so important for people like myself to speak out about what I saw and did in Vietnam. I'm part of the conscience of this country. If people like myself don't speak about what war does, it'll never end. The images of war are not being shown to Americans. Not really. No one here knows what it's like to see a young soldier, eighteen or nineteen years old, in a body bag, or an Iraqi mother who has lost her son. If Americans really saw that, this couldn't go on"**

A Vietnam nurse, one of the thousands of protestors in Washington on September 24

**"You hit me on one cheek and I'll try to respond by helping you"**

Hugo Chavez on his plans to send oil to the poor of the US

**"It gives certain power and leverage to certain countries and not to others. We're experiencing it with Venezuela, where the oil profits are being put to use across the region to push forward Chavez's particular view of the world."**

Condoleezza Rice, on the effects of rising oil prices

## INSIDE THE SYSTEM

Not content with creaming off massive profits and facilitating tax avoidance for years, Bank of Ireland's contempt for the public was reiterated once again with appointment of Number one tax exile Denis O'Brien to the post of Deputy Governor.

Ireland has just one third of the required number of child and adolescent psychiatrists. 20% of children in Ireland today suffer mental or behavioural disorders. There are just 20 inpatient beds of the recommended 156 for those under 16

A sample study of those treated under the National treatment Purchase Fund, which was set up to take people off waiting lists by treating them abroad or in private hospitals, has found that 36% of those availing of it were treated

in the public hospitals to which they were first referred. This raises the obvious question as to why they weren't just treated there in the first place. Could it be that Harney and co. are intent on introducing more privatisation no matter what?

Councillors in Cork have voted to rezone more land for housing in the village of Rathcormac despite local opposition. According to one planner "Rathcormacism is an adjective for overdevelopment." 500 houses have already been built while just one school, which accommodates 140 students in prefabs, exists in the village

A consortium of investors is proposing to build a 250 bed private hospital in Swords-an area that is

experiencing huge population growth. There are now 16 private hospitals in the pipeline nationwide, with 20 already existing.

Over 100 people are currently held in the non-nationals unit at Cloverhill. 70% have immigration difficulties or are waiting for decisions on their asylum applications. They are held for an average of between 30 and 50 days. These are not criminals, just people who want to work and live in Ireland.

93% of respondents in a recent opinion poll believe they are being ripped off by prices in Ireland.

Up to 200 detainees at Guantanamo Bay are taking part in a hunger strike at the prison. The military has acknowledged 128 prisoners are involved but legal representatives say it

is about 200 or nearly 40 percent of the total prison population.

The gap between rich and poor in China is growing. The richest 20% of the population now account for 50% of the total income or consumption. Fears are growing that the widening gap may spark civic unrest in the future.

In South Africa recently more than 70 trade union, campaigning, socialist, religious and civic groups came together to form a coalition to challenge the ANC government's policies. The group is called the Western Province Coalition For Jobs and Against Poverty. Their demands include a minimum state benefit for all, increased spending on health, transport and education, and a greater emphasis on public services.

# Protest/Reports/Struggle

email to swped@eircom.net Phone 01 8722682

## HOSPITALS

### Nurses' anger over Harney's health plans

By Jo Tully

Two very significant decisions were taken by an INO Special Delegate Conference of more than 300 nurses last week in Dublin. These decisions were unanimous, reflecting not just rising anger inside the nursing workforce but an increasing determination to take action.

The first decision relates to the A&E crisis: the trolley count averaged over 200 nationally during the summer period, traditionally the quiet time of year, indicating that the winter crisis will be worse than ever before. Harney's 10-point plan, hailed by herself as capable of sorting out the A&E crisis within weeks, is an abject failure. It is a failure because it never mentioned or intended to deal with the fundamental problem i.e. the provision of more beds. Instead it tampered with detail and even at that, badly.

Acknowledging that the crisis will be with us for at least 18 months to two years a new strategy has been announced – effectively continue to do nothing about the provision of more beds but hide the problem away from the glare of the media.

The CEO in Beaumont Hospital in tandem with the HSE have issued what is effectively an ultimatum to the INO declaring their intent to place patients waiting on trolleys in to what are already overcrowded and under-staffed wards. This of course will replicate the A&E conditions throughout the hospital. Meanwhile Harney continues with her plans to build and fund through massive tax breaks private for-profit hospitals on public hospital land.

The INOs response to this new strategy is an adamant NO

WAY. Firstly it argues

Open the 480 beds which have been closed but are being capable of being used; 200 of which are in Dublin.

Secondly, lift the employment ceilings on staffing levels put in place just after the last general election.

Beaumont will, it seems, be the test case. The INO knows that if the strategy is implemented there it will be implemented in every other hospital in the country. This is a very serious issue and could bring Harney's privatisation plans centre stage and on to the streets.

The second decision taken at last weeks Special Delegate Conference relates more directly to nurses' pay and conditions. The INO rejected any new Benchmarking arrangements and resolved to process outstanding claims independently. The basic demand for parity with other health professionals is a claim outstanding since the 1999 strike and which was supposed to have been resolved by the first Benchmarking agreement. It in fact made the situation worse. The Conference was adamant that we will not make the same mistake twice. Our claims will now be processed through the Labour Court but may take some months before there is an outcome and we see action. However, events could overtake the process.

On a more general level the fact that the INO has rejected Benchmarking 2 presents an opportunity for other unions dissatisfied with Benchmarking to pull out also - the whole process could begin to unravel. Jo Tully is a member of the executive of the Irish Nurses' Organisation (INO)

### Housing statistics:

40,000 of the 80,000 homes built last year were second homes (holiday homes, houses or apartments), which often remain empty because they are bought in order to avail of the government's generous tax subsidies (e.g. Section 50 tax relief) and the profit from speculative sell-on.

Part V of the Planning Act, requires builders of housing developments of five units or more to give over one-fifth of the development to social and affordable housing.

But last year just 374 affordable houses were delivered under part V as many developers are transferring land, serviced sites or making financial contributions to local authorities in lieu of building houses in their own developments.

The Government, in line with their privatisation belief, wants to hand over responsibility for all social housing provision to the private sector.

They would like to see housing and homeless agencies take over the role of social housing provider. However such organisations cannot be relied upon on a long term basis due to often insufficient and irregular funding.

The lack of funding for social housing, health support etc is even more absurd when you look at the €173 million in unpaid taxes that was written off by the government last year, the €35 million that was poured into the failed MediaLab research centre,

the €27m spent on an automated passport system originally priced at half that, the €5m on a computer system installed by the Prison Service but never used and the €2m unpaid by National Toll Roads for its licence to operate the West Link Toll Bridge.

The reasons why people end up homeless are many and varied, including mental ill health, leaving institutional care/prison, family break downs, alcohol and substance use, traumatic experiences etc. But there is one common thread to all of these; poverty.

The people in question are invariably those who find themselves on the bottom of the social scale and while providing adequate housing and other services for people who are already homeless is important and would save lives, it will not solve the underlying problems.

The government is to announce shortly that is to sell the former Veterinary College which is a 2.1 acre site on Pembroke road.

It is likely to make over €100million. Street Scene, organisers of the protest at the Dail are calling on Dublin City Council to pass an emergency motion calling on the government to refrain from selling the site and instead allocate it to Dublin City Council with a view to alleviating the housing crisis in the city.

Action is urgently required if more deaths are to be avoided on the streets of Ireland.

## DUN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN

# OCTOBER 10TH: D-DAY FOR THE BATHS



By Richard Boyd Barrett

On October 10th the Council will vote on plans to put an 8-storey apartment and shopping complex on the site of Dun Laoghaire Baths.

