

Working Class Resistance

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VICTORY FOR MIGRANT WORKER DIRECT ACTION GETS THE GOODS

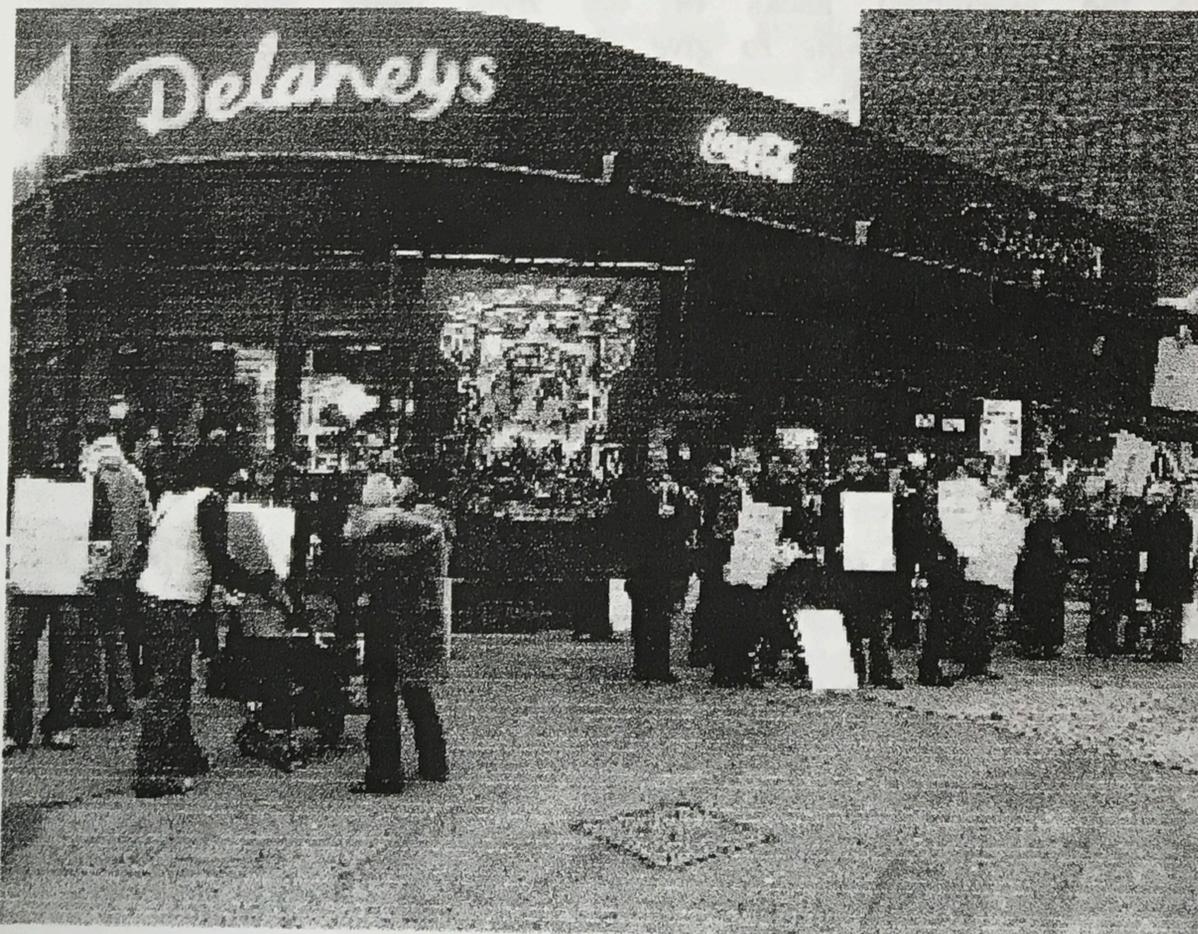
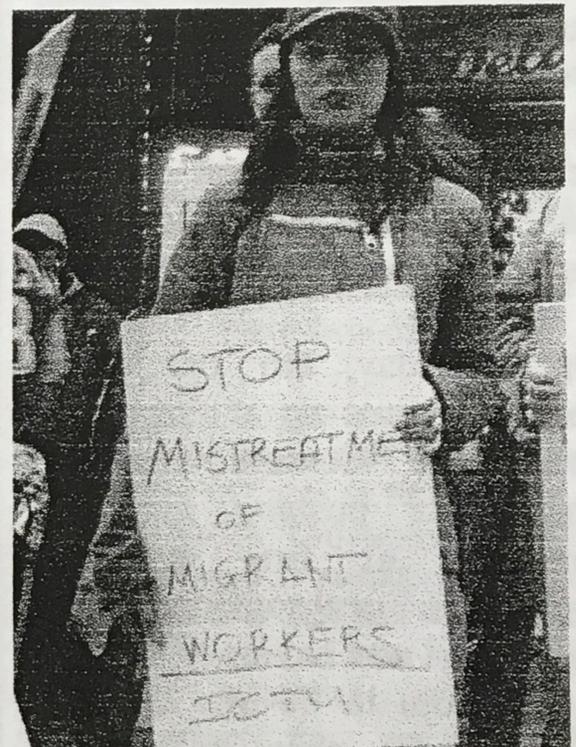
Following three successful pickets of Delaney's restaurant in Belfast Dasa Kacova has won all her demands and been offered her job back.

