

SOLIDARITY

Number 84 - February 2005

Twenty One Years of Irish Anarchist News

<http://www.struggle.ws/wsm>

Tricky Taoiseach Turns Pink

Back in November while we, the people, were doing what we normally do, working hard, getting caught in gridlock and worrying if we had enough money for the Christmas presents, there was a revolution going on in St. Lukes which we barely noticed. In the darkening light of that month there was a RED DAWN. Bertie Ahern; the dear leader himself revealed in an interview with Mark Brennock (IT 20.11.04) that 'I am one of the few socialists left in Irish politics.'

As usual we were too busy working to pay attention to what came into his head and out of his mouth that morning. But even for this gobshite, this was a highly fantastical excrement that he was spouting.

We took a look around at the socialist utopia that our leader had created for us and we were not impressed.

Do we have an amazing health system caring for the poor and the elderly? No. In fact they were stealing money off pensioners who were unfortunate enough to be in nursing homes.

Do we have free education for all? No, registration charges are climbing all the

time whilst all grants have not been keeping pace and teachers are being pushed into a corner by the government.

What we do see is a push by the government to run down and privatise services. Bin Taxes, then Aer Rianta, then An Post, then ESB, then they appear at our door looking to charge us for water when all it ever does is rain. The madness of the 'socialist' beloved leader is there for all to see. So keep up the work comrades. The leader is doing what he does best, which is planning more stealth taxes and talking shite. Dear leader, socialism means more than letting the commoners into the parks. and the Botanic Gardens.

by Dermot Sreenan



War and Peace

Let Them Put Their Money Where Their Mouth Is

The most catastrophic earthquake in recent memory occurred in the Indian Ocean on St. Stephen's day 2004. The resulting tsunami caused the deaths of at least 250,000 people across many countries in the region and has left millions more without homes, food, water or livelihoods. Whole communities now have to rebuild lives whilst containing the devastating grief and legacy of all that has been lost.

In Ireland, as in much of the West, the public response was immediate and colossal. Reasons for this include the fact that the regions most affected are popular destinations we've at least heard of, and that the disaster happened over the Christmas holidays giving us plenty of time to absorb media images as we ate and drank ourselves silly. But without doubt, the real motivation of ordinary people responding and acting so unequivocally was that of empathy. Even though we couldn't really comprehend the rising number of dead, or come to terms with the medium and long term impacts, ordinary working class people right across the globe acted out of instinct and solidarity with our fellow man, giving freely of our money and time.



Asian Tsunami: People donated 100's of millions to help

This is in complete contrast to the responses of western governments and their corporate masters. The derisory amounts offered by each and every government have been raised continually by embarrassed



Fallujah, Iraq: Western Governments have spent 100's of billions to create this devastation

ministers, stung by public criticism of their miserliness with our money. Bertie has now raised the €1 million to €20 million. Unfortunately previous experience shows that even when little help is offered, even less is received. For example only 5% of aid promised to Iran after recent earthquake there was actually given. Oxfam have already accused this government of diverting half of the 20 million from existing aid funds!!

The dysfunctional mindset of our political and business leaders enable them to talk up sums offered to rescue, repair and rebuild human lives, whilst spending and investing our money on the infrastructure of war and exploitation. Tony Blair revised the UK's pledge from £15 million to £50 million but has spent £6000 million on the illegal occupation of Iraq. Mr Bush has offered \$150 million but this is peanuts compared the cost of just one of his stealth bombers, which cost \$2000 million apiece.

What about the 'generosity' flaunted by big business to the applause of some sections of the mass media? While of course accepting that corporations have no legal imperative to give anything, it is noteworthy to examine just how generous the big boys really are.

The Bank of Ireland offered €1.8 million when its profits last year were €696 million. The AIB has pledged €3 million, a lot of money to you and me no doubt, but it makes €4 million in profit every single day.

These are just two examples of which there are many more.

The message is simple. Powerful and rich men may spend lots of time talking about democracy and liberation but they don't believe in equality. That is why they don't bother counting dead Iraqis. That is why over a million human beings die every month of hunger and preventable diseases across the globe in countries crippled by debt.

