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No alternative to bin charges

By Brian Moore

Most people instinctively support the underdog in any contest, especially when that contest pits ordinary working class people against the coercive power of the state. Republicans are no exception to this rule. We've been there ourselves, we're still there now, and we feel an instinctive sympathy for anyone in a similar position. But sometimes this sympathy is misplaced - sometimes the underdog is simply wrong and the government, however much we may hate to admit it, simply right. In such cases we should always be prepared to lay our sympathies to one side and support the better policy, regardless of who happens to be espousing or opposing it. The politics, not the personalities, must be allowed to decide the issue. The current controversy over bin charges in Dublin, which has seen fifteen protesters jailed so far, may be just such a case. Although neither side's arguments are conclusive, and there are certainly dubious aspects to the government's position, it is clear that the protesters' stance on the issue is simply untenable.

The problem of waste management is becoming an ever more serious issue across the developed world, and Ireland is no exception. We are facing a crisis of immense proportions, the result of decades of environmental carelessness. Most of the country's landfill sites are due to run out of space in less than three years, with no alternatives yet in place. And the problem is still growing. Each Irish person generates an average of 700kg of domestic waste each year, a figure which increased by over 30% between 1998 and 2001. Dutch and Finnish citizens, in contrast, produce less than one third of this amount. It is clear that a sustainable solution to the problem of waste management must be found and found quickly, but doing so has proven difficult. The most economical and environmentally friendly solution - a combination of recycling and incineration - has been vigorously opposed by local pressure groups across the country, partly because of somewhat dubious fears about the health effects of incineration, but primarily because no one wants a huge incinerator facility in their back yard.

The government's preferred solution involves a combination of recycling and landfill, regulated according to a principle of 'pay as you pollute'. According to the system introduced recently by Fingal County Council - which sparked the anti-bin charges protests - householders pay €5 for each wheelie-bin of domestic waste collected by the council. The system is intended to encourage recycling by penalising

defaulters - the less waste you produce, the less you pay - while waivers are available for pensioners and the unemployed.

Some of the arguments advanced by the anti-bin charges campaigners have been dubious in the extreme, such as the idea that domestic waste is insignificant in comparison to commercial waste, and that as commercial producers are not properly penalised it would be unfair to penalise householders. In fact, the campaigners' statistics are questionable, but their argument is even more so - even if their statistics were true, this would be an argument for charging businesses *more* for waste disposal, not for not charging householders at all. Other concerns are more firmly grounded however. Many fear that, once introduced, the charges will escalate rapidly and provide a basis for the privatisation of the refuse collection service - a phenomenon which has already occurred in other parts of the country, where council workers have been replaced by a low-paid, non-unionised workforce. Furthermore, the lack of adequate recycling facilities in Dublin means that people will be unable to reduce the volume of waste they produce and therefore their exposure to the charges.

Despite these very real concerns, the protesters' basic position remains untenable, a fact reflected in the lack of public support for their campaign. A recent poll of 14,000 people carried out by the Marian Finucane radio show found that over three-quarters of those polled support the idea of bin charges based on the 'pay as you pollute' principle. Most people recognize that the waste crisis must be dealt with without delay. The system currently being implemented in Dublin is far from perfect, but the anti-bin charges campaigners have no alternative to offer. In fact, a better system is currently being tested in other parts of the country. In some areas, such as Dundalk, householders are now being supplied with two bins - a green bin for recyclable material, which is collected free of charge, and a black bin for landfill waste which is collected for a €5 fee. This scheme both encourages *and* facilitates recycling, solving one of the major drawbacks of the Dublin system.

The anti-bin charges campaigners have displayed an admirable level of courage in their willingness to go to prison for their beliefs. Their position, however, is fundamentally unsound. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that their time would be better spent promoting a realistic and environmentally sound alternative than simply opposing the current imperfect system of bin charges.

The Hanly Report: health care in crisis

By Ken Patterson

Recently, Minister of Health Micheál Martin launched a new report into the Health services. The objective of this report, better known as the Hanly report, is to lay the groundwork for the much-needed shake-up and reform of our health system which at present is in crisis. The content of this in-depth report is made up of recommendations from the National Taskforce on Medical Staffing. The taskforce looked at the reorganisation of hospital services and the need for more doctors over the next ten years. Chairman, David Hanly said, 'the report was based on lengthy consultations with doctors and the majority are in favour of going forward.'

Among the main recommendations is that there should be an increase in the number of hospital consultants from 1,700 at present to 3,600 by 2013 with less reliance on junior doctors to provide treatment; an integrated network of acute hospitals with twelve major centres to provide specialist care, supported by local hospitals carrying out more routine work which in turn will provide more expert service and improve the treatment of a patients outcome. It is also proposed that local hospitals should meet most of the local populations medical needs, including a range of diagnostic, assessment and treatment facilities. The taskforce recommends closer linkages with primary care through GPs and primary care teams, also importantly that there should be no closure of hospitals.

Other important recommendations of this lengthy report are that a better training system and career structure for junior doctors should be put in place and that consultants should work a more extended day, providing services such as outpatient clinics in the evening and being more available to patients. The report also emphasises that it is inefficient to leave expensive plant and equipment such as theatres and MRI scan equipment idle for a sizeable proportion of the day. Improved efficiency would lead to a reduction in hospital waiting lists. Other change recommended is that there needs to be a development of ambulance services. This will enable the ambulance service to play a key role in the initial care and treatment of emergency patients, and that intensive training courses should be provided as soon as possible to facilitate the changeover

to the new system.

According to the Hanly report, Saint Vincent's hospital in Dublin and Limerick Regional Hospital will become the testing grounds for the proposed radical changes in delivery of patient care. These changes should be in place by the summer of 2004 and help inform the group that has been set up to establish how the plan should be implemented nationally.

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been reported that it is now normal for an average of forty patients to be left lying on trolleys awaiting admission at one busy city hospital. Recently a spokesman for Tallaght Hospital said that, 'due to pressures, such as people on trolleys in the A&E department awaiting admission, the situation for both the patients and the staff in this department is now critical'. Last year Tallaght Hospital had to close thirty-five beds, which obviously has added to the problem of trying to give adequate health care to patients. This a common situation reported in many hospitals and A&E departments across the country.

On paper, the Hanly report certainly looks a very impressive report. If fully implemented along with the two other earlier health reports, the Brennan and Prospectus proposals, together they will create radical and badly needed reform of the health service. The implementation of the Hanly reports recommendations alone would make a considerable difference to patients.