Save Our Seafront said the Council must reject the plan and commit instead to a fully public swimming amenity with no private apartments. SOS are calling on both the Council and central government to give specific commitments to provide money for a redevelopment of the baths site as fully public swimming amenity.

On several occasions thousands of people have

joined SOS protests against the Council's disgraceful plan. Almost 15,000 people have signed a petition opposing this development.

The protests have had a major impact. When the council first unveiled their plans most councillors supported them. Because of the huge protests many individual councillors and political representatives now say they oppose the development.

However, for several months, the three major parties, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Labour Party, sat on the fence and refused to state which way they would vote.

Since the huge protest on September 18th, Fianna Fail

now says they will oppose the plan. Fine Gael and Labour are still saying nothing.

So the pressure is working but the battle is not over yet. On October 10th we must demand all parties listen to the voice of the public and vote against these plans. We must also make it clear that scaling down the existing plan or just leaving the baths derelict is not good enough.

People Power is working. Let's keep it up. Join the protest at the Town Hall on Monday October 10th.

Web: [www.saveourseafront.ie](http://www.saveourseafront.ie)  
E-mail: [info@saveourseafront.ie](mailto:info@saveourseafront.ie)

## ANTI WAR

### Washington protest biggest since Iraq war started



Left: Survivors of Hurricane Katrina in Washington; Right: part of the march in Shannon

Last weekend hundreds of thousands marched in various cities across the world against the US occupation of Iraq. Up to three hundred thousand people protested in Washington showing that the movement against the Iraq war is growing in strength across the US.

New Orleans evacuees carried placards on the protest reading, "Make levees, not humvees", "Baghdad burns, New Orleans sinks, Halliburton profits", and "Stop the hurricane of poverty and



war". US police arrested Cindy Sheehan at the protest on Monday.

Tens of thousands marched in London showing that the anti-war movement has not been cowed by the bombings. Instead it is determined to show that the terrorist attacks are linked to the war in Iraq.

Around 400 people marched into Shannon Airport to protest at Ireland's complicity with the Iraq war.

## SHORTS

### VICTORY FOR ANTI-BIN TAX CAMPAIGN

Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Co. Council's decision this week to withdraw threats of court action against bin tax non-payers is a hugely significant victory for the anti-bin tax campaign.

Michael Hogan, of the Council's Finance department, cited a "legal minefield" if the Council attempted to pursue householders through the courts for arrears. Mr Hogan admitted there were over €18 million in outstanding arrears at the end of 2003, clearly indicating very high levels of non-payment.

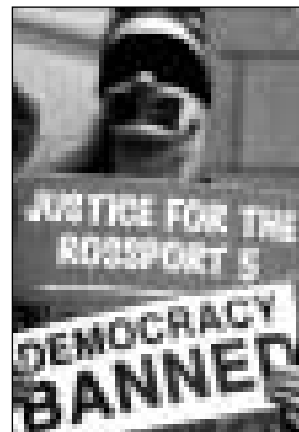
Richard Boyd Barrett, chairperson of CASC and local Socialist Workers Party activist said:

"This is a major victory for the thousands of people that refused to pay this unjust rip-off tax. As our campaign always said, if enough people stood together and refused to pay, there was no way they could take us all to court.

The only bullying tactic the Council now has left is a threat to leave our bins uncollected if we refuse to pay the bin tax. They have tried this in a few areas already.

However, the Campaign has successfully organised those areas to resist this bullying. Householders and campaign activists are throwing their own bins into the back of the bin lorry. Over the next few weeks we will be holding public meetings all across the county to organise every area if the council tries to leave bins uncollected.q war.

### Protest against postering ban



Members of the Dublin Shell to sea campaign protested outside the Dublin City Council offices last Friday against the Council's decision to remove all political posters erected in the city. The campaign for free speech can be contacted at 086 1523542

### Students Against Poverty

We are picketing the shell Garage on the Falls road this Saturday. SAP, which recently sent 30 people down to the Shannon peace festival, is a broad alliance of school and university students.

On sat 10th of September we held a picket of the Andersontown Shell Garage which was well attended and supported. It was covered by The Andersontown News.

Sean Mitchell



industrial news and struggle  
send reports to swped@eircom.net phone 01 8722682

# IRISH FERRIES: Follow the French workers' action

Jack O'Connor of SIPTU has suggested that this dispute places the future of social partnership under threat.

According to O'Connor, "The most daunting aspect of all that is taking place is the position being adopted by IBEC.

Its Director Turlough O'Sullivan has refused to rule out similar approaches by other employers citing competition as the reason.

If this naked pursuit of profit maximisation regardless of the social cost is part of the IBEC agenda then we have to ask if there is any point in remaining in the process"

It's not just the future of social partnership that is at stake however.

The relevance and power of the trade union movement is now going to face a great test that will have implications not just in Ireland but across the whole of Europe. O'Connor suggested that the response of SIPTU and other unions would "depend on the degree to which those promoting these barbaric tactics are prepared to resort.

"We won't fire the first shot but we are ready to fire back whatever they throw at us".

The willingness of SIPTU to fight will determine how successful Irish Ferries management is. Determined action and widespread solidarity can defeat them. SIPTU has served strike notice on the company.

French ferry workers blockade ports against privatisation



## Lessons in how to fight

On the last Monday in September the French government announced its intention to privatise the National Corsica Mediterranean Company (SNCM).

The take over by Butler Capital Partners would result in job losses of up to 400. A 24 hour strike was immediately announced and subsequently extended.

Dockers and seamen in Marseilles shut down the passenger port along with local oil and container terminals. In Corsica protestors blockaded airports and ferry terminals. Members of the Union of Corsican Workers 'hijacked' an empty passenger ferry and headed for the Corsican port of Bastia, where barricades were set up and protestors clashed with police.

Media sources are now reporting that a general strike looks increasingly possible, while a rally in support of those arrested for the ferry hijack looks set to attract huge levels of support.

France already faces national strikes and demonstrations on Tuesday, when unions will protest against the planned privatisation of EDF, the utilities group, and other economic reforms.

Already the French Prime Minister has suggested that the state could retain a 25% share in SNCM, a significant climb-down but not enough for those who are fighting the privatisation.

## Privatising Ireland's ferries

The state owned Ferry Company B&I Line was sold in 1992 to the Irish Continental Group (of which Irish Ferries is a division) for the knock down price of £8 million.

All existing debts were cleared by the government before it was sold. The first action by ICG was to implement a rationalisation process, which saw 163 job losses.

A consultants report commissioned by Irish Ferries was published in mid-September was rejected by the company.

Even though many of its recommendations were in line with what the company wants, one of its findings

were a little hard to stomach for them, it criticised the level of mistrust between management and workers and demanded that the board take steps to alleviate the problem.

It recommended that directors and senior managers take a 5% cut in salaries. The chief executive currently receives a salary of €687,000 per year.

Worryingly, though, SIPTU's Paul Smyth has indicated that they would accept the plan which includes outsourcing catering and cleaning services, 5% salary cuts and staff reductions.

## Dangers of outsourcing

In 1989 the "Scandinavian Star" sank. 157 people died. A report into the tragedy revealed the following were contributing factors to the disaster: excessively long working hours communications difficulties caused by language barriers outsourcing, which led to a situation where no-one knew who employed whom and if they were properly certified

## ESB Dispute: Workers were right to strike

Interview with Mick O'Reilly, ATGWU

SW: Why did this dispute occur?

Mick O'Reilly (ATGWU):

The dispute occurred because, and this is a point that not been taken up by journalists whatsoever, the ESB refused to negotiate with the Union.

There hadn't been a report from the regulators. The ESB wouldn't talk about the new agreement with contractors. They would not engage with the union.

