

# Socialist Worker

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## Obituary: The Sopranos

Is life worth living after the Sopranos? In the eight years it has been on our screens it has transformed the entire medium of television, making artistically innovative and compelling television. Page 11



## Ireland's immigration after McDowell

Kevin Brophy, solicitor for the Agbonloh family deported in August talks about the asylum process in Ireland and what changes have happened since Michael McDowell's exit from office. Page 10

## Multicultural Ireland?

"The recent debate on a Sikh man wearing a turban while on duty with the Garda highlighted the limits of multiculturalism in Ireland". Steve Loyal explains the debates around multiculturalism. Page 10



## Academic freedom in danger

Two academics in Germany have been arrested and imprisoned under terror legislation. US and European universities are witnessing a crackdown on left wing academics under the cover of the 'war on terror'. Page 9

## The end of cheap food?

'Bio-fuels' are being presented as the solution to Global Warming and the West's reliance on oil. But will they cause mass starvation in the third world so you can fill up your car's petrol tank? Page 6



# WILL THE GREENS KEEP AHERN IN POWER?

By Donal Mac Fhearraigh

Bertie Ahern is before the Morris Tribunal this month to answer questions about his mysterious money arrangements. Ahern will be questioned crucially about the 'dig-outs' and 'whip-arounds' he claims he was given by 'friends' and, more importantly, other large lodgments he made to his personal bank account between 1993 and 1995 that amounted to €148,000. Ahern's story is full of contradictions.

Ahern was originally due to give evidence to the tribunal before the general election in May but the tribunal was suspended so Ahern would not have to answer the allegations during the election.

Ahern claimed in April that he was given IR£22,000 by friends in 1993 to buy his house in Drumcondra but in 2006 Ahern's accountant said the same money was used to pay for his marital separation from his wife Miriam.

Then there is the \$45,000 lodged in the AIB in 1994.

Ahern claims this was in fact Stg £28,700 he got from his landlord to refurbish his house and denies it was dollars despite the exchange rate on the day matching the sum exactly and the bank records showing \$45,000 was received that day.

All of this came to light after the Morris Tribunal - tasked with investigating planning corruption - asked to see Ahern's bank accounts because it was told by property developer Tom Gilmartin that a Cork based property developer, Owen O'Callaghan, paid Ahern IR£80,000 to smooth the way for the Liffey Valley shopping centre at Quarryvale in west Dublin.

The Tribunal believes Ahern's money came from O'Callaghan rather than from some dodgy landlord or 'whip-arounds'.

Ahern and O'Callaghan are linked via a Los Angeles brokerage firm, Chilton O'Connor, hence the importance of the dollar lodgement. Ahern has admitted he met O'Callaghan and a Chilton O'Connor director in 1994 to discuss a major project

O'Callaghan was undertaking at Liffey Valley, Co Dublin.

Ahern will try to play the victim and focus the debate on whether or not the sum was dollars or another currency.

Michael Wall, Ahern's friend and landlord, who we are asked to believe spent Str£28,700 refurbishing Ahern's brand new house (almost the cost of a house at the time), will also answer questions at the tribunal. Wall later gifted Ahern the house, though Ahern claims it was a loan, he just forgot to repay it until it was brought to public attention.

It's beyond credibility that the Ahern, Minister for Finance of the country at the time, a trained accountant, didn't keep account of his financial affairs.

Unfortunately the Greens have made it clear they will ditch all principles to get into government.

The Greens as a radical force in Irish politics are dead. Its time for Green Party members and supporters to draw this conclusion and join a left that is about more than just electoral politics.



# Aer Lingus pilots demand equal wages

## A struggle to defend all airport workers' conditions

By Kieran Allen

Aer Lingus Pilots are the latest group to confront 'outsourcing'.

While much of the media focus on Aer Lingus has been on the Shannon-Heathrow slots, the real agenda of its management has been neglected.

By opening a new base in Belfast, Aer Lingus hope to create a wedge to reduce the wages and conditions of its staff.

By contrast, the pilots union IALPA, supports the opening of a Belfast base and moves to

an all-island economy - but not one based on cutting wages and conditions.

Before privatisation, the Aer Lingus chief Dermot Mannion committed himself to honouring all collective agreements with staff.

In the immediate aftermath of the sell off, Aer Lingus wanted pilots moved to Cork as a matter of urgency. In accordance with a collective agreement with IALPA this occurred when the Cork pilots got the same pay and condition as those in Dublin.

But a very different tone was adopted with the Belfast move.

From the start, the company played a peculiar political game to cover its real agenda.

Twenty serving Aer Lingus pilots expressed an interest in returning to the North to work there. Thirty new pilots in all would be needed.

But they were told that they would first have to resign from their positions in Dublin and start on new terms and conditions.

Mannion also deliberately played with sectarian politics to

carry through his plan for outsourcing.

In a letter sent to IALPA on 7 August, the company said 'We fear that if our Dublin based pilots are given first refusal on any new pilot positions in Belfast, there will be a very strong perception these are 'Roman Catholic' jobs to the exclusion of Protestants. This could leave the airline open to attack from the Northern Irish press and, more, significantly open to fair employment tribunal claims'.

The cynicism here was breath taking.

No one - bar the Aer Lingus management had raised a concern about the religion of pilots based in Belfast.

The main union which represents Catholic and Protestant workers at the airport came out against attempts to stoke up sectarianism as a cover for reducing pay and conditions.

UNITE regional secretary Jimmy Kelly said 'We are not going to tolerate Aer Lingus parachuting into Belfast and using workers wages and conditions in the drive to push down costs. If Aer Lingus want

to save costs, they can do it by reducing directors bonuses or shareholders payouts'

Aer Lingus is trying to do two things with the Belfast move.

It wants pilots to have lower pension entitlements than those in Dublin, with no guaranteed pension payments.

It wants to reduce the capacity of IALPA to bargain on such issues by refusing to enter negotiations with them now.

If they succeed with the pilots, other staff groups will face similar threats.

## Gramsci: A Marxist for today?



Chris Bambery looks at how the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, developed Karl Marx's analysis of ideology and what it means for how socialists should organize in the modern world. Page 7

## Afghanistan: The hidden war

Britain and the US admit to "difficulties" in Iraq, but continue to sell Afghanistan as "the good war". Behind the hype, the occupation is failing and destabilising allies like Pakistan. Page 9

## The 'sub-prime' market crash

Chaos reigns in stock exchanges across the world since the end of July. Peadar O'Grady explains what is behind the stock market crisis. Page 5



## Paying the cost of the housing crisis

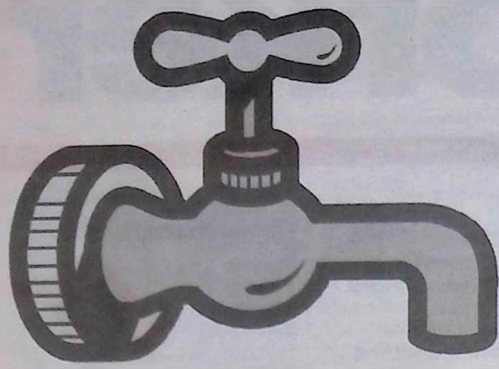
US Banks squeezed by the credit crisis are passing on the costs to consumers by increasing mortgage and credit card interest rates. It could happen here if the housing bubble bursts. Page 5

## Aer Lingus and Shannon

Kieran Allen asks if workers can rely on employers like Michael O'Leary to oppose Aer Lingus plans or do they need their own independent opposition? Page 6 & 7







## The case for water charges has evaporated

by Eamonn McCann

The case for the non-payment campaign has been clinched.

These are the conclusions from a paper on the future of the water service by David Hall, director of the Public Services Research Unit at the University of Greenwich.

The paper was commissioned by the North's public service union Nipsa. It formed the basis of the trade unions' argument to the review panel which will report to the Executive next month on the funding options available for the future.

The alternatives outlined by Hall are not revolutionary. Indeed, they are in line with the pledges on water charges made by all the mainstream parties during the Assembly election in March.

Of course, this doesn't mean that the main parties will adopt Hall's proposals.

All the indications are that they intend to renege on their promises by claiming that the British Treasury won't supply the funds for them to deliver.

Hall provides irrefutable figures to show that not only have we been paying for water all along, but that the amount we pay has been increasing year on year.

In 1999, according to a government consultation paper, the average domestic rate-payer in the North was coughing up £127 a year for water and sewerage. It was then that the practice was abandoned of indicating on bills what percentage of the rates was earmarked for particular services.

However, the amount we have been paying for water since 1999 isn't difficult to work out. Between then and now, domestic rates rose by around 85 percent. Apply this figure to water, and we find that we were paid £235 per household last year.

Water charges would be on top of this bill. There's no suggestion that the introduction of charges would mean a reduction in rates.

In effect, imposing water charges would amount to an increase in rates. Under the scheme devised by the consultants brought in by New Labour—cost to us so far, £18.5 million—the level of charges would be based on house prices—essentially the basis on which domestic rates are calculated.

Separating out the two streams of revenue increases costs. Hall reckons that the price of running Northern Ireland Water—the Government-owned company, or GoCo, set up as a half-way-house to privatisation—would come to £50 million a year over the next seven years—27 percent of total operating expenditure.

Put another way, getting rid of the GoCo, abandoning charges and continuing to fund the water service through the regional rate would save £50 million per annum.

And then there's the missing "green dowry." The phrase refers to the £6.6 billion handed by Thatcher's Government to the private companies which took over water in England and Wales in 1989.

(Their £5 billion debts were written off and £1.6 billion donated towards investment in new infrastructure.)

Hall makes a calculation which factors in inflation and relative population levels and estimates the equivalent dowry for Northern Ireland at £386 million. But instead, Northern Ireland Water is to be saddled with an "assigned" debt of £150 million.

The £6.6 billion gifted to the private companies across the water came from the tax-payer—including tax-payers in the North. Far from free-loading on regions in Britain, the North has subsidised them. Or subsidised the profiteers who now run their water services.

The real reason for the persistence of the Treasury and of powerful interests in the North in pushing water charges has to do with privatisation.

The point of charges is to provide a revenue flow for the private company which it's intended will own and control the water and sewerage service a few years hence.

Under legislation brought in by the Direct Rule regime, the Government-owned Northern Ireland Water can move to full-blown privatisation without coming back to Westminster, the Assembly or anyone else for permission.

Could the Executive in these circumstances get rid of Northern Ireland Water and abandon the plan for charges?

It could indeed, especially if it was able to explain to the Treasury—the plan for charges can't work if the people won't pay, and that's what they are telling us in their hundreds of thousands.

In a twisted way, mass non-payment will help Sinn Féin, the DUP and the others to keep their election promises!

Members of the SWP are working with a wide range of campaigners in communities across the North and through the trade union movement to ensure that the movement for non-payment makes it impossible for the privatisation project to go ahead. Every socialist should get involved.

# Justice for Terence Wheelock



By Sinead Kennedy

The 'Justice for Terence Wheelock' campaign have called a Public Meeting on Saturday 15th September at 1 pm in the Lourdes Parish Hall, Sean McDermot's Street. Leading campaigner, journalist and activist Eamonn McCann will speak.