However, knowing the present government's record, it is easy to be cynical about the report, and indeed question if it will be fully implemented? After all it is a regular

occurrence for the present Government to make promises and not to keep them. A weakness of the Hanly report is that it does not directly deal with proper facilities for the disabled, or with childcare, or even the needs of home help.

It has been argued by some Government opposition figures that the report does not offer any realistic solutions on how to solve the crisis in the health service. A Fine Gael representative has been quoted in saying, 'that the only thing currently growing quicker than hospital waiting lists is the

Department of Health publication list.' The Hanly report is the one hundred and forty eighth report in five years within the department, with one hundred and five reports published in the last three years alone. It also has been argued that the Hanly report doesn't say anything about the investment required for an additional 2,500 acute beds and the extra 1,900 consultants that is recommended.

There is no question that to get the health service out of the crisis it is in at present is going to take a considerable amount of investment, however it is money well spent. The Hanly report estimates the cost of providing a consultant-led service

at €111 million by 2013. The Health Minister has said that, 'Mr. McCreevy is not in the habit of making funding commitments that extend beyond the next twelve months. It has been reported in the media that the Scrooge-like Minister of Finance has questioned the recommendations of the new report. He has been in two minds in his support of the strategy and has told the Department of Health that there will be no money for extra acute beds under the strategy next year.

The pertinent question is not about proposals contained in the Hanly report, most of which are clearly well structured, but whether the Government has the political will to carry them fully through. They can no longer dodge the issue of our health service being in complete crisis, action must be taken now. It is a fundamental right of all Irish citizens to have proper health care available to them.

Ken Patterson is a republican prisoner in Portlaoise Gaol

Sectarianism alive and well

In any stable society that functions in a normal fashion there has to be a healthy balance between its economic structures, political system and most importantly the social relationships - that is, the atmosphere, the life-blood, within which members of the society can breathe, survive and reproduce.

However, in North Belfast, sectarianism has created an atmosphere where you have chaos, conflict, indifference, inequality, social exclusion and uncertainty that fundamentally attacks the very capacities that define culture and identity within. Two years ago we watched horrific images unfold on our TV screens of school children, some as young as four, with expressions of terror on their tear drenched faces, sheltering behind their parents and lines of RUC personal as they ran a gauntlet of hate from loyalist mobs hurling sectarian abuse and blast bombs.

Two years on little has changed: déjà vu, back to the future and groundhog day are what springs to mind when one reads or sees news reports about events surrounding schools in north Belfast such as Holy Cross Girls Primary and St Gabriel's Secondary School. In a recent Sunday Tribune article dated 12 October 2003, its Northern Editor Susan McKay catalogued a series of attacks, which have become all too familiar in north Belfast and other areas of the six counties: 1st September, loyalists leave a pipe bomb on the gates of Holy Cross Primary School; 15th September, explosive devices left at two Catholic schools in County Derry; 18th September, UDA closes five Catholic schools in Larne and Belfast by phoning bomb scares to a newsroom; 24th September, pipe bomb left at gates of the Dominican College in north Belfast; 26th September, Catholic teenagers attack two school buses carrying girls in north Belfast; 27th September, two Catholic schoolboys attacked by loyalists in west Belfast; 29th September, loyalists enter grounds of Our Lady of Mercy's School in north Belfast and set fire to 17 cars; 9th October, man attempts to attack schoolboys outside St Gabriel's School on the Crumlin Road.

Time and time again we see UDA-influenced thugs determined to continue showing the sharp political and social nature of sectarianism in Belfast. These thugs who represent a small percentage of the Protestant community, continue nonetheless to spout anti-Catholic propaganda as a cancer within society. So despite the Good Friday Agreement sectarianism is indeed alive and well in Belfast.

'Gorgeous George' goosed

By Kevin Lally

The British Labour Party has continued its attempts to crush internal dissent against the war in Iraq. On Thursday October 23rd, George Galloway, the anti-war Member of Parliament for Glasgow Kelvingrove, was summoned before a national constitutional committee hearing of the Labour Party. The committee - consisting of people selected from a twelve strong panel elected by the party conference - was told that Galloway faced charges of bringing the party into disrepute as a result of five alleged offences: inciting Arabs to fight British troops; inciting British troops to defy orders; inviting Plymouth voters to reject Labour; threatening to stand against Labour in an election; and backing an anti-war candidate from the Socialist Alliance (who subsequently beat Labour in Preston).

Galloway, popularly known as 'Gorgeous George' for his flamboyant fashion sense, had been suspended from the Labour party in May after he appeared in an interview with Abu Dhabi TV one week after the beginning of hostilities in Iraq. During this interview he denounced both Bush and Blair for invading the country 'like wolves', and he went on to say that British troops should not obey 'illegal orders'.

During an interval in the proceedings Galloway claimed that the Labour Party's Deputy General Secretary, Chris Lennie, had twisted his every word, denigrated his every motive and denied him every action to make his case. He said that a large part of the hearing had turned on claims that he had called for British troops to defy orders in the war against Saddam Hussein.

Galloway insisted that all of the transcripts would clearly show that he had only called for British troops to defy illegal orders. He went on to state that Labour Party officials had vehemently insisted that British troops had an absolute duty to carry out orders regardless of whether those orders were 'legal or otherwise'. 'On that basis,' Galloway pointed out, 'the whole of the Nuremberg trials would have collapsed'.

The Glasgow MP, who had secured high profile support from former veteran Labour MP and left-wing cabinet minister, Tony Benn, continued to be unrepentant, stating, 'Every comment that I have made before, during and since the Iraqi conflict, I stand by. I will apologise for nothing'.

Some hours later as the hearing reached its conclusion, it became clear that George Galloway, a member of the Labour party for thirty-six years, was to be expelled without leave to appeal. Being found guilty

of four of the five counts on which he had been charged, he was acquitted of the charge of urging voters in Plymouth not to back Labour. Reacting furiously to the committee verdict he issued a warning to Blair, saying that he would 'make sure Blair regretted' the Prime Minister's attempts to silence him. He pledged to stand as an independent at the next general election and did not rule out forcing an early by-election in his constituency.

Speaking later at a press conference, the MP, who is of Irish extraction, went on to say, 'The majority of the people believe we are governed by a liar and a conspirator. Mr. Blair's response to the disaster of the war is to attack those who stood against the war and to root them out of British politics. The anti-war movement is not going to disappear and we will continue to hold him to account for a war that was criminal and a blunder of extraordinary magnitude. Labour will rue the day they took this decision, as they rued the day they rigged party elections in London to get rid of Ken Livingstone'.

