

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

Irish narchist Paper



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www.struggle.ws/wsm.html

Reclaim the Planet



THERE MUST be something better. In Ireland we have record homelessness, hostels are full and teenagers with problems are sleeping on the streets. People in work find it increasingly hard to afford private sector rents or mortgages. Wage rises are in single figures while average profits have doubled in the last five years.

Traffic jams get longer, we spend more of our time getting to and from work. Waiting to get into hospital for non-emergency operations takes even longer than getting bank records from Liam Lawlor.

And the solutions offered by establishment politicians are crap. We can passively hope that they might do something sometime; or we can blame someone even worse off than ourselves. In the South we can scapegoat refugees and other foreigners, in the North we can pick on those of the other religion.

The system we live under – capitalism – is run in the interests of the rich. The vast majority of people work for someone else. We do not get the full value of our efforts, the unpaid portion of our work makes up the bosses' profits.

Our environment is increasingly endangered in the interests of the multi-millionaires. Illegal dumps all over the country, Sellafield on our doorstep, the destruction

of rainforests (the lungs of the planet), production of goods deliberately designed to fall apart in a few years so that we have to buy new ones, and privatising of open spaces are just some of the 'benefits' of capitalism. What sort of world will be left to our children and grandchildren?

It's a system based on the systematic ripping off of the majority by a small minority. To 'justify' this robbery we are taught that we are too stupid to rule ourselves, that we need an elite of bosses and rulers to organise our lives for us.

Imagine if all the resources and experience available to us were to be utilised for the common good. Imagine if everyone effected by a decision was able to have a say in making that decision. Imagine if we lived in a world where the reason for working was to satisfy human needs and desires, and not to make profits for fat cats like Denis O'Brien, Margaret Heffernan or Tony O'Reilly.

It is possible. The bosses are a tiny minority. We can end their rule if we get together, explain our ideas to our neighbours and workmates, develop the confidence that comes from getting active in struggles to make things better, and promote the ideas of socialism, liberty and grassroots democracy. The Workers Solidarity Movement is one contribution to the struggle for an anarchist society.



From Barcelona to Seville

Time was when an EU summit was every leader's wet dream. Who remembers the heady days of Ireland's EU presidency as the limos sped through the streets with their garda escorts? What minister didn't relish the opportunity to be broadcast throughout the world exchanging limp handshakes with the other dickwads and making vague claims about jobs and economic growth?

But not any more. The EU summit in Barcelona over the 9th to the 16th of March saw between 250,000 (police figure) and 600,000 (Indymedia) people take to the streets in a massive anti-capitalist manifestation! Most protestors appeared to have decided to avoid playing the police in the "game" of set piece confrontation.

The 50,000 strong CGT (anarcho syndicalist union) declared *"We called for walking out on the script, for using direct action and civil disobedience as mechanisms for struggle that go beyond violent confrontations with the police. We have to regain the furiously festive and subversive nature of our activity, breaking military frameworks (summit-blockade-clash with police) the powers want to confine us to."*

They opted for decentralised actions, *"as many as the people proposed,"* under the idea of convergence and mutual respect. During one of the many meetings, it was argued: *"We are not afraid. The entire police strategy is based on creating a state of exception, where people stay inside their houses, and an activist elite confronts 10,000 police. Given this reality, the movement should go back to using its creativity and decentralization. Achieving, through that, a more complete visualization of the resistances, of their diversity, beyond the framework of a medieval joust, which is what the police are proposing."* (quoted in the Mexican daily *La Jornada* Sunday, March 24, 2002)

In spite of the mainly peaceful tactics there were a large group intent on making trouble! These were the Spanish police who used rubber bullets to disperse the crowd at several points. Scores of demonstrators, tourists and reporters were injured. However the MRG-International group who organised the anti capitalist end of things claimed: *"that the success of the demonstration on the 16th was historic not just because there were 500,000 people, but also because the vast majority of the demo was grassroots, anti-capitalist and in opposition to the political classes."*

One of the most widely read newspapers in Catalonia, *El Periodico*, included a headline the day after the march that read *"Tie in the Summit - Victory in the streets"*

The next EU summit is the Heads of Government meeting in Seville over the 21 - 22nd

of June. The Spanish government's presidency of the EU has been particularly draconian. Among the measures our lords and masters will be considering is the further criminalisation of protest. The Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union has presented the EU Working Party on Terrorism with a draft which would introduce the exchange of information on suspected protestors to protect EU Summits and other international meetings.

The Spanish Presidency proposal said such protests were: *"the work of a loose network, hiding behind various social fronts, by which we mean organisations taking advantage of their lawful status to aid and abet the achievement of terrorist groups' aims."* And went on to propose that the Council of the European Union should introduce *"a standard form for exchanging information on terrorist incidents"* as this would be very helpful in: *"prosecuting violent urban youthful radicalism, which is increasingly being used as a cat's paw by terrorist groups in order to achieve their criminal aims"*

The Spanish have been also leading the way in the privatisation of education. They have introduced the *"Ley Organica de Universidades"*, whose aim is to privatise the Spanish higher education system, to increase the involvement of business in universities, to force contracting-out of services inside the education system, and to reduce the levels of democracy (student representation) inside universities. Already four students have been jailed in Seville itself for occupations protesting the LOU. We can expect one very large mobilisation in Seville.

