

June election results: Capitalism, “national unity” and anti-immigrant racism



redjade



An Phoblacht

Irish-born children, their immigrant parents and supporters protest McDowell & co's racist attacks on immigrants, October 2003.

The results of the elections on 11 June presented an apparent contradiction, captured by one radio commentator's quip that Ireland is now "more racist, more socialist and more nationalist". Labour and the Socialist Party, as well as the bourgeois Fine Gael and petty-bourgeois nationalist Sinn Féin all made gains against Fianna Fáil, which (like governing parties across the EU) did poorly in the EU Parliament elections and received their worst local election results since the 1920s. On the other hand, the government's racist referendum to abolish the constitutional right to Irish citizenship for those born here to non-citizen parents passed with an overwhelming 79% in favour. The referendum result was hailed by racists around the world, from Áine Ní Chonaill of the Immigration Control Platform to David Duke of the KKK to Eugene Terreblanche of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement. Even in constituencies where opponents of the referendum did well, support for the racist referendum was high. Taken together, the election results show that people are angry with the government and blame them for

their economic austerity, the rotten public services, their support to the imperialist invasion of Iraq and their manifest corruption; but at the same time, people cannot see beyond the framework of capitalism which is predicated on racism. Thus, prodded on by the government and the capitalist media, many people, to varying extents, buy into the government's scapegoating of immigrants. Both the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Socialist Party hailed the local and EU Parliament election results while downplaying the significance of the passage of the racist referendum. *Socialist Worker* (18 June-2 July) claimed "This result shows that there is a real audience for left wing and socialist politics in working class areas in the country." The Socialist Party's Kevin McLoughlin wrote

"The result of the local elections shows that working class people are looking for an alternative. Struggles that can occur in the next period such as against the water charges (if the government proceeds with its plans) will further enhance the conditions needed for the development of a genuine mass working class

For a Leninist vanguard party!

party. For now the focus should be on the fact that this government has been significantly weakened.”

—*Socialist Voice*, July 2004

Taken together, the results underscore that fighting against racism is key for socialists. While these “socialists” might increase their electoral chances by accommodating backward consciousness within the working class, the working class itself will only be able to acquire revolutionary consciousness through the intervention of a revolutionary vanguard which fights to make workers conscious of the need to defend the oppressed.

While working people are clearly looking for an alternative to the current FF/PPD government, the fact is that any “alternative” within capitalism will continue to mean racism for immigrants and Travellers, the oppression of women and the exploitation of the working class. In our 28 April leaflet opposing the referendum (“Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!” reprinted on page 11), the SGI explained: “Racism is intrinsic to the capitalist system; the capitalist class uses it to divide and rule the workers and oppressed and scapegoats immigrants to distract the working class from the fact that it is the bourgeoisie and the capitalist system that is dragging them down into ever greater poverty and misery.” As part of our struggle to build a revolutionary party to lead the working class in overthrowing the capitalist system, we fight for the unity and integrity of the working class against chauvinism and racism and seek to make the advanced workers conscious of the need to defend immigrants.

In recent years, immigrants have become an important part of the workforce in several industries including hospitals, food processing and the building trades. In order to fight the capitalists’ divide-and-rule tactics, the working class needs to use its social power in defence of women’s rights, immigrants and Travellers. For instance, the unions have the power to prevent deportation flights through industrial action at airports. But this will require a political fight against the present union leadership which won’t even mobilise the power of the unions in defence of their own members’ jobs and conditions let alone in defence of immigrants. ***Workers of the world unite!***

Since the referendum there has been a substantial in-



Colin Keegan/Irish Independent

Dublin Airport: Immigration cops form a line to escort immigrants into a holding area prior to their mass deportation early in morning of 26 August.

crease in the number of deportation orders served. Olivia Ndayishimiye from Burundi and her two children had been staying in a rape crisis centre in Mayo since last October because of the horrifying trauma she had suffered in Burundi, including being repeatedly raped and witnessing the killing of her parents and ten-year-old son. They were seized without notice or warning at 10:30pm on 7 July and deported to Britain under the terms of the Dublin Agreement. This EU agreement, which was ratified under the Rainbow Coalition government including Labour in 1997, mandates that people make applications for asylum in the first EU country they arrive in and is merely one example of how the various European capitalist states collaborate in racist attacks on immigrants. Shortly after midnight on 26 August, 28 Nigerians, including a number of children with Irish citizenship, were deported on a specially chartered flight to Lagos, bringing the total of deportees this year to 381. One 20-year-old man, who had nearly finished a business studies course at DIT, was deported and separated from his 18-year-old sister; at least one woman left her Irish-born baby behind because she was so afraid for its life in Nigeria. There has moreover been a significant increase in physical attacks on immigrants across the Northside of Dublin, including Sani Mashiya who was slashed with a blade, kicked and beaten with stones and a wooden bat in Blanchardstown. ***No deportations! Full citizenship rights for all immigrants! Down with racist Fortress Europe!***

There has also been increased repression against Travellers—historically the main victims of racism in Ireland. Discrimination against Travellers account for 41% of all claims under the Equal Status Act. The racist anti-trespass law passed in 2002, which empowers gardaí to evict Travellers, throw them in prison and seize their homes for living on the roadside because they have nowhere else to go, has been used on 140 occasions. On 14 August, up to 15 gardaí attacked a lone caravan parked off the South Link Road in Cork. When the woman, who has been on the county council’s housing waiting list for five years, locked herself in the caravan, the cops broke a window in an

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Ukraine con game

Taaffeite CWI: From Yeltsin's barricades to the Augean Stables



РАБОЧАЯ ДЕМОКРАТИЯ

№ 3 ОКТ. 1991

ЦЕНА 1 Р

ОРГАН КОМИТЕТА ЗА РАБОЧУЮ ДЕМОКРАТИЮ И МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ СОЦИАЛИЗМ

НА БАРРИКАДАХ

...И В ЛЕНИНГРАДЕ

В МОСКВЕ...

Хорошо бы было, конечно, чтобы в баррикадах революции 1991 года только тогда были...

Самые в Ленинграде революционеры, которые были организованы, что и другие революционные...

тенилось. Рабочие Карелии, которые были организованы, так же как и другие, были...

Yeltsin's counterrevolutionary rabble outside the White House in Moscow, August 1991. Russian Militant tendency newspaper boasted: "On the Barricades in Moscow..." "...And in Leningrad".

As many as ten self-styled revolutionary organizations around the world have boasted for several years about their supposed Ukrainian "sections". Last July, the Ukrainian affiliates of these fraudulent Internationals went up in smoke. It turned out that the Ukrainian section of Peter Taaffe's London-based Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), led by one Oleg Vernik, had organized a cynical scam to defraud these groups for money by simultaneously pretending to be the Ukrainian "section" of all of them (see "Con Artists Get Conned—Chickens Come Home to Roost in Kiev", *Workers Vanguard* No. 808, 29 August 2003). The CWI leadership protests that it had no responsibility for the swindle. But this operation, given its far-flung scope and glaring visibility before the Ukrainian and Russian left, would have been *impossible* unless the London offices of Peter Taaffe looked the other way.

Now the CWI leadership is engaged in damage control, admitting what it feels obliged to—and not a whit more. A "Statement from the International Secretariat of the CWI on the Ukraine Organisation", dated 29 August 2003, informed the conned groups that six of the Kiev con artists had been expelled from the CWI. As for the others, the statement declared that "within the ranks of the Ukrainian organisation are some very good comrades, some of whom acquiesced to the dishonest methods"! Oleg Vernik himself was merely suspended, and his expulsion was referred to the next meeting of the CWI's International Executive Committee (IEC). To our knowledge, no further information has been released by the CWI on their current relationship with Vernik.

The CWI clearly hoped to keep their Russian organization out of the spotlight and even mandated it to join in the cleanup of its Kiev mess. But a leader of the Moscow CWI, Ilya Budraitskis, was cited by three groups—the League for the Revolutionary Party (LRP), the International Bolshevik Tendency (BT) and, reportedly, the Internationalist Group (IG)—as one of the con artists. The BT then posted a statement voted by the CWI's IEC at a 19-24 November 2003 meeting, admitting that Budraitskis had, indeed, presented himself to the LRP, the BT and Workers Power's League for the Fifth International as a member of their putative Kiev group. Assuring the world that Budraitskis "was not motivated by any desire to gain money" and that he is committed "to building the CWI on a principled basis", they announced that he had been removed from leading bodies of the Russian CWI for at least six months.

The Russian Taaffeites' real attitude—utter cynicism—is reflected on their Web site where they have carried on a dialogue with critics of their handling of the scandal. To one critic who protested, "You are wrong to think that people will soon forget", the site administrator responded, "We don't give a damn who, what or where is forgotten or remembered." He continued: "No one but losers is interested in the fate of the 'socialist activists of the BT' and their ilk. After all, they regarded themselves as the most intelligent and advanced—so, they got what their intelligence and level of development were worth." When the critic insisted to "know your position on the Ukrainian CWI", the site administrator replied: "On what basis

do you demand a reckoning from us? This is an internal CWI matter."

The CWI on Yeltsin's barricades

The corruption of the Ukrainian and Russian CWI sections flourished in the particularly reactionary setting of the post-counterrevolution ex-USSR. We in the International Communist League fought to the end against the capitalist counterrevolutions of 1989-92 in the former Soviet bloc on the basis of Trotsky's program (see "Why We Fought to Defend the Soviet Union", *Workers Vanguard* Nos. 809 and 810, 12 and 26 September 2003). A crucial part of our fight in the USSR was a ruthless exposure of the CWI's prostitution of Trotskyism to counterrevolution.

These days Peter Taaffe claims the Militant tendency opposed Russian president Boris Yeltsin's pro-imperialist counter coup in August 1991 that ushered in the period of open counterrevolution, culminating in the creation of a bourgeois state and the restoration of capitalist rule. In a 2002 online publication, *Militant's Real History*, Taaffe wrote: "We publicly distanced ourselves from the pro-capitalist Yeltsinites, some of whom flooded towards the defence of their hero at the White House in Moscow." This is a *lie*. They were on Yeltsin's White House barricades. The front-page headlines of their newspaper, *Rabochaya Demokratiya* (October 1991), trumpeted: "Where We Were", "On the Barricades in Moscow..." "...And in Leningrad". They wrote:

"I am a participant in the struggle for democracy. I would like to tell about how this all happened, what I saw with my own eyes.

"On the 19th, Monday...

"I went to the White House and helped build barricades around the monument to the martyrs of the 1905 Revolution.

"It was symbolic that the barricades of the 1905 Revolution stood on the same place where the barricades of the revolution of 1991 arose! Only then, the revolution ended in defeat, whereas, now, in Victory!"

The International Communist League fought for unconditional military defense of the Soviet workers state and its collectivized property forms. In our August 1991 statement, "Soviet Workers: Defeat Yeltsin-Bush Counterrevolution!", tens of thousands of copies of which were distributed throughout the Soviet Union, we wrote that workers mobilizations should have cleaned out the counterrevolutionary rabble on Yeltsin's barricades, thus opening the road to proletarian political revolution to sweep the traitors away.

The adherents to Taaffe's Militant tendency did not just climb on Yeltsin's barricades—where they were, in any case, not needed. They went to the factories, where these social-democratic traitors tried to *head off* workers mobilizations against Yeltsin and Bush's "democrats":

"From the declarations of the [putschist State Emergency Committee] it followed that they were acting

against the so-called 'democrats,' and that posed the danger of support to the putschists by workers organizations that did not share the principles of the 'democrats'—the rule of private property and capitalist power. And that is exactly what happened. Some of the workers organizations were getting ready to send greetings of welcome, and at several factories the workers even tried to organize defense detachments in support of the putschists.

"From the morning on, all of our members explained to workers at their workplaces that the position of the Emergency Committee did not coincide with their interests. In addition to this, they connected up with worker activists of other organizations, in order to prevent hasty actions."

