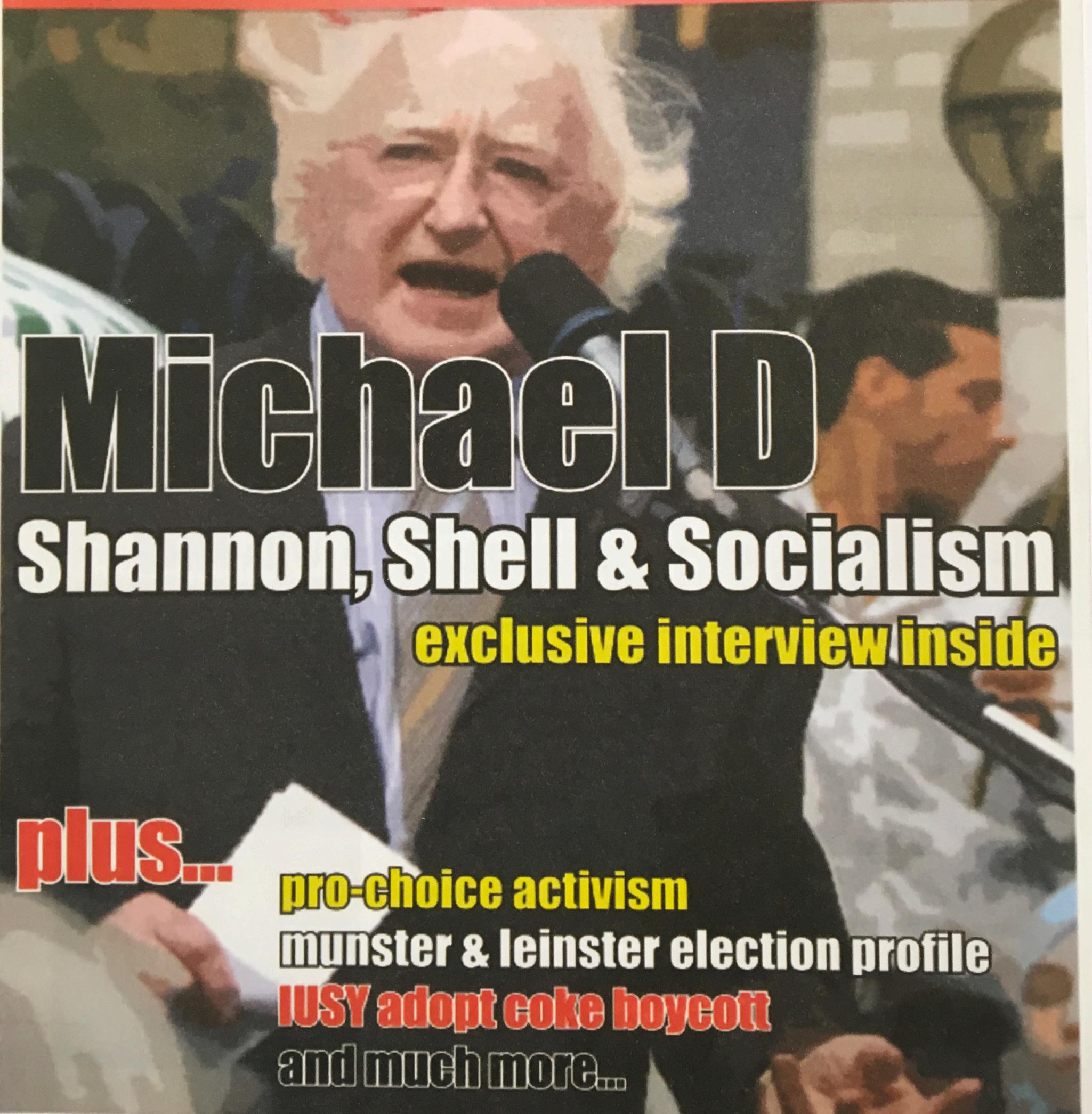


Left Tribune

*"proud to be left,
proud to be labour"*

the magazine of Labour Youth in Ireland

vol 2 Issue 5 / spring 2007

A photograph of Michael D. Higgins, an older man with white hair, wearing a dark suit and a light-colored tie. He is speaking into a microphone at a podium. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and what appears to be an indoor setting.

Michael D

Shannon, Shell & Socialism

exclusive interview inside

plus...

pro-choice activism

munster & leinster election profile

IUSY adopt coke boycott

and much more...

Left
Tribune

"proud to be left,
proud to be labour"

Volume II, Issue 5
February 2007

Left Tribune is the magazine of Labour Youth in Ireland. We operate on the basis of a sustainable and democratic socialist ethos.

As such, *Left Tribune* is printed on paper which is 50% recycled and 50% from sustainable forests. If you are finished reading, we would ask that you pass this issue on to someone else - or recycle it.

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We welcome articles and comments from all readers to lycommunications@labour.ie

The opinions expressed in *Left Tribune* are those of its contributors and are not necessarily the policies or views of Labour Youth or the Labour Party.

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IUSY Adopt Coke Boycott Campaign

Dermot Looney

The International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY) has adopted a policy to support the boycott of Coca-Cola in a huge fillup for the global campaign for human rights in Colombia. During the historic IUSY World Council, held in Cork from February 1st - 3rd, delegates approved the motion from Labour Youth, Ireland to lend their support to the growing campaign.

IUSY represents almost 150 youth sections of labour, socialist and social democratic parties all over the world and is the largest youth political organisation in the world. Founded 100 years ago, it held its first ever Irish-based event in the UCC campus in Cork with an active involvement by many members of Labour Youth, Ireland.

Comrades from parties as diverse as the Armenian Revolutionary Youth Federation, the Mexican Juventud Demócrata PRD, the Fatah Youth from Palestine, the All Burma Students League and Australian Young Labour took part in the event, themed "People in Movement."

The Council was addressed by IUSY President Fikile Mbabula of the ANC Youth League in South Africa, and for the first time by IUSY Secretary General Yvonne O'Callaghan from Ireland. The World Council dealt with issues such as the Middle East peace process and global migration.

The resolution on Coca-Cola was proposed by Enda Duffy, the Irish Labour delegate, with the active support of our Colombian comrades in the Joventud Partido Liberal Colombiano (Liberal Party Youth).

The campaign to boycott Coca Cola began in Ireland in 2003 following a call from the Colombian trade union SINALTRAINAL, whose members were subject to a vicious anti-union campaign of intimidation, torture and even murder by paramilitaries supported by the Coca-Cola bottling plants.

Students in UCD, NCAD and Trinity College have all voted to prohibit the sale of Coca Cola in shops owned by their student unions, leading to a massive worldwide campaign which incorporates boycotts in over a hundred universities. Trinity students will be asked to renew this boycott for the third time at the end of February and are confident that the boycott will again be upheld.

Labour Youth has been to the forefront of the campaign in Ireland and continue to work with progressive groups and

International delegates vote to support Boycott Killer Coke Campaign



individuals in maintaining and spreading the boycott.

Speaking after the resolution was passed, Labour Youth Chair Patrick Nulty said, "the resolution sends a clear message to Coca-Cola that this campaign is going from strength to strength. Their crimes in Colombia are indicative of the exploitation and aggression shown by multinational corporations towards people in the developing world."

"It is our duty to hold these companies to account and to campaign for justice and the rule of law. There can be no hiding place or excuses for companies who exploit, intimidate and degrade their employees in any part of the world."

Further info & contact details: Page 14

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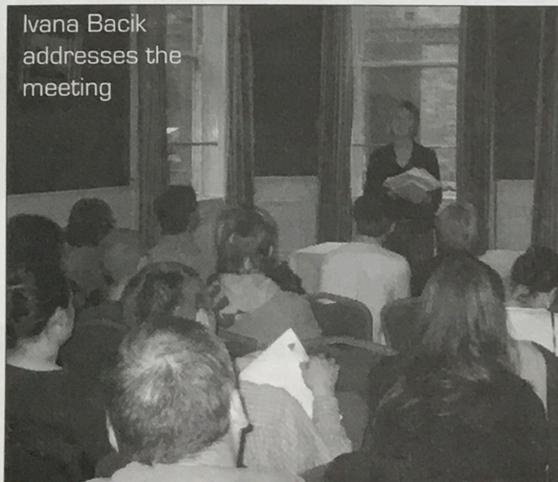
Empowering Women to Choose:

Labour Youth Pro-Choice Meeting Looks to the Future

Jane Horgan-Jones

Over 70 pro choice activists from all political backgrounds and none gathered on Saturday 27th January in the Central Hotel on Exchequer St. to discuss the Irish pro choice campaign and strategise for the future. The event was hosted by Labour Youth and was designed to come up with practical, workable suggestions and initiatives that the left can unite around in order to further the campaign.

With this aspiration in mind, the day saw a programme of workshops and facilitators, instead of the more common format used by public meetings involving speak-

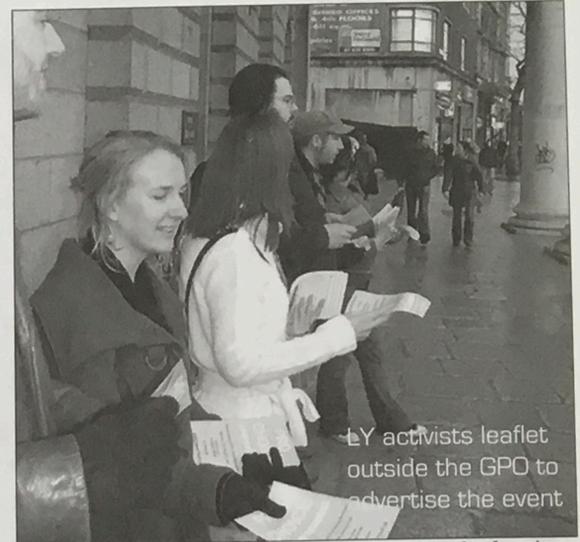


Ivana Bacik addresses the meeting

ers followed by a question and answer session. Held concurrently, the workshops dealt with the class analysis of the abortion issue, direct action and outreach campaigning. The three workshops were facilitated by Aileen O'Connell (WSM), Aoife Cooke (RAG Collective) and Ailbhe Smyth (WERRC, UCD), with Ivana Bacik (Reid Professor of Law, TCD) acting as the overall chair.

Following the conclusion of the three working groups, the meeting reassembled in order to hear feedback and collate the suggestions from the groups into a coherent plan. In what was an extremely productive session, a number of action points were decided upon that activists were delegated to coordinate in the coming months. These included a campaign targeting various "rogue crisis pregnancy agencies" which operate in Ireland and provide extremely directive counselling, refusing to advise women of all the options available to them in a crisis pregnancy situation.

In addition, it was agreed that pro choice groups on campuses across the country should be set up, and that links should be made with womens groups in the UK who are interested in setting up "welcome committees" for women travelling



LY activists leaflet outside the GPO to advertise the event

across the water for abortions. A further date was also set for another planning meeting to arrange these and other initiatives decided upon on the day, and over €200 raised in donations to get the ball rolling.