Terence Wheelock died in 2005, three months after he fell into a coma while in Garda

custody.

While the Gardaí continue to insist that Terence tried to hang himself in his cell using the string from his tracksuit, Terence's family have never believed this official version of events.

Even the inquest earlier this year raised more questions than answers.

For example, Terence's body has covered in marks and

his family say 'there wasn't a mark on him' before he was taken into custody and no marks were noted by the arresting gardai when he was taken into custody.

His family maintained that the marks on his body show that he had 'taken a beating' while he was in custody.

In the two years since Terence's death the family have found themselves thwarted in

their every attempt to find out what happened to Terence that night at the Garda Station in Store's street.

However, after much campaigning, they have finally won a small victory.

It was announced at the end of July that Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission is to investigate the circumstance surrounding the death of Terence.

## Protest for outpatients' transport services

By Sinead Kennedy

About a hundred and fifty people protested outside of Mayo General Hospital recently. They were demanding that Western Health Service Executive (HSE) fully reinstate transport services for outpatients.

The ambulance service in the Mayo area has declined significantly over the last number of years and the protesters are demanding that it be brought back up to 2004 levels.

Some of the patients who are affected by these cutbacks include wheelchair users, cancer patients, people waiting on transplants.

One of the protesters, Mary, spoke to Socialist Worker about why she was there:

'I'm here on behalf of my

mother who suffers from bad arthritis.

'She has to travel to Belfast a bit for check-ups but she's a pensioner.

'She's too old to travel on her own so one of us has to go with her.

'Now they're saying she has got up there on her own, they're no longer providing transport.

'I don't drive so someone else in the family has to take time off work to get her there. Living in the country means that you rely on things like this more, it's not like living in Dublin.'

But Mary said 'Everyone here is very determined and his is just the beginning'.

The protests plan to continue their action over the coming weeks.



The ambulance service in the Mayo area has declined

## Save Ormeau Park



By Sean Mitchell

The Save Ormeau Park (SOP) campaign organised an 80 strong public meeting at the start of September to debate whether or not a stadium should be built in the Park as proposed by Belfast City Council.

The Northern Assembly wants to locate the national all-purpose stadium at the Maze—former home of the H-blocks.

Belfast City Council is pushing to have it built at Ormeau Park instead. There was overwhelming rejection of this proposal at the meeting.

The Council has commissioned the University of Ulster to

produce a report arguing that Ormeau Park is the best place for such a venture.

The authors interviewed many people with business interests, but failed to consult a single resident or user of the park.

Whilst there may be sound reasons to build the stadium in Belfast there are plenty of brown-field sites such as the Titanic Quarter that are more suitable and doesn't result in another green space being lost to commercial interests.

The S.O.P. campaign plans to protest at the next meeting of the Committee of the Council responsible for pushing this anti-social agenda through.



## West Belfast wants creative development not private profit

By Gerry Carroll

The Stop the Sell off Campaign (SSOC) is stepping up the pressure against the proposed sell off of public land in West Belfast.

On Thursday 30th August a crowd that included local politicians staged a protest outside the Department of Social Development offices. The protest was called to force the DSD to reverse their decision to sell off the public land. The DSD were presented with 2000 petitions of opposition to the sell off.

The SSOC are organising a Reclaim the Site day for 15th September. There will be face painting, bouncy castles, and music from Tin Pot operation, Cruncher, the Andersonstown school of music and others.

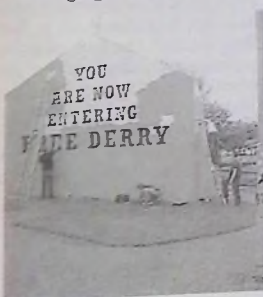
This is the beginning of a series of events in which local people start to 'Reclaim the site'. Such methods are designed to show DSD minister Margaret Ritchie and her colleagues that people wish to use the site creatively and actively rather than it being used as a money-spinner for private developers. The minister is due to make an announcement about the future of the site at the end of September. People are confident of winning the campaign. September 15th will go a long way to showing the defiance of the area.

## Foyle Gay Pride events in Derry

By Davey McAuley

The first Foyle Gay Pride in five years took place in Derry from the 13th until the 18th of August. Derry was once reputed to be the most homophobic city in Europe. Free Derry corner was painted bright pink for the week, images of which were broadcast all around the world.

The launch party had over two hundred people, gay and straight celebrating the launch of Gay Pride while a few dozen Free Presbyterians protested outside the event, carrying placards with Biblical quotes and singing hymns.



Free Derry Corner. Painted pink

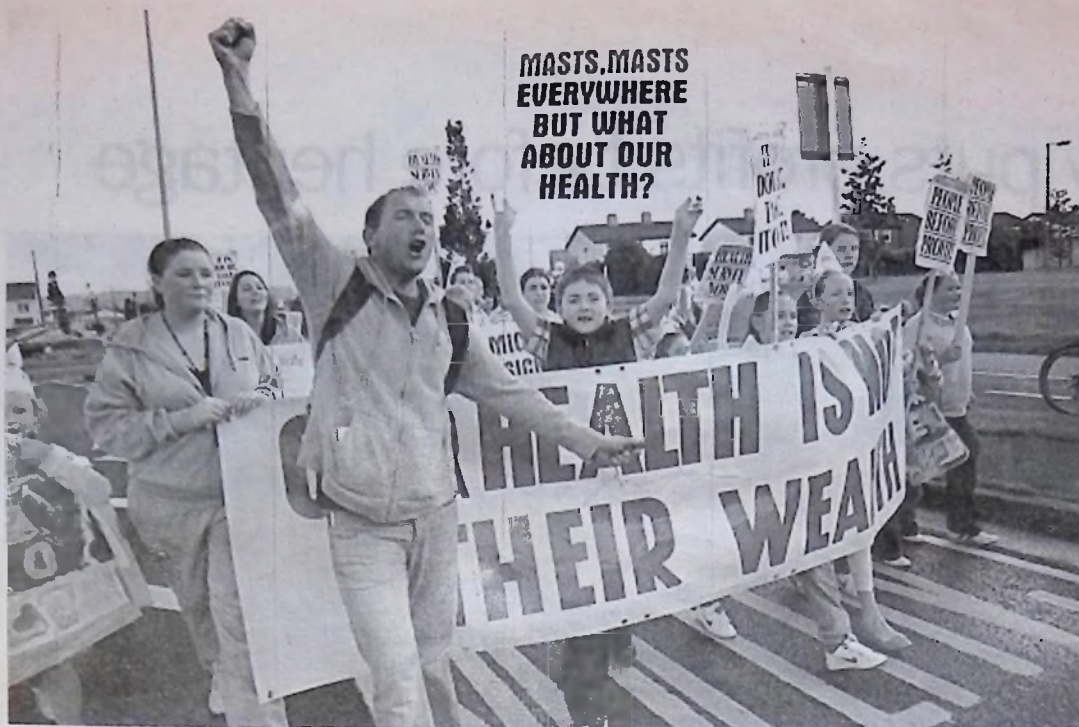
Four hundred people turned out to The Rock for Pride concert featuring the city's hottest young bands.

Another event which drew a huge crowd was 'The silver tongued Devils', an evening of poetry, which culminated in a stunning performance of Allen Ginsburg's howl performed by a cast that included Eamonn McCann.

A crowd of over one hundred people attended a conference on LGBT human rights.

Foyle Pride 2007 culminated with the Gay Pride Ball. A crowd of over four hundred people attended the glitzy event.

A massive success, plans are already underway for Pride 2008.



## Marching against the Mast in Clondalkin

Mast Action Clondalkin held a successful march with over 400 people protesting against a phone mast on Nellstown Garda station. The campaign has done a

health survey in the area where they suspect there is a cancer cluster due to the radiation from the phone mast and pylons. They will present the

health survey to Mary Harney, Minister for Health, on the 18th September and demand that the HSE carry out a full survey in the area. Nearly two hundred people

turned up to a fundraiser for the campaign at the end of August that raised 1000. A follow up information and activists meeting had 30 in attendance.

## 10,000 protest against Bush in Sydney



by Donal Mac Fhearraigh

10,000 marched against Bush and the war in Iraq at the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum in Sydney on the 8th September.

The New South Wales state Labor government tried to stop people protesting against Bush. They introduced draconian police powers and whipped up media scare-stories about "violent protests".

In spite of this and a heavy police presence on the day the march was a huge success.

Damien Lawson of The Stop Bush Coalition who organised

the march said "We're very happy, the turnout is double our expectations, there are at least 10,000 people here and it's been a very peaceful march.

"We got across the key issues: opposition to the war in Iraq, concern about climate change and opposition to John Howard's Work Choices."

Chants included "Howard, Bush, USA, how many kids did you kill today?", "Troops out now!", "The workers united will never be defeated!"

Banners included 'War criminals not welcome here - Bush go home'.

One group of protestors,

dressed in formal attire, called themselves 'Billionaires for Bush' and carried banners saying 'Blood for Oil', 'How Many Species Do You Really Need?' and 'Clean Air, Can't Sell It, Who Needs It'.

Many other colourfully dressed or in costumes gave the march a carnival like atmosphere.

Mamdouh Habib, who was incarcerated in Guantanamo Bay and released without ever being charged, attended the march and said "George Bush is a great evil..."

"He should get out of this country".

## Postcard campaign to save St Michaels

By Donal Mac Fhearraigh

It was revealed in April that the developer Noel Smyth was in discussions with the St Vincent's Health Care Group, a holding company for the Sisters of Mercy, to buy St Michaels public hospital in Dun Laoghaire.

Smyth has already bought the land surrounding the hospital - St Michael's private nursing home and the car park used by the hospital staff and patients. He has lodged a planning permission to build eight and nine story apartment blocks on the car park site. He hopes that by doing so he will increase the pressure on the hospital to sell up. The St Vincent's Health Care Group said it was "disappointed the car park was sold" as in their view it is "an integral part of the current hospital service".

Smyth has struck a deal with Cosgrave Developments where he wants to re-locate the hospital to the site of the Dun Laoghaire Golf Club. This would probably also mean closing a public hospital and opening a private hospital on the new site.

People before Profit in Dun Laoghaire have lodged an objection to Smyth's planned apartments. Richard Boyd Barrett said, "We have launched a postcard campaign aimed at the local councillors. We want them to vary the county development plan to refine the zoning of the



St Michaels protest in Dun Laoghaire

hospital car park to be for hospital use only. This will force Smyth to sell the car park back to the public hospital and keep St Michaels public and at its current location".

"We are also calling for the services at St Michaels to be upgraded. We want the full 24 hour Accident and Emergency

department and the pediatric services restored".

"We have collected 6000 signatures on a petition in support of the campaign. 400 people attended the campaign launch meeting in July and 600 people marched through Dun Laoghaire on 14th July to save the hospital".

## Toxic dump excavation plans must halt

By Violet Wilken

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council wants to excavate and relocate 90,000 tonnes of 'municipal' waste which includes industrial, domestic and surgical waste, to the middle of the Ballyogan dump in South Dublin. Disturbing the dump risks releasing poisonous substances, toxic metals, ground and surface water pollution and leachate, and most seriously dangerous gasses such as methane gas which is odourless and fatal. Previously methane gas pockets have caused explosions in the dump.