—"Where We Were"

The impulse of these workers was far better than that of the Militant tendency, whose support to Yeltsin put it in the same camp as every imperialist power on the face of the globe. Unfortunately, the stodgy bureaucrats of the putschist "Emergency Committee" sought to prevent the workers from mobilizing against Yeltsin because they too were committed to a program of capitalist restoration and didn't want in any way to antagonize the imperialist powers. As our August 1991 statement noted, class-conscious Soviet workers who saw the urgent need to halt the capitalist-restorationist forces would have been against Yeltsin but also would have had no illusions in the anti-Yeltsin coup. Pointing to a call by a workers conference that had been initiated the previous month by delegates from 400 major Moscow-area plants to form workers militias for the preservation of socialized property in solidarity with the "Emergency Committee", we wrote: "A call for workers militias to smash the counterrevolutionary Yeltsinite demonstrations was certainly in order. But if the Emergency Committee had consolidated power, it would have attempted to disband any such workers militias, which would otherwise have inevitably and rapidly escaped its political control. The last thing these degenerate Stalinists wanted to see was the independent mobilization of the working class."

We fought to oust the Stalinist traitors through a proletarian political revolution based on the defense of the gains of the great 1917 Russian Revolution that remained embodied in the Soviet Union despite its degeneration. The Militant's opposition to the Stalinist coup-makers flowed directly from their line that anything, including capitalist restoration, was preferable to "Stalinist totalitarianism". Finding itself in the camp of imperialist-inspired counterrevolution was nothing new for this outfit. They opposed the Soviet Red Army intervention in Afghanistan against CIA-backed Islamic reaction, hailed the clerical and anti-Semitic Solidarność "union" in Poland that sought to overthrow the Polish deformed workers state in 1981, and advocated the capitalist reunification of Germany in 1989-90 (see Spartacist pamphlet *Militant Labour's touching faith in the capitalist state* [1994]).

From "democratic" counterrevolution to the "red"/brown swamp

As Yeltsin's "democratic" capitalist *social counter-revolution* descended into economic collapse and ethnic slaughters, Russia's new ruling capitalist gangs increasingly portrayed these horrors as a *national degradation* inflicted by the usual suspects: foreigners, Jews, minorities, etc. This was the ideological basis for the emergence of the "red"/brown opposition coalition that encompassed everything from fascists and monarchists to so-called leftists. The International Communist League answered the rising brown tide by publishing an issue of our Russian-language *Byulleten' Spartakovtsev* especially devoted to the role of a Leninist party as the people's tribune, defending women, gays, Jews, minorities and oppressed nationalities, all the targets of the returning medievalist bigotry of Russia's benighted past. The Russian Militant swam *with* the brown tide, tailing after the main bastion of the "red"/brown coalition, the grotesquely misnamed Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF), which was Russia's largest party.

More recently, commenting on the 7 December 2003 Russian Duma (parliament) elections that handed the KPRF a severe defeat, the CWI's Rob Jones posted on their English-language Web site: "We...called on workers and youth to not support any of the parties supported by big business—including the CP—but called on workers to organise their own independent class organisations, to assist working class struggle" ("Election Victory for Pro-Putin United Russia Party", 10 December 2003).

This is another lie. The real position of the Russian Taaffeites, currently named "Socialist Resistance", is captured in their June 2003 Russian-language declaration, "Parliamentary Elections in Russia: The Orientation of Socialist Resistance". There the Russian Taaffeites hid behind the fact that there are two tiers of candidates in the elections, party-slate and individual. While for the party-slate tier they declared that "there is no way we could call for a vote to such a party" as the KPRF, for the individual candidacies they *endorsed voting for KPRF "worker" candidates*: "In each area, after candidacies are put forward, worker candidates (if there are such) will be selected from trade unions, the Russian Labor Party, the RKRП, *the KPRF* or other parties, that Socialist Resistance will support" (emphasis added).



Taaffeites welcomed National Bolshevik Party fascists to 1998 May Day Moscow forum (right). Above: NBP depiction of "ideal" member, modelled on Hitler's stormtroopers.

Their declaration also reveals that the Russian Taaffeites had a standing policy of giving support (direct or indirect) to the KPRF:

"In the previous Duma elections of 1993 and 1998, our slogan was, 'Not one vote to the Right!' This meant a call to not vote for bourgeois, that is, rightist parties, and logically, *to vote for a leftist party*. But how to determine what party is leftist? We answered as follows. Since you have made the conscious choice to not vote for bourgeois parties, make a second conscious choice. *If you believe the KPRF is a leftist party—vote for it. And better yet, join it* and verify if that is really the case.... We ourselves after all have no illusions in these parties; we believe that it is necessary to vote for a genuine Labor Party. There is no such party? That means it is necessary to build it! But today on the so-called left there in fact remains only one party—the KPRF." (emphasis added)

Electoral support to the KPRF is not a tactical question. The KPRF is on the other side of the class line. From its inception in 1993, the KPRF was always an outright bourgeois party, hostile to working-class actions. It was the main channel for diverting anger away from capitalist counterrevolution to racism and anti-Semitism—the "socialism of fools"—at home and behind Russian imperial ambitions abroad. In October 1998, when prominent KPRF leader General Albert Makashov repeatedly declared, "I will round up all the Yids and send them to the next world!" the KPRF-dominated Duma refused to even consider rebuking him. When the Chechen people won de facto independence by defeating Yeltsin's barbarous colonial-style First Chechen War of 1994-96, the KPRF *spear-headed opposition* to the Peace Treaty as a disgrace to Russian regional imperial ambitions in the Caucasus and Central Asia. By 2001, the KPRF ruled most of the Russian regions, and in 1998 a KPRF member was



first deputy prime minister in Yeltsin's cabinet. The KPRF's party slate candidates in the 2003 Duma elections included one billionaire and 16 millionaires; among them were barons from Russia's then-largest oil giant Yukos, including the former chairman, Sergei Muravlenko! No class-conscious worker would have *ever* called for a vote to the despicable, bourgeois KPRF.

The Russian and Ukrainian CWI: In bed with fascists

The Taaffeites' adaptation to plebeian Russian nationalism led them far beyond the electoral arena of the KPRF. They courted and consorted with fascists in Russia and Ukraine! Peter Taaffe proclaims that the CWI is leading a movement *against* the National Bolshevik Party (NBP) fascists in Russia, because he *knows* how scandalous the CWI's real connection to them is. So Taaffe presents himself to the world on the Internet as having been a target of NBP disruption when he gave a speech in Moscow on May Day 1998:

"The CWI at the time were heavily involved in an anti-fascist campaign whose main target was the so-called National Bolshevik Party led by Limonov—a right-wing nationalist organization which attracted a lot of youth by using radical, apparently left symbols such as Che Guevara but whose main ideologues were fascist. They use for example the Nazi armbands, the only difference being they have replaced the swastika with the hammer and sickle. When some of this group turned up at the meeting the Chair announced they would not be allowed to speak. Half way through the meeting they started heckling, accusing us of being Jews."

—Peter Taaffe, *Militant's Real History*

Actually, Taaffe's problem at that meeting was not with the NBP, but rather with the fact that one of our comrades in attendance denounced the presence of the fascists and walked out in protest. The NBP was clearly invited. As we noted in our article "'Little England' Labourites Embrace Russian Fascists" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 696, 11 September 1998), the CWI distributed on May Day 1998 a grotesque appeal in *Levy Avangard*, the paper of its Russian group, titled "How to Understand the NBP". This sickening piece appeals to the fascists, "In which world do you want to live, my dear friend?" It then expresses "pity" for those fascists who want to preserve "everything in the form of an ever-rotating swastika". To those fascists who want to live "in a world of true Man, acknowledging reality", the article concludes with the invitation, "why are you still not with us?"

Taaffe now disputes our exposure of how they welcomed the fascists at their 1998 May Day forum. Here is an independent account of the incident, which was published in an anarchist journal:

"After the session began, [G.], who was attending as a guest (representing a competing Trotskyist tendency,

the 'Spartacists'), began to openly express indignation at the presence in the hall of members of the NBP. Calling them reactionaries and 'semi-fascists' (the only thing unclear was why only 'semi'), he declared that he was leaving the hall, not wishing to be in the same room with them. To our astonishment, the wrath of the gathering fell not on the heads of the 'Natsbols' [National Bolsheviks], but on the 'disrupter of the peace.' On the faces of Trotskyists of other tendencies appeared smirks, and taunts of 'good riddance!' broke out; Mark, the comrade in arms of the historian Rogovin ([Northite] 'International Committee of the Fourth International'), declared, 'Good Bye!' One of the 'Limonovites' clearly said, 'Leprous Yid!' There was not the slightest reaction to this. There was no protest whatsoever from [leaders of the Russian CWI] Shibbanov and Jones, who responded to the fascists' outburst with complete indifference. But then, when [G.] returned to the hall to take a couple of pictures of the National Bolsheviks in the hall, Shibbanov jumped up and made for him, possibly wanting to seize the film. But the 'Spartacist' left the gathering in time."

—Vladimir Sirogin, "May Day à la Trotskyists (Notes of an Eyewitness)", *Naperekor*, Summer 1998

The May 1998 meeting was not an isolated instance. Last year, the CWI conducted an ongoing dialogue with the NBP on a discussion page of the Russian CWI Web site titled "Question by a Natsbol to Marxists". When the NBP physically attacked local Taaffeites at a Revolution Day demonstration on 7 November 2003 in the city of Yaroslavl, the Russian CWI responded by opening yet another new discussion site, "Questions to Members of the NBP". Seeking a truce and a continuation of the online dialogue, the Taaffeites' postings included an assurance to the NBP: "We are not about to start up any wars."

This came amid escalating fascist attacks. Within days of the NBP attack on the Taaffeites, a dormitory at Moscow's Lumumba University erupted into flames (see "Racism and Capitalist Counterrevolution—Moscow Foreign Student Dorm Fire Kills 43", *Workers Vanguard* No. 818, 23 January). The students were under constant assault by skinheads, and many of them say the skinheads started the fire.

The Russian Taaffeites' pursuit of fascist youth may have yielded them no more than humiliation and beatings, but the Ukrainian CWI "Workers Resistance" (RS) *actually collaborated openly with the fascists!* On 15 February 2003, the day of coordinated international protest against the U.S. war in Iraq, the Ukrainian CWI posted on their official Web site a statement signed by them and, among others, the fascist Ukrainian Brotherhood (Odessa) [Bratstvo]. There is no ambiguity about the nature of this group. The Russian Taaffeites themselves, in a Web posting dated 6 April 2004, call Bratstvo "a fascistic organization", the Ukrainian analogue of the Russian National Bolshevik Party.

Elections...

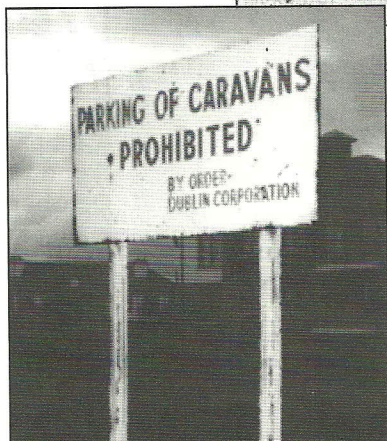
(continued from page 2)

attempt to enter. The attack was so terrifying that the woman, who suffers from depression, attempted to slit her wrists. The woman's children were physically restrained by the cops, who also kicked the family's small dog around and threatened to break its neck. Jim Maguire, a Traveller facing eviction in Swords, Co Dublin captured the desperate situation facing Travellers on unofficial halting sites: "You might be a few hours in a place, and the knock will come on the door. The gardaí will want you out. Or you might get a few days or a few weeks. But it's always

the same story. The kids haven't been to school for months because we never know where we're going to be" (*Irish Times*, 6 July). **Defend Travellers! Down with the racist anti-trespass law!**

The government justified the referendum by claiming that the Dublin maternity hospitals were "overwhelmed" by immigrants. But in reality the horrendous state of Ireland's run-down and decrepit healthcare system and public hospitals has nothing to do with immigrants, but is due to lack of funding. The bourgeoisie get whatever treatment they want in private hospitals like the Blackrock and Galway clinics, while working-class patients wait for hours on trolleys in hospital corridors. There is an extreme lack of specialist doctors in many fields, such as neurology where public patients have to wait for up to two years to see a specialist. A substantial number of nurses in the public hospitals are immigrants, particularly from the Philippines. But with the passing of the racist referendum the children of these nurses will have no automatic right to Irish citizenship.