Conor Mc Loughlin

Information on the Seville protests will be posted to global_irl-subscribe@yahoogroups.com



That's Capitalism



If 2 per cent of the workers in developing countries moved to work in developed countries and earned no more than a poverty-level wage of €5,680, they would earn a total of €250 billion. Perhaps they would remit to their families in developing countries €45-55 billion annually, or US\$250 billion over five years. This would be vastly larger than either aid or investment flows.

The Rowntree Trust's recent research discovered what every dog on the corner knows – the Republic of Ireland is "one of the most corrupt countries in Europe". Surprise, surprise but apparently corruption is pretty much structured into how the powerful in Ireland do things. The report highlights the "widening levels of inequality, extraordinary low levels of investment in public service, and a depressing record on environmental protection". The report also bemoaned the cosy relationship between politicians and the judiciary – so politicians being politicians immediately set out to prove the findings correct – just ask Bobby Molloy – they just can't help themselves really.

Workers in Britain may be leading the way for Europe in their attitudes towards employment. The Office for National Statistics found that 2.2 million working days were lost last autumn compared to the 1.9 million over last summer. Friday is the most popular day of illness – and some say workers are stupid

The general election saw Fianna Fail tell some unintentional home truths. Speaking on Radio Kerry on April Fool's Day Minister for Tourism and Sport Jim McDaid reminded listeners who might be thinking of voting for some other party *"at the end of the day the party in government is the party in control of the exchequer. it's the government who hold the purse strings"*. Or, to put it in plain English, if you fail to elect a Fianna Fail TD for your area you will get less cash for your schools, hospitals and road repairs.

We keep hearing about how most workers in Ireland saw their pay rise during the Celtic Tiger years. It's true, but it doesn't tell the whole story. According to the Central Statistics Office, between 1994-99, the gross value added by Irish industrial firms increased from €14.679 million to €30,059 million (or 104.8%), yet wages paid to workers only increased by 43% (from €5.310 million to €7,593 million). This means that for every extra €1 you managed to get out of your boss, he or she got you to make an extra €2.43 for them.

Thinking about Anarchism

Movement

Anarchism & Nationalism

Most people have, to a greater or lesser extent, a nationalistic view of the world. They see the world as being divided up into a number of different nations. These nations are distinct from each other, and divided on the basis of their different histories, traditions, cultures and languages. It is commonly assumed that nations occur naturally, stretching back into the depths of history.

However, almost all of our present nations, and the very idea of the modern nation itself, are relatively modern inventions. With the rise of the bourgeois state in the nineteenth century, ruling classes needed an ideology to make their subjects identify with the state in which they lived. To replace the divine right of the kings who they supplanted, they set about manufacturing nations by imposing uniform standards of language, religion, culture and traditions upon their subjects. These were far from naturally occurring divisions and almost every modern nation state was, at its inception, made up of a mosaic of different cultures, the product of countless waves of migrations and interactions between neighboring people. The new rulers of the nation states bulldozed these minority cultures, suppressed regional diversity and in many cases invented a purely fictional national history to bind their subjects to the idea of 'their' nation state. At the time of Italy's unification in the 1860s only 2.5% of the population spoke Italian for everyday purposes¹. The modern Italian national identity was imposed after the formation of the Italian State.

Although the very idea of the nation may be entirely imaginary, the effects of nationalism are very real. The 20th century has seen untold millions slaughter each other in wars between nations, based purely upon the fact that their rulers were quarrelling. It is the concept of nationalism which allows a soldier to march happily into war, thinking that he is defending his nation, when in fact all he is doing is murdering strangers at the behest of his real enemies: his generals, bosses and rulers.

A narrow, fixed conception of national identity has long been useful to ruling classes wishing to divide their subjects in order to better rule them. There scarcely exists a state in the world that does not exercise some form of oppression against the members of minority 'nations' within it. Where there is substantial resistance to this national oppression, such as in Northern Ireland or Palestine, the state quickly resorts to vio-

lence and heightened repression to impose their will.

Anarchists are internationalists, we reject the very notion of nationalism. We believe that there is no overriding common interest between the people of a particular nation. The world is divided into two great classes, the workers and the bosses, their common class interests are so great that their cultural differences are irrelevant. We believe that human culture is much too dynamic and varied to be neatly parceled up into any number of national identities. We propose a sense of identity that embraces diversity and acknowledges the right of all to choose their own culture, language and beliefs. We believe that this can only be achieved by ending the fundamental division of our society, the class division.

In response to national oppression, anarchists seek to build movements that, not only resist all oppression based upon nationality, but actually challenge the very idea of the division of people into nations by concentrating on the common class interests that unite workers across national divides.

We oppose absolutely all national oppression and acknowledge the right of oppressed people to resist, yet we think that a nationalist response can never address the real problems. Although oppressed nationalities can succeed in gaining a share of power or even their own state, as long as they remain divided into classes, the fundamental problems return. Although Northern Ireland may get a police force that won't discriminate against Catholics, it'll still have a police force that will happily baton-charge strikers. Palestine may get its own state but the majority of the population will continue to be little more than slaves to the big capitalists of the region, and although it might be nicer to be ordered around by Arafat's stooges than by the Israeli army, it's still just taking orders.

Chekov Feeney

¹E J Hobsbawm, *Nations & Nationalism since 1780*. P80. Cambridge University Press 1990.