The young Slovakian worker was sacked on the spot from Delaney's restaurant for asking why she had to remove her jumper at work on a cold January day. Delaney's owners refused to meet with the worker or with her trade union representative. As a result

pickets were organised by ICTU and the Belfast & District Trades Council and were supported by a wide range of trade union and political activists including members of Organise!

ICTU state that they will expose and challenge the mistreatment of workers and in particular migrant workers who are among the most vulnerable in our society. "It is unacceptable in this day and age that employers

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can still mistreat workers in this way”.

The pickets met with a very positive response from the public. Even the random sample of the public who have passed the picket have produced several first hand testimonies of Delaneys' management's mistreatment of workers going back for years. Two former Communication Workers' Union members who now work at Delaney's walked off the job to join the picket. One passing schoolgirl when told of the jumper incident remarked, "God, its just like being at school!"

On Saturday 8th of March someone turns up at the picket calling us "Commie bastards" and starts pushing his way through. At first everyone thought he knew someone on the picket and was having a laugh. It turned pout to be Mr. Delaney himself. He then called the police. It turned out to be all hot air. After about an hour of negotiations he agreed to all of the workers demands to reinstate Dasa immediately, reimburse her for loss of earnings, pay her outstanding holiday entitlement and to treat all workers fairly.

Understandably she did not wish to return to work under him again and agreed to a full financial settlement.

She won! We won!

Direct Action gets the goods.

Mark

Who Assists the Assistants?

Classroom assistants

Being a classroom assistant in the north must seem a thankless task. You deal with the education of pupils with learning difficulties, sometimes quite severe. You work closely with those pupils who aren't as motivated as others. Maybe you get the piss taken out of you. In between you do a bit of cutting and pasting while making sure the teacher has a regular supply of tea and coffee. And, if you've been a classroom assistant for the last thirteen years, you wait patiently for the trade unions to get their house in order and get you a wage on which you can perhaps live. After all, you know that MLA you never voted for is too busy living off your back to lend a helping hand.

Politicians

Splinters on the backside result from too much sitting on the fence. If you're Catriona Ruane, you probably know all about that. Claiming socialist credentials while being ultimately responsible for implementing what amounts to a pay-cut on our classroom assistants might make that a bit more like hiding behind the fence though.

Our glorious Education Minister, in the light of the recent classroom assistants' crisis in the north, doesn't do 'surgery' too well either (though she might need some), but she suffers in silence for the 'cause'. From the steps of Stormont, she rallies the troops of both sides with all the fervour of a decapitated hamster.

To the classroom assistants:

"I want to reiterate that I have the utmost respect for classroom assistants and the job that they do."

To management:

"I am aware that Management Side has also issued an open letter to all classroom assistants explaining in detail the full terms of the offer."

