

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

Irish  *narchist Paper*



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www.struggle.ws/wsm.html



The globalisation we demand

Has it ever struck you as a little odd that the same governments that claim to stand for globalisation are busy erecting expensive fences along their borders to keep people out? Or that the collapse of the Berlin wall has been followed a decade later by new and longer walls being erected a few hundred miles to the East running down the Polish and Czech frontiers?

This is not a semantic comparison. Hundreds died trying to cross the Berlin wall. Thousands have died trying to cross the walls that surround Europe and which separate the US from Mexico. They have drowned in rivers and the Mediterranean, died of thirst in deserts and suffocated in the backs of containers. Dozens have died in suspicious circumstances in the hands of immigration police. Thousands more sit in prison camps across Europe, waiting to be deported.

The old East German regime always insisted that those who died trying to cross its wall were not 'political refugees' but rather a mixture of economic migrants seeking higher wages in the west and 'criminals' fleeing justice. The new regimes of Blair, Bush and Ahern defend the deaths of those crossing the new walls by reference to criminal gangs and the 'fact' that those crossing are not 'political refugees' but rather a mixture of economic migrants seeking higher wages in the west and 'criminals' fleeing justice

The workers of this planet need real globalisation. We need the global freedom to travel, live and work where we want. We need access to education, healthcare and clean water where

ever we happen to be. We need to make global agreements that will control pollution, reduce greenhouse gases and produce the goods and services we need. We need to end militarism and war across the world.

There are two projects of globalisation working in the world right now. The first is the one you are told about on the 6 o'clock news, the project of capitalist or neo-liberal 'globalisation' that seeks to erode our living standards and remove environmental protection. It is the project of the elite who own most of the wealth of this world. It is the project of the EU summits, the World Economic Forum, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation.

The second is that of the anarchists and others whom the media often call 'anti-globalisation protesters'. We also have our international summits but perhaps not that surprisingly the mainstream media, which is after all owned and controlled by the elites, fail to mention them. With few exceptions we only appear in the media as the mysterious and motiveless protesters who insist on disrupting the 'legitimate business' of the 'democratic' world leaders as they meet in Seattle, Prague or Genoa.

But all the same that second project of globalisation from below has been growing throughout the last decade. It emerges into view wherever there is resistance to the neo-liberal project. It may appear minor as in the resistance to the bin tax in Ireland. Or it may be spectacular as the people of Argentina resist the IMF and force one president after another to resign. The bosses need us, we don't need them. The working people across the globe create the world's wealth. Together we can bring this new world into being.

Spanish Anarcho-syndicalists demonstrate in Madrid

A figure of twenty to twenty-five thousand (only five thousand in the police's usual deflated estimate) demonstrated on December 2nd in what is the largest so far of a series of mainly 'black-and-red' demonstrations carried out in Madrid and other Spanish towns over the last few years. This time, the protest was held against the social pact signed by reformist trade unions and the government, against the changes in labour legislation, against pension cutbacks, against the new imperialist war, against precarity and the rest of the virulent effects of liberalism and globalisation.

The demo was called by the anarchosyndicalist *Confederación General del Trabajo* (CGT) and by the Madrid Syndical Platform, which is comprised of the CGT itself and other anarchosyndicalist organisations such as CNT and *Solidaridad Obrera* and radical grassroots syndicalist organisations (busdrivers, mintworkers, etc.) The left-wing coalition, *Izquierda Unida*, also supported the call, but its presence was barely noticeable. There were however, several hundred members of the critical section of the communist trade union CCOO, a few small handfuls of members of extraparliamentary groups and several thousand high school and university students.

The high participation resulted in the first demonstrators arriving at the destination point, Madrid's central *Puerta del Sol* while the end of the protest still had not started to leave the point of departure, the *Plaza de Cibeles*. In other words several kilometres of colourful and active protest in nearly its entirety under red and black banners and flags. One of the most repeated slogans was a call for a General Strike, something the CGT has been repeating for several months.

This demonstration, without precedent as regards the participation and presence of the CGT, is interpreted by that organisation as proof that it is not only growing in affiliation and elected delegates, but, most importantly, in militants. At the same time it is clear that the different organisations which oppose the never-ending loss of basic civil and labour rights are unable to organise major struggles on their own. But when putting efforts together where we agree, we are capable of revolutionising society.

Another interpretation is that anarchists can, in specific struggles, work together with parts of the disaffected non-libertarian Left, without being dominated and, much to the contrary, creating a clearly libertarian message.

According to the *Confederación General del Trabajo* (CGT), this protest shows more than ever that a General Strike can and should be called in order to shake the pillars of capital. In any case, as the anarcho-syndicalist confederation points out, the success or failure of this strike will be the result of the workers themselves, and this is the message that this anarchosyndicalist confederation is proposing to the rest of the Spanish trade union movement.

While impartial observers might feel that the CGT is overly optimistic in its estimations of the possible results of a General Strike, its current day-by-day struggles merit a few

words. These include strikes in telephone call centres over Christmas (fifty thousand workers), strikes in the metropolitan areas of the national railway system (87% of workers on strike during the first day of strikes last 3rd December), and strikes in December for the forty thousand temporary workers contracted to carry out the national census held every ten years. At the same time, support for illegal immigrant workers remain one of the key issues in Barcelona, Valencia and other towns.