Getting involved

Anarchism is a very simple idea – basically society should be organised in a non-hierarchical way, it should not be divided into order-givers and order-takers. We don't need bosses, politicians, bishops or anybody else to tell us how to live our lives. Anarchists look to a society which will be based on the idea of "from each according to ability, to each according to need".

We want to bring about a society based on real grassroots democracy where power remains at local level and is organised upwards through workplace and community councils. This society will only be brought about through revolution! There is an old anarchist slogan which says that if elections changed anything they would be illegal. This is not just an empty slogan. The thinking behind it is that real democratic change cannot come from the top down but must be built from the bottom up. Instead of voting in elections and effectively giving someone else control of our lives, we stand for direct action and solidarity among and between workers. Real and meaningful change will only come about through our own efforts and by our own strength – when we all stand together against exploitation and wage slavery.

The Workers Solidarity Movement – as we got to print – has launched an anti-election campaign. Instead of choosing which small gang of politicians will rule us for the next few years, anarchists are urging their neighbours and workmates to consider ending the division of people into rulers and ruled, bosses and workers. Thousands of anti-election manifestos have already been delivered to homes around the country. If you haven't got one yet, call 087-7939931 and we'll send you a copy. Members of the WSM are also active in their trade unions, in the campaigns against the bin tax, and in the ongoing struggle against racism. We produce this paper, the magazine *Red & Black Revolution*, and the occasional *Anarchist News* bulletin. With our relatively small numbers there is a limit to what we can do. That's why we need people like you to get involved. If you like what you've in this paper, maybe you would be willing to take 10 or more copies to distribute among friends, workmates or neighbours. The more people who read about the ideas and the more people who get involved in struggle, the sooner we will reach our objective – a world free of poverty and exploitation. A world where freedom is a reality for all.

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 email ainriail-request@struggle.ws with the subject subscribe

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

Israel/Palestine: Roots of the conflict

Around the end of the 19th century the area then internationally known as Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. The vast majority of the indigenous population were Muslim with a minority Christian and smaller minority Jewish (around 3%) population. The indigenous Jewish community were not involved in nor supportive of the Zionist movement which began in 1882 with the first wave of European Jewish immigration to Palestine.

Zionism, or Jewish nationalism, has the core belief that all Jews constitute one nation (and not simply a religious or ethnic community). Zionism, supported by the Western empires, was influenced by nationalist ideology and by European settler colonialism, and its goal at the outset was the concentration of as many Jews as possible in Palestine and the eventual establishment of a Jewish state there.

The Arabs of Palestine were overwhelmingly opposed to an exclusively Jewish state and to the large-scale Jewish immigration which led to eviction from their small farms, which had been sold to settlers by their landlords. European Jewish immigration to Palestine increased dramatically after Hitler's rise to power in 1933 leading to new land purchases and Jewish settlements. Palestinian resistance climaxed in 1936-9 when, after the failure of a long strike, a national revolt was attempted. The revolt was defeated by the British who had been in control of the area since the 1st world war.

After the 2nd world war, survivors of the Nazi Holocaust were not really given a choice of places to which to emigrate, opportunities to emigrate to the United States or into other countries in the Western Hemisphere being very limited. On the other hand, the indigenous Arab population rejected the idea, accepted as natural in the West, that they had a moral obligation to sacrifice their land to compensate for the crimes committed by Europeans.

In 1947, the UN General Assembly voted to partition Palestine into two states, one Jewish and the other Arab. Days after the adoption of the UN partition plan fighting began between the Arab and Jewish residents of Palestine. By early 1948, the Zionist forces had secured control over the territory allotted to the Jewish state in the UN plan, as well as territory assigned to the Palestinian state, and Zionist leaders proclaimed the state of Israel. Neighbouring Arab states, whose rulers had territorial designs on Palestine, then invaded Israel-Palestine. By 1949 half the proposed Palestinian state was incorporated within Israel, East Jerusalem and the West bank was occupied by Jordan and the Gaza region was divided between Israel and Egypt. During this conflict massacres of Palestinian people took place and around 750,000 fled or were expelled. Of this refugee population, approximately one-third fled to the West Bank, another third to the Gaza Strip, and the remainder to Jordan, Syria, Lebanon or farther afield.

In 1967 Israel attacked Egypt, Syria and Jordan in a war which lasted six days and resulted in the Israeli occupation of the West bank, the Gaza strip, the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights.

Since 1967 a harsh military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza has been maintained, with the systematic humiliation and degradation of the Palestinian population an instrument of policy. Israeli policies and practices in the West Bank and Gaza have included extensive use of collective punishments such as curfews, mass land expropriations, house demolitions, assassinations, forced movement of populations and closure of roads, schools, universities and community institutions.

Hundreds of Palestinian political activists have been deported to Jordan or Lebanon, tens of thousands of acres of Palestinian land have been confiscated, and thousands of fruit trees have been uprooted. Since 1967, over 300,000 Palestinians have been imprisoned without trial, and over half a million have been tried in the Israeli military court system. Torture of Palestinian prisoners is common practice and dozens of people have died in detention.

Palestinians are denied freedom of expres-

The role of the US

Israel's economic and military development is entirely dependent on massive material and military support from the U.S. In 1982 for example a conservative estimate of the aid from the US amounted to \$1000 per year for each citizen of Israel and since 1978 Israel has received something between a third to a half of total US military and economic aid in the world. "What the United States wants from Israel is that it become a technologically advanced, highly militarised society without any independent or viable economy of its own so that it's totally dependent on the United States and therefore dependable." (Chomsky) The major interest for the US lies in the energy reserves of the region. For the US, Israel is a strategic asset which serves as a barrier against indigenous threats to US control of Middle East oil.

sion, press and political association. Every aspect of Palestinian life is regulated, and often severely restricted by the Israeli military administration. For example, the Israeli state even forbids the gathering wild thyme, and no one may plant a tree or a vegetable in the West Bank without written authorisation.