We were the ones blamed for not engaging, but we took our action because we couldn't go through procedures because the ESB wouldn't



ATGWU officials Brendan Ogle and Mick O'Reilly

even negotiate with us. You have to negotiate before you can go through procedures"

SW: What do you feel you achieved by your action?

MOR: As a result of our action the ESB have now agreed to enter negotiations

and the regulator has produced a report as a backdrop to it.

We got what we set out to achieve.

SW: How do you feel about the role of other unions in the dispute?

MOR: The most important thing in this dispute was that the pickets were fully respected by all everyone in the union and also workers in the other unions, who were called upon not to by their own unions.

As far as the other unions are concerned, mistakes were made.

However, the point now is the unions need to get together and show unity. The key to this unity is the ESB workers themselves.

## Poor pensions at Irish Airlines

Irish Airlines (General Employees) Superannuation Scheme (IAGESS) is a defined benefit scheme set up in 1954 and registered with The Pensions Board.

The scheme comprises two sponsoring employers Aer Lingus (EI) and Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) (formerly Aer Rianta) and three participating companies all of which are spin off entities from the original sponsors.

Pensions Payable are 40/60ths of Final Salary based on years of service with no lump sum. Members may commute up to 25% of pension and take a reduced pension. The average pension payable at 31st March 05 was €14,000. This represents 39% of average salary and falls far short of 2/3rd of average salary.

There is no provision for increases in pension. The Trustee may, in accordance with the rules, award pension increases from any accrued sur-

pluses. These increases cannot exceed Consumer Price Index (CPI). The scheme has paid C.P.I. each year to date.

### Other Issues

Aer Lingus has tried to distance itself from any responsibility for the pensions of its employees. It tried and failed to change the scheme from a Defined Benefit to a Target Benefit.

RASA (Retired Aviation Staff Association) are concerned that, in the ongoing discussion about pensions in Aer Lingus and in DAA, that the solutions include present and future pensioners. The Trade Unions have assured RASA that this is their position. They will not allow Aer Lingus to favour a new scheme that would leave existing pensioners high and dry. They are looking for more than C.P.I. As members of the Public Service they contend that have been denied this right by their employers, supported by

successive Government administrations.

Over the past seven years they have taken their case to every organ of the State.

In the end nothing was done. Maybe everyone thought they would go away. The Department of Finance refused to meet them.

To meet our claim the scheme needs additional funding. It needs funding just to meet the present benefits. The actuary has stated this regularly. The tradition in most schemes is that the ratio of Employer's to Employee's contribution is 2:1. In a minority it is more.

We are now asked to sacrifice and forego Pay Related Indexed Pensions due to the failure by the sponsors to properly fund the Pension Scheme over time, aided and abetted by the Oireachtas.

It is time to pay. Our pensions are currently circa 50% less than comparative Public Servants since 1990.

# MRSA warnings about overcrowded hospitals

By PEADAR O'GRADY

Three reports in September warned that overcrowded Hospitals are a major cause of the rise in the incidence of MRSA infections.

Mary Harney has constantly emphasised handwashing as the main solution to the problem. While handwashing is vital, Harney has ignored the role of understaffed and overcrowded hospitals because she is not prepared to increase funding to public hospitals.

MRSA is a type of bacteria which has become resistant to most antibiotics through overuse of powerful antibiotics in hospitals. While usually harmless and carried in some people's nasal passages, it can be very serious if it gets into a wound or even fatal if it gets into the bloodstream as septicemia because it is very hard to kill. It is a good example of prevention being vitally more important than cure.

A report from the Irish Society of Clinical Microbiologists advised restricting the overuse of antibiotics but also stressed the importance of the bug passing from patient to patient through overcrowding: "Every hospital and healthcare institution must take steps to prevent patient overcrowding and ensure adequate space between adjacent beds."

This report also stressed the importance of screening staff and patients for infection and ensuring that isolation beds are opened and infection control staff are employed. The report concluded however that 'current resources are inadequate' to achieve improvements.



Demanding Monaghan hospital be restored

On 16th September the Irish Times reported that: "In a confidential private submission to the Tanaiste and Minister for Health, Mary Harney, the Chief Executives of all five Dublin teaching hospitals said that, in addition to hygiene, inadequate ward infrastructure and high bed occupancy rates were contributing to the level of hospital

acquired infections." They stressed the need for extra beds and staff. They also called for additional single rooms and isolation facilities with en suite bathrooms.

"Outsourcing" or privatisation of cleaning has meant that private companies cut back on staff pay and hours to squeeze the most profit from contracts. This has meant

hurried work and worse conditions for cleaners. It has caused hygiene standards to fall. It also means that sudden increases in the need for cleaning, like during an outbreak of diarrhoea and vomiting, are not available.

The nurses' journal, 'Nursing Standard', reported on September 7th that:

"Changes to the hospital environment had encouraged the spread of MRSA in the UK."

"These were:

"A reduction in the number of hospital beds, leading to increased ward transfers.

"Decreased lengths of stay, so that some infected patients leave before MRSA is detected.

"Increased staff workloads resulting in less time to deal with infection control.

"High rates of bed occupancy."

Ward transfers means patients are moved from one ward to another because of overcrowding and this leads to the spread of infection. International studies show that when bed occupancy rates go over 85% MRSA infection rates start to rise despite the most stringent hygiene regime. In Ireland hospitals are often full and occupancy rates go over 100%!

Mary Harney has now announced a plan to make this worse by insisting that Trolleys from overflowing A&E departments be pushed onto the already overcrowded wards.

At a special delegate conference the nurses union the INO voted to take strike action if Harney pushes this dangerous policy through. Nurses also voted to restart the popular "Enough is enough" campaign to picket and demonstrate until Harney releases the money to properly fund our public hospitals.

For the moment, Harney will continue to wash her hands of the health service she is supposed to be in charge of. A winter of protest and support for action by hospital staff and patient support groups is urgently needed.

## Nursing-home occupation ends in victory

By PEADAR O'GRADY

Workers at Tullybeg retirement village ended an 11-week occupation in September having won statutory redundancy, back-pay, and money in lieu of notice and holiday pay.

The first signs of trouble were in February this year when private nursing-home Boss Ted Cunningham was arrested and investigated for money-laundering after £2.5 million in northern banknotes was found in his garden — allegedly money stolen in the Northern Bank raid.

Cunningham told staff in May the for-profit nursing-home was to be sold as a going concern and that nobody would lose their job. But on the 29th of June, HSE ambulances arrived without warning and started to move elderly residents to other homes saying the home was to be closed. No offer was made by the HSE to

keep the home open despite a record of good professional care by staff there.

Cunningham got married in July, weeks after he said he had no money to pay his workers what he owed them. He celebrated at what the Irish Examiner described as 'a lavish ceremony and reception at the 5-star Dromoland Castle'.

Socialist Worker spoke to Bridie Delaney, one of the organisers of the Rahan occupation.

*SW: How did workers react to the news of closure?*

BD: Ted Cunningham had told us that our jobs were safe and that no residents would have to be moved so we were totally shocked when we heard this from the HSE.

It was very distressing. Even when all the patients were gone, nobody from management spoke to us.

Wages were owed from the 16th of June.

We realised then that 'if we leave now we won't ever be paid'. The only chance we had was to stick together. They couldn't sell the place with us in it so we stayed put.

*SW: How did you organise the occupation?*

BD: We got together and decided to keep our rosters going, making sure some workers were in the home at all times.

We picketed the entrance to the home and after three weeks we extended the picket to the golf club next door, which is part of the complex, because the owners were still taking in money there.

The local people were great and respected our picket.

When the managers brought in outside golfers we moved the picket and sat on the greens and wouldn't let them finish their games.

So they gave up and sent in trucks to the clubhouse to empty

the contents.