While these strikes and struggles are encouraging, what is perhaps most worthy of mention here is the fact that the main anarchosyndicalist organisations, CGT, CNT, CNT-AIT and SO, only a short while ago bitter enemies, have gradually, over the last couple of years, started to work together amongst themselves and other syndicalist organisations, forgetting previous differences, accepting current diversity while looking for shared interests and concerns.

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Written for Workers Solidarity by the Spanish anarchists Apoyo Mutuo. www.red-libertaria.org info@red-libertaria.org or post Apdo 51575, 28080 Madrid, Spain. There is also a brief report by an Irish anarchist who was on this demonstration at <http://struggle.ws/freearth/news/madriddemoDEC.html>



Have your say

Write a letter to us at WSM, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8. You can also comment on any of the articles in this issue at

www.struggle.ws/wsm/comment.html



Getting involved

Welcome to 2002 and to the first issue of Workers Solidarity for this New Year.

A small group of anarchists have been publishing Workers Solidarity since 1984 in a variety of formats. We do so because we think it is essential to not only tell people what anarchism is really about but also to provide an honest alternative to the bosses' media. We publish the stories that they generally won't.

In 2000 we changed the format of our paper and there has been a great response to this development. We now have people distributing the paper in the following areas, Athenry, Belfast, Castledermot, Cork, Drogheda, Derry, Dublin, Fermoy, Galway, Kilcock, Kilkenny, Lurgan, Manorhamilton, Maynooth, Naas, Oughterard, Sligo and Thurles.

We have been trying to keep you informed of all the various struggles that we are involved in from the local anti-bin tax campaign in our areas, the globalisation movement, and recently we played an active part in opposing the Afghan war.

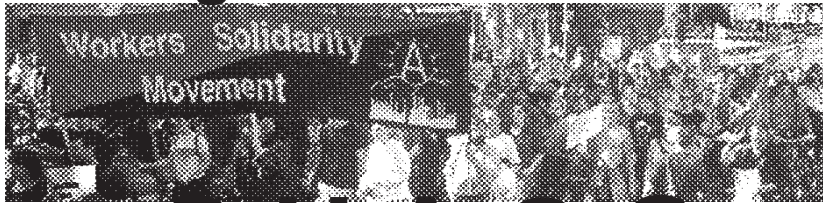
At the end of last year we took part in the first Grassroots Gathering at the end of November. This was an inspiring event, which brought activists from all over the island together for the first time. Arising from this there was a national anti-war demonstration organised at Shannon which had people at it from Limerick, Cork, Sligo, Belfast and Dublin.

Some of our members were there and this lively demonstration coincided with the visit of the US minister for War Donald Rumsfeld who was quaffing pints with marines on their way to Afghanistan. The demonstration displayed to them that the war and Ireland's complicit role in it was being challenged. Unfortunately once again we saw people being arrested for demonstrating in Shannon. 2002 promises to be a busy year.

We will be out campaigning for a No vote in the coming referendum to try and make sure the Irish State doesn't adopt a more anti-choice position. Also it's important to remember that 2002 is going to be the year when we see the politicians re-appear at our doors seeking our votes for election. We are planning to have certain activities to highlight the hypocrisy of these crooks and to display the failings of our so-called democratic system. Hopefully we can make 2002 a year to remember for all the wrong reasons.

If you are interested in getting involved in campaigning for the right to choose - or even in the around the futility of electing your leaders - get in contact with us. Alone we can achieve little, together we can begin to win. Find out more about Anarchism and get involved in the fight for real freedom.

Thinking about Anarchism



CHAOS

“Freedom is chaos”. “Anarchy is chaos”. The first statement will be derided as authoritarian and elitist. It sounds like the ranting of some tinpot dictator. The second is often be seen as a plain statement of fact . Yet freedom and anarchism are the same thing. Whether we call it freedom or anarchism, it is about people being able to run their own lives, enjoy real liberty and have a say in the decisions that will effect them.

The media constantly tell us that anarchy is just another word for disorder and disorganisation. Whether it be the Star or the ‘educated’ Irish Times, the same misuse of the word occurs with monotonous regularity. Not all of this can be put down to lazy and careless journalism. Why do they use anarchy as a handy catch-all term for crime, thuggery and disorganisation? Many of them know this is not true, why else do they simultaneously warn that the anti-capitalist movement is organised by anarchists.

Far from being the purveyors of a recipe for chaos, the very opposite is the case. Anarchists seek to organise society in better way, based on direct democracy and satisfying peoples needs. To take just two examples: it was the anarchist movement which played a central role in building trade unions in many countries as far apart as France and Argentina, Chile and Korea. In Ireland the successful campaign which organised thousands of householders and defeated the water charges had an anarchist as its secretary, as does the current Dublin City movement against the bin tax.

Do anarchists not organise themselves? Do they not build organisations, publish newspapers, establish international networks and federations?

Of course they do, and none of it is secret. What lies behind all the slander is not usually a calculated and deliberate lie intended to dissuade the rest of us from finding out more about anarchism. Our opponents have convinced themselves that society can not function without a strong governing group (and they almost invariably think they should be in it).

