

Socialist Worker

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END THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ!

REMIND BUSH AND BLAIR OF THEIR BLOODY PAST AND PRESENT IN IRAQ!

- They hoisted Saddam to power
- They backed his wars on Iran and Kurds
- They slaughtered 200,000 in 1991 war
- US/UK backed sanctions

- killed one million Iraqis
- Over 20,000 dead in this year's war
- US corporations seize Iraq's oil
- No elections in 'free Iraq'

BUSH AND Blair were crowing last month following the capture of Saddam Hussein. They claim it justifies their war on Iraq. It does nothing of the kind. That war killed at least 20,000 Iraqis.

The US and Britain had already slaughtered 200,000 Iraqis in the 1991 Gulf War. And the sanctions

regime the US and Britain imposed after that war murdered at least 500,000 Iraqi children.

To add to that history of horror every report coming out of Iraq today suggests things are going from bad to worse under the US and British occupation.

Ordinary Iraqis have been shot down by occupation forces. Trade union offices have been raided under

the repressive Saddam-era laws that the US and Britain insist on maintaining.

And so unpopular is the occupation among ordinary Iraqis that the US has ruled out any quick move to genuine elections.

Successive US and British governments supported and bankrolled Saddam's regime. They turned a blind eye when he slaughtered Iraqis and Kurds, and sold him even more

weapons.

Until the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Saddam was a key US ally in the Middle East, supporting their foreign policy in the region and striking deals with Western multinationals.

Bush and Blair's celebrations at the capture of Saddam Hussein are likely to be short-lived.

The opposition to the occupation

of Iraq is far wider than a handful of "Saddam loyalists". It is fuelled by the brutality of the occupying troops and the plunder of Iraq by Western multinationals.

That is why in the coming months the resistance to the occupation, in Iraq and around the world, is likely to grow, not diminish.

New Year resolution: Chase FF candidates from your doorstep

IN THE coming months you may find some rather sheepish looking people making an appearance at your doorstep.

Armed with a cheesy grin, absolutely no conscience and a brass neck they will ask you to make them your Number One in the upcoming Local and European Elections.

These people will be Fianna Fail and PD election candidates.

So before you chase them down the street or slam the door in their face why not remind them of a few gems that Miserable McCreavy gave us in the Budget.

1 Creche supplement for childcare is to be phased out.

2 The increase in child benefit of €6 per

month (less than €2 a week) is wholly inadequate considering inflation and the other stealth taxes introduced by this government.

And it is a direct betrayal of election promises.

3 The Government has also failed to respond to a simple proposal from the Combat Poverty Agency on school meals.

For a Government that will spend more than €40 billion next year, is €15 million too much to ask for a half-decent school meals programme?

€15 million, the price of the Punctestown development. €15 million is the price of a national schools meals service in disadvantaged schools.

4 The massive slashing of the Community

Employment Scheme up and down the country.

5 Changes in supplementary rent allowance which will mean that people will not be able to get help with rent for six months.

6 Exchequer funding for the Status of People with Disabilities has been slashed by 19 per cent.

Bertie's Sultans of Spin

WORRIED at their plummeting poll ratings and the huge increase in anti-government feeling in the country FF are turning to the US for help.

The party has hired leading American political consultants Shrum Devine Donilon a Washington based firm that has previously worked with Bill Clinton.

In the last general election FF spent a whopping €46,000 on hiring the US based spin doctors. It is expected that the party will spend a multiple of this figure in the months before the local election.

The company have also worked with such beacons of honesty and decency as Tony Blair and former Israeli PM Ehud Barak.

However the continual boozing of the Taoiseach at public events and the protests against the Bin Tax shows that FF will need more than a firm of spin doctors to fool the Irish public.



Irish rich keep it off shore!

THE Irish Rich are continuing to stash billions in offshore tax havens according to the Sunday Tribune.

Offshore deposits held by Irish Banks and building societies in the Isle of Man jumped by 30 per cent to reach an amazing record level of €6 billion at the end of last year!

They care more for golfers than children

IT'S official this FF/PD government care more for the golfers of Ireland than the children of the nation.

The Government chief whip Mary Hanafin admitted to the Dail in

December that there were more golf clubs than playgrounds in the State.

The lack of sufficient playgrounds and play areas for young children is a major issue in many

working class estates.

But the general welfare of working class children is not a high priority for this government. FF/PD care more for the country's golfers!

US-backed Iraq army walkout

THREE hundred Iraqi army recruits have resigned from the first battalion set up by US occupation forces.

Only 400 soldiers were left by mid December, following the mass walkout over terrible pay and conditions.

Salaries in the new army range from \$50 a month to \$180 for a

colonel, a US occupation administration source said.

Speaking on condition of anonymity to the US media, the official also confirmed there had been discipline problems—with some recruits refusing to obey instructions before resigning.

The walkout is said to be spreading across the country.

Soldier's families dig for truth

A DELEGATION of nine relatives of US soldiers has gone to Iraq to find out what is going on for themselves.

"We haven't been getting the full story in the US," said Michael Loperio, the 54 year old father of a US soldier.

"The media is covering events—shootings and bombings—but not the issues.

They are not covering what is really happening to Iraqi people and to the Iraqi infrastructure."

Michael says right wing radio talk shows laid into his wife, who is a social worker, after she



gave interviews about his visit to Iraq.

Billy Kelly, another member of the group, is a retired barman from New York who fought in the Vietnam War.

He said, "There's not a day goes by when I don't think about what happened there 35 years ago." He suspects that Iraq has a lot of similarities with Vietnam.

Fernando Suarez del Solar knows his son was killed by a US cluster bomb.

He has become an outspoken critic of Bush's war and demands the immediate withdrawal of US troops.

CHENEY'S BOYS WIN \$1 BILLION JACKPOT

GUESS WHO'S been handed \$1 billion worth of reconstruction work in Iraq by the US government?

Halliburton, the engineering firm, which used to be run by US vice-president Dick Cheney, is in the

money because of delays in opening up a key contract to competition.

Contracts

"Since August when the follow-on contracts were supposed to be awarded, the administration has obligated more

than \$1 billion to Halliburton under the oil infrastructure contract," said US Democrat congressman Henry Waxman.

"These inexplicable delays may be good for Halliburton—they are costing the taxpayers a bundle."

You can have the morning after pill... In a week!

GOVERNMENT cut-backs in Third Level education have reached such a proportion that students in UCC can not get their hands on the morning after pill for seven days!

In November a Cork student who sought the morning after pill was told that she would have to wait a week for it by the free student medical service at the college.

A spokesperson for UCC told the national papers that there were finite resources at the College and same day appointments with doctors on campus could no longer be guaranteed.

Ministers dine in style

SOCIALIST Worker readers will be delighted to know that our FF/PD ministers are being well fed and watered by the Irish tax payers.

While putting the boot into Irish workers through the cutbacks in social welfare, health and education the government found some spare change to spend over €88,000 in 2003 on meals and drinks on the government jet.

BUSH FEARS IRISH ANTI WAR MOVEMENT!

ACCORDING to the Sunday Tribune George Bush has had to cancel a planned visit to Ireland in April for an EU/US summit because of fears of major protests.

Bush was due to head up the US delegation but the Irish government feared massive and widespread protests like that of February 15 in Dublin and in London in November.

editorial



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

REVOLUTION

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

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

War is a constant feature of capitalism today as the imperialist powers try to dominate the earth. Bush's "War on Terrorism" is a crude device to attack any country which threatens US military, strategic or economic dominance.

END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

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

FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

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

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party. This party needs to argue against right-wing ideas and for overthrowing the system. We call for co-operation between left-wing parties and the formation of a strong socialist bloc. We stand for fighting trade unions and for independent rank and file action.

RABBITTE SAYS NO TO FF... BUT FLIRTS WITH FG.

Fine Gael are no better!

ON the now deceased Eamon Dunphy TV show in December the Labour Party leader ruled out any future coalition with Fianna Fail.

Coming under massive pressure from within his own party, Rabbitte finally pulled FF out of the bag of potential coalition partners.

This FF led government is becoming so hated that even the Labour Party leadership know that they must isolate themselves from Ahern's gang.

But while Rabbitte has turned down FF he now looks towards Fine Gael as the future coalition partner.

But socialists in Ireland know that FG are no better than FF.

Fine Gael have acted as the "spare wheel" in Irish politics.

A right wing party that differs little in policy with FF they have ensured that Irish people have had to live under a series of right wing led coalitions.

But Labour party members and supporters should be under no illusion about the nature of FG.

Just a brief look at the debates from the FG National Conference in December makes it clear where they stand.

*FG are in favour of privatising health care in Ireland.

The FG spokesperson on Health, Olivia Mitchell told the conference that the state should start withdrawing from providing health services and instead seek "market orientated solutions" to improve the health system.

She said that the introduction of competition would "capture for patients the benefits of the market and ensure that the health services benefits from innovations, from financial and operational efficiencies."

