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## From the Newswire: The Unofficial Action Taken By Irish Ferries SIPTU Members Deserves Our 100% Support



It is unfortunate and regrettable that the SIPTU members of Irish Ferries have been left with no other alternative but to resort to this desperate but principled and very admirable and brave stand. It must be causing the leadership and bureaucracy of SIPTU an unwanted headache of migraine proportions. The direct action that the Irish Ferries workers have taken has shown that the Industrial Relations Act of 1990 should never have been even contemplated nor considered acceptable by our trade union bureaucracy when it was both discussed and finally introduced as legislation.

The Industrial Relations Act of 1990 prohibits actions of this very nature. Yet the leadership of SIPTU and ICTU have done nothing to have it repealed. IBEC and the Government have made their positions very clear right from the outset of this dispute.

IBEC by their attack on the trade union movement in the early stages of this dispute and their sudden descent into total silence mean that we can take it that it is IBEC that

The unofficial action and indeed the direct action taken by the SIPTU members on the two Irish Ferries Ships in Wales on the night of November 24th should be commended and supported wholeheartedly by the leadership of SIPTU/ICTU. Both leaderships should now support in the strongest possible terms the action taken by the Irish Ferries workers without reserve. Surely these workers must now be facing criminal proceedings by the management of Irish Ferries?

are leading the "Shock and Awe" tactics of Irish Ferries. Were we ever in doubt as to who really was setting the agenda? This government say they can do no more in this dispute. What did they do in the first place? Act as neutral observers? Let us remind ourselves how neutral this government is when employers exploit workers.

When the most widespread abuse of workers ever uncovered in this country was revealed on the construction sites of GAMA - what was the punishment that company received? A massive multi-million euro contract for the construction of one of the biggest road building jobs this state has ever undertaken. IBEC and the government have made their class allegiances very clear throughout this dispute. They are our class enemies.

This dispute has stripped bare the myth of social partnership. What a headache this all must be for our trade union leaders. 100% support must be given to the Irish Ferries workers. Our futures depend on it.



As the Environmental "Protection" Agency (EPA) gave the go ahead to Indaver to build incineration facilities in Ringaskiddy, Co.Cork, and Duleek, Co.Meath, Mary O'Leary, chairperson of Cork Harbour Alliance for a Safe Environment (aka CHASE) said "It's not over". She went on to comment that "It is no surprise that the EPA have granted licenses as the former project manager of both incinerators, in Ringaskiddy and in Duleek, is now a director of the EPA". Should this plan reach bear fruit these will be the first public waste incinerators in

Ireland. The area is heavily populated, with the housing estates of Ringaskiddy itself, and the site is near to Cobh and Monkstown, one hundred metres away from a college, and next to Spike island which McDowell wants to re-open as a super-prison. The proposed incinerator site is also very close to many large workplaces.

In the event of accident Ringaskiddy is a peninsula with one road out, while Cobh, population 10,000, is an island joined to the mainland only by one narrow bridge. Moreover the site is subject to flooding and coastal erosion, and, being in a valley, subject to a process called 'thermal inversion' whereby cold air forms a cap over a valley trapping air, and hence emissions, within the valley. Emissions from incinerators include PCBs and Dioxins, which can have severe effects on health, particularly on children. These health effects include cancer, and impairment of the immune, hormonal and reproductive systems.

## "Not Employing Anyone Who Was A Member Of A Union"

*The front page of the Carlow Nationalist carried reports on the 26<sup>th</sup> of November of an emerging protest at the gates of a building site in at Fruithill, in Carlow town. The unofficial dispute arose after two members, block layers both, of the Carlow branch of BATU approached the site only to be told they were "not employing anyone who is a member of a union."*

*The company which finds itself at the centre of the protest is LJM Ireland LTD which was granted a contract from the town council for the development of local authority social housing under the supervision of the National Building Agency last January.*

*The local paper has quoted Dan McNerney, Senior Engineer with the local authorities as saying that "On the signing of the contract last January the council were happy that LJM were fully in compliance with all regulations in the areas of rates of pay, sick pay and pensions."*

*A spokesperson for the Carlow branch of BATU has confirmed having meetings with local councillors and local authority officials on the issue. He also went on to describe the protest at the Fruithill site where 96 houses are being developed as the result of individual actions by members and is not conducted officially by the union.*