It is clear that our 'leaders' and the corporate elite who make their wealth off us do not see all human beings as equally valuable. That is why we have massive war machines, ever ready to bomb and kill for 'democracy', but not massive armies to fight hunger, disease, poverty and squalor. This is the reality of the world we live in.

However, the response of ordinary people suggests that we, the great majority of this planet's population, do believe in equality and solidarity, and that we are willing to act on our empathetic instincts. Mother Nature may be beyond our control but the ability to create global justice and to share wealth is not. Real change will come when we, the people, make it impossible for our 'leaders' to ignore our demands and we remove the structures of enforced inequality and human misery that grind down so many fellow human beings.

Zapatistas: An Inspirational Decade On

January 1st marked the 11th anniversary of the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, a state in southern Mexico. On New Years Day 1994, the EZLN seized a number of towns in Chiapas before retreating into the mountains and jungles in the face of a massive army counter attack. The military phase of the struggle lasted only a few days as millions of Mexicans demonstrated to demand that the army stop their offensive against the rebels.

The importance of their rebellion is not in the brief military struggle that took place 11 years ago but in the society they have built in the years since. Although the Zapatistas are not anarchists the way they wish to organise society and the way they organise themselves shares many features with anarchism.

When you explain the anarchist vision to people a very common response is that it is a nice idea but it could never work. People see all the difficulties of their day-to-day lives and doubt that these could be overcome to create a free society. But the Zapatista movement, despite the fact that it is divided into five different languages and almost exclusively consists of very poor farmers, has managed not only to create an alternative but to keep that alternative alive for over a decade.

These rebel communities do not elect leaders to make decisions for them. Instead, decisions are made, whether on a local level or across the region, through a system of mandated and recallable delegates. Last year they set up five 'good government councils'. Delegates on these are rotated every eight to fifteen days to prevent anyone getting too attached to the position and as part of "a process where entire villages are learning to govern." In a letter released over the summer the Zapatista spokesperson ex-



plained why they choose such a system

"The advantages? Fine, one of them is that it's more difficult for an authority to go too far and, by arguing how "complicated" the task of governing is, to not keep the communities informed about the use of resources or decision making. The more people know what it's all about, the more difficult it will be to deceive and to lie. And the governed will exercise more vigilance over those who govern."

"It also makes corruption more difficult. If you manage to corrupt one member of the good government council, you will have to corrupt all the autonomous authorities, or

all the rotations, because doing a "deal" with just one of them won't guarantee anything (corruption also requires "continuity"). Just when you have corrupted all the councils, you'll have to start over again, because by then there will have been a change in the authorities, and the one you "arranged" won't work any longer. And so you'll have to corrupt virtually all the adult residents of the Zapatista communities."

A very different way of running things than what you find in Ireland where, both in politics and in the economy, many important decisions that affect our society are made by professional politicians and the business elite.

Of course surviving for 11 years has meant the Zapatistas have had to make many compromises. Their initial rising was premised on the idea that either their action would spark a general uprising in Mexico or that they would be crushed. And despite much effort in the years after that rising they failed to spark off a revolutionary movement across Mexico. This means they have shifted focus to building an autonomous area in Chiapas, still part of the Mexican nation but without any involvement of the Mexican government.

Today in Chiapas they have had to move away from confrontation with the state and eliminate problems which might invite state involvement. So, although the Zapatista communities still occupy the land seized from the ranchers in the years after the rising and maintain autonomous communities they still have to deal with the reality of Mexican state power and abide by some of their regulations - like holding a valid Mexican driving license. A further example of this sort of pragmatic compromise is that the Zapatistas have decided they will allow the national elections to take place in their communities even if they will not be voting in them.

It is hard to see how much longer the Zapatista experiment in self-managed communities will survive. They reckon they have some space for now because the government expects them to fail and is happy, for now, to wait for them to do so. But their existence does demonstrate that a couple of hundred thousand people can organise their lives in a genuinely democratic fashion, in the harshest of conditions, for over a decade.

by Andrew Flood

Rebel Footballers

Inter Milan has shocked the footballing world by giving thousands of euro to the Zapatista guerrillas in Mexico.