Soon after, trucks arrived to the home to take furniture and equipment out but we blocked the entrance. We felt that they were our assets as much as anyone else's. We didn't let anyone take anything out of that house.

*SW: How did you win in the end?*

BD: We made it clear we weren't going to move until we were paid.

It was hard on all of us and we weren't paid for all the weeks on strike, but we had no choice.

Some of the workers were close to retirement and needed to keep their stamps paid up. Many of us will find it difficult to get jobs in the future because of our age, but we won our back-pay, holiday pay, money in lieu of notice and statutory redundancy and I'm very proud of what we achieved.

*SW: What do you think you learned from the occupation?*

BD: It really was an eye-opener for

all of us.

We saw the power some bosses have and the lies they tell to the media and how the media believes their version.

Brian Cowen told us he'd like to help but that he was powerless over the owners, that this was a business issue.

We went to the Dail to a Joint Oireachtas Committee meeting. The room was full of Senators and TDs discussing the Groceries Order but when our issue came up most of them just walked away and only a handful were left.

It was like we just didn't matter to them. I was so angry I just couldn't speak.

None of us were ever in a union. We were never allowed a union in Rahan.

Nobody should go to work without being in a union. But you can only win if you stick together and fight.

# Time for a new left in Ireland

## Ballymun People Before Profit (BPBP)

Ballymun in North Dublin is an area of sustained disadvantage. Unemployment is three times the Dublin average. Over one third of households are women bringing up children on their own. Long-term deprivation is transferred from one generation to the next. Many children leave school early without sitting the Junior or Leaving certificates.

With a profound shortage of properly funded social amenities — youth clubs, sports facilities, crèches and nurseries etc — the real needs of the local population are not being met. Young Ballymun males are more likely to be using hard drugs than getting to college or university.

Any strategy for 'regeneration' should therefore start with the social needs of the residents and overcoming the accumulated deficit and long term disadvantage. Dublin City Council and the Dept of the Environment have set up Ballymun Regeneration Ltd (BRL) to oversee the demolition of flats and rehousing. However, behind the glitzy brochures, Ballymun is being sold off to big business interests and the needs of local people are coming a poor second.

There have been a number of protests and campaigns in recent times. Now activists are coming together. Ballymun People Before Profit contains activists who have helped organise independently against unsafe building sites, lack of jobs and for apprenticeships for people of Ballymun in the Regeneration. They have also organised against closure of our public swimming pool, the delay in housing residents with special needs or in derelict, half-empty flats blocks, against the unfair bin tax and on many other issues.

Paddy Haughey runs the Plough Youth Club in Shangan and has joined forces with BPBP. He told Socialist Worker: "We had a public affordable swimming pool for kids in Ballymun. But Ballymun Regeneration has closed it down. The new 'leisure centre' pool is completely inadequate for schools, youth clubs and the people of Ballymun. The fight is still on to keep our public pool — what we have we hold!"

Paddy points out how BRL is beholden to the business interests: "They are selling off our pitches and greens to private developers. They are selling off the best part of Ballymun."

Ballymun Regeneration pretends that it acts in 'partnership' and in 'consultation' with the community in Ballymun. It set up a number of Area Forums and the Ballymun Neighbourhood Council on which a number of residents and community groups sit alongside Gardai, Council and BRL officials. But in reality all the power lies with the officials.

Local activist Frank Scalzo comments: "Ballymun People Before Profit is an organisation that can begin to give real representation to the needs of the people of Ballymun, it is democratic. The Forums are a failure, they didn't provide a voice

for the people—they were rendered useless for the people of Ballymun. In fact BRL deprived the people of Ballymun of a voice. Until recently they would only talk to the residents through the Forums."

Lána McCarthy, another BPBP member said: "This alliance is really important. BRL and their contractors are getting away with terrible things. It's about time people came together to stop them."

Tony Greene is a local trade unionist and campaigner for jobs and apprenticeships for local people in the massive building works. He told Socialist Worker: "This is one of the biggest construction projects of its sort in Europe, yet the opportunities for local have been nearly non-existent. BRL should have set up a local jobs plan and used the local job centre to create jobs for the people. BPBP is a campaigning body and it will be taking up these issues."

Mary Wall works in a local crèche. She and others organised support for the Gama strikers earlier in the year: "There is general agreement that childcare is a huge issue here. We are fighting for publicly operated crèches and nurseries that locals can afford."

Martin Kinsella was a key organiser of protests on a building site in Shangan that stopped work on the site and won the cancellation of the building of a pub which local people vigorously opposed: "We have established a monitoring committee to check on safety on and around the sites. We have issued Citations where safety work needs to be done, and if the builders don't comply they face pickets and protests by residents."

Kevin Wingfield, from the Ballymun SWP, has been involved in the anti bin tax campaign as well as Ballymun Against War. He told Socialist Worker: "What BRL has been doing to the community in Ballymun — the privatising of local resources and pandering to business interests over the needs of local people — has been the spur that brought the activists together."

"The politicians have let us down big time. You expect that from Fianna Fail and Fine Gael but the Labour councillor sits on the board of BRL defending its policies and decisions. Although Sinn Fein has significant support in the area, its activists cannot be found on the ground any more. So nobody is standing up against the neoliberal agenda here except ordinary people and activists."

"I think this alliance could be the beginning of a New Left in the area. We have learnt to work together while respecting differences of opinion and diversity. We are active on the ground and we have wide support and participation locally by helping people organise to stand up for their rights. Standing one of our activists in the general election is also one possibility under discussion."

**To contact Ballymun People Before Profit phone Kevin Wingfield (Acting Secretary) on 086-3074060**



Activists from Ballymun in recent protests over closure of swimming pool and bin tax

Photos: Frank Scalzo

## Over fifty activists launch Dun Laoghaire People Before Profit

Over fifty activists gathered at the first meeting of the People before Profit alliance in Dun Laoghaire. The meeting came at the end of a hot summer of campaigning in Dun Laoghaire.

Ten days previously more than 5000 people had joined together at a rally and concert to Save Dun Laoghaire Baths. It now looks as if the council will be forced by people power to ditch their plans to privatise this part of the seafront.

In council areas all over the borough groups of residents are banding together to dump their rubbish in the back of council bin lorries. The council has now backed down on its threats to take legal action against non-payers after five years of mass campaign-

ing against this unjust double tax.

Outside the town hall the ongoing encampment of the Dun Laoghaire Housing Action Committee has collected 7000 signatures in support of Antoinette Tate's campaign for housing for herself and her three children.

The People before Profit meeting was designed to launch a new network of support for activists between these and other campaigns and to launch a political challenge to the establishment parties in the area.

Richard Boyd Barrett, Brid Smith, Eamonn McCann, and Maura Harrington of the Shell To Sea Campaign and the Davitt League addressed the meeting. Each speaker supported

the idea of a new national alliance uniting all those campaigning for democracy and justice, a clean environment, a fair tax system, investment in public services and amenities, workers and immigrants' rights, housing for all, and against Ireland's support for American Imperialism.

There was a lively audience discussion with speakers from the floor emphasising the need to support and unite with trade unionists such as the ESB and Irish Ferries workers. Nearly everyone in attendance joined the new network.

**To contact Dun Laoghaire People Before Profit phone Richard Boyd Barrett on 087-6329511**



# German New Left breakthrough

By Donal Mac Fhearraigh

The breakthrough of the Left Party in the German elections has electrified the debate on building a New Left in Europe.

The Left Party came out of the movement against the social welfare cutbacks Hartz IV and the privatisation of public services Agenda 2010. The Irish media have deliberately ignored the Left Party's breakthrough. The Irish Times editorial bemoaned that the German election will setback the privatisation agenda - the Lisbon agenda - for the whole of Europe.

