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# Socialist Worker

# TWO FACES OF IRELAND



**Sean Fitzpatrick: Has not returned €70 million to Anglo-Irish bank but lives a life of luxury.**



**Moore Family: Evicted from their home for owing €13,000**

BRIAN LENIHAN says we must all pull together for the good of the country. But tell that to the Moore family in Loughlinstown who were evicted from their homes for owing €13,000.

Their misfortune was that they were not the Fitzpatrick family and did not have the 'right connections'.

Sean Fitzpatrick took €70 million in loans from Anglo-Irish Bank to engage in massive property speculation.

To cover up these loans, he got his friends in Irish Nationwide to send him over a few million each year to hide the drop in the company's accounts.

After the books seemed to be balanced, the money was sent back to the other building society.

A typical cute little scam worthy of a Fianna Fail business man! Except that this type of activity has brought economic chaos to the majority of people on this island.

Yet Sean Fitzpatrick swans around his local golf club and still lives in his

luxury home.

The Irish state treats bankers and speculators with kids gloves. It is only now starting to take a case for the recovery of money from Fitzpatrick but that legal process will drag on for years.

A bit like the famous tribunals devised by that other inventor of cute scams: Bertie Ahern

It is an entirely different story for the Moore family.

Riot police were recently called out to their house in Loughlinstown, Dun Laoghaire to ensure that a family was evicted from their council house. While the eviction was underway, television stations were ordered by the police not to broadcast live pictures of the scene.

The Moore family had fallen into arrears with their council rent and a large force of police accompanied the sheriff to evict them from their home.

The riot police stayed in the background as neighbours gathered to watch in horror a scene that could have occurred during the time of the Land League.

Ann and Christy Moore were dragged before the courts for arrears of €13,000 by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Council. The arrears had grown because of family difficulties and because Christy was only able to get employment on an intermittent basis.

The family agreed to a procedure to pay back the arrears by making two payments of €500 within a year and to pay 150 percent of their normal rent to reduce the arrears.

The local People Before Profit councillor, Richard Boyd Barrett, sought meetings with the county manager of Dun Laoghaire and the Director of Housing.

'I genuinely thought that an accommodation could have been reached between the council and the family.

'The Moores were stretching themselves financially to pay off the arrears and the whole issue could have been sorted out without putting the family to the humiliation of eviction'.

To his and the family's surprise, however, the council decided to opt for an eviction. In a mark of total disrespect, they did not even give the family a date for the eviction so that they could settle up their affairs.

Instead, the sheriff and the Gardai swooped on the house at 7am in the morning.

Ann Moore had just returned from a twelve hour shift at a local hospital to find the police dragging her furniture out of the house.

Her first reaction was to get a ladder and seek to enter her own home through a window to save some of her goods. But a police officer prevented entry and Ann then embarked on a six and half hour standoff as she stayed on the ladder.

While the stand-off was occurring, people began to gather and police then decided to censor information on what was happening.

Despite the fact that television crews had filmed the events, they were told not to broadcast live pictures as these might incite a riot.

Over 170,000 people are in negative equity at the moment and 30,000 have begun to fall back on payments.

The disgraceful scenes in Dun Laoghaire are likely to be repeated for both mortgage holders and council tenants if banks and bureaucrats get their way.

If you don't want to see Sean Fitzpatrick swan around with his FF friends while decent people like the Moore family are evicted, then we need to start protesting.

The Right to Work protest at the Dail was a fantastic start. Now is the time to escalate the movement to drive the bankers' government out of office.

# WEXFORD: A PEOPLE'S MARCH TO SAVE A HOSPITAL

THE CAMPAIGN against the downgrading of Wexford General Hospital (WGH) has gained huge momentum over the past couple of weeks, leading up to what has been dubbed locally in Wexford as "the people's protest".

It is with good reason that this name has been put on the march as the numbers of volunteers from community groups, sporting organisations, political groups and ordinary working and unemployed people, has been overwhelming.

From the moment that SIPTU Shop Steward at WGH, Seamus O'Brien, called the protest, the numbers of people contacting the Facebook page, and contacting Seamus by phone has continued to grow. When asked to leaflet drop their own estate, or street, or neighbourhood, the people of Wexford rallied around and really got stuck in.

The downgrading of Wexford General Hospital will mean the loss of 24 hour Accident and Emergency cover, with a gradual downgrading of even the limited service over a short period of perhaps three years.

It will also mean the loss of the very busy Maternity Unit, which last year delivered more babies than the Maternity unit in Waterford, where Wexford people would be expected to go following downgrading. The Paediatric unit will also be closed and there has been a covert implementation in this area already.

Next year will see the centenary of the 1911 Lockout at Pierce's Foundry in the town, and there seems to be a steely determination in the hearts of Wexford people that they will not be locked out again when it comes to health care or access to it in their own town.

The harsh reality of the proposed A&E closure is that people will die.

Waterford Hospital is a good fifty minutes to an hour away from WGH, and that is just door to door. This does not take into account an ambulance having to be called, for example, to Kilmore, which is 15 minutes from the Ambulance Control Centre. By the time they arrive to collect the patient and get to Waterford, the "golden hour", within which cardiac attacks need to be dealt with, would long since have passed.

In May 1798, the first ever Republic of Ireland was declared, though crushed soon after by Lord Cornwallis.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the people of Wexford may play their part in bringing about a new republic, where essential health services are put before bankers pension top ups or HSE Executives bonuses.

The feeling on the streets is, that this time, the people of Wexford will not be so easily crushed.

# Why is Mary Harney stopping home help?

THE PROVISION of Home Help to all new applicants has been removed and existing Home Help hours have been reduced from 11 to 7.5 hours per week.

Care in the community is now carried out via Home Support which entails help with dressing, meals etc.

However, a chronic shortage of this support has created the situation where many older people remain in institutional care such as residential homes or hospitals because the basic daily help is not available.

The 2001 Primary Care Strategy was designed to alleviate pressure on acute hospital services and to move chronic care into the community.

However, it has been belittled as a farce and a joke by the Irish Medical Organisation.

Of the 1,000 planned primary care teams to be operational by 2011, only an estimated 97 were functional by 2008 despite Mary Harney's response to a parliamentary question in 2007



stating that 300 PCTs would be functional by 2008.

Chronic illness cases in the over 65 age group account for 60% of the acute beds in

hospitals, while 66% of emergency admissions are a result of ongoing chronic illnesses in the same group.

The cost of care increases

by 100% for those who are age 50-54, by 213% who are 65-69 and by 400% who are age 75-79.

This pattern is com-

pounded by the effects of young people emigrating, leaving elderly people without the option of informal family care.

## Nurses expose reality of health cuts

OVER 300 nurses and midwives gathered on May 5th in Trim for their three day annual delegate conference.