The FG system would be one where the free market in health would offer "dynamic benefits that operate automatically in a system in which competition flourishes."

Essentially the FG vision of health care in Ireland is based on the United States model of a private deregulated system where

the rich can pay for the best of service while the rest have to scrimp and save to get any sort of care.

Would many members and supporters of the Labour Party agree with this vision?

*If in government FG would not pay civil servants the benchmarking pay that they are owed.

Enda Kenny has said that he would renege on the deal that the state struck with the unions and refuse to pay thousands of civil servants what they are owed.

According to Kenny he wants the workers to become more "efficient" and quickly "modernise" before they can receive the money.

However despite this the hypocritical FG TDs will be excepting their very own payments under the benchmarking deal later this year with no changes in their 'work practices'.

*** FG want Ireland to move closer to NATO and to ditch its policy of neutrality.**

"We must live up to our responsibilities. We must tell the truth on our neutrality. Because like it or not, Ireland is no longer neutral," Enda Kenny told FG delegates.

FG want Ireland to move closer to NATO and to more actively support US foreign policy.

Would the many Labour Party

members who campaigned actively in the antiwar movement in Ireland last year agree with this vision of Ireland's place in the world?

Right Wing

FG are not some "less corrupt" or more "liberal" version of FF.

They are the right wing party of Michael Lowry, the party that is very open about its plans to implement a neo liberal economic agenda at home, and a more pro-US policy internationally.

Labour going into power with FG would just mean another predominantly right wing govern-

ment in charge in Ireland with the same old neo liberal policies for another five years.

Socialists who are members of Labour and who support the party should pressurise Rabbitte into ruling out a coalition with the right wing FG.

However it may well be the case that Rabbitte will get caught in the headlights of a ministerial limo and hungry for power will enter government with FG.

Socialists should see this strategy as a dead end for the left wing movement in Ireland and should begin building a real alternative to the left of Labour.

An alternative that will make no compromise with the right

Iraq: The resistance continues

THE Irish Times headline said it all 'Iraq has become a new Vietnam'.

Journalist Tom Clonan calculated that the attrition rate for US combat troops in Iraq has reached 9.5%.

This rate is above that of the Vietnam war!

US commanders have already said that they expect the resistance in Iraq to intensify again in the coming weeks and months.

Official statistics from the Pentagon state that 444 US troops have been killed and just over 2,500 have been wounded by the beginning of December.

These are very high numbers when compared to the total number of combat troops in action in Iraq.

The casualty rate is more than 10 times that experienced by the US in the First Gulf War.

The capture of Saddam Hussein in December will not mean the end of the Iraqi resistance.



■ US/UK troops occupy Iraq face growing resistance

According to most observers on the ground in Iraq the former Iraqi dictator who has been in hiding had little connection with the resistance that the people of Iraq have provided since the invasion.

But the Bush regime

has been doing its best to ignore the increasing number of body bags returning to the US.

Funerals

Bush may have flown into Baghdad airport for a flying visit, but he has been much slower

to attend the funerals of the war dead in the US and to meet the victims families.

Anger amongst families of service men killed and those still serving in Iraq is growing as people begin to question the Bush administration's

motives for this invasion.

A US group, Bring Them Home Now, is made up of military families, veterans and those on active service who are against the war.

Visit the website at www.bringthemhome-

Dublin-Monaghan bombing: The truth still not revealed

VICTIMS of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in 1974 have been badly let down by the Irish State over the past two decades.

Ignored by various governments they have vigorously campaigned to have the bombings properly investigated.

Allegations of British collusion in the bombings and the Irish State deliberately turning a blind eye to important evidence have gone without investigation for the past twenty years.

The recently published Barron Report has confirmed many of the fears and suspicions held by the victims since the

series of bombs that left 33 dead on the streets of Dublin and Monaghan on 17 May 1974.

While not categorically stating that there was collusion between the UVF and British Security Forces Barron says that "a finding that members of the security forces in Northern Ireland could have been involved in the bombing is neither fanciful nor absurd, given the number of instances in which similar illegal activity has been proven."

The report is also very critical of the Garda investigation that followed the bombings.

The Guards "failed to make full use of the information it obtained.



Certain lines of investigation were not pursued and certain suspects were not questioned.

The Barron report interestingly said

the government of the day "showed little interest in the bombings.

When information was given to them suggesting that the British authorities had intelligence naming the bombers this was not followed up.

The FG/Labour government of the time was too interested in attacking republicans and supporting the Sunningdale Agreement.

Taoiseach Liam Cosgrave did not 'want to rock the boat' with the British government by asking any difficult questions.

Indeed in his radio address on the day of the bombing he blamed 'all men of violence' for the act.

A not so veiled attack on the republican movement on the day of what was clearly a massive loyalist attack

The Barron report also points out that the British authorities had been less than fulsome when providing information over the past two years.

And other documents that were requested by Justice Barron have actually gone missing from the Department of Justice here in Dublin

The relatives of the victims have said that they may call for a full judicial public enquiry into these events to finally get the truth.

Socialists should support any such call.

comment



Eamonn McCann

Now that is how to fight poverty

There was an irony about the fact that the Nipsa strike in the North came on the same day—December 11th—as British Chancellor Gordon Brown's pre-budget statement at Westminster.

Brown's statement was so brimming with rhetoric against social injustice that one *Guardian* columnist described it as a "declaration of war on child poverty." Another suggested that it "embraced the traditional Left values of the unions and Old Labour"—supposedly part of Brown's strategy to replace Blair as Labour leader some time in 2004.

In fact, the Nipsa action will do more to fight poverty than Brown's rhetoric. Indeed, the strike was aimed against policies associated with Brown which generate poverty.

And as for the "values of the unions," the strikers were hamstrung by Tory anti-union laws which have been retained by New Labour.

All evidence suggests countries with low levels of child poverty have two things in common—high "market wages" (what you get before benefits or tax credits), and a relatively narrow gap between high and low pay. Northern Ireland doesn't conform to this model, and nothing in Brown's statement will change this reality.

Gap

Northern Ireland has the lowest wages in these islands, and a widening gap between the rich and the poor. These are the main reasons that the levels of child poverty here are so high.

More than half of children living in poverty come from families where there is at least one person working. And some of these workers are the government's own employees—the very people who were on the picket lines on December 11th. Many of the strikers are so low-paid they can claim Working Tax Credit.

The difference is that, while New Labour talks of eliminating the reasons for child poverty, the strikers were actually doing something about it.

Going round the picket lines in Derry gave an inkling of what had driven the Nipsa members to take action. In one recently decentralised office, many work seven-day weeks in an effort to make a decent wage. One man told us he had had one Sunday off since the summer to be with his children.

"When you tell someone you're a civil servant, they think you're on the pig's back. They assume you are earning a decent wage. But most of us aren't."

When the jobs in question were moved from Belfast to Derry, there was rejoicing in the city. But the strikers explained that to get the job they had to agree to weekend working and eight-to-eight shifts. So much for "the work-life balance."

Cushy

And in case anybody thinks that, while many civil service jobs may be poorly paid, they are still a cushy number, the strikers had tales of working conditions that were little short of mind-boggling. At the moment, there are thousands of "temporary casual" workers on as little as £8,000 a year. In one office, some of them don't have a chair to sit on. They have to hope that someone will be off sick so they can borrow a chair. Otherwise, they kneel at desks or in the middle of the floor!

Over the coming weeks, civil servants in the North will work to rule, and there will be more strikes. Nobody should doubt rank-and-file determination. But the obsession of the union leadership with avoiding all-out action and staying within the law is a source of potential weakness. An official Nipsa leaflet on the day warned members not to place more than the permitted six picketers on any one workplace, to annoy nobody, and to obey the police at all times!

The general lesson is not to put faith in the manoeuvring of New Labour leaders but to understand that the way to fight poverty and social injustice is for the working class to organise itself and go for the strongest and most effective action that has adequate support, irrespective of pleas from the communal politicians or pressure from the Tory/New Labour anti-union laws.

AFTER THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

Will they lead to new conflict?

MANY commentators are fearful that the result of the Assembly election could bring down the Belfast Agreement.

It's said this is the inevitable result of a sectarianism bred into Northern Ireland people.

But in fact, the Agreement itself is based on acceptance of sectarianism.

In practice, it required two elections—one between unionist parties, the other between nationalists—to determine who people think will best represent each side.

The result is the competitive mobilisation of the two communities.

The issues which divide Unionism and Nationalism go to the top of the agenda, while issues like poverty and low pay scarcely arise.

This produces the unstable deadlock which the Northern institutions have endured over the last five years.

But there is no appetite



■ DUP's Paisley, Jnr and Snr and Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams

on any side for a return to all-out violence.

Hungry

Both the DUP and Sinn

Fein are hungry for office and are likely to find a fudged compromise sooner or later.

The timing may depend on how long Paisley the

elder manages to hang on.