Barely a month after the referendum, reports emerged that gardaí were investigating two back-street abortions carried out on immigrant women. Both suffered medical complications and one of the women was hospitalised. The ban on abortion means that women are forced to either have children that they do not want or cannot afford, or, if they have the money, travel to Britain for an abortion. Some 40 temporary travel papers have been issued to immigrant women by the Department of Justice to travel to Britain for abortions. However, immigrant women, particularly asylum seekers who are socially isolated and have little money, would not know this option is available to them. The Alliance for Choice noted that back-street abortions are nothing new here: between 1926 and 1974 there were at least 58 recorded prose-



Spartacist Ireland

Are you in a position to provide him/her with accommodation?

(a) in his/her area of choice Yes ☐ No ☒ (b) in any other area Yes ☐ No ☒

If YES, please state when and what area(s)

If you are in a position to provide accommodation in this case:

(a) is he/she willing to accept the accommodation available? Yes ☐ No ☐

(b) has any other offer been refused? Yes ☐ No ☐

If you are NOT in a position to provide accommodation at present, please state when you might

NOT IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE

or details which you consider relevant

SIGNED: *D. H. H. H.*

DATE: *28/5/04*

Housing Authority Stamp

COMHAIRE CHONTAE FINE GALL

28 MAY 2004

HEALTH BOARD WHEN A FORMAL OFFER OF ACCOMMODATION IS MADE

TRAVELLERS

Irish Times

Local councils bar Travellers from living on empty land; in Fingal "Travellers" is stamped on rent supplement application (above), identifying them to racist landlords.

cutions under the anti-abortion Offences Against the Person Act. Since 1967, five women are known to have died in Northern Ireland (where abortion is also banned) due to back-street abortions. **For the separation of church and state! Free quality healthcare including contraception and abortion on demand! Free 24-hour childcare!**

Reformist left adapts to workers' existing consciousness

In the Socialist Party's election manifesto they said: "Oppose this Government's Referendum. They tried to con people into opposing taxi drivers, transport workers, lone parents and teachers. All were accused of holding the country to ransom." Throughout their campaign, the Socialist Party never characterised the referendum as "racist", for fear of alienating some voters. They trivialise the extent of oppression of immigrants and the role that racism plays in dividing workers and tying them to the Irish bourgeoisie. After the elections the Socialist Party wrote "The vote does not at all mean 80% of people here are racist but it does in part reflect a hardening of attitudes against foreign nationals settling in Ireland" (*Socialist Voice*, July 2004). While not all those voting for the referendum are hard-core racists, the results underscore the importance of combating racism within the working class.

The Workers Solidarity Movement published a leaflet "Vote No" "Send a Message to McDowell on June 11th", which makes a number of correct points about how the government is trying to scapegoat immigrants and divide workers and the oppressed. However, they argue "An open immigration policy would benefit all Irish people because of the taxes those legal immigrant workers could be used to increase the budget for housing, education and health." This incredible statement fuels illusions that workers and the ruling class



Dave MacDomhnaill/Irish Times

Filipino nurses and other immigrants are key to functioning of Irish health system.

share common interests and that a capitalist government would spend money on housing, education and health for the working class. The Irish government coffers are practically overflowing with money, even with the bourgeoisie paying almost no taxes; the lack of funding for things that are in the interests of working people is a result of the political priorities of the capitalists and the relatively low level of class struggle by the proletariat. If the government got more money from workers, they would either give further tax breaks to the wealthy or possibly spend the money on more state repression.

For proletarian internationalism

Nationalism was at the centre of the referendum, setting standards of how "Irish" someone is. The children of those people who have fled here to escape oppression, poverty and war, and who plan to stay are to be excluded as not sufficiently "Irish", which has always meant to be white, Catholic and settled. Fundamentally, nationalism posits that class divisions are less important than national unity and that there are common "national interests" shared by workers and the capitalists. This is a bourgeois, false consciousness. In fact, there are two hostile classes in society: workers who are forced to sell their labour power to survive and the property-owning capitalist class to whom their labour power is sold. The interests of workers and their capitalist exploiters are irreconcilable. In Ireland this has been plain to see since the 1913 Lockout when the Irish capitalists showed their class consciousness in seeking to smash Larkin's ITGWU, even if it meant starving the entire working class. Today it is the government, on behalf of the Irish capitalist class, that is intent on privatising public transport and breaking up Aer Rianta in order to better exploit workers and make more profit.

In Ireland, the idea of national unity is one of the main obstacles to the working class acquiring revolutionary consciousness. Historically, this is a consequence of centuries of British colonialism, as well as the continued oppression of the Catholics in Northern Ireland. This false consciousness is pushed not just by Fianna Fáil and Sinn Féin, but also by the Labour Party and TU bureaucracy. From 1918, when Labour

stood down their candidates in order to clear the way for a Sinn Féin victory, the Labour leaders have always put the "national interest" ahead of the interest of the working class. Today this can be seen in a 26 July press release, where Roisin Shortall, in opposing the threatened 1300 redundancies at Aer Lingus, wrote "There are important decisions that have to be made about the future of Aer Lingus. This is not just another company: it is a national asset that is of strategic importance to this country as an island nation, heavily dependent on tourism and one of the few member states without a land link to the European mainland."

The trade union bureaucracy plays an important role in keeping workers tied to the capitalists. Workers at CIE and Aer Rianta have repeatedly voted to strike against the planned privatisation of public transport and the break-up of Aer Rianta, but the trade union bureaucrats keep selling them out, calling off the strikes at the last minute. In June, after ESB workers had voted for strike action, David Begg of the ICTU said "Needless to say, Congress would expect that, in an industry as critical as the ESB, industrial peace will be maintained until all avenues to explore a solution to the issues in contention have been exhausted" (*Irish Times*, 29 June). The fact that the electricity supply is "critical" to the functioning of Irish capitalism in fact gives the ESB workers tremendous social power which they should be wielding to defend their pay and conditions. However, Begg and the rest of the union bureaucracy are more interested in not harming the interests of the capitalist exploiters than they are in fighting for workers' interests.

The series of "social partnership" agreements, which are designed to prevent strikes, keep wages down and increase profits for the capitalists, are one of the sharpest examples of "national unity" being used to tie workers to their bosses. During the "Celtic Tiger" boom years, the various partnership deals enabled the Irish bourgeoisie to accrue great wealth, with workers getting little. We say: ***Break with nationalism and class collaboration! For the political independence of the working class! For class struggle against privatisation of public transport and the break-up of Aer Rianta!***

For a Leninist party as tribune of the people that fights all oppression!

In his editorial for *Socialist Voice* (July 2004) in the wake of the elections, Joe Higgins claimed "One thing that is evident from the Euro Elections is the glaring lack throughout the EU of mass parties of the left that would reflect the opposition of the working class to neo-liberalism and its hatred of governments pushing through right-wing 'reforms', especially governments made up of parties claiming to be Social Democratic or Labour." In order to effectively fight capitalist austerity and "neo-liberalism" it is necessary to build, not parties which *reflect* the existing consciousness of the working class, but revolutionary parties which struggle

to break workers from their existing (pro-capitalist) consciousness and win them to genuine socialist consciousness. This was the type of party that Lenin built in Russia—through political combat against the Social Democrats and centrists who insisted on building workers parties which included opportunists as well as revolutionaries (the “party of the whole class”). It was the Bolsheviks which proved to be the only type of party capable of leading the working class to the conquest of power.

Ninety years ago, social-democratic parties across Europe lined up in support of their own bourgeoisies in World War I. In response to this world-historic betrayal, Lenin drew the conclusion that it was necessary to break from the opportunists and social-chauvinists:

“The war has clearly proved that at a moment of crisis (and the imperialist era will undoubtedly be one of all kinds of crises) a sizable mass of opportunists, supported and often directly guided by the bourgeoisie (this is of particular importance!), go over to the latter’s camp, betray socialism, damage the workers’ cause and attempt to ruin it. In every crisis the bourgeoisie will always aid the opportunists, will always try to suppress the revolutionary section of the proletariat, stopping short of nothing and employing the most unlawful and savage *military* measures.... Anyone who has failed to understand this truth *after* the events we have gone through is hopelessly deceiving both himself and the workers.”

—“What Next?” (January 1915)

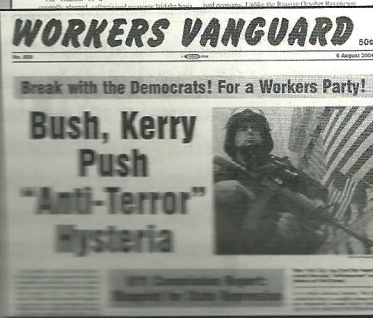
The Socialist Party and their international co-thinkers in the Committee for a Workers’ International have denied this basic truth from their very origins. When known as the Militant tendency they spent decades as groupings

within the rotting corpse of social democracy.

An idea of what their “mass workers party” would look like can be glimpsed by the fact that their councillor in Omagh, Johnny McLaughlin, voted for an anti-abortion motion in the council and for special powers to the RUC in the wake of the Omagh bombing. When McLaughlin chose to resign from the Socialist Party, they called his decision “regrettable” [sic] (see “Socialist Party spits on abortion rights”, *Spartacist Ireland* no 2, Autumn/Winter 2002). Today, they explicitly argue against the need to build a revolutionary party: “Some left-wing groups argue that by calling for a new mass workers’ party we are trying to create a Labour Party Mark II; a party where reformist ideas would predominate, sowing the false idea that capitalism could be gradually transformed into a better society. Surely they reason we should be calling for a mass *revolutionary* party instead. Unfortunately they completely misunderstand the role that a mass workers’ party could play in the struggle to change society” (Socialist Party [England] pamphlet *The case for a new workers’ party*). In fact, since 1914 revolutionaries have completely understood the role of non-revolutionary workers parties: betrayal of the struggle for socialism!

It is necessary to win workers to the perspective of building a revolutionary vanguard party like Lenin’s Bolsheviks, a party that stands as tribune of the people, combating every instance of oppression and state terror no matter what section of the population it affects. We fight for mobilising the working class to overthrow the capitalist system and establish societies where the workers own and control the means of production. Only then can the wealth of society be put to use for the benefit of the majority of the people. ■

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No to the racist citizenship referendum!

Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!

This leaflet was first issued 28 April 2004.

The June 11 citizenship referendum is the latest in a series of racist attacks carried out by the Irish bourgeoisie and their government. Fianna Fáil and the PDs hope to stir up a tide of racism that will sweep them to victory in the local and European elections, while the government is widely unpopular because of the continuing economic downturn, the rotten public services, their support to the imperialist invasion of Iraq and their manifest corruption. If passed, the amendment will abolish the constitutional right to Irish citizenship for everyone born in Ireland. This right was incorporated into the constitution when the Southern bourgeoisie dropped their territorial claim on Northern Ireland as part of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Before 1998, citizenship was determined by the Oireachtas; the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act of 1956 stated "Every person born in Ireland is an Irish citizen from birth." After amending the constitution, the government wants to bar people born here from being citizens unless at least one parent was legally resident in Ireland for three of the previous four years; living here as a student or while seeking political asylum won't count.