The first motion concluded with a resounding and unanimous rejection of the public-sector pay and reform proposals. David Hughes, the Deputy General Secretary of the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO) pointed out the simple truth that "No Deal is better than a Bad Deal".

Through out the conference delegates from the floor told of the devastating effects the moratorium is having on patient care which is exclusively concentrated on reductions in front line staff.

Speaker after speaker poured scorn on the McCarthy plan to reduce 6,000 staff (on

top of 3,000 staff cuts since the embargo) and 3,500 acute hospital beds.

The reality behind these numbers is illustrated by an example reported by the journalist and INMO keynote guest Sarah Burke:

"A director of nursing talked about how she has eight unfilled posts and she has to make the choice between stopping a wound management clinic for older people living at home, or stopping an Intellectual Disability clinic for families with new born children with ID or else not providing palliative care for people dying in the community".

Nurses described how this situation was compounded by management decisions. These often result in

chaos as services are constantly re-organized to keep up with the crazy beat of those crazy mantras: "we can do more with less" and "if it's not written it didn't happen".

One delegate reported how the HSE invested in the services of a management consultant who came up with the grand idea of solving the A&E crisis by getting a private company to

examine the casters on the hospital trolleys.

Nurses working in residential services illustrated how care delivery was being impeded by an arrogant emphasis on paper work by the new HIQA inspectorate. Delegates pointed out that real standards would inevitably decline because HIQA had reneged on setting rigorous minimum staff-

resident ratios.

The most significant event of the INMO conference was its launch of an alternative Policy for a better Health Service based on delivering care where access is based on need and where care is delivered locally.

The INMO also specifically called for an immediate lifting of the staff moratorium, a graduate training scheme for newly trained nurses (It costs the Irish tax payer 100,000 to train each graduate and currently these graduates are forced to emigrate for lack of jobs) and an early retirement scheme for excessive HSE management.

Sarah Burke's speech is available at: [http://www.inmo.ie/INMOPage\\_21\\_6992.aspx?vi=sarah.mp3](http://www.inmo.ie/INMOPage_21_6992.aspx?vi=sarah.mp3)

## RED WORDS IRISH SOCIALIST JOURNAL



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S. KÉDÉ VEHEZDI "SATANY'S ACCQUITTANT": THE POLITICS OF NOAM CHOMSKY

### REVIEWS

Marrisa Holbarrow examines Fintan O'Toole's book on Ireland's economic crash, *Ship of Fools*; Brian O'Boyle looks at Chris Harman's final book, *Zombie Capitalism*; Paul O'Brien considers Brian Hanley's and Scott Miller's history of the Workers Party, *The Lost Revolution*; Séan Mitchell reviews Robert Service's biography of Trotsky and Madeleine Johansson looks at a new biography of Engels.

A SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY PUBLICATION

IRISH SOCIALIST JOURNAL  
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## TRADE UNIONIST EXECUTED IN IRAN

THE INTERNATIONAL Trade Union

Confederation has condemned the execution of Farzad Kamangar, a trade union activist in Evin prison, Tehran, on 10 May, 2010. Farzad was arrested in July 2006, accused of Moharebeh, enmity towards god.

He was sentenced to death in February 2008. Farzad's lawyer, Khalil Bahramian, states that not one shred of evidence

was brought forward against Farzad.

The 34-year-old teacher was executed without the knowledge of either his lawyer or his family.

Prior to his trial, he was held for long periods without access to his lawyer or family, and amnesty international.

Amnesty International states that Farzad was beaten, flogged and electrocuted prior to his execution.

Iran has one of the highest rates of executions in the world, more than 80 being documented in 2010 so far.

The International Trade Union Confederation has appealed to the Iranian president to halt any further human rights abuses against trade union members and has called on all its affiliates to denounce this execution.

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# Thailand's murderous crackdown

**THAILAND'S ARMY** and the regime of right-wing Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjavija are responsible for a bloodbath on the streets of Bangkok.

Soldiers moved in against pro-democracy demonstrators who have been gathered in the city for nearly two months to demand that the government—installed with the support of the military in 2008—resign and hold new elections.

The military sealed off the encampment of the demonstrators, who are known as the Red Shirts because of their clothing.

Thailand's government and military blame the protesters for starting the violence, and the Western media has lapped up their wild stories of mysterious "men in black" allegedly orchestrating the confrontations.

It reflects a blatant class bias against the poor.

Giles Ji Ungpakorn is a Thai academic and dissident who stands accused by the regime of the supposed crime of "lese majesty"—basically, not being loyal to Thailand's head of state, King Bhumibol.

Facing a possible prison sentence of 15 years, he fled the country a year ago. Here, we reprint excerpts from Ungpakorn's recent blog entry

**65 deaths and 1669 injured so that Abhisit's military backed government can stay in power.**

The deaths include paramedics, news reporters and at least one ten year old boy. The army is using assassination squads and snipers to deliberately gun down unarmed civilians.

The Thai government continues to lie about the events and has decided it is OK to shoot anyone in the centre of Bangkok. It has given no commitment to protect civilians, news reporters or paramedics.

The opposition UDD leadership has repeated their offer of talks and their request for an immediate ceasefire. The UDD request for UN mediation in any talks is because there are no neutral institutions in Thailand. The National Human Rights Commission, NGOs, judiciary, most academics are all supporting the government and the military.

Censorship is widespread and the government is employing teams to hack facebook and other internet sites. You Tube has allowed the government to remove videos of the events taken by locals.

Abhisit's government was NEVER elected. It is in place because of the military. So Red Shirt demands for democratic elections are totally legitimate. The Red Shirts have been unarmed and peaceful. It is the army that has turned Bangkok into a war zone.

The tyrants say that the Red Shirts are all determined to overthrow the monarchy, and therefore it is justifiable to kill them. So having a monarchy is an excuse to kill anyone who fights for democracy and social justice.

Various government spokespeople, including Abhisit's academic-for-hire Panitan Wattanayagorn and censorship boss Satit Wongnongtuay, continue to lie and lie again, claiming that troops only fire in self-defence. Yet all press reports and videos show indiscriminate shooting of unarmed civilians, including a 10-year-old boy, a paramedic and foreign news reporters.