Whatever the turn of events, the nature of the Agreement will continue to produce crisis and instability and to fuel sectarianism.

Socialists scored good votes

AGAINST this background, the vote for the Socialist Environmental Alliance (SEA) in the Foyle and East Londonderry (sic) constituencies was excellent.

Eamonn McCann's 2,257 first preferences in Foyle represented 5.5 percent of the total.

As well, every one of Marion Baur's 137 first preferences in mainly rural East Derry was hard won.

She was the first left candidate to step forward in the history of the constituency.

A member of the Communist Party of Ireland who started off with only one person on her election team (her husband, Herman), and not known politically in the area, she polled just 30 fewer than the leader of the Fire Brigades Union in South Belfast.

The McCann and Baur votes were an endorsement of the fact that the SEA brought together socialists, trade unionists, women's

rights' and environmental activists in an electoral alliance to provide a radical, anti-sectarian alternative.

The SEA was also distinguished from Left-wing campaigns elsewhere in the election in that it headlined its

association with the global movements against capitalism and war.

More than a few votes came from people pleased to be able to identify themselves, not by reference to the Northern community they came

from, but with progressive politics in the world at large.

The main point of socialists standing in an election is to popularise socialist ideas.

The SEA succeeded in doing this to a greater extent than any other Left campaign.

A NON-SECTARIAN VOTE

IN EFFORTS to downplay the significance of the SEA vote, bourgeois commentators suggested that Eamonn McCann's support was personal and Catholic.

The fact that Eamonn is well-known did mean that many were already aware what he stands for.

This undoubtedly gave the SEA a good start in Foyle. But it cost votes as winning votes.

A common response to canvassers was, "I'd vote for Eamonn if it wasn't for his support for X," or more frequently, "He'd get elected if he'd only stop going on about capitalism!" Foyle is about

80 percent Catholic, but to crudely characterise the SEA vote as Catholic is an insult to Protestants.

Nobody was counting, but a good proportion of SEA campaigners were from Protestant backgrounds.

Some votes across the divide were difficult to interpret, other than simply to observe that they crossed the divide—23 number ones for DUP'er Willy Hay gave the SEA their number two.

And 55 SEA number ones went number two for Jeffrey Donaldson supporter Mary Hamilton of the UU.

Both unionist candidates were ultra-Right on class and

social issues.

The fact that there was any cross-voting with the SEA was remarkable.

In a constituency more than three quarters Catholic, three-quarters of SEA voters transferred to Sinn Fein or the SDLP.

It's likely few of these came from Protestant backgrounds.

It's harder to calculate the breakdown of the 593 SEA votes which didn't transfer to anyone, but they will have included people from both sides of the divide as well as some who don't see themselves on either side.

Oppose the racist attacks

RACIST thugs mounted sickening attacks on three families in the village area of South Belfast in December.

The victims included two heavily pregnant Chinese women and another man who suffered horrific facial injuries after being struck by a brick.

The families had to flee their homes.

Racist attacks are most visible in the socially and economically deprived loyalist working class estates, carried out by a handful of racist thugs.

It is in such socio-economic deprived areas that these racists will attempt to get organised.

Far right organisations such as the NF, Combat18 and the BNP have found a sympathetic ear among elements of far right Loyalist groups who can and do carry out such attacks in such areas with increasing support from far right organisations.

With racist attacks on the increase it is important to take a stand. The Anti Racism Network (ARN) was established to take a practical, collective and visual stand against the rise of racial incidents in the North.

Working class communities have borne the brunt of thirty years of the "troubles" with the increase in sectarian tensions, then attacks and murders.

Sectarianism has divided the working class communities with each 'side' encouraged to blame the other for their ills.

Similarly racists try to blame lack of housing, healthcare etc on asylum seekers and immigrants.

Those opposed to the hateful agendas of the far right must not only condemn and challenge such myths and perceptions but actively oppose such organisations if the seek to organise here.

Contact us on arn_belfast@yahoo.co.uk —**DAVY CARLIN**, Chairperson, Anti Racism Network

Students face top-up fees

Over 150 Labour backbenchers have signalled that they will vote against the new Higher Education legislation when it comes before parliament early in the New Year.

There have already been major student rallies against the new policy.

The White Paper on Education set out the future for Higher Educa-

tion in January.

Universities are to be allowed to charge "variable fees" of up to £3000 for each course.

Blair knows that this is an unpopular policy so to sweeten it, the up-front fee of just over £1000 per course that every student presently pays will be scrapped and the cost of each course will be capped at £3000 until 2011.

Students will not have to pay anything until they graduate and start work and only once their salary reaches £12,000.

Blair claims the money to upgrade Higher Education isn't there; yet the occupation of Iraq is costing £200 million per month and has already cost £6.2 billion.

He also claims that flat fees subsidise upper

and middle class students who attend elite universities and therefore pay the same as students attending lesser universities.

Of course if there were no fees at all, and more investment put into secondary schools and the non-elite universities, the discrepancy wouldn't arise in the first place.

Eight out of thirteen

competitor countries in the OECD charge tuition fees and seven of those have variable fees.

Blair wants to catch up with them. The universities want to compete for the lucrative "overseas fee paying students" as well as being able to sell their commodity to the highest bidder locally.

AS IRELAND'S EU PRESIDENCY BEGINS, IT IS TIME TO SAY...

by RORY HEARNE

Another Europe is Possible

Protests Against a 'Neo Liberal' Europe

THE EU currently works by a rotating presidency which passes to a different country every six months.

Ireland took over the presidency in January 2004.

Up to this year the country which held the presidency hosted a Summit of EU heads of state.

In recent years these summits have become a focus for anti-capitalist demonstrations.

Gothenburg 2001 was marked with thousands on the streets and one protestor being shot as the ruling class in the West tried, unsuccessfully to frighten the movement off the streets.

Then only two months after 9/11 they faced 100,000 trade unionists and 40,000 anti-capitalists in Brussels.

A demonstration of over 300,000 met the EU summit in Barcelona in March 2002 while thousands marched in Thessalonica during the Greek presidency this year (showing the democratic side of the EU—hundreds of protesters were arrested and held for months only being released recently after a hunger strike).

These protests have forced the EU heads of state to retreat to the protected confines of the EU buildings in Brussels in order to hold their bi-annual summits!

Ireland will not have a summit but will have a series of meetings of the EU ministers in different parts of the country, a 'party' to mark the enlargement of the EU on 1 May and possibly an EU-US summit with George Bush in early June.

Mobilisation

A new alliance called Another Europe is Possible has been formed to co-ordinate the main events and mobilisations while Ireland holds the EU presidency.

The alliance is proposing a calendar of events that will be gearing towards 1 May.

Ahern has invited all 25 heads of state to come to Dublin on 1 May to take part in a 'celebration on the streets'.

Dick Roche our 'Europe' Minister said "we want to have the celebration out there on the streets, we want to have the people of Dublin, the people of Ireland—a celebration for the people, not for the men in suits".

They will spend millions on enticing us to take part in their 'party' in order to show to their masters in Europe the fun loving shellaley-swinging and EU-adoring Irish people! They want to portray the Celtic Tiger as the successful model economy of neo-liberalism.

The alliance however is planning an alternative party on 1 May—a huge protest against their EU of neo-liberalism and war!

This will be a chance for the workers and ordinary people of Ireland who during the Celtic Tiger have only seen increasing poverty, cut-backs and job insecurity to come out and embarrass this rotten government.

Palestinian solidarity groups from all over Europe are also coming to Dublin on 1 May this year to oppose the preferential agreements that the EU gives to Israel.



■ Ministers from across the EU at the failed summit on the EU constitution in December

EU Constitution: A Blueprint for a Militarised Europe

May 9 2004—that is the date when the EU leaders hope to sign the new Constitution for Europe.

This constitution will have "primacy over the law of the member states"—it overrides all national constitutions and is irreversible!

It will create a highly centralised, undemocratic federal state under the political hegemony of the bigger states (mainly France and Germany).

At the heart of this Constitution is the prioritisation of neo-

liberalism and militarisation as the twin driving forces behind the EU project.

1 THE MILITARISATION OF EUROPE

The constitution establishes a common foreign and security Policy to "lead to a common defence".

All member states are required to "make civilian and military capabilities available to the Union for the implementation of the common security and defence policy" and to "undertake progressively to improve their military capabilities".

It also establishes a European Armaments, Research and Military Capabilities Agency to promote the EU arms industry and makes the promotion of the Nuclear industry as a priority! They are planning on spending billions on the industry of death and destruction while people die waiting for hospital treatment due to lack of funds!

2 THE PRIVATISATION OF EUROPE

The new EU constitution prepares the way for privatisation of health and education services as part of the Common Com-

mercial Policy.

Article III-27 of the proposed new constitution says "The Common Commercial Policy shall be based on uniform principles..with regard to ..trade in goods and services..the achievement of uniformity in measures of liberalisation and aim of the progressive abolition of restrictions on Foreign Direct Investment and lowering of other barriers".