The level of interest in pro choice issues evident in the numbers in attendance shows that the lack of abortion facilities in Ireland is an issue which needs to be addressed, and that the political will is there to address it. To get involved in the campaign and be added to the mailing list for details of future activities, email youth@labour.ie or horganjones.jane@gmail.com

Labour Youth News Round-Up



Conor Tannam

Boost for Same Sex Marriage Campaign with Launch of Labour Civil Unions Bill

The Labour Party has launched a bill that proposes equal rights for same sex couples. This bill is the first bill of its kind since the inception of the state. If passed this legislation will provide all the legal rights and responsibilities that are afforded to couples that are married to same sex partners. Included in the bill are new regulations regarding adoption.

If passed by the Oireachtas, this piece of law would be a hugely progressive step towards realising full equality between same sex and opposite sex unions. Under the constitution a referendum would be required to deliver full same sex marriage. The proposals have the support of Labour Youth, Labour Equality and Labour LGBT, all of whom have been active in the campaign for same sex marriage.

Free the Miami 5

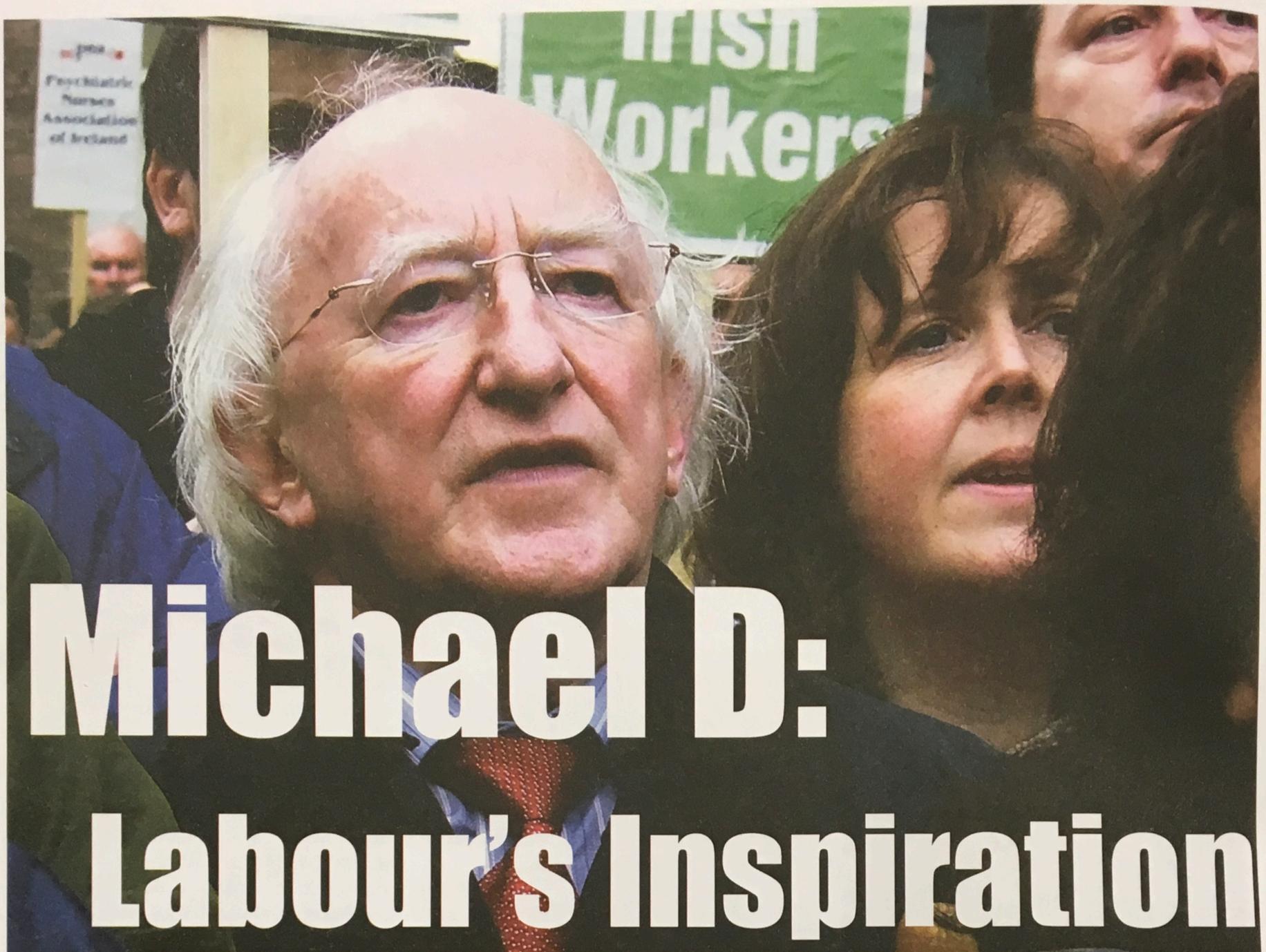
Labour Youth activists are urged to sign a petition available at www.labouryouth.ie in support of the 'Miami 5' - Cuban prisoners who have been incarcerated since 2001 in a U.S. jail. The men are currently being held under false espionage charges. The 5 were falsely accused by the U.S. government of committing espionage conspiracy against the United States, and other related charges. But they have argued in their defense that they were involved in monitoring the actions of Miami-based terrorist groups in order to prevent terrorist attacks on their country of Cuba.

The men never directed any actions against the US government nor did they possess any weapons whilst in the country. Family members and supporters have been denied access to the prisoners, who are also refused letters of solidarity from writers such as Noam Chomsky and José Saramago demanding that the men be released. Labour Youth are also campaigning to end the US-led blockade of Cuba, as reported in the last issue of *Left Tribune*.

Labour Youth Says "Members Will Have Say" on Coalition

Labour Youth has countered recent press speculation regarding the party's coalition future, pointing out their opposition to any junior status in government as mandated by successive Youth Conferences. LY noted that the party membership - as opposed to the leadership - would be making any decision once the election results are known. Labour Youth has opposed the 'Mullingar Accord' strategy since it was announced in 2005.

Chair Patrick Nulty remarked, "Labour Youth has been consistent for some years now in saying that Ireland does not merely need an alternative government - it also needs to develop a realignment of politics." Bearing in mind that LY has over 1000 members nationwide it is fallacy of the media and political commentators that a Labour coalition with Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil is the inevitable result of the election. Labour Youth will have a strong voice when the votes are counted and it is imperative that our policies and activism promote Labour to the fullest.



Michael D: Labour's Inspiration

38 years since he first stood for election, Labour Party President Michael D Higgins faces into his 13th successive campaign in Galway West in a mood as passionate & defiant as ever. He spoke to Jane Horgan-Jones & Karen O'Connell on his many causes for concern, from Shell in Mayo to the war in Iraq.

*It might be raining and it might be cold,
And the bishop's gone and left the fold,
But we're standing proud
and we're walking tall,
We've got Michael D
rockin' in the Dáil for us,
Michael D rockin' in the Dáil!*

-The Saw Doctors

Michael D Higgins. TD. President of the Labour Party. Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs. Former Mayor of Galway, Minister for Arts, Culture, and the Gaeltacht, Honorary Adjunct Professor at Large in Political Science and Sociology in NUIG and probably the only Irish politician to ever have had a rock song written about him.

In these and other diverse capacities, Michael D. has been recognised as one of the foremost champions of human rights, socialist politics and political activism in the Irish public sphere for three decades and more. It's little surprise too that he has firmly established himself as a kind of spiritual leader for a Labour Youth which has adopted a campaigning approach on so many of the issues close to his heart.

Michael D's unrelenting quest for equality and justice has taken many forms over the years. Most recently, this activism has

manifested itself in the publication of a new collection of essays, poems and diary entries entitled *Causes for Concern: Irish Politics, Culture and Society*, which he sees as being an important contribution to consciousness in today's society. "It is quite philosophical, it makes a case for being aware, and being critically aware, and then moving from critical awareness to action."

The book has proven immediately successful in the mainstream book charts, achieving unusual success for a political publication. Although containing only two or three pieces from each decade, the depth and complexities of the issues explored in the book have also evoked substantial anticipation for an eventual biographical work from Michael D.

Michael D's political career has been colourful, diverse, sometimes controversial, and has surprising origins. In his early days as an undergraduate in NUIG, Higgins was Chair of the university Cumann of Fianna Fáil. The young Michael D. had a view that he could influence Fianna Fáil and "push it in a left direction". However, despite his best efforts, he remembers that his substantial efforts were eventually thwarted by the Fianna Fáil leadership.

"Our Cumann was regarded as being unruly, and was about to be disciplined. We had been asking spokespersons to come and tell us

their policies and they had complained us to the head office for being less than respectful of senior and eminent spokespersons. Has anything changed?" he winks.

The realisation that the Labour Party was his true calling came after hearing Noël Browne speak in Manchester in 1968. A year later he was a Labour candidate for election in Galway West, eventually winning a seat in 1981 and retaining it ever since, with a brief interruption between November 1982 and 1987.

"The media is very nearly a monopoly, and far worse than it was in the 60's and 70's"

He attributes what he notes is a huge change in the political climate over the years in no small part to negative developments in the media.

"Some developments in communication, for example the Internet, have moved in favour of faster and easier communication, but others have become negatives in general media area. The media is very nearly a monopoly, and far worse than it was in the 60's and 70's. As a result, the quality of political writing in the media hasn't improved at all, and there has been a constriction of the space available

for discussing politics."

"There has also been a concentration of ownership and a tabloidisation of media; this is true not only of print media but also of radio and television. There is a profound tendency against democracy in that."

These comments are particularly apt for those involved in campaigns that have found themselves the victims of targeted media bias; most notably the Shell to Sea campaign and solidarity with the Afghan hunger strikers in St. Patrick's Cathedral in May 2006.

The particularly evocative case of the latter brought to light many inadequacies and injustices fundamentally embedded in the Irish immigration and asylum systems. Perhaps most demonstrative of these shortcomings are the many personal stories that emerge from within the layers of bureaucracy that make up the process.

"Youngsters in St. Pat's and others may be attending school, but then their reward for studying hard and getting their Leaving Cert is that they are now eligible for deportation. This is a scandalous, appalling burden to carry."

"We need a clearer system in place; issues of migration should be moved away from the Department of Justice. A department dealing with security is clearly not the best department to be handling issues regarding migrants and refugees. The absence of flexibility is appalling, and there is a very strong case to be made for eliminating backlog by allowing anyone who has been waiting for a decision for more than a certain amount of time to stay. The whole system is quite immoral and wrong."

Similarly, the Shell to Sea campaign has been the sustained target of media lies and fabrications for almost the entirety of its existence. However, Michael D was clear and unambiguous when asked about his views of the campaign and his ideas for how best it can progress.

"It is a great pity that Justin Keating's proposals in the 70's which would have allowed for a right of participation in ownership for the state and a right to take royalties were not adopted. The fiscal licensing terms were then changed by Ray Burke in deeply suspicious circumstances, and later changed again by other Fianna Fáil ministers. Then Shell arrived, assisted in no small part by Frank Fahey."