When questions were raised about whether the referendum would violate the Good Friday Agreement, the British Labour government, which has been waging its own vicious campaign against immigrants, was quick to give its assent. Since the 1935 Aliens Act, Irish governments have always tailored their immigration laws in the interests not only of the Irish bourgeoisie but also the British imperialists. We oppose the Good Friday Agreement and the whole imperialist "peace" fraud, which reinforces the oppression of the Northern Catholic minority.

The Labour Party here is opposing the referendum, but their opposition has been overwhelmingly to the timing of the referendum rather than its content. Labour's Joe Costello, in a 7 April press release, said "From the very beginning the Labour Party said that we recognised that there was a problem in regard to our existing citizenship regime that needed to be resolved". Labour MEP candidate Ivana Bacik argues "If there is some abuse of our laws on citizenship that abuse might best be tackled through the passing of

legislation criminalising the trafficking of pregnant women" (*Irish Times*, 8 April). Any capitalist laws against "trafficking" are merely a humane cover for racist deportations of immigrants. We say everyone who has made it to Ireland should have the right to stay. ***Full citizenship rights for all immigrants!***

Down with racist Fortress Europe!

The anti-immigrant referendum comes in the context of the expansion of the EU, which will give the West European capitalists easier access to the cheap labour of millions of East Europeans. A week before announcing the referendum, the government decided that, in line with Britain and every country in West Europe, it would limit the right of citizens of the ten new EU member states to receive social welfare. Capitalist governments right across Europe are attacking immigrants, from laws prohibiting the wearing of the Islamic headscarf in France and Germany, to the stepped-up harassment of immigrants as part of the so-called "war on terror". The EU is a capitalist trade bloc through which the European capitalists seek to better cooperate in exploiting workers and compete with their imperialist rivals in the US and Japan. Since the counterrevolutionary destruction of the East European deformed workers states and the degenerated workers state of the Soviet Union in 1989-92, anti-immigrant racism has largely supplanted anti-communism as the common cause of the West European bourgeoisies. The Spartacist Group Ireland and the International Communist League oppose the EU and fight ***for a Socialist United States of Europe!***

The Supreme Court ruling last year that immigrant parents of children who are Irish citizens do not have residency rights means that 11,000 families live in constant fear of a knock on their door from Garda National Immigration Bureau stormtroopers to forcibly return them to horrific oppression, war and grinding poverty. Already this year over 350 people have been deported, most on specially chartered flights in the dead of night. The government is also further tightening immigration controls at the ports and airports. The racist tenor set by the government leads to things like the hate mail sent to Tokie Laotan, a Nigerian national contesting the local

continued on page 19

No deportations!

Women and Revolution

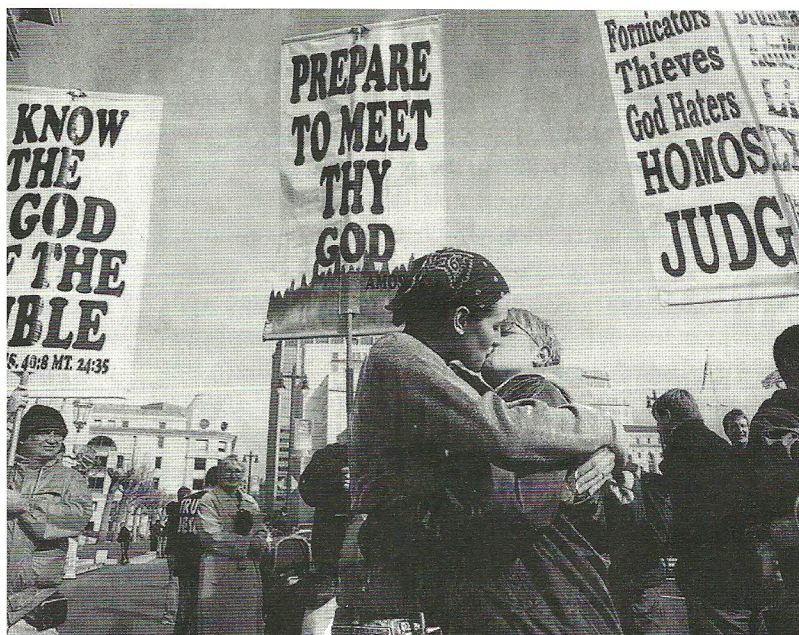


Marriage and the capitalist state

**For the right of
gay marriage...
and divorce!**

We reprint below an article from Workers Vanguard no 824, 16 April 2004, paper of the Spartacist League/US. Because of the power of the Catholic church in the Irish clericalist state, gay marriage is not even up for discussion here. Pushing "holy" family values, Fianna Fáil's Family Affairs Minister Mary Coughlan warned that Ireland is not ready to accept gay men raising a child, "and may never, ever, ever be ready for it" (Irish Independent, 14 May). As a cop-out, the Equality Agency has recommended a form of civil partnership explicitly short of marriage, which could include certain important rights, eg inheritance and income tax, pensions, next-of-kin status. Fine Gael have talked of requiring couples in such a civil union to go through the same onerous divorce procedures as married couples, ie prove to a court they have lived separately for four out of the last five years. **We demand the right to free divorce with no conditions! For the separation of church and state!**

There have been some changes to Irish laws in the last period: decriminalising homosexuality for men over the age of 17 (1993), and legalizing divorce (1997). However, the need to fight for full democratic rights for all gays and lesbians in Ireland is no less urgent today. This year the government has forged ahead with anti-gay amendments to tenancy and social welfare legislation preventing someone getting unemployment benefit if their partner is employed. In "modern Ireland" young gay men are seven times more likely to attempt suicide than their straight peers. In 2003, Concerned Parents Against Bullying reported that **100%** of calls to them concerning bullying of boys feature homophobia as at least part of it



Mata/AFP

Lesbian newlyweds in San Francisco embrace as religious bigots invoke wrath of god.

(Irish Times, 7 June 2003). The Spartacist Group Ireland fights against the ideology of bourgeois family values in the working class in order for it to lead all the oppressed in overthrowing this wretched capitalist order.

"Abolition of the family! Even the most radical flare up at this infamous proposal of the Communists.

"On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain. In its completely developed form this family exists only among the bourgeoisie. But this state of things finds its complement in the practical absence of the family among the proletarians, and in public prostitution.

"The bourgeois family will vanish as a matter of course when its complement vanishes, and both will vanish with the vanishing of capital."

—Communist Manifesto (1848)

Until the welcome day capitalism **does** vanish, the monogamous family remains the legally enforced social model, at least in Western societies, for the organization of private life in its most intimate aspects: love, sex, bearing and raising children. It is the central social institution oppressing women; anti-gay bigotry flows from the need to punish any "deviations" from this pa-

triarchal structure. Why anyone not under social pressure or economic duress would voluntarily enter the bonds of matrimony is, of course, one of life's mysteries. Nonetheless, it appears that these days the only people who actually want to get married are the only ones President Bush wants to stop: gays and lesbians.

Absolutely, they ought to have the right to marry. And just as absolutely, we socialists fight for a society in which no one needs to be forced into a legal strait-jacket in order to get medical benefits, visitation rights, custody of children, immigration rights, or any of the many privileges this capitalist society grants to those, and only those, who are embedded in the traditional "one man on one woman for life" legal mold.

Controversy over "gay marriage" has roiled the U.S. since November 2003, when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that permitting only "civil unions" for gay couples was unconstitutional, thus establishing the right to gay marriage in Massachusetts. In February the San Francisco mayor ordered same-sex marriage licenses issued, and 4,037 gay and lesbian couples from 46 states and eight countries got hitched before ceremonies were ordered halted on March 11. The Green Party mayor of New Paltz, New York, jumped into the fray, officiating at 25 same-sex marriages. When he was barred by court order from continuing, two local Unitarian ministers took over, only to have criminal charges filed against them by the Ulster County D.A. for solemnizing "unlicensed marriages" in March.

In 1996, Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act which pronounced, "the word 'marriage' means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife". With unholy glee, Christian fundamentalists of all sorts are now pushing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution banning states from recognizing gay marriage (39 states already refuse to countenance it). Others warn direly that the floodgates of unspeakable immorality are now open. Polygamy is the least of it; Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, dissenting from last year's Supreme Court decision overturning Texas sodomy laws, claimed that decision could abolish bans not only on same-sex marriage, but also "adult incest, prostitution, masturbation, adultery, fornication, bestiality, and obscenity".

President Bush, supporting the anti-gay constitutional amendment, intoned: "The union of a man and a woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith", complaining that "After...millennia of human experience, a few judges and local authorities are presuming to change the most fundamental institution of civilization." Meanwhile, the *Wall Street Journal*, beady profit-making eye on the bottom line, featured a piece on "Cashing In on Gay Marriage" (March 11), while vendors presented "Loveland", a "Same-Sex Wedding Expo" at New York's Jacob Javits convention center.

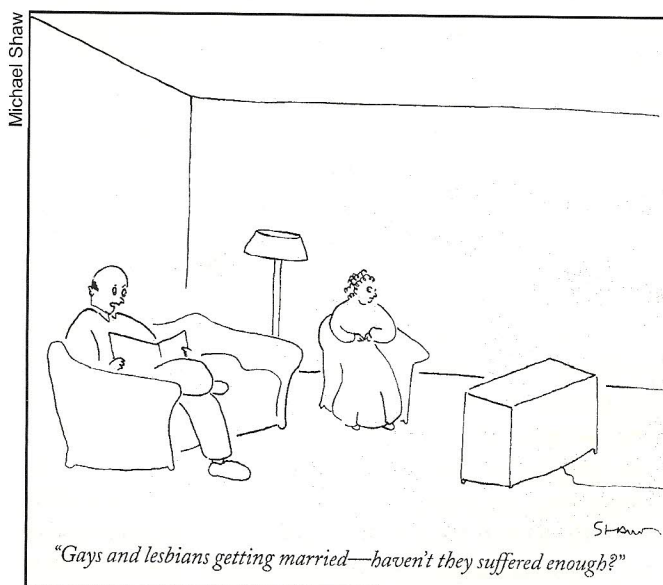
All this sudden churning of the crazed, hypocritical witches' brew that passes for American political discourse these days, especially on questions involving sex, certainly has its darkly humorous and bizarre side. Partly that's because the messy reality most people actually live in bears little resemblance to the rigid official portraits of Christian moral rectitude this government claims as models of social behavior. But the deeper social issues involved are deadly serious, ranging from the most intimate personal questions to broad areas of responsibility for raising new generations, and how to care for others, whether family, friends or lovers; in short, how "private life" in its entirety is defined and organized.

Workers must fight for democratic rights for gays!

Apocalyptic predictions of the end of civilization if gays are allowed to marry are obviously hysterical fantasies; at the same time, gay marriage in itself will not end the often deadly prejudice and pain gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people encounter every day in this homophobic, anti-sex society. But that pain makes it even more important to fight for every possible democratic right, every form of social and political equality that can be wrested from this society.