Patricia McKenna MEP said recently "the thrust of the Common Commercial Policy is clearly to optimise profit-making opportunities for business at the

expense of public welfare and the public good".

To add to this the Constitution extends the powers given to the European Commission by Article 133 from the Nice Treaty in relation to the promotion of liberalisation (privatisation and deregulation).

This will allow the Commission to push through the WTO and GATS agenda of privatisation and deregulating of all our public services to allow competition from the private sector which will mean further attacks on the living conditions of all workers in Europe.

Is the EU a progressive alternative to the US?

MOST social democrat parties (such as the Labour Party, SPD in Germany, and the Socialist Party in France), some trade unionists and members of ATTAC—the big French anti-globalisation organisation hold up the idea of a reformed EU) as the only alternative to the US neo-liberal war machine.

In Ireland the left has grasped on to the EU as the only method of bringing positive change in matters of the environment and labour standards.

(Remember those Labour Party posters—socialists say yes to Nice!)

The EU project began in 1951 as the European Coal and Steel Community, and then evolved to the EEC in 1957.

It was an area of free trade and issues of economic integration that were the priority.

However, while the European Community continued its econom-

ic growth and integration it was continually reliant on the US for military security.

Military

The big European players like France, Germany and Spain felt themselves losing out militarily and being too dependent on the US and NATO in the Balkan Wars.

Thus increasing the military capabilities of the European Union became a priority.

Why should EU partners play a junior role to the US? Why not be able to defend OUR own interests and wage our own wars!

Just like the threat from McDonald Douglas helps the spread of McDonald's around the world so too will the Eurofighter and European Army make the world 'safe' for Eriksson and Danone!

Can this new EU empire be a counterweight to the US and help fight for peace around the world? One look at the bloody colonial

history of France, Spain, Portugal and Britain (continuing its occupation of Iraq) suggests otherwise.

Member states of the EU have backed the US war on Iraq and no EU government made any attempt to stop it.

The new European empire will instead hope to send its army to the Middle East and elsewhere—not on missions of peace but to gain access to markets and resources.

Is a battle between US and EU armies over the spoils of imperial conquest an impossibility?

As capitalism continues to be in crisis it will become ever more desperate for profit—the creation of an EU super state to help EU capital accumulate more profit around the world will not benefit the workers of Europe but mean billions will be spent on armies and defence while jobs and public services are slashed.

The only power to defeat the US are the workers themselves!

YES TO A EUROPE BASED ON PEOPLE NOT PROFIT!

THERE is complete disillusionment with the system.

A recent poll showed that support for the EU has dropped below 50 per cent across the Union for the first time.

The rise of the far-right in France and Holland was a reflection of that disenfranchisement but Europe has seen a new movement that resonates of 1968 confronting neo-liberalism and war.

It began with the waves of strikes that hit France in 1995 and continues to grow.

General strikes hit Spain, Italy, and Austria while the trade unions across Europe are fighting back over pension rights.

Millions marched against the War on 15 February and the European Social Forums in Paris and Florence showed the depth of the anti-globalisation movement in Europe.

We say no to Fortress

Europe and its racist immigration and asylum laws.

No to an EU army and yes to a Europe based on people not profit.

It is only this movement that has the power to stop US imperialism and make another Europe Possible.

In both Spain and Italy the General Strikes followed within months of huge anti-capitalist protests taking place in those countries.

There is no doubt that the mood for strikes was influenced by a growing radicalisation that the protests helped to build.

We can create that same radicalising effect here in Ireland.

Therefore everyone should get stuck in and get their union branch/local community/group/student union to pass a motion supporting the mobilisations during the EU presidency and start now!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 16th/17th Galway: Employment Ministers—Protest organised.

January 22/23 Dublin: Justice Ministers—Launch meeting of Another Europe is Possible

February 20th—Dublin: Article 133 Group—Protest to defend public services

March 20th: International Day of Action against occupation of Iraq and Palestine

April 2nd/3rd—Kildare: Finance Ministers—Counter Summit—Another Europe is Possible

May 1st—Dublin: EU heads of State Enlargement Party Mobilisations/Counter Carnival against a Europe of War and Neo-liberalism—no to the EU constitution—for a Europe of social rights

May 14/15 Waterford: Environment Ministers meeting.

June—EU-US summit: No welcome for Bush!

Why the working class is key to change

by COLIN BARKER

"parliamentary democracy" today.

In order to secure and extend its rule the working class needs the active involvement of the masses of people who are currently excluded from decisions about the matters that shape their own lives.

Capitalism has a combination of two drives, both of which are direct obstacles to democratic popular control over social, economic and political life. The first is exploitation. The second is competition.

Exploitation—the extraction of surpluses from the labour of the majority by a minority—necessarily rests on hierarchy and lack of democracy.

To maintain the flow of profits to a few, the social power of private and state property over us is upheld by whole armies of supervisors, foremen, managers, police, jailers and (ultimately) soldiers.

Replacing production for profit with production aimed directly at satisfying human need means breaking these hierarchies and substituting direct democratic control over society's means of production.

Capitalism, though, is not only marked by class exploitation. Its other core feature is "the market" and the necessity of competition between rival companies and states.

Indeed, that competition compels the capitalist class to seek, constantly, to step up the rate of exploitation and to devise ever new methods of keeping control over labour. Competition drives capitalists to accumulate, to exploit.

Crises

Competition and the market also produce a world that nobody controls that develops through convulsive crises. Private profit dominates, and general interests take a back seat—as a result the capitalist class has no effective answer to ecological threats like global warming.

Capitalist production, driven by competitive accumulation, rips the heart out of established communities, and today threatens the very existence of life on the planet. It prevents the rational collective harbouring and development of resources.

The sole practical alternative to the anarchic and destructiveness of capitalist competition and exploitation is the development and extension of cooperative and democratic planning.

How, in the end, can human needs and wants be decided unless human beings themselves choose—democratically—what their needs and wants are and where their priorities lie?

Massive arms spending by the two blocs helped avoid a return to the slump of the 1930s and allowed an unprecedented period of sustained growth for the world economy.

How else can plans be sensibly evaluated and changed unless the majority can engage in debate and decide how to alter things?

Such a world only becomes possible when workers organise themselves to take that world back from their ruling exploiters and place it under their own collective power.

Possible

Socialism is only possible when millions upon millions of ordinary working people—women and men, black and white, gay and straight—organise themselves democratically "from below" and set out to take all forms of decision-making power away from the minorities who rule us today, and to impose their own collective power over every aspect of social and productive life.

The founding principle of a socialist society is the most extensive democracy, going far beyond the limited principles of

AS THE OCCUPATION OF IRAQ MOVES INTO 2004, A NEW BOOK TRACES THE ROOTS OF U.S. ...

War and imperialism

by KEVIN WINGFIELD

SINCE 9/11 there have been two major wars in as many years. The invasion of Afghanistan was quickly followed by the war on Iraq and the brutal occupation which is now showing every sign of turning into another Vietnam.

Is this the result simply of an especially right-wing US administration under Bush plundering the country's oil assets for his friends in big business?

If that were so Michael Moore, the author of *Stupid White Men* and *Bowling for Columbine* might be justified when he urges reluctant support for the Democrats.

Or are there important continuities with previous administrations pointing to deeper reasons for this plunge into war?

A new book by Alex Callinicos begins to answer these questions.

At the end of the Second World War, the US was by far the strongest economy in the world accounting for roughly one half of everything that was produced globally.

But it faced a major military, though not economic, competitor in Russia, which established its domination in East and Central Europe at the end of the war.

By the use of its military power, the US pursued a policy of containment of the Russian empire.

It was able to bring Western Europe, Japan and much of the rest of the world into a series of military and political alliances led by the US.

Large scale economic aid to Europe in the form of the Marshall Plan, helped lift war torn economies and reduce the social tensions in the continent.

Economically the US promoted free-trade in place of the protectionist blocs that presided over the great slump in the 1930s.

Its rulers calculated that the strength of its industries could penetrate these markets where previously they had been largely shut out.

Strength

With the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, new problems faced US imperialism. Although the only remaining super-power, it faced the prospect of the rise of serious rivals, particularly China with one fifth of the world's population and stupendous growth rates as well as Japan.

Could the US be sure that the big powers of Europe would remain content to allow themselves to remain under the umbrella of the US? Would Iran, Iraq or Syria seek regional dominance in the oil rich and strategically crucial Middle East?

The costs of the arms build up were borne principally by the US, Russia, Britain and France. Germany and Japan were excluded by the post war settlement from



undertaking substantial military spending, so were able to devote their resources to re-equipping their industries to take advantage of the booming world economy.

Germany and Japan, although integrated into the Western bloc, grew to challenge the US in key markets, along with some of the Asian Tiger economies.