Opened in 1975, residents were assured the dump would only be open for 3 years and only cover 3 acres - it now covers over 50 hectares. Health effects of the dump for those within 3km of the site include an alarming rate of congenital anomalies and cancer. The residents have asked for an independent risk assessment to be carried out after being told contingency plans for the safety of the workers working on the dump have been put in place.

The reason given for disturbing the dump is that ESB cables from pylons are sagging dangerously low to the ground. The residents suspect it has more to do with planned development in the area. Their suggestion of making the ESB pylons higher was not considered because it was not the cheapest option.

This dump is a public-private partnership between Green Star and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council. The result is huge benefits for the waste companies and dire consequences for resident's health.

A protest rally was held outside Dun Laoghaire Town Hall in early September and meetings are being organised across the Ballyogan/Carrickmines area in the coming weeks.

SAVE THE HILL OF TARA FROM THE M3 MOTORWAY

# LOVE TARA MARCH

Garden of Remembrance to Dept. of the Taoiseach, via the Custom House

Saturday, September 15th Starts at 1.00pm

sign petition at [www.tarawatch.org](http://www.tarawatch.org)

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# Gormley puts profits before heritage

By Donal Mac Fhearraigh

The campaign to save Tara issued a summons on the Irish Government in September over the M3 motorway and their refusal to do a new Environmental Impact Assessment following the discovery of major archaeological finds in the path of the M3. The court case is due to be heard in October.

Michael Canney, who is taking the case spoke to Socialist Worker, "The Tara landscape, the cradle of our civilisation, is being defaced in the name of private profit and political expediency. The destruction of sites over the last six months are acts of vandalism."

"Unregulated and profit driven property development is the cause of the transport crisis. The M3 was designed to increase traffic, car dependency and road toll profits".

Michael, a Green Party member, also criticized the Greens in Government, "It appears we are still closer to Boston than Berlin, despite the Greens being in Government".

"If they feel they got a great deal on Climate Change why don't they come out and say, OK, we sold out Tara, we sold out Shannon, we sold out Rosport but we got these commitments, instead of this hand-wringing nonsense".

"If the leadership of the Greens wanted to tackle Climate Change why is 80Bn of the National Development plan earmarked for motorways. The transport sector is the fastest increasing source of CO2 emissions".



Roestown: Facing destruction

"Anyone who has given any thought to the crisis facing the environment sees it is linked to consumerism and capitalism. I don't think the system as its presently structured can solve the problem".

Dr Muireann Ni Bhrolachain, lecturer in Irish Heritage in TCD, said "This decision shows the contempt

and arrogance of this Government when it comes to environmental concerns. This government continues to put sectoral interests above those of the common good".

"If the Greens do not respond to the campaigns I can see the Greens being devastated and taken apart at the next election because of their betrayals"

Seamus Heaney also added his support saying, "Protest against the loss of Tara and its heritage is vital. Fundamentally we are acting for the preservation of heritage as part of our national life".

For more info: [www.savetara.com](http://www.savetara.com); [www.tarapixie.net](http://www.tarapixie.net)

## EPA refuses to act

by Brid Smith

People Before Profit in Ballyfermot recently met with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to discuss the problems local people face living next to a Thorntons Recycling depot on Killeen Road.

Brid Smith of the campaign said, "Complaints received by the EPA were addressed but residents' representatives at the meeting were totally unhappy with the response from the EPA. We are now seeking a meeting with the EPA board and the HSE".

"Meantime we will continue our protests at the depot, our next protest is on Thursday 20th September at 3.30pm outside Thorntons on Killeen Road".

# Renewed Shell to Sea protests planned for Mayo

by Donal Mac Fhearraigh

The Shell to Sea Campaign is planning a number of days of action throughout September. The first will be on 14th September in Ballinaboy, Mayo. Sean Harrington from Shell to Sea gave an update to Socialist Worker about how the campaign is going.

"The Petroleum Affairs Division has admitted recently that the currently proposed refinery is only the tip of the iceberg for Erris. They intend to use Ballinaboy as the conduit for all future finds in the Corrib Basin. This will mean that all 450 acres of land granted to the multinationals by Frank Fahey will eventually be used as the complex is expanded, with all the human and environmental problems that will inevitably ensue".

"The refinery is being built in the catchment area of Carrowmore Lake, the water source for 10,000 Erris people, an almost unbelievable proposal which is being strongly opposed by ourselves and An Taisce".

"The Natural Resources of



Shell to Sea recent protest

Ireland have been given away to Shell, Statoil and others in a deal that means we pay

the market rate to the multinationals for what should be ours. Noel Dempsey, Min-

ister for the Environment, previously put their value as high as €1 Trillion. These is-

ssues go to the very heart of the type of country Ireland is becoming".

"The project currently has no route for the inland section of pipeline which will be carrying untreated, unodorised natural gas at at least twice the pressure of treated gas in normal gas pipelines. Eight potential routes are currently being proposed, with a modified route taking in some of Rosport being seen as one of the favourites. Once again there is great concern in the community as to how near to houses the pipeline might go".

"Shell are currently awaiting a decision on an Integrated Pollution Control Licence, granted provisionally by the E.P.A and challenged brilliantly by the local community, An Taisce and many other groups in a 3-week oral hearing last April. We fear that, even in the face of compelling presentations in opposition to the granting of the licence, political pressure on the E.P.A will be enormous. If the license is granted we will immediately bring a challenge in Europe".

more info: [www.shelltosea.org](http://www.shelltosea.org)

## YOUR RIGHTS AT WORK

### TUPE - Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employees)

By Ritchie Browne

One of the few pieces of industrial relations legislation that hardly differs as it applies in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is the TUPE—Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employees) legislation.

This is because the TUPE legislation comes from European Directive

2001/23/EC.

The legislation is quite detailed and there are some minor differences between the jurisdictions because of case law.

However, the purpose of the TUPE Regulations is to protect employees' terms and conditions when their employment is transferred to a new owner/employer.

This means that the continuity of service is preserved and that the new employer must honour the contracts of employment of existing employees, including rates of pay, hours

of work and annual leave entitlements.

It is important to note that pension rights are specifically excluded from TUPE and do not transfer to the new employment.

Neither the previous employer (the transferor) nor the new employer (the transferee) can use the fact of the sale as a justification for dismissing employees unless there are valid economic, technical or organisational grounds justifying changes in the workforce.

If an employee is dismissed because of a TUPE

transfer then the dismissal is automatically unfair and the employee can bring a claim for unfair dismissal.

However, a dismissal on economic, technical or organisational grounds is redundancy and the employee may have an entitlement to a redundancy payment if he/she qualifies.

The regulations also cover situations where part of the business is sold, and they protect the employees working in that part of the business in the same way as if the entire business was sold.

Collective agreements made between a trade union and the old employer also transfer to the new employer and are treated in the same way as if they had been made with the new employer.

All employees affected by the transfer which includes employees working for the old employer and those working for the new employer have the right to be informed and consulted in advance of the transfer and the employer must inform and consult with the trade union and elected workplace representatives prior to the transfer.

Employees who are transferred under TUPE will have their terms and conditions of employment protected but because TUPE does not apply to any subsequent new staff there is nothing to prevent employers taking on new recruits after the transfer on less favourable terms.

The potential is the creation of a two-tier workforce with employees working alongside each other doing the same job but on different pay and conditions, which undermines collective agreements and weakens union organisation.





# Stock market crash and 'sub-prime' mortgages

By Peadar O'Grady

Chaos reigns in stock exchanges across the world since the end of July. On Friday 11<sup>th</sup> August European stock markets had their biggest one-day falls in 4 years. By September the Irish stock index, the ISEQ, had dropped by almost 12% since 2006 wiping out billions in share prices.

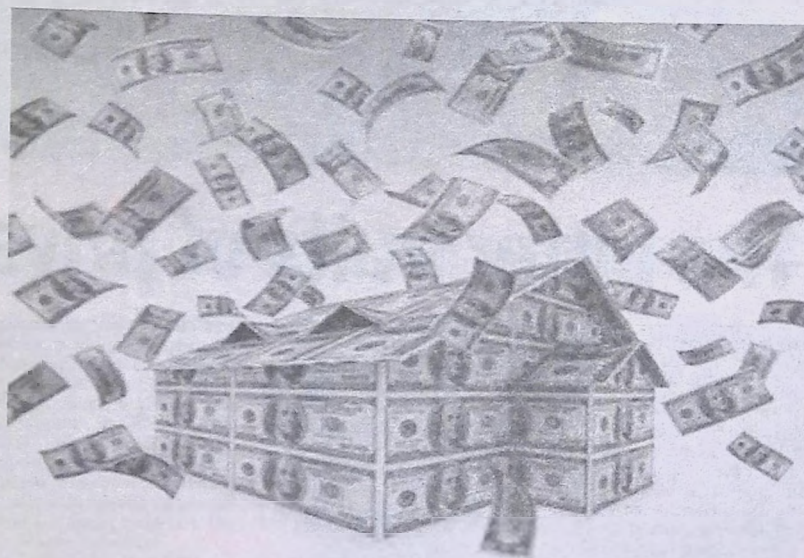
The crash is blamed on the US housing crisis. In the US, low interest rates of 1% in 2001 fuelled a housing boom which crashed, in March this year when rates had risen to 5.25%. Homeowners are defaulting on payments and housing prices are falling as people try to sell or have their house repossessed by the bank.

Like in Ireland, US banks sold large mortgages, with little or no deposit and low interest rates or with interest-free periods or fixed rate periods. During the boom the rising price of their house meant people could remortgage for cash to keep up with payments and keep afloat. Rising interest rates, and the sudden 'resetting' of the interest rate to a higher rate, meant many people could no longer afford the repayments and didn't pay (defaulted). Resetting will peak in October 2007 and remain very high for 2008 so American workers have not even felt the worst impact yet. This is also why the stock markets have the jitters.

As more people had to sell their house the price of houses fell and those keeping afloat by remortgaging no longer had a surplus they could mortgage (negative equity) and they defaulted too, accelerating the crash in house prices and repossessions. Hardest hit, as ever, are the poorest families who have 'sub-prime' mortgages. These are mortgages at higher interest rates sold to poor families with low incomes and poor credit records (no savings, large credit card debts, other large loans owed or defaulted on etc). Regular mortgage interest rates are 5 or 6% but sub-prime rates are as high as 11 or 12%.

## Crisis spreads

The crisis of debt defaults in mortgages has had a knock-on effect across other areas of the US economy, particularly banking and finance but also construction (falling house prices means for-profit builders



build fewer houses). More than 100 mortgage lenders have gone bankrupt in the US so far this year.

The financial system is reeling because banks had sold these mortgages on, bundled together in complicated financial packages with a range of titles like CDOs or ABSs, to other banks and financial institutions like Goldman Sachs (whose share price plummeted by 30%) or by 'Hedge Funds' like Bears Stearns (Hedge Funds act like stock brokers to large corporate investors).