They also lamented that the election result will only encourage people to vote for the radical left in the future. In reality the establishment have closed ranks against the Left Party because they know it shows the possibility for how an alternative to the neo-liberal agenda can be built across Europe. This is especially true in Ireland where 'Others', i.e. left independents and socialists regularly reach 10% in opinion polls.

The German result is one more advance for the radical left in Europe. It follows the performances in recent elections by Respect in Britain, the Left Bloc in Portugal, the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark, and the defeat of the European constitution in the French and Dutch referendums. Behind the rise of this new left is a rebellion against the neo-liberal consensus that reigns at the top of European society.

Socialist Worker spoke to Stefan

Bornost who is editor of Linksruck, a socialist paper in Germany and is a member of the Left Party.

"The election in Germany has plunged the political establishment into crisis. The Left Party won 8.7% of the vote, putting them ahead of the Greens with 54 seats. The SPD (Labour), only avoided a complete meltdown by campaigning against all the policies they had implemented in government and because the right wing CDU and FDP, said they would implement even harsher neo-liberal measures.

However the SPD remain as committed as ever to their neo-liberal agenda. They have excluded the Left Party from any coalition talks and are instead going to form a grand coalition with the rightwing CDU so they can continue their policies."

"The Left Party was created as an alliance between the Election Alternative for Social Justice (WASG), created by trade unionists who left the SPD, and the PDS, the former Communist Party in the East. Oskar Lafontaine, former finance minister is now a key figure in the Left Party. Ulrich Maurer, who was the head of the SPD parliamentary fraction in Baden Wurttemberg a few years ago, is now in the national parliament for the Left Party.

The main spokesperson for the SPD left in the 1970s has joined. This success means the Left Party can have an influence on national politics."



Below: Banner reads 'Fight in parliament and on the streets; above: Victory for Die Linke

"The Left Party won 25 percent in the East, and 5 percent in the West. The vote in the West was very significant - it is three times the vote won by forces to the left of the SPD last time.

One fifth of the nearly five million unemployed voted Left Party. Among the poorest third of the elec-

torate, again one fifth voted for the Left Party.

The deep disaffection with neo-liberalism is finding a political expression. Between 100 and 150 are joining the WASG each week.

It had 5,000 members in May and has 12,000 now. People are looking for a left alternative, not a right wing

one - the fascist vote was down on previous elections".

We need a similar left alliance in Ireland. The Left Party results show that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

With the radical left polling 10% in Ireland its past time we created a similar alliance here.



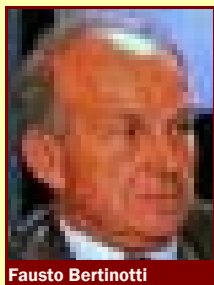
## Europe's radical left welcome Left Party's success

'The German elections give a big new impetus to the Party of the European Left.

The Left Party successfully accomplished an unprecedented achievement in the history of post-war Germany - mass support given to a party which places itself to the left of the the continent's biggest social democracy.

The Left Party's adherence to the Party of the European Left underlines the possibility and necessity of the growth of a radical and alternative left in all European countries.

The great success of the Left Party



Fausto Bertinotti

calls on social democracy to have the courage to break with moderate and anti-social policies. In different shapes, this is the problem that reformists will be facing in the whole of Europe.'

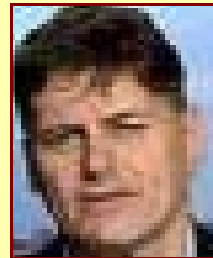
**Fausto Bertinotti**, chairman of the Party of the European left

'Having lived in West Germany many years ago, I have always since taken a keen interest in German politics. Back then, Germany was a model of social partnership and workers invariably supported the SPD.

What is so exciting about the election is that that consensus is now breaking up.

It's not just that unheralded opportunities have opened up for the radical left, but that it is taking advantage of them.

I wish the Left Party every success in building upon its result and



Colin Fox

becoming a permanent and significant part of the political scene there.

This supports what we in the SSP have long argued - there is life outside the social democrats.'

**Colin Fox**, convenor Scottish Socialist Party

'With these great results for the Left Party nothing will be the same in Germany, and we all know that this means that nothing will be the same for the left in Europe.

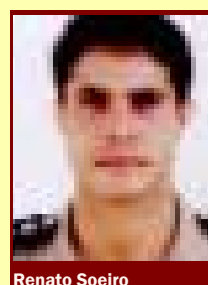
I hope that these encouraging results will create the momentum

needed for building the new party with a modern, plural, popular and radical approach to anti-capitalist alternatives.

All components will have a lot to learn from each other and a lot to give.

According to the experience of the Left Bloc in Portugal, we can say that the result of this exchange is far better than the mere sum of the different traditions that are put in contact with each other.'

**Renato Soeiro**, member of the national board of the Left Bloc (Portugal)



Renato Soeiro

## Brazilian left gains as corruption scandal haunts Lula

Leadership elections have exposed the deepening disillusionment inside the Brazilian Workers Party, reports Sean Purdy

A growing number of rank and file members of Brazil's ruling Workers Party rejected the rightward drift of the Lula government and the party leadership in internal elections held on Sunday 18 September.

The moves to challenge the leadership came as the Workers Party, known by its Portuguese initials PT, faced a growing corruption scandal.

Leading members of the government have been forced to step down amid allegations of illegal payments to PT members and bribes given to the PT's coalition partners.

In elections for party president last weekend the right's candidate, Ricardo Berzoino, won 42 percent of

the vote, but a clear majority voted for four other candidates.

In elections for the leadership body most party members also voted for slates of left candidates critical of the neo-liberal policies of the PT leadership.

A second round of elections for party president will be held in October but it is not clear which left candidate will go through to the run-off.

Raul Pont of Socialist Democracy, a current linked to the Trotskyist Fourth International, and Valter Pomar of Left Articulation each won around 15 percent of the vote.

PT members are upset with Lula for adopting many of the same neo-liberal politics as the previous right



Brazilian Workers Party President Lula

wing government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

Increased investment in social programmes, promised during the elections in October 2002, have been sacrificed to service debt repayment to the World Bank and the IMF.

Unemployment remains high and the divide between rich and poor in Brazil continues to be among the worst in the world.

The corruption scandal has been deeply shocking many ordinary PT members.

Numerous elected officials from the PT, linked to the conservative faction in the party, have been caught funneling dirty money to buy the votes of right wing parties in the congress

and senate.

P-Sol, the party of Socialism and Freedom, formed by ex-members of the PT and other militants in June 2004, is rapidly gaining support.

The new party continues to attract former members of the PT as well as a growing layer of previously non-affiliated activists in the social movements and unions.

The challenge for militants in P-Sol will be to turn the party into a real alternative.

Such an alternative would not just focus on parliamentary politics, but would also be able to organise Brazilians in struggle in the workplaces, university campuses and social movements.

# Release of the Rosspport Five: A victory for people power

## EDITORIAL

Last Friday's release of the Rosspport five was a fantastic demonstration of how people power can bring giant corporations to their knees. The five men, Brendan Philbin, Willie Corduff, Vincent McGrath, Micheal O Seighin and Philip McGrath were set free after spending 94 days in Cloverhill Prison.

They were sent to prison when they bravely defied a court order that insisted they stop protesting against work being carried out by Shell on its proposed pipeline. Despite coming under considerable pressure and the trauma of spending that amount of time in prison, the men refused to purge their contempt of court and did not apologise. Due to massive popular pressure Shell was forced to lift its injunction on the men.

