
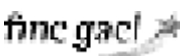




# CALL THIS CHOICE?


	<p><b>For more of the same old crap</b>  <i>* tribunals, thieves, referendums, gombeens &amp; gobshites.</i></p>
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	<p><b>For exactly the same</b>  <i>* plus the added bonus of a buffoon as leader!</i></p>
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	<p><b>For yet more of the same</b>  <i>* 'socialist' millionaires club</i></p>
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	<p><b>Fianna Fail II "The Quickening"</b>  <i>* now with guns!</i></p>
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	<p><b>For a government in bed with the bosses</b>  <i>* in more ways than one</i></p>
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	<p><b>A bunny rabbit in the path of the global capitalist bulldozer</b>  <i>* trading principles for power</i></p>
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	<p><b>Voters of the World Unite!!!</b>  <i>* for a return to Lenin's dictatorship</i></p>
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## What they say

In their election campaigns all the parties say the same things. They are all for a "properly funded health system", "affordable housing", a "modern and efficient public transport system", "investment in schools" and so on. They present us with a set of wild promises for achieving these goals, supported by vague and implausible plans. Then four years later they're back with the same policies, the same promises and the same problems.

After years of economic boom we are left with a disastrous health system, a chronic housing crisis, an underfunded, demoralised education system and gridlocked transport. Still, all of the major parties continue with policies which are virtually identical. Their only real disagreements are on trivial differences in their vague spending promises.

Supposedly, we live in a democracy and in a democracy, the people have the power. But what power do we have when the only say that we get in how our society is run, is a choice between a few nearly identical parties every five years?

It's only in the personalities of individual candidates, or on local issues, that we can see any difference between the 'choices' in front of us. But even these minor differences are more imaginary than real. In this contest of personalities and rhetoric, those who can ensure the most sympathetic media attention win. Voting in the election is no more empowering than voting for 'popstars' - whoever puts on the best show wins - they're all selling the same thing.

No matter who we vote for, we have no say in any of the major decisions that affect our lives. We have no say in how our workplaces are run, we have no control over the distribution of our society's wealth. Elections are supposed to be how the ordinary person has a say in the running of society. Yet it seems that somebody else has already made all of the important decisions - without asking us.

*This leaflet was produced by the Irish anarchist organisation, the*  
**Workers Solidarity Movement**  
*For more see <http://struggle.ws/election.html>*

## What they do

Over the last decade in Ireland all of the major parties have been in government and they all pursued nearly identical policies. If you noticed any major differences in the way the country was run during the last two governments, you must have been smoking something strong. Their policies are largely dictated by the needs of global capitalism and its international institutions like the EU, IMF, World Bank, NATO and G8. Whichever government gets in after this election, you can be sure they'll happily continue this neo-liberal agenda and continue to keep corporate tax low, keep wages down, privatise whatever they can and try to make people pay for essential services such as water and bins.



Even on the relatively minor issues where we can see some difference between the parties, our vote is hardly that powerful. We have no control over those who we vote for and there is no guarantee that they will do what they say. There are thousands of recent examples of politicians 'changing their minds' as soon as they get a sniff of power. For example, in their manifesto for the 1997 election, Fianna Fail stated: "We oppose Irish participation in N.A.T.O. itself, [and] in N.A.T.O.-led organisations such as the Partnership for Peace". Two years later they led Ireland into Partnership for Peace.

If you think that we can solve our problems by voting and waiting for politicians to sort it out, you are fooling yourself. Politicians look after themselves and their powerful friends. If ordinary people want to have any say in the running of society, we need to get active, organise and fight for ourselves.

## Take the power back!

Real power in our 'democracy' does not lie in the hands of the people. The bosses of the media companies and other large corporations wield the power. In Ireland, Tony O Reilly has more influence over important decisions than hundreds of thousands of ordinary people combined.

Unfortunately, changing this is much more difficult than simply going out to vote every few years.