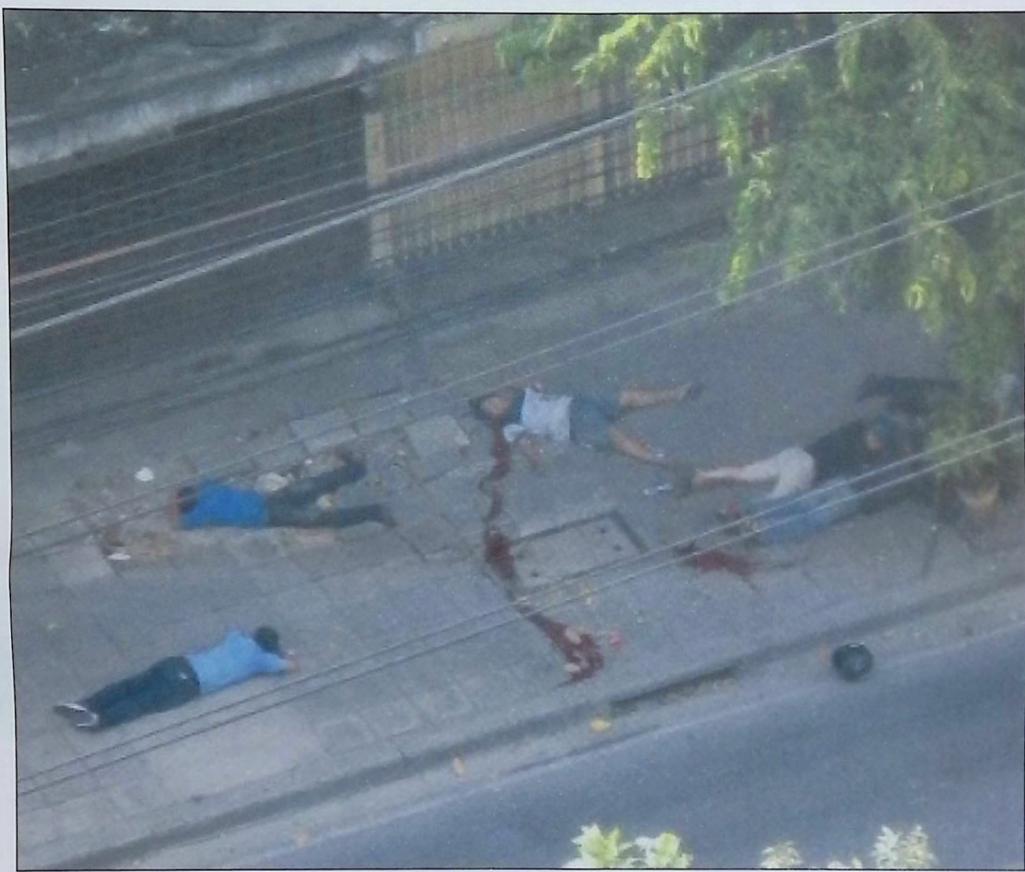
Army snipers are hiding in buildings, and clearly none of them are at risk or being threatened in any way by protesters. Yet they just sit there and pick off unarmed civilians in the streets.

Fake human rights groups call on "both sides" to stop the violence. Yet it is only one side that is using lethal violence against unarmed pro-democracy demonstrators. Even Reporters Without Borders demands that "both sides" guarantee the safety of reporters. How can Red Shirts guarantee anyone's safety when they are being murdered in cold blood?

Many so-called news reports write that troops fire on rioters. No one is rioting except the army. Others talk about "protests turning violent." It is not the protesters who are violent.

Unarmed pro-democracy protesters are being systematically murdered in order to keep Abhisit and his military-backed government in power. The king is silent, as usual. His only job, apart from counting his wealth, is to legitimize every bloody act that the army commits. Yet so-called analysts write that he has "held the country together."

The fact is that he has supported every crackdown on democracy. He is weak and spineless. That is why millions of Red



Shirts are becoming Republicans.

The UN has just selected Thailand to be on the Human Rights Council. What

a joke! But what can one expect from a body controlled by warmongers. Red Shirts throughout the country

are standing firm in the bloody fight for democracy, social justice and human dignity. I salute them!

## A FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY

**THE WESTERN** media has trivialised the fight for democracy in Thailand by describing it as a conflict between the Red Shirts and the Yellow Shirts.

The colour code that identifies the two movements means the Western media acts as if there is some kind of equivalence between the Red Shirts and the Yellow Shirts. This is not true.

The Red Shirts are a pro-democracy movement, associated

with the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship (UDD).

They are largely made up of the urban and rural poor who support the pro-poor policies of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.

He was prime minister from 2001 until the constitutional court removed him in 2006.

Red Shirts demand that the government resign immediately and allow new elections to be held.

The Yellow Shirts, on the other hand, come out of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) – an authoritarian royalist movement with fascist tendencies. They are part of the present Democrat Party government.

The PAD has the backing of the military leaders and the judiciary who have banned two democratically elected parties and participated in two coups in recent years.

WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR			
<p><b>Capitalism</b> is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>REVOLUTION</b> The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.</p> <p>To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much</p>	<p>greater political and economic democracy.</p> <p><b>AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR</b> War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth.</p> <p>The "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.</p> <p><b>END RACISM AND OPPRESSION</b> We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the</p>	<p>working class.</p> <p>We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.</p> <p>We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.</p> <p><b>FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH</b> We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Brown government.</p> <p>Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'</p> <p>We want to see an Irish workers republic where all</p>	<p>workers gain.</p> <p>Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!</p> <p><b>FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY</b> To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.</p> <p>This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system.</p> <p>We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc.</p> <p>We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.</p>

# 1500 March in Athlone

**OVER 1500** angry people marched through the streets of Athlone on Saturday 15th May over the proposed closure of Loughloe House.

Loughloe House is the only HSE run elderly residential care home in Athlone.

Joe Ruane, Health Manager for Longford/Westmeath announced the closure of the home on 6th May on the back of a HIQA report.

He stated that it would cost too much money to bring Loughloe House up to the required standard and therefore it was to be closed.

All 26 residents would be transferred to other care homes, many outside of Athlone making it difficult for family members to visit on a daily basis.

The staff were to be relocated to St Vincents Hospital in Athlone.

It is reported that since the announcement of closure, 3 residents have died and there is pressure being put on family members to seek alternative accommodation for their elderly relative.

Mary Harney is more concerned about wealthy bankers rather than frail elderly!

### Excuse

The HIQA report has not yet been published and many on the march are angry that such a decision has been made on information that is currently not available to them.

Many believe that Loughloe House passed the HIQA standard and Mary Harney is just using it as an excuse to cut the public purse so a few more millions can go to the bankers!

Speakers at the march included the local FG senator and councillor, SF councillor, SIPTU official and march organiser.

Mary O'Rourke, local FF TD was present but didn't speak and there was some anger directed towards her and FF.

There is a Facebook site Keep Loughloe House Open which is attracting many comments.

Further events are planned.

### Join the Socialists

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# SEXISM: A PRODUCT'S BEST PROMOTER

AN AD campaign for Hunky Dory crisps which features women in revealing tops playing rugby under straplines such as "Are you staring at my crisps?" and "Tackle these" attracted huge volumes of criticism and complaints.

The ads were rightly branded by many as sexist and offensive to women, sportswomen in particular.