Like in the Enron scandal, the crisis involved false reporting. This time it was credit rating agencies lying about how risky the debts being bought and sold were. Many financial corporations borrowed money to buy these debt packages. Many banks, hedge funds, insurance companies and pension funds are now trying to hide how much money they have tied up in these debts ('exposure'). The cover-up is adding to further panic among investors who want to sell off shares in any company with heavy exposure.

A further knock-on is due to banks tightening up on credit in general, worsening the house price crash but also affecting loans for big finance buying of companies and mergers (so-called 'Leveraged Buy-Outs', LBOs, because they use huge loans as a lever to buy the company). The ability of com-

panies to accumulate capital by centralising it through 'mergers and acquisitions' is crucial to capitalism as a system.

The European Central Bank has bailed out banks with fixed rate loans (at 4%) to the tune of over €200 billion to date. Unfortunately for the US, one of the biggest buyers of US debt products, China, is getting cold feet about buying any more, adding further to fears of a bigger bust to come.

Money is the lifeblood of Capitalism. If the credit crunch worsens and share prices continue to fall the global economy will suffer. Shifts in investment may hit manufacturing and services, but not in any planned way causing further disruption and job losses. Less consumer spending will mean unsold goods will pile up in a glutted market with workers laid off and a further fall in consumption.

## Lessons

The main lessons for socialists are that mega profits for banks in recent years means workers eventually are the ones to pay for the inevitable crisis through losing their homes and experiencing increasing interest rates, debts and job losses.

This crash is part of the 'boom and bust' cycle which is built in to the Capitalist system of production. Profit and competition drive booms in credit and production which in turn inevitably lead to slumps as speculation and overproduction

outstrip the ability of ordinary people to afford to pay for the products and services supplied to markets.

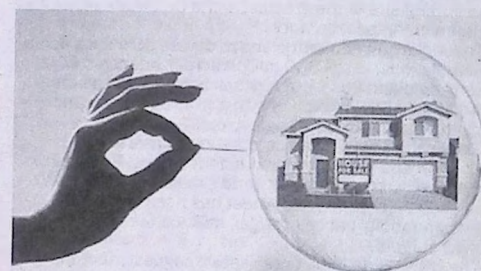
Capitalist globalisation means also that a crisis in one area (housing in the US) can cause chaos in the world economy because of a lack of any regulations or planning to halt the knock-on effects. An international socialist economy, controlled by workers and based on production for need rather than greed, would not have these crises.

Ireland, because of its 'open' economy and involvement in finance and stocks is very vulnerable to 'market volatility' as US and other multinationals close down. Job losses in Ireland are increasing recently. It is also true that the conditions for a housing and construction crash in Ireland are similar to those in the US and are a forewarning of the defaults and repossessions to come here. Also, construction is such a large part of the Irish economy that the effects would be greater in Ireland than elsewhere.

We urgently need protection for Irish workers facing ruin by having proper housing and financial policies in Ireland including:

- Proper financial regulation and taxes/levies on bankers and financial speculators.
- Lending money and building houses on a not-for-profit basis.

## Housing Crisis in the USA – Workers paying the cost



By Peadar O'Grady

Stephanie Cannizzaro is one of the many victims of the U.S. mortgage mess.

Stephanie says she and her husband, a New Jersey transit worker, were bamboozled last year by a company called New Century Mortgage into refinancing their home loan with an adjustable rate mortgage that started at an interest rate of 11.3 percent and required a monthly payment of \$2,900.

The Cannizzaros missed the last four months of payments and face foreclosure. If they lose their home, Stephanie doesn't know where she, her husband and their three teenage children will end up.

In the US in July, Banks repossessed over 200,000 family homes from mainly poor working class families. Estimates for the year 2007 as a whole are for more than 2 million repossessions.

Wage rates for workers in the US have been stagnant since the 1970s and cutbacks in public housing have meant mortgages have become the only option to get a house and a source of income or a pension. In addition, the rising cost of living, like food and fuel prices, have pushed families to run up expensive loans and credit card debts.

The average household debt in the US is \$12,000 but this is even higher for poor families and a bigger slice of their income. Banks squeezed by the credit crisis are passing on the costs to consumers by further increasing mortgage and credit card interest rates, deepening the crisis for workers.

US food charities known as 'food banks' are running short of food as more and more families lose their homes and approach them for help.

In Ireland the story of cuts in public housing and mortgages at 5 or 6 times income with low interest introductory periods and resetting of rates are familiar to us. The price of houses is falling here too, opening up the prospect of workers being stuck with a mortgage that is more than the price of the house (negative equity). The interest rates are rising too and banks can raise credit card and mortgage interest rates further, even if the European Central Bank lowers its rate.

The prospect for defaults and repossessions in Ireland is rising and draws attention to the profit-driven policies on housing and lending that are pushing Irish workers into more and more impossible levels of debt.





# The end of cheap food?

By Sinead Kennedy

As the debate about climate changes intensifies, 'bio-fuels' or 'agro-fuels' are being presented as the solution to the West's over reliance on oil. Even the term itself, bio-fuels, invokes images of renewability and abundance – a clean, green, sustainable technology, a happy marriage of nature and technology.

The image allows politicians, multinationals, the World Bank and even the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to present fuels made from corn, sugarcane, soy, maize and other crops as next step in a smooth transition from peak oil to a new renewable fuel economy.

George Bush wants US farmers to produce 35 billion gallons of non-fossil transport fuels by 2017 to help reduce US dependency on imported oil, heralding bio-fuels as 'the future of America'. An the US is not alone – governments in Europe, Japan and China are also committing themselves to renewable energy schemes to provide 10% by of transport fuel by 2020.

So, are they the easy solution to our looming environmental catastrophes?

Well, like most of George Bush's 'solutions' this one doesn't quiet live up to its rosy picture.

These targets far exceed the agricultural capacities of the industrialised West: Europe would need to plant 70% of its farmland to fuel, while the US's entire corn and soy harvest would need to be processed as ethanol.

Once again the West are looking greedily to at the arable land of the developing world as a solution to their fuel demands, while governments in these countries seem eager to oblige.

Land that was once being used to grow food is now being transferred over to the production of 'agro-fuels', representing one of the greatest shifts that world agriculture has seen in the past century.

The Indian government plans to devote 35 million acres to biofuel crops, Brazil 300 million acres, Indonesia 65 million acres and Southern Africa is being touted as the future Middle East of biofuel with 1 billion acres of land ready to be converted into agro-crops.

These changes are rapidly creating a crisis in food production and huge increases in food prices. Because America exports most of the world's maize, its price has doubled in 10 months, and wheat has risen about 50%. World commodity prices of sugar, milk, coffee and cocoa have all surged.

The UN's World Food organisation suggests that the demand for agro-fuels will increase almost twofold in the next five years, while the OECD, a club of the 30 richest countries in the world, is predicting that global food prices will increase by between 20% and 50% over the next ten years.

Nestlé, the world's largest food company, has said that food prices will remain high for as long as anyone could see into the future. It is very likely that these increases in food prices could trigger inflation in an already unstable world economy.

The world's population is rising by 87 million people a year and developing countries like China and India are switching to meat based diets which are more land intensive: it takes 7kg of grain to produce 1kg of beef.

These increases in agricultural production also require accelerated demands for water.

The World Bank reports that water tables are falling in countries that contain over half the world's people. Yet few people seem to be making the connection that water shortages mean food shortages.

In the last three years the rapid concentration of power within the agro-fuels industry is breath-taking. Venture capital investment in agro-fuels has increased by 800%. Private investment is being poured into public research institutions. For example BP just gave half a billion dollars to the University of California. Behind the scenes, multinational oil, agricultural and genetic engineering corporations – for example, ADM and Monsanto, Chevron and Volkswagen and BP, Dupont and Toyota – are forming powerful partnerships. These corporations are consolidating the research, production, processing and distribution chains of our food and fuel under one colossal and industrial roof.

However, these changes are not taking place unchallenged. In India, increases of 11% of food prices provoked wide-spread protests this year. The price of the staple tortilla quadrupled in Mexico in February and crowds of 75,000 people came on to the streets in protest and China was forced to halt all new planting of corn for ethanol after staple foods such as pork soared by 42% last year.

When George Bush arrived in Brazil to establish an ethanol partnership with Lula, 700 women from Via Campesina greeted him by occupying Cargill's sugar mill in Sao Paulo in protest. They understood that derailing these agro-fuels juggernaut is about creating a political movement that puts resources in the hands of rural peoples.



# The bitter fruits of privatisation

By Kieran Allen

When Bertie Ahern set out to privatise Aer Lingus, he knew the way to defuse opposition was to talk nice. There were plenty of 'assurances' and an emphasis on a 'partnership approach'. Only in this way could the previously unthinkable be achieved – the sell off of the national airline.

So Transport Minister Martin Cullen claimed that the valued Heathrow slots would not be sold off and that there would be 'sufficient services between state airports and Heathrow to allow passengers connect through the course of the day with long haul destination flights to and from Heathrow'.

Union agreements were to be adhered to and there were even some concessions to Aer Lingus workers to defuse strike action against privatisation.

But sweet words count for little in the calculus of profit.

The privatisation deal was driven through with the excuse that the airline had to raise €2 billion to fund new long haul planes to service America.

In fact, however, the sell off only raised €1.2 billion – and €30 million of that was used immediately to pay consultants fees to firms like Goodbody's.

This meant that the company then had to use the sale to 'leverage' further money in borrowing.

But that could only happen if there was a further squeezing of workers to guarantee high profits for financiers and shareholders like Ryanair.

Between 2001 and 2006 when it was privatised, employee numbers in Aer Lingus had already been reduced by 43 percent as SIPTU leaders colluded in a 'cut costs' strategy, claiming that it would help the airline to become competitive and so ward off privatisation.

It then failed to mount a fight against privatisation through strike action – and instead settled

for assurance that 'agreements would be honoured'.

But less than a year after the privatisation went through the promises had turned to dust and workers were asked for even more sacrifices.

In December 2006, staff at Aer Lingus got a PCI -07 document telling them that the company would be reducing terms and

conditions in a whole spectrum of areas – on shift premiums, annual leave, and overtime rate.

By February 2007, the union was bitterly complaining about four significant breaches of agreements by the new 'Thatcherite management'.

Now the removal of the Shannon-Heathrow slots is a clear signal that Aer Lingus has no fur-

ther obligations to Irish society to promote regional development. Over the longer term, it may even withdraw from the airport fully.

Once again the soft assuring words of Bertie Ahern had turned out to be lies. The union leaders had been hoodwinked in defusing opposition – and grassroots workers are set to pay the cost.

## Who will now stand up to Aer Lingus?

The removal of Heathrow – Shannon slots has galvanised a huge opposition in the mid west.

In August 5,000 people marched through Shannon in a demonstration led by an hoc group set up by airport workers, the Shannon Action Group.

A survey conducted by the Irish Examiner showed that over 80 percent of the population opposed the move.

The sheer scale of the opposition produced a number of interesting responses.

One was from FF deputies in the area led by Willie O'Dea. Raising the verbal temperature, he compared Dermot Mannion to Oliver Cromwell and promised a ferocious opposition inside the cabinet.