They hold the idea that most people are too stupid for a free society to work, too stupid to be capable of getting together and running society. After all, anarchism would mean the end of a system where a tiny minority of bosses and politicians rule over the rest of us and organise society in the interest of their class.

Our bosses and rulers (and all the wannabe bosses and rulers) try to justify this by implying that only a special few are imaginative and sensible enough to make the really big decisions, and that a small minority should govern the rest of us. We have been

brought up to see this as the ‘natural’ way of things.

In the middle ages the justification was supplied by the church in the guise of the “divine right of kings”. Then with the overthrow of feudalism and the development of modern capitalism the line changed to one which said our rulers were there because they were best suited to running things. You can choose which politicians sit in the Assembly and Dail, but you aren’t allowed to choose not to delegate so much power to such a small group of people.

And you certainly aren’t allowed to vote out your boss, let alone vote to have no bosses at all. It is supposed to be unthinkable, not a rational thought. But then, we are not supposed to think of the current system as chaos.

One might think it a good description when farmers in one part of the world are paid not to grow food, while in another part people starve? Is it not chaotic when money can be found to buy Farmleigh House so the government has somewhere to party, while there is not enough cash to house the homeless?

Anarchists are organising against capitalism today, so that tomorrow we can help organise a society of freedom, socialism and democracy.

Alan MacSimóin



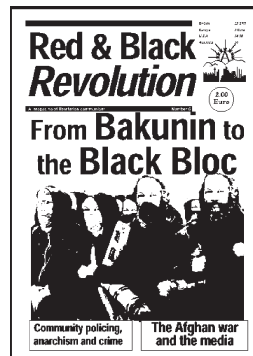
That's Capitalism

Ryanair's huge profits (€2.5 million a day) are being added to by making new cabin crew pay £450 for their uniforms. And this comes after the starting pay for new cabin crew was cut by £1,000 a year. The airline also charges pilots £50 to apply for a job. Maybe this explains why multi-millionaire boss, Michael O'Leary, won't allow union rights for his staff.

Since World War II there have been more than 250 major wars, in which 23 million people have been killed.

Download the PDF file from our website
<http://struggle.ws/rbr.html>

Red & Black Revolution No. 6



Crime and community policing

The term ‘community policing’ has been much abused in recent times, most particularly in the North of Ireland where it has become shorthand for vicious punishment beatings and shootings. In this article Gregor Kerr takes a look at the issue of community policing - what it is and more importantly what it isn't. The question of what levels of real community policing would actually be possible or allowed under capitalism is looked at, and the debate about crime, anti-social behaviour and reactions to it in an anarchist society is touched on.

Bakunin's ideas on revolutionary organisation

The Russian revolutionary Micheal Bakunin is often presented as the ‘founding father’ of anarchism. He was a larger than life figure whose disputes with Marx in the 1st international form an essential role in the clarification of the role of the vanguard and of the state in the revolutionary process. Yet his concrete ideas on anarchist organisation are not so well known. Andrew Flood takes a closer look at them.

Bashing the Black Bloc?

In the wake of the G8 protests in Genoa, Ray Cunningham, who took part in the demonstrations there, looks at the future for the Black Bloc and the ‘anti-globalisation’ movement.

Max Stirner

Max Stirner was an obscure prophet of individualism living in nineteenth century Germany. many anarchists today including anarcho communists also consider themselves Stirnerists and a Stirnerist tradition lives on in places like Glasgow. Conor Mc Loughlin examines some of Stirner's ideas.

The media and the war

Terry Clancy, of the Free Earth website, examines the ‘free’ press to find out why we shouldn't expect them to provide neutral or impartial coverage, especially during a war.

Download the PDF file from our website
<http://struggle.ws/rbr.html>

The Euro: the root of all evil?

The arrival of the Euro in its 'real' form of notes and coins is a key step along the path towards European unification. In Ireland, at least, it was virtually unopposed save for a few nostalgic articles about missing the artistry of the old notes and coins.

The Irish media presents a uniform picture of the growth of the EU in which ministers argue about fish quotas but there is otherwise little disagreement. The vote against the Nice treaty in Ireland however demonstrates there are very large numbers of people suspicious about the EU project. But you would be hard pushed to find any explanation of what this suspicion is.

In so far as we get any explanation there is a vague idea that Nice was voted down because of the anti-freedom, anti women bigots in groups like Youth Defence somehow managed to trick people into voting no. This is an angle that suits the government but does not stand up to any real examination. These forces have always been anti-Europe yet until Nice European referenda were easily carried. And in general Irish society in the last decades has moved to greater rather than less respect for the individual freedoms of women, gays and all the other groups the bigots despise.

European unification has always had mixed results in Ireland. Certain elements, particularly those that gave limited support to the struggles for individual rights, were quite welcome. Others like the growing formal ties to European militarisation were less welcome but realistically Ireland's 'neutrality' has always been a bit of a pro-British/American joke. And most of the economic arguments were little more than arguments between the gombeen and international sections of the boss class that are meaningless to Irish workers.