Gorgeous, pouting Raymond Coyle

Susan McKay of the National Women's Council said it was "really tiresome to see companies resorting to this kind of old style sexism when the world is full of so many imaginative possibilities". The posters are now to be "withdrawn", although the campaign was never intended to last more than a few weeks anyway.

Raymond Coyle, chief executive of Largo Foods, who own the Hunky Dorys brand, attempted to defend his company by claiming he just wanted to brighten things up: "Everything is so serious and gloomy now and we want to inject a little bit of fun into things." Fine Gael Councillor Bill

Tormey agreed: "The Hunky Dory crisp ads are brilliant," he claimed. "The prissy reaction from prudes is well off the mark. Have they ever heard of rugby songs and the legends of coarse rugby?"

Not surprisingly he was quickly joined by Kevin Myers, who used his *Irish Independent* column to jump to Hunky Dorys' defence and label anyone who disagreed with him humourless: "Everyone outside the ranks of the Miserable Seventies Demented Feminists knows what the Hunky Dorys ads are about. F-U-N."

The Hunky Dory ads are neither clever nor funny but in 72 hours, they received more headlines for the crisp maker than it could have hoped for. As Susan McKay noted, one of the most "depressing" things about the ads is that the "company will get masses of publicity for this".

Sexist advertising, it seems, can still achieve that Holy Grail of all advertising—cut-through to the target consumer. Coyle is unapologetic about his sexist approach: "The target audience for my crisps is young men and it's highly unlikely that they will have been offended by the ads. The people who have been offended were never likely to buy a packet of Hunk Dorys."

This is not the first time that Largo has used sexist advertising to promote its product. In 2005, the snacks brand produced posters showing three scantily dressed women and the words: "Which one would you throw out of bed for eating Hunky Dory?"

In the recent media debate over the ads one of problems that emerged was that while many women said they disliked the images of women in the ads they found it difficult to express why. Women said they felt the ads objectified women but they didn't want to be labelled humourless feminists by objecting to them or labelling them sexist.

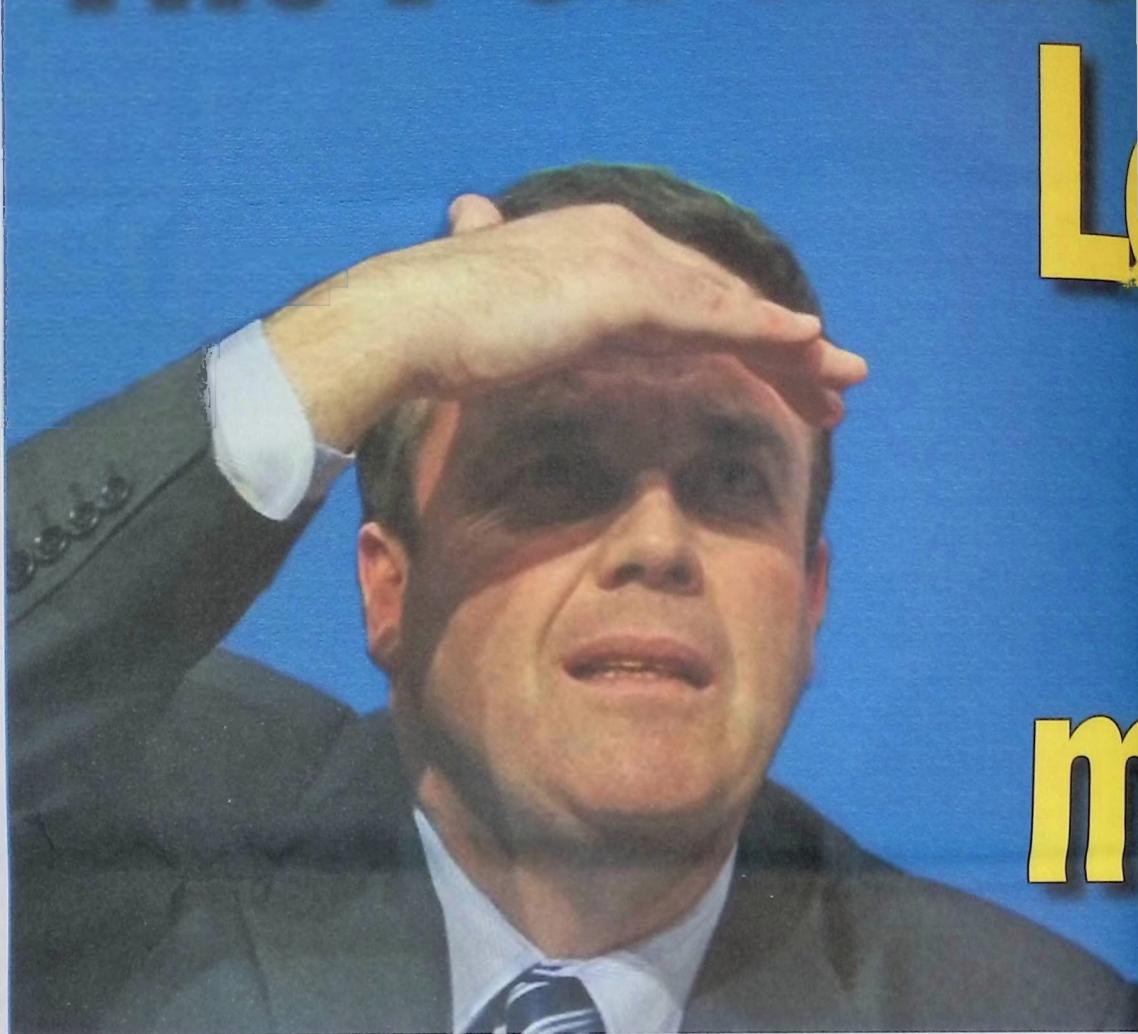
One of the consequences of the past decade of post-feminism is that we have no longer really have the language to talk about sexism in contemporary culture. As Judith Williamson argues: Label an ad sexist and it almost sounds quaint. It conjures up, on the one hand, scenes of be-aproned housewives serving dinners to hungry husbands, and on the other, posters of leggy models in platform boots and hotpants with - and this is the important image in the scenario - feminists in dungarees slapping "this degrades women" stickers all over them.

However it is not that an understanding of "what is sexist" has disappeared. Rather, sexism has become undercut and absorbed as something that is 'retro' and funny, and, therefore, seen to be acceptable. The Hunky Dory ads are deliberately knowing about their sexism and, far from appearing exploitative such ads, can be presented as daringly cutting-edge.

This unwillingness to name sexism in the present has encouraged it to develop as a form of nostalgia and to flourish in a highly exploitative form which is often perceived as risqué or radical. The reality of sexism is, however, still with us. Now is the time to resuscitate the term and renew the fight against it.