Within Israel, the minority Palestinian population live as second class citizens. Israel is the only state in the world which is not the state of its actual citizens, but of the whole Jewish people who consequently have rights that non-Jews do not. For example, 93% of the land of the state is characterised as Jew-

ish land, meaning that no non-Jew is allowed to lease, sell or buy it.

Land expropriation, to make way for new Israeli settlements in the occupied territories has been ongoing since 1968 as more and more Arab land is ethnically cleansed. Intense networks of bypass roads linking settlements to each other have been constructed while further fragmenting and diminishing Palestinian living space and land holdings.

It is now estimated that there are almost 3.2 million Palestinian refugees living in the West bank, the Gaza strip, Jordan, Syria and the Lebanon. Of these, around a million live in refugee camps.

Israel's reign of terror in the occupied territories, accompanied by its policy of blocking economic development, aims at driving large numbers of Palestinians to emigrate and to convert the remaining population into a captive market and cheap labour force for Israel with the eventual aim of integrating the occupied territories within Israel. The minority of the Israeli ruling class who don't agree with this are not much better. Their preferred option is a weak Palestinian statelet existing alongside Israel and under its effective control (the 'two states' solution).

The first Intifada, a mass uprising against Israeli occupation initially involving hundreds of thousands of people, took place from 1987 to 1992. After the failure of the Oslo agreement the second Intifada began in September 2000 and since then over 1,400 Palestinians and nearly 450 Israelis have been killed. Islamic religious terrorists, Hamas and Islamic Jihad have claimed responsibility for most of the suicide bombings and other attacks inside Israel, which have claimed over 160 civilian lives as of April 2002.

Israel's military response to the uprising and guerrilla war escalated in intensity and scale throughout 2001 into 2002, culminating in the recent military attack on the West Bank and Gaza strip, where the Israeli military has completely demolished entire sections of refugee camps and massacred hundreds of Palestinians living there. Villages and towns throughout the occupied territories have been raided, civilian homes shelled and demolished, electricity and water supplies cut, people assassinated and thousands of residents detained at military bases. Medical personnel and ambulances attempting to evacuate the dead and wounded have been shot at and ambulances destroyed.

Deirdre Hogan

Distribute Workers Solidarity

To receive extra copies of Workers Solidarity to distribute in your workplace, school or town mail us at WSM, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8 or email us at wsm_ireland@yahoo.com Remember to tell us how many you want and what your postal address is!

Israeli anarchists on the occupation

This declaration written in May 2001 is an "unofficial text of small libertarian communist group in Israel". We reproduce it here to show that there is anarchist resistance to the occupation within Israel. This is part of the broader peace movement that unites some Israeli Jews and Arabs and which has attempted to break the army blockade of Ramallah on a couple of occasions. This text also provides a valuable local perspective.

The truth is now there for all to see: there is no peace agreement between Zionist Israel and the Palestinian Arab people, and there will never be. Zionist Israel is a state which adheres to discrimination between its Jewish citizens, and the rest of its citizens.

Every agreement achieved in the short run between Israel and the Palestinians will express the present power balance between an occupying force and the occupied, between the oppressor and the oppressed between the strong and the weak between the masters and the enslaved.

The solutions suggested for the present are based on "compromise" between two sides that are not equal. The formula for a "Palestinian state besides the Israeli state" is in the present conditions a big fraud. Even if Israel will agree in the near future to the establishment of such a state ruled by the PLO, it will necessarily be like a Bantustan in the time of Apartheid in South Africa: A state inflicted with high unemployment, flooded by hundreds of thousands of returning refugees, while a very high percent of its population will be dependant on the Israeli economy.

This is the reason we do not find any value in searching for or offering any solution for

the present or the near future. However, there is a strong reason to put forward principled demands worth fighting/struggling for:

- 1) Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli army from ALL the territories occupied in 1967 war.
- 2) Recognition of the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination.
- 3) Cancellation of all the discriminatory rules that Israel has and replace them with fully equal rights for all those who live in Israel .
- 4) Recognition of the right of the Palestinians ("refugees") to return to their homeland.

Only a social revolution of all the region (as part of change in the social order of all the world) which will abolish the capitalist exploitation and the hierarchical structure of the states and other oppressing and discriminating mechanisms - will put end to the conflict ignited in the region by the super power states and the Zionist project they nourished.

A fuller version of this statement is available in *Against War and Terrorism 2* for 2 Euro from the WSM bookservice or on the web at

www.struggle.ws/issues/war/pamMARCH02.html



Review: WSM web site (www.struggle.ws)

The WSM started one of the first Irish political web sites back in the mid 90's. It contains almost all the articles we have published since 91 and quite a few additional reports that were never been printed as well as lots of photos and PDF files. We asked Eoghan Ryan to review it for us.

A search on "anarchism+Ireland" led me to the website of the Workers Solidarity Movement (www.struggle.ws/wsm) when I used the Google and Yahoo search engines. A similar search using MSN and Altavista proved less successful however. Content-wise, the site is rather impressive. There is a regularly updated news section with reports, and often photos, of the various activities of WSM members and, where applicable, links to the various associated campaigns. PDF versions of various WSM publications are provided and their bookservice is plugged also.