But it soon became apparent that FF were up to their old tricks of bending to populist local sentiment to cover their base – while loyally trooping in to vote for same measures they were attacking.

O'Dea and every FF representative should now be told that if they do not put their constituents ahead of the corporate elite, they should never ask for votes again.

Another response came from a moralistic left who were dejected after most recent electoral results.

Asked to support the Shannon workers, Ed Horgan an anti-war activist from the area blamed them for facilitating the loss of innocent lives in Iraq and argued that 'our tears for Shannon airport

rejection of people in Shannon only plays into the hands of cynics like Willie O'Dea, who appear to, at least, give verbal expression to the justifiable anger.

Anti-war activists who fail to support a fight to retain jobs only make airport workers even more fearful about relying on the US army to keep livelihoods.

The ability of workers to confront political questions grows when worker militancy and confidence increases.

A moralistic approach which simply denounces people for electoral 'stupidity' or 'collusion' in war makes little sense strategically.

The best way to oppose Aer Lingus is on a firm class basis. The demonstration called by the Shannon Action Group was a

real sign of hope. If it connects with the concerns about outsourcing voiced by the pilots, it could lead to greater Irish Ferries style protests across the country.

But that will require workers to stand on their own feet rather than deferring to the business led Shannon Connectivity Alliance or devious figures like Michael O Leary.



should be tears of shame.... And not tears for our own self centred commercial interests'.

In a similar vein, the columnist Fintan O'Toole pointed out that FF, and the PDs got more than 50 percent of the vote in the area and that people should 'accept responsibility for the choices they themselves made when they went to the polls'.

This type of moralistic

"We a

By Donal Mac FH

Ryanair has announced it is establishing a route at Belfast city air undercut Aer Lingus prices from Alder means Aer Lingus profitable routes Shannon out of s and now could er money on these r Belfast.

Tony Kinnane represents Aer Lingus workers at Shannon said, "Aer Lingus currently two He leased, the Shannon route was profitable directly competing whereas the Belfast already has eight flights per day of British Midland. timetable also supports the Cork-LHR route were being transferred to Belfast with Shannon slots moving to Cork decision is allowed it would set a very precedent for the airports."

Myles Worth Aer Lingus said, currently 260 Aer staff working at Shannon Airport. The move

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by Eamonn McC







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# Lingus?

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## "We are not going to take redundancy over this"

By Donal Mac Fhearraigh

Ryanair has announced it is establishing a new hub at Belfast city airport to undercut Aer Lingus flight prices from Aldergrove. This means Aer Lingus moved profitable routes from Shannon out of sheer greed and now could end up losing money on these routes in Belfast.

Tony Kinnane who represents Aer Lingus workers at Shannon Airport said, "Aer Lingus has currently two Heathrow slots leased, the Shannon-LHR route was profitable with no directly competing airline, whereas the Belfast-LHR already has eight pairs of flights per day operated by British Midland. The 2008 timetable also suggests that the Cork-LHR operations were being transferred to Belfast with Shannon-LHR slots moving to Cork. If this decision is allowed to stand, it would set a very dangerous precedent for the other Irish airports."

Myles Worth a worker in Aer Lingus said, "There are currently 260 Aer Lingus staff working at Shannon Airport. The move to Belfast

threatens the jobs of 45 to 50 of the ground staff working in Shannon".

Following the mass meetings and protests in Shannon Myles said, "The staff in Shannon are completely opposed to the move. People are not talking about taking redundancy over this".

There are wider implications to Aer Lingus moving the Heathrow slots to Belfast, Myles explained. "There is a lot of suspicion about Aer Lingus long term plans especially with regard to the long haul routes".

"If Aer Lingus gets away with moving Shannon-Heathrow slots to Belfast-Heathrow, that means they can move them outside the state's jurisdiction, then what is to stop them moving the Shannon-New York slots to Heathrow-New York where they can make massive profits".

"The average price of a business class flight from Heathrow to New York is £4,000. This one move could quadruple the value of the company. It shows you how the agenda of a private company differs from the needs of a national carrier".



The Aer Lingus workers at Shannon were meeting as Socialist Worker went

to press to decide if more action was needed to force the government to intervene.

## An All-Ireland race to the bottom?

by Eamonn McCann



Look back over the last month and you will get a glimpse of the united Ireland that nationalists are preparing for.

Aer Lingus' decision to abandon Shannon and set up a "UK hub" at Aldergrove was welcomed enthusiastically by the two main Nationalist parties in the North, Sinn Fein and the SDLP.

Leave aside the irony of them accepting that the

North is part of the UK, then?

It's no more than they accepted in the Belfast Agreement of 1998.

Aer Lingus was motivated, in part at least, by a determination to drive down the pay of pilots and other workers.

In other words, the North has become a staging post in the race to the bottom. Sinn Fein and the SDLP

are also enthusiastic campaigners for lowering corporation tax in the North to bring levels down to Southern rates.

So that's the shape of things to come in the all-Ireland economy which they envisage.

Northern-level wages for the workers, Southern-level taxes for business.

Who says the armed struggle wasn't worthwhile?

# The state, consent and 'war of position' Antonio Gramsci

By Chris Bambery

Common criticisms of Marxism are that it is a theory that argues everything is determined by economics and that it offers a crude explanation of ideology.

This mirrors official "Marxism" which once ruled in Moscow and Beijing.

According to this workers were dominated by false consciousness, but would be led to true class consciousness by the party.

The Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, developed Karl Marx's analysis of ideology. He did so under terrible conditions, in the jails of Mussolini's fascist dictatorship.

In passing sentence the judge stated the court "must stop this brain working for 20 years".

It failed. Gramsci wrote a series of notebooks in jail. Censorship meant he wrote in code.

The immediate problem Gramsci addressed was the failure of the revolutionary upsurge which had swept western Europe in the wake of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

Italy had been the country where conditions most approximated to Russia and Gramsci had played a central role in the struggles of the Turin working class during the "red years" of 1919 and 1920. Turin was Italy's great industrial centre.

Gramsci took up a series of arguments by Russian leaders Lenin and Trotsky on the difference between western and eastern Europe.

The ruling class was for Gramsci like the mythical centaur – half man, half beast.

It ruled through the use of state coercion and through the consent of those over whom it ruled. In Tsarist Russia civil society was only beginning to emerge—it was "primordial and gelatinous". State coercion was dominant.

The job of revolutionaries was to lead a direct assault on that state when opportunity arose. Gramsci called that a "war of manoeuvre".

In western Europe the ruling class relied for most of the time on consent and had a variety of institutions within civil society which acted like a complicated series of earthworks surrounding a great fortress.

Those institutions and the ideas that they diffused throughout society had to be undermined through a longer ideological struggle before a direct assault was possible.

A revolutionary party had to contest and win leadership over the working class and other oppressed groups. This he called a "war of position".

For Gramsci this involved struggle.

A daily battle of ideas centred on creating "organic intellectuals" within the working class.

These were revolutionary workers who were an integral part of that class, engaging with it.

In both east and



west the state relied on repression and consent to rule. Gramsci warned that the state was more powerful in the west and when push came to shove would be a more powerful enemy.

At some point the trench warfare involved in the "war of position" would go over onto the offensive—the "war of manoeuvre".

All of this centred on a dynamic two way relationship between the revolutionary party and the working class.

Looking back on his own experience of the Turin working class he argued that the spontaneous rebellions of the working class were crucial:

"This element of 'spontaneity' was not neglected and even less despised.

"It was educated, it was directed, it was purified of everything extraneous that could pollute it."

In 1924 he had described a revolutionary party "resulting from a dialectical process in which the spontaneous movement of the revolutionary masses, and the organisational and directive will of the centre converge."

Elsewhere he argued for "unity of 'spontaneity' and of 'conscious direction'":

"Precisely because the party is strongly centralised, a massive effort of propaganda and agitation within its ranks is required.

"It is necessary for the party to educate its members and to raise their ideological level in an organised way."

But the party members were not mere robots following orders. He said, "It is necessary that every member of the party is an active political element, is a leader."

The party had to provide leadership in day to day struggle:

"This leadership was not 'abstract'. It did not consist in mechanically repeating some scientific or abstract or theoretical formula; it did not confuse politics, the real action, with theoretical dissertations.

It applied itself to real men..."

Each party member had to be a leader within their own "milieu" – at work, school or in their neighbourhood.

The ultimate goal for Gramsci remained until his death in 1937, from illness and fascist ill-treatment, revolution.



## EDITORIAL

# The non-existent Labour Left

The debate around the Labour Party's leadership contest focused on issues of 'branding', 'image' and 'organisation' as the root causes of Labour's malaise. Official Ireland backed and then welcomed Eamon Gilmore's ascent to the throne of leadership.

But, the real reasons for Labour's stagnation have to do with strategy and politics. We live in a country where the third biggest city has been without drinking water for six months, where there is a healthcare crisis and a transport crisis. The Labour Party failed to articulate opposition and alternatives on these issues and others because of their commitment to pro-market and pro-neo-liberal policies.

The coronation of Eamon Gilmore as the new leader of the Labour Party emphasised the weakness of any Left inside Labour.

Calls on Tommy Broughan to mount a left leadership challenge by Labour Youth came to nothing. Broughan's vision of 'greening' the Labour Party was focused on bringing Labour closer to Fianna Fail and republicanism rather than any break to the left. Jan O'Sullivan contesting the deputy leadership position is welcome but only emphasises the lack of a left leadership challenge.

The whole leadership contest shows up the absence of any ideological alternative to the neo-liberal politics of the Gilmore-Rabbitte-Howlin axis inside Labour.

Gilmore's leadership will continue Labour's rightward drift. Gilmore has publicly set his face against any alliance of the left. Labour's vision under Gilmore, as under Rabbitte, is to be a junior partner in a right wing coalition. The difference is that they also want to leave the door open to FF.

Some on the left were hoping for a Labour Sinn Fein axis to emerge in Irish politics.

They argued this would give the left a focus and help end the two and a half party system of FF, FG and Labour in the South. But without Labour and Sinn Fein breaking with neo-liberalism such an alliance would have brought the Left nowhere. The Aer Lingus crisis has exposed the limits of both parties radicalism.

Both parties are committed to maintaining low taxes on corporations (and extending these north of the border) at the expense of public services and working conditions.

The Greens entering government and ditching any hint of radicalism, most recently coming out in favour of the new EU Constitution, has exposed the third alternative in Irish politics.

The excuse that breaking all their promises, from Shannon to Tara, is justified to get action on Global Warming doesn't wash when you remember that it's the same companies, Big Oil and others, that are blocking action on Global Warming and Renewable Energy as are fostering a car dependent culture and backing Washington's war agenda.

The only genuine alternative is the People Before Profit Alliance whose candidates, most notably Sean Mitchell in West Belfast and Richard Boyd Barrett in Dun Laoghaire made a significant impact in the elections North and South.

We need to go out and build People Before Profit as the real Left in Ireland in every community, workplace and college. Inside that we need a clear socialist current explaining the limits to reforms under capitalism and why we need to get rid of this system all together.

## comment

By Ahmed Ibrahim, Sudanese socialist living in Ireland

For many centuries Islam was one of the greatest civilisations of the world, the richest, most powerful and most creative in almost every human field.