The Labour spin-doctors tried to quell any support that might be growing for the expelled member for Glasgow Kelvingrove. Labour Party chairman, Ian McCartney, insisted that the disciplinary action taken against George Galloway had been a unique case which was prompted by Galloway's refusal to apologise for urging the killing of British troops in conflict. McCartney said, 'This is not an issue of free speech. He was not expelled for his anti-war views, but for going unsolicited on an international TV programme and inciting forces to cross the border and kill our brothers and sisters in the British army'.

It must be pointed out though that the clear message being sent by the British Labour Party leadership is this: If you are in favour of the United Nations Charter and if you believe in justice and peace, then you should not be a member of the Labour Party, because if you are, you might be expelled.

Galloway concluded the press conference with the following words, 'This was a politically motivated kangaroo court, the verdict of which was written well in advance ... in the best tradition of political show trials. It was a travesty of justice'. This final statement illustrates perfectly the parity of justice that now exists between Britain and this country, especially when you consider the events that transpired recently at the Special Criminal Court in Dublin.

Judge Mahon - tax evader

Planning Tribunal chairman Judge Alan Mahon recently confirmed that in 1992 he made a tax settlement of £20,000 to the Revenue Commissioners. The payment consisted of £16,000 in unpaid taxes plus £4,000 for interest and penalties.

While all the main Dail parties united in support for Judge Mahon, this revelation does give rise to the question of whether Mahon is in any position to preside over an inquiry, seeking to expose those who have evaded paying taxes through money laundering and off-shore accounts.

Judge Mahon provided information of his tax difficulties to the Judicial Appointments Commission prior to his promotion to the Bench last year, and in the eyes of those we elect to serve us, this admission seems to have exonerated him from any wrong doing. Judge Mahon has the power to send Lawlor, Dunlop and the rest of the tax dodgers to prison, and while the £20,00 he paid may not seem much compared to the alleged millions Liam Lawlor has in off-shore accounts and the £285,000 Frank Dunlop has so far paid back, it is nonetheless tax evasion. Would Judge Mahon have declared the shortfall himself if it had not been discovered by the Revenue? We will never know.

Because Judge Mahon informed the Judicial Appointments Committee of his wrong doing before his appointment to the Bench, his tax evasion was forgiven and apparently he is still considered fit to sit in judgment of other defaulters. These less fortunate others will not however be exonerated of wrong doing by simply putting their hands up, admitting guilt, and paying back or returning the taxes they evaded. Judge Mahon has to be seen to make these defaulters pay for their crimes and uphold law and order when he himself is not free of sin. How can his rulings in the planning tribunal or any other courthouse in the land be taken seriously while he sits in Dublin Castle passing judgment on crimes he himself is guilty of?

This year Justice Flood stood down from the planning tribunal and Judge Mahon took over its chairmanship. If the Government were to lose another chairman in the same year it would leave them looking extremely foolish. It seems inevitable therefore that Mahon will soldier on in spite of all the revelations about him not because he is the best man for the job but because Ahern, McDowell and the rest of the Leinster House gang cannot be seen to have messed it up again.

4bn euro tax fraud uncovered

By Brian Moore

The American revolutionary Benjamin Franklin once wrote that nothing in this life is certain except death and taxes. Some progress has been made since Franklin's time. While death remains a problem for us all, taxes, at least for the wealthy, have become something of an optional extra. Unfortunately for the rest of us, tax evasion by the wealthy is one of the primary reasons for Ireland's crumbling infrastructure and lack of quality public services. Many of us suspected that the boom years of the Celtic Tiger economy were also a boom time for the accountants who facilitate this time honored Irish tradition. Now, an investigation by the Revenue Commissioners into the goings on at various Irish banks in the Isle of Man is beginning to reveal the unprecedented scale of the fraud.

Of course, tax evasion isn't really a crime, is it? The traditional Irish attitude has always been that 'If you can get one over on the government, good luck to you.' And considering the corrupt and squalid nature of the Irish political class, it's hard not to admire anyone who can successfully circumvent their authority. Thankfully, this attitude is beginning to change. Tax evaders, of course, aren't robbing the government - they're robbing the people. Nobody, it is safe to say, likes paying tax. At best, it's a necessary evil. Most will concede however that tax is a very necessary evil. The collective benefits of 'big government' - such as free healthcare, the safety net of social welfare, properly funded policing and quality public services - far outweigh the individual costs. Ultra-capitalist societies which have demonized the very notion of taxation, such as the US and Thatcher's Britain, have paid a heavy penalty in social costs. Unfortunately Ireland, which has the lowest corporate tax rates in Europe, is much closer to Boston than Berlin in this respect, as our unfavorable comparison with continental standards of living demonstrates.

Given the already minimal contribution we expect our businessmen to make to the collective coffers, it is all the more important that they fulfill their obligations and all the more reprehensible when they don't. Of course only a fool would expect the business class to be imbued with a sense of social responsibility - a rational capitalist will comply with the law only when the costs of transgressing outweigh the benefits. And while the benefits of tax evasion are enormous, the costs are minimal - who, after all, remembers the last businessman sent to prison for tax evasion? Given this dichotomy between costs and benefits, we

can expect the scale of the tax fraud problem in Ireland to be enormous. This expectation has been confirmed in recent years by a series of Revenue Commission investigations, part of a government 'clampdown' on tax fraud which, although it has done little to stem the problem, has at least begun to reveal the scale of the deception.

It is something approaching an eternal truth that the more money you make, the less tax you pay. While PAYE workers are condemned to pay their fair share, the truly wealthy have access to a panoply of evasion strategies. One popular strategy involves holding money in offshore accounts, until recently beyond the reach of the taxman. The Revenue Commission has recently opened an investigation into a number of banking operations based in the Isle of Man, a notorious tax haven with strict banking secrecy laws designed to facilitate corporate fraud. The investigation involves the local subsidiaries of six well-known Irish banks - Bank of Ireland, AIB, Anglo Irish Banks, Ulster Bank, Irish Nationwide and Irish Permanent. The Commissioners' current targets are the 3,000 Irish Permanent account holders, who deposited a total of €262 million on the island in 1999. The Irish Permanent operation appears to have been a relatively small-scale affair however. A secret report by the prominent accountancy firm KPMG, leaked to the *Sunday Independent*, records that a total of €4 billion was lodged in the six Isle of Man subsidiaries by Irish people in 1998 and 1999 alone. Incredibly, the Isle of Man accounts are only the tip of the iceberg. A similar Revenue Commission investigation into one Bank of Ireland subsidiary on the island of Jersey, another notorious tax haven, recently recovered €100 million in unpaid taxes, while numerous other off-shore accounts are known to be held in the Cayman Islands, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Altogether, the Revenue Commission has recovered almost €1 billion in unpaid taxes in recent years, although the problem remains far from solved.