The site also provides an opportunity to subscribe to some of the Irish and international anarchist mailing lists. However, much of this information is contained on the homepage itself, which could result in an information overload for the uninitiated browser. Perhaps a simpler, clearer homepage with links to all the above subsections, placed on different pages, would be more navigable. Also, while there is a primer on anarchism provided, based on a WSM publication, I think that links to other anarchist educational material on the web would be a good idea.

The site itself is one of a larger collection of anarchist leaning sites that together constitute part of the Struggle collection. While Struggle provides a good overview of all anarcho-type happenings in this country, if one was to access the WSM site directly, there is a distinct lack of information about other anarchist groups and tendencies existing in Ireland. To avoid duplication, perhaps a clearer link to the struggle collection, with a brief outline of it, would suffice.

Aesthetically, the site leaves a bit to be desired. I found the combination of, almost fluorescent, shades of blue, yellow and red, rather hard on the eye and even somewhat garish! In conclusion, and, ultimately, mitigation, many of these criticisms are perhaps only a step above nit picking. The WSM site is pretty damn good. Check it out!

cal working class which refused support for a political party and which relied on its own power to change society.

Throughout the history of parliaments there have been 'radical' candidates for election who promise to change society, once we put them into power. This pamphlet goes some way towards explaining why such candidates can't create effective change and puts forward the anarchist idea that without volunteering any of our power away we have the ability to effect real change.

Read it online at http://struggle.ws/once/pd_intro.html Brian Skinner



Review:

Parliament or Democracy?

Modern government is based on the idea that we elect the great and the good to rule over us, trusting that they have our best interests at heart and that they are wise and good enough to know what's needed. We elect our representatives based on their policies and promises, and trust that once in power, they'll do as promised and carry out our wishes.

One of the main problems with this system is that the people we elect, once in power are separated from those that elected them and are under no obligation to do what they said. Indeed governments and politicians are, legally, perfectly entitled to do quite the opposite.

Representative democracy removes people's direct control over their own lives and replaces it with the governance of an elite.

In this pamphlet Kevin Doyle traces the establishment of parliamentary democracy and shows how after events like the English Civil War and the French Revolution it was developed as a mechanism for control by the 'responsible elements' of society.

After all, once the 'divine right' of kings to rule was abolished a new problem became apparent: if royalty were no longer entitled to rule then who was? If full equality was brought in, then, since the poor outnumbered the rich, wouldn't they be in a position to end the privilege of the latter?

The solution to this problem was the 'qualified' vote, whereby access to the vote was curtailed using any arbitrary difference - sex, race, possession of property etc. In this way the vote was restricted to those sections of society that acted 'maturely', i.e. they had an interest in society remaining as it was.

Never conceded, the power to elect new masters had to be fought for. Social Democratic Parties worked mainly to extend the vote, and this became the priority of large sections of the left. Once representation in Parliament was achieved the job of building socialism fell into the 'capable' hands of the parliamentary socialists.

The emergence of parliamentary socialism alienated the working class from its own independent means of bringing about change. A tokenistic form of democracy became the order of the day - a definite achievement for the 'rich and privileged'. More radical democratic ideas such as direct democracy and direct action, which were a threat to the social order, were successfully sidelined and mostly ignored.

Finally in the last chapter Doyle sketches a picture of the libertarian alternative to representative democracy - direct democracy, which flourished for a while in revolutionary Spain (1930's), where there was a radi

Politics of the car

With growing traffic jams, longer journeys to work and increasing road deaths Aileen O'Carroll makes a contribution to the debate about how to get out of this mess.

Cars are a problem. Transport, particularly road transport, is a major contributor to the production of greenhouse gasses which contribute to global warming. It is estimated that for every gallon of oil used about 19 pounds of carbon dioxide go into the atmosphere. Cars can make you sick. They produce polluting gasses, at certain concentrations these irritate the eyes and nose and respiratory system and can be carcinogenic.

Cars are noisy. Traffic is the major source of noise in cities. The noisiest of all are the heavy goods vehicles and the number of these are expected to double by 2015. Noise can damage hearing, disrupt sleep and increase stress and blood-pressure.

Cars take up a lot of space. Up to 10% of the arable land in the US is taken up by car transport. It's estimated that in the 1960s in the US up to 50,000 people each year were displaced by cars. In heavily populated developing countries such as China, Egypt and Bangladesh there simply isn't room for cars. In cities, where space is even more limited, the problem can be worse. It is estimated that roads take up 25%-35% a cities land.

In some parts of the world this is worse than others. Average Australian cities have four times and average US cities have three times more roads than in Europe. In Los Angeles two thirds of the city's land is taken up by cars. The difference in these figures indicates that there is nothing automatic about how much space cars should take up. Different policies can result in different transport systems. The UK has seen greater growth of suburbs than other countries and also has a greater level of car dependency. In Germany more people own cars, but they are used less.

The people who are least likely to have a car, are most likely to die because of one. In the UK 40% of the population do not have a car. Of that 40%, 65% come from low income groups. The number of children injured or killed in car accidents is highest in deprived areas. Children of the poorest families are five times more likely to be hit by a car than those of the richest*. This is because these children are more likely to walk to school, to live in high traffic areas or in communities that are severed by wider and thus more dangerous roads.