That changed when Muslim lands were invaded and dominated by Western, Christian powers.

The frustration within Islam at this apparent reversal of what seemed to be the divine law and natural order of things has been lengthy, and with the interference of the West in the Middle East has reached a peak.

The poverty of Arab states and the Global South and the sharpening of US violence in Iraq and by proxy through Israel, have contributed hugely to Islamic anger in more recent times.

The paradox, however, is that Islam in the Arabic language basically means



Islam in the Arabic language basically means 'Peace'.

'Peace'. As in many other religions there are many sects and branches.

Sunni and Shia are the two main sects and they interpret Islam quite differently.

Among these groups are conservatives, ultra-conservatives and liberals.

There is also another group, a political one: the Islamists, who long for the glory days of the religion on the one hand and resent the West's abuses on the other.

The Islamists are perceived by the West as representative of all of Islam, which is not true.

Fear and suspicion of all of Islam then gives rise to one of the West's new ideologies: Islamophobia.

Unfortunately it is often ordinary Muslim men and women, who bear the brunt of such a prejudice, and they have been verbally attacked and their Mosques have been threatened.

But fear and suspicion work both ways, and, arguably it is more justified in Islam against the divisive and one-sided foreign policies of the West, including its partisan support of Israel against the Palestinians, its support of corrupt and repressive regimes like that of Saudi Arabia, the fraudulent invasion and occupation of Iraq and its threats against Iran.

As long as the political problems remain unresolved there will continue to be political clashes, and its corollary, an irrational hatred of Islam as a religion and of Muslims as a whole.

## What side is Martin McGuinness on?

By Sean Mitchell

While British Troops were leaving Basra Palace with their tails between their legs, an attempt was going on in Finland to broker a peace deal between the "warring factions" in Iraq.

The South African ANC, Ulster Unionists and Iraq Sunni and Shias were all present. The sessions were chaired by Sinn Fein's Martin McGuinness. The idea behind the charade was to paint the conflict in Iraq as yet another sectarian squabble.

Northern Ireland is the model for the future they claim. The conflict in Iraq could be

ended by "disarmament", "dialogue" and "power sharing".

What is extraordinary about these talks and their outcome was the absence of any discussion of the US and UK occupation in Iraq. Arming whichever militia suited its priorities at any given time, the occupation has from the beginning attempted to foster sectarian strife in Iraq. Sectarian violence has been present in Iraq since the invasion but only because it serves the interests of the US and UK. No doubt they have no problems with talk of "disarmament", as long as it doesn't include them.

Sunni's and Shias in Iraq are more likely to unite around the issue of the occupation and its consequences. One of the first things the US did in Iraq was to privatise industry whole scale, and then to ban nationalization. Surely the Finland talks could have pointed to a fight back around these issues as a way forward, something that has already begun successfully with the Iraqi Oil workers.

What is interesting about these talks is the role of Martin McGuinness. It is no surprise that a man like Jeffrey Donaldson, a prizefighter for imperialism for decades, would involve

himself in this. But McGuinness is a man that claims anti-imperialist credentials. Whatever these were, you can be sure that they no longer exist. While the whole world cries for the occupation to end McGuinness doesn't even mention it.

Sectarianism in Northern Ireland hasn't been solved, its merely been institutionalized. This would be a disaster for Iraq.

If Martin McGuinness is genuinely looking for a solution to the conflict in Iraq, he should look no further than what millions of people around the world have been saying. Get the troops out!

### WHAT THE SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY STANDS FOR

Capitalism is wrecking the lives of millions and endangering the planet.

A new society can only be constructed when the workers take control of the wealth and plan its production and distribution for human need and not profit.

#### REVOLUTION

The present system cannot be patched up or reformed. The courts, the army and police exist to defend the interests of the wealthy.

To destroy capitalism, we need to remove the present state structures and create a workers' state based on much

greater political and economic democracy.

#### AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR

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

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

#### END RACISM AND OPPRESSION

We oppose all forms of oppression and racism. This divides and weakens the

working class.

We are for full social, economic and political equality for women.

We oppose immigration controls which are always racist.

#### FOR WORKERS' UNITY IN THE NORTH

We stand for workers unity against the Assembly politicians and Blair government.

Like great socialist James Connolly, we believe that partition has brought about a 'carnival of reaction'

We want to see an Irish workers republic where all

workers gain.

Our flag is neither green nor orange but red!

#### FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

To win socialism socialists need to organise in a revolutionary party.

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# Afghanistan: The hidden war

By Donal Mac Fhearraigh

While the British and US governments may admit to "difficulties" in Iraq, they continue to try and sell the invasion of Afghanistan as "the good war".

Yet behind the hype, there is wide-spread acceptance that the occupation is heading towards disaster.

Hundreds of Afghan civilians have been killed after attacks by NATO and US troops.

Helmand province has seen some of the bloodiest battles. Independent researchers estimate that at least 348 civilian deaths were caused by coalition forces in Helmand in the first six months of this year. In comparison, 320 Afghan civilians were killed by international forces in 2006.

The researchers use hospital data from Helmand to look at rates of civilian casualties.

They show that international troops have killed more civilians than they have Taliban since the current operation began last year.

Opium poppy cultivation has reached new records while support for the Western-backed government in the capital Kabul has collapsed. Poppies were banned when the Taliban was in power.

They are now grown by poor farmers all over the country, and Karzai's ministers are deeply involved in the trade.

The Taliban led resistance are not some strange fanatics. They are the local people rising up in arms. When the television



International troops have killed more civilians than they have Taliban since the current operation began last year.

says 400 Taliban have been killed, all they mean is that men, women, and children are being heavily bombed.

NATO now has 20,000 troops in a country of 25 million. The troops are holed up in bases scattered across the south of the country with little chance

of defeating an insurgency that has the backing of the majority of Afghans.

This is no longer a guerilla war. Occupation troops face resistance units of several hundred men armed with rifles, machine guns, and rocket propelled grenades.

The Taliban also say they have surface to air missiles that can shoot down helicopters and planes.

NATO troops rely on US air power to help them fight "insurgents", but it is these air strikes that cause many civilian casualties.

Since January of this year

26 British troops have been killed in Afghanistan, bringing the total to 70.

According to a report from the British Ministry of Defence, leaked to The London Times newspaper, they expect a further 42 soldiers to die by the end of the year.

## Blowback in Pakistan

A looming defeat in Afghanistan is undermining a key US ally in the 'war on terror', the dictator Gen Musharraf in Pakistan. There is a long belt of mountainous country on the eastern Afghan border with Pakistan. For 120 years this region of Pakistan, Waziristan, has been the centre of resistance to western invasions.

Since 2002 the Pakistani army has attempted to regain control of north Waziristan, where Osama Bin Laden is widely believed to be resident. The most recent incursions in July following the Siege of the Red Mosque in Islamabad ended in failure. The war in Afghanistan has spilled over into Pakistan and other central asian republics. The US and Britain have backed the return of the corrupt politician Benazir Bhutto to try to shore up the regime in Pakistan. Pakistan's elite have used the army as a proxy for the US on the borders of Afghanistan. Bhutto wants to continue the support for the US - all of this adds to the popular appeal of the Islamist parties.

Riaz Ahmed, from the International Socialists in Pakistan, told Socialist Worker, "The ruling class is in crisis and has no idea what to do next."

"Everyone thinks that General Musharraf's days are numbered. But the weakness of the mainstream parties means that the working class must play a critical role in bringing change and democracy."



Protests against the World Economic Summit in Heiligendamm; Below: Dr. Matthias B.

## German anti-war academics persecuted

In Germany a number of people, among them two academics, Dr. Andrej Holm and Dr. Matthias B., have been arrested and imprisoned after been accused of membership of a terrorist association.

There is little or no evidence to substantiate the charges.

The German Federal Prosecutor have justified the charges on the following grounds:

■ Dr. Matthias B. is alleged to have used, in his academic publications, "phrases and key words" which are also used by the 'militante gruppe'

■ As political scientist holding a PhD, Matthias B. is seen to be intellectually capable to "author the sophisticated texts of the 'militante gruppe' ". Additionally, "as employee in a research institute he has access to libraries which he can use inconspicuously in order to do the research neces-

sary to the drafting of texts of the 'militante gruppe'".

■ Another accused individual is said to have met with suspects in a conspiratorial manner: "meetings were regularly arranged without, however, mentioning place, time and content of the meetings"; furthermore, he is said to have been active in the "extreme

left-wing scene";

■ In the case of a third accused individual, an address book was found which included the names and addresses of the other three accused;

■ Dr. Andrej Holm, who works as urban sociologist, is

claimed to have close contacts with all three individuals who have been charged but still remain free;

■ Dr. Andrej Holm is alleged to have been active in the "resistance mounted by the extreme left-wing scene against the World Economic Summit

of 2007 in Heiligendamm";

The only evidence that the German Federal Prosecutor appear to have is the fact that he did not take his mobile phone with him to a meeting - this is considered to be "conspiratorial behaviour".

The arrests have drawn angry protests from academics, activists and civil liberty groups in Germany and across the globe.

The American Sociological Association that held its annual congress in August 2007, has written an open letter to Federal Prosecutor Monika Harms.

Academics Richard Sennett and Saskia Sassen have published an article entitled "Guantánamo in Germany. In the name of the war on terror, our colleagues are being persecuted—for the crime of sociology" on 21 August in 'The Guardian'.

You can sign the "Open letter to Federal Prosecutor Monika Harms against criminalization of science" at <http://www.freeandrej.net>. ms/Institute of Social Science at Humboldt University/Berlin

## UCU to debate Israeli boycott

By Brian Kelly, UCU Belfast

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) in the North and across the UK are due to debate a motion calling for a "comprehensive and consistent" boycott of Israeli academic institutions. The call for a boycott was issued by sixty of the most prominent academic, cultural and professional associations and trade unions in the occupied West Bank and Gaza, and won a majority vote at the UCU's first national conference in May 2007. The UCU motion comes after several of the largest trade unions in the UK and Ireland, including Unison, the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance, have adopted similar strategies to demonstrate their opposition to ongoing brutality against Palestinians.

Unlike some other attempts at boycott, the UCU motion has touched a nerve among prominent defenders of Israel, who have mobilized to intimidate members from taking a stand on the issue. Within days of the motion, two high-powered Israeli delegations traveled to the UK to rally Zionist support and begin to build opposition to the UCU. True to form, Tony Blair telephoned Israeli PM Ehud Olmert to assure him the motion had no public support. The Israeli Foreign Minister registered a formal protest with British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett and invited Higher Education Secretary Bill Rammell on a junket to Israel to "tighten academic relations between the two countries," an offer he accepted. Prominent VC's from the elite Russell Group universities issued a public statement vowing to defy the boycott regardless of the UCU vote, and Zionists in the Jewish Leadership Council and others have attempted to smear the boycott as an attack on 'academic freedom.'