## Wealth Watch Report:

# The Pot of Gold



**T**he wealthy, Brian Lenihan never tires of telling us, can contribute no more than they do at present towards the cost of digging Ireland out of the financial hole the bankers, developers and political elite have dumped us in.

His favourite phrase seems to be, 'there is no pot of gold in the hands of the rich that the state can tax.'

Well either Brian Lenihan is an idiot, or he is engaged in an exercise of naked class warfare, making ordinary workers pay through the nose for the disastrous folly of the few while allowing the rich hang on to their ill-gotten loot.

Judge for yourself.

The wealthy are, and have always been extremely reluctant to pay taxes. They employ tax advisers, often former Revenue inspectors, to tell them how to avoid contributing to the public purse. And the state gives them huge leeway.

For example, while ordinary workers are taxed at source and therefore have no alternative but to pay their share, most wealthy people are allowed to *assess their own tax liabilities*. They tell the taxman how much they are prepared to pay.

This applies to people like barristers, doctors, consultants, lawyers, publicans, company directors, builders, developers, landlords, hoteliers,

restauranters, shopkeepers, and so on.

Every now and then the Revenue Commissioners carry out spot-checks (audits) on small samples of people in various self-assessed categories, and every time they do, they haul in vast amounts of unpaid tax, indicating that tax evasion is rife and the losses to the public purse enormous.

**T**he critical point is that audits are *selective* – they represent just small samples, which means the tax evasion they uncover represents just the tip of the iceberg.

In 2009, a total of 12,500 tax audits were carried out and they netted €602 million in unpaid taxes, an average of almost €50,000 from every tax dodger they caught. That's as much as a worker on average wages would *earn* in 18 months.

When the Revenue looked at a tiny number of trust funds last year – 94 in total – they found €17.6 million in unpaid taxes, €187,234 from each individual.

When a recent check was done on people in the financial sector, €138.4 million was collected in unpaid taxes.

This is a vast amount of money, but still just a fraction of what is actually owed.

Among those audited were 140 top managers in financial

institutions who had to cough up an average of €10,000 each. Needless to say, no-one was charged with any offence, unlike the scores of poor people languishing in Mountjoy prison for over-claiming a few euro in welfare benefits.

Another recent Revenue audit, this time of just 170 solicitors and barristers, brought in €8.6 million in unpaid taxes, an average of €51,000 from each tax dodger. Assuming the same level of tax evasion exists throughout these well heeled professions, then the amount of unpaid tax would exceed *a quarter of a billion* euro annually.

**A** sample audit of pubs, clubs and nightclubs produced €20 million extra in taxes while another sample of construction companies produced €92 million.

On-going investigations into off-shore tax dodging schemes netted another €76.3 million last year, proving that despite all the tough talk from Revenue, wealthy individuals are still hiding vast sums outside the state.

Landlords of private rented properties are among the most notorious tax dodgers, and are probably the least targeted of all when it comes to Revenue audits.

Last year the state itself gave 120,000 landlords well over half a billion euro (€511m) in the form of rent supplements for

# ... that ... Lenihan ... keeps ... missing

## WHERE DID ALL THE MONEY GO?

THE IRISH state deliberately hides the size of assets held by wealthy individuals. No official figures are produced on wealth – unlike, for example the situation in Norway.

But there is still enough evidence to show that wealth has not just disappeared.

Goodbody Stockbrokers, for example, has claimed that financial assets have grown by 16% since 2005.

The Sunday Times Rich List also showed that a tiny elite of Irish society still own €40 billion in wealth.

For every developer who lost a fortune buying land and property that later plunged in value, there was a seller who pocketed the enormous sums of money the developers forked out in the first place.

A prime example is the Doyle/Gallagher family, former owners of the Jury's hotel group who sold all their properties to developers at the height of the boom for close to a billion euro. That was hard cash going straight into their pockets.

Even if sellers like the Doyles went on to invest their new fortunes in, for example, bank shares that later plunged in value, the same argument holds true: the person who sold them the shares pocketed the fortune.

Investment fund managers – the people who help the very rich increase their fortunes – say tens of billions of euro have simply been stashed away by these enormously wealthy people, awaiting profitable opportunities to 're-enter the market'.

tenants on welfare benefits. Yet the state has no idea how many of these landlords pay tax on this income. 80% of them have not provided their PPS number to the Department of Social Protection, preventing cross-checking with Revenue.

And they say collecting another €195 million is now proving problematic.

In the meantime, the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) has uncovered a huge amount of information on the financial affairs of developers, much of which could prove explosive in terms of their

tax dodging activities. However, none of this information has yet been shared with the Revenue Commissioners.

Even if it is in the future, the chances of developers being pursued for what they owe in taxes are slim to non-existent, so don't hold your breath. And don't expect Brian Lenihan to do anything about it either.

The Comptroller and Auditor General, who monitors how state bodies manage public finances, has described the taxation of landlords as 'haphazard and inefficient', yet the state has allowed them evade taxes for decades.

The Revenue carried out an audit on just 80 landlords last year and as a result pulled in €5 million in unpaid tax, an astonishing €62,500 per landlord, suggesting there are potentially billions in unpaid taxes in this one sector alone.

On top of all the unpaid taxes that the Revenue can only guess at on the basis of these sample audits, there is a sum of €2.11 billion that they know is due to them, but that they still can't, or won't collect.

This is made up of taxes due on the profits businesses made in the past, but that they didn't pay, and now say they can't pay because of the recession.

Last year Revenue agreed to write off €222 million from businesses that pleaded hardship, 72% up on 2008.

## A BONUS TO SACK WORKERS

**Why did Donal Connell, boss of An Post, get a massive pay rise last year - netting him an outrageous €500,000 - when the business he manages turned a profit of €39.9m in 2008 into a loss of €25.6m in 2009?**

**Could it be the state's way of rewarding him for getting rid of 400 full-time jobs last year, saving An Post €20m? All as a prelude to privatisation.**

**Blood money is a phrase that comes to mind.**



## Skirmish at the Dail



Gardai draw batons on demonstrators at the Dail Photo: Paula Geraghty

ON MAY 11<sup>th</sup>, Sky News broke into its coverage of David Cameron's inauguration as British Prime to announce that the Irish parliament had been stormed.

This 'breaking News' jolted the Irish media and for the next week programme after programme discussed the 'storming of the Dail'. It was a major shift in how the media covered protest.

Most of the time, the Irish media ignore protests. No matter how many press releases are issued, they rarely announce the details of when and where protests assemble. The Irish Times, for example, has a policy of not printing letters which announce details of the protests in advance.

Once protests occur, the media invariably use the police figures as estimates of how many people turn out. If the protest is organised on a wider community basis, the figures are often quite accurate.

But if there is a strong left wing influence within the protest, the police will deliberately play down the numbers.