## From the newswire: Interview With An Irish Activist Involved In New Zealand Starbucks Strike

**Briefly Describe your involvement in the Starbucks Strike in NZ:** My name's Joe Carolan and I was one of the half dozen or so full time organisers for Unite and our SupersizemyPay.com campaign. Delegates from our stores in St Lukes and Newmarket were the first Starbucks workers in the world to wildcat to support a strike in K Road, Auckland's counter-culture drag. I helped organise a Freedom Bus to pick strikers up and ferry them there on the day, and kicked off a loud carnival picket line with music and free fair trade coffee there when we got there. We drove the wildcat strikers back after two hours of strike action and ensured there was no victimisation in their stores.

**How did you get involved?** The last time I had been in Aotearoa I had got involved in the Fightback! direct action wave of occupations in the Universities here for free education. Four years later, the front line had moved to the battle to organise young workers, and most of the left wing activists I had worked with then worth their salt were stepping up to help the Unite Workers Union organising drive.

**Where did this initiative come from?** Two left wing activists here in Aotearoa (New Zealand), Matt Mc Carten and Mike Treen, had gone through the experience of a small left wing party, the Alliance, joining in coalition with a social liberal one, Labour NZ. The experience devastated the radical left, and they saw that many of the surviving left wing groups and unions were out of touch with where workers were at nowadays. So they went back to the class and decided to organise a combative, grassroots union for the working poor.

**What are the aims of the campaign?** To start a Teamsters Rebellion like confrontation in Auckland between the working poor and the multinationals! And to win a living minimum wage of \$12 an hour, the abolition of discriminatory youth rates against workers under the age of 18, and for an end to precarity- secure hours and rosters that people can plan their lives around.

**How were the Starbucks workers unionised?** Changes to the Employment Relations Act here last year allowed unions round the clock access to worksites to recruit and talk to workers. So we use visits as our organising model. We have hundreds of KFCs, Starbucks, Pizza Huts, Burger Kings, Wendys etc etc to visit each week. We sign members up to the union, who agree with our demands and our strategy, only taking 1% deductions from their wages. Employers have to deduct these by law, but we never charge more than \$4.50 in any one week. Any member can phone us with PGs (personal grievances) or we can find out problems when we visit the store.

So over the last four months we have recruited 4500 workers to Unite, with about 3000 of them in the Fast Foods sector. Turnover is high in this industry but then so is our recruitment. As strong workplace leaders emerge, so more of the recruitment is done by the delegates within the stores. We are now building up strike committees in our stronger stores whose actions inspire the next layer of supporters to become delegates and strike leaders. Next week, for example, KFC in Balmoral goes on strike against youth rates. Three of the five strike leaders are under 18, and 60% of that store is on youth rates of NZ\$7.80 an hour before tax. We're billing it as the Battle of Balmoral, and are out leafleting schools and worksites all this week building for a massive rally outside the store when it goes on strike this Saturday at 2pm!

The Starbucks chain here is one of the more compact targets and has a good level of delegate activists, which was why we decided to move first with them. Ten stores took wildcat action to support the K Road strike, and emerging activists such as Nick, the 16 year old who was the world's first Starbucks striker, is now playing a major role in inspiring young KFC and McDonalds workers to organise their own actions.

**How has the government in NZ reacted if at all?** The NZ government is made up of a coalition of the social-liberal Labour Party and a number of small right wing parties, such as New Zealand First and United Future. They could have formed a more left wing government with the Maori Party and the Greens, who both support our \$12 dollar an hour minimum wage demand. Their choice of partners showed their preference for right wing politics, and the need for us to fight for our demands independent of them. As socialists often say, real change will only come from below, from the grassroots. We want to force a victory in the workplace first, which will hopefully inspire other low paid activists to organise and strike to win an achievable goal.

**How have established older unions reacted?** The Congress of Trade Unions has verbally backed our campaign, as have left wing union leaders like the National Distribution Union's Laile Haire. We hope to work with her organising supermarkets soon, which is the next front in the battle against poverty wages. In a situation where 400,000 workers in this country are on a minimum wage of NZ\$9.50, many of the other unions here are controlled by members of the Labour Party, and have retreated into white collar and the public service jobs. We want to bring unions back to the working poor and the young, and the thousands who have joined Unite in the last few months shows it can be done. Many of the left wing activists in other unions have joined a network called the Workers Charter movement in opposition to the partnership policy of the Labour dominated ones.