Freedom, the British anarchist fortnightly, reports that team captain Javier Zanetti persuaded the club to donate the cash raised by fining players for late arrival or use of mobile phones in changing rooms.

After the rebel village of Zincantan in Chiapas was attacked by government forces,



the club sent off its first donation of an ambulance and €5,000.

Zanetti included a message "We believe in a better world, in an unglobalised world, enriched by cultural differences and customs of all the people. This is why we want to support you in this struggle to maintain your roots and fight for your ideals."

The rebels have used the cash to rebuild houses and water pipelines.

More information at
<http://struggle.ws/Mexico.html>

Working in a Music Store

Who'd Have Thought Exploitation Could Be So Hip?

Apart from Christmas, when they're manically busy, workers in a music store look to have it easy, whiling away the hours in an industry that markets itself with a skilfully honed "yoof" image. It seems like an ideal 'McJob' for people seeking temporary employment. But just as advertising can be deceptive about the nature of a product, so too can the façade of a music store deceive and hide manipulative work practices.

Recently finished in college and active in the Dublin Grassroots Network, Cormac found a job in HMV before heading off to work in Australia. He describes how "HMV had complete ignorance towards basic workers' rights. The team leader structure and the way the three floors in the building were divided, created an air of division. The people who would be empowered with some puny token position were very patronising and authoritarian towards the people who were supposed to be below them, even though they were performing the exact same task in the shop on daily basis."

With a team leader taking advantage of his position and "taking his individual moods on a given day out on the workers," the need for a union became apparent.

"I noticed there was a definite air of, well I wouldn't say oppression, but definite intimidation at the very least within HMV. I was being searched on an almost daily basis, almost several a times a day on some occasions. I was getting pissed off and other people were pissed off."

Enter the Union

In recent issues of *Workers Solidarity*, we've been paying attention to the development of the Independent Workers Union and the harassment its members have faced for union organising.

Cormac came into contact with the IWU at a 'protest somewhere' and picked up their leaflet "and upon reading it, got the feeling that they weren't another arm of the state, like SIPTU and the ICTU have become. They don't seem to believe in the same methods of operation in engaging with the state in promoting the partnership agreements and that. They seem to actually be more about direct action and the power of workers, which is what a trade union is meant to do at the end of the day.

"IWU members are not just people that pay a subscription and the costs of the union,

members actually control the union because it works on a non-hierarchical basis from the bottom up. There's only one paid employee in the union and every single member has access to facilities in the office on North Strand Road, computer, fax and telephone.



"The members are what makes a union and the members aren't just subscribers, not just people who pay the cost of the union, and the people in the IWU have been politically involved as well on various levels in both left wing and more liberal circles and they understand the issues involved in approaching and taking on multinationals, I think there's definitely a vigour involved in their operation, a passion that is lacking in other unions."

Uppity Workers

After coming into contact with the IWU Cormac put his efforts into organising his shop floor. "Basically on my floor I approached people on a verbal basis, a conversational basis. Also I left IWU flyers in the staff areas and I also instigated a campaign of toilet graffiti which was basically aimed at stirring people's consciousness into play. Such as on the back of the toilet door I'd write 'Why do season workers receive only a €10 bonus whereas other workers, even part-timers receive a €150 bonus for Christmas?' Other things like, 'Why is there no holiday pay for seasonal workers?'"

"We had a kind of semi-informal meeting in the staff room to look at the leaflet and I explained to them what the IWU was about and what a trade union did for workers, what your subscription money went towards."

"Then the Friday of that actual week there

was an incident involving a security guard where he started shouting at me on the shop floor so I walked off the shop floor politely and went to management about the incident. Following up on that I actually got fired for standing up for my rights, or whatever you want to call it, for accusing security of intimidating workers. So I got in touch with Ray O'Reilly (an IWU organiser) immediately and the IWU were in the next morning and met with HMV management. So the IWU did a super job and I got my job back."