It should come as no surprise to anyone that the average Irish businessman is a selfish, self-serving individual, prepared to undermine the common good in pursuit of personal gain. In a capitalist society, that is simply the criterion for economic success. The problem of tax evasion will only be solved when the costs involved are made to outweigh the benefits. That in turn will not occur until we finally dispel the notion that tax evasion is a victimless crime. It is not - it is a crime against the Irish people. Tax evasion is theft, tax evaders are thieves, and they should be punished appropriately.

Peace and its Discontents

Republican prisoner Liam Grogan reflects on the Provisional movement's latest bout of self-harm

There is an old saying, usually attributed to Joseph Goebbels, that if you repeat a lie often enough, then no matter how outrageous it may be, people will begin to believe it. Evidently trusting this to be true, the Provisional leadership has for the past decade or so constantly repeated the lie that the peace process represents an advancement of republican objectives. One recent example of this was Joe Cahill's comment, 'We won the war, now let's win the peace'.

Although the absurdity of Cahill's claim is manifest to anyone with an iota of honesty, possibly the best example of the Provisional leadership's utter failure to achieve any real success occurred on the 21st of October. On the morning of what was supposed to be a carefully choreographed day, Gerry Adams effectively told the world that, as far as Sinn Féin was concerned, the war to force a British withdrawal from Ireland was over and Sinn Féin was fully committed to implementing the Good Friday Agreement. The Provisional IRA subsequently released a statement endorsing Adams' position. Later the same afternoon, John de Chastelain, the head of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD), confirmed that a quantity of arms, 'considerably larger' than that contained in the Provisionals' previous two acts of decommissioning, had been put beyond use.

While Gerry Adams' statement and the Provisional IRA's endorsement of it was hardly unexpected - it is something the Provisional leadership has been building up to for years - in the words of Steven King, a senior advisor to David Trimble, it was significant in that once and for all, in a very public way, 'A united Ireland has been reduced to an aspiration'. Sinn Féin, formerly a revolutionary republican political party, has become a constitutional nationalist political party, on a par with the SDLP and Fianna Fáil.

In return for having obtained the Provisional IRA's suicide note, it was expected that the Ulster Unionists would agree to Sinn Féin once again helping the unionists administer British rule in Ireland. For these crumbs, what was once one of the most effective guerrilla armies in the world had completed its self-destruction. However, in fine unionist tradition of going against the script David Trimble refused to give such an undertaking and instead demanded to know precisely what weapons had been destroyed. That the UUP leader acted so boldly should not be surprising given the Provisional leadership's long established record of caving into what have become increasingly embarrassing settlement terms.

One has to look no further than the decommissioning issue itself to find proof of this. Showing typical perfidiousness, the British government only publicly raised the question of decommissioning six months after the Provisional IRA's first ceasefire in August 1994. At the time, the Provisional movement refused to countenance decommissioning, correctly suggesting that it would be an

act akin to surrender. Shortly after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998, the Provisional IRA released a statement repeating this position. Part of it stated, '...this document [the Agreement] clearly falls short of presenting a solid basis for a lasting settlement...there will be no decommissioning by the IRA.' Five years and three acts of decommissioning later, these words ring a little hollow. And given what has been already conceded by the Provisionals - acceptance of the unionist veto, a return to Stormont, minimalist policing reform, the retrospective criminalization of thirty years of struggle by the one-sided nature of the decommissioning process - it is more than a little ludicrous that they now balk at telling the world exactly what weapons they have destroyed.

1998 Provisional IRA statement: '...this document [the Agreement] clearly falls short of presenting a solid basis for a lasting settlement...there will be no decommissioning by the IRA'

Perhaps the reason for Provisional reticence at this time is the result of an acute sense of embarrassment and shame. For thirty years, the Provisional IRA dealt ruthlessly with anyone suspected of giving away its weapons. One wonders how bitter must be the families of those executed on the orders of the present Provisional leadership who themselves have now given away far more weapons and done far more damage to the republican cause than every informer put together over the past thirty years.

While the days of targeting the Crown's occupation forces may be long over, it is not true to say that the Provisional IRA have gone

away. The Provisional's leadership and the bully boys they send out are more than content to continue intimidating and occasionally murdering those within republican communities who oppose them. Hypocritically, the British and Irish governments turn a blind eye to these activities that one normally associates with right-wing death squads in Latin America. The Provisionals may deny having anything to do with the murder of Joseph O'Connor in Belfast in 2000 and the disappearance of Armagh man Gareth O'Connor this year but these denials come from the same organisation that lied about Jean McConville and the other Disappeared for nearly thirty years.

So what happens now? The elections on November 26th will almost certainly result in Sinn Féin consolidating its position as the biggest nationalist party in the six counties. It is very possible that the DUP will emerge as the largest unionist party. Suddenly the system of government devised when the UUP and the SDLP were the two largest parties doesn't seem quite so clever or workable when the DUP and Sinn Féin may be providing the First and Deputy First Ministers.

In the absence of a deal between the UUP and Sinn Féin the forthcoming elections may seem like a recipe for disaster. Indeed, the current impasse, like so many before it, has been widely described as a crisis. It is nothing of the sort. At least not from the perspective of the two governments and the Ulster Unionists who

are quite content to let direct rule from London continue. For them the primary objective of the peace process has not been to create a viable Stormont government, it has been to defeat militant Irish republicanism and its capacity to wage war. From this viewpoint, the process has been an unqualified success.

Besides, it is quite likely that the DUP, every bit as power hungry as the Provisionals, will find some way of sharing power with Sinn Féin. Despite its rejectionist stance in the previous assembly, the DUP still took its ministerial seats at the cabinet table. It will probably do so again. The fact that the DUP are seen as hawks may also mean that it will, in fact, be easier for them to make a deal with Sinn Féin as they will not have to worry about being out-flanked as the UUP did.

The only people to whom the present situation should seem a crisis are the Provisionals themselves. But considering that this is the party who persist in attempting to sell the Good Friday Agreement as a republican success story it is doubtful whether at this stage they can possibly be expected to recognise the truth of their situation. Doing everything that has been asked of them, no matter how humiliating, and finding that this still isn't enough must be a dispiriting experience. Or it would be if the prospect of doing well at the polls didn't override every other consideration including republican principles and objectives. Having abandoned all for the sake of a modicum of political power, they judge success not by how close they are to a 32 county socialist republic but by how many seats they win to an ineffective and partitionist assembly.