**Is there as big a failure to unionise precarious/temporary/low wage/service workers in NZ as there is in Ireland?**

Yes. Back home in Ireland I was a precarious English Language Teacher, another sector that Unite organises here in Auckland. I used to hear horror stories from my Chinese and immigrant workers every week of their treatment by Irish employers, and despaired that there was no combative union out there willing to take a risk on the fast food sector. A lot of union work back home is still in the traditional public service or industrial sectors, but what I've learned in Auckland is that we can organise call centres, restaurants, language schools, hotels and the low paid service industry to stand up and fight.

Before I applied to work with Unite, I wrote Mike Treen an email saying that they were doing the work that Jim Larkin and James Connolly would be proud of. I hope Irish activists back home in the trade union movement can take inspiration from our fight. Perhaps the better unions such as the ATGWU could organise a similar campaign- we would be happy to share our experiences with them. The battle has only begun here, though, and we have some serious enemies to contend with. The media over here are branding us "David and Goliath", so the more international solidarity we have, the better. The Starbucks Workers Union in New York has been working closely with us. If we can unionise and beat them citywide in Auckland, then we have no doubt it will spread to other cities and countries.



### Public launch of new "Tenants First" booklet

*Around 75 community and housing activists from across the city gathered in the Macro Community Resource Centre on North King St on November 22nd, for the launching of a new Tenants First booklet, entitled "The Real Guide to Regeneration for Communities: Making The Right Decision About Urban Regeneration". The booklet has been in production for several months, and five thousand copies have been printed up for distribution around local authority flat complexes and housing estates right across Dublin City.*

*The booklet was produced not as a leaflet to be shoved through letterboxes, but rather as a tool that local communities can use in facilitating workshops and discussions when faced with regeneration (which based on the contributions from the floor last night, seems to be widespread and increasing). "12 steps to making the right decision about regeneration" are mapped out, and take tenants from the initial stages of finding out information and understanding what is happening, to organising your own agenda, getting resources and fighting for what you want.*

*The booklet then goes into further detail about making the decision locally; gathering information; debating, evaluating, and making a democratic decision; raising support from the wider local area; setting your own agenda and having an independent space outside the authority structures; real and active participation; ways of doing the work and setting up a regeneration board; and moving forward. It is obvious that a lot of work and experience have gone into the production of the booklet, and it will prove a valuable resource in the coming months and years. In the first six months of next year, Tenants First will be facilitating workshops all across the city in communities undergoing regeneration and redevelopment. This booklet will be distributed at each of them.*

*Tenants First is an independent, non-party political forum of tenants and community workers who have come together to share information and experiences to support each other on issues of common concern. The central aim is to provide a strong collective voice for local tenants on issues related to their living and dwelling conditions. The group provides support, advice, and a space for local authority flat and housing tenants and community voluntary organisations to come together and share mutual experiences, and to develop collective responses/actions. If you would like copies of the booklet, contact the St. Michael's Estate Family Resource Centre, Inchicore, Dublin 8.*

## Hundreds march against Fine Gael attack on Irish language

Hundreds demonstrated on November 16<sup>th</sup> against Fine Gael's worrying proposal to make Irish language education optional, and no longer compulsory.

The demonstration was kicked off at the main gates of Trinity College at lunchtime, and so was witnessed by large crowds of sympathetic spectators as well as participants.

Hundreds marched to the headquarters of Fine Gael, to shouts of "Fine Gaela." When the group arrived at Fine Gael headquarters, party leader Enda Kenny emerged to address the crowd. He received jeers from the crowd when he told them that removing the Irish language requirement would actually help the language. He then fled from the crowd when someone from Ogra na Gael got up to speak.

Further debate on the Irish Language and it being compulsory for Leaving Certificate students can be viewed on the newswire, at [http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story\\_id=73027](http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=73027)

From the newswire: A brief report back on the speakers from an Anti-Corruption meeting organised by Frank McBrearty in the Mansion House in Dublin, on November 20<sup>th</sup>. This is a brief excerpt of the report, you can read the full report from all speakers (including one controversial 'hoax' speaker!) on the Indymedia newswire: [http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story\\_id=73090](http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=73090)

**Frank McBrearty:** Condemned "crime correspondents who try to brainwash people every week" with their hyping of gangland and other crimes. As he sees it they are just basically working for the garda press office. He also outlined that most of the posters they tried to put up to advertise the meeting were immediately pulled down by Dublin corporation. As well as this in the regular media there was an organised campaign to mislead people into thinking the meeting had been cancelled. He was pleased at the attendance therefore in the light of this campaign.