To the assembled hacks of the *Irish News* there gathered.
"I would urge everyone to give the offer their full consideration".
And over the top you go.

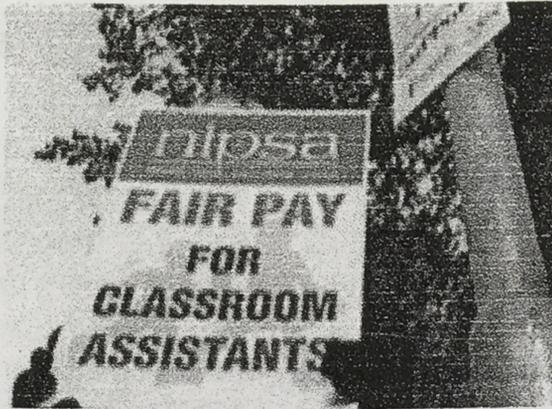
Of course Ruane, like most Shinnners, has to, every so often, doff the cap to those ignorant enough to still fall for the old socialist rhetoric, set to the music of an auld jig no career-advancing politico dances to anymore. The DUP's Sammy Wilson has a bit more leeway, and jumped at the chance to out-tory the tory. He claimed Ruane's role was:

"...tantamount to an abandonment of the children caught up in the affair... and "through her incompetence in the face of this terrible ongoing situation, (she) has shown a lack of foresight and a total loss of control... She has abandoned the children and that is an absolute disgrace."

Sammy doesn't seem to realise that striking parents also have children. He seems to have forgotten that a few more shillings in their Mum's and Dad's pocket at the end of the month might just come in useful. His party, like all the other parties in the north when you sift through the rhetoric, are totally against any improvement in the conditions of classroom assistants. Maybe, just maybe, that might be due to the fact that 56 local councillors from those parties sit as members in the local Education and Library Boards (ELBs). One MLA, Dawn Purvis (PUP) at least tried to push for a motion in support

of the demands of the assistants. The vote was taken with a grand number of one MLA (Dawn Purvis herself) in support!

But children have also been used as pawns in the dispute with the moguls in the media whipping up a frenzy of anti-strike sentiment. Last November, UTV cameras were primed for a boost in TV ratings and maybe some shenanigans as buses attempted to transport Special Needs pupils across picket lines at Glenveagh Primary School in south Belfast. The fact that the pupils were Special Needs only added fuel to the fires being stoked by a media obviously worried by popular support for the assistants.



Unions at the OK Corral

The stand-off at Glenveagh school also helped promote divisions that have plagued the trade unions in the thirteen years the dispute has effectively been going on for. Driving the buses that day were workers from the T & G union which does not support strike action. If you believe the figures, members were split 50-50 on whether or not to support strike action. Along with the GMB and Unison, the T & G have severely criticized NIPSA's handling of the dispute.

From the start of the recent dispute NIPSA have been consistent with their opposition to the Education Boards' plans to fob off assistants with superficial pay increases which are nothing of the sort beneath the surface. Their 'offer' - a one off payment of £1100 covering one year of losses - also reduces hourly rates by 18.5% by lengthening the working week from 32.5 hours to 36 hours. It also removes the Special Needs Allowance payable to some assistants and ignores NVQ qualifications that others might have. Strikes on the 26th September last year and other actions on the 3rd, 4th and 5th October strengthened NIPSA's hand. While not fully under the control of its members NIPSA has at least attempted to represent the will of the majority of teaching assistants. Teaching assistants how have been undermined and sabotaged by the pro-management stance of the ATL, GMB and Unison. A minority of teaching assistants belong to these unions and it is clear that the vote in favour of continuing the dispute, taken by NIPSA members, represents the will of the vast majority.

Education Workers Network

Organise! believes that the setting up of an Education Workers Network is a important next step in bringing together all strands of education work and all education workers into the same organisation regardless of religion, part-time or full-time teacher status or whether you work in the state sector or in adult education. It would cater to classroom assistants, janitors, kitchen staff: in short everyone involved in education. What the classroom assistants' dispute has proved is a case of 'too many cooks'. Education workers need to be in an organisation that is all inclusive, where an injury to one is an injury to all. Only then will workers have the strength in numbers to take on the bosses.