"There is no doubt that Fianna Fáil hands are very dirty on this issue, and that the Taoiseach is behaving with cowardice... Intervention is surely needed. I feel sorry for the people of Rossport. This has all been dumped in on top of them, and it is very wrong for [the media and government] to present their campaign as a front for other people."

Going forward, Michael D. suggested the internationalisation of the campaign to focus on the state-owned company Statoil in Norway, pointing out that when a delegation from Rossport visited the country, "the party that is now in government supported them."

Michael D. was also critical and concerned about elements of Garda treatment at the protests in Bellanaboy. "Gardaí have been



5 Things you might not know about Michael D.

1. Former PD leader Des O'Malley once said that Michael D "would go mad" if he ever got into government. 10 years later, Michael D's response as Minister for Arts, Culture & the Gaeltacht was "if this is madness, let us have more of it!"
2. He has released three poetry collections; *The Betrayal*, *The Season of Fire* and *An Arid Season*.
3. He is President and a Director of Galway United Football Club, working with 'Rogue Trader' Nick Leeson - the club's General Manager - in a club which has recently been nominated to the new League of Ireland Premiership.
4. A quote from his speech to the Party Conference in Tralee in 2005 - "Proud to be Left, Proud to be Labour" has become a *de facto* motto for Labour Youth. As well as popping up regularly in speeches at youth events, the line appears on the new banner of the UCD Upton-O'Riordan branch and is used in the masthead for Left Tribune.
5. He has made documentaries on Noël Browne, the island of Montserrat & the 1992 'Earth Summit' in Rio.

undisciplined and unaccountable. On occasions they have been provoked, but on many more occasions, including the time I was in Rossport, the Gardaí's attitude has been provocative, unhelpful and unaccountable."

Undoubtedly, though, Michael D is best known for his longstanding opposition to the war in Iraq, and to the use of Shannon airport as a stopover point for US military on their way to the Middle East. He noted his strong support for Motion 119 from the last full Labour Party Conference in 2005, proposed by Labour Youth, which called for the removal of US military from Shannon.

"The US administration is impaled on the hook of unconditional support for Israel"

"Labour Youth's proposal was perfectly correct, it was the only one, and it was that military were arriving in Shannon as part of an illegal war outside of international law. You cannot accept diplomatic assurances that you are complying with international law."

"I believe Shannon should not be available for CIA flights... Any use of any of our airports should be under the clear acceptance of our obligations under the UN charter and should be within the obligations of international law and justice. This rules out the use of any of our airports for such military purposes and pieces of adventurism as we have seen."

This illegal occupation in Iraq also draws a comparison with the support given to Israel from the US in aid of their occupation of Palestine. "The US administration is impaled on the hook of unconditional support for Israel.

The Palestinian issue is about dispossession and occupation, and severe breaches of human rights that have been completely trampled on by the Wall. The EU needs to sponsor a conference in the region; there you can deal with the nuclear issue too."

Amid the media frenzy and speculation about Labour's possible coalition options, Michael D offered some clear and coherent positions on Labour's policies for government.

"We need to maximise electoral support for our own policies. We will not negotiate on our principles - we have bedrock values. For example, there will NOT be private hospitals on public hospital grounds with Labour in government. We will have an ethical foreign policy ratified by international agreement. There will be a vindication of workers rights, and nothing will come at the cost of civil rights."

Looking to the future of the party and Irish politics in general, Michael D was ebullient in his praise for Labour Youth and the bottom-up activism that has defined it in recent years.

"The levels of youth activism, and the radicalism, courage and energy of Labour Youth in particular are to be welcomed. The challenge for Labour Youth lies in building a left economy and society and to fight against the rise in managerial philosophies."

Approaching what may be his last candidacy for Dáil Eireann, Michael D. has clearly retained the strength, drive and integrity that characterised his political career from the moment it began, and remains a source of constant inspiration for those of us committed to the socialist cause, to campaigning activism and to human rights in the world today.

Editorial: Between a Rock & a Hard Place

Like it or not, it seems to be a requirement of the Labour Party - above all other parties - to answer questions on its coalition prospects in the run up to any general election. Sadly, issues of short-term arithmetic have dominated political discourse in recent weeks when the agenda could have been set by the Labour's long-term vision for society itself. The great dichotomy manifests itself in the narrowest possible terms - Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael - rather than in far more fundamental questions; left or right, public or private, greed or care.

What is at least as depressing as the narrow and largely vacuous commentary on Labour's post-election options is the dull predictability of it all. Much of it was outlined in Labour Youth's document on electoral strategy, entitled "Towards an Alternative Politics," which was released prior to the Tralee Conference in 2005.

Those who are enacting the strategy voted for at that Conference have certainly taken the commitment to Fine Gael seriously, going so far as to release large numbers of joint policy documents - some good, some not so good - and to parade the FG leader on the party website and at parlia-

mentary party meetings. Nevertheless, the fairly stagnant position of both "alternative coalition" parties in the polls have prompted a rethink in strategy, with considerable meddling from media sources and supposed internal squabbles prompting considerable speculation towards a coalition with Fianna Fáil should the numbers require it.

There is a case to be made that such an approach will help "keep Labour relevant" in the election campaign - although such an approach was far from successful in 2002. Whatever the reasons, the Party Leader and management have adopted a "FG where possible, FF where necessary" strategy. The term "national interest," seemingly coined by the Irish Independent in an interview with Pat Rabbitte, has been utilised to great effect by a number of parties to ward away the Sinn Féin bogeyman.

Nevertheless, it is likely that a majority of the members of the Labour Party - the people who will ultimately decide - will reject any attempts to coalesce with Fianna Fáil after the election, believing the national interest is not served by 5 more years of FF-dominated government.

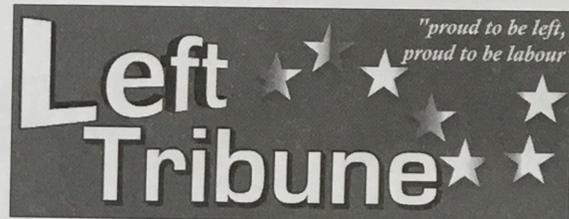
It is not the fault of the Labour

Party that the media focus is on personalities and the numbers game, rather than issue-based politics and policies. Nevertheless, the strategy embarked on by the leadership has played into that agenda and it is increasingly doubtful that Labour will be able to set the agenda in the campaign ahead, no matter how solid our policies.

Perhaps Labour's best hope is embarking on a more independent approach which focuses on the established ground - public services, social justice and neutrality - which parties such as the Greens & Sinn Féin have managed to attack with some success.

Regardless, Labour's position in Irish politics is increasingly squeezed by the jagged rock of Fianna Fáil and the barren hard place of Fine Gael. Only a Labour Party with the requisite confidence and boldness in our ideals to stand against Civil War parties almost 100 years on will replace them.

Dermot Looney, Editor



Labour Youth Branch Reports

Trinity College / David Thornley Branch (trinitylabour.bebo.com)

Trinity College is predicting a busy year with the Coca-Cola issue once again coming to the forefront of our student politics. The third referendum in four years on the boycott is set to take place at the end of February. A successful public meeting with Kevin Keating of SIPTU and Labour Youth activist Paul

Dillon, President of UCD SU at the time of the boycott there, helped to launch the campaign at the start of February. Activists are confident that the boycott will again be retained.

Preparations are currently under way for Trinity Labour's Socialist week. The aim is to explore a variety of issues that arise from within a socialist reality. It is hoped that this event will take place in March.

Christina McSorley (Chair)



UCD / Upton-O'Riordan Branch (ucdlabour.bebo.com)

The branch kicked off the new semester by laying down some plans for a series of public meetings to be held in the coming year. The first of these was a successful meeting on

Travellers Rights in the context of the Pdraig Nally trial with Martin Collins of Pavee Point.

Future plans include talks on the Beech Hill and a number campaigns during the year, including **Stop the US blockade of Cuba**. This will take the form of a campaign in

UCD to be followed by a picket of the US embassy.

A further campaign will take place on **Disability Access in UCD**, including a public meeting and a campaign calling for better facilities to be made available for individuals with special needs in the College.

It is also hoped that an event celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Labour Youth branch in UCD will be held, featuring speakers from each decade. The new branch banner on the left will also be launched.

Meanwhile, many branch members remain actively involved in the Shell to Sea campaign on campus and will be travelling to Rossport for the Solidarity Day on the 16th of February.

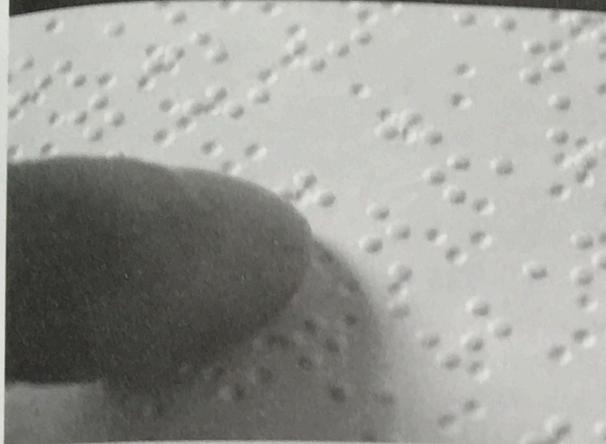
Karen O'Connell (Equality Officer)

To include your own branch or constituency news in future issues of Left Tribune, just email lycommunications@labour.ie

UCD Labour
 CAMPAIGNING FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM
 Proud to be Left
 Proud to be Labour

James Larkin 1874-1947
 James Connolly 1868-1916

Excluded and Ignored: How Ireland discriminates against our disabled



*People with disabilities are being excluded from Irish society because of the lack of enforcement of current equality legislation and the lack of political will to challenge the discrimination that they experience almost every day, writes **Joanne Doherty***

For a long time in Ireland, students with special needs had to attend special schools. The 1998 Education Act finally legislated for the inclusion of children with special needs into mainstream schools. Unfortunately the support services in place to meet these needs are inadequate or simply do not exist. A substantial proportion of primary school pupils with special needs are not getting any support at all. Some schools will not enrol a child with special needs until resources are provided from the Department of Education. However, the Department will not give extra resources to a school until a child with special needs enrolls in that school. The National Educational Psychological Services identify children who may have particular needs. However schools can only commission a maximum of 2 psychological assessments for every 100 students on the school roll. The only other way of being assessed is by going to a psychologist privately, meaning children who do not have the means to afford this are further disadvantaged. Barriers also exist in the physical accessibility of schools and third level institutions.

People with physical disabilities are denied access to public transport. Not all Dublin buses are wheelchair accessible. Rush hour trains are above passenger capacity, meaning that there is no space for wheelchair users. Elevators at train stations are often out of order. Train stations usually need prior notification if a wheelchair user will use the service. Buses and trains most often do not have speakers to indicate the various stops, which can be very problematic for people with visual impairments, or signs indicating the various stops, which can cause difficulties for people with hearing impairments. Private transport such as taxis and cars is often relied upon, which can be very expensive.