**Frank Connolly:** He is struck when he attends these meetings at the "vast number of people deeply hurt by agencies of the state....and the avalanche of allegations against the judiciary, the gardai etc.." His group, the Centre for Public Inquiry, is actually inundated with so many cases that he now realises that they simply don't have the resources to deal with them. Instead of talking further about the "so called Irish justice system" he outlined his history of digging up corruption in the planning system and highlighted the story of Tom Gilmartin. Gilmartin has alleged that his life was ruined by a combination of some

powerful Irish businessmen, Ireland's largest bank, the UK inland revenue and, Connolly pointed out, there are even allegations about two taoisigh and "a [sic!] serving taoiseach".

**Aisling Reidy Irish Council for Civil Liberties:** She has highlighted the fact that over the course of the life of the ICCL the gardai and state agencies are actually getting more and more draconian powers despite all the evidence that has emerged since the Sallins case of the gardai abusing those powers. This she feels is because the majority of people still need to be persuaded that this abuse of power is the main problem. They in fact are heavily influenced by the media highlighting of things like gang warfare, which is what happens when the "government constantly plays the politics of fear". So to address this she feels its very important for people to build as broad an alliance as possible.

## Shannon, Torture, Troops, and Timebombs

Last week a German documentary team was at Shannon as part of a program on CIA renditions. After seeing troops and cops, and doing interviews with the Shannon planespotters, they also got to see the Gardai chasing the plane spotters around the airport. As Dermot Ahern is seeking assurances from Condeleeza Rice that the CIA is not using Shannon for torture, a USMIL a/c with hazardous cargo landed at SNN prompting an evacuation of parts of the airport and neighbouring industrial estate according to Clare FM.

Previous reports from **Tim Hourigan** (which include the Swedish documentary that matched his plane spottings in Shannon to the world wide evidence of US torture renditions - this caused a Scandal in Sweden and Spain) can be accessed, along with all Indymedia Anti-War stories at <http://www.indymedia.ie/antiwar>

On Thursday and Friday of last week, three of the Shannon Planespotters, Conor, Ed and Tim were out at Shannon keeping an eye on things, but also meeting a documentary team from Germany. The German crew are making a program about CIA "extraordinary renditions" - the snatch missions using the Guantanamo Bay Express and other torture jets. They spoke to the journalists, and showed them around the airport, and noticed a suspicious aircraft which Ed

[Horgan] reported to the Garda Siochana. "On Friday, we showed them a bit of how we monitor the flights, and we brought them around the back of the airport while we waited for a US military flight to land. We saw an ATA Boeing 757 land and taxi to Gate 42 at the passenger terminal (Gate 42 is fenced off for the US military)."

In an alarming development for safety at Shannon airport and town parts of the industrial estate, as well as the airport, were evacuated for an emergency landing of a **USAF C-17 Globemaster** carrying 'hazardous material'. The aircraft, part of the 446th Airlift Wing, based at McChord Air Force Base in Washington State was heading East, first landing in Kansas, and routing for RAF Mildenhall in England when it developed problems with its hydraulic system and diverted to Shannon, advising the ground that it was carrying '**hazardous material**'. It landed at 8.15 and was moved to the middle of the airfield, where smoke was spotted coming from the right wing.

According to CLARE FM's report (<http://www.clarefm.ie/news/index.htm#1>), "Over 400 employees from the West side of the Shannon Industrial State were evacuated amid reports the aircraft was transporting hazardous material. The C17 aircraft is capable of carrying up to 169,000lbs of cargo, including tanks, Apache helicopters, artillery, and weapons,



such as the Patriot Missile System." It was further reported that the coastguard was advised that if the aircraft was forced to land off the runway at Shannon, the crew would ditch it Shannon Estuary. (The concern being that if all the hydraulic fluid leaked out, that the brakes wouldn't work well enough to stop the plane on a 2 mile runway).