This pattern of propaganda estimates began with anti-war protests in 2003 and has continued ever since. So the police claimed that only 500 turned up to the Right to Work protest, when in fact nearly 2,000 were in attendance.

Media bias is also evident in the way that the issues involved in the protest are played down. A few days after the Right to Work protest, 1,500 people marched through Athlone to protest against HSE plans to close of Loughloe House, elderly care centre.

As a ratio of protest marchers to local town size, the Athlone protest was far bigger.

But it only merited one or two lines in the media. No explanation were offered how why people were challenging the HSE case or why they felt so strongly about this particular care centre. In some cases, the media even defines the protest as a form of 'traffic disruption'.

Against this background, the overwhelming coverage of the Right to Work protest might appear welcome. But this is to ignore the other ways, the corporate media frames issues to do with protest.

Despite its populist pretensions, the corporate media adopts a patronising approach to its audience. 'Ordinary' people are not believed to have strong political opinions and are supposed

to be constantly open to manipulation. It, therefore, focuses on 'extreme' elements who want to 'hijack' the march. It sets out to warn its audience about 'hidden agendas' and to implicitly suggest that they will be caught up in violence.

At this point, the media functions most directly as a propaganda machine. It is used as a weapon to frighten people away from protest and reduce the attendance down to 'hardliners' which can be dealt with through police tactics.

A story in the Sunday Independent before the second Right to Work protest at the Dail illustrates this. Under a headline 'Garda train in secret for riots' it focussed on 'hard line' groups like the Socialist Workers Party who wanted to 'hijack' the protest. The clear and deliberate aim was to frighten people away to and create an atmosphere whereby the police could get away with attacking sections of the crowd.

This pattern of reporting on protests – either ignoring the issues or trying to scare people away – arises from the structure of corporate ownership and state control. Two right wing tax exiles, Denis O Brian and Tony O Reilly, control most media outlets in Ireland.

They will do everything to defeat any movement that challenges their wealth and privilege and so appoint editors who are sympathetic to their world view. This is the real 'hidden agenda' that operates behind coverage of protest.

Unfortunately, some left wingers crumble under this media pressure and turn on militants. A case in point is Fintan O Toole who attacked people who engaged in a skirmish at the Dail as 'idiots'. Worse, in a strange balance that harked by gone days, O Toole managed to find two extremes – Fianna Fail and the hard left - who both put people off protest.

This is really silly stuff. It ignores how the 'hard left' actually builds protests – rather than 'soft left' union leaders, for example, who collaborate with the government. It ignores how violence in protests is usually caused by the police. It was after all the police who drew batons on protesters at the gate of the Dail rather than the other way around.

And it fails to face up to the fact that whether or not there are skirmishes, the corporate media will do the dirty work of its owners.

# THE CORPORATE MEDIA'S LIES ABOUT GREEK WORKERS

THE GREEK economy is caught in the vice of the capitalist system. The budget deficit – the amount public spending exceeds tax revenues—last year was 13.6 percent of the value of all Greek goods and services.

The overall state debt totals €300 billion and this means that Greece has had to borrow large sums of money.

Many speculators are fearful that the government will stop paying and will default on this debt. To soothe their nerves, they have increased the interest rate that Greece borrows money, intensifying its crisis. The EU is also worried that the Greek crisis might also contaminate other countries, and hit their banks. European banks have a €189 billion exposure to Greek debts, with French banks accounting for €75 billion of that. German chancellor Angela Merkel has talked tough on the bail-out deal but she's concerned that any default might hit Germany's banks, which also hold a high level of Greek debt.

In order to pave the way for the IMF/EU bail-out plan, Greek workers have been subject to an unprecedented smear campaign by the Irish and European media. Most stories are some variation on the following line: "These lazy Greek workers, constantly go on strike without any reason and then come running to the Europeans to finance their own laziness".

On an almost daily basis the news is filled with stories about how Greece has too many public sector workers, how the working week is too short, how people retire early on fat pensions, as if these were the cause of the crisis. Even the most cursory glance behind the hype and myth about Greek workers reveals a completely different picture.

## MYTH 1: SHORT WORKING WEEK

**FACTS:** According to Eurostat, Greek workers work longer hours than the rest of Europeans. They work on average 43.7 hours a week. The average working week in the 27 member states of the Eurozone is 41.3 hours. In Germany it is 41.7 hours, in Ireland it is 40.2 hours and France is 40.7 hours.

## MYTH 2: HIGH WAGES

**FACTS:** According to Eurostat, Greece has the lowest paid private sector workers in the Eurozone. In Greece, the average gross monthly wage, including PRSI and taxes, is €803 while in Ireland the lowest gross salary is €1300. In France it is €1250 and in the Netherlands it's €1400. According to the GSEE [Greek Union confederation] Labour Institution, since the crisis erupted, the austerity programmes already imposed by recent governments have cut the value of real wages in the private sector to 1984 levels.

Instead of civil servants' wages going up in recent years, we have seen the opposite phenomenon.

As a result of the constant cuts carried out since 1990, according to an ADEDY report [the civil servants trade union confederation], the total real income of civil servants has fallen by 3 percent.

## MYTH 3: EARLY RETIREMENT WITH 'FAT' PENSIONS

**FACTS:** The average age of retirement in Greece is 61.4 years, a little higher than the European average of 61.1 years. According to the GSEE Labour Institution, the average pension in Greece is €750 per month. In Ireland it is €1700 in Belgium €2800 and in the Netherlands €3200 a month. It is worth noting that this figure was calculated before the implementation of the Greek government's budget cuts, which increases the age of retirement from 65 to 67 years while at the same time cutting pensions by 30 to 50 percent.

## MYTH 4: EXCESSIVE NUMBERS OF PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS

**FACTS:** According to reports of the ILO (International Labour Organisation), civil serv-



ants in Greece represent 22.3 percent of the total workforce. In France civil servant comprise 30 percent of workforce, in Sweden 34 percent, in the Netherlands 27 percent, in the UK 20 percent. While Greece is well below average these figures don't allow for the fact that 300,000 workers in Greek public sector are working under temporary contracts, which means they have far lower wages and fewer rights.

## MYTH 5: TWO MONTHS EXTRA SALARY BONUS

**FACTS:** The so called "thirteenth" and "fourteenth month" are two extra annual payments

to Greek public workers. (Note: All wage levels, all the facts and figures about the Greek workers' wages listed above include these extra "salaries")

They were given separately as a method of fragmenting total annual income. They were designed to raise very low wages to something more realistic in order to facilitate tourist growth during the holiday season.

It is similar to an Irish worker on the minimum wage relying on a shift allowance or a Christmas bonus. The recent budget cuts means that civil servants and pensioners lose both of these payments.