People with disabilities in Ireland are half as likely to be in employment com-

pared to people without disabilities. The Employment Equality Act 1998 was the first time that employees and job seekers with a disability had the right not to be discriminated against. However, the protection of private property clause within the Constitution has watered down the responsibility employers should have towards an employee with a disability. The Act requires that an employer do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person who has a disability by

A school can only commission a maximum of 2 psychological assessments for every 100 students on the school roll

providing special treatment or facilities at less than nominal cost. The meaning of the term 'nominal cost' is unclear, allowing for many employers to overlook the needs of employees or choose not to employ a person with a disability because of the unknown "costs" involved. Only a small number of cases have been brought to the Equality Authority on this ground of discrimination. The time and the costs involved in pursuing a case are undoubtedly preventing people from bringing forward cases of discrimination.

People with disabilities are often denied the right to socialise. Cinemas, shops, restaurants and pubs are generally not wheelchair accessible. Even if a cinema is wheelchair accessible, you have to sit at the very front, directly at the screen. Shop aisles are often too narrow for wheelchairs, shelves and counters are not reachable, prices are not displayed in Braille, changing rooms are not accessible. Most restaurants and pubs are not wheelchair accessible - there are often steps into and within the building, no accessible toilets, stairs but no lift. Menus are rarely in Braille. Staff are not

trained in sign language. The Equal Status Acts 2000 and 2004 state that service providers must reasonably accommodate a person with a disability by providing special treatment or facilities at less than nominal cost. Service providers often do not carry out these obligations because of the costs involved or the lack of awareness of or entitlement to grants. Part M of the Building Regulations requires that all new public buildings must be accessible to people with disabilities. There has been a lack of enforcement of this and very few sanctions imposed.

The Acts that have been mentioned above have highlighted the right people with disabilities have not to be discriminated against within the education system, when applying for a job, within the workplace, and when accessing buildings. But the small number of cases being brought to the Equality Authority with regard these discriminations and the under-representation of people with disabilities within the education system and in employment suggests that these acts are having only a small effect in ending discrimination and in creating accessibility. These Acts also have the effect of individualising discrimination because of the requirement that individuals themselves bring forward cases of discrimination, instead of highlighting that discrimination against people with disabilities is a systematic part of the environment. In order for these acts to have any substantial effect, there needs to be inspections of public buildings, workplaces, the transport system and the education system, rather than placing full responsibility on individuals. Ultimately political will is needed to end the blatant inequalities experienced by people with disabilities. This issue needs to be put on the political agenda and on our agenda in Labour Youth as part of our overall struggle for equality, justice and inclusion.

General Election '07: Labour

With a general election just a few months away, Labour is standing up to 50 candidates in every one of the 43 constituencies around the country - the first time we have contested every constituency since 1969. Having previously looked at candidates in Dublin and the North West, he now profiles Labour's candidates in the Ireland East and South election regions.

Ireland East (All of Leinster minus Dublin)

The politics textbooks will tell you that Labour's strongest vote throughout history has not been in Dublin, but in the other counties of Leinster - counties such as Wicklow and Wexford have almost always had a Labour presence in the Dáil. The 13 candidates in these 10 constituencies will be hoping to increase Labour's tally of 6 seats in this area.

2 Meath East

New constituency - formerly part of Meath. No of seats: 3
 No current Labour TD. Candidate: Cllr Dominic Hannigan
The splitting of the 5-seat Meath constituency into two 3-seaters is generally seen to be of electoral benefit to Labour. In the 2005 by-election in Meath, Dominic Hannigan polled very well in his base in the eastern part of the county. Elected as an Independent councillor in the 2002 locals, Hannigan is one of the most high-profile new Labour candidates & will face stiff opposition in trying to reclaim a Labour seat once held by now-Independent Brian Fitzgerald.

3 Meath West

New constituency - formerly part of Meath. No of seats: 3
 No current Labour TD. Candidate: Cllr Brian Collins
33-year old Brian Collins remains a familiar face to many Labour Youth activists, having co-ordinated the Tom Johnson Summer School for many years. A councillor on Kells Town Council, he will face an uphill challenge in a competitive field which includes big-hitters Noel Dempsey (FF) and Damien English (FG).

4 Longford-Westmeath

New constituency - Longford was formerly joined with Roscommon, and Westmeath was a 3-seat constituency on its own. No of seats: 4
 Current TD and candidate: Willie Penrose
If you're looking to put money on one Labour candidate in the next general election, Willie Penrose would be the safest bet. Touted nationwide as an incredible vote-getter, Penrose was the only Labour candidate in 2002 to exceed the quota on the first count and while the introduction of Longford to the constituency will hardly add to the Labour presence, he looks set for his fourth term in the Dáil this time round.

5 Laois-Offaly

No of seats: 5 - Currently 2 FF, 2 FG, 1 PD
 No current Labour TD. Candidates: Jim O'Brien and David Whelan
Undoubtedly Labour's weakest constituency in the whole of Leinster, it is hard to remember that Labour held a seat here less than ten years ago. Pat Gallagher's election in 1992 was the fruit of many year's labour as well as the effect of a national Spring Tide. First-timers Jim O'Brien (based in Portlaoise) and David Whelan (based in Tullamore) will be hoping to build Labour's profile in a constituency dominated by Ministers Cowen and Parlon and FG's Olwyn Enright. Maybe, just maybe, a collapse in Parlon's vote might lead to a backdoor chance for Labour.

6 Kildare North

No of seats: 4 - Currently 1 FG, 1 LAB, 1 IND
 Current TD and candidate: Emmet Stagg
The increase of Kildare North from 3 seats to 4 shouldn't affect Emmet Stagg's longstanding vote in an area he has represented since 1987. The former darling of the Labour Left was unable to return a Labour colleague in Paddy MacNamara in the 2005 by-election here, but should comfortably hold his seat despite a left challenge from Independent Catherine Murphy.

7 Kildare South

No of seats: 3 - Currently 2 FF, 1 LAB
 Current TD and candidate: Jack Wall
Labour's spokesperson on Sport and Tourism in the current Dáil, Jack Wall has held a seat here since 1997. A mostly rural constituency with an increasing number of Dublin commuters, Kildare South may indeed return a change at the next election. The media wisdom is for a switch from FF to FG and a Labour hold.

1 Louth

No of seats: 4 - Currently 2 FF, 1 FG, 1 SF
 No current Labour TD. Candidate: Cllr Ged Nash
A former Labour stronghold, Michael Bell held a seat here from 1982 to 2002. 31-year old Ged Nash has a job on his hands in winning back the seat here from a strong FG attempt to gain a second seat. However, having topped the poll by a considerable margin in the 2004 elections with the highest ever first preference vote recorded in his electoral area, Ged will be in with a shout of becoming one of Labour's youngest TD in the next Dáil.

10 Carlow-Kilkenny

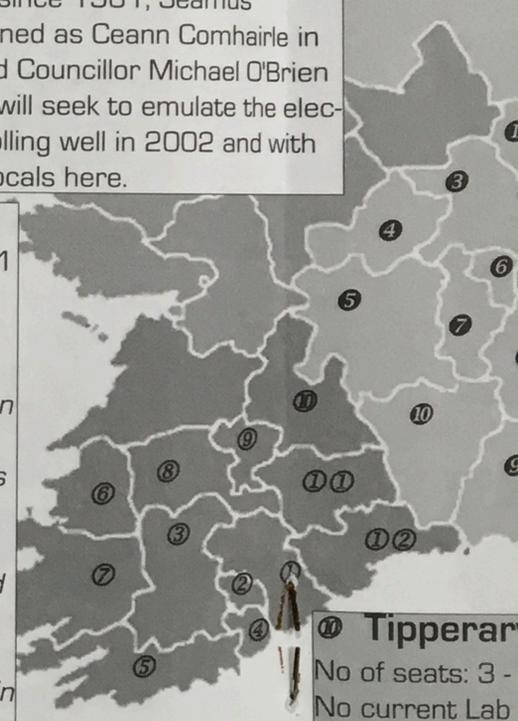
No of seats: 5 - Currently 3 FF, 1 FG, 1 LAB
 Current TD: Seamus Pattison (retiring). Candidates: Cllr Michael O'Brien, Cllr Jim Townsend
Having represented the constituency since 1961, Seamus Pattison, who was automatically returned as Ceann Comhairle in 2002, has now retired. Kilkenny-based Councillor Michael O'Brien and Carlow-based Cllr Jim Townsend will seek to emulate the electoral strategy with both candidates polling well in 2002 and with Labour performing well in the 2004 locals here.

9 Wexford

No of seats: 5 - Currently 2 FF, 2 FG, 1 LAB
 Current TD and candidate: Brendan Howlin
Along with Wicklow, Wexford has been somewhat of a stronghold of the left for years, with Brendan Corish and his father Richard dominating until the 1980's. Only between 1982 and Brendan Howlin's election in 1982 did Labour not hold a seat here. The pattern is unlikely to be changed here. Colm O'Gorman was rumoured to be in talks with Labour about a possible run here but instead opted for the PD's. His campaign has been much of a damp squib and is unlikely to threaten Howlin's return to the Dáil.

8 Wicklow

No of seats: 5 - Currently 2 FF, 1 FG, 1 LAB, 1 IND
 Current TD and candidate: Liz McManus. Also : Cllr Nicky Kelly
Labour came closest to a second seat here last time out with just 19 votes separating Nicky Kelly from Fianna Fáil-oriented Independent Mildred Fox, who is now stepping down. A strong challenge has been mooted for Green Councillor Deirdre de Burca here, and there may yet be an independent heir to Fox's seat, but with FF in disarray the hope is that Labour can win 2 of the 5 seats in a constituency that has never failed to elect a left candidate (James Everett, Liam Kavanagh and Liz McManus).



11 Tipperary

No of seats: 3
 No current Labour TD
With FG targeting the seat, Labour candidate Kathleen will be a strong contender for the Dáil Seanad to the Dáil. John Ryan, it m...

12 Limerick

No of seats: 5
 Current TD and candidate: Labour's Educ...
Jan O'Sullivan of the Socialist Party has the seat - of a constituency which has never elected a left candidate in Clare. A strong re-election.

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Labour's Candidates

Ireland South

In the last three decades the left has built a considerable presence across Munster through Labour, the Workers' Party/Democratic Left and the Democratic Socialist Party, but this has been partly eroded in recent years. There are 12 constituencies in this area, with 5 sitting TD's and 12 candidates already selected.

①② Waterford

No of seats: 5 - Currently 2 FF, 1 FG, 1 LAB
Current TD and candidate: Brian O'Shea
Brian O'Shea first stood in 1982 and was first elected in 1989, holding his seat since then. He is currently Labour's spokesperson on Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and despite a strong showing by SF and a resurgence from the Workers' Party, should retain the seat.