Behind the car is a huge and powerful car industry. In the US from the 1930s to the 1950s General Motors and other automobile manufactures bought 90% of the tram networks in 45 US cities. These were then dismantled and replaced by busses (which were manufactured by the car companies). In 1991 the auto industry in the USA spent 10 million dollars defeating legislation aimed at tougher fuel efficiency standards. The only solution often being offered is

to build more roads, it's a solution that benefits industry not people. More roads into the countryside surrounding cities, leads to the growth of suburbs, which leads to more traffic (and calls for more roads). The solution leads to more problems, and it also leads to great wealth for the developers who build the suburbs and those who own the land they are built on.

Take the example of the Liffey Valley shopping centre. This superstore is located nine and a half miles from Dublin's city centre. It advertises itself as being "where the M50 meets the N4". The M50, a ring-road around the city, was designed to help traffic avoid the city. Most traffic is not caused by long distance journeys between cities but by short regular journeys within cities. Liffey Valley contains 23 acres of car-park. The supermarket attracts routine shoppers, which means routine drivers onto the M50. In the UK the building of huge shopping centres in the middle of nowhere has led to 'donut' cities. Shops in the centre go bust forcing people to drive to the outskirts for their normal shopping. Out of town shopping is impossible for those without cars. A UK report on poverty indicated that these centres contribute to poverty. The Citizens Organising Foundation discovered that the cheapest groceries cost 69% more in the poorest districts compared with shops in the same chain in the richest parts*. Before the councillors were 'lobbied' by the developers the plan for the area was very different. It was planned to create a town-centre at Neilstown for Lucan and Clondalkin. This would have been accessible to local people, instead they have been left with minimal facilities.

Ensuring that cars can travel more easily is not necessarily going to solve our problems in the long term. We have to think about alternative ways of travelling and look at why we need to travel. There are more people using bicycles in Asia than there are cars in the world. Irish cities are not designed with either bikes or public transport in mind. Changes to public transport are hotly debated in the press and by the media, changes that benefit cars are rarely discussed. We have few bicycle lanes and those which exist are often poorly designed and dangerous, an afterthought rather than an important component of city transport.

We need to ask ourselves, what sort of cities do we need to live in? Cities need to be designed differently. We need cities where it is possible to walk, cycle or get public transport to work. Cities in which shops, schools and doctors are *easily* accessible to those without a car.

Information in the article from a research project on cars at www.tcd.ie/ERC
* *Captive State*, George Monbiot, p127, p186



Dublin Open Meetings

Every month in Dublin we host a gathering of anarchists and other libertarian socialists to discuss a topic of interest over a pint.

We hope to develop these meetings so they become an essential monthly meeting point. Newcomers welcome - just bring along an open mind. The meetings are in The Teachers Club, 36 Parnell Square.

Monday 13th May, 8.30pm Anarchism and Palestine

The left is deeply divided on Palestine, some insist on two states others demand a single state solution. What should anarchists advocate.

Monday 10th June, 8.30pm Should anarchists build a revolutionary union

With the emergence of the Independent Workers Union and growing unhappiness with ICTU should anarchists stop working within the existing unions and build revolutionary unions instead?

Cork meetings

contact WSM, PO Box 31, Sorting Office, Cork or cork_wsm@yahoo.com

Contact the WSM

Workers Solidarity Movement, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8
or
E-mail wsm_ireland@yahoo.com
Phone/SMS **087-7939931**
On the web - <http://struggle.ws/wsm>



Reclaim
the Streets
14.30 at GPO (Dublin)
Sat 6th May

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

The Bin Tax – The Race for Office

The Dublin City campaign had a conference on March the 9th that was very well attended by representatives from all over Dublin, plus visitors from Fingal, Dublin South and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, as well as Cork, Drogheda and Bray. The mood at the conference was optimistic and people are ready to defeat this unjust tax in all its guises.

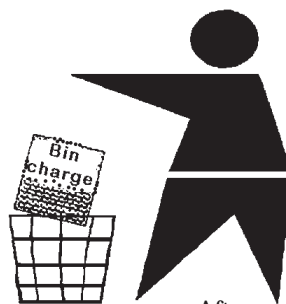
The conference formally established the campaign in Dublin. The following were elected as campaign officers, Dermot Connolly, Chairperson, Dermot Sreenan, Secretary, Sheila Delaney, Treasurer, and Brid Smith, Spokesperson. It was also agreed that a monthly meeting of a co-ordinating committee to which each campaign group should send at least two representatives would run the campaign.

The first of these meetings happened on the 20th April. The next one is scheduled for late May – please contact me if you are looking for details of the time and venue of it. The campaign adopted a number of resolutions – including pushing for opposition to the bin tax being made one of the themes of the May Day march this year. This idea was put to

the Dublin Council of Trades Unions as a motion and has been formally accepted.

Another motion that was adopted at the conference was the idea for the campaign to formally endorse candidates who have worked for the campaign and are standing on the basis of being in favor of non-payment. Whilst I can understand the will of people to 'make the politicians pay' for their treachery in bringing in this tax for a public service – we don't agree with this tactic. The way this tax is going to be defeated is by building a massive campaign.

