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Irish shorts (WS49)

Workers Solidarity Movement

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The Finglas school students and the Israeli ambassador

Five school students from Finglas are off to Israel. They will represent Ireland in the Young Enterprise European Finals, a competition involving “mini-companies”. Their firm, ‘Rainbows’, won first prize in Young Enterprise Ireland when they paid a 27% dividend to their “shareholders”.

Prior to travelling, and as part of their prize, they have been “invited to tea at the Israeli embassy where they will get an opportunity to chat to the Ambassador and to discover more about Israel”. Are they to be offered hints about setting up a confessional state, about invading the Lebanon, or about bombing refugees sheltering in an Irish UN base?

Since the 1970s an increasing number of schools have been setting up such “mini-companies” in the transition year. The purpose is to teach students how to be bosses, or at least to hammer home the idea that capitalism is the best way to run the world. That is why the winning team had sponsorship from the School-Industry Links Scheme, Munekata Ireland and the Finglas Chamber of Commerce.

All of this is regarded as normal and uncontroversial. But if it was suggested that they learn something about the world of work that would be of a lot more use to the average Finglas student, like why workers’ control is a good idea or how to organise a strike against low pay, those in authority would scream their heads off about “indoctrination” and “bringing politics into the schools”.

The truth is, of course, that schools are full of politics. You find politics in almost everything from the content of history books to the arbitrary rule of the principal. The problem is that the politics are those of the ruling class.

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Gimme, gimme

While business leaders scream that Irish wages are “too high” and are making “us” uncompetitive”, profits of £4,600 million were “repatriated” by multinationals last year. According to the US Chamber of Commerce Ireland is the best place in Western Europe to invest American capital, the average return being 17% – 20%.

Women ripped-off

The Northern Ireland Equal Opportunities Commission reports that women in non-manual jobs earn an average 27% less than males, in manual jobs the figure is 24%. And it is not always easy to upgrade your skills, men are three times more likely than women to find a place on a government training scheme.

Open conference for union rebels

Saturday September 28th will see an open conference of trade unionists who oppose ‘social partnership’ deals like the PCW and want more democracy in the unions. Organised by a committee of shop stewards, and independent of any union head office or political organisation, the conference in the Teachers’ Club (36 Parnell Square, Dublin) is open to all union members. Further information is available from Trade Union Forum, c/o 10 Comyn Place, Dublin 9.