①① Tipperary South

No of seats: 3 - Currently 1 FF, 1 FG, 1 IND
No current Labour TD. Candidate: Mayor Phil Prendergast
Clonmel's Phil Prendergast is universally accepted as a bright hope for Labour in a constituency once dominated by Labour's Michael Ferris. Formerly part of Seamus Healy's Workers' and Unemployed Action Group, Prendergast joined Labour in 2005 and has put out a strong marker for a challenge here.

① Tipperary North

No of seats: 3 - Currently 2 FF, 1 IND
No current Lab TD. Candidate: Sen Kathleen O'Meara
With FG targeting the return of a seat here that they lost with the scandal over Michael Lowry - who, bafflingly, continues to top the poll here - it is difficult to see the Labour candidate not feel the pinch here. Nevertheless, Kathleen will be aiming high to move next door from the Seanad to the Dáil. Formerly a Labour seat built up by John Ryan, it might yet return a Labour TD in '07.

⑨ Limerick East

No of seats: 5 - Currently 2 FF, 1 FG, 1 LAB, 1 PD
Current TD and candidate: Jan O'Sullivan
Labour's Education Spokesperson in the current Dáil, Jan O'Sullivan began her political life in the Democratic Socialist Party and has carried on the tradition - and the seat - of Jim Kemmy in this mostly-urban constituency which also incorporates a small part of Co Clare. A strong vote-getter with an excellent chance of re-election.

① Cork East

No of seats: 4 - Currently 2 FF, 1 FG, 1 LAB
Current TD: Joe Sherlock (retiring). Candidates: Cllr John Mulvihill, Cllr Seán Sherlock
Having first been elected for Sinn Féin - The Workers' Party in 1981, and later its further incarnations up to the Labour Party, Joe Sherlock is now stepping down with two strong candidates lining up to replace him - his son, Cllr Seán Sherlock, and Cllr John Mulvihill. Seán has a strong base in his father's former heartland of Mallow, whereas John will be looking to build on his Midleton-based local vote. Interestingly, Mulvihill got more first preferences than Sherlock the last time out, but it the latter was elected on transfers.

② Cork North Central

No of seats: 4 - Currently 3 FF, 1 FG, 1 LAB
Current TD and candidate: Kathleen Lynch
The dropping of a seat here may put pressure on Labour's Kathleen Lynch, a former DL representative who famously won a by-election here in 1994. Sinn Féin are promoting their candidate strongly here but the pundits seem to be suggesting similar personnel this time round, with FF taking the drop of one seat.

③ Cork North West

No of seats: 3 - Currently 2 FF, 1 FG
No current Labour TD. Candidate: Cllr Martin Coughlan
Hardly a Labour heartland, Martin Coughlan nonetheless polled a respectable vote here in 2002 and won both town and county council seats for the Macroom area in the 2004 elections. With just six candidates declared - 3 FF and 2 FG, as well as Martin - it is likely to be the smallest election in the country.

④ Cork South Central

No of seats: 5 - Currently 3 FF, 1 FG, 1 GP
No current Labour TD. Candidate: Cllr Ciaran Lynch
Cllr Ciarán Lynch will fight it out in one of the tightest battles in the country, with FF's Mícheál Martin and FG's Simon Coveney vying to top the poll. Lynch will be hoping to gain one of the FF seats although the Greens' Dan Boyle may also be under threat. With a strong showing in the 2004 locals here, and a vigorous local organisation, Lynch may be Labour's best chance of a gain in "The Real Capital."

⑤ Cork South West

No of seats: 3 - Currently 2 FF, 1 FG
No current Labour TD. Candidate: Senator Michael McCarthy
Having polled 10% here in 2002, Michael McCarthy went on to an impressive Seanad victory on the Labour Panel. Both FF's Denis O'Donovan and FG's Jim O'Keeffe seem safe here, but the retirement of former Agriculture Minister Joe Walsh might leave an outside chance for the Labour candidate on an improved showing.

⑥ Kerry North

No of seats: 3 - Currently 1 FF, 1 FG, 1 SF
No current Labour TD. Candidate: Cllr Terry O'Brien
Labour members will need little reminding of former successes here. Former leader Dick Spring held the Labour seat here for over 20 years, following on the tradition from his father. He lost it in 02 in unlucky circumstances, polling 0.90 of a quota and still losing out. Tralee-based Councillor Terry O'Brien will be hoping to rejuvenate Labour's fortunes in Kerry North, and recent polls have predicted that Labour will take a seat from FG or SF.

⑦ Kerry South

No of seats: 3 - Currently 1 FF, 1 LAB, 1 IND
Current TD and candidate: Breeda Moynihan-Cronin
Former Labour organiser Pat Magnier said that Michael Moynihan - Breeda's father - carved the Labour seat out of the mountain rock of Kerry South. Labour has fought hard to maintain a base here and Breeda Moynihan-Cronin's announcement of retirement led to considerable despair in the local organisation. Her change of mind to run again has prompted flurries of activity and a local poll has placed her highly for re-election.

⑧ Limerick West

No of seats: 3 - Currently 2 FF, 1 FG
No current Labour TD. No candidate yet selected.
The only constituency where Labour has yet to select a candidate. She or he will have a fight on their hands as Labour only holds one Council seat here and did not stand in 02.

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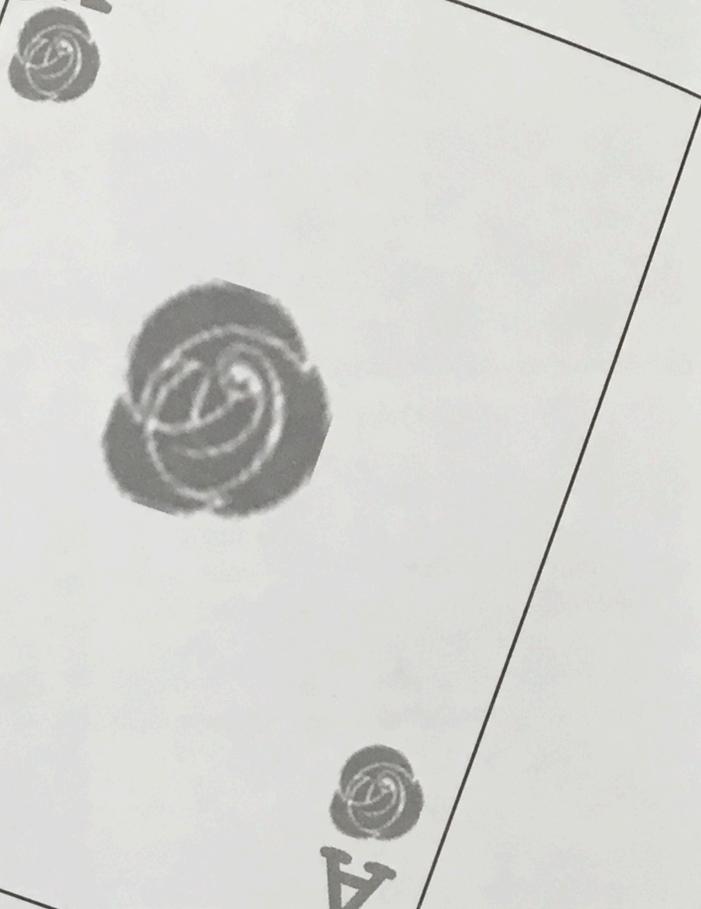
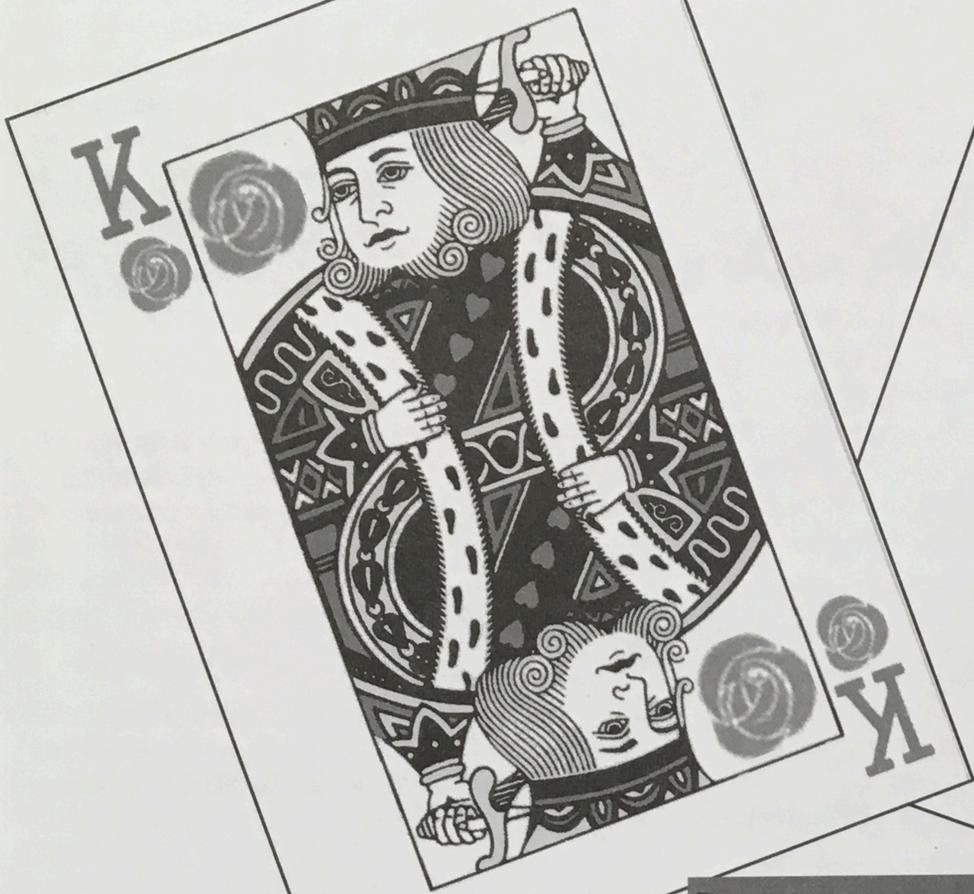
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Political Poker