For the SDLP, future prospects are not good. Judging by their recent petulance at being excluded from the UUP-Sinn Féin talks, it seems they are beginning to realise that in the eyes of the two governments their day has come, their task as a counterpoint to militant republicanism is no longer needed. Perhaps if the SDLP didn't so readily agree to every British government initiative, such as the meagre police reforms, then it might actually have a few cards left to play when negotiating time came around.

Sinn Féin would do well to learn the lesson behind the SDLP's demise. The Provisional movement has primarily derived its power not from its thousands of voters but from the IRA's campaign. To suggest otherwise is to be either naïve or disingenuous. Having given this leverage away, Sinn Féin will undoubtedly realise the result of this in years to come as the British government imposes any conditions it wants on the Irish people.

So repeatedly out-thought and out-manoeuvred are the Provisional leadership that not alone are they entirely unable to advance a republican agenda but all too frequently they end up trying to advance a position they previously fought against. For years the demand in relation to policing was Disband the RUC. Now the Provisionals are desperately trying to get implemented the Patten Report, which they had originally rubbished. It's doubtful they will even manage to succeed in this minimalist objective. A similar story occurred with decommissioning. Not an ounce, not a bullet the graffiti told us. Now they are happy to go along with decommissioning as long as it is kept confidential. Most damning of all is the question of administering British rule in Ireland. This might seem a rather obvious point but it is not so long ago that the Provisionals were trying to get rid of the British administration in Ireland; now they beg to be allowed to get back to running their British ministries. So much for the famed Sinn Féin negotiating skills.

What is most frustrating is that this disastrous outcome was as predictable as it was unnecessary. Leaving aside the unionists and the British government, the pan-nationalist consensus - the cornerstone of Adams' strategy - was never going to be pressing for a united Ireland, it was always going to be pressing for the defeat of republicanism. And as proved by the events of October 21st, it has achieved this quite stunningly.

It is unfortunate that during this debacle, Irish republicanism has not had the service of someone, such as the Palestinian intellectual Edward Said, who with eloquence and precision, could cut through the subterfuge surrounding the Middle East Peace Process. He lambasted the Israelis for the treatment of his people but he also lambasted Arafat and his cronies in the Palestinian Authority for their corruptness and abandonment of their cause. While we in Ireland

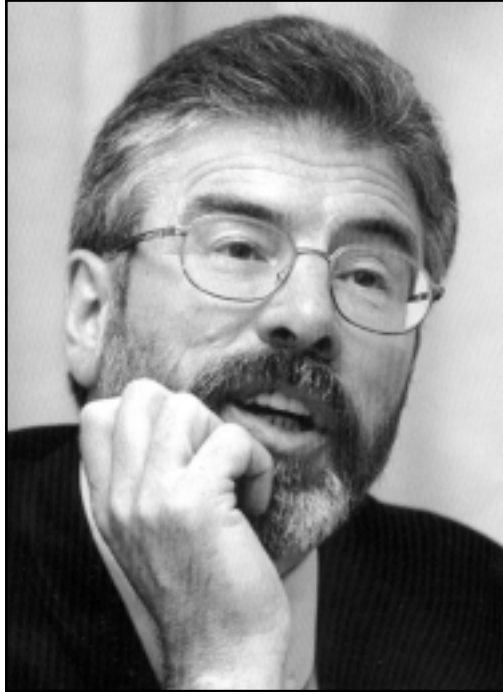
have had to suffer our own Arafat (and our own Goebbels) we have not had the consolation of a Said. His death is a huge loss to those hoping for justice in the Middle East.

In Ireland, anti-agreement republicans do have a number of options. The favoured one so far is to take the head-in-the-sand approach and pretend that the past ten years haven't happened and that the Good Friday Agreement doesn't exist. Thus, with a feeling of smug satisfaction, arguments and wars already lost can continue to be fought. This is pointless. It gives the misleading appearance that the choice for republicans is between the Adams' strategy and that which could easily result in another Omagh. While Pearse's old dictum, that Ireland unfree shall never be at peace, may be true, it seems that the war waged by the anti-agreement IRAs will not be against the British Army but against 82 year-old members of the Police Board in Strabane or people like Danny McGurk in Belfast. According to the respected commentator and ex-prisoner, Anthony McIntyre, groups

like the Real IRA are in danger of becoming more unpopular than the RUC in West Belfast. A remarkable feat.

There is another option. A letter writer to the Irish News recently lamented the fact that both the SDLP and Sinn Féin have failed to explain to unionist people what exactly a united Ireland would, on a practical level, entail. The writer wanted to know about such specifics as the health service, pension rights, the Irish language barrier to public service jobs, rights to dual citizenship et cetera. No matter how dim the prospect of a united Ireland might currently be, it is incumbent upon anti-agreement republicans to answer these questions and offer a vision of a united Ireland that unionists, and everyone else on this island, can share. This enormous task requires imagination and generosity.

One hopes that an eventual united Ireland will espouse the original republican principles of liberty, equality and fraternity and not the republicanism of Sinn Féin where a supposed socialist philosophy exists alongside the donations from the multi-nationals, the \$1,000 a-plate dinners and obsequiousness to the most dangerous US administration in years. The ideal laid out in the 1916 Proclamation that all the children of the nation - regardless of sex, colour or creed - must be cherished equally should be at the forefront of a new Ireland. The worst thing that could happen is that a 32-county Irish republic would become a monstrous mirror reflection of the old sectarian insular six-county state. That would be the biggest betrayal of all.



Adams: a catalogue of failures

Breaking every law

By Sean Mulligan

At first glance it seemed funny. Two men, who had tried to get away with an armed robbery using an imitation firearm, had been caught after what was described as a 'comedy of errors'. On the 28th of October they appeared in court and received a suspended sentence. Their motive for robbing an AIB bank of €3,500 was so that they could pay off their drug debts. In sentencing them to a three-year suspended sentence, the judge referred to them as being 'naive'. Comical as the case was, it is one of many where judges have acted in a similar fashion. Going on these cases, one could be forgiven for thinking that the Irish legal system is quaint to say the least. However, if you were foolish enough to fall into that trap, you would be closing your eyes to one of the most corrupt legal systems in Western Europe.