Irish Anarchists have for the most part insisted that we are against aspects of the way European unification is being, not the idea of unification. In many ways it should be welcomed by workers as a move away from the old nationalisms of the 20th century. And also of course European unification was one of the key goals of the workers' movements before the war of 1914 smashed such hopes in the trenches.

As with other aspects of globalisation there is the globalisation that the bosses wish to accept and the globalisation that the workers need to impose. For example, the freedom of anyone anywhere on the planet to travel where ever they like free of border controls.

The EU is key to the bosses' process of capitalist globalisation. In a general sense European Unification is providing the motor by

which workers' rights are being reduced to a point near the bottom of the European average and through which massive industrial and transport projects are being imposed on reluctant populations who are also forced to pay for them. Here it provides a handy excuse for the Irish State when it comes to trying to impose regressive taxes like the Bin tax.

The decision making structure of the European Union is not widely understood. In general all we see are the summits where the leaders of the European states come together to finalise documents that have been negotiated over the previous years in the shadows.

Lurking in these shadows is a deeply undemocratic process. Many proposals start off in a rather shadowy body also based in Brussels called the 'European Round Table



of Industrialists' (ERT). This elite club, formed in 1983 brings together 45 top European corporations like ICI, BP, Shell, Renault, Bayer, Unilever and Nestlé. Ireland is 'represented' by Michael Smurfit of Jefferson Smurfit[1].

Perhaps this line up alone explains some of the pro-car and oil industry decisions that the EU has made in favouring motorway construction over freight trains for the long distance transport of goods? The ERT has also been pushing the World Trade Organisation agenda with the circles of the European bureaucracy.

Many of the provisions of the Single European Act (SEA), for instance, originated in the ERT document "Europe 1990 - A program for action". The SEA with its emphasis on a European free trade zone that would lead to

further concentration of production in the most developed regions and the centralisation of production. The European Commissioner for the Environment estimated that because it also favoured road (rather than rail) transport it would lead to a 50% increase in heavy road haulage by 2000, some 17 million more vehicles[2].

One of the components of this transport policy, the 'TENS' will mean 13,000 km² of new roads. This leads to massive pollution and a waste of resources as goods are transported over crazy distances. One German study found that while the necessary components to produce and package strawberry yoghurt could all be sourced within a radius of 50 miles they were in fact transported over 7,000 miles[3].

This sort of crazy policy which results in pollution only makes sense when you understand it has been imposed in the interests of the European corporations. A 1999 WHO report on Health costs due to road traffic-related air pollution revealed that car-related pollution kills more people than car accidents in Austria, France and Switzerland[4].

The act also favoured large-scale industrial farming, which requires huge energy and chemical inputs (again good for the likes of ICI and Shell). European research money, paid for by the taxes of European workers, was directed towards genetic engineering, biotechnology and the chemical pharmaceutical industry rather than towards minimising unemployment or environmental degradation. Baron Daniel Janssen of the ERT describes the EC decision making structures as "extremely open to the business community, so that when businessmen like me face an issue that needs political input we have access to excellent Commissioners such as Monti for competition, Lamy for world trade, and Liikanen for electronic commerce and industry"[5].

It's estimated that Brussels hosts some 500 industry lobby groups employing some 10,000 professional lobbyists. 1999 for instance saw a multi-million Euro lobbying campaign by the biotech companies which saw the introduction of the industry friendly 'Patents on life' directive.

It makes no sense for us to oppose the EU on the basis of some sort of return to national sovereignty. Rather we must look for ways to create our globalisation agenda out of the process. The protests at the European Summits are proving one way of doing this. At the December summit in Brussels between 60,000 and 100,000 took part in the Trade Union organised demonstration alone. These protests can also be one of the ways in which we build links across Europe and create our alternative.

Andrew Flood

- 1 ERT membership is on their web page at <http://www.ert.be>
- 2 Restructuring and Resistance (available from the WSM bookservice for 13 Euros), p47
- 3 ibid, p147
- 4 See http://www.efoa.org/fr/mtbe_air_quality/auto_pollution.htm
- 5 Restructuring and Resistance , p66

Murdered by Fortress Europe

The discovery of the bodies of 8 asylum seekers in a container in Wexford in late November shocked everyone. For those concerned with the plight of asylum seekers, and for those aware of the horrors of 'Fortress Europe' the deaths were not only a disaster waiting to happen but just the latest instalment in an ever grosser tale of human misery and exploitation.

For mainstream politicians the deaths proved that there is no situation that they will not exploit for their own hypocritical purposes. Minister for 'Justice', John O'Donoghue turned up in Wexford crying crocodile tears, conveniently ignoring the fact that at the very same time a seven-month pregnant Nigerian woman was being held in Mountjoy prison by his 'justice system' awaiting deportation. He also forgot to mention that had the 8 made it into the country alive, their most likely fate would be deportation back to where they had come from.

Meanwhile Taoiseach Bertie Ahern pledged that those responsible for the deaths would be hunted down and that "no effort would be spared, to bring them to justice". If only he had meant it, it could have been the quickest ever arrests in the history of the Gardai. The person directly responsible for the deaths - along with his counterparts throughout the European Union - was none other than Bertie's cabinet colleague, Mr. O'Donoghue.