in support of



Wednesday 28 February
8pm

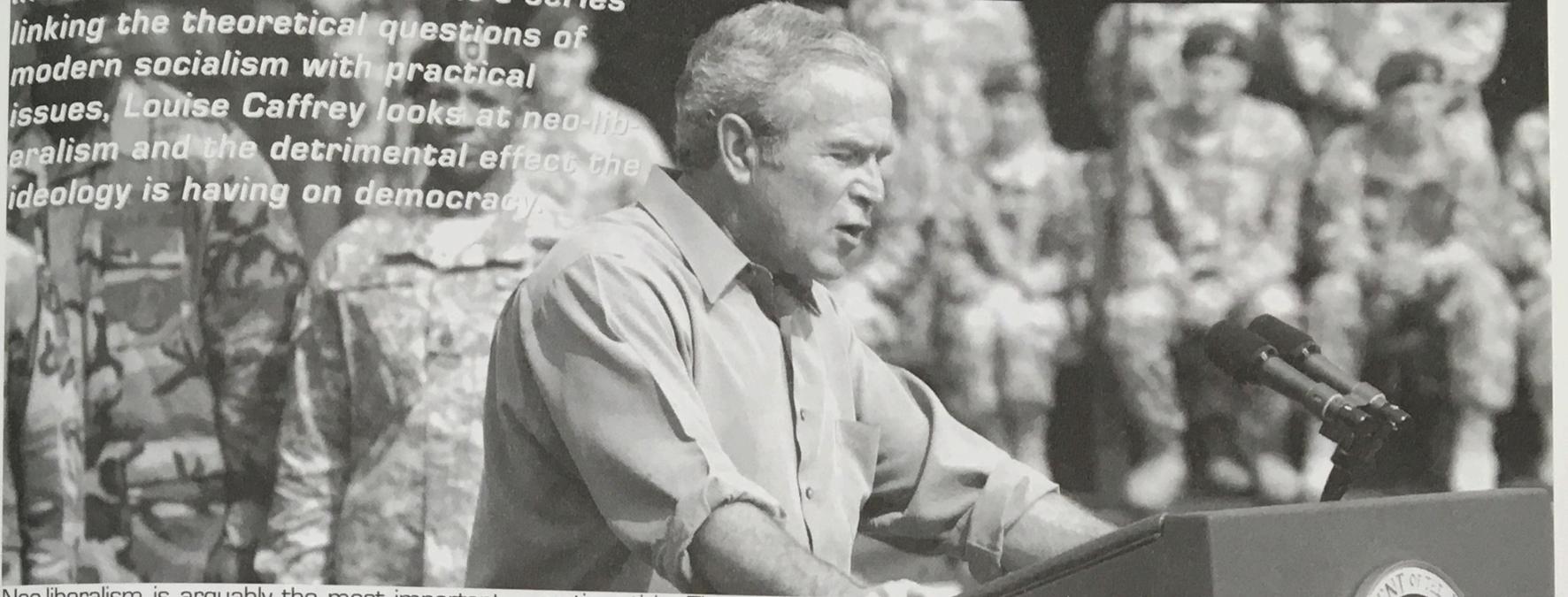
Basement, Doyle's Pub, Dublin 2

Buy in: €20 (€10 to prize pool)

20 minute blinds - Rebuys allowed for first 100 minutes - 3000 chips starting stack - Register by 7.30pm and receive an extra 250 chips!

IN THEORY: Neo-liberalism and the demise of Irish democracy

In the second of Left Tribune's series linking the theoretical questions of modern socialism with practical issues, Louise Caffrey looks at neo-liberalism and the detrimental effect the ideology is having on democracy.



Neo-liberalism is arguably the most important concept of the past 30 years. It is an ideology that has come to announce an upheaval in global economic, social and political governance and a paradigm that has provoked some of the most impassioned and bitter policy debates. "Neo-liberalism" is a term that litters the pages of academic journals but hears rare utterance within the popular media or the walls of Leinster House. Consequently, despite its global magnitude it is a concept that the vast majority of people in Ireland, as worldwide, have never heard of.

So what is neo-liberalism? Firstly it is important to note that neo-liberalism is not a precisely defined term. It is a broad ideology and its implementation has varied between countries. The central tenet of neo-liberal ideology is that the economy will grow fastest if governments keep their intervention to a minimum. Hence it advocates vast privatisation of state enterprise, low taxation and a highly limited welfare state. It also proposes the "opening up" of individual countries to the global economy, principally through the attraction of high levels of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); essentially money (or companies) from abroad to fund projects at home.

Neo-liberalism is first and foremost an economic policy and its economic implications are of utmost importance. However, an economy cannot exist in isolation and so neo-liberalism must also be seen as a political and social policy with consequences for the fabric of society in far broader terms. These political and social effects of neo-liberalism are a much less debated topic, yet through an examination of the Irish context it can be argued that elements endemic to the neo-liberal model erode and limit the quality of democracy.

Firstly, the neo-liberal avocation of high levels of privatisation presents a conflict with the democratic model since by definition it erodes the public sphere; the sphere of demo-

cratic activity. Thus the increasing threat of privatisation taking place within the Irish health, education, energy and transport sectors limits the accountability of these sectors to the Irish people. As we sell off control of our assets, democracy is eroded since our decisions at

Neo-liberalism gives those controlling foreign capital within Ireland a disproportionate and undemocratic influence on decisions taken in the country

election time are effectively decisions over a smaller and smaller area of policy. Moreover as our say diminishes, that of the private sector grows, creating a situation in which decisions affecting Irish people are increasingly decided not by the Irish people as a whole, but by a small group of private and wealthy individuals.

The importance placed on the attraction of FDI in the neo-liberal paradigm further accentuates this trend. By making FDI the cornerstone of economic growth, neo-liberalism gives those controlling foreign capital within Ireland a disproportionate and undemocratic influence on decisions taken in the country. It also places limits on the policy choices that governments which accept the neo-liberal model can make. A particularly potent example of this in the Irish context is the use of Shannon Airport as a stopover point for US military planes in the war against Iraq. This situation exists despite the clear opposition of the vast majority of Irish citizens, yet it is allowed to perpetuate because our government fears offending any foreign investment within the country, an inherently undemocratic situation.

A final issue relates to the link between neo-liberalism and inequality, the growth of which is expected by even the most enthusiastic proponents of neo-liberal restructuring. Within Ireland the pre-eminence of this

ideology has resulted in extraordinarily high levels of inequality. More than 20% of Irish people are living in poverty and the EU social inclusion data from 2001 (most recent) places Ireland at the bottom of the table in terms of the EU-15. The effect of this on people's lives must be neither underestimated nor ignored. However, it must also be examined from the perspective of its effect on the functioning of democracy. Our equal engagement in the political system is determined not just by our equal "right" to engage, but by our ability to engage. Time, education, health, knowledge, even money itself, can affect the weight of our political contribution. These factors are more unequal in an unequal society. The result of this is a "democracy" in which the democratic contribution between citizens is of increasingly unequal weight.

Thus there is high indication that the neo-liberal model has a negative impact on the functioning of democracy. Yet this erosion of democracy is happening in silence. This silence interacts with the undemocratic nature of neo-liberalism to further compound popular alienation from the democratic process. If Irish democracy is to maintain any meaning, this silence must be broken and informed and inclusive debate must begin. For this to happen the question of neo-liberalism must be transported from academic circles into "real" society. The current context of politics, in which issues are introduced and challenged in the absence of a debate that engages with the notion of ideology, is not just unhelpful but wholly damaging to Irish society and democracy. The responsibility for transporting this debate into the "real" world ultimately lies with political parties, trade unions, the media and broad civil society. This transportation must begin with an acknowledgement and re-engagement with the ideologies of this century. Only in such a manner can democracy be reinvigorated and neo-liberalism, which so undermines that democracy, be challenged.

Should Labour co-operate more closely with Sinn Féin?

Is it now time for Labour to work with Sinn Féin towards a left-led alternative government rather than coalition with Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil? Paul Dillon, who was a former organiser for the ATGWU in the 6 counties, and Donal O Liathain, a member of Northern Ireland Labour Youth, take on the debate.

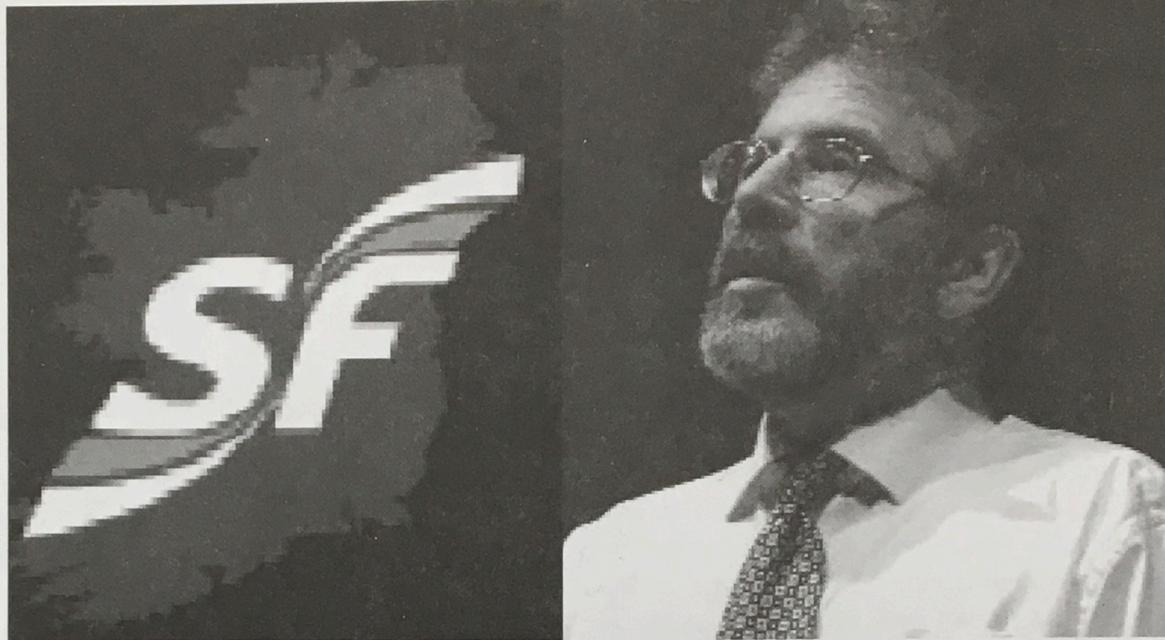
YES: Paul Dillon

What is to become of the Labour Party? Ten years of Fianna Fáil and the PDs and Labour still hovers in or around the 10 to 12 per cent mark in the opinion polls. At this stage, it is safe to conclude that the Mullingar accord and the pre-election pact with the Fine Gael party have not rewarded Labour in terms of public support. Add to that the fact that some long standing Labour policies seem to have been ditched and new policies have been cautious and 'un-Labour' like in order to preserve an image of false unity between Labour and FG and the picture for Labour appears bleak. The greatest effect of Labour's alliance with FG has been the partial resurrection of that party's fortunes.

What is the alternative? Surely not an alliance with Fianna Fáil. Labour members need little reminder of the outcome of Labour's past association with FF in government. Those who suggest that Labour's electoral slaughtering in 1997 had more to do with the switch in electoral partners from Fianna Fáil to Fine Gael in 1994 are still boxing from the same corner. Close relationships with either Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael - the Podge and Rodge of Irish politics - do not benefit Labour electorally and prevent the emergence of an alternative politics to rival the current dominance of centre-right ideas in Ireland.

This is the bad news. The good news is that an alternative is available if we are brave enough to seek it out. The numbers of Labour, Sinn Féin, Green and progressive TDs in the Dáil outstrips the parliamentary strength of the Fine Gael party. A similar coalition of the willing exists outside parliament. Labour members were amongst the hundreds of thousands who have taken part in the mobilisations against war, attacks on workers' rights and other progressive causes in recent years. Some of these mobilisations - namely the Anti-war demonstration of 15 February 2003 and the Irish Ferries march of December 2005 - were amongst the biggest in recent Irish history. This ought to be a cause for great hope.