From the foundation of the Irish Free State, the old British legal system was maintained. The new founding fathers, who had pretended to be Republicans prior to the 'Treaty', showed their true colours when it came to the legal system and the type of justice that would be dispensed. The judges and barristers would keep their gowns and wigs, along with their top hats and anti-republican sentiments. Embarrassed slightly by the cold blooded murder of Republican prisoners during the Civil War, the establishment had no difficulty in finding judges who would use the cloak of the legal profession to do the dirty work required to jail or execute Republicans. Each Dublin government was only too willing to avail of all and any special powers that were passed. In fact, no government rescinded any of these laws, as they all found them extremely useful over the years.

The notorious Offences Against the State Act of 1939 has been kept in existence since 1939 by every government, and was in fact added to in 1972 and again as recently as 1998. Not alone was this draconian act availed of in the 40s to murder Republicans and jail many more on the flimsiest of pretexts, but it has fulfilled that role ever since. By its presence, the various Dublin governments have been able to maintain the 'Special Criminal Court' in Green Street, Dublin, as well as using the opinion of a Garda Superintendent as sufficient evidence to jail someone for membership of an illegal organisation. Over the years, the right to silence was removed, firstly by peo-

ple having to account for their movements or face a term in jail if they refused, then by the introduction of Section 2 of the Act as amended in 1998. The right not to incriminate oneself and the right to silence are generally recognised international standards which lie at the heart of a fair trial. The right to 'examine or have examined witnesses against him', as outlined in The European Convention On Human Rights (Article 6), is another right recognised in international law. These standards seem on



the face of it to be simple enough, not alone for a judge or other member of the Irish legal system to understand, but any lay person. Or are they?

There is an old saying that 'ignorance of the law is no defence'. How then has it been the case that for years judges in the Irish legal system have ignored international law and jailed people to long prison sentences on little or no evidence? How has it been possible for senior judges and other members of the legal profession to pretend that while certain standards apply in the High Court for example, they are not necessary when it comes to the Special Court? If the prosecution tried to have someone jailed in the High Court for robbery or any other offence solely on the opinion of a Garda officer, these judges would have a fit. The defendant would have the benefit of a jury and would be given the benefit of any doubt. These same judges, however, are prepared to sit in judgement on people in the Special Court and, while doing so, ignore internationally accepted standards as to a fair trial, the right to silence, and the right not to be tried for the same offence twice. These judges are well aware that

Ireland signed up to the UN Charter of Human Rights as well as the European one, as far back as 1950. They are well aware of rulings, like *Heaney and McGuinness v Ireland* in the European Court, where Ireland was found guilty of a breach of the men's human rights when arrested back in 1990 by denying them the right to silence. These judges have jailed people on IRA membership and then jailed them again on the exact same charge, justifying it on the basis that it was a different date. In other words, these judges could jail a man every day of the year by claiming it was a different date. The fact that the Garda officer doesn't have to provide any evidence as to what he is basing his opinion on helps of course.

Various international human rights groups have raised these issues over many years, so our learned judges cannot claim to be unaware of the injustices they have been perpetrating. Different political figures have promised to change the system but haven't done anything about it. Recently Michael McDowell introduced the European Convention on Human Rights Bill 2003, which states that it 'enables further effect to be given, subject to the constitution, to certain provisions of the Convention for the protection of human rights, etc.'. Given the fact that the Irish people as a

whole and Republicans in particular have never seen the effect of the ECHR in Irish law, one wonders what is meant by 'certain provisions'? There is one thing certain in all this. Given their track record, Irish judges have broken every law and rule in the legal book. They have ignored human and legal rights when it suited them and corrupted the legal process. On their record only a fool would think that this new Act would have any influence on them. The fact they have been allowed to get away with this hypocrisy and double standards reveals the true nature of the state we live in, and it certainly doesn't leave one in the mood for humour.

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articles on issues of
national or international
interest.

Agreement on the brink

A nightmare scenario is unfolding for supporters of the Belfast Agreement. If the anti-Agreement wolves of the DUP triumph in the forthcoming elections it will almost certainly ensure that the Assembly cannot function. Sinn Fein's only hope, the UUP, are already running scared from the 'extremists' snapping at their heels. When General John de Chastelain gave his minimalist account of the latest act of IRA decommissioning, he presented David Trimble with the perfect opportunity to retreat from any agreement between the Ulster Unionists and Sinn Fein prior to the Assembly elections. How galling it must have been for the Provisional IRA to find their latest humiliating act of decommissioning thrown back in their faces simply because Trimble wanted to bolster his fading electoral fortunes.

It is acknowledged on all sides that Gerry Adams and his followers have already gone further than anyone could ever have imagined. But regardless of how far the Provisionals go, it will never be enough. Unionists will never be satisfied until they have a public announcement from the PIRA that they have disbanded.

From the outset, the use of decommissioning as a bargaining chip was a fundamental blunder on Adams' part. By even allowing the prospect of decommissioning to be debated, Adams ensured that a settlement would never be reached with Unionism until the Provisional IRA was disbanded. By giving an inch, he left the way open for Unionists to take a mile. By allowing for just the prospect of decommissioning, Adams demonstrated that for the Provisional movement there were no issues of principle, no lines which would not be crossed. Why then should he expect Unionists to be happy with what they had when they knew that more was always on offer?

Remember the phrase 'not a bullet, not an ounce'? The Provisionals have travelled a long way since then. From the beginning of the process in the early 90s the lie told to PIRA activists by their leadership was that 'Our involvement in this process is only a tactic. Have faith in the leadership, there will be no decommissioning'. Some activists weren't prepared to accept what they were told and eventually quit the organisation. Others followed blindly, naively believing that their leaders were being truthful.

The Provisional movement has since sacrificed much, but what has been gained in return? In October 2001 General John de Chastelain informed the British and Irish governments that he had witnessed a 'significant event' in which the PIRA had put a quantity of arms beyond use. British Prime Minister Tony Blair hailed the event as a 'significant milestone'. He said self-government in the

North could now be properly re-established. The British Prime Minister also promised at that time that 'A rolling programme of demilitarisation - reducing the level of British troops and military installations - will now be accelerated in the North'. Three years later and after the third act of decommissioning, significant demilitarisation has still not materialised. In fact, in some nationalist areas the British military presence on the streets and in the air has significantly increased.

It would seem that the only people happy with the current state of the political process are the British government. Despite the recent 'blip' in the political choreography, Blair remains upbeat.

'By giving an inch, Adams left the way open for Unionists to take a mile. By allowing for just the prospect of decommissioning, Adams demonstrated that for the Provisional movement there were no issues of principle, no lines which would not be crossed'

And rightly so, many republicans would argue, as he has much to be happy about. Indeed, Blair could barely restrain his glee as he recently informed the British Parliament that Sinn Fein have replaced their aim of a united Ireland with a call for 'the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement', which recognises Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. 'This indeed was a massive shift by Irish Republicans', Blair told the House, pointing out that 'it doesn't matter how many arms were decommissioned - it was the symbolism of the act' that counted.