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The point was that US military

power was far ahead of any possible rival, but economically, the US was in relative decline. There could be no guarantee that its world position could be maintained indefinitely under these conditions.

In the 1990s—under both Democrat and Republican administrations—US-dominated NATO was expanded into the former satellites of Russia in Eastern Europe and US bases were established in Central Asia.

Long before 9/11 the neo-cons that now surround Bush were demanding the process go further.

Pressure

They argued that the US should utilise the window of opportunity of US military might to shut out the possibility of any serious rival threatening US domination in the future.

They demanded regime change in Iraq. They demanded the National Missile Defence system—"Star Wars II".

Before Bush or 9/11, it was the

"liberal" Clinton who ordered bombing raids on Iraq to step up the pressure on a country already broken by ten years of crippling sanctions. It was Clinton who authorised the war in former Yugoslavia in 1999.

Where US political leadership had in the past been expressed through international organisations like the UN and the IMF, from the end of the Cold War the US began to be far more willing to take action in Europe and the Middle East on its own terms.

In the 1991 Gulf War the US bypassed the UN and fought under the banner of NATO.

In 1999 the US took the lead in "sorting out" the ex-Yugoslavia, indicating to the European powers that it was the US that had the military clout to deal with destabilising emergencies like the Kosovan war.

After 9/11 the beefed up imperialist policy was christened the "War on Terror". Now the US sidelined even NATO and took the initiative, with Britain and a small number of other powers—the "coalition of the willing"—tagging along.

From the point of view of the rulers of the USA it was important to demonstrate that having been hit on 9/11 it could respond, without depending on the efforts of others.

More than this the US rulers understand that they must use the current conjuncture—overwhelming US military world supremacy, the lack as yet of any serious rival as a world power—to establish the conditions that can sustain US hegemony well into the twenty-first century and counteract the relative economic decline of the US.

Oil

Pressure for the invasion of Iraq had been growing long before 9/11. But the combination of a White House stuffed full of neo-cons and the dramatic impact of 9/11 cleared the way for a further escalation of US imperialist aggression.

It would be a mistake therefore to see the occupation of Iraq, for example, as simply about oil profits.

No doubt the profits to Dick Cheney's Halliburton and other US

interests will be enormous as the US imposed government privatises the industry in Iraq.

Against this some commentators have calculated that on a simple profit and loss basis the costs of the war and occupation will be greater than the anticipated profits.

But this is too simple a yardstick. Iraq holds the second largest reserves of oil in the world.

The point is to control and secure oil supplies and to dominate the strategic region of the Middle East and prevent any Middle Eastern power from aspiring to regional dominance.

This has a global significance. Japan and China both depend on imported oil supplies.

If China is to become a major industrial power, US control of oil supplies gives it enormous leverage to prevent the rise of the country as a serious regional rival for domination in Asia and beyond.

Similarly any move by Japan to seek to become a world power

rivaling the US would be met with a threat to its supplies of oil.

Where once a West European bloc was welcomed in the US as helping to counter-balance the Soviet empire, today the US fears the emergence of a strengthened Europe with global ambitions led by one of the major powers of the continent.

Bush was at great pains to split Europe politically over the war into the "Old Europe" of France and Germany, which opposed the war, and the new comers from Eastern Europe which had strong economic reasons to diplomatically support the US.

Of course a militarised Europe is not an alternative or counterweight to imperialism, as some have suggested, but represents a dangerous escalation of imperialist rivalries.

It is important to understand that the accelerated rise of US imperialism and its major wars are not simply the result of a cabal of neo-cons.

Ninety years ago, in *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin argued that with the rise of huge monopolies, the economic competition of capitalists on a world stage burst through simple price competition and took on a military dimension.

Explaining the origins of the First World War, he argued that the economic competition of massive capitalist corporations and the geo-political rivalry of states fused into barbarous imperialist wars.

He insisted that the great powers could not act differently and it was pointless to look to more reasonable rulers—war grew out of the very logic of capitalism itself.

Much has changed in the world since Lenin's time. But the push to capitalist imperialism remains—it may have been less visible in the glacial years of the Cold War, but now the world is in flux once again its effects are obvious, dramatic and brutal.

Whether Bush or Wesley Clark is in the White House after 2004, the same strategic calculations will be made and essentially the same imperialist policy pursued.

For Lenin, the only answer was to challenge the system itself.

Today the same considerations apply and the massive anti war movement that has arisen internationally over past year or so begins to point to that alternative.

The New Mandarins of American Power, Alex Callinicos, Polity Press, available from SW Books, PO Box 1648 Dublin 8

Workers create all the wealth in society

By PAT STACK

THERE'S A powerful myth, promulgated by Blair, by the Tories, by most of the media. It is that businessmen are "wealth creators".

Without them, we're told, there would be no investment, no jobs, an economy in a spiral of decline. Under feudalism, using the same logic, without the lords there would be no land. The peasants would just float in the air, starving.

What is true in current-day society is that the means of wealth creation are in the hands of a small class of capitalists. They own and control the major means of production—the factories and offices, the roads, railways, docks and airports, and so on.

Often—indeed increasingly, through "privatisation"—they own them privately. Sometimes nation-states own them. In either case, access to and decision-making control over these facilities is out of the hands of the mass of the population.

Today, the working class in just a small country like South Korea is probably bigger than the world's working class a century and a half ago.

Sometimes you hear it argued that the working class is shrinking, because "manual work" is declining.

What a weird argument! "Manual" means "by the hand"—but somehow it's supposed the nurses and computer operators, people in offices and call centres don't need hands! It's not the colour of a person's collar that determines their class, but their relationship to the means of production.

The majority—the working class—can only make a living if they work for someone else, in return for a wage or salary.

The working class are the key wealth creators. They produce most of the goods and services society needs—in workplaces that they neither own nor control.

In principle it makes no difference whether they work for private corporations or the state. In either case, they work under bosses they don't choose, and they earn only enough to live from one month to the next.

As every slave knew, being a wealth creator doesn't make you wealthy.

The goods and services that workers produce belong not to them, but to their bosses. In the very process of producing things, the working class also reproduces the wealth of the capitalists.

Microsoft workers don't just develop software, they also develop Bill Gates's immense riches, the possibility of socialism.

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2003 in review

THE WAR:

Imperialism shaken
by resistance

WAR AND the resistance to it shaped politics across the world last year. At every step the anti-war movement dogged Bush and Blair.

They started the year determined to wage war on Iraq. Incredibly, Bush dared to justify the war by saying in February, "Throughout the 20th century small groups of men seized control of nations, built armies and arsenals, and set out to dominate the weak and intimidate the world."

In the run-up to war US Secretary of State Colin Powell used Blair's dossier to "prove" Iraq was trying to obtain uranium. No one admitted that the CIA regarded this claim as false. Blair rushed out what became known as the "dodgy dossier", cribbed from a student's old PhD thesis.

On these false claims Bush and Blair unleashed the carnage on 20 March. The vast majority of the British press hailed the "liberation" of Iraq. But the anti-war movement was far from crushed.

The reality of the US occupation and the Iraqis' increasing resistance proved the anti-war movement's arguments were right. The rising death toll of US soldiers raised the spectre of Vietnam. By early December the death toll was 506 US and British soldiers.

The demonstrations in London were a series of record-breakers. The largest demo in history—15 February, 2 million. The largest against a war that had started—22 March, 500,000. The largest demo at the end of a war—12 April, 200,000. The biggest weekday protests—20 November, 300,000.

This opposition showed up the spineless "official" opposition in Bush's and Blair's gov-



■ Japanese demonstrators protest at their government's sending troops to Iraq last month

ernments. Too few Labour MPs found enough conscience to vote against Blair over the war. Robin Cook, Blair's foreign secretary, finally resigned on 17 March. It took Clare Short until 12 May before she left.

In the US the majority of Democrats voted for Bush's war, including Hillary Clinton.

As the war got increasingly unpopular, some Democrats changed their minds.

Capture

The capture of Saddam Hussein has sent many of them rushing back to the Bush camp.

As the Washington Post reported back in September,

"Virtually all of Bush's biggest accomplishments won the backing of large numbers of Democrats, including most of those hoping to oust him."

The anti-war movement has blocked Bush and Blair from rushing on to wars elsewhere, despite repeated threats against North Korea and Iran.

The anti-war movement has gone from strength to strength. Its impact has been felt in the trade unions and anti-capitalist mobilisations.

The task next year is to continue that pressure on Bush and Blair and to punish them in the crucial elections that both will be facing.

Anti-capitalism: The movement is still spreading

THE anti-capitalist movement was not hurled into chaos by the war on Iraq, as some had predicted. Instead the vast majority of anti-capitalists became part of the anti-war mobilisations.

In turn, the anti-war movement strengthened the anti-capitalists.

In January over 8,000 people attended the Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad, India, and tens of thousands gathered at the World Social

Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. These events confirmed again that opposition to capitalist globalisation was not confined to a thin layer of young activists in the richer countries.