There has never been more support for a left-led government in Ireland. Labour has the opportunity to lead a coalition of the willing both inside the Dáil and outside



and construct a programme deserving of the description Labour to build support for it.

This of course means a change in attitude from some towards Sinn Féin. The truth is that all of the traditional arguments against the participation of Sinn Féin in government have now disappeared. The IRA has put its arms beyond use. The Sinn Féin party has been aligned to the causes close to the hearts of members of the Labour party and others on the Left in recent years - most noticeably the citizenship referendum of 2003, the question of the US military's use of Shannon airport and currently in the Shell to Sea campaign.

There is no point resurrecting what occurred in yester year. Sinn Féin members returned to the Dáil in 2006 will be returned on a political mandate, not on the basis of past IRA atrocities. It is time to let the past rest. Some on the Left have been weary of raising questions of Republicanism and nationalism, lest such questions divide people or contribute towards reactionary politics. The truth of the matter is that it's no crime to argue strongly for Ireland to be governed as single entity. It makes a lot of practical sense.

For starters, Unionists would have a stronger voice in an all Ireland context. Currently, Unionism is a tiny minority in the Westminster set up. The Left need not be uncomfortable with questions of national identity. Identity does not have to be asserted in a way that excludes anybody. A pluralist society can accommodate a strong Irish identity, a strong British identity, a strong

Polish agenda. Socialists recognize the common purpose of humanity and stress that when it comes to divisions in society, the dividing line is class, not nationality. But that doesn't mean we need be uncomfortable with people asserting their identity.

Some have raised practical questions over Sinn Féin's Left credentials relating to their time in government in the North when Sinn Féin ministers were said to have introduced private finance initiatives into public services. Others argue that Sinn Féin's Left credentials are compromised by a seemingly all encompassing nationalism, evident when the party leadership supported Mary McAleese in her bid to win the Presidency in 1997.

These are questions for debate and discussion. To the Labour audience, I offer this point of view. Labour members will only be in a position to challenge Sinn Féin on such questions when we strive to put our own house in order. This means asserting opposition when our own party leadership is ambivalent about possible part-privatisations of public service and insisting that we use opportunities like Presidential elections to advance the Labour cause through actually running a candidate of our own.

The policy of pursuing a Labour-led government has both principled and pragmatic merit. This means reaching out to all those - including Sinn Féin - who may be potential allies in this quest. The conditions, both inside and outside parliament, are favourable for the construction of such a project.

NO: Dónal Ó Liatháin

"The British army must take full responsibility for civilian deaths by failing to clear the area [around the car bombs planted by the PIRA] in an efficient and appropriate manner" - PIRA Army Council statement

This was the twisted logic of Seán Mac Stíofáin, the first Chief of Staff of the Provisional IRA, and in a way it characterized the twisted logic of the Provisional Republican movement from its very inception. Nothing was ever their fault, they had the right to remove from existence anyone they wished, and violence was just their way of political campaigning. In their view two words justified everything - "Brits Out".

With the passing of time the period known as 'the Troubles' will fade in people's memories. It will be hard for the generation after our's to understand the motives and methods of many. It's even hard for our generation to remember the constant fear, the unrelenting security and counter security measures, the unspoken rules dictating what you couldn't say or where you couldn't go. It's a long, tragic and truly saddening story.

To explain Sinn Féin/PIRA's part in instigating the violence in figures, the PIRA killed approximately half of all who were killed in the Troubles. They killed more civilians than they killed British soldiers and they killed more Catholics than they killed Protestants. In short, for 30 years the PIRA terrorized their way through Northern Ireland not caring that they were directly damaging their 'own' community more than protecting it. The PIRA also killed more republican paramilitaries than loyalist paramilitaries in its "defense of the community". In reality the PIRA was a cabal of ruthless men and women consolidating power and wealth with little regard for those who got in their way.

But is this representative of Sinn Féin today? After all Gerry Adams has come a long way from being a scruffy prisoner and Martin McGuinness has changed from the ragged PIRA volunteer that he was to the sleek and oily politician he has become.

Let us consider the small case of five of Arthur Morgan's election workers in Bray. Not 30 years ago but 3. Remember 2003? Remember that five Sinn Féin election workers were among a gang of 6 (the sixth had done time for membership of the PIRA) arrested in Bray, Co Wicklow in 2003. These boys were posing as gardaí, using fake uniforms and a stolen car made to look like a squad car (which contained Arthur Morgan's election posters in the boot). What were they doing five years after the Good Friday Agreement dressed as Garda in Bray?

Let's think about September 2003. Jean McConville was due to be buried. Sinn Féin had 'nothing' to do with her murder



many years before, but none-the-less Sinn Féin representatives warned her family not to make the service public. The family did. All ten children of Jean have reported threats and/or attacks from the 'Republican movement'.

Few would count November 2005 as history. A little under 18 months ago five Sinn Féin activists were charged over claims they viciously assaulted a garda and group of foreign nationals with hurleys in a racist attack in Ballinamore, Co Leitrim. During the attack, the proud Irish Republicans cried "f*** off back to your own country" and defiantly declared that "Ireland is for the Irish". Thankfully the leadership of the "Ireland of Equals" haven't bowed under pressure and these fine Irishmen still retain their membership of SF.

Gardaí also probed a link between the Ballinamore incident and an attack on a couple in a bar in Manorhamilton in March of last year. Two active members of Sinn Féin were among six men arrested in connection with that incident.

The list goes on: hijackings of alcohol in Meath, punishment beatings in Belfast, Limerick, Derry. Racist attacks in Manorhamilton, Twinbrook. Extortion in Belfast Dublin, Cork. Money laundering in Manchester, London, Glasgow... all cases where individuals with connections to Provisional Sinn Féin have been arrested.

The left wing has, at the heart of its traditions, the absolute truth that politics doesn't end at a parliament's door. We know

that a declaration passed in a dusty chamber matters not a damn if people's actions and attitudes do not support it.

The Sinn Féin leadership may loftily declare themselves to be a left leaning party, but when it refuses to take action against its own members for violent bigoted crimes it loses all credibility. Sinn Féin in government may declare itself to be a rights giving group, but when they triple health waiting lists, when they fail to remove the 11 plus and when they do nothing but hinder equality legislation then they show their true colours. Many ordinary members of Sinn Féin can show socialist inclinations but until they realize that a united people is more important than a united Ireland they are little more than base nationalists in a party acting for "ourselves alone".

What story the future will bring no one can know, but there are stories from the past we all should know. In 1969 the leader of the Orange lodge on the Shankill road visited the Catholic priest of the Falls Road with a simple request. He asked for, and was given, a lend of the church's musical instruments so that the lodge could celebrate the 12th of July. After the traditional march the lodge's band marched up the Falls Road. There for the rest of the day they gave a free concert of contemporary show tunes, much to the delight of the local community.

Today this would be impossible. A wall 60 foot high of steel and barbed wire now divides these communities. Lovingly emblazoned on the wall in letters 6 foot high is the message "Support Sinn Féin/P.I.R.A."

A Socialist in the US Senate

Enda Duffy

The outcome of the recent mid-term elections in the United States was a shift in political power to the Democrats; for the first time in over a decade the party now holds power in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. This victory can best be described as a protest and direct political attack on the Bush administration and the

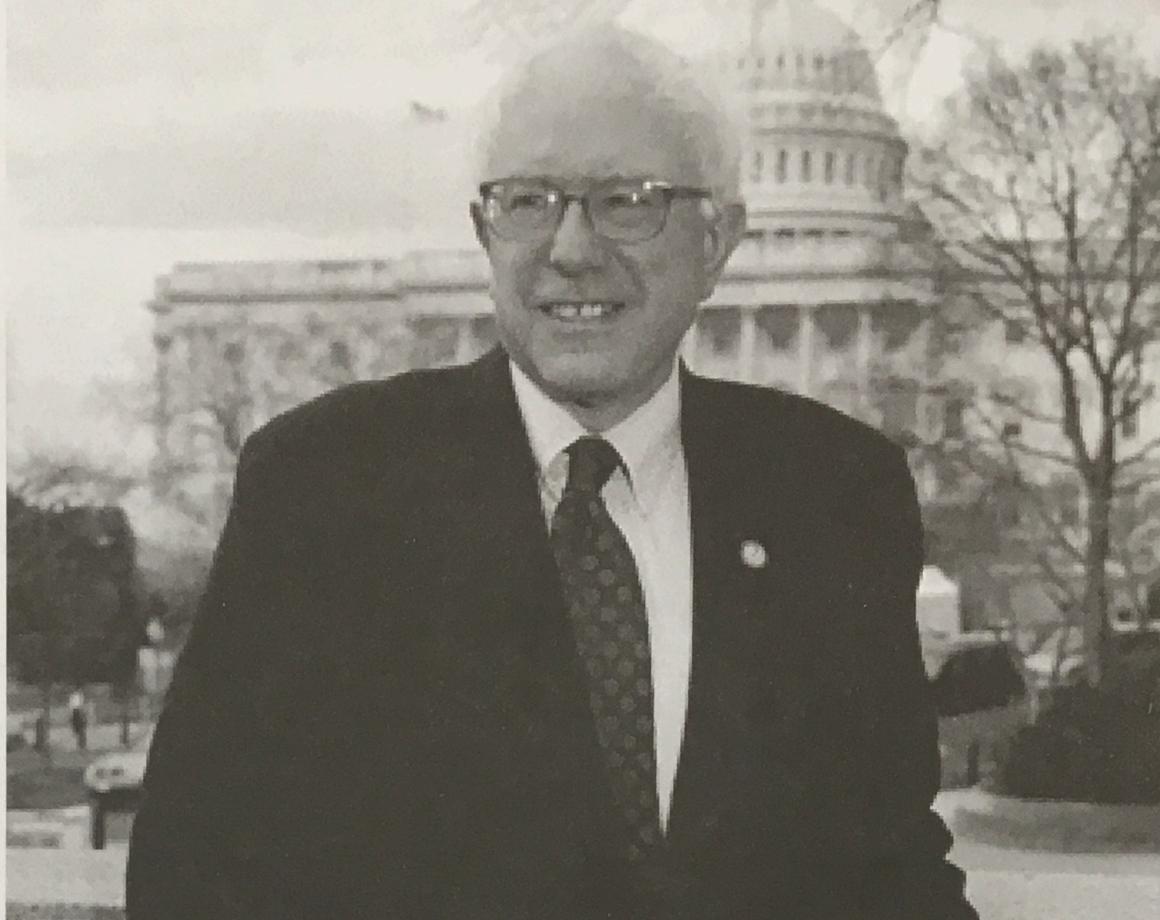
Sanders supports universal health care and opposes what he terms "unfettered" free trade

occupation of Iraq. However, when thinking about American politics, one can only be aghast at the fact that the Democrats and Republicans have very few political differences. Both parties are pro market capitalism and pro war and both are funded by big business. In addition, the majority of their public representatives are wealthy millionaires. The only real question when voting in America is which is the lesser of two evils? This is a truly shocking reality in a country that purports democracy. However, in the state of Vermont a rare classic battle between capitalist and worker took place.