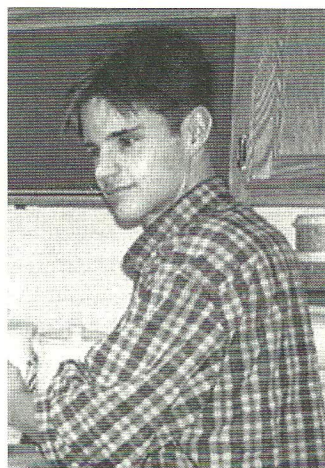
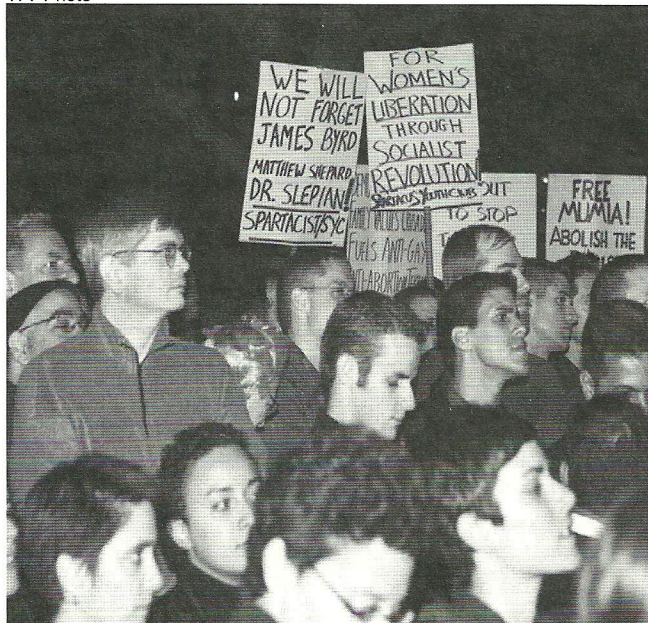
It is a vital task of the workers revolutionary vanguard to fight for full democratic rights for gays—including, today, marriage rights—and to fight to win the working class to this cause. The Spartacist League has done this since its inception. As Lenin pointed out in his 1902 work *What Is To Be Done?*:

"Working class consciousness cannot be genuinely political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all cases* of tyranny, oppression, violence and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected.... Why is it that the Russian workers as yet display so little revolutionary activity in connection with the brutal way in which the police maltreat the people, in connection with the persecution of the religious sects, with the flogging of the peasantry, with



Spartacists at 1999 NYC one-year anniversary memorial rally for Matthew Shepard (right), murdered by anti-gay bigots in Wyoming.

WV Photo



from Roxbury put it well: "I know the pain of being less than equal, and I cannot and will not impose that status on anyone else. I was but one generation removed from an existence in slavery. I could not in good conscience ever vote to send anyone to that place from which my family fled." Others can't see that an injury

to one is an injury to all, and so in a backhanded way end up in the camp of the racist anti-gay bigots. Black columnist Adrian Walker, writing in the *Boston Globe* (12 February), quoted one clergyman: "Think about Emmett Till, the Scottsboro Boys, and those police dogs in Birmingham—and then tell me they've faced what we've faced. This has nothing to do with civil rights."

This reflects in part the pernicious influence of Democratic Party "constituency" politics, where one sector of the oppressed is pitted against another in the scramble for aid from a state which defends capitalist rule.

Of course there are many, and qualitative, differences between black oppression and gay oppression in this society. Racism is the bedrock of American capitalism, the great fault line in American politics since the founding of the nation on the backs of black slaves. The ruling class consciously manipulates racism to weaken the proletariat. The fight for black freedom will be central to the proletarian revolution in the U.S. For that revolution to succeed, the working class, including its strategic black component, must understand its historic task is to abolish class society in order to open the road to human freedom for *everyone*. And that most certainly includes gays—and everyone else who, however self-defined, rebels against the straitjacket social roles imposed by the capitalist ruling class.

Further, violence against gays, lesbians and, increasingly, transgendered people is a deadly constant on America's mean streets and in the repressive holding pens known as public schools. The grisly 1998 murder in Laramie of Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old gay Wyoming student who was kidnapped, beaten, burnt and then left tied to a fence to die, shocked the nation. Though accurate statistics are almost impossible to come by, given that many victims don't come forward because they rightly fear more harassment from cops, school authorities or parents, and because official statistics don't always accurately list "hate crimes", there are still well over 1,000 reported cases a year of violence, sometimes fatal, against gays and lesbians and others deemed sexually "deviant".

the outrageous censorship, with the torture of soldiers, with the persecution of the most innocent cultural enterprises, etc.?... We must blame ourselves for being unable as yet to organize a sufficiently wide, striking and rapid exposure of these despicable outrages. When we do that (and we must and can do it), the most backward worker will understand, *or will feel*, that the students and religious sects, the muzhiks and the authors are being abused and outraged by the very same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life."

Here in the United States, one of the most politically backward "advanced" capitalist countries on earth, saddled with a huge burden of puritanism and religious fundamentalism to boot, there is a lot of backwardness on the gay question.

Even among black workers, historically among the most militant in the proletariat and in general those with the fewest illusions in the "good nature" of this rotten capitalist social order, there is a significant amount of anti-gay prejudice. Much of it is pushed by conservative forces in the black church, although even the black churches are deeply split on this question. As we wrote in our article, "For the Right to Gay Marriage!": "In its extreme, one gets the phenomenon of a black Baptist minister, the Rev. Gregory Daniels, who declared, 'If the K.K.K. opposes gay marriage, I would ride with them' (*New York Times*, 1 March). He might saddle up, but it will be a short ride—the first target of this motley collection of nativist, anti-labor fascists is black people" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 821, 5 March).

In contrast to this myopic anti-gay prejudice is the compassion so many black people feel because they know first-hand the torment and danger of oppression and discrimination. A Massachusetts State Senator

A recent Internet search uncovered an article from the *Arizona Tucson Citizen* (23 February) titled "Gays, Jews Top Targets of Hate Crimes Here", which described the June 2002 beating to death of 24-year-old Philip Walsted, who was gay. It was a hate crime, according to police. In January of this year another gay man was found lying on the street, badly beaten, near a gay bar in Tucson, while a gay University of Arizona student was stabbed in 2000. That's just a few stories from one city. According to the Winter 2003 Southern Poverty Law Center's Intelligence Report, there were 27 murders of transgendered people in a 21-month period (2002-2003) in the United States. The point of these few examples is not to "prove" that any social group is more or less hurt than any other, but to indicate that moral regimentation is part of what keeps this unjust society running the way it does.

It was a good thing that the U.S. Supreme Court struck down sodomy statutes in its 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* ruling, because it explicitly overturned the Court's infamously reactionary 1986 decision in *Bowers v. Hardwick* that upheld states' anti-sodomy laws. That decision castigated gays with statements like "proscriptions against sodomy have ancient roots". Chief Justice Warren Burger practically called for a holy war against homosexuals, writing approvingly in his concurrence that "Blackstone described 'the infamous crime against nature' as an offense of 'deeper malignity' than rape, a heinous act 'the very mention of which is a disgrace to human nature,' and 'a crime not fit to be named'". This is the legal language that gives cover to gay-bashing.

Gays still don't have full civil rights: they aren't allowed to serve openly in the U.S. military, for example. According to the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a gay rights group, in the ten years since Democratic president Bill Clinton adopted the infamous "don't ask, don't tell" policy, around 10,000 service members have been discharged for being openly gay. As we stated when that policy was raised: "Open gays and lesbians have just as much right as anyone else to participate in the armed forces", while raising the classic Marxist slogan of "Not one man, not one penny" for the military ("Gays in the Military", *Workers Vanguard* No. 569, 12 February 1993). This is the tradition of militant Marxism in opposition to

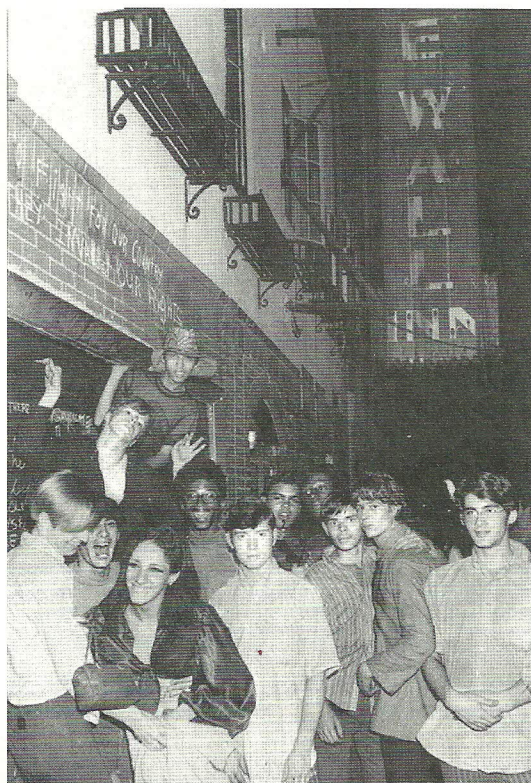
imperialist war. At the same time, the military is a microcosm of society as a whole, and so we fight against racist atrocities and discrimination in the armed forces just as we do in the rest of society. The fight to integrate black soldiers fully into the armed forces toward the end of World War II created a potentially powerful base for struggles for black emancipation—and in fact black civil rights activists also fought for homosexual rights in the armed forces then.

Government and social control of women

Many people still would argue, gays should have democratic rights, but why marriage? The capitalist politicians running for president are all dancing around the pretty meaningless "civil union" cop-out, basically catering to religious reactionaries with votes. But isn't marriage in some sense "special", more private, more "sacred" somehow? Not at all. Monogamous marriage is a creation of society, not god (since there isn't one), and it has been used historically as a

means of reactionary social control by the ruling class.

We advocate effective consent in all sexual relations and think that what any combination of individuals do in bed is nobody's business but the participants themselves, as long as it's consensual. While defending the right to gay marriage, we also argue that the "marriage mania" represents a fundamentally conservative thrust by the well-to-do petty-bourgeois gay milieu. It's a far cry from "free love" and the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969 to today's marriage ceremonies, PTA meetings and Democratic and Republican Party fundraisers. In the quest for bourgeois "respectability", gay pride day organizers have viciously banned NAMBLA (North American Man-Boy Love Association) from their marches (thereby fueling the "anti-pedophilia" hysteria which



Fred W McDarrah

New York City, June 1969: Young gay activists gather outside Stonewall bar after brutal cop attack which triggered "Stonewall Rebellion".

targets all gays) and welcomed contingents of gay cops who spend a good part of their time busting "sex offenders".

Nonetheless, by analogy to our position on the armed forces, we oppose excluding any category of people from access to the privileges and benefits such institutions offer in this society. At the same time, in the course of fighting for these rights, we seek to convince activists that to really resolve women's and gay oppression it is necessary to create a socialist society, in which the current functions of the bourgeois family

are socialized: communal childcare; communal kitchens; free, quality health care; and in all ways freeing women from the burden of child rearing and household slavery.

A look at the history of monogamous marriage in the United States reveals its use as a tool of governmental control. A valuable book on this subject, Nancy F. Cott's *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Harvard University Press, 2000), states: "The structure of marriage...facilitates the government's grasp on the populace.... In the form of the law and state enforcement, the public sets the terms of marriage, says who can and cannot marry, who can officiate, what obligations and rights the agreement involves, whether it can be ended and if so, why and how." The following history is largely drawn from that book; quotations from other sources are noted.

One of the book's central themes is how entire categories of people, especially those deemed "inferior", were denied the legal right to marry in many states. This included, most notoriously, black slaves, who of course had no rights whatsoever. And for decades after the Civil War, blacks and Asians were banned from marrying whites. Additionally, as Cott writes, "Prohibiting divergent marriages has been as important in public policy as sustaining the chosen model." Thus polygamous Mormons and Native Americans were forbidden to practice their own forms of "marriage", while attempts at utopian communes made in the years before the Civil War came under massive assault following the North's victory and the consolidation of the American nation under the strengthening grip of industrial capitalism.

In America from the beginning, marriage, though infused with Christian doctrine, was a matter of governmental control, not primarily a religious institution, because the U.S. was established on the formal basis of separation of church and state. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, marriage itself, based on older common law, was seen as "a form of governance.... A man's headship of a family, his taking the responsibility for dependent wife and children, qualified him to be a participating member of a state.... Under the common law, a woman was absorbed into her husband's legal and economic persona upon marrying, and her husband gained the civic presence she lost." This concept in fact continued right up through the 20th century, and was really only dealt a decisive blow, in terms of public civil rights at least, with women getting the right to vote nationally in 1920. However, Congress determined in 1922 that a wife would lose her citizenship if she married a foreigner and stayed in his country for two years; other grounds for female loss of citizenship included marriage to an Asian, a polygamist—or an anarchist!