UCU vote "NO" on pay-bargaining

In late-February, the University and College Union (UCU), which represents academic and academic-related staff in post-secondary education institutions, balloted its members on a proposed national pay bargaining agreement. The membership voted against the new machinery. The employers' representative organization and support unions (representing cleaners, porters etc) supported the new bargaining mechanism.

Several reasons were given for the NO vote, the:

- agreement would have effectively ended the ability to take industrial action during term-time, amounting to a "no-strike" agreement during teaching-time.
- proposed pay-bargaining structure that favoured by bosses and employers.
- new machinery placed restrictions on attempts to resolve local disputes

The Education Workers Network leaned toward a NO vote with the Salford branch being first to publicly advocate the NO vote to its members. Locally, Queens University's UCU branch also urged its members to reject the proposals. It is clear that while most wanted a national and joint bargaining mechanism, it would not be at any cost. A joint-statement from various UCU branches attached to universities in London, Sterling, Dundee, Brighton, and Manchester said:

The battle over pay is not a battle with individual universities, moreover it is a battle with the Government. We have a Government unwilling properly to fund education but willing to continue the illegal occupation of Iraq, and to bail out failed financial speculators in the banking sector. It is a Government that then tries to deflect responsibility from itself for the underfunding of universities by commercialising the sector through fee privatisation.

Turnout for the ballot was poor, with only 28% of the 60,000 eligible to vote in the ballot choosing to do so, Just over 10,000 voted against the proposed machinery, and 6,500 voting in favour of the proposal.

No! to holocaust denier

Convicted holocaust denier David Irving was in Ireland recently for an appearance on RTE's Late Late Show and a debate in Cork. Members of Organise!, WSM, and other left groups staged a protest at RTE studios in Donnybrook, Dublin on 7 March after his appearance on the Late Late Show was announced. Around 40 people were present at the protest, called at very short notice. Unfortunately it was not successful in stopping Irving from entering RTE studios and it was later revealed that he had been sneaked-in an alternate entrance.

Irving was convicted and jailed in Austria in February 2006 for holocaust denial and glorifying Hitler's nazi party, a crime in Austria. He was later released in December 2006 to serve the remainder of his 3-year sentence on probation.

That this man espousing repugnant views was reduced to sneaking into the building says much about his status, more so, that RTE persisted with having him as a guest reflects appallingly on their role as public broadcaster. RTE should be ashamed of themselves for providing a platform for this nazi-apologist and his disgusting views.

Irving was also scheduled to appear at a debate at University College Cork hosted by their Philosophical Society – the appearance was cancelled. Following the Oxford Union scheduling a debate on "free speech" with Nick Griffin last year, Irving's Cork address was also under the guise of issues of "free speech". That the nature or scale of the Holocaust is something up for legitimate discussion, under the guise of free speech does a great disservice to the six-million people systematically murdered in the advancement of nazi ideology. The views Irving espouses, and the room created for fascist tendencies in providing a platform to such views is anathema to the real spirit of free speech. Irving poisonous views, that advance an ideological programme that would deny to others, the rights he claims he is being denied, should be challenged and smashed wherever we are confronted with them.

"Make Sacking Easier" says Conservative think-tank

Education unions have responded with anger to the recommendation of a conservative think-tank advocating making sacking of staff and pupil expulsion easier. The unions assert that the report shows a distinct lack of knowledge of the reality in mainstream school and reveals the agenda behind the academy program.

A report published in February by the conservative and free-market advocacy think-tank Reform has sparked anger from teaching unions over its assertions that sacking of "under-performing" staff and expulsion of "unruly" pupils should be made easier. The main thrust of the report is that a business-model, similar to that of the academies program should be applied across the state education sector. The author of the report is Richard Tice, himself the chair of governors at an academy school in Northampton, and member of the largest academy-sponsor group, United Learning Trust.