It is as a direct consequence of the 'Fortress Europe' policies of the EU governments that people have to put themselves in the position of attempting to smuggle themselves into Europe in such dangerous situations. As the picket organised by the Anti-Racism Campaign to mark the deaths asked "If asylum is a human right, how come people have to die trying to claim it?"

Neo-liberalism

Of course it is as a result of the neo-liberal economic policies of western governments that the number of people seeking to make it to the EU or the USA from the developing world is increasing. This latest phase of capitalist development has not only resulted in a widening gap between the rich and the poor in countries such as Ireland but has also vastly increased the gap in wealth between the 'developed' and 'developing' worlds. This has had the obvious consequence of forcing people to leave their home countries and come in search of a decent standard of living in the areas where the wealth is perceived to be. Coupled with this is the fact that there are large numbers of displaced people as a result of wars, civil and religious unrest etc., and people fleeing despotic regimes - people for whom it is literally a matter of life and death whether or not they make it into the relative safety of Europe or the US.

Throughout the 1980s Irish people were forced to emigrate in search of economic survival. Tens of thousands of us headed for the USA or Australia. Most went illegally, and worked in the black economy, often sending money back to those left at home. Are we now going to stand idly by and allow people who are doing exactly the same thing to be exploited, insulted, deported and killed by the architects of 'Fortress Europe'?

Gregor Kerr

Right to pollute upheld!!

THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT lost its appeal against a decision made under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the free trade area covering Canada, USA and Mexico. Like the World Trade Organisation, NAFTA removes "barriers to trade", such obstructive unnecessary things like labour laws, environmental and health regulations.

All poor old Metalclad Corp wanted to do was build a toxic waste dump in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. Local people took direct action to stop it being built because it would poison the local water supply and forced the local government to refuse planning permission and declare the site part of an ecological reserve.

This was however - thanks to NAFTA - a barrier to trade, an infringement of the corporations rights (yes, corporations feel pain as well you know) and illegal. So the company sued for \$90 million in damages, including compensation for lost profits and future business! They got \$16.9 million in the end, but we're sure for the Californian based company that will do nicely thank-you-very-much.

From SchNEWS (Brighton), November 23rd, 2001

NEWS FROM THE WSM VIA THE INTERNET

Our email list Ainriail distributes regular news updates and notices of events to subscribers. There are 4 - 8 emails a week. To join the list just send the message **subscribe ainriail** to **lists@tao.ca**

Our web page www.struggle.ws/wsm includes a huge archive of articles about the history of anarchism and Irish struggles.



London anarchists occupy Argentinian Embassy on Jan 10 in solidarity with their anti-IMF rebellion

Every month in Dublin we host a gathering of anarchists and other libertarian socialists to discuss a topic of interest over a pint. The meetings, for experienced activists and new comers alike, normally feature a local guest speaker with some expertise in the area, and are intended for thought provoking open discussion - not indoctrination!

Dublin Open Meetings

Monday Jan. 28, 8pm

Anarchism and Individualism

A common criticism of old style left politics is that they sacrificed the individual for the 'greater good'. How does anarchism deal with the issue of individual rights?

Monday Feb. 18, 8pm

Social struggles and anarchism in South America

A look at the role of anarchists in the social struggles in Latin America. We hope to have a Chilean anarchist speaking at this meeting.

Cork meetings

contact the Cork address for details.

Contact the WSM

Workers Solidarity Movement, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8 or E-mail wsm_ireland@yahoo.com On the web - <http://struggle.ws/wsm>;
WSM Cork, PO Box 31, Sorting Office, Cork or E-mail wsm_cork@yahoo.com

Strikers piss on bosses

Hundreds of strikers urinated on a Government building in Romania to show what they thought of 'their' government. They urinated on the walls of the Ministry of Labour building in Bucharest after a 15,000 strong march through the city in December. Members of the country's National Block Union are demanding more pay.

Sectarianism in North Belfast

As an Anarcho-Syndicalist, living in North Belfast I was interested to see Gregor Kerr's recent article, 'Sectarianism and North Belfast' in Workers Solidarity.

That sectarianism is alive and well is no surprise. The area I live in has seen almost nightly sectarian riots for months now.

Recently a teenage boy lost his life in such riots. 'Spacer' (his nickname) has been acclaimed as a Loyalist hero. He was a member of the youth wing of the UDA, Ulster Young Militants. He was a working class youth who joined the UYM to be one of the 'lads' and join in the regular riots in the area. 'Spacer' was killed throwing a pipe bomb made by the UDA.

It is much the same on the other side of the 'peace line', kids with nothing better to do congregate at flash points in order to kick off riots.

While not downplaying or excusing the appalling sectarian abuse and violence suffered by children attending Holy Cross primary school it must be pointed out that Protestants have also been the victims of sectarian attacks across North Belfast. This has fed into a sense of grievance in many Protestant communities in interface areas. A grievance which the UDA has taken full advantage of.

None of this is despite the 'Belfast Agree-

ment'. In an area where we have a 'close' Westminster seat, with Nigel Dodds (DUP) sitting and Gerry Kelly (Sinn Féin MLA) hopeful of taking it, our sectarian political settlement is central to the escalation of sectarian violence.