The five men were given a rapturous welcome by the three thousand strong crowd that attended the rally on Saturday, 1st of October. Retired schoolteacher, Micheal Ó Seighin said "Feet on the ground won it. It shows that Irish people

expect a higher state of democracy, and they expect more of their Government in relation to people's safety and welfare." Brendan Philbin added: "Today and yesterday was our fight but tomorrow it could be yours, sadly the system has let us down." Willie Corduff joked and said "if they can't run this country then we'll have to have a go at it".

Let no one be under any illusion, this is just the beginning of the campaign. Mark Garavan, spokesperson of the Shell to Sea campaign said, "Shell said, firstly, they would not lift the injunction, and then they said they couldn't lift it, but in the end they had to. They dropped it because of public pressure. It was people power that did it and people power must continue. The release of the five is not the end but just the beginning. The campaign must continue and it will succeed".

Dr Owens Wiwa, brother of Ken Saro-Wiwa, said at the rally, "this has been a victory-a big victory. If you protest against Shell in my country you get locked up. If

you keep protesting you get hanged like my brother and eight of my friends were in November 1995. We said to Shell that you will never, ever, drill one drop of oil from the Oogoni land. In the same way you must say 'no to Shell- Shell to sea'".

Jack O Connor, President of SIPTU, at the rally linked the Rosspport five case with Irish Ferries, "its time all the little people stood together against the big people who want to stand on all of us". However, it was no thanks to O Connor or David Begg from ICTU that the five were released. It was a result of the thousands of people on the ground who have been marching and picketing Statoil and Shell stations along with the five men's determination. The Rosspport five should inspire anyone who is angry with the state of the health service, rip-off-Ireland and the workers threatened with slave labour in Irish Ferries. They have shown that if you fight with popular protests and militant action then the global corporations and their lackeys in government can be beaten.

There is considerable anger fomenting in Irish society against the neo-liberal agenda. The response to the jailing of the Rosspport Five is testament to that. Now is the time to build on that sentiment to create a new left alliance and movement that puts people before profit.

If the men go to prison again, the whole country should come to a standstill. Similarly, if Irish Ferries succeed in the introduction of slave labour, as Eamonn McCann said at the rally (to thunderous applause from everyone except O Connor and Begg), then the ports must be brought to a halt through strike action.

The court meets on October 25th to decide if the men should be punished for refusing to purge their contempt. However, it should be Ray Burke, Frank Fahey, Dempsey and the other Ministers who should be punished for giving away our natural resources to private corporations. We should start building for that protest now..



Addressing the crowd in Dublin

Photo: Paula Geraghty

## Rosspport Five: A struggle for democracy

By Mark Garavan

Five men from County Mayo – Brendan Philbin, Vincent McGrath, Willie Corduff, Philip McGrath and Michael O Seighin – completed almost ninety four days in Cloverhill Prison in Dublin.

What was their crime? It was to refuse Shell access to lands in the small village of Rosspport to lay a high-pressure pipeline carrying unprocessed natural gas.

They did so because of the certainty that, if the pipeline as currently proposed ruptured, they and their families and neighbours would die.

In response Shell took out an injunction preventing them from continuing their protests. When

the men and many others did not comply with this court order, Shell sought to commit a selected group of five to prison. Rather than promise to stop their campaign, these five men accepted their imprisonment.

Why are they so opposed to this pipeline?

The question of appropriate safety distances is at the core of the dispute. How far away from houses should a pipeline be when its operating pressure is from 120 to 150 bar and it could, in certain scenarios, reach 345 bar?

The design code used for the proposed pipeline suggests that for pressures of 345 bar (a pressure which the government's own safety review indicates could be reached on occasion) the pipeline should be

no closer than 170 metres to the nearest inhabited dwellings. If US standards were applied the distance should be 295 metres. In the case of the proposed Rosspport pipeline, houses are 70 metres away.

Why is the upstream pipeline being placed so close to houses? Who is responsible for this decision and who will be liable if something goes wrong?

In designing so unusual and dangerous a construction, one must examine the consequences of failure.

How many will die in a rupture? How far might a vapour cloud of gas travel in the event of an uncontrolled release? What distance might a fireball travel from the pipeline? This is not scare mongering - this is simply competent design

safety investigation. Pipelines do rupture. It's not meant to happen but it does.

The Rosspport Five and their supporters believe that if the gas is processed offshore then these problems can be solved.

This controversy raises serious matters of national importance. First, it demonstrates the extraordinary power of private corporations to ignore citizens and communities in their pursuit of profit. This case demonstrates with greater clarity than usual the dangers of the prevailing neo-liberal economic orthodoxy.

Second, it shows how much contemporary democracy is in decline. The Rosspport citizens have never had an opportunity to participate in the decision on the pipeline.

Finally, it throws into relief how fragile is the right to protest. If Shell and their government partner succeed in forcing the pipeline through, it means that a dangerous precedent will be established.

A private company can compulsorily take over your property and community, place there a hazardous activity without any appeal possible from you and, if you protest, can indefinitely detain you without trial.

This issue could not be more serious. The five brave men from Rosspport and their families stepped in where the State has failed. Their struggle is for fundamental democratic rights.

Mark Garavan is spokesperson for the Shell to Sea Campaign.



# Decommissioned: Northern Ireland's civil service buildings

By Eamonn McCann

In the week of the IRA statement abandoning armed struggle, Northern Ireland Office Minister Lord Rooker announced that virtually all the civil service buildings in the North are to be sold off to the private sector.

Eighty-eight buildings with a freehold value of close on quarter of a billion pounds will go. Dole offices, tax offices, the Child Support Agency, etc.

Even Castle Buildings where the Belfast Agreement was negotiated will come under the hammer.

The private sector will not only own the buildings, it will also provide their catering, security, cleaning services etc.—with devastating results for jobs, wages and working conditions.

The plan was greeted with hosannas of joy on the business pages of Northern Ireland's papers, where it's argued that the public sector in the Six Counties is too big and burdensome, and the sooner we break it up and dump all those jobs at half-decent pay and conditions and replace them with casualised, minimum-wage and preferably non-union labour the better for everybody.

The response from the Nationalist and Unionist parties was virtually inaudible amid the bluster and acrimony over the IRA statement.

The previous week, as smoke billowed from deprived Protestant areas of Belfast and pipe bombs smashed into Catholic homes in north Antrim, New Labour minister Shaun Woodward announced that water treatment facilities were to be taken over by a consortium called Dalriada Water via a £110 million Public Private Partnership.

Again, there was scarcely a murmur from any of the main parties.

One of the components of Dalriada is Tyco International, based in the tax haven of the Bahamas.

Tyco was in the news the same day as the announcement for a very different reason—former chief executive Dennis Kozlowski and finance chief Mark Swartz were jailed in New York for corruption: among other lurid tales, the jury



Clockwise from top left: Tyco-crooks: Dennis Kozlowski and Mark Swartz, welcoming party: Sinn Fein mayor Lynn Fleming; Shaun Woodward; Lord Rooker

heard that Kozlowski has used millions in company money to pay for a birthday party on Sardinia for his wife, the centre-piece of which had been a life-sized ice-sculpture of Michelangelo's David pissing vodka from its penis.

A gang like Tyco can be ushered into Northern Ireland by New Labour and handed a lucrative stake in our water industry without so much as hostile comment, much less opposition, from anywhere in the political main-

stream. Whether Tyco is a dodgier operation than Accenture is a moot point. Accenture emerged from within Arthur Andersen, the 'management consultants' who guided the

affairs of the Texas-based company, Enron, which went wallop a couple of years back with desperate consequences for employees and pensioners. Accenture has become a major, international, specialist scavenger, feeding off the debris as governments like New Labour let the market rip like a hurricane through public services.

Accenture is in the running for a PFI contract which will involve cutting the entire human resources component of the NI civil service out from the public. Among the workers who'll be hit hardest are hundreds in Derry. Accenture has let it be known that if it wins the contract, it will locate some of its operation in Derry.