In the report, Rice accused teaching unions of being "blockers of reform" and said union influence permeated every aspect of his school prior to the inception of the academy program. Rice said, "It appears to me the unions have been too successful in representing their members' interests and this has had the unintended consequence of lowering confidence in the profession... The management freedom given to academies should be rolled out across the whole state sector." On the position of what are perceived as "under-performing" teachers, the report is clear that sacking should be made easier - "Teachers who cannot control classes, who will not follow Heads' policies and who are on constant sick registers need to be let go, either to pursue another career or retrain in their current posts."

Making the expulsion of pupils "less-problematic" was another target of the report - "The ultimate decision making authority for exclusions should be the schools themselves" and goes on to cite the Conservative Party report *Raising the bar, closing the gap*, "In order to restore authority to schools and head teachers, we would therefore ensure that head teachers are given the right to exclude (expel) pupils without the right of appeal to an independent appeals panel administered by the local authority. The only appeal would be to the governing body of the school."

Teaching unions have expressed considerable concern at the reports recommendations with the National Union of Teachers (NUT), NASUWT and Association for Teachers and Lecturers all commenting on its publication. Steve Sinnott of the NUT said "In arguing that essential union protections should be ditched, Reform's attack on unions takes on all teaching profession but to Ed Balls [education secretary]. I urge him to respond to Reform by rejecting the report as claptrap."

While the academies programme has yet to reach Northern Ireland, we should remain vigilant at further attacks on workers and students in our education system and the greater moves towards privatisation in the education sector, of which the academy programme is a part. This is particularly important at a time of poor staff morale and apathy with regards industrial action within the education sector.

Choccy

Not a Wheel Will Turn

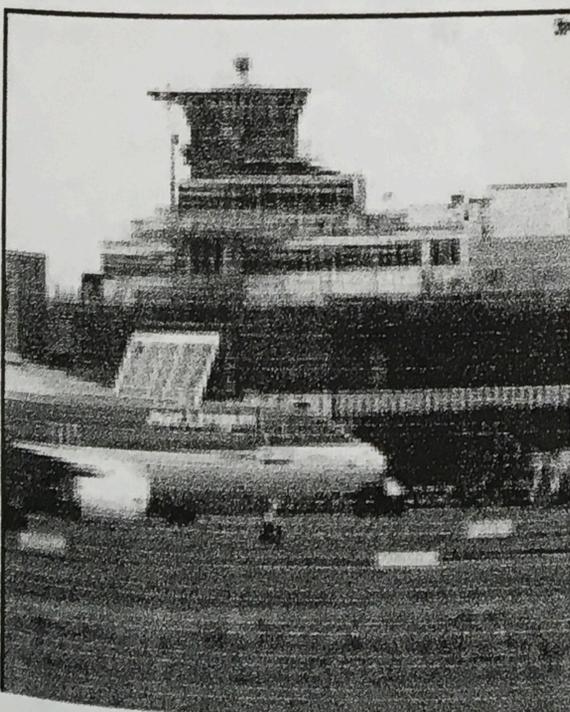
The potential power wielded by transport workers has been ably demonstrated recently by industrial action by Air Traffic Controllers and Train Drivers in the South of Ireland.

Air Traffic Controllers at Shannon, Cork and Dublin airports caused disruption and cancellations to flights during February, by the use of overtime bans, unofficial stoppages and voting by 99% in favour of official action. IMPACT, the Controllers union, said the dispute centred on rosters and staffing levels, claiming that there has been a recruitment ban for six years, which has led to short staffing and over-reliance on overtime to ensure coverage. Predictably, people who actually do nothing useful for society, demanded that the people who are coming under an intolerable amount of pressure while they try to ensure the safety of hundreds of people in metal tubes at 30,000 feet stop their whining and get on with it.