Around 100,000 people marched against the Evian G8 summit in June.

Then in August 200,000 gathered in Larzac, France, for an anti-capitalist festival.

The present round of anti-capitalist mobilisations burst

onto the world's screens in Seattle in 1999 as people protested against the World Trade Organisation.

This year protesters again took on the WTO, in Cancun, Mexico. The demonstrations outside helped to fuel the bitter

divisions inside the plush conference centre and thereby brought about the collapse of the world trade talks.

This was a victory for the poor across the globe as the privatising, deregulating, pro-multinational proposals on the agenda were not implemented.

The European Social Forum in Paris in November, which attracted over 50,000 people, was a great success, more political and more determined than ever.

TO WATCH IN 2004

- **WORLD SOCIAL FORUM:** 16-21 January, Mumbai, India - 100,000 people are expected to attend.
- **G8 SUMMIT:** 8-10 June, Sea Island, Georgia, United States
- **EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM:** planned for October, London

WHAT
A YEAR
THAT
WAS!

JANUARY

■ Some 300,000 join anti-war march in Washington.

FEBRUARY

20 million across the world join first global day of protest against war on 15 February. Including over 100,000 on the streets of Dublin.

■ The New York Times says, "There may still be two superpowers on the planet—the US and world public opinion."

APRIL

■ Saddam Hussein's statue is toppled in Baghdad.

■ Three days later 200,000 march in London against the US occupation of Iraq. Protests are held across the world.

MAY

■ Bush declares victory in Iraq on 1 May. US troops gun down protesters in Iraq.

■ New Labour suspends anti-war MP George Galloway.

■ Two million in France join general strike over Tory attacks on pensions and welfare.

JUNE

■ 10,000 Iraqis protest in British-controlled Basra. Six British soldiers killed in Iraq.

JULY

■ Dr David Kelly's body found, sparking a political crisis.

AUGUST

■ Hutton inquiry into Kelly's death uncovers top level rows over claims Iraq posed a threat.

■ Power cuts hits 50 million in North America—the crazy logic of the market in energy.

SEPTEMBER

■ Three year anniversary of Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

International: A world system of mass destruction

■ In **BOLIVIA** a popular movement over the sale of the country's gas reserves to the US ended with the president fleeing to Miami, driven from office by a massive revolutionary uprising.

■ Lula took office in **BRAZIL** at the start of the year. Millions of people in the country and across the world hoped he would bring radical change.

He did bring some reforms. But within six months of coming to power Lula was implementing poli-

cies that hit the poor, giving tax cuts to the rich and pressing for the expulsion of left wing MPs who had voted against attacks on pensions.

Lula's policies have caused a wave of opposition, with major strikes and demonstrations in July and August.

■ In **VENEZUELA** workers and the poor came onto the streets and organised in their workplaces in February to defeat a bosses' stoppage.

It had threatened to bring

down President Chavez.

The action from below played a key role in beating back the right—and pushing for demands far more radical than those of Chavez himself.

■ Across **AFRICA** 2.4 million people died because of AIDS this year, nearly 7,000 a day.

This was a real weapon of mass destruction. In the worst affected countries AIDS will kill a third of today's 15 year olds unless immediate action is taken.

The number of AIDS

cases in China, India, Indonesia and Russia is rising dramatically. George W Bush cynically claimed to be pouring billions into the fight against AIDS.

But he then appointed a pharmaceutical executive, Randall Tobias, to head his new AIDS initiative. Most of the money that Bush pledged for the US programme will find its way into the pockets of the drug companies.

It is an initiative to support the profits of the phar-

maceutical corporations.

■ A report from a UN agency in July showed how over 50 countries have been plunged backwards in the last decade.

Every day 30,000 children die of preventable disease across the world. In country after country people are dying younger, as diseases like AIDS and the effects of poverty take their toll.

The UN report was backed up by a study in the *Lancet*, the doctors' magazine in Britain, last week.

The *Lancet* report showed that every year nearly 11 million children around the world die before their fifth birthday.

"Every single day an attack against children occurs that is ten times greater than the death toll from the World Trade Centre," said Professor Jean-Pierre Habicht, one of the authors of the *Lancet* study. The richest 1 percent of people in the world now have as much income as the poorest 57 percent.

book

The reality of boom time Ireland

by CONOR KOSTICK

AS the Irish boom years end, it is time to draw up a balance sheet from them and learn a few lessons.

And the lesson is not that there was "a lot done—more to do." In fact the Celtic Tiger years were years of a widening gap between rich and poor, massive tax evasion by the rich and a host of political scandals.

After the Ball is a timely new book by Irish Times journalist Fintan O'Toole. It contains eight essays that challenge the right wing myths about Ireland during recent years.

It is, although much dryer, the Irish equivalent of the work of Michael Moore in that Fintan O'Toole skillfully uses his knowledge of the workings of all levels of Irish society to provide vivid contrasts.

For example, after explaining in detail, with some clear case studies, how property developers, pub and nightclub owners evaded their taxes, O'Toole then discusses prosecutions against those guilty of tax evasion. He concludes "All in all, tax fraud in 2002 was punished with a grand total of €5,540 in fines and no prison sentences were actually served.

The contrast with social welfare fraud is striking. A total of 245 cases were forwarded to Chief State Solicitor's office. Some 167 cases were finalised in court—in which five offenders were served with prison sentences, 28 received suspended sentences, 78 were fined, a total of 32 received the Probation Act and the remainder were struck out, dismissed or bound to the peace."

He continues, "In 2002, Revenue audited 16,186 cases and the audits yielded €286.83 million. Over the same period the Department of Social and Family Affairs carried out a total of 341,000 reviews of social welfare claims and realised savings of €287.7million.

Scrutiny

In other words, for roughly the same amount of money saved or earned for the Exchequer, social welfare claimants were subject to over 20 times more scrutiny than taxpayers."

The book is very successful in condensing and presenting the kind of information that is needed to refute the political right in Ireland.

It is the sort of book that you want on your shelf to arm yourself with evidence against those who say that the boom years were a success for supporters of the free market.

But more than providing information, Fintan O'Toole makes a number of arguments that are the real strength of the book.

The second and seventh essays, for example, are discussions of the relative merits of the free market, a crucial topic as Ireland enters a new phase of privatisation.

O'Toole tackles the argument from both ends, showing both that entrepreneurs are often less responsible for their success than the myth would have it and that genuinely successful innovation and advance is often the work of the public sector, or non-profit institutions.

He gives a very interesting account of the development of the Internet and the Human Genome Project (HGP) that show the importance of public collaboration in their development.

In the later case a battle took place between public and private companies, one that indeed is still around, leading the main geneticist behind the HGP project, Sir John Sulston to say "greed nearly succeeded in privatising the human genome, our own code, and indeed remains a threat to it."

His own outlook is that intellectual progress requires "the commonality of the ever growing body of knowledge and the need for it to be freely available to all."

O'Toole also gives important summaries of the disastrous experience of deregulation in New Zealand, California and the British railway network.

There is a underlying philosophy in the book that is less convincing—which is an implicit view that the economy and society generally could be advanced successfully and more equitably based on the kind of left of centre values advocated by the trade union leaders say, or a left leaning Pat Rabbitte.

But it is not necessary to make too much of this, as it is not O'Toole's purpose to investigate the extent to which social democracy is capable of managing capitalism in a manner which benefits all classes.

Rather the book should be appreciated as a very timely blast against the free market right in Ireland and readers of Socialist Worker will be delighted to see it in the bestsellers list in 2004.

■ **After the Ball**, Fintan O'Toole. €11.99

music

Spokesman for a generation

by CATHAL MAC OIREACHTAIGH

DAMIEN Dempsey was born, bred and buttered on Dublin's Northside.

Over the last few years he has quite literally become a musical spokesman for a generation of young working class people that grew up in the economic and social slump of the eighties.

His second album *Seize The Day* was one of the albums of the year in 2003.

He has certainly been making waves in the Irish music scene and has received much acclaim from admirers like Christy Moore, Shane MacGowan and Sinéad O'Connor.

Supported

All of whom he has supported while touring his first album *They Don't Teach this Shit in School*.

Shane MacGowan commented on Damien's sound saying "It's angry, it's humourous, it's great music, it's great lyrics...he describes the way things really are—which is a pile of shit."

The 28 year-old singer-songwriter released his second album *Seize The Day* on Clear Records back in May 2003 going straight into the Irish Album charts at number five.

Damien's sound on 'Seize The Day' reflects a high degree of musical innovation as he blends influences like Luke Kelly, Bob Marley and traditional Irish Sean-Nós together with his own staunch Dublin accent to create a unique musical concoction.



■ **Damien Dempsey: The harsh reality of urban culture**

Sinead O'Connor commented "In a way I think he represents the sort of voice in Ireland that is not allowed to be heard."

Sinéad provides ghostly backing vocals on songs like *It's All Good* and *Celtic Tiger* while Brian Eno adds a touch of diversity throughout the album.