The intensive campaign by Israel and its allies has had a contradictory effect. On the one hand, UCU general secretary Sally Hunt—an opponent of the boycott—seems grateful that the pressure may help her turn the tide against the motion, something she would be less likely to accomplish otherwise. In setting the ground rules for debate in the branches, Hunt has done all she can to stack



Israel boycott poster produced in UCU

the deck against the motion passing. But this might not play well inside UCU. Her statement to the press that she does not believe the boycott to be a 'priority' for the membership comes across as hypocritical when Hunt, more than anyone else, is identified with the sell-out that ended a major industrial action in the spring of 2006.

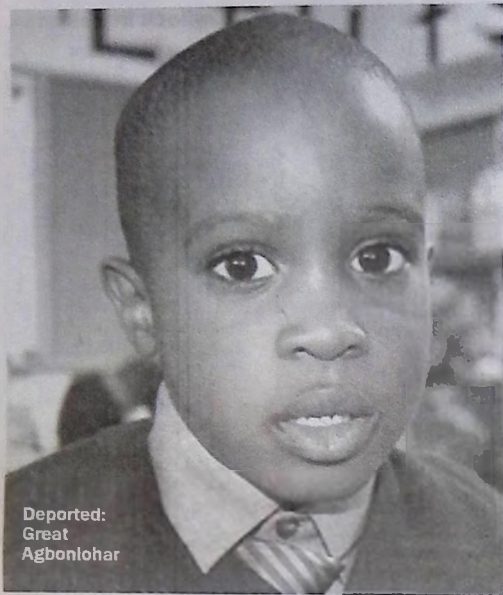
The heavy-handed Zionist response has also provoked a backlash among the membership. Especially galling for a campaign built around 'academic freedom' is the involvement of some of the most notorious enemies of free speech on the Israeli side. Alan Dershowitz, the notorious Israel apologist who led the recent campaign to deny anti-Zionist Professor Norman Finkelstein tenure at DePaul University in the US, told the Guardian newspaper that he had "mustered a team of 100 high-

profile lawyers on both sides of the Atlantic to 'devastate and bankrupt' anyone acting against Israeli universities."

UCU members, no less than anyone else, are aware of the brutality Israel carries off day in and day out in occupied Palestine, and far from an attack on academic freedom, the boycott call represents the best traditions of trade union internationalism. Already, even before it has passed, the threat of a boycott has had an effect. Within ten days of the UCU vote, the heads of four leading Israeli universities sent a letter to the Israeli government urging it to "lift a ban that prevents all Palestinian students in Gaza from studying in the West Bank." Real academic freedom for all can only be won by dismantling Israel's repressive apparatus, and the UCU boycott will help in that effort.



## After McDowell: A more humane asylum system?



Deported:  
Great  
Agbonlohar

By Donal Mac Fhearraigh

Great Agbonlohar is a six year old autistic Nigerian child, who has lived with his mother Olivia and twin sister Melissa in Clonakilty, Co. Cork since March 2003. Despite a 3000 strong petition from the people of Clonakilty they were deported from Ireland on 14 August. Socialist Worker spoke to Kevin Brophy, solicitor for the family about the case.

**Q. Can you tell us about the family's at the moment?**

"Currently Great and his mother, Olivia are living in Accra, Ghana, where she found a school that caters for autistic children but has no specialized treatment. They only have a six month visa for Ghana and have no idea what to do after that. Olivia is too afraid to return to Nigeria fearing what will happen to Great. The family's case is back in court on 23rd October. Olivia has placed great faith in the Irish legal system to come to her aid".

**Q. What has changed following Michael McDowell's exit from office?**

"There has indeed been a change, most people expected a change for the better but what we got was change for the worse, best exemplified by the appointment of Connor Lenihan as Minister for Integration. Probably the greatest misnomer when it comes to a government minister. This is the politician who used terms such as 'the kebabs' to describe the GAMA workers from Turkey".

"The current system sees immigrants as a burden. This attitude of fear and suspicion of immigrants and asylum seekers comes from the very top levels of government. It can be traced back to Michael McDowell comments on 'bogus' asylum seekers and welfare tourism. It isn't surprising then that this gets picked up and reflected in general society".

"The attitude of suspicion is seen in the level of proof needed to obtain asylum in the country. The level of proof you need is much more than for many cases in an Irish Court. An inability to answer accurately questions such as how many miles your town is away from the capital city are used to undermine an application for asylum".

"The most galling example of this inhumanity can be seen in the government forcing immigrants to queue from before dawn in the cold and rain outside the Garda National Immigration Bureau on Burgh Quay".

"At the very least there should be a more humane system to process applications. I have had clients who were so distressed as to threaten suicide because they were left years with no response from the department or any idea of how much longer the process will take. It is tantamount to an extended torture process where there is nothing you can do to expedite your case".

**Q. Eamon Ryan and the Green Party were closely associated with the appeal, are they still supportive?**

"The Greens as a party and as individuals were closely associated with the case and demanding change with regard to the asylum process and asylum seekers rights. Their silence on the issue since entering government is shocking. They seem to have abandoned all their principles to gain a seat in government. You would expect such behavior from FG but not from a supposed progressive party like the Greens".

**Q. How would you describe the government's policy on immigration?**

"It is complete hypocrisy for the Irish government to use its aid budget to give itself a liberal and progressive gloss, in many cases using charities and obtaining services through them that should be provided by the state. In reality when an actual person from the third world, most commonly from Africa, turns up on their border they face degrading treatment".

**Q. How can people help?**

"People should contact the Great Support Group in Clonakilty at [adriann@gofree.indigo.ie](mailto:adriann@gofree.indigo.ie) where they can donate money that will go directly to the Agbonlohar family. The case is in court again on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October. We are keeping the spotlight on this case, the intensity of the spotlight will increase as the case approaches, we won't let the government get away with an 'out of sight, out of mind' approach.

But the best hope for the Agbonlohar family and everyone else in the asylum process is public pressure on the government to bring about change".

# Why is multiculturalism under attack?



## Interview with Steve Loyal, lecturer in UCD Sociology Dept

By Donal Mac Fhearraigh

"The recent debate on a Sikh man wearing a turban while on duty with the Garda shows that despite the governments talk of integration the reality is that their vision of Ireland is far from a multicultural one. I believe he should have been allowed to wear a turban while on duty. Broader social issues can become transferred onto smaller symbolic issues like wearing religious symbols. But we also need to engage in a wider debate about the social and economic inclusion of minority groups in Irish society".

"Multiculturalism has become allied to a politics of recognition of minority rights and is therefore under attack. One of the big issues multiculturalism deals with is religion and religious difference. In Europe it has become a code word for Islam".

"There has always been a criticism that multiculturalism leads to a balkanization of society and encourages separatism rather than integration. The Irish government often repeats this."

"This analysis is problematic because it doesn't take into account that these countries didn't put basic mechanisms like language classes in place to help the integration of migrants. For



Steve Loyal

instance Germany didn't acknowledge itself as a country of immigration until 2001. France, which is a country that has always emphasized a policy of assimilation, has never acknowledged the racism immigrants and children of immigrants face. The state then blames these communities for not integrating".

"The origin of the term Multiculturalism is very progressive in a liberal sense of tolerance and respecting diversity and pluralism. It became prominent after 1968 and through the civil rights movements when more resources were made available to minority groups. It was through this process that more middle class groups articulated a politics of multiculturalism and set out to redefine community based on ethnic identities. Identity politics were key rather than looking at questions of resources such as employment and housing".

"There is a tension between thinking about and allowing diversity, and reaching equality—including social equality. You can't talk about equality however without transforming the social structure".

"Multiculturalism as a theory ignores the issues of power in society. Rather than seeking to change the structures of society it merely seeks to contain any conflicts around difference. Secondly it sees all cultures as static whereas all cultures are constantly feeding off each other. It can also become a simple celebration of consumer differences with an emphasis on different eating habits, different clothing habits, what Russell Jacobi calls 'the narcissism of small differences' is celebrated rather than the broader social and economic issues discussed".

"The Irish government talks about integration but it has put no integration policy in place at all. Its immigration policy is based around a model of economic need and security. The Dept of Justice has been historically anti foreigner from the Jews fleeing the Holocaust to today's immigrants".

"There are two main debates surrounding the immigration issue in Ireland. One is around the terms 'bogus asylum seekers' coming here to sponge off the welfare state.

That debate has now been replaced with the idea that migrants are coming here taking our jobs and lowering our wages. The trade union movement fell into that trap with the whole debate around displacement. This was an example of blaming the migrants rather than the state or the employers for not protecting the migrants and giving them enough rights".

"The Union movement has realized that if it going to be successful in Ireland it needs to recruit more and more migrant workers. There are now more foreign union organisers. One of the issues the union movement needs to address is not just turning up to recruit migrants in their workplaces. The unions also have to participate in their leisure activities as well, going to their festivals, meeting them there in order to win their trust".

"Cultural celebrations like the Festival of World Cultures are good, despite the dangers of cultural commodification I mentioned. But we also need broader social movement tied to organising demonstrations that celebrate the contribution migrants make to Ireland, as well as demonstrating about inequality. We need to show what contribution these workers have made to the Irish economy and how Ireland couldn't survive without them".



# Obituary: The Sopranos



Dinner with the Sopranos

By Sinead Kennedy

*'This Thing of Ours, It's Over'* Television has never before produced a show like *'The Sopranos'*. In the eight years it has been on our screens it has transformed the entire medium of television, with US television now leading the way in artistically innovative and compelling television.

The initial suggestion by HBO to David Chase, the show's creator and writer, was to develop a TV version of *The Godfather*. What Chase produced was something dramatically different and groundbreaking, a show in which the 'bad guys', the violent criminals, are the main protagonists with law-enforcement playing second fiddle to main plot.

*The Sopranos* was a show more interested in asking difficult questions than in providing easy answers. Part of reason for the show's success was the ease with which it built a bridge between popular culture and art, combining complex character driven plots with explicit sex, language and guts and gore violence. Chase has cited his influences as everything from Archie Bunker and the Rolling Stones to Shakespeare and Fellini. Today, the same television sceptics who once

declared that they never watched TV can be overheard complaining how they never have enough time to watch all they've recorded onto their high-tech DVD recorders.

If someone explained in outline the plot of *'The Sopranos'* it would read like a dark sitcom: A overweight mafioso, harassed by his two kids, his status-hungry wife and a mother from hell who along with his uncle might be conspiring to kill him, has a mid-life crisis and goes into therapy.

The greatest achievement of Chase was to make *'The Sopranos'* about the mob while at the same time suggesting that it was not really about the mafia at all. The gangster figure is one of America's most durable cultural contributions but in *'The Sopranos'* the gangster is assimilated into everyday life and in the process the glitz, glamour and romance is dissolved and domesticated into everyday life. In the classic gangster films of the 1950s and 1960s the mafia is a sinister presence. Consider for a moment, James Cagney, one of cinema's classic gangsters. He is always presented as a violent aberration, the archetypal outsider who casts a shadow over the American

family. In *'The Sopranos'* Tony is the prime representative of that family—he is the guy who lives in the house beside you, whose kids play with your kids, he is the deadly norm.

On the surface Tony and his family have achieved the American dream of wealth and success, yet, they live lives of idealised despair. Tony walks through life in search of some sort of transcendence which he seeks variously in Canadian geese, horses, and re-enactments of World War II on the History Channel.