Transport Minister Noel Dempsey bemoaned "...possible damage to the economy and the reputation of the country". Michael O'Leary, not content with having offended residents of East Belfast, (who aren't prepared to have their lives further disrupted by an extension to the City Airport so Ryanair can make more money) chipped in to condemn "Unjustified and excessive demands from an out of control public sector union", and claimed the ATCs were already overpaid! Of course, any worker with an ounce of sense knows that 'the economy' doesn't work for our benefit and the 'good of the economy' means the profits of the already rich. As for O'Leary, the only thing out of control is his megalomania, and his ruthless pursuit of wealth and power and fuck any little people who get in his way.

At the time of writing, the threat of action has been suspended while the union examine Labour Court recommendations. Clearly the will of the members is likely to be at odds with the leadership, who would rather make nice with the bosses and work in 'Partnership'.

On the railways, Drivers took unofficial action in protest at new rosters implemented by Irish rail. For example, Cork Drivers refused to work to the new schedule and simply worked to the old one, causing cancellations and delays.



Its only a few years ago that Northern Ireland Railways was forced to withdraw on a Friday a new timetable due to come into operation on the following Monday (which had been printed up and distributed to the public) when it became clear that Drivers would not maintain the overtime levels required to ensure coverage. This was followed by the most intensive recruitment and training of Drivers for decades.

Whatever the outcomes of these disputes, the value of direct action by transport workers has been made clear. Not a wheel can turn without the labour of transport workers, yet arrogant politicians and parasite bosses expect to impose their will, without giving workers any say in the organisation of their work, work in which after all those who perform it are the experts. Those who make the decisions need to learn to listen to the workers, particularly when the work they do involves the health and safety of others, or else the type of actions in this article will undoubtedly continue to happen.

Transport Worker

Thousands on Strike in Colombia

3,500 workers are on strike in protest at temporary employment contracts in the world's most dangerous nation to be a trade unionist.

Members of the Sintracerrromatoso union at the nickel mine operated by Cerro Matoso, a subsidiary of the multinational company, BHP Billiton, have begun a strike after negotiations failed to produce an agreement with the company.

Two weeks ago, Utramicol, an IMF affiliate, reported on the situation of the Cerro Matoso workers, who had indicated then that there had been no significant progress in negotiations because of the company's intransigence.

The union is demanding improved contracts and is especially concerned about the temporary employment contracts used by the company. The union insists that the company signs open-ended employment contracts with workers currently employed on temporary contracts.

It also rejects the company's proposal to increase the length of the contract from two to four years. Historically, the contract has always been for two years.

Approximately 3,500 workers are on strike. Roger Herrera, union president said: "The company only has 1,000 directly employed workers. The other 2,500 are temporary workers and this means the company can avoid recognising their basic employment rights."

From www.libcom.org/news

International Solidarity: No Sweatshops in Bangladesh

The Bangladesh garment trade employs around 2 million and is the country's biggest exporting industry. There has been a state of emergency imposed by the military Government of Bangladesh since January 2007. Recent months have seen a surge in militant direct action by garment workers in Bangladesh that has included strikes, roadblocks, occupations and the destruction of factories.

21st century fashions on sale here are produced in 19th century Dickensian working conditions in Bangladesh and other countries. Primark, Tesco, Asda and other high street brands all sell clothing produced in Bangladesh in factories where workers are forced to work 80 hours a week for as little as 4p an hour. There are reports of physical and verbal abuse by supervisors and of workers being sacked for taking sick leave. Workers have been refused access to trade unions and dismissed for trying to organise a union. These abuses have been going on for years. Corporate Ethical codes of conduct and regular audits have made very little difference. Competition between these companies may drive prices down, but it also drives down wages. There is no magic bulk buying production model where everyone is a winner. Primark, Tesco and Asda make millions while many garment workers do not earn enough to pay for the minimum daily nutrition requirement. Bangladesh has the lowest minimum wage in the world. Even in this country the profits do not trickle down to the shop floor as most of these companies' employees are on minimum wage.