More than seeing "supposed marginal privileges" disappear, and looking at Glenbryn and Tigers Bay, its hard to imagine any of the residents feeling "privileged", most Protestants feel that a united capitalist Ireland is on the cards and that Sinn Féin have ditched the long war in favour of the long wait. This is about demographics, territory and the balance of votes in an area.

Even if the sectarian element of counting votes as 'unionist' or 'nationalist' at Stormont was removed we have the very real problem that for many working class people the 'other' community is seen only in terms of those people who attack 'their' community from the other side of the road.

Real 'cross community' contact is limited. Education is segregated, housing is segregated, we drink in our 'own' pubs. Demonisation of the 'other' community can easily grow - largely unchallenged. This is the reality for many people, who do not make

a conscious effort to try and break out.

Working class people DO have more in common than they do separating them. Overcoming division in the north is essential but cannot rely on vision alone. The breaking down of sectarianism needs wide-ranging and practical work. All too often confronting the scale of division across the north seems overwhelming.

We have a mammoth, but not an unrealisable task. We can start breaking down the barriers where people work together, we must work for real integrated education for working class kids, a separation of church and education, we need to encourage people to work together for the benefit and well-being of OUR working class community.

Only as Anarchists can we offer the practical implementation of our ideas along with our revolutionary vision. Not simply dealing with the symptoms of sectarianism but challenging the sectarian party political system, and capitalism itself, which, far from being respectable and detached observers, lie at the very heart of our problems.

Jason Brannigan (Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation)

A longer version of this reply can be found on the web at <http://struggle.ws/ws/letters/sectarianDEC01.html>

GRASSROOTS GATHERING – The Important first Steps

On the 24th and 25th of November an important event took place called the Grassroots Gathering in Dublin. Individual activists called for this meeting from the following organisations – Irish Mexico Group, Gluaiseacht, Workers Solidarity Movement, Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation, and the Alliance of Cork Anarchists.

As I arrived at about 10.30 on Saturday morning I was impressed with the numbers of people walking in and signing the registration forms. All in all almost 100 people registered over the course of the day. We all had come to the gathering from all over the island as activists to try and set up a new network based on the principals that people should be in charge of their own lives.

We wanted to reject the top down organisational model for one that's open and truly democratic. People had come from various backgrounds with different concerns – but we were in that gathering to work together to find a means to working towards some solutions that would bring about empowerment to those effected.

The first day was divided into 3 separate sessions and small work groups were set up. A good idea was that the workgroups were set up randomly (i.e. in an attempt to put people together who hadn't met before) and we each addressed the topics. Why were we there? How to organise from the bottom up? What could we do in the future?

From a personal perspective I found the 3

sessions very refreshing and though provoking. People attending were all coming from an activist background – and we could all learn from our different experiences. There was also a good display of mutual respect for differing opinions and tactics. We came up with some ideas of trying to spread knowledge on the various issues we were all working on. Nobody was there to specifically sell a line – convince you to buy a paper or join **The Party**. This led to a productive day where we agreed to work more closely in the future on specific agreed issues.

The second day we met up in Spacecraft (a warehouse) and the people there tried to come up with what could be done in the future. A planned national anti-war demon-

stration at Shannon – was organised from this meeting and that duly took place on the 15th of December. We also plan to involve more people - swap information about what the various groups are up to – and we plan to have another gathering – in Cork at Easter.

I found the whole experience very inspiring – and was impressed to see so many motivated activists who are not only yearn for a better world – but are intent and prepared to work towards it.

Dermot Sreenan

To stay informed of future Grassroots Gathering events send an email to grassrootsgathering@yahoo.com or write to any of the groups involved.



Part of the grassroots gathering demonstration against the War at Shannon airport, see <http://struggle.ws/wsm/news/2001/shannonDEC.html> for more

ABORTION RIGHTS

It's up to you and me

In the debate thrown up by this year's abortion referendum media 'experts' and commentators have been saying that the progressive changes that occurred around contraception, divorce and equal age of consent for gays in Ireland in the early to mid-nineties were a natural result of modernisation of Irish society and occurred because liberal politicians decided to push for these changes. We are supposed to feel that only our rulers can change things, that the rest of us are pretty powerless. Well, it's not true.

Certain objective conditions, such as the greater urbanisation of Irish society, have had some effect on changing attitudes away from the conservative and ultra-Catholic views that dominated Irish society in the past. However no progressive reforms would ever have occurred were it not for people organising and fighting for these changes.

Prior to the X-case in 1992 abortion in Ireland was illegal in all circumstances. It was also illegal to give out any information about abortion facilities in other countries. Clinics were prohibited from giving non-directive counseling and the Censorship of Publications Act was used to ban health books and sections of British newspapers and magazines which contained information on where to get an abortion.

However, when the government then attempted to prevent the 14 year old suicidal Ms X from leaving the county to obtain an abortion abroad, there was a huge public outcry. Through mass mobilisations, school strikes and protests outside the Dáil people forced the government to back down.

A Supreme Court ruling then removed the ban on abortion in Ireland where there was a substantial risk to the life of the pregnant woman, with the threat of suicide included as such a risk. In the subsequent referendum people rejected the proposal to overturn the X-case judgement, they also voted to end the ban on information and voted for the right of women to travel abroad for an abortion. It is clear that these changes would never have taken place were it not for people engaging in the battle of ideas about abortion and ensuring that their voices were heard by taking part in marches and demonstrations.