In the Senate elections a very unusual thing happened in American politics; a democratic socialist ran for election and won convincingly. As the records show, Bernie Sanders is the first self-declared socialist to enter the Senate.

Bernie Sanders' whole life has been occupied by struggles for social justice. In his early political career, Sanders ran for the Senate in 1972 and 1974, as well as for governor of Vermont in 1972, 1976 and 1986. In all these elections he lost. However, in 1981, Sanders ran for mayor of Burlington and defeated six-term Democratic incumbent Gordon Paquette by 12 votes. During his term as mayor he implemented many socialist policies and was thanked by the electorate when they re-elected him for three more terms.

Under Sanders, Burlington became the first city in the country to fund community-trust housing and it redeveloped many of its disadvantaged areas. In 1988, when six-term incumbent House Representative Jim Jeffords made a successful run for the Senate, Sanders again turned his attention to national politics and ran for Jeffords' vacated seat in the House. Unfortunately, Sanders narrowly lost to Peter P. Smith, the former Republican candidate for governor, but again ran against Smith in 1990. In one of the biggest upsets in recent political history, he took 56 percent of the vote and became the first independent member of the House since 1950.



"We have the wealth and resources to end poverty, make health care available for all and provide the best education in the world"

Sanders is a co-founder of the House Progressive Caucus, a left wing group of mainly Democrats. Sanders' voting record speaks for itself, with votes against both resolutions authorising the use of force against Iraq in 1991 and 2002 and strong opposition the 2003 invasion. Sanders supports universal health care and opposes what he terms "unfettered" free trade, which he argues deprives American workers of their jobs while exploiting foreign workers in sweat-shop factories. He also makes no secret of his opposition to the Bush administration, which he has regularly attacked for cuts in social programmes he supports.

When Jim Jeffords announced that he would not seek re-election, Sanders decided to run. He easily beat his Republican challenger, businessman Richard Tarrant, by a margin of 2 to 1. History was made when the first known socialist entered the US Senate to take his seat on 4 January 2007.

Despite his achievements, Sanders has received heavy criticism from both the right and left. From the left, he has received criticism for being too close to the Democrats and for supporting a vote for John Kerry over Ralph Nader in the last presidential election. Sanders also supported the Israeli attacks on Lebanon and is extremely hostile towards Palestinian sovereignty. In addition, critics from the right claim Sanders promotes programmes that include nationalising all U.S. banks, public ownership of all utilities, the ending of compulsory education and establishing a worker-controlled government.

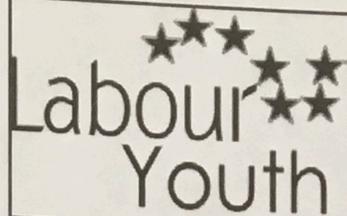
In an article he wrote entitled 'US

needs a political revolution', Sanders summed up his view of American political hegemony: "The tragic consequence of millions of low income and working people losing faith in the ability of the government to respond to their problems, is that today the United States has, by far, the lowest voter turnout of any major country. Meanwhile, the rich and multi-national corporations are pouring billions into the political process and both major political parties. The obvious result is that many candidates who are elected end up being more concerned about pleasing their wealthy benefactors than representing the needs of working people, children, the elderly or the poor."

Sanders sums up this article with a call to arms for the American worker, "We have the wealth and resources in this country today to end poverty, make health care available for all, and provide the best education in the world. We won't accomplish those goals, however, unless all Americans reclaim their democratic heritage by fully participating in the political process: by using the power to vote and speak and act for social justice."

Although we on the left must not get carried away by his success, there is no doubt that Sanders is a man that continually advocates grassroots participation in democracy and society and has consistently been calling for a new grassroots political movement to sweep across the USA and reclaim politics for the people. Clearly, the election of Bernard Sanders is a step in the right direction for American politics.

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Joining Labour Youth is as simple as filling in the form below and posting to Labour Youth, 17 Ely Place, Dublin 2 - or emailing the details to youth@labour.ie

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Get Involved!

Have you been inspired by any of the topics covered in this issue? If so make sure to get in contact with the relevant organisations:

Boycott Killer Coke:
www.killercoke.org

IUSY
www.iusy.org

Disabled Rights
www.inclusionireland.ie

Other websites of note:

Labour Youth Homepage:
www.labouryouth.ie

ECOSY - Young European Socialists:
www.ecosy.org

Anti-War Ireland:
www.antiwarireland.org

Residents Against Racism
www.residentsagainstracism.org

Indymedia:
www.indymedia.ie

Obituary: David Ervine

Donal O Liathain

On a cold blustery day in January under the shadow of Belfast's famous shipyards David Ervine was laid to rest. It was clear from the closed shops, the constant trickle of mourners emerging from the sidestreets and the lowered flags, that this community was saying farewell to one of their own.

How did this convicted bomber become so instrumental in the peace process? How could a man who despised racism and bigotry to his core maintain links to racist paramilitaries? How did a man who always struggled to maintain his elected positions command such universal respect?

Born in inner city East Belfast David came from a Protestant working class family. After WWII many had been laid off from Harland & Wolfe Shipyards, the areas biggest employer - between 25,000 and 30,000 workers in total. Never a wealthy area, East Belfast suffered.

Throughout the 50's and 60's things went from bad to worse. Even at an

early age he recognised and appreciated the solidarity the unemployed had with each other regardless of religion. Things were to change when on July 21st 1972, attending a friend's wedding in Belfast Castle, Ervine witnessed Republican bombs across Belfast from the high vantage point. As the guests watched plumes of smoke rise from Loyalist and Unionist areas many decided that they needed to do more to defend their communities. The 19 year old David Ervine was one of these. The next day he joined the UVF

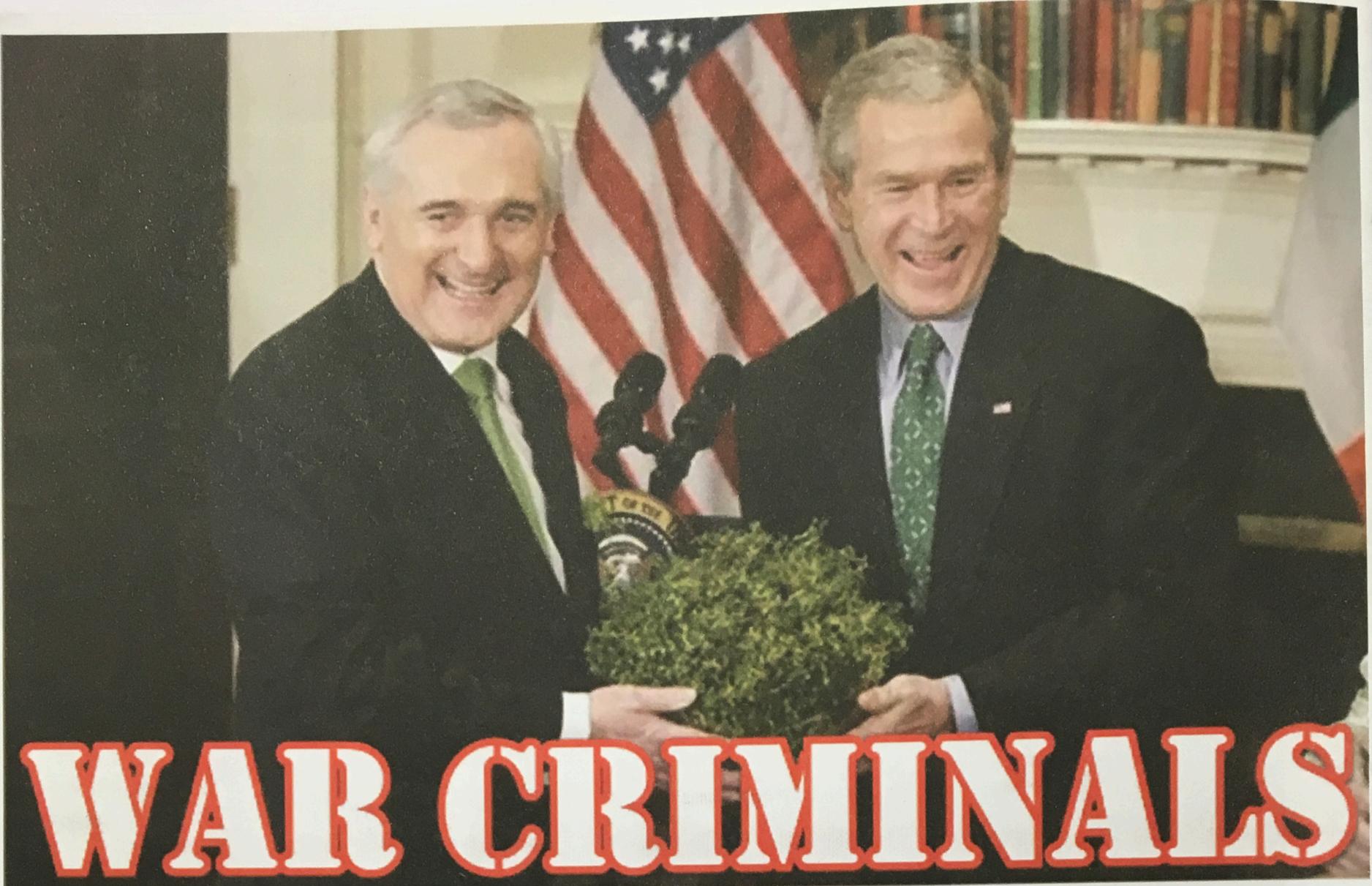
Two years later David Ervine was caught driving a stolen car, with explosives and various bomb components. Sentenced to 11 years in the Maze, David was subjected to verbal abuse the moment he was placed in his cell. Ironically it was his cellmate and the resident UVF Commander who attacked him. Demanding to know why Ervine had been imprisoned, Gusto Spence despaired at his simplistic naive answers.

Spence mentored him in economics, social theory and amongst other things,

the Irish language. They became close friends and came to the conclusion that a peaceful socialist political group was needed.

Upon his release he returned to East Belfast and joined the PUP. For the next thirty years he campaigned tirelessly for the working classes. Until his death he was at the front of a wide variety of socialist and labour campaigns. East Belfast is still one of the most disadvantaged areas in Northern Ireland. Less than 1 in a 100 students get to third level. Unemployment rates are some of the highest on the island - voter turnout levels some of the lowest. Boarded up houses and burnt out shops dot the streets.

But David Ervine has left a legacy. In the politics of flags, David managed to raise more important issues. The people of East Belfast now have access to social projects, cooperatives and educational centres. We're still a long way from Ervine's dream of a north "free of the Pope, the Queen and King Billy" but with a few more David's and a few less Ian's it could be closer than we think.



WAR CRIMINALS

*A vote for Labour will kick Bush's
Irish allies out of office &
his military out of Shannon.*

A vote for Labour
is an anti-war vote



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