Under the Good Friday Agreement nationalists and republicans have been the biggest losers. They have been required to accept the partition of Ireland. The principal of 'unionist consent' has been agreed. The territorial claim over the Six Counties has been excised from the Southern constitution. And in return for these huge concessions the British government merely agreed to repeal an act of its parliament. Even more gallingly, despite all the ground conceded, pro-Agreement nationalists and republicans must endure the sight of Trimble placing more obstacles on what they are told is the path to a peaceful new Ireland.

One of the main architects of the GFA, Mr. Martin Mansergh, in a recent newspaper article (*Sunday Business Post*, 24/8/03) described the Agreement as 'imperfect'. This is a far cry from being 'the only show in town', as it was once described by the same Mr. Mansergh, who also referred to the GFA as the 'united Irish deal'. This 'united Irish deal' never included or resembled a realistic deal that could deliver a united Ireland. It was nothing other than a strategy to pacify nationalists and strengthen the Union with Britain. Anti-Agreement republicans recognised this from the beginning. Perhaps now, as humiliation is heaped upon humiliation, more Sinn Fein members will realise that they have been duped by their own leadership and recognise the Agreement for what it really is.

Letters and articles can be sent to Forum Magazine at:

The New Republican Forum, PO Box 10, Dundalk Sorting Office, Dundalk, Co. Louth, Ireland.

Edward Said (1935-2003)

By Tony Hyland

An academic giant, distinguished opera critic, pianist, politician, public lecturer and author of nineteen literary and political books, Edward Said possessed an incredible intellectual drive. 'I have no concept of leisure or relaxation', he wrote in *Out of Place* [1999], 'and, more particularly, no sense of cumulative achievement. Every day for me is like the beginning of a new term at school, with a vast and empty summer behind it, and an uncertain summer before it'.

Born in Jerusalem into a prosperous Palestinian family, Said completed his elementary education in Jerusalem and Cairo before moving to America. A precocious student, he progressed through Princeton and Harvard where he completed his doctoral thesis before being appointed Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, New York.

One of the leading literary critics of the past quarter century, Said's pioneering work offered a fresh interpretation of the western literary canon. His most influential book, *Orientalism* [1978] exposed the unholy alliance between the Enlightenment and colonialism: a theme he later developed in his seminal work *Culture and Imperialism* [1993]. In 1986 Said visited Ireland as a guest speaker at the Yeats Summer School. The result was his ground breaking lecture 'Yeats and Decolonisation', which was later published as a Field Day pamphlet and incorporated into the 1993 book.

The lecture exemplified Said's ability to re-evaluate texts afresh. For decades Yeats had been under attack by literary critics. Some characterised his work as representing a 'pathology of literary unionism', while others highlighted his fascist tendencies. In contrast Said depicted Yeats as the first great poet of the decolonising world: an artist who survived war and revolution and traced his nation's painful journey towards independence. Yeats, according to Said, was a cultural hero of the anti-imperial world who subsequently inspired poets such as Pablo Neruda in Chile and Mahmoud Darwish in Palestine.

But perhaps Said will forever be remembered as the West's most articulate advocate of the Palestinian freedom struggle. His profusion of political works such as *The Question of Palestine* [1979], *The Politics of Dispossession* [1994], *Peace and its Discontents* [1995] and *The End of the*

Peace Process [2000] remain essential reading for any student of the conflict. Said could not ignore the dispossession of his people, or the racism, lies and evasions that were deployed to justify this immoral act. Yet more than any other Palestinian writer he recognised the complexity of the conflict in that his people were 'the victims of victims'.

But while acknowledging the significance of the Holocaust, Said could not accept that its legacy of trauma and horror should be used to justify the dispossession of the Palestinians who were 'absolutely dissociable from what has been an entirely



European complicity'. 'The question to be asked', he wrote in *The Politics of Dispossession* [1994] 'is how long can the history of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust be used as a fence to exempt Israel from arguments and sanctions against it for its behaviour towards the Palestinians, arguments and sanctions that were used against other repressive governments, such as South Africa? How long are we going to deny that the cries of the people of the Gaza are directly connected to the policies of the Israeli government and not to the cries of the victims of Nazism'.

Elected to the Palestinian National Council [PNC] in 1977, as an independent intellectual Said avoided involvement in all factional struggles, preferring instead to use his authority to make strategic interventions. From the outset he rejected the use of armed struggle and was one of the earliest advocates of a two state solution; a policy which was formally adopted at a PNC meeting in Algiers in 1988.

However, as the Middle East peace process evolved Said dissented from the Palestinian mainstream and adopted an increasingly critical stance. In 1991 he

resigned from the PNC. Invited by the Clinton government to attend the 1993 White House summit between Arafat and Rabin he declined the offer and dismissed the Oslo Declaration as 'an instrument of Palestinian surrender, a Palestinian Versailles'. Said - who retained a profound interest in Ireland - increasingly feared that the Belfast Agreement might represent a similar betrayal of Irish nationalists. A persistent critic of the corrupt and discredited Palestinian Authority, the books of this most articulate and distinguished Palestinian exile were censored by Arafat and his regime.

In 1993 Edward Said was diagnosed with leukaemia. Between bouts of chemotherapy he began work on *Out of Place*. Published in 1999 this unstintingly candid memoir is a reflective archaeology of his youth. In it Said explored his evolving sense of himself as a permanent outsider. *Out of Place* was greeted with odium by the pro-Israeli US press. The right wing magazine *Commentary*, which previously labelled Said 'the professor of terror', accused him of falsifying his status as a refugee to advance his advocacy of the Palestinian cause, and of falsely claiming to have been educated in Jerusalem before completing his education in America. Said treated these allegations with the contempt they deserved.

Towards the end of his life Said advocated a one-state solution to the Palestinian question. He accepted that his preference for a unitary state encompassing historical Palestinian, in which all Arabs and Jews would enjoy equal citizenship, civil and religious rights, was utopian. Yet he persevered with his vision.

To this end in 2000 Edward Said and Dr Mustafa Barghouti launched the Palestinian National Initiative [PNI] - a coalition of secular and democratic forces who rejected Islamic fundamentalism and the venality of the Palestinian Authority - in an attempt to provide a radical political alternative to the current morass that is Palestinian politics. The PNI continues to enjoy a good deal of popular support in spite of a dearth of domestic and international media attention.