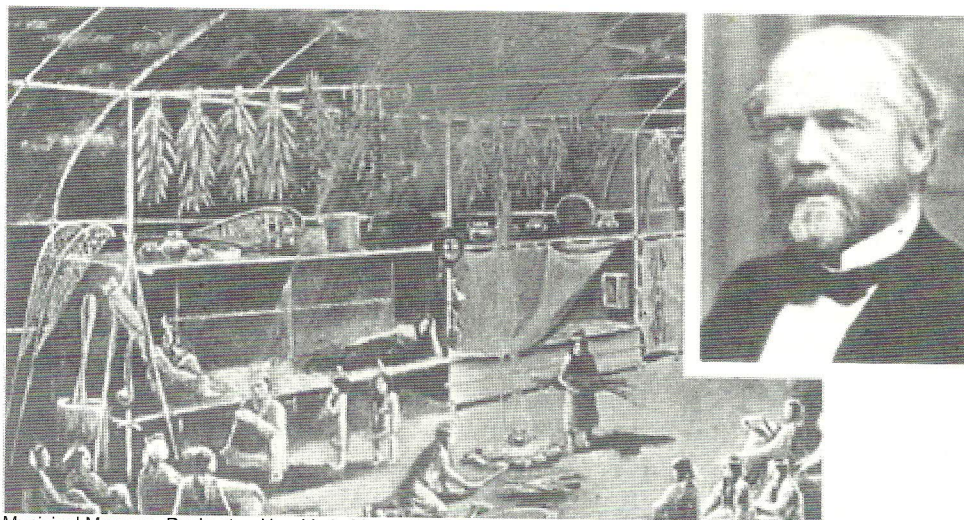
Within the strict confines of the marriage relationship, male supremacy remained largely intact. Cott describes three U.S. Supreme Court cases, in 1904, 1908 and 1911, all of which essentially upheld the

husband's right to control of his wife's body. The 1904 case determined a husband's right to collect "damages" from his wife's lover in a case of adultery, even asserting that the husband's right to "exclusive" sexual intercourse was "a right of the highest kind, upon...which the whole social order rests" (rhetorical excess, to be sure; were this literally true, civilization would have collapsed long ago). The 1908 case justified Congress's ban on bringing women to the U.S. for an "immoral purpose", thus keeping out a man and his mistress and upholding the government's authority to legislate monogamy and punish women who transgressed. The 1911 case involved a woman's attempt to sue her husband for assault and battery. The Supreme Court refused to interfere between man and wife, rejecting the "radical and far-reaching" belief that a wife could sue her husband for injuries "as though they were strangers", and that it was "better to draw the curtain, shut out the public gaze", as an earlier North Carolina court decision put it, on the prerogatives of male brutality within the family circle. It took massive social upheaval and a wave of New Left-derived feminist activism in the 1970s to finally breach what was in fact the husband's right to rape his wife; only in 1984 did a New York court finally overturn that state's marital rape exemption, then followed by others.

Native Americans, blacks, Asians, immigrants: forced or banned marriages

The creation of the American nation rested on the backs of black slaves—and on the virtual obliteration of the native Indian population of tribal hunter-gatherers and agriculturalists—resulting in the creation of a bourgeois democracy for white, male property owners. How much more we could have learned about the early history of our species from these indigenous peoples, relentlessly slaughtered and driven onto "reservations", is a question American Marxists must feel keenly. Friedrich Engels' work, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), was after all inspired by American anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan's pioneering research into the family patterns of North American tribes. It was this research, in good part, that led to the Marxist understanding that in fact human beings have lived "for millennia" in *non-patriarchal* relationships, in tribal, matrilineal societies in which women were not enslaved within the straitjacket of monogamous marriage, in which children were the responsibility of both men and women. Monogamous marriage is a social invention brought to North America by the colonizers, along with their diseases, their "sacred family" and their slaves.

So the Native American population, when not simply killed, was offered an "enlightened" choice by their overseers: rot on the reservation or give up your "heathen" ways. As Cott puts it, "Most groups—



Municipal Museum, Rochester, New York; Morgan Papers, University of Rochester (inset)

Interior of an Iroquois long house. Research by anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (inset) on pre-capitalist societies informed Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*.

notably the Iroquois, who dominated the eastern part of North America—did not make the nuclear family so fundamental an economic and psychological unit as Protestants did, nor did they generally recognize private property as such.... The federal government consistently encouraged or forced Indians to adopt Christian-model monogamy as the *sine qua non* of civilization and morality.” In some cases it was considered that Indians could be “civilized” by converting to Christianity, and marriage of an Indian woman to a white male was tolerated, though in some dozen states marriages between Indians and whites were declared non-valid. The 1887 Dawes Act stole Indians’ communal land and undermined their tribal way of life, assigning male family “last names” to Indians (against native cultural tradition), and establishing “individual property-ownership, and further subverted native American women’s roles as agriculturists by presuming the Indian male should be the landowner and farmer”. Cott writes: “Like ex-slaves and ex-polygamists, Indians were required by the federal government to adopt monogamy as ‘the law of social life’ to become citizens.”

On the other hand, for black slaves in America, legal marriage was out of the question, though slaveholders did encourage childbearing to reproduce and expand the slave population, especially after 1808 when importation of slaves was banned. “Concubinage, which is voluntary on the part of the slaves, and permissive on that of the master...in reality, is the relation, to which these people have ever been practically restricted”, wrote the Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court in 1838. Thus the fight for the right to marriage, as an assertion of the right to control one’s own body and make a free contract with another human being, was seen as an important aspect of the fight for black freedom.

As it is with just about everything else in America, racism is deeply intertwined with marriage law. Attempts to keep the “white race” “unmixed” were

a unique feature of the American colonies since their inception (with the peculiar result that people of all different skin tones and ancestral background are automatically considered “black” if there is even a hint of a black ancestor somewhere). Ever since the inception of monogamous marriage and the family, from ancient times on, laws against intermarriage between different classes aimed to preserve ruling-class privileges. Spain in 1776 had such laws, as did the British

colonists in Ireland in the 14th century, for example. But America uniquely developed the illogic of racism, due to its slaveholding history, to such an extent that even after the victorious Civil War that freed the slaves, many states still banned black-white marriage; in Mississippi the penalty was life imprisonment. The miscegenation law was not repealed in Alabama until 2000!

The relationship between slavery and women’s subordinate position in marriage was widely noted and utilized by those on both sides of the issues. Southern evangelical Protestant ministers, who published more than half of pre-Civil War pro-slavery tracts, regularly quoted the Bible; a typical claim was that god “included slavery as an organizing element in that family order which lies at the very foundation of Church and State”. On the other side, those among the anti-slavery abolitionists and early women’s rights advocates who shared the liberal ideals of individual freedom and the view that “self-ownership” was a natural right, saw that both slaves and married women lacked this basic right. As Lucy Stone put it, “Marriage is to woman a state of slavery. It takes from her the right to her own property, and makes her submissive in all things to her husband.”

Following the Civil War, successive stages of immigration fed the fires of growing industrialization in the U.S. Here too the government’s marriage policies were aimed at social control. Chinese immigrants on the West Coast, who first came in the gold rush, were in demand for mining and railroad-building, but when the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, an explosion of anti-Chinese racism was unleashed. The first federal step to restrict immigration, the Page Act of 1875, was aimed at Asian women, who were supposedly all prostitutes, and required “the U.S. consul to make sure that any immigrant debarking from an Asian country was not under contract for ‘lewd and immoral purposes’”. By 1913 eight states had laws against whites marrying Japanese or Chinese people.

"Free love" utopias and polygamy

In the stormy years leading up to the great social explosion that was the American Civil War, the last progressive gasp of the bourgeoisie (like the 1848 Revolutions in Europe) in North America, many experimental utopian socialist alternatives to monogamous marriage flowered. There were many "free love" communities established in the U.S., inspired by such utopian visionaries as Robert Owen, Claude Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier, whose profound insight that the status of women is the decisive indicator of social progress inspired further Marxist theory on the subject. The New York Oneida community, founded in 1849 with a pamphlet called *Slavery and Marriage: A Dialogue*, did away with the exclusive pairing of couples, though within a rather formal structure. These groups, though ridiculed and condemned, were not by and large prosecuted before the Civil War, but afterward, when in the name of "consolidating" the nation, a crackdown on most forms of "social deviation" began.

One interesting—and still contemporary—group stands out in all this: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, or Mormons, one of whose founding tenets is the right of men to polygamy, or multiple marriage to many women at once. Right-wingers today throw up their hands in horror at gay marriage, breathlessly bemoaning that polygamy will be next. Well, guess what, it's already here, and has been for over a hundred years, out in Utah and other Western states, where an estimated 30,000 old-style Mormons still practice the sect's early preaching, though the "official" church formally renounced it a long time ago. We believe the Mormons have the right to be left alone, to practice their religion and live their private lives however they see fit. Our position for the right of gay marriage, like the right of Mormons to practice polygamy, stems from our opposition to government interference with the rights of individuals to effect whatever consensual arrangements they wish. We pointed out that American Mormons, including the women, essentially freely choose their practice, unlike in countries without bourgeois revolutions, where women are still little more than property of their patriarchal masters and where polygamous social systems must be relentlessly opposed. As we wrote in "Free Tom Green! Mormon Polygamists: Leave Them Alone!" (*Workers Vanguard* No. 764, 14 September 2001), defending a man convicted of felony bigamy charges:

"The family structure—whether monogamous or polygamous—necessarily oppresses women. However, not everybody understands the source of their oppression, and people do all sorts of things that are undoubtedly bad for them that the state still has no business throwing them in prison for. As Marxists we understand that the family serves a real social purpose and cannot simply be 'abolished,' even in a

workers state, but must be replaced with alternate social institutions."

Women's liberation, individual freedoms and the fight for socialism

So, as radical columnist Alexander Cockburn put it, "Why rejoice when state and church extend their grip, which is what marriage is all about" ("Sidestep on Freedom's Path", *CounterPunch*, 20/21 March). Cockburn quotes early ACT UP activist Jim Eigo on the question: "Why are current mainstream gay organizations working to strike a bargain with straight society that will make some queers less equal than others?... Marriage has no more place in efforts to achieve equality than slavery or the divine right of kings. At this juncture in history, wouldn't it make more sense for us to try to figure out how to relieve heterosexuals of the outdated shackles of matrimony?"

It certainly would. And it is the modern Marxist movement which has figured out how to break those shackles, through abolishing the system of private property in the means of production, thus abolishing the need for the bourgeois family structure to pass on such private wealth. As Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the 1917 Russian Revolution, wrote in response to the magazine *Liberty* (14 January 1933) which asked, "Is Bolshevism deliberately destroying the family?":

"If one understands by 'family' a compulsory union based on the marriage contract, the blessing of the church, property rights, and the single passport, then Bolshevism has destroyed this policed family from the roots up.

"If one understands by 'family' the unbounded domination of parents over children, and absence of legal rights for the wife, then Bolshevism has, unfortunately, not yet completely destroyed this carryover of society's old barbarism.

"If one understands by 'family' ideal monogamy—not in the legal but in the actual sense—then the Bolsheviks could not destroy what never was nor is on earth, barring fortunate exceptions."■

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Referendum...

(continued from page 11)

election in Galway, and the vile rape threats against Galway anti-racist activist Orla Ní Chomhraí.