## GREEK WORKER SPEAKS OUT: 'WE AREN'T LAZY: WE ARE STRETCHED AND STRESSED'



EUROPE'S PRESS and politicians have attempted to portray ordinary Greeks as lazy and ill deserving of being bailed out. "These are racist lies," said Tiana Andreou, a finance ministry worker. "Of course, the capitalists are on permanent vacation, but everyone else is working hard just to survive. We are all stretched and stressed."

"I don't believe a word of what the politicians say. They will measure the reaction from the strikes and what the EU and the IMF say and then maybe bring in more measures."

"These attacks are just the beginning."

## WHO IS TO BLAME?

THE ONE thing that media have not attacked is the huge profits that Greek and foreign capitalists are continuing to reap.

During the first half of the past decade, Greek capitalists were constantly in the three top places in the league table of profitability at a global level.

Even now Greek bankers are enjoying the highest rates of interest in Europe.

The current crisis is the direct result of the neoliberal policies that were pursued by the social democratic governments of the 1990s, and, even more enthusiastically, by the right-wing government of Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis, as the leader of the New Democracy (ND) party between 2004 and 2009.

For many years, Greek public finances were based exclusively on the taxation of the wage-earning population and the lower middle class.

Greece had one of the lowest corporate taxes among EU countries, but even these low taxes are rarely collected properly.

Corporate tax evasion is at a record high and even the sales tax is not fully collected by the government, but is left in business hands to further raise their profits.

At the same time, Greece has one of the highest taxes on wages among the EU countries.

Employers and even the state have stopped paying their contributions to pension funds, creating a shortfall of more than 10 billion euros annually.

In October 2009, PASOK (Labour type party) was elected as a result of a campaign that promised resistance to a wage freeze proposed by right wing New Democracy.

Yet within months, PASOK Prime Minister Georgios Papandreu made clear that his government was now committed to pushing through an austerity program even harsher than that of his right-wing predecessor.

In a strategy similar to that being pursued by Fianna Fail and the Greens, PASOK have made an all-out attack on workers rights and public services.

Their aim is not only to freeze wages, but to actually cut pay in the public sector, thereby opening the way for bosses to do the same thing in the private sector.

It also plans a broad program of privatisation of significant areas of the public sector, including ports, energy, and water.

On top of that Papandreu aims to substantially raise taxes for low and middle earners without touching the profits of the rich, especially big businesses and the banks.

The EMU now wants to see this strategy of slashing the public sector and cutting wages applied generally across the EMU and is considering legally compelling countries to reduce their budgets deficits. This contradicts their own economic advice.

Last month, the IMF's influential World Economic Outlook report warned rich western countries that their economies were too weak for spending cuts, tax increases or higher interest rates.

It recommended that cut backs should be held off until the end of 2011, at the earliest, otherwise there is a serious risk of a double-dip recession.

# Northern election shows space for left

By DONAL MAC FHEARRAIGH

PETER ROBINSON, one of the most bigotted politicians in the North, has been booted out of the East Belfast seat he held for 31 years.

Peter and Iris Robinson were dubbed the 'Swish Family Robinson' due to their insatiable use of expenses.

Most media commentators expected the hardline Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) to pick up from the Robinson's sex and money scandals.

They took it as read that working class Protestant voters from east Belfast would only vote for conservative unionist politicians. In fact voters switched to Alliance's Naomi Long who ran a campaign on 'Sectarianism Costs' and is much more socially liberal.

Across the North the TUV challenge failed to materialise. Their failure alongside the growth of votes for non-sectarian candidates emphasised the desire for a politics that goes beyond Orange and Green.

What turned people against Robinson and the DUP was not a right wing moralistic reaction to Iris Robinson's personal life but the couples corrupt intimate ties with developers.

Iris Robinson was famously able to phone up two developers and get £25,000 from each at short notice. These same developers coincidentally got lots of contracts from the Castlereagh council where the Robinson's held court.

For most working class voters these scandals confirmed the DUP, and Robinson in particular, as the developers party - FF north of the border.

The loss of Peter Robinson's MP seat will also encourage a renewed civil war inside the DUP between the Robinson faction and the Paisley faction. Ian Junior



Defeated: Iris and Peter Robinson

was famously shafted by the Robinsonites over corrupt connections to developers and sent to Coventry.

Then Ian Senior was sent out to grass amid rumours of senility.

The outcome has radically changed the complexion of politics in Belfast. There is now only one Unionist MP for Belfast, Nigel Dodds, where once there were three. We now have one SF, one SDLP, one Alliance and one DUP.

The second major triumph of the election was the complete failure of the Ulster Unionist - Tory alliance, UCUNF (Ulster

Conservative and Unionist New Force). The failure means the Ulster Unionists, once the political wing of the Orange Order, now has no MPs.

It exposed the class divisions in Unionism - working class Protestants in the North may vote Unionist but won't vote Tory. Many joined the Facebook group "I've never voted Troy - because I'm not a f\*cking idiot".

Unionism is an all class alliance on a single issue. Once the alliance is exposed to wider politics it can fracture along class lines.

Sinn Fein's and the SDLP's vote dropped across the North. It is a sign of the weakening grip of communal politics and the hold of Sinn Fein on 'their' areas. Sinn Fein's role in running Stormont's institutionalised sectarianism and driving through cuts and anti-working class policies is catching up with them.

The third big story of the election was the success of Eamonn McCann's campaign in Derry. Eamonn doubled his vote to nearly 3000 votes and was the only candidate in Foyle to increase his percentage of the vote, achieving 7.7%.

This was one of the strongest results for a socialist running anywhere in the UK.

This puts him well within striking distance of a seat in Stormont next year. His vote is a remarkable statement of the desire to move politics beyond the Orange-Green divide in the face of a bitter SF-SDLP face-off centred on who was the strongest representative for nationalism.

Rather than seeing a vote for Eamonn as a wasted vote, or capitulating to tactical voting, many switched to voting People Before Profit to endorse class-based anti-sectarian politics.

Many who felt they couldn't vote for him this year said they would give him a high preference in next year's Northern Assembly election.

The overall outcome of the election shows the increased space for the People Before Profit Alliance and the left.

Unlike the Alliance Party who promote anti-sectarianism within the current political and economic framework, the People Before Profit Alliance promotes anti-sectarian politics based on common struggle to defend jobs and public services. Indeed the Alliance Party are part of the Liberal-Tory government and will back their policies and cuts.



Doubled vote: Eamonn McCann

## Raytheon 14 trial begins



By ROISIN BRYCE

FOURTEEN PEOPLE are facing trial, starting Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May for action taken at the Raytheon arms company plant in Derry in January 2009.

The Derry Anti War Coalition (DAWC), along with Foyle Ethical Investment Campaign, opposed the presence of Raytheon Systems Ltd in the city since it arrived to great fanfare in 2000.