One particularly touching song is *Ghosts of Overdoses* which echoes the devastating effects of the heroin plague in urban street life and Damien captures

this reality with powerful lyrics sang in an honest and powerful tone.

Myths

Other songs like *Factories, Trains and Houses* reflect in a simple but poetic way ordinary working class life whereas *Celtic Tiger* strongly dispels the myths of Ireland's economic boom.

The backing music throughout features quite a bit of string work along with an overriding traditional sound that uses

the uilleann pipes and bodhrán to great effect.

As a whole, *Seize the Day* represents a passionate lyrical snapshot of inner city and working class life in modern Ireland.

Damien provides a voice for many of the voiceless within working class communities bringing their experiences into musical folklore.

At the heart of Damien Dempsey's music is a strong sense of social conscious that channels its energy

through a hard-hitting approach.

His songs strike a chord with people, both young and old, who recognise the harsh reality of urban culture and the subsequent effect on a generation.

One thing is certain, this album has honesty, integrity and a uniqueness that is almost unprecedented in the swathe of contemporary Irish music, much unlike the homogenised, manufactured products of Louis 'Lucifer' Walsh.

book

A modern political thriller

by KEVIN WINGFIELD

JOHN Le Carré made his reputation through spy stories like *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

These novels were well crafted suspense stories of agents and double agents at the heart of Western and Russian espionage.

Having himself worked for British Intelligence his books radiated a cynical authentic-

ty.

But with the collapse of the Russian empire and with it the Cold War you might think he would be left high and dry.

Not so. His recent novels are set in the New World Order of capitalist globalisation and radiate an unprecedented passion.

The *Constant Gardener* spoke of the depredations of the pharmaceuticals in Africa and his latest book, *Absolute Friends*, just published, is a cracker.

Two young men from very different backgrounds meet in Germany during the student

uprising of the late sixties.

Attracted to the confused anarchism of the Berlin squats which later spawned the dead end of Baader Meinhof terrorism, they become close friends.

Berlin Wall

Later their paths cross again and their friendship is renewed as each becomes despairingly and ambiguously involved in Cold War espionage as semi-detached spies for Britain and East Germany.

With the collapse of the Berlin Wall they are scattered to the four winds. Teddy asks his

friend where he will go: "Somewhere there's hope at last."

"Where would that be?"

"Wherever hope's the only thing they can afford. You think the war's over because a bunch of old Nazis in East Germany have traded Lenin for Coca Cola? Do you really believe that American capitalism will make the world a sweet safe place? It will pick it dry."

"So what are you proposing to do about it?"

"Resist it, Teddy. What else is there to do?"

They meet again in 2003, in the shadow of

9/11 and the invasion of Iraq.

Events then spiral out of the men's control as the story develops to its tragic and frightening climax.

This book is clearly written by a man whose blood is boiling.

His sympathies are obviously with those who stand up against imperialism, war and capitalism.

As a thriller it is among the best. As a political novel it is brilliant.

■ **John Le Carré, *Absolute Friends*, Hodder and Stoughton, €23.95**

A New Year message to all our readers



- ★ *Are you against Ireland giving any support to Bush's war in Iraq?*
- ★ *Are you against a system where Bill Gates and fellow billionaires own more than Sub Saharan Africa?*
- ★ *Do you think there's one law for the rich and another for bin tax protestors?*

THEN JOIN THE SWP

I want to join the Socialist Workers Party

Name _____

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Return to SWP, PO Box 1648, Dublin 8

Tel (01) 872 2682

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www.swp.ie

What a year 2003 was. Bush and Blair's war and occupation of Iraq brought forth the biggest mass movement in living memory.

On February 15 up to 150,000 marched in Dublin and Belfast against the war in the biggest political mass movement of its type ever.

The fig leaf of democracy under capitalism was exposed. Despite huge opposition, our governments went ahead with the brutal war. In Ireland, Ahern opened the gates of Shannon airport for US warplanes.

But our efforts were not in vain. Blair's government is wracked with dissension and crisis. George Bush faces defeat in the 2004 election as opposition grows in the US. And Ahern presides over a hugely unpopular government.

The anti-war movement has connected with a growing revolt against corporate globalisation. The struggle over bin charges here is part of that revolt. Thousands of people have come to meeting in working class areas to say: Our services are not for sale.

The same cry is echoed across Latin America where millions of people have stood up to the same neo-liberal agenda of privatisation and attacks on public services. In Bolivia they took it to the brink of revolution.

November's European Social Forum in Paris brought together tens of thousands of anti capitalists from across Europe to discuss future visions and strategies for a better world. It showed that the anti-capitalist movement is alive and kicking.

The mood of opposition and even revolt is palpable. And not before time. Ireland is a hugely unequal society. The gap between rich and poor widens every year. Disgraced politicians like Ray Burke still draw a Minister's pension as single mothers are denied rent allowance for six months.

All this gives great hope to socialists. But we have a problem. The political organisation of the movement lags behind the needs of the struggle.

Despite the crucial role played by socialists in the Anti War Movement and campaigns like that against the Bin Tax, we are still too few in number to pose the necessary alternative and provide a focus for moving forward.

And we have a lot to do. For the next six months Ireland holds the presidency of the EU. Throughout those months EU ministers will be visiting to discuss their agenda of privatisations and militarising Europe. They must be met with massive demonstrations demanding **!Another Europe is Possible!**

George Bush will also be visiting Ireland in June to get a few photo-opportunities in the run-up to the US Presidential election. He must be met with London style demonstrations telling the world that there is no welcome for him here.

Government plans to privatise Dublin Bus and Aer Rianta and our public services will provoke big battles. These will need the support and solidarity of trade unionists and working class communities throughout the country.

And in the elections in June, we need to see a united socialist slate to begin pose an alternative to the corrupt establishment parties.

We appeal to every reader of Socialist Worker to get involved in the struggle for a socialist future. We have branches of the party throughout the country, North and South. Everyone has a part to play and your activity can be vital to shaping the future.

We appeal to you to join the Socialist Workers Party now and work with us to win a new world.

A great moment to be a NIPSA member

A GREAT day to be a NIPSA member!! That is how Philip described the massive civil servants strike on Thursday December 11.

For the first time in 16 years thousands struck against poverty wages in the civil service.

Everywhere the picket lines were respected by postal workers, bin collectors and delivery drivers.

There were pickets in every town in the North. On the morning it seemed as if there was a picket line on every street in Belfast!

At the Child Support Agency, the pickets defied the government limit of just six pickets on each entrance and had over 30 strikers there most of the day.

One civil servant joined the union on the CSA picket line, he had cycled all the way to work past government offices with pickets on them, once he got to the CSA he decided to strike

too.

Over 500 strikers then attended a rally organised by NIPSA at lunchtime. Hundreds marched to Transport House from the picket lines chanting 'low pay, no way, we want fair pay'.

Atmosphere

One striker, Peter, told *Socialist Worker*, "the atmosphere at the rally was electric, it really felt like we were fighting back, we felt powerful."

The picket lines at the CSA were maintained from 6.45am until 5.15pm, "our workplace is right beside the bus stop, all day the bus drivers were waving at us and beeping their horn, it was a really amazing feeling"

Brian told *Socialist Worker*. "All day we were discussing what we should do next, there is a real mood here for fighting, the work

to rule and overtime ban have started but after today loads of people were saying that we need more days like this."

The atmosphere in Derry was similar, although there most pickets were made up only of Branch officers, with numbers on the picket line being kept within the legal limit of six on each entrance.

The level of solidarity from postal workers etc. was similar to Belfast and it was difficult to talk on the picket line sometimes because of the number of cars honking support for the strikers.

At the recently decentralised Pensions Branch, Johnny told *Socialist Worker*, "people here are having to work seven day weeks to earn a decent wage. You shouldn't have to work Saturday and Sunday, especially when you have children, just to bring home a living wage. But so many people



■ Nipsa strikers on the picket line

here work through the weekend, it means our overtime ban will really have an effect".

Daniel agreed, "Some people would be better off on benefits, really, the pay is so poor.

"It's a disgrace that top civil servants got a pay rise of four to nine percent of an awful lot of money while even four percent of our lousy wage would be just a couple of quid. And then we see the MLAs getting paid maybe three, four times

what we earn—for doing nothing."

Maura said "Management has been scare-mongering among the temporary casuals, telling them they are more likely to be let go if they respect the pickets.

"We had to reassure them and many joined the union. The temporaries who respected the pickets this morning showed great courage and solidarity. There are 230 of us in this building and only about 20

are in, mostly management."

Class

Across the North, the NIPSA strike saw thousands of Protestant and Catholic workers standing shoulder to shoulder, putting the interests of their class ahead of 'their' community.

As Ryan McKinney, chair of NIPSA's No. 8 branch told *Socialist Worker*: "This strike is important in showing the Protestant and Catholic workers have

more in common with each other than with their politicians who tell them their allegiance should be to 'their community'.