Conor Cregan and Ed Horgan took photos of the plane and made complaints to Shannon Garda demanding that the cargo be confiscated before it could be used to kill and maim innocent people in Iraq. You can see more of their pictures of US warplanes landing at Shannon, plus their full (hilarious) interaction with the Garda at the perimeter fence of Shannon airport at

[http://indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story\\_id=73255](http://indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=73255)

# News and Reports from local Indymedia websites around the world



**IMC NYC:** Twenty-five Christians in the nonviolent tradition of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker arrived in Cuba on December 5th and plan to set out from Santiago on a solemn fifty-mile march to the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. They seek to defend human dignity by visiting with the hundreds of detainees. They are requesting entry into the compound to visit and interview the detainees as a work of mercy in keeping with their faith. If refused, as United Nations inspectors were just two weeks ago, they will hold a fast in solidarity and a vigil to pray for the immediate abolition of torture by all nations.

Participants in the group include a Jesuit Priest, Steve Kelly, a Catholic Nun, Sr. Anne Montgomery, Frida Berrigan, daughter of the late antiwar activist Phil Berrigan, and representatives of a number of Catholic Worker Communities. The marchers plan to arrive outside the gates of the U.S. naval base and prison complex on Guantanamo Bay on December 10, International Human Rights Day. You can find out more and offer your support at <http://www.witnesstorture.com>

**Indybay.org:** On December 8th, Governor Schwarzenegger will hold a clemency hearing for Stanley "Tookie" Williams with defence lawyers, Los Angeles County prosecutors and other involved parties. The governor has set a 30-minute time limit for each side to argue its position on clemency. Schwarzenegger has the authority to commute a death sentence to life without parole. Tookie Williams is notorious for having founded, along with Raymond Lee Washington, the Crips street gang in Los Angeles in 1971. The Crips grew to be a criminal enterprise that many credit for the exploding violence in urban America over the last four decades.



In 1996, after nearly 7 straight years in solitary confinement -- spent largely in self-reflection -- Williams repudiated the gang life by issuing a public apology and began working to find ways to improve himself. And although he continues to deny any involvement in the 1979 murders that sent him to prison, Williams has acknowledged the devastating consequences that his foundation of the Crips has caused for so many others. Since he began his efforts, Williams has received over 50,000 e-mails from young people and others, including many law enforcement officials, acknowledging that his writings have saved lives and helped to steer young people away from gang activity. For more info, check out

<http://www.savetookie.org>



**IMC UK:** A coalition of eco-activists, climate change campaigners and local airport residents demonstrated in London outside the gala dinner of the world's largest aviation industry conference on Tuesday 29th November. The area was heavily policed with mounted officers and dogs and pedestrian access to Tower Bridge bridge restricted. Aviation delegates arriving at London's Tower Bridge Walkways were greeted with a noisy protest and a brief attempt to block the route of delegate coaches was made.

Earlier in the day it was reported that Earth First activists disrupted the aviation conference. The campaigners were opposing plans to expand runways and drawing attention to the fact that aviation is one of the fastest growing cause of climate change. The actions coincided with the beginning of the UN Kyoto "COP 11 / MOP 1" Climate Conference in Montreal, Canada, which runs until 9th December. On the same day Tony Blair's 'pro-nuclear' energy review speech was also disrupted by Greenpeace activists at the annual CBI conference.

**NZ IMC:** KFC workers, some earning as low as \$7.13 (about €3.50) an hour, went on strike on Saturday December 3rd at the million dollar refurbished Balmoral KFC store in Auckland. More than 150 strikers and supporters turned up for the event, which was organised by the Unite workers union as part of the SuperSizeMyPay.Com campaign. High profile support for the 'SuperSizeMyPay.Com' strike against youth rates at Balmoral KFC has come from the Post Primary Teachers Association (PPTA) and well known activist and teacher, John Minto. The PPTA and Mr Minto are endorsing the young workers decision to take action to highlight age discrimination just as school exams end and students start looking for holiday jobs and extra hours.



KFC Balmoral worker, Sam Van Der Kolk, 15, who earns \$7.13 an hour, was one of the workers who voted for strike action last Friday and is taking on an extra 20 hours for the Christmas break. "This is my first job and this weekend will be the first time I've ever held a placard. I'm going to be the first of all of my mates to ever go on strike. I'm looking forward to going on strike to let the community know we are getting paid crap - I'm doing it for everyone," he said.

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