Racism is intrinsic to the capitalist system; the capitalist class uses it to divide and rule the workers and oppressed and scapegoats immigrants to distract the working class from the fact that it is the bourgeoisie and the capitalist system that is dragging them down into ever greater poverty and misery. Today the government cynically argues that the referendum is necessary because Dublin maternity hospitals are being "overwhelmed" by pregnant immigrants. Virtually every hospital in the country is overwhelmed with sick and injured because the capitalist government won't provide enough staff and funding. Meanwhile almost every month an Irish woman abandons a newborn child whom she either doesn't want or can't afford. **For free, quality healthcare for all! For free 24-hour childcare! For the separation of church and state! For free abortion on demand!**

When the 1956 Citizenship Act was passed, immigration to Ireland was not even an issue; most Irish people wanted to leave. Through the economic growth over the past decade the Irish capitalists came to need immigrants as a source of super-exploited labour: from Chinese working in McDonalds, to Africans cleaning pub toilets to Filipino nurses to East Europeans working in food processing and building trades. The number of work permits has risen eight-fold in the last four years to 47,000. Because work permits are issued to the employers, the workers are tied to a particular job and are particularly vulnerable to abuses by their bosses. While the bourgeoisie needs these workers, they are determined to deny them (and their children) citizenship rights in order to be better able to exploit them.

Historically, the Travelling people have been the main victims of racism in Ireland. Travellers are still viciously oppressed, not least by the racist anti-trespass law of 2002 which is used to seize Travellers' homes and threaten them with prison for living on the roadside because they have nowhere else to go. In late February and early March, the gardai seized five caravans in Ennis and three Travellers were sentenced to prison. **Defend Travellers! Down with the racist anti-trespass law!**

For a revolutionary workers party to defend all the oppressed

To combat the capitalists' divide-and-rule tactics, the working class needs to utilise its social power in defence of immigrants and Travellers. The unions have the power to, for instance, prevent deportation flights through industrial action at the airports. However, the current leadership of the unions is so rotten that, despite the anger and militancy of workers from Aer Rianta to CIE to An Post, they won't even mobilise the unions' power in defence of their own members' jobs, pay and conditions much less in defence of

immigrants and Travellers. Moreover, much of the working class is permeated by backward consciousness, including nationalism, racism and sexism. This backward consciousness is fuelled by the agents of capital within the working class, most importantly the trade union bureaucrats and the Labour Party as part of their programme to chain Irish workers to their exploiters under the guise of "national unity".

Left groups like the Socialist Party and Socialist Workers Party (SWP) oppose the referendum but offer no credible way to struggle against racism. The SWP's strategy for "fighting racism" can be seen in their Belfast Anti-Racist Network which welcomed anti-Catholic bigots carrying banners "Loyalists Against Racism" to a 27 January protest. In a 7 April press release, Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins said that "Immigrant workers and asylum seekers should not be made the scapegoats for successive Governments' running down of the health service", but in Higgins' statement for the EU elections (*Socialist Voice*, April 2004) he says not a word about attacks on immigrants or against racism. While the points Higgins (and his comrades contesting the local elections) stresses, like opposing privatisation, defending pensions and opposing regressive taxes like the bin charges are important, the working class will only become conscious of its own historic interests through recognising that racism and other forms of special oppression are key to maintaining the oppression and exploitation of workers themselves. It is necessary to win workers to the perspective of building a revolutionary vanguard party, like Lenin's Bolsheviks who led the socialist revolution in Russia in 1917—a party that stands as a tribune of the people, combating every instance of oppression and state terror no matter what section of the populace it affects.

The Socialist Party is doubly incapable of offering a real strategy to fight racism because they consider the cops and prison guards who arrest, imprison and deport immigrants to be "workers in uniform" and say they should be in the unions. CPSU President and Socialist Party supporter Denis Keane recently denounced the government's plans to close two prisons and wrote "prison officers should refuse to accept McDowell's dictates and begin an immediate campaign of industrial action" (*Socialist Voice*, February 2004)! Cops and prison guards are key elements of the capitalist state: the armed fist of the capitalist class whose "job" is to defend the capitalists' wealth and political power against workers and the oppressed. What kind of "socialists" want cops and screws to get paid more to deport immigrants, evict Travellers or attack anti-war and anti-capitalist protesters?! The capitalist state must be overthrown through workers revolution, in Ireland and internationally. Only in this way can the wealth of society be put to use for the benefit of the mass of people; only then will the oppression of immigrants, Travellers and all the oppressed be eliminated. ■

Iraq...

(continued from page 24)

Houses are raided where “sinners” are believed to be drinking alcohol or listening to music other than Koranic chants. School kids with “indecent” haircuts are surrounded by *mujahedin* trucks, hauled off, beaten and shaved bald, dangerously branded as infidels. Ghaith Abdul-Ahad (*Guardian*, 25 June) writes that it’s now “Falluja versus Falluja”. The mayor handed him two letters. One warns, “Be careful, oh brothers, because the Americans and their traitor allies, the Kurds and the Shias, are planning to come after your leaders.” The other is addressed to the UN, demanding that Iraq be run by Sunni army officers. Meanwhile, the US continues to bomb the city with impunity.

As revolutionary Marxists, we have a side in the current situation, against the US, its allies and Iraqi lackeys. Our starting point is to demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all US troops, and their allies. We defend the peoples of Iraq against any US-led attack and repression. Insofar as the forces on the ground in Iraq aim their blows against the imperialist occupiers (including the over 20,000 private mercenaries operating in the country), we call for their military defence against US imperialism. Every blow struck against the imperialist occupiers is a blow struck against the enemy of workers and the oppressed all over the world.

But we do not imbue the forces presently organising guerrilla attacks on US forces with “anti-imperialist” credentials and warn that in the absence of working-class struggle in Iraq and internationally against the occupation, the victory of one or another of the reactionary clerical forces is more likely to come about through an alliance with US imperialism. We are intransigent opponents of the murderous communal violence against other ethnic, religious and national populations often-times carried out by the very same forces fighting the occupation armies. And we condemn the kidnappings and executions of foreign civilian workers in Iraq.

We are external to the situation inside Iraq and our task at this time is therefore necessarily largely propagandistic, but no less crucial. While making clear that the main enemy is US imperialism and its allies, a revolutionary party with roots and influence in Iraq today would mobilise against the reimposition of *sharia*, against communalist sectarian attacks, for organising the vestiges of the workers movement and the legions of the unemployed on a class basis through strikes and workplace occupations against the thieving imperialist occupiers and parasitic clerics.

Equitable resolution of the democratic rights of all the peoples of Iraq, and the Near East more broadly, cannot be achieved under capitalism but only with the overthrow of bourgeois rule in the region and the establishment of a socialist federation of the Near East. This is the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution. This means combining the struggle against the

occupation with a struggle against all manner of bourgeois nationalism and religious fundamentalism, and poses the urgent need to forge Marxist parties to lead the struggles for the working people to come to power throughout the region. International extension of the revolution to the rich centres of imperialism—the United States, Europe, Japan—is vital, or, as Marx noted, “all the old crap” will return.

Revolutionaries vs reformists in the anti-war movement

We oppose calls to cloak an American imperialist occupation in “humanitarian” United Nations garb. We oppose the liberals and ostensible leftists who argue that the way out of the Iraq occupation is “regime change” in Washington in November. The rape of Iraq was prepared by 14 years of crippling UN sanctions and thousands of murderous bombing sorties ordered by Democratic president Clinton. John Kerry aims to reclaim the White House for the Democrats this autumn by outflanking Bush as a war candidate. A solution to the suffering of the peoples in Iraq depends heavily on *class struggle at home against US imperialism and in all the countries supporting the occupation*. This includes Ireland, where Shannon airport is being used for the transport of US troops and military supplies to maintain the occupation. We fight to instil in the proletariat the consciousness that the same profit-lusting rulers who smash their unions, drive down wages, destroy healthcare and education and attack immigrants, aid the massacre of the workers of Iraq in the interest of capital. This requires a struggle to break the workers from illusions that the Irish capitalist class is innocuous and can be neutral.

The Spartacist League and Spartacus Youth Clubs fought in the US anti-war movement against the reformist pressure politics of United for Peace and Justice, Workers World Party—which recently underwent a split—and its ANSWER coalition, the Revolutionary Communist Party and its Not In Our Name coalition, and the International Socialist Organization (ISO) and its various campus coalitions. We in the Spartacist Group Ireland had a similar perspective towards the Irish Anti-War Movement (IAWM). While occasionally spouting home truths about the nature of the profit-driven capitalist system and its inherent drive to war in the pages of their newspapers, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Socialist Party actively built the IAWM, which provided a platform for and promoted the more left-talking capitalist parties like the Greens and Sinn Féin and the pro-capitalist Labour Party. The SWP and Socialist Party limited anti-war protests to the confines of what was acceptable to the pro-capitalist right wing of the IAWM (see “Down with the US/British colonial occupation of Iraq!”, *Spartacist Ireland* no 4, Autumn/Winter 2003). Thus, while we forthrightly raised the call to defend Iraq—ie, that workers and anti-war

activists had to take a side against the US imperialists and their allies—the IAWM refused to raise such calls, limiting their slogans to pacifist demands like “No to War” or “Stop the War”, pandering to Labour and the Greens who only opposed the war because it did not have a UN mandate.

Both the SWP and Socialist Party also refuse to call for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. In fact the Socialist Party criticised the anti-war movement in Belfast *from the right* for allowing slogans against British imperialism in Northern Ire-



Peter Morrison/AP

Ardoyne, July 2004: British Army defends reactionary Orange Order march, attacks Catholic protesters. Army's experience in North now used in Iraq.

land to be carried in demos. In an article about the 20 March demonstration against the occupation of Iraq they state: “The one defect of the march which will have to be discussed by the anti war movement was its one sidedness. Members of Sinn Fein youth marched with a banner which read ‘Brits out of Ireland and Iraq.’ The Socialist Party and Socialist Youth oppose all imperialism across the world but the above slogan could only appeal to one side of the sectarian divide in Northern Ireland” (*Socialist Voice*, April 2004). The Socialist Party’s opposition to the imperialist occupation of Iraq is revealed as so much hot air given their refusal to oppose the continuing military occupation of Northern Ireland. The British military is as much an army of occupation in Northern Ireland as it is in Iraq; in 2003 the army stopped and questioned 11,000 people in the North, a figure so high it was even criticised by the SDLP. **For the immediate unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland!**

Today, groups that refused to side with Iraq in the lead-up to and during the war welcome acts of resistance against the occupation because every blow against the imperialists in Iraq redounds against Bush in the run-up to the November election and against those governments (such as the Irish and British) who supported the invasion, increasing the chances of a more “left” capitalist government coming to power. The left across Europe was ecstatic when José María Aznar’s right-wing Partido Popular government was

replaced by one centred on the social-democratic PSOE following Aznar’s cynical attempt to blame Basque nationalists for the criminal Madrid train bombs on 11 March. The SWP made their perspective crystal clear with a front-page headline (24 March-9 April) which blared, “Aznar pays the price for supporting the war on Iraq” “ONE GONE, MORE TO GO” with pictures of Aznar, Blair, Bush and Ahern. While the new prime minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero did withdraw Spain’s troops from Iraq, he speaks for the imperialist ambitions of America’s European imperialist rivals led by France and Germany. They view a UN-administered occupation as a way to enhance their own interests in the region and to get a better share of the spoils. The last time the PSOE held office meant launching the fascist death squads known as GAL (Grupos Antiterroristas de Liberación) in the 1980s against Basque nationalists. While welcoming the toppling of Aznar’s government, the Socialist Party claims that the “PSOE ceased to be a working class party long ago”, and says “We need to build new mass parties of the working class around the world, committed to the struggle for socialism, committed to overthrowing the cause of war—the capitalist system” (*Socialist View*, Spring 2004). However, the Socialist Party’s international comrades in America, Socialist Alternative, call for a vote to capitalist politician Ralph Nader, as they did in 2000. Furthermore, Nader has made it clear that the purpose of his campaign is to push the Democratic Party in a more “progressive” direction (see “Ralph Nader, ISO and Socialist Alternative: Unsavory at Any Speed”, *Workers Vanguard* no 827, 28 May).