The National Garment Workers Federation of Bangladesh is an independent union that has been fighting for better wages and conditions since 1984. They also campaign for maternity leave in an industry that employs mostly women. It's General Secretary Amirul Haque Amin states, "European companies are responsible for the living conditions of Bangladeshi workers". Furthermore, "pressure from consumers onto multi-national corporations, and from these corporations onto their sub-contractors, is extremely important. Unions such as the NGWF will continue their fights at local level, but they are limited in what they can accomplish without the solidarity of people outside the country." Are Bangladesh workers currently calling for a consumer boycott? According to Nazma Akter, another union organiser, "No, we'd just lose our jobs." She believes that factory work, however hellish plays an important role in emancipating women. "Previously they had no work, they stayed in the countryside and put up with domestic violence. So what can supporters in this country do?"

Mehedi Hasan, an NGO workplace organiser was arrested in January as part of a crackdown on unions and workers' revolts. Since then hundreds have e-mailed the Bangladesh Government asking them to drop charges against other labour rights activists and to repeal emergency legislation banning union organising. A number of cases against prominent activists have now been dropped proving e-mail campaigns do work. However many continue to face false charges due their support of garment workers. Standard e-mail letters can be found at www.labourbehindthelabel.org. Along with nosweat.org they regularly carry news of solidarity actions and e-mail protest letters to corporations and governments that support sweatshops. Further information on the recent wave of unrest, and the murder of a garment worker by management security guards can be found at: <http://libcom.org/tags/bangladesh>.

Mark

An Anarchists Story



Just Books Collective put on a video showing of 'Ethel MacDonald—An Anarchists Story' on Saturday 8th of March for International Women's Day at the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre.

Ethel MacDonald was born in Bellshill, West of Scotland, in 1910 the free-spirited daughter of a large working class family - but from such humble beginnings often come extraordinary stories.

At the time of our story Ethel is 27 years old. She is determined - she is confident of her values and her abilities and is completely fearless. As an Anarchist she is politically aware and has a burning desire for social justice.

Supporting commentary spoken by David Hayman paired with expert interviews, including Noam Chomsky, provides background knowledge of 1930's European Politics and a further insight into the young Scot's motives, actions and social situation. The film links her own personal drama to archive footage of Barcelona.

Ethel reported on Barcelona's widely-heard Anarchist radio station. In the crackdown following the events of May 1937 she helped anarchists wanted by the Communist secret police escape and smuggled letters and food into prison. Through her activities in helping anarchists escape Spain, she became renowned in the British press as the "Scots Scarlet Pimpernel".

The successful event coincided with the victory of Dasa Kacova in her dispute with Delaney's (see front page). In a brief introduction to the event a Just Books Collective member mentioned that it was fitting that on International Women's Day a young women and migrant worker had achieved this victory with the support of trade union and political activists.

Jacintha



Thousands Strike in Colombia

More than 250 employees of a factory that manufactures beer bottles for Corona (amongst others) in San Luis Potosí have been fired for associating with a legally recognised independent union. The factory's owners are also purging the factory of sympathisers of the sacked workers.

The union's first action was to gain a 19% pay rise off the employers: Grupo Modelo, who export Corona beer internationally, as well as selling a host of other beer brands in Mexico.

Upon being informed of their redundancies, the sacked union activists attempted to hold a legally-binding strike, only for the national labour arbitration panel (the Junta Federal de Conciliación y Arbitraje [JFCyA]) to ban it. In response, the SUTEIVP have erected a permanent picket outside the factory gates.

Grupo Modelo is now cracking down on support for the sacked union activists. CCTV monitors their stall and the workers who approach it, informers have been placed on company transport to and from the site, with workers being hauled in front of management if "they so much as open a [bus] window and greet picketers".

SUTEIVP have organised marches from San Luis Potosí to Mexico City (over 400km) and established a permanent presence outside the headquarters of Grupo Modelo and its sister companies, the US embassy and the JFCyA offices in the capital, with whom they have lodged an appeal against their ruling. Internationally, it calls for a boycott of Modelo products, which to readers outside Mexico will mean giving up Corona beer.