We have to spread the knowledge of the campaign and build up the membership so that we are in a position to defend the test cases that will inevitably come after the general



election. The way that we defeat this tax – is almost as important as killing it itself. It will be defeated by resisting the bullying of the City Council, by going to court and taking them on, and by spreading mass non-payment. When the majority of people continue to refuse to pay this tax – the system set up to impose it becomes unimplementable.

After we win – we'll have to remember that it was by standing together and refusing to pay that we'll have killed this attempt at double tax.

Electing a few lone voices to the Dail, where they can be ignored like those of us outside it, won't defeat it. We're not interested in having someone else do the fighting on our behalf in the house of power – because we're interested in taking that power back. Leaders are only people who can be got at – they can't get at the people of Dublin if we stand up together and collectively say "We're not paying!"

Dermot Sreenan
Contact 087-6277606

A history of the struggle against the bin tax in Dublin and Cork is at <http://struggle.ws/wsm/bins.html>

Malcontents and 'cliques' ?? The ASTI dispute as seen through the eyes of ICTU

A question for you to ponder: In the *Sunday Independent* on 7th April 2002, which group of people in Irish society was described by Emer O'Kelly as "... exhibiting the worst kind of moral inertia, a kind of Thatcherite, bull-headed indifference to the mores of a decent society." Money grabbing land developers? Child-raping priests? Self-serving politicians?

No, no and no again. This bunch of "...malcontents who have abused.. children" (as written in the same article) was none other than members of the three teacher unions - ASTI, INTO and TUI who, at their union conferences the previous week, had threatened - to varying degrees - to take industrial action if their claims for wage increases were not met. This particular article may have been totally over the top but its political slant was not at all out of step with the coverage which the ASTI have been getting as the one union who have actually been involved in taking action in pursuit of their claim.

We might quite rightly expect no different from the media. But the ASTI - as was the case with the ILDA - came under fierce attack from a quarter that might not be so expected. Members of the ASTI might have expected that their first port of call in terms of looking for support might be their fellow teachers in the INTO and TUI. But this turned out not to be the case. While rank-and-file members of the other teacher unions were undoubtedly supportive of the ASTI stance, at leadership level it was a different story.

The then general secretary of the INTO, who is also president of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, launched a stinging attack on the ASTI tactic of withdrawing from supervisory duties in schools. He referred to the ASTI campaign as a disaster for all teachers and claimed that the union was being run by a "small clique" that was not interested in a solution to the dispute. Interestingly this 'small clique' swept the boards at the ASTI conference in terms of capturing key positions within the union leader-

ship. While anarchists would obviously argue that the building of strong effective rank-and-file organisation is more important than the capturing of leadership positions, nevertheless this showed that the militants within the ASTI were reflecting much more closely the views of ordinary members and activists than were O'Toole and his media allies.

It is very clear just why the ICTU leadership was - and is - so keen to attack the ASTI. Because they have decided to leave ICTU and reject so-called 'social partnership' the ASTI - as were the ILDA - are seen as the enemy. ICTU's big fear is that the confrontational tactics of the ASTI might actually be successful, thus demonstrating to other groups of workers that the trade union movement does not have to be shackled to the notion of 'we're all in this together'. Just as Mick O'Reilly was kicked out of the ATGWU for his anti-partnership stance, so both ASTI and ILDA have come under attack by media, government and fellow trade unionists for their 'heresy' in daring to plot an independent path. Gregor Kerr

Morons in Power

So we now have normal politics in the six counties? We saw Barry McElduff MLA (Sinn Féin) being "offended" in the Assembly by Culture Minister Michael McGimpsey, who suggested building a 'national' stadium for soccer, GAA, rugby and athletics. The West Tyrone republican rushed out press statements telling how he was offended by the use of the word 'nation' to describe the six counties. Then, on the same day, Jeffrey Donaldson MLA (Ulster Unionist) whined about the "offence" caused by placing of an Irish tricolour in the Westminster office of the four Sinn Féin MPs. When it was pointed out to Donaldson that only the four MPs and their guests would see the flag, he replied that cleaners who would see this "foreign flag" would be afraid to go about their business of dusting and hoovering.

If only these clowns got as offended by hospital waiting lists, sectarian thuggery, pensioners living in poverty, and all the other suffering that the Sinn Fein-Unionist-SDLP-DUP coalition presides over each and every day in the Executive.

Anarchist Summer Camp (June 2002)

Anarchists from all over Ireland will be meeting up on Achill island, Co. Mayo, over the June bankholiday for the Irish anarchist Summer Camp.

- Camping and Hostel accommodation available
- Hill walking, wind-surfing, abseiling and many other pursuits
- Pubs, food and craic
- Revolutionary atmosphere guaranteed!

For further information contact James at jamesmcbarron@yahoo.co.uk or 021 4322561