Edward Said died on 25 September from the demoralising disease he fought with dignity and bravery for the last decade. Amid censorship, repression and despair one can only hope that the people of Palestine study his political writings well because they provide the real 'road-map' to a better future.

Globalization: the rules are rigged

By James Burke

International trade agreements might not be the most inspiring topic on most peoples' agendas. How the economic system of the world works is of little interest to the average man or woman in the street. Yet for millions of people around the globe, it is literally a life or death struggle to survive. The stakes involved are in fact huge, with some 2.7 billion people living on one euro or less a day, in what we have come to term the 'developing world'. We in the Western industrialised countries, as well as being well off in comparison, have by our rules and financial institutions been responsible for much of the poverty that exists in the world. Our influence on the economies of these countries is many faceted and governed by the WTO (World Trade Organisation) which was created in 1995 after a inter-governmental meeting in Uruguay. Before the WTO, there was GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), which was established just after the Second World War. GATT was created in an effort to rebuild the global economy and included the establishment of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank.

During the period between 1947 and 1994, there were eight rounds of trade talks in different parts of the world dealing with tariffs, and the import taxes on industrial goods were slashed from 40% to below 5%. This reduction was the basis for the growth in trade and prosperity which characterised the second half of the 20th century. It proved to many the relationship between trade liberalisation and economic growth, as lower tariffs led to more trade. Countries which didn't participate in GATT (there were 23 members) suffered slower growth rates and declining living standards, while those who had signed up prospered.

With the creation of the WTO, membership grew to almost 150 countries and a new trade round was held in Doha, Qatar, in the hope of launching a new round of liberalisation in international trade. The United States was one of the major backers of the Doha meeting, as they hoped it would demonstrate to the poorer counties that the best way out of economic conditions which bred 'terrorism' was trade. The Doha meeting was followed recently by the meeting in Cancun, which highlighted the real problems in international trade that had become apparent as far back as the meeting in Uruguay. These problems include services, intellectual property rights, medical and most problematic of all, agriculture.

Agriculture in the 'developing world' is of major importance to the millions of people who depend on local produce for their survival. The daily struggle of these countries to feed their exploding populations is hampered by many factors, nature being one of them. Most of these countries in the 'developing world' are not industrialised and rely on agriculture as the only means of earning foreign currency. We in the rich countries have by our policies and subsidised exports added insult to injury, increasing the already enormous burden under which the poorer countries labour. Following the Second World War, the rich

markets, many in 'developing' countries, which in turn undermines the farmers there and in many cases locks them into poverty. How can a poor farmer in Africa compete with one in Europe, if we consider that not alone must he overcome water and environmental problems, but the fact that an EU farmer receives an annual subsidy of €375 for each cow he owns? However, it is not just the poorer countries that suffer as a result of this trade imbalance. Western consumers are also affected. According to Policy Exchange, a think tank, people in the EU pay 42% more for their food as result of this policy and consumers in Japan pay twice as much, while food bills in the US are 10% higher. Commenting on this problem and the way it effects the poorer nations, Mary Robinson, who plays a leading role in Oxfam, stated 'anyone who looks into it objectively cannot but be shocked at the way the rules are rigged'. Her comments reflect a growing disquiet among trade negotiators in the west and the representatives of the 'developing' countries, as witnessed at Cancun earlier this year. The pressure to stop food dumping by the richer countries on to the poorer ones is growing, as is the demand that the EU and the US change their policies. There has been a growing awareness in the 'developing' world that only by their coming together, can they campaign against and stop the £200stg billion of subsidies the rich nations provide for their farmers. This new grouping, which emerged during and after Cancun, is led by China, Brazil, India and South Africa and comes under the umbrella of G21 (group of 21 members, including Turkey and others). This grouping in reality represents two-thirds of the world's farmers.

Of course there have been threats against them for their stand, with the loss of aid being mentioned to any country joining the group. The old strategy of 'divide and rule' is being attempted but will not work. The poorer nations will not agree to an international trade agreement which leaves them locked in poverty. The richer countries are going to have to take an axe to their agriculture subsidies and leave a fairer playing field on which the 'developing' nations can compete. Given that these subsidies are greater than the gross domestic product of Africa as a whole and six times the level of over-seas aid, the axe is going to have to be a large one. It is only by removing the 'rigged rules' of international trade that millions of people will be lifted out of the poverty they now find themselves trapped in.



nations prospered from their industrial progress and trade. Agriculture on the other hand was a sector which dwindled in comparison, as far as gross domestic product and employment was concerned. Nevertheless, a deal was done with our farmers to protect them from the rigours of this new situation. In Europe, for example, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was introduced and would in time account for 60% of the EU budget. Direct subsidies to producers in the EU cost around €100 billion annually and as a result depress world market prices in such items as dairy products, wheat and even sugar. Likewise, Japan supports rice production with subsidies of up to 700 per cent of the production costs, which means that producers in 'developing countries' are excluded from Japan as a market. Another example is cotton subsidies in the US, which amount to more than \$3 billion annually and which drive down world cotton prices by as much as 20 per cent. This policy has been estimated to cost West Africa alone some \$250 million annually in foreign export earnings.

This Western subsidisation of domestic agriculture often results in massive over-supply and the surplus is dumped on other

The New Republican Forum

The New Republican Forum is a coalition of political and community activists, founded to challenge the political status quo in Ireland by providing a radical Republican alternative to the mainstream political establishment.

The New Republican Forum:

- Stands for the reunification of Ireland and opposes all aspects of British interference in Irish affairs.
- Opposes the Belfast Agreement, which subverts the Irish people's inalienable right to self-determination.
- Stands for the creation of a just society in Ireland, based on principles of equality, social justice and genuine democracy, underpinned by a comprehensive charter of inalienable human rights.
- Supports the promotion and development of Irish culture.
- Opposes the resurgence of imperialism as a political ideology, led by the United States, its allies and client regimes.
- Supports all oppressed peoples struggling for national liberation.
- Opposes any attempt by the Dublin government to aid or assist any Western military alliance.

Our aims are:

- To establish a credible Republican opposition to British rule in Ireland.
- To critically reassess and analyse the history of the Republican struggle in Ireland, and by so doing, chart a course for the future of the Republican movement.
- To establish, support and coordinate the activities of Republican, community-based and other progressive organisations, forging a basis for a new national movement.
- To liase with other progressive forces, nationally and internationally, including anti-capitalist groups, trade unionists and environmental movements, along with national liberation movements worldwide, to further the cause of anti-imperialism.
- To establish a range of independent media outlets providing Irish people with alternative sources of information on political and social issues.

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