Adapted from www.libcom.org/news

Bleeding For Oil Iraq - 5 Years of 'Humanitarian' Intervention

In the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, George Bush told the world, "a dictator is building and hiding weapons that could enable him to dominate the Middle East and intimidate the civilised world - and we will not allow it". The question should really be asked, was it really the main tactic of the US-UK led invasion to dispose of this dictator because of his threat to the rest of the world? We are now approaching five years in Iraq and still there are no signs of any 'weapons of mass destruction'. In fact, the case is that they gave up any attempt to find these WMDs in January 2004. So we are left with the primary reason for the invasion of Iraq somewhat lacking in substance.

Any illegality of the war was shrugged off by other supposed justifications for the invasion. Saddam Hussein was touted as collaborating with terrorists in Palestine. There was implicit, but not direct, language coming from the Bush administration of his possible involvement in 9/11. This of course turned out to be utter nonsense, even the US government having to admit in the end they couldn't find any links between Saddam and al-Qaeda. The human rights abuses of the country were called into question also. The important point to remember though is that Saddam committed most of his atrocities shortly after the first Gulf War. If human rights abuses had really been the concern of the American government they could have toppled Saddam then.

What of other nations such as North Korea who don't hide the fact they have a nuclear weapons program. They are also one of the most oppressive governments in the world. What of the on going genocide in Darfur? If WMDs and humanitarian crises were of any concern to Britain and America surely these two examples would be more worthy of military intervention than Iraq. What reasons are we left with then for another year in Iraq?

The millions of protesters from around the world who came out to voice their opposition to the war when it began knew the answer to this question. It was written on their banners in various incarnations such as "No Blood for Oil" and "Down with the New World Order". Everyone knew that this war was about America securing its hegemony in the Middle East and more importantly about securing one of the least used oil resources in the world. If the invasion of Iraq had been about eradicating any threat from Saddam and securing democracy for the people of Iraq then there would be absolutely no reason for troops to remain there. Yet as we approach the fifth year of occupation they are still there.

The media constantly presents us with images of the complete breakdown of society in Iraq. Conservative estimates point the total death toll now to at least 100,000 civilians. Others are even willing to count near the million mark. We are told that the occupying forces are there to maintain stability from the constant threat of car and suicide bombers. As the liberators of Iraq why have the coalition forces brought the people of Iraq the tragedies of Haditha and Abu Ghraib? The fact is the only stability that the occupying forces are there to maintain is that of the oil fields.

It has come as no surprise to anyone that Exxon/Mobile and Halliburtons stock has increased dramatically in the five years of occupation. It is my opinion though that corporate greed does not play an entirely central role in the securing of Iraq's oil fields, but rather it is US Imperialism that plays an important part in this act. With increasingly depleting global energy resources the capture of oil fields in the Persian Gulf gives the US a strong global position over other growing economies dependant upon oil. As long as there are oil reserves in Iraq, central to the maintenance of hegemony in a global capitalist system, there will be a foreign military presence.

David

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AK Distribution

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Anarchist Federation

<http://www.afed.org.uk>

Email: infoafed.org.uk

The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists (based in Britain) which aims to abolish Capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. Address: c/o 84b Whitechapel High St., London, E1 7QX
Tel: 07946214590

Just Books Collective

P.O. Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ, N. Ireland.

Email: jst_books@yahoo.co.uk

Anarchist books & more. @ distribution collective with a history stretching back to 1978. Drop them a line for a catalogue or to request a stall at your event.

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Shell To Sea

www.shelltosea.com

Visit the website of the campaign against Shell's attempt to plough a pipeline through communities in Co. Mayo.

Solidarity Federation

<http://www.solfed.org.uk>

Email: solfedsolfed.org.uk

Part of the International Workers' Association, SolFed are an Anarcho-Syndicalist group who organise locally and by industry to resist the bosses and bring about a free society
Address: SF, PO Box 469, Preston PR1 8FX
Tel: 07984 675 281

Workers Solidarity Movement

<http://www.struggle.ws/wsm.html>

wsm_ireland@yahoo.com cork_wsm@yahoo.com

Publish Workers Solidarity & Red and Black Revolution. A Platformist Anarchist organisation active in a wide range of campaigns.

P.O. Box 1528, Dublin 8, Republic of Ireland.

SM

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Organisation: Organise!

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