"Strikes like this show the sectarian polarisation we saw in the elections isn't the only force at work in Northern Ireland.

"Workers' struggles can provide from below a counterforce to the sectarianism being whipped up from the top."

Oxigen strikers fight on for union rights

FIFTY-SEVEN SIPTU members have been on strike at Oxigen for more than two months in their demand for the right to representation.

It is a crucial battle for the trade union movement in Dublin.

Despite all the talk of social partnership, the state and the local authorities are directly colluding with the Oxigen bosses to break this strike.

Scabs who have been sent to Oxigen have openly acknowledged that they heard about the 'job' through an advertisement in FAS.

The strikers have urgently asked their SIPTU colleagues in FAS to black these advertisements.

Once the company heard about their workers joining a union, they embarked on a wholesale campaign of intimidation.

One of the union activists was accused of harassing another employee—and then denied the right to have representation to defend himself.

He was also stopped on the Naas road by a truck and then someone in a Mercedes and threatened with fists.

His house was visited by people who answered to a similar description to those who intimidated him on the Naas Rd.

Burnt

A caravan which was supplied to the strikers to help organise pickets was burnt down.

Grease has been sprayed

on a wall workers where were picketing nearby and a blue line has been drawn which they are not allowed to pass.

This has been enforced by the Gardaí while scabs who have driven at speed towards strikers have not been reprimanded.

The workers have struck because their conditions are far worse than similar council employees are.

They are supposed to collect 1400 bins a day compared to 1100 on the

councils' routes.

They have to keep working until all the bins are collected—and get no overtime rates.

'We have elastic hours at Oxigen' is how one activist put it.

If SIPTU is beaten at Oxigen, it will have huge repercussions for the council staff.

This is why it is vital that SIPTU throw its weight behind these workers.



■ Oxigen: the fight goes on

Now SIPTU must fight

SIPTU began the strike well by calling a protest during working hours of the council staff in solidarity.

But now they are fighting with one hand tied behind their back.

Oxigen activists who have spoken to *Socialist Worker* have made a number of suggestions that SIPTU needs to implement.

Organise a proper strike fund – which the strikers control themselves.

At present donations go to the SIPTU head office—and workers do not have clear ideas where they are getting support. SIPTU should urge its members to make regular contributions and ensure that representatives of the strikers control the funds.

Black all products associated with Oxigen. At the moment, South Dublin Council leases trucks from Oxigen. SIPTU should be telling its members to black

these trucks while the strike is on.

Organise pickets on depots, which Oxigen uses to process its waste. SIPTU should issue an open call to the anti-bin tax campaign to help on this.

The issue facing the union is simple – are they willing to do what it takes to win – or are the Oxigen workers going to become another victims of the softly, softly approach of social partnership.

Another Europe is possible

Around 70 people met in December to discuss organising a campaign for an alternative Europe.

Participants came from a variety of social movements including Dublin Bin Tax Campaign, Irish Anti War Movement, Oxigen strikers, trade unions and members of Labour, the Green Party, Sinn Fein, the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party.

The meeting set up a working group to organise key mobilisations over the next six months under the slogan Another Europe is Possible.

■ February 15th when the Article 133 committee of the EU—which is responsible for pushing the GATS agenda—meets in Dublin

■ May 1st, to counter the official Launch Party for the new EU

■ The meeting agreed to back the large scale protest against the US occupation of Iraq of March 20 called by the anti war movement.

■ THE Ballyfermot Community Alliance (BCA) and the Anti-Bin Tax Campaign have agreed to hold a Another Europe is Possible forum in the coming weeks.

The local groups are very keen to get involved in the organised opposition that will take place during Ireland's time as President of Europe (see page five for more details).

★ **OVER €1,100 was raised at a recent Ballyfermot fundraiser for the striking Oxigen bin workers.**

The fundraiser was organised by a number of local organisations including those fighting the Community Employment Scheme cuts and the Anti-Bin Tax Campaign.

Oxigen workers are on strike to demand union recognition.

The anti-bin tax campaign in the Ballyfermot area is also carrying out a boycott of the green bins. Oxigen has the contract to collect green bins with Dublin City Council.

Over fifty workers, members of SIPTU have been on strike for over two months to demand union recognition at the anti-union firm.

Why not take up a collection or hold a fundraiser. Send your messages of support or financial support to Oxigen Strike, c/o Paul Smith, Liberty Hall, Dublin 2.

Socialist Worker

inside:

IRELAND E.U. PRESIDENCY:
ANOTHER EUROPE IS POSSIBLE
PAGE 5

WHAT IS THE REASON FOR WAR AND U.S. IMPERIALISM?

PAGE 6 & 7

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

BIN TAX:

THE FIGHT CONTINUES

THE FIRST round of the Bin Tax campaign may be over but we need to carry on the struggle into the new year.

That was the message as over 100 activists attended the conference of anti-bin tax campaigns in early December

Anti bin tax activists from across the campaigns in the city and county said that the national media had ignored the huge numbers of people who continued to refuse to pay the tax in Dublin.

Speakers also condemned the jailing of Bin Tax protesters while Tax Dodges and Ansbacker Account holders walked free.

The conference was told that only 29.8 percent had paid in full for the three years in Dublin City and non-payment was holding up well despite the vicious campaign of intimidation by the Councils and the government.

The non-payment level in South Dublin stands at 58 percent.

Resistance

In the immediate future the campaign needs to keep up the resistance in local areas.

"In the recent past, since September, we have had mass meetings of over 250 in seven areas and during the height of the struggle groups of residents of between 30 to 50 monitored the bin collection

ades in the New Year if non-collection attempted.

"Initially we plan a round of mass meetings linking the issue of bin tax to all the stealth taxes and privatisation.

Alliance

"We propose a City wide demo against the bin tax to coincide with the 20 February EU meeting on privatisation in Dublin and we are in favour of building an alliance to stand in the local elections in June."

The struggle so far has been fought to a stalemate even though activists have been imprisoned and the campaign attacked in the media.

Based on their record in the bin tax struggle the campaign should also make it clear that it will be supporting a platform of candidates in the upcoming local and European elections.

Mass meetings need to be called in each area to democratically give the endorsement to particular left wing candidates who have a record of struggle in their area.

The pressure must continue as the struggle against this double taxation continues in 2004.

LESS THAN 30% HAVE PAID IN FULL IN DUBLIN CITY

in about 20 estates over a month," said Richard Boyd Barrett from the Dun Laoghaire campaign.

"In a few affluent areas non-collection has been attempted. In two other areas, people have stymied non-collection by throwing the refuse into the back of the truck.

"We understand that Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Council will try tagging in two pilot areas in 2004 and that they are planning a sizeable increase in the charge.

"We have a big activist base and will impose block-

GIVE THEM BACK THEIR RUBBISH!

MEMBERS of the Anti-Bin Tax campaign in Ballyfermot and Crumlin let their feelings be known on the lack of recycling facilities in their area last month.

The Crumlin / Drimnagh / Walkinstown/ Ballyfermot anti bin tax campaign has started to return packaging to supermarkets under Section 29(i) of the Waste Management Act 1996.

Superquinn, Tesco and Dunnes all received trolley loads of packaging.

After solidarity blockades, regular public meetings of over 500 and widespread non-payment (estimated at over 80 percent), the D12 campaigns tried a new tactic returning the packaging.

On Thursday 11 December members of the campaign in Ballyfermot handed in a protest letter to the local Tesco store and brought back all their used packaging for recycling.

"We handed in a letter telling the manager that we wanted recycling facilities to be provided for the con-

sumer," said Brid Smith from the local Anti-Bin Tax campaign.

"He told us that Tesco were a member of Repak. But the problem with Repak is that they only look after Tesco's waste not those of us who buy the goods.

"We left our packaging with the manager of the store. We really want to highlight the whole issue about the polluter pays principle.

"In this case we are not the polluter and it should not be up to the consumer. There should be proper recycling facilities freely available.

"Only 15 percent of all waste is produced by households, that means the other 85 percent is produced by industry and agriculture."

There was a similar protest at the local supermarket in Crumlin on the same night.

The protest was held to coincide with the High Court case of three people in the Ballyfermot area who have refused to pay their

arrears on the bin tax. The judgement in the case has been reserved and will not be delivered until the new year.

Each of the main supermarkets got a visit with about 15 people at Superquinn, Sundrive Road and 50 at the Crumlin shopping centre (where Dunnes and Tesco have branches). The Supermarkets had got wind of what was up and had placed signs on the doors saying 'No Litter—we pay Repak and don't have to take packaging back.'

However, the campaign had letters to hand in to the store managers which quoted the relevant legislation

"29 (i) requires the owner or manager of a supermarket, service station or other sales outlet to provide, free of charge, specified facilities at such an outlet for the removal by customers of packaging... and receptacles for the deposit of such packaging."