You can’t raise political consciousness and struggle against war while subordinated to representatives of the capitalist class waging the war! Coalitions based on this kind of class collaboration are an obstacle because they shackle anti-war workers and youth to their class enemy and promote the illusion that the priorities of the ruling class can be shifted in the interest of working people through peace crawls. The truth is that imperialist war is not merely a policy, but the inexorable product of the drive to conquer new markets for exploitation and export of capital. That’s why only a series of socialist revolutions to overthrow capitalist rule can create a world planned economy that will put a stop to imperialist war. This is the only solution; to achieve it requires a fight for the political independence of the workers movement and the forging of a revolutionary party.

Frankenstein’s monster, the anti-war movement and the “resistance”

The imperialist war against and occupation of Iraq are a direct consequence of the counterrevolutionary destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991-92. Although bureaucratically deformed and degenerated by Stalinist misrule, the Soviet Union was still a workers state with a planned economy and collectivized property, if not the beacon of liberation created by the October

1917 socialist revolution. We fought to defend the Soviet Union—just as we do China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba today—against any external attack by imperialism, without any *a priori* conditions, and against internal attempts at capitalist restoration. At the same time, we fight to oust the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies and to implant the revolutionary internationalist and socialist programme of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolsheviks, as we did in the former USSR, East Germany and elsewhere. Without the Soviet Union to stay the hand of US imperialism, the world has become a more dangerous place of unbridled American military intervention and increased rivalries among capitalist powers, which threaten wider conflicts, ultimately including with nuclear weapons.

From the beginning of the Cold War, US policy under Democrats and Republicans was to bolster Islamic fundamentalism and murderous, authoritarian regimes (like Hussein in Iraq and the Shah in Iran) as bulwarks against "godless communism" in the region and to ensure access to petroleum reserves. In 1979, the Soviet Red Army intervened in Afghanistan at the request of the modernising bourgeois-nationalist government which was besieged by Islamic fundamentalists opposed to elementary democratic rights for women and reforms that infringed on the economic and political fiefdoms of the mullahs. These *mujahedin* cutthroats threw acid in the faces of unveiled women and skinned Communist schoolteachers alive for the "crime" of teaching women how to read. They were armed, financed and trained by US imperialism. We Trotskyists hailed the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan and called to extend the gains of the Russian Revolution to the Afghan peoples. But the Kremlin criminally withdrew the Red Army from Afghanistan in an effort to appease US imperialism. This marked the beginning of the end for the Soviet Union, as religious reaction and nationalism fueled anti-Communist rollback across East Europe and to the homeland of the October Revolution.

An informative article by Juan Cole, "The Iraqi Shiites—On the History of America's Would-Be Allies" (*Boston Review*, October-November 2003), notes, "Once the Soviets had fallen the Sunni radicals abandoned their alliance of convenience with Washington and turned against the United States, which they now saw as a bulwark of the secular governments that they were trying to overthrow, in addition to resenting its role in supporting Israeli expansionism. The more radical of these groups coalesced into al Qaeda and decided to hit the 'far' enemy rather than only the 'near' one."

This history is essential in evaluating the American and Irish left and the Iraq occupation today. Claiming a "third camp" of neither Washington nor Moscow, the SWP sided with their "own" bourgeoisie by serving as the left cover for "democratic" imperialism against the Soviet Union in every conflict of the Cold War. The SWP's American comrades cheered in *Socialist*

Worker [US] (May 1988): "We welcome the defeat of the Russians in Afghanistan. It will give heart to all those inside the USSR and in East Europe who want to break the rule of Stalin's heirs." With galloping cynicism, groups like the SWP, which howled against "Soviet imperialism" in Afghanistan and supported the counterrevolutionary *jihad*, now oppose the Iraq war they helped bring about in their own small way through their craven anti-Communism.

In their enthusing over the resistance to the occupation in Iraq, the SWP often try to draw analogies between Iraq today and Vietnam. For example, in an article headed "The nightmare of defeat facing Bush and Kerry" (*Socialist Worker*, 5-25 August), they say: "Resistance to US imperialism on this scale prompts comparison to the Vietnam War, which claimed 58,000 US lives—and more than a million Vietnamese—between 1961 and 1973.... It was the resistance of the Vietnamese that encouraged the anti-war movement in the US and elsewhere that created a political crisis in the US which eventually forced it to withdraw." It wasn't the demonstrations that stopped that war but rather the battlefield victory of the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants in a social revolution that drove out the imperialist exploiters and their local lackeys. At first, the SWP actually avoided taking a side with the Vietnamese workers and peasants, because they were led by Stalinists. Later they supported the Vietnamese struggle but justified it on anti-Communist grounds that the Stalinist bureaucrats in the Soviet Union and China did not intervene directly against US imperialism in the Vietnam War. Today the SWP excoriates us for supporting the "workers bomb" because we stand for the unconditional military defence of the deformed workers states of China, Cuba, North Korea and Vietnam—including the right of these countries to have nuclear weapons. But if it had not been for the military counterweight of the USSR, the imperialists would have turned Vietnam into irradiated rubble.

The myth of the "national resistance"

Cheerleaders for Third World nationalism, Saddam Hussein and the Ba'athist Party, Workers World Party in the US peddles the myth of an "Iraqi Revolution" which they cite as a continuous process since 1958! A 5 February article by Fred Goldstein states, "The invasion to recolonize Iraq is a new development in the history of imperialism. It is an attempt to destroy the independence of a people who have already carried out a great anti-imperialist revolution—the revolution of 1958." Later in the article, Goldstein informs us, "In Iraq, because of the nature of the Iraqi Revolution and what it achieved for the masses, there was no such counter-revolutionary internal base for the CIA and Pentagon to work with."

This is an outright lie. Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath Party were the counterrevolutionary oppressors of Iraq's workers, Kurds, Shi'ites and other peoples,

and as such were close allies of US imperialism until Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990. In 1958, there was indeed a revolutionary upheaval that overthrew the pro-British monarchy. There was also a mass Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) that united Kurds and Arabs as well as Sunnis, Shi'ites, Jews and Christians. It was a party with good human material but a rotten Stalinist



AP

Iraqi women protest last January against decision by Washington's hand-picked Governing Council to replace Hussein-era civil codes protecting women with Islamic *sharia* law.

programme of class collaboration. The events of 1958 did not end in victory, but a defeat from which the working class has yet to recover, because the opportunity for socialist revolution was sacrificed by the Kremlin Stalinists and the ICP on the altar of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism and alliance with a mythical "progressive" bourgeoisie in Iraq. When the Ba'athists took power in the 1960s, they, in cahoots with the CIA, outlawed and shattered the ICP, killing and imprisoning thousands of Communists and trade unionists.

To understand what is happening in Iraq today, including the communalist violence, you have to understand what Iraq is. Iraq is not a nation, but a patchwork of different peoples and ethnicities carved up by the British imperialists out of the old Turkish Ottoman Empire at the end of the First World War. There are three main populations within Iraq's borders: a portion of the Kurdish nation (a nation that also spans parts of Iran, Turkey and Syria); an Arab Shi'ite majority; and the historically dominant Arab Sunni minority. Absent the working class emerging as an independent political force in a struggle against neocolonial rule, each of these populations can only come to power by oppressing the others and in alliance with US imperialism. What "resistance forces" like Muqtada al-Sadr's Shi'ite Mahdi Army are after is to rule Iraq as the local satraps for imperialism if the US forces would just get out.

The struggle of the Kurdish people explodes the myth of a unitary Iraqi nation. Their fight for self-determination is a just struggle, requiring the overthrow of four capitalist states. We call for a Socialist Republic of United Kurdistan! But in Iraq today—and only in Iraq—the Kurdish question has become decisively sub-

ordinated to the occupation, in the sense that the Kurdish political parties and their military forces are an integral part of the occupation forces. In fact, many Iraqi Kurds mistakenly look with favour on the American occupation as a guarantor against Arab reconquest. The struggle for Kurdish independence can only go forward through intransigent opposition to the occupation and the Kurdish nationalists who collaborate with US imperialism.

The so-called "national resistance" in Iraq is a myth promoted by US and Western imperialism and cynical leftists. When the American military bombed the Sunni town of Falluja and simultaneously went after Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, there were temporary instances of unity against the foreign occupier. But resistance forces led by religious clerics are by definition sectarian. There isn't a unitary "resistance" force in Iraq but rather disparate groupings organizing guerilla attacks on US forces—and often against rival groupings and random civilians.

Defeat imperialism through workers revolution!

Military defeats abroad help sharpen the class contradictions of a particular country. That's the meaning of the Marxist axiom that "war is the mother of revolution." But it is fundamentally the working class that has the social power to accomplish this historic task. We do not raise the call for class struggle at home with the pollyannish belief that the Iraq occupation is going to end with the immediate unfolding of socialist revolution in the US, or in Europe. We raise it in order to cut through the reactionary "national unity" mongering and "anti-terror" scare of the ruling class and to bring the working class to the understanding that it alone has the power to defeat the imperialist system through proletarian socialist revolution. Out of working-class and social struggle and through the intervention of revolutionary Marxists, the workers parties essential for this successful outcome will be forged. This is the purpose to which the Spartacist Group Ireland, the Spartacist League/US and our comrades in the International Communist League are dedicated. ■

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The left and the occupation of Iraq US/Britain out of Iraq now! UN stay out!

The following article is adapted from Workers Vanguard no 830, 6 August.

What does Iraq look like since the bally-hooed handover of sovereignty? Exactly like a country under merciless US imperialist military occupation with hand-picked satraps returned from exile and crowned by Washington as local “democratic” leaders. The new prime minister, Iyad Allawi, is a thug who did wet work for the American CIA, British MI6 and the Ba’ath Party’s intelligence agency. Just days before becoming prime minister, Allawi personally shot dead six handcuffed and blindfolded prisoners in the courtyard of a Baghdad police station (reported by Paul McGeough, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 July). The morgue overflows with rotting corpses and as the mercury hits 45 degrees, “Baghdad is a city that reeks with the stench of the dead” (Robert Fisk, *London Independent*, 28 July).

Ordinary citizens are blown to bits by the American military at checkpoints all over Baghdad festooned with signs reading, “Do not enter or you will be shot.” Scores more are killed by suicide bombers who make no distinction between Iraqis lining up for jobs or waiting as their documents are checked and the foreign invaders or their police lackeys. The official unemployment figure in Iraq is now 70%. Latest estimates of the number of civilians killed (the American occupiers don’t bother to count how many civilians they kill) range from over 11,000 to over 13,000.

Patrick Cockburn’s Baghdad “Diary” (*London Review of Books*, 22 July) reports:

“After the disasters of the past year the Americans know they cannot occupy Iraq, even in the short term, without the support of local allies. The problem is that most Iraqis would like Allawi and the interim government to get rid of the suicide bombers and kidnappers—and of the US occupation as well. But the US shows no sign of abandoning its plans to



Young Spartacus
Spartacist contingent at 20 March protest in Los Angeles against US occupation of Iraq.

keep Iraq as a client state. It would have a weak army, devoted entirely to counter-insurgency. It would have no tanks, aircraft, missiles or artillery and would resemble a Latin American state of the 1960s with an army and security forces controlled largely by Washington. This was the message brought by Paul Wolfowitz when he turned up in Baghdad in June—accompanied by Kevin Tebbit, the permanent undersecretary at the [British] Ministry of Defence—just before the supposed handover of power. The US will allow Iraq to rearm, but only against its own people.”

What about areas of Iraq where the US military has retreated and turned over control to former Ba’athist officers, Sunni Muslim clerics or their Shi’ite counterparts? In Falluja, women have been forced back into veils, prohibited from wearing make-up or participating in public life under the recently imposed Islamic *sharia* law. A street poster “decree of Allah” threatens, “We will have no pity for those who oppose Allah by their beauty or mode of dress” (*Le Monde*, 30 June).

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For class struggle against capitalist rulers at home!