The response of every one of the main parties in Derry has been to become cheerleaders for Accenture. It's become the local entrant in the race. One local wag suggested the council might mount a campaign for citizens to phone the NIO and vote for the Derry favourite.

No suggestion, waggish or otherwise, that the council might coordinate resistance to the imminent attack on Derry jobs.

Sinn Fein mayor Lynn Fleming said: "Accenture's interest is a welcome indication that all efforts to rebuild the economic future of this city and region are beginning to take shape".

This is a party which advertises itself, particularly in the Republic, as anti-privatisation!

The underlying fact is that Sinn Fein and the other mainstream parties, based on the interests of one community vis-à-vis the other, have no basis on which to mount opposition to the neo-liberal assault. Neo-liberalism doesn't discriminate between the communities.

The issues arising from the IRA move, the riots and sectarian attacks are important. But to concentrate on them to the extent of allowing the advance of neo-liberalism to go unchallenged is to ensure that the division between the communities sharpens as poverty and despair deepens.

Now more than ever, only class politics make sense.

# Afghan election fraud as US and warlords rule

Early results in the Afghan elections show turnout down to 55% from 70% in last year's presidential elections.

Human rights groups have put much of this decline down to the presence of hundreds of former and current warlords and gangsters on the ballot paper.

One such warlord is the notorious Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. Human rights groups accuse his fighters of killing civilians, raping women and plundering at will during Afghanistan's civil war. Another candidate was the former Taliban deputy interior minister Mullah Khaksar.

Warlords, in alliance with the US military, still rule with an iron fist over private fiefdoms covering much of the country.

In reality these elections are a fraud,



Warlord: Abdul Rasul Sayyaf; protectors: Western troops

designed not to democratise Afghanistan, but to shore up the US occupation. Whoever is elected the US will still rule through the tens of thousand of troops who remain based in

Afghanistan. A truly democratic Afghanistan would surely ask these troops to leave.

A recent report by the Kabul-based Afghanistan Justice Project cited

"grave abuses" by US troops, "many of them of the same sort used by their counterparts in the communist, mujahidin and Taliban regimes that preceded them."

These include "crude and brutal methods of torture that have sometimes led to death and the use of secret detention facilities that facilitate torture; and unacknowledged detentions that are tantamount to 'disappearances.'" Particularly relevant to the parliamentary elections, the report concludes that "U.S. forces have jeopardized prospects for establishing stable and accountable institutions in Afghanistan, have undermined the security of the Afghan people ..., and have reinforced a pattern of impunity that undermines the legitimacy of the political process."

There is no sign of these troops leaving of their own accord. Though a growing insurgency points the way to what could bring true democracy to Iraq.

Nearly 70 US troops have been killed so far this year in clashes with rebels. More significantly, in July, over 1000 demonstrators outside the main US base at Bagram called for an end to arbitrary house-break-ins and arrests and for treating Afghans with more dignity. This was the largest protest since a wave of anti-US demonstrations across the country in May led to 16 deaths.

The future of democracy in Afghanistan depends on how well this growing people's rebellion links with other similar movements across the Middle East.

# Uniting against sectarianism



**By Dan Buckley**

One of the common arguments used by the DUP and other Unionist politicians is that the eruption of rioting and violence by loyalists had absolutely nothing to do with poverty.

Instead, they point to the issues that have caused Unionism to be resentful of the Belfast Agreement, issues like the disbandment of the RIR and RUC, 50/50 recruitment to the police, the release of Sean Kelly, the apparent bias of the establishment against protestants with the Parades Commission and the 'well known republican' Peter Haine.

The Orange Order and the dubious north and west Belfast Parades Forum have started to use the language of a civil rights movement with "end cultural apartheid" being one of its slogans.

The problem is that the forum is a forum for unionist politicians, the orange order and the paramilitaries to engage on a strategy for contentious parades-hardly the usual suspects in a civil rights movement.

The new Love Ulster paper uses similar language at points with one headline declaring that "We are all victims". Like the Parades Forum, the paper has rather dubious links. It is produced by the Shankill Mirror with support from, amongst others, the Orange Order, the UDA and UVF, and the victims group FAIR.

The only case being put forward by leaders within loyalism and Unionism is that they have lost out from the Belfast Agreement, becoming second class citizens within their own country.

However, the recent rioting has highlighted several things.

It has highlighted the amount of alienation within the protestant community, alienated from control over their own destiny and

alienated from the Belfast Agreement.

But the more progressive sections within loyalism have to understand that the feeling that the peace process hasn't delivered is felt by both Protestants, Catholics and dissenters.

In north and west Belfast, an area which witnessed most of the killing and the most funerals, the peace process has not delivered. Today north Belfast is one of the poorest areas in the UK, it has also been witness to a devastating spate of suicides in recent years with the legacy of the troubles leaving some of the highest suicide rates in Britain or Ireland.

Simply, the peace dividend, which has seen billions poured into the centre of Belfast, hasn't seeped into the poorest areas.

Instead we have witnessed the loss of 19,000 manufacturing jobs and a new service economy based on intensive low waged labour and in jobs where union organisation is practically impossible.

Neither loyalism nor republicanism has the answer to solving the problems faced by the working class in the north.

Republicanism is based on national liberation but socialists have argued that its all well and good fighting for national libera-

tion, but at the end of the day it means joining the rest of the ruling class at the top table and adopting to 'pragmatic' politics.

Loyalism and unionism is based on the idea that maintaining the union with Britain is the best way to maintain our way of life here, that we have very little in common with people in Dublin, Cork or Galway. This has meant unionism has historically presented protestants as superior to Catholics leaving a wanton trail of bigotry throughout the history of the northern state.

Socialists reject both of those ideas. We have argued that there is far more that unites a people living on the Shankill Road with someone else living in Clondalkin in Dublin or London than with Ian Paisley or Reg Empey. We have argued that the best way to defend our communities against sectarianism is to unite beyond religion and put pressure on trade unions to act.

But the situation in Northern Ireland at the moment, shows the real need for one thing above all and that is a viable left alternative made up of all those who support diversity, peace and oppose the privatisation of our public services.



## INTERNATIONAL Tony Blair dumps the planet

Tony Blair has fallen into line with George Bush yet again, this time on global warming - despite his promises to focus on the problem.

Speaking just 17 days after Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, he said, "No country is going to cut its growth or consumption substantially in the light of a long term environmental problem. Some people have signed Kyoto, some people haven't signed Kyoto, right. That is a disagreement. It's there. It's not going to be resolved".

Category five hurricanes such as Katrina have doubled in frequency since the 1970s. This is one of the most visible examples of the problems caused by climate change.

A global day of protest on climate change is planned for 3 December to coincide the UN Climate Change Conference in Montreal, Canada. Info [www.campaigncc.org](http://www.campaigncc.org)



## Unions demand change, but Blair is not for turning

Blair and New Labour suffered many defeats at the Labour Party conference this year. A motion backing union rights passed by 69 percent to 31 percent at the conference one of Blair's biggest ever conference defeats. Blair has never lost so many votes at one conference.

The four big trade unions affiliated to Labour Unison, Amicus, the GMB and the T&G united at the conference to attempt to stop New Labour's pro-privatisation policies.

But New Labour leaders have made it clear that they will ignore these misguided conference votes, just as they have ignored decisions at previous conferences opposing NHS foundation trusts and supporting direct investment in council housing.

Many union leaders, such as Amicus's Derek Simpson, have put their faith in chancellor Gordon Brown taking over from Tony Blair. Brown, however, has reiterated his commitment to the free market and to continuing Blair's legacy of reform when he becomes leader of the party.