Old Head of Kinsale – Round 5

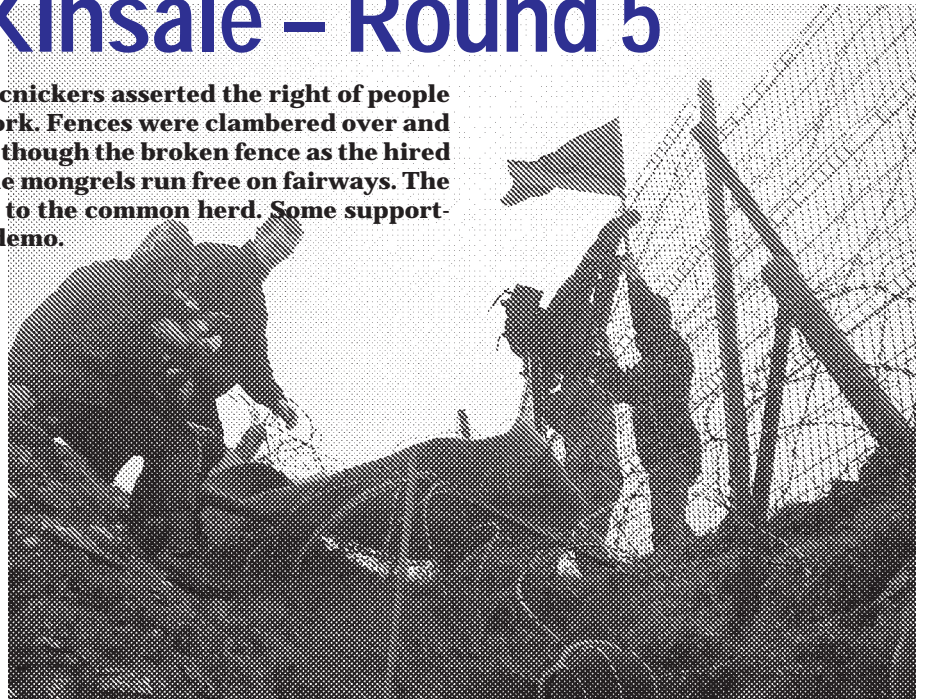
Yet again, on Easter Sunday, over 100 picnickers asserted the right of people to walk the Old Head of Kinsale in Co.Cork. Fences were clambered over and wet smelly dogs were lifted to freedom – though the broken fence as the hired goons of security were against letting the mongrels run free on fairways. The exclusive golf course was again opened to the common herd. Some supporters of the golf course staged a counter demo.

It was great craic but beneath the obvious fun of the whole outing a serious battle is being fought. The idea being defended by the golf course owners and their supporters is that private property has absolute rights; greater than the rights, desires or needs of ordinary people. Though it is well known that people have walked the Old Head for generations the wealthy O'Connor brothers, who purchased the headland and built the course, feel that they have a right to exclude everyone who is a non-paying guest. This they state with the common arrogance of the capitalist land owner. They are appalled that anyone could possibly have a counter view.

Of course many people do, and more importantly, many people are prepared to do something to defend that right. The series of successful mass entrances onto the headland and golf course have defied the power of the owners and the state. Mass direct action has shown that we will not tolerate the violation of our fundamental right to roam. The right of people to access the beauty of the planet, to breathe the air, drink the water and walk the land free of hindrance is not for sale.

As more and more land becomes fenced off, more and more free campsites are turned into no-camping zones by Councils the length and breadth of the country, and ever more land owners deny access or attempt to charge for access to traditional walks and monuments, it is vital that protests like the Old Head continue to take place. This is part of the global battle between the rights of property and the rights of people. The rights of people must win or we will all lose.

James McBarron



Irish Anarchist Gathering - Dublin - May 18th - All welcome

Ideas and Action

From Resistance
to Change

Saturday May 18th, 11.am,
Central Hotel, Exchequer
Street, Dublin 2

1. **The Anti-Capitalist Movement** - Think Global, Act Local
Speakers on Anti Bin Charge Campaign, Save the Old Head of Kinsale Campaign, Critical Mass/Reclaim The Streets
2. **The North** - the challenge of building a broad successful anti-sectarian movement. Speakers from WSM and other anarchist organisations.
3. **Sellafield - From Protest to Closure** - Speaker from Gluaiseacht, and a speaker on the successful anti-Carnsore campaign
4. **The anarchist solution and organising to achieve it**

For further details or if you are travelling from outside Dublin and will need accommodation contact us at wsm_ireland@yahoo.com Phone/SMS 087-7939931

Cork Grassroots Gathering

The second Grassroots Gathering was held over the Easter weekend in Cork. Some seventy people from all over Ireland took part. Areas represented included Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Belfast as well as a scattering of other counties including Kildare, Kerry, Clare and Sligo.

The Grassroots Gatherings are regular events for libertarian activists to network, exchange information and plan for the future. This gathering included activists involved in Gluaiseacht, Workers Solidarity Movement, Reclaim the Streets, Dublin and Cork anti bin-charges campaigns, Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation, Cork Autonomous Zone, Reclaim the Glen, Anarchist Federation, Sellafield bike tour, West Paupa support group, Shannon anti-war refueling and quite a few more.

It met in the Cork Autonomous Zone, a space a number of Cork activists have come together to create. The day ended with a general session which agreed the next Gathering will take place over the October bank holiday in Belfast. Next morning dozens of people from the Gathering joined in the Old Head of Kinsale protest.

Andrew Flood

Grassroots Gathering web page
<http://grassrootsgathering.freeservers.com>

Grassroots Gathering announcement list
Send an email to grassrootsgathering-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

A man goes into a pet shop to buy a parrot. The shop owner points to three identical looking parrots on a perch and says, "The parrot on the left costs €500". "Why so much," asks the man? The shop owner says, "He knows how to use a computer". The man then asks about the next parrot and is told that this one costs €1,000 because it can do everything the other parrot can do plus it knows how to use the UNIX operating system. Naturally, the man asks about the third parrot to be told that it costs €2,000. Startled he asks, "What can it do?" The shop owner replies, "To be honest I have never seen it do a thing, but the other two call him boss!"