If you want to have any hope of taking the power back, you have to get active. This means organising with those around you to take on the power of the corporations. It means organising in such a way that everybody has a say over the decisions that affect them. It means refusing to accept what the government tells you to do and taking direct action instead. Whether you participate in a protest, help to produce an alternative news service, or disobey an unjust law, you are taking the power into your own hands, not waiting for somebody else to do it for you.

Although our tiny voices of protest can seem insignificant in the face of the might of global capitalism, we are not alone. In the last few years a global movement has emerged which has seen hundreds of thousands take to the streets all over the world to oppose the summits of the global elite. One of the slogans of these protests has been "think global, act local" and this is exactly what we need to do.



power. profits. property developers

## Want To get Active?

Here are some good places to start, campaigns and groups supported by anarchists:

**Workers solidarity Movement** - Irish Anarchist organisation involved in a range of struggles for a free, socialist world.  
087-7939931 or <http://struggle.ws/wsm.html>

**Campaign against the bin charges** - Opposing unfair double taxation. For info on groups in your area phone: 087-6277606.

**Glúaiseacht** - Organising in a non-hierarchical way around environmental and social justice issues. They have organised a number of protests against Sellafield. <http://www.gluaiseacht.org/>

**Reclaim the streets.** Reclaiming public space for the people to party! 087-9425422 or <http://www.indymedia.ie/rts>

**Indymedia** - An international network of alternative news services, against the corporate monopoly of media: <http://www.indymedia.ie/>

**Residents Against Racism / Anti-Fascist Action** - anti-racist groups  
email: [Residents\\_Against\\_Racism@ireland.com](mailto:Residents_Against_Racism@ireland.com) / [afa@ireland.com](mailto:afa@ireland.com)

**Cork Peace Alliance** - Organising against war and imperialism  
The CAZ, 4 Knapps Square, Cork.

## Anarchists & Elections

The famous anarchist Emma Goldman once wrote

*"participation in elections means the transfer of one's will and decisions to another.."*

This sums up neatly one of the main reasons why anarchists argue against taking part in parliamentary elections. The very act of going into a polling booth and putting a number beside someone's name is in itself an act of disempowerment; it is an acceptance that someone else has the right to make decisions on our behalf.

When a decision has to be made there are essentially two basic choices – either the people directly involved make the decision for themselves or someone else makes it for them. Anarchists argue that, rather than choose who should make decisions for us, we would be better off spending our energies in attempting to build a new society in which we can make those decisions for ourselves.

One of the best examples of this is the issue of local authority service charges. A campaign is now under way throughout

the country aimed at the abolition of service charges (refuse charges). Householders in Dublin, Cork and elsewhere are refusing to pay what is rightly seen as an unfair double tax.

Not one single candidate in the last local elections actually wrote in his/her manifesto that he/she was in favour of the imposition of this tax. Yet it has been introduced by politicians, and PAYE taxpayers are expected to pay up yet again - while at the same time the rate at which tax is levied on the profits of big companies such as the banks continues to be reduced.

Given the level of opposition to the tax, the obvious way to defeat it is simply not to pay. If everyone stands together and refuses to give in, the Councils and the government will eventually have to give in. Just as we defeated the water charges over 4 years ago, so we can also win on this issue by standing together in solidarity. We don't need to vote for anyone to win on this issue – what we do need is simply to stand shoulder to shoulder with our neighbours in our refusal to pay.

On a wider basis, what we need to do as a society is to look to developing ways of tackling the 'democratic deficit'. All of us are aware of the fact that politicians are totally out of touch with the needs of working class communities. We are also aware that we have absolutely no mechanism for ensuring that the politicians that we vote for actually carry out the promises for which they are elected. Anarchists want to develop a system of true direct democracy, which will ensure that these issues are tackled. That is why we reject participation in the sham of parliamentary elections.

Anarchist gathering - all welcome

## Ideas And Action From Resistance to Change

11 am - 5pm, Saturday May 18th,  
Central Hotel, Exchequer st., Dublin 2.

- The global anti-capitalist movement: Think global, act local
- Sellafield: from protest to closure
- How can we build an anti-sectarian movement in the North?
- Anarchism: what it is and how we can get there.

For more info: 087-7913391 or see <http://struggle.ws/wsm.html>