The referendum on Divorce in 1995, which was only narrowly won by a mere 9,114 votes, shows how important it is that people get actively involved in the battle of ideas. Many people had just assumed that the referendum would be won and it was only as the referendum date drew near and polls indicated that it might possibly be lost that activists started to distribute leaflets and canvass door to door, making the argument for the divorce to be legalised in Ireland.

Since 1995 there have been no more major progressive reforms and the government has

consistently refused to make the legal changes that would implement the X-case ruling. Over this period the "pro-lifers" have been very active and, as well as lobbying politicians, have put huge resources into attempting to influence public opinion on the ground.

They have, for example, distributed glossy anti-choice leaflets to tens of thousands of households. The government has now called yet another anti-abortion referendum, which if passed will reverse the X-case ruling and increase to a maximum 12 years the jail sentence for desperate women who attempt to give themselves an abortion.

There is little popular support for this referendum. Recent opinion polls show that only 22% of the electorate favour a complete ban on abortion (1). Yet this does not mean that it will automatically be defeated.

If the divorce referendum showed anything, it showed that we cannot leave it up to media pundits to convince people that the government proposal is a backward step. As in the last abortion referendum, one of the problems we face is voter confusion over the implications of the vote. On the Irish Times webpage, for instance, both pro-choice and anti-abortion posters were calling for both a yes and a no vote.

Furthermore abortion is a taboo subject in Ireland. The emotional and personal nature of 'pro-life' attacks on those who disagree with them has meant that many people have taken the decision to avoid taking any position on abortion. It is one of the few areas of political life where people are not comfortable making known their opinions.

It is one of the few topics that is never talked about over a few pints in the pub. Many people won't vote in this referendum because they have been intimidated away from even thinking about this issue.

And yet it is important for us to win. And we can win. But it will mean going door to door with leaflets, giving out leaflets at bus and train queues, putting up posters, convincing our friends and family that their vote counts, that it is important that they take a stand. No change has ever been won without peo-

ple like you and me spending time and effort trying to make it happen. Now is the time to give a hand.

The Alliance for a NO vote is the umbrella network for pro-choice organisations and individuals. Ask them to put you in touch with others in your area who are willing give out leaflets in the weeks before the referendum.

Tel 086-3615287 or email allianceforanovote@eircom.net

Deirdre Hogan & Aileen O'Carroll

(1) Irish Independent poll, Monday December 31st 2001

Noel Ahern is the Fianna Fail TD for Dublin North West, and a supporter of the referendum to deny suicidal women with crisis pregnancies the possibility of abortion

An open letter to a Fianna Fáil hypocrite

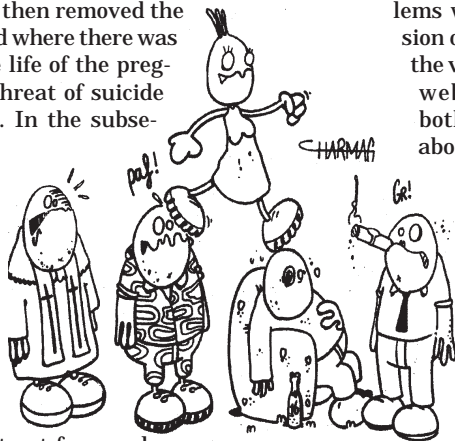
Dear Noel Ahern,
In your speech to the Dáil on October 25th, you said "I cannot be sure I would not be on the plane to the UK with my daughter, nor could any other person". You were referring to young women with crisis pregnancies - possibly due to rape - who are desperate to the point of being suicidal because they are pregnant, being brought to Britain for abortions. We welcome your recognition that getting an abortion is reasonable and appropriate in such circumstances. It is probably what most of your colleagues in the Dáil and what any reasonable parent would do.
Why then, are you supporting proposals that would prevent a pregnant rape victim - so desperate that suicide appears to her the only way out of an unwanted pregnancy - from getting an abortion in Ireland?
You indicate that you would go with your daughter to Britain for an abortion rather than risk her life due to suicide. If you would not put your own daughter's life at such risk, why are you willing to put at risk the life of another person's daughter - simply because they can't afford the costs or are unable to travel? Do you think that other women's lives are of less worth than your daughter's life?
We call on you and your colleagues to withdraw support for this unreasonable Bill, and to begin discussion on the way to provide here for other Irish women the choice that you would provide for your own daughter.

Cathleen O'Neill, Catherine Naji,
Sinead NiChulachain
Alliance for a NO Vote,
PO Box 8306, Dublin 1.

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BIN TAX VICTORY: Court orders Corpo to collect non-payers' bins

How many time have you heard it – Don't fight back! What's the point! We won't win anyway! Last November the long-standing campaign against the bin collection tax here in Cork proved, once again, that the opposite is true.

After a marathon protest and despite the jailing of seven activists from our campaign, Cork Corpo's strategy of bullying the people of the city into paying *twice* to have their domestic rubbish collected, ended in disarray. The deathblow for the Corpo came with a decision made by the Supreme Court that Cork Corporation has a statutory obligation to collect domestic rubbish within the city.