In the very first episode Tony's psychiatrist, Dr. Melfi, asks 'What are you afraid of going to happen?' Tony replies, 'I don't know! But something. I don't know! Over the course of the next seven seasons this sense of unease intensifies becoming a doom-laden preoccupation, at least for the men.

Typically, the gangster genre has always consigned women to roles as victims, trading chips or trophies, often all three at once. But it was with his wife, his daughter, his sister and his analyst that Tony engaged in his deepest struggles. In early serieses it was in Tony's relationship with women that the possibility of a transformed life was suggested. But towards the

end of the show the tables were turned. It is the women who are obsessed with cars, real estate and their husbands' rank and power in the organization, while the men, Tony and others, including of all people, Paulie, are having existential crises.

All the characters become increasingly preoccupied with their own redemption and purgatory was a frequent late theme. In one memorable episode Paulie, in flight of the theological speculation, calculates that after the multiple murders he's committed he will have to do an extra six thousands years in purgatory. But he assures us purgatory years are very different to our years: 'I could do that standing on my head ... it's like a couple of days here.'

However, as the show progressed we were reminded that this world is closer to hell than purgatory as the brutal consequences of their violence closes in around them. What began as the story of a potential healing became the description of the last stages of an incurable sickness. But the show's ending or non-ending was a powerful tour-de-force just like the show itself – disturbing, haunting and beautifully unfinished.

## Dave Lordan's 'The Boy in the Ring'

By Sinead Kennedy

*With The Boy is the Ring*, Dave Lordan has powerfully announced his presence in Irish poetry as an compelling and exhilarating new voice.

Lordan was the 2005 winner of the Patrick Kavanagh Poetry Award and his debut collection is published by the prestigious Salmon Press. The collection is most remarkable for its energy and passion, as *Lordan* immerses the reader in an imaginative world full of memorable characters and voices. His attention to the precise details of everyday life transforms the mundane

into the mysterious as he celebrates real life for all its rich ordinariness.

But what marks Lordan apart from the majority of his contemporaries is his fearlessness. He is willing to travel into territories that his contemporaries are increasingly recoiling from. While others are preoccupied with formal experiment, Lordan uses his exploration of form to explore the sites of collisions between the personal and the political. His work reveals the darker, human cost of the Celtic Tiger; war, racism and alienation.

Not content to be a

dispassionate observer his work resonates with anger and fury and, at times, with moments of unbearable tenderness and humanity.

For me the most striking poem is the penultimate 'Of Attila and Cybele' a translation of the Roman poet Catullus (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE). It allows Lordan to show case his range, talent and integrity as poet, by fashioning a compelling narrative and displaying different styles that range from the oratorical and conversational to the lyrical and idiomtic.

Dave: Lordan, *The Boy in the Ring* €12

## Dublin Theatre Festival

By Paul O'Brien

The 50th anniversary of the Dublin Theatre Festival, which runs from 27 September to 14 October, features an expanded programme of 33 shows from 13 countries and 221 performances.

The 2007 programme includes a number of innovations including outdoor productions, which are free, but tickets are required and can be obtained from the booking office.

The Festival has teamed up with The Ark, a cultural centre for children to present a series of plays for families and children.

In addition there are a series of panel discussions that will explore the role the festival has played in Irish cultural life over the last fifty years.

Perhaps the most famous and infamous play in the Abbey Theatre's repertoire, *The Playboy of the Western World* has constantly been revised and revisited.

Bisi Adigun and Roddy Doyle follow in that tradition by setting the play in a modern pub in a Dublin suburb. *The Playboy* is Christopher Malomo, a well-educated refugee from Hungary, on the run for killing his father. This is a welcome attempt by the Abbey to engage with modern Ireland

There are three Chekov plays at the festival this year. A Hungarian production of *Ivanov*, one of his early masterpieces uprooted from its Russian bourgeoisie setting and placed firmly within Hungary's ascendant peasant classes in the 1960s.

Also from Hungary comes a much praised production of *The Seagull*, which a century ago contributed to a theatre revolution that still



The Playboy of the Western World at the Abbey

determines our concept of theatre today. Both of these productions are in Hungarian with English subtitles. The Gate Theatre will stage a major new production of Brian Friel's version of *Uncle Vanya*.

Eugene O'Neill is regarded as America's greatest dramatist and *Long Day's Journey into Night* his finest play. This *Druid* production at The Gaiety directed by Garry Hynes is the first major Irish production for many years of a work in which O'Neill's Irish heritage plays a significant part.

Taking place over the course of a single day and night in 1912, it is O'Neill's journey into the night of the four embattled souls of the Tyrone family. *Druid* has assembled an extraordinary company of some of the most acclaimed US and Irish actors, with James Cromwell (*The Queen*, *LA Confidential*) and Michael Esper (*Crazy Mary* in New York) joining leading lights of the Irish stage Marie Mullen (Tony Award Winner for *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*) and Aidan Kelly (*Julius Caesar*, *Terminus*).

For more information and bookings visit: [www.dublentheatrefestival.com](http://www.dublentheatrefestival.com)



Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* at The Gaiety





# Socialist Worker

## Obituary: The Sopranos

Is life worth living after the Sopranos? In the eight years it has been on our screens it has transformed the entire medium of television, making artistically innovative and compelling television. Page 11



## Ireland's immigration after McDowell

Kevin Brophy, solicitor for the Agbonlohar family deported in August talks about the asylum process in Ireland and what changes have happened since Michael McDowell's exit from office. Page 10

## Multicultural Ireland?

"The recent debate on a Sikh man wearing a turban while on duty with the Garda highlighted the limits of multiculturalism in Ireland". Steve Loyal explains the debates around multiculturalism. Page 10



## Academic freedom in danger

Two academics in Germany have been arrested and imprisoned under terror legislation. US and European universities are witnessing a crackdown on left wing academics under the cover of the 'war on terror'. Page 9

## The end of cheap food?

'Bio-fuels' are being presented as the solution to Global Warming and the West's reliance on oil. But will they cause mass starvation in the third world so you can fill up your car's petrol tank? Page 6



# DEFEATED IN IRAQ

By Richard Boyd Barrett

At the beginning of September, the last 550 British troops were withdrawn from the southern Iraqi city of Basra, forced out by the ferocious attacks by the Shia resistance.

Crowds of locals gathered on the streets of Basra on Monday to cheer the British army's departure.

"They are colonialists," said Rudha Muter, a local resident. "We as an Iraqi people reject occupation. We reject colonialism - we want our freedom."

The troops joined the 5,000 others holed up 13 miles outside of town in the heavily fortified airport.

It is expected that the bulk of British troops will be completely withdrawn from Iraq over the next weeks and months.

This comes less than a year after Blair's boast that British troops would stay until "the job is done".

The British presence in Basra has been under constant attack for months, with mortar shells regularly pounding their base in Basra Palace until they announced their withdrawal.

A year ago British forces had to storm a police station to rescue their own soldiers who had been detained while spying in Arab clothing on the same station.

The British failure is almost total after four years of effort and the death of 168 personnel.

"Relentless attacks against British forces in effect had driven them off the streets into



increasingly secluded compounds," says a report by the Brussels-based International Crisis Group. "Basra's residents and militiamen view this not as an orderly withdrawal but rather as an ignominious defeat."

The departure of the British troops leaves Bush without his most important ally in the "Coalition of the Willing".

As one commentator noted, "With the British giving up

on their quadrant of Iraq—a strategically crucial location at the northern tip of the Persian Gulf, where the bulk of supplies for the US military in Iraq are offloaded, and from which the vast majority of Iraq's dismal oil exports are exported—American troops are stranded, and dependent upon air drops for their secure delivery of supplies."

With 160,000 troops in Iraq and the failure of the 30,000

"surge" to improve matters US generals are falling out behind closed doors.

US military top brass in the US Joint Chiefs of Staff and General David Petraeus, commander of US forces in Iraq, are deeply divided over whether to evacuate large numbers of troops or try committing yet more.

Petraeus is shortly due to publish his own report into whether Bush's "surge" strat-

egy has worked.

For Iraqis the continued occupation has only made life more miserable.

The number of Iraqis fleeing their homes in fear of their lives has risen from 50,000 a month to 60,000 a month according to the UN High Commission for Refugees.

Some 4.2 million Iraqis are now refugees inside and outside the country.

With the British troops re-

treating with their tail between their legs it's time Ireland halted its shameful collaboration with Bush's war in allowing US military uses of Shannon.

In particular, we need to up the pressure on the Green Party members of the government who are cravenly going along with this disgraceful policy.

Richard Boyd Barrett is Chair of the Irish Anti War Movement and writes in a personal capacity.

# Smash Brown's Pay Freeze—Unite the Fightback

By Sean Mitchell

Gordon Brown wants a pay freeze. He has said that he intends to limit the pay increases of thousands of public sector workers to 2.5%.

Working people are finding it more difficult to make ends meet. Interest rates are up, inflation is up and the general cost of living is up. House prices are soaring because of the failure to invest in quality social hous-

ing. However the rise in prices, is not being met by one thing, a rise in wages.

The expenses of working people are rising even faster than the retail prices index (RPI) measure of inflation, which currently stands at 4.5 percent. This means that in real terms, Brown's 2.5% pay increase cap is a significant pay cut.

There has been a growing mood of anger and a willing-

ness to fight within trade unions. This has been most evident in the CWU. Strikes have been taking place throughout the summer. Royal Mail management has now been forced to the negotiating table. Workers want to see their pay increase, but without any strings attached. An acceptable settlement cannot include job cuts or privatization. Post workers are ready to resume strike action should the talks collapse.

Other unions have been engaging in the struggle for decent pay.

The PCS has been in a long running battle with the government against job cuts and services while class room assistants are preparing to tackle the new assembly over its miserable pay deal. Health workers in Unison are considering strike action and local government workers are in the process of rejecting a 2% pay offer



Unions should unite these struggles as far as possible. Strike actions should be coordi-

nated and united rallies should be organised. While there may be some small difference in each unions fight, they are all strands of the same struggle, to defend wages, conditions and the public sector.

The Labour government is weak after Tony Blair was driven out of office two years early, because of the disaster of Iraq. Brown is in the same position. If Unions fight together they can break his plan

## Gramsci: A Marxist for today?



Chris Bambery looks at how the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, developed Karl Marx's analysis of ideology and what it means for how socialists should organize in the modern world. Page 7

## Afghanistan: The hidden war

Britain and the US admit to "difficulties" in Iraq, but continue to sell Afghanistan as "the good war". Behind the hype, the occupation is failing and destabilising allies like Pakistan. Page 9

## The 'sub-prime' market crash

Chaos reigns in stock exchanges across the world since the end of July. Peadar O'Grady explains what is behind the stock market crisis. Page 5



## Paying the cost of the housing crisis

US Banks squeezed by the credit crisis are passing on the costs to consumers by increasing mortgage and credit card interest rates. It could happen here if the housing bubble bursts. Page 5

## Aer Lingus and Shannon

Kieran Alien asks if workers can rely on employers like Michael O'Leary to oppose Aer Lingus plans or do they need their own independent opposition? Page 6&7