## The Zapatistas launch their 'Other' Campaign

The Zapatista uprising in Mexico in the mid-1990s demanded rights for indigenous peoples. It won the support of anti-capitalists around the globe, this support rather than military strength, halted the Mexican army's counter-offensive.

A negotiated truce was established between the government and the Zapatistas. But pressure from the mining and oil multinationals, eager to exploit the region's resources, led to the collapse of the agreements.

The Zapatista communities decided to withdraw into the Lacandon Forest and started to build their autonomy, ignoring the Mexican state. Their attempts to govern liberated spaces free from interference by the state have inspired anti-capitalist theoreticians such as John Holloway and Toni Negri. But now reality is knocking on the Zapatistas doors. They are coming to realise that it is not possible to live in a parallel world. They cannot ignore the system which attacks them they need to destroy it.

So the Zapatistas have launched what they call the Other Campaign, inviting anti-capitalist groupings, to get involved in building a broad front throughout Mexico. This alliance is embryonic. It may include an electoral aspect, although the Zapatistas have made it clear that this is not the main point.

The first steps have been taken to set up an anti-capitalist movement from below, where social and political organisations can come together in a non-sectarian way. This political turn of the Zapatistas is very important because it shows there cannot be revolutionary successes without workers, students, peasants and poor people uniting against capitalism.

## REVIEWS

# True story of boxer who could have been a contender

### Movie: Cinderella Man

Reviewed by Tom O Connor

James J Braddock was a name I was unfamiliar with as I entered the cinema to watch Russell Crowe, in his latest outing as a down on his luck middle-aged boxer getting a second bite of the cherry. Thanks to an entertaining and well-directed movie, not only was I aquatinted with Crowe's alter ego, but also I found myself cheering and urging Braddock during the closing stages of the movie.

The film is set in New York City, circa 1930, when America was caught up in the grip of The Great Depression. Ron Howard, who also directed Crowe in "A Beautiful Mind", does a fantastic job in creating an ultra realistic 1930's location. Every little detail was attended to, from props to building facades, costumes and jewellery. However, the film avoids the raw horror that these times served up, concentrating on more positive aspects instead.

In this true-life story, Crowe plays Jim Braddock, a boxer who was once a potential World champion, but owing to the Wall Street crash of 1929, he, like everyone else during those desperate times was suffering. Things go from bad to worse for Crowe's character, but he never gives in. There is a strong moral aspect to the movie, from Braddock telling his son Howard never to steal after he makes him return some purloined meat to his little daughter Rosie asking "Why can't I go to school", the



Braddock's inspiration through out his life was his family.

film try's to highlight some of the social injustices of the time.

Braddock's inspiration through out his life was his family. We see Crowe giving his little daughter Rosie his breakfast and going hungry himself, because she asked for more. He begged and demeaned himself just to keep his family together. Through Braddock's own struggle to make a living out of boxing, he unwittingly becomes a Hero to the down trodden

and ordinary people. This is really emphasized in a scene when Braddock's wife Mae (played admirably by Renee Zellweger), goes to church and meets the parish priest at the door telling him "I'm hear to pray for my husband" and he replies "so have they" and the camera pans around to show the church packed to the rafters.

Braddock's true-life story makes for a great movie, even for non-box-

ing fans. In an age when special effects are over used it is refreshing to view a movie, which tells its story through "old fashioned acting".

When they hand out the Oscars next year Ron Howard should be in line for one for Best Picture and Crowe should get the best leading Male Gong. As for James J Braddock in real life, you fought the Good fight and won. We salute you.

Verdict; 5 star viewing.

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# Socialist Worker

## THE WALL IS GETTING HIGHER AND HIGHER: OCCUPATION IN PALESTINE

By Raymond Deane

I recently visited the Palestinian West Bank with Roger Cole, chairman of the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA), at the invitation of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

We were based in Ramallah, a bustling town which is clearly experiencing a building boom, much of it linked to “government” institutions.

This boom doesn’t extend to the refugee camp of Al-Amari in nearby Al-Bireh, where more than 7000 descendants of those Palestinians violently expelled from the new Israeli state in 1948 live on top of one another in an area of only 94,000 square metres. While everyone rightly reviles the Lebanese government for the conditions under which Palestinian refugees in that country are obliged to live, an objective observer might wonder why refugees within the West Bank don’t seem to have things much better.

Enter the European Union. At Al-Amari the German government is installing a much-needed sewage system. Throughout the territories illegally occupied by Israel since 1967, other public works are being carried out under the auspices of this or that EU country.

The Palestinians are duly grateful, but quick to point out that infrastructural and humanitarian aid, while essential, are no substitute for political backing — and this is singularly lacking from the EU, while the USA makes no bones about its total backing for Israel. Germany in particular, for self-seeking historical reasons, consistently prevents its EU “partners” from taking political action to ensure that Israel ends its occupation and dismantles its separation wall on Palestinian territory as required by the July 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Around Jerusalem, things are particularly acute. Despite its condemnation by the ICJ and the UN General Assembly, Israel continues to build its wall around and even within the villages of Abu Dis, Al Azaria (Bethany) and Al Sawahre. East Jerusalem itself, supposedly the future capital of an increasingly chimerical “Palestinian state”, is slowly having the life crushed out of it while the world looks on impassively. An employee of UNRWA (the



UN Relief and Works Agency) told us that East Jerusalem is increasingly coming to resemble Jaffa: once a proud Arab town, now a crime-ridden suburb of a ruthlessly expanding Israeli city.

We met nobody who was impressed by Israel’s “disengagement” from the Gaza Strip.

Subsequent events have confirmed their fears: having emptied the Strip of its illegal colonisers, Israel has sealed it off and is now using it for target practice. The Western corporate media unanimously relay Israel’s perspective whereby its bombardments are “reprisals” for

Palestinian rockets, without mentioning the daily murderous Israeli attacks on the West Bank which Hamas cites as the motive for its actions.

Yet there is no excuse for the persistent bombing of Sderot, by all accounts a miserable place where Israel dumps its more

“undesirable” immigrants. The notion that an alliance might be formed between Palestinians and Israelis marginalised by the ferociously neo-liberal Israeli government remains entirely utopian for now. The Histadrut, Israel’s uniquely state-linked trade union federation, has no interest in procuring rights for Arab workers. The Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU), like all Palestinian institutions, is crippled by lack of funds and the constraints imposed by Israel’s occupation — during Israel’s 2002 invasion the PGFTU headquarters in Nablus was bombed.

It appears that the world’s governments, including the Arab dictatorships, have decided that come what may they will normalise relations with Israel. In view of such normalisation, civil society must opt for isolation. Israel must become the new South Africa, and must be subject to a comprehensive boycott affecting trade, culture, academia, sport, and tourism until governments wake up to their responsibilities and impose sanctions. We must also boycott firms — such as our own Cement Roadstone Holdings (CRH) and Fyffes — that regularly do business with Israel.

Many on the left are wary of such a strategy. They point out that in the case of South Africa the call for a boycott came from the ANC and “there is no Palestinian ANC”. Roger Cole and I raised this point repeatedly with those officials whom we met, and were repeatedly assured that while they all backed such a boycott they were locked into an impossibly constricting network of relationships (Israel, EU, USA) that precluded any official call from them.

On the other hand, the PGFTU in a letter to the UK TUC in June 2004 asserted that “Imposing sanctions on Sharon’s Government will not only help the Palestinian solidarity campaign, but it will also help building peace in the area and in the whole world”, a call backed by 106 Palestinian civil society organisations. Let us take it as a mandate and bend our collective efforts towards isolating the Israeli apartheid state.

**Raymond Deane is outgoing chairperson of the Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign.**



Top: Palestinians confront Israeli troops; above: Raymond Deane at the Apartheid Wall