Despite the fact that it is the Supreme Court that has dealt this blow to Cork Corporation, it has been the ongoing and sustained campaign led by Householders Against The Service Charges (HASC), that is responsible for the victory. By organising weekly protests, by preparing to take the Corpo on head-on and even go to jail, HASC ensured that the issue stayed alive during a difficult period. This has now paid off and everyone can feel proud of the achievement, not least because it will give heart to other campaigns throughout the country.

But where to now? Clearly, the aim should be to continue with the basic but important job of getting more workers in Cork to refuse to pay the Bin tax. With the Corpo losing it's main weapon of threat

against people, as a result of the Supreme Court decision, this should be easier.

A non-payment poster/leafleting campaign is vital, particularly in the lead up to the new round of yearly bills.

Although building non-payment might seem obvious, there are clear problems ahead with the probability of a general election. Some activists in HASC will want to see HASC opting for the avenue of 'endorsing a candidate' in the lead up to the election. There is also the possibility that HASC will have some of its resources diverted in this direction. Anarchists oppose this. As we see it is vital to keep the focus in the campaign directed at building 'mass non-payment' and solidarity. This is the real threat to the Corpo's long term strategy and the only sure one that will guarantee us victory.

More at <http://struggle.ws/wsm/bins.html>



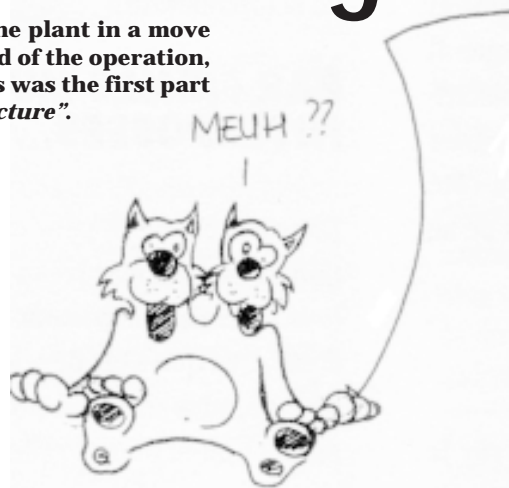
BIN THE BILL

Sellafield's sick New Year gift

On December the 20th 2001 – Sellafield brought radioactive plutonium into the plant in a move to open up a MOX reprocessing plant for dirty radioactive materials. The head of the operation, Mr. Jack Allen, declared he was most pleased with developments and said this was the first part in the “phased and prudent ramp-up of commissioning for MOX fuel manufacture”.

As we enter an election year – all the major parties are falling over themselves to be seen to be against this poisonous plant in Cumbria. Some like the Greens' John Gormely even went over there to protest at the opening of the Mox plant. Others stay at home and organise demonstrations outside the British Embassy. They all want your votes and they all know the answer to “are you in favor of Sellafield” but in reality they do precious little to stop it from expanding and growing. Fianna Fáil even took out a full-page critical advertisement against Sellafield in the Times of London newspaper thus neatly illustrating the incapacity of the Irish government to act or do anything meaningful about this issue.

Some committed environmentalist activists like Gluaiseach have backed up opposition to Sellafield with actions outside the plant. This issue is too important to be left to the bungling fools in power who do nothing while our coastal waters are polluted and poisoned. We need to make links with groups across Britain against this plant. We need to come up with imaginative direct action that will make the costs of operating these plants too high a price for the bosses to pay. This is about



our planet and we need to take action now to give ourselves a chance at a cleaner safer future.

Vote No in government's anti-choice referendum

As we face into campaigning against yet another abortion referendum we are taking this opportunity to detail why we this is such an important issue for us. Anarchism is all about the freedom to choose to make decisions that directly effect us. For women, this includes the decision whether or not to become pregnant, whether or not to remain pregnant, whether or not to have children.

It is possible to be an anarchist and to have a moral objection to abortion. It is not possible to be an anarchist and not support the right to choose. For if the right to choose does not rest solely with pregnant women, where does it lie; with the state, with lawyers and the courts, with police?

The logic of the anti-choice position is that women are coerced into continuing with unwanted pregnancies. To anarchists this is unacceptable. Women consider many different issues when they make the decision to have an abortion. They consider the views of their partner, parents and of the society they live in. They consider the effect it will have on their career or studies. They think about whether they are ready for motherhood. They look at the relationship they are in. They examine their financial situation.

The decision is complex and not an easy one. The best person, in

deed the only person, with the right to make that decision, is the woman who is going to have to live with its consequences. So for us, the right to abortion is a basic human right.

For many women abortion isn't a choice, rather it is the only option in their circumstances. The right to choose should also include the right to choose to become a mother. While we fight for abortion rights on one hand, we also fight for the removal of stigma and economic barriers, which prevent some women from carrying through a pregnancy, which they would like to continue with.

Our fight for abortion rights therefore is also part of a wider struggle to re-define what sort of lives women are able to lead. It is just as much part of a struggle for a society that supports parents in their decision to have children. In defending and defining the right to choose in the broadest way possible, we are defending the right to make choices about how to live our lives. In doing this we are setting the agenda for a future society.

Aileen O'Carroll