Demonstrations, die-ins, marches, petitions and appeals to the City Council were staged to expose Raytheon's work - producing software for weapons systems. This was despite local politicians' insistence that no

military work was being carried out. Campaigners also exposed the 'special relationship' between Israel and Raytheon.

The upcoming trial is the result of the third direct action taken at the plant and the second trial of DAWC activists. In 2006, while Lebanon was under assault by Israel, nine men successfully decommissioned the server at the plant, disrupting operations in the multinational for several days. They were ultimately acquitted by a jury which accepted that they were attempting to prevent war crimes.

In the latest trial, the nine women and five men pleaded not guilty to a

range of charges, from burglary with intent, to assault, criminal damage and obstruction.

Each of the nine women who went into the Raytheon building on 12<sup>th</sup> January last year believed that war crimes were being perpetrated by Israel and it was their legal and moral duty to try to prevent them.

The fact that Raytheon was on their doorstep meant they had no choice but to act.

Subsequent reports by the UN and Amnesty International (among others) have served to confirm that war crimes were being committed. Innocent civilians were being deliberately targeted, as well as hospitals, schools and mosques, and the Israeli Defence Forces used weapons that killed and maimed indiscriminately in built up areas.

Raytheon technology was present in many of these weapons, with the full knowledge and technical support of the company.

The five men face charges connected with the peaceful demonstration outside the Raytheon premises in support of the women's actions and resulted from heavy handed tactics by the PSNI.

All of those charged believe that their defence is sound and relish the opportunity to expose Raytheon's complicity in Israel's war crimes. The trial comes in the wake of Raytheon finally leaving Derry, which shows what can be done on a local level, as well as internationally by breaking the siege, to put pressure on Israel and its allies.

## Irish ship to join flotilla attempting to breach Gaza blockade in late May



JOHN GING, the Irish-born head of the UN humanitarian agency in Gaza - the UNRWA has demanded that the international community should break the Israeli siege of Gaza by sea.

In an interview with a Norwegian newspaper, Mr Ging said: "The international community must shoulder its responsibility on this issue, and look for practical ways to break the siege, leaving the statements aside, because there is a possibility to break the siege."

He continued: "We recommend the world to send ships to the shores of Gaza, and we believe that Israel would not stop these vessels because the sea is open, and many human rights organizations have been successful in previous similar steps, and proved that breaking the siege on Gaza is possible."

Mr Ging blamed both Egypt and Israel for the continuation of the blockade on Gaza, asking, "How can Israel evade the responsibility of the siege, and how Egypt would not agree to show flexibility in order to bring aid to Gaza?"

He added, "It is time for the international community to bring aid by sea as it did in Haiti."

John Ging's remarks come in advance of a major seaborne effort in late May by grassroots activists to break the blockade on Gaza.

Irish human rights activists will participate in this attempt and an Irish cargo ship will form part of the flotilla. This ship - the MV Linda - is to be renamed the MV Rachel Corrie in memory of the international solidarity activist murdered by the Israeli army.

On 24 May, eight ships will converge in international waters near Cyprus before proceeding to Gaza with humanitarian supplies for those under siege.

It is unclear at this stage how the Israeli navy and military will react but those travelling are determined to breach the blockade and land the much-needed aid.

Several Irish human rights activists and politicians will participate in the flotilla.

## DUP and Sinn Fein Unite to Attack Right to Protest

By EAMONN McCANN

AS THE posh-boy premier sharpens his knife while casting an eye on the public services that so many depend on, the Public Assemblies, Parades and Protests Bill could turn out the unkindest cut of all.

The Bill, published in draft form during the election campaign, arises from the agreement made at Hillsborough on February 5 linking the devolution of policing and justice to the establishment of a new body for resolving disputes over parades.

The connection between the devolution of policing and the regulation of parades had been asserted by the DUP - and dismissed by almost everybody else as an attempt to delay the transfer of powers. There had been no reference to any linkage in the 2006 St Andrews Agreement.

The DUP's tangled line of dubious argument was that the Protestant community would not have confidence in any devolved policing arrangement unless a more reliable means of solving Garvaghy-type problems was in place.

That this was the point of the exercise seemed confirmed in the document issued at Hillsborough in which the First and deputy First Ministers undertook to appoint a six-strong working group to "bring forward agreed outcomes which they believe are capable of achieving cross community support".

The working group comprised MLAs Stephen Moutray, Nelson McCausland and Jeffrey Donaldson (DUP) and Gerry Kelly, Michelle Gildernew and John O'Dowd (Sinn Fein).

They held their inaugural meeting on February 9. The draft - published on April 20 - is the fruit of their labours.

There was no indication in February that the group had been tasked to do anything other than devise a system to replace the procedures of the Parades Commission; no suggestion that it would be engaged in drafting a new,



You wouldn't be thinking of protesting, would you? Gerry Kelly (Sinn Fein) and Jeffrey Donaldson (DUP)

wide-ranging public order act.

But this is what's set out in the draft Public Assemblies, Parades and Protests Bill (Northern Ireland).

Its provisions appear aimed at least as much at curtailing protests against

job losses and cuts in public services as resolving communal disagreements over marches.

The explanatory guide accompanying the draft defines the purpose of the proposed law as "to establish a

legal framework that will allow for the introduction of new procedures governing public assemblies in Northern Ireland".

Not contentious marches, but "public assemblies". Clause 5 defines

"public assembly" as "covering any public procession, meeting or protest, apart from funerals and gatherings which the First and deputy First Ministers specifically order to be excluded".

"Public meeting" is defined as "a meeting of 50 or more persons held in a public place to which the public or a section of the public are invited to attend".

The example chosen in the guide to illustrate the working of the new measure is instructive: "If a group wanted to protest against the closure of a local sports facility this ... would fall under the definition of a public meeting and would therefore be subject to the notification procedures for a public assembly outlined in clause 13." Closure of a local sports facility ... a far cry from Orange parades and residents' protests.

Clause 13 tells that a campaign to save the sports facility - or library, or leisure centre, or residential home - would have to give 37 days' notice of any planned protest. So notification of a rally scheduled for November 1 next would have to be submitted by September 24. Knee-jerk action to save services will be outlawed. The scope of the proposed law goes beyond parades issues. It has implications for trades unions, community organisations and campaigns.

There has been no public explanation - much less discussion - of how the DUP/SF working group established at Hillsborough came to devise not a remodelled Parades Commission, but an elaborate bureaucratic machine for managing and curtailing the right of citizens to voice protest.

Had such a measure been mooted in the days before their accession to government, half the members of the working group (perhaps a different half on different occasions) would have been instantly on the streets with the protest placards.

Back then, of course, that sort of thing would have been legal.

Consultation on the new measure ends on July 14