HMV Retreat

Having breached employment legislation by dismissing Cormac without any notice, HMV waited for three weeks so they could legitimately end his contract. "There was 25 or 30 people laid off on Christmas Eve and I was the first to be informed of my laying off. They didn't like my attitude, basically I was on time every morning, I did my job, as best as I could within the parameters of what I was supposed to do, I was friendly to customers, in fact a lot of customers went and said I was friendly, this and that and had done a good job. They definitely laid me off and one of my fellow employees who I was very good friends with, and openly so, and they knew we were good friends on the floor, he was also laid off by association, they didn't actually have anything on him. So he lost his job as a result of his friendship with me."

A HMV employee in another branch described how the contract structure is used to drive wages down. She was let go at the end of a seasonal contract and then re-hired a week later as a part-timer, having lost her entitlement to an increased hourly rate. Where Cormac used to work, part-timers still haven't received their holiday bonuses.

Being in contact with a union ensured Cormac got his job back, but to the management it was a clear sign that he identified himself as having very different interests than his employer.

"HMV have created a façade of hip or grooviness, or whatever you want to call it, or fashionable image. People really want to get a job there, people didn't want to jeopardise their job by raising objections. If you do obey what orders you are given and don't rock the boat there is a constant reward there. There's a scheme whereby people who adhere to company policy and wear the HMV logo with pride will be rewarded in the fact that they'll receive some façade of a promotion, be that team leader or in the case of seasonal workers, being kept on for a longer period."

Interview by James R.

Social Space is the Place

Seomra Spraio Initiative Aims to Create Radical Social Space

Artist's impression of planned social space



Today in Ireland there is virtually nowhere indoors for people to congregate that isn't a pub or overpriced cafe. *by Seomra Spraio.*

Many readers will be aware of the success of autonomous social centres in other European cities, independent of local authority, church, business or other controlling body. These spaces have provided a focal point for many of the social movements in the West, where public spaces have been eaten away by consumerism, property speculation and the culture of the car.

They celebrate collective cooperation and diversity and have numerous day-to-day uses: community drop-in centre, inexpensive cafe, political meeting space, library, gig venue, arts centre, and internet cafe, to name a few.

Several attempts were made in Dublin in the past couple of years to set up autonomous centres in buildings that had been derelict for years, but these have been evicted by the City Council or by "heavies" employed by the owners. Clearly the Council would prefer to see buildings remain derelict rather than put to any use.

Seomra Spraio is the provisional name of a collective which has come together to create a social centre space in Dublin

In early December there was huge response to the call for a gathering to initiate an Autonomous Social Centre in Dublin, over a hundred people came and watched films about centres across Europe and chatted over vegetarian food served afterwards. Then on the 21st of December we had a well attended gig in the Voodoo Lounge, where fans of both punk and dance were entertained and more funds were raised. How long before we can use/raise that money towards a building is the question.

After the Xmas break we had another meeting in the first week of January to see how far we got with research on the finance and structure of the proposed social centre. We have expanded on our wishlist of functions for the centre and now we have to start making these a reality under one roof. As we organise, we are coming across the very factors which have made it necessary to take this ambitious project on: small borrowed rooms, restrictions on their use and no consistent place for people to know where we are.

We have been talking to people involved in social centres and how they go about it and making contacts with them and remembering our own experiences on our travels to spaces around Europe and elsewhere. We are still refining the question of what do we want and how do we make it happen within the restriction of doing it the legal way, (insurance, finance, legal form etc.).

Next we will be concentrating on the search for a location, raising more money and getting more people involved. We are looking for more people who think they could help with the project in any way and also for talented people to entertain at our monthly gigs.



It's Official! Tax fraud is okay if you are rich

The most senior tax official in the 26 counties, Revenue Commissioners chair Frank Daly, appeared before the Dail Committee of Public Accounts last November 18th. His remarks deserve a wide circulation.

When Socialist Party TD, Joe Higgins, suggested it was "clear that, if you are a big banker, you can steal with impunity from the tax payer but if you are an ordinary person you will go to prison for stealing a few hundred euro", Mr Daly said "you are quite right".

He also said that the Revenue had tried to prosecute banks and financial advisors for "aiding and abetting" tax evasion but had been told by the (politically appointed)

Director of Public Prosecutions that they "didn't have a case".

Handbags & Hospital Beds

Back in 2001 the government promised to provide an extra 3,000 hospital beds in the 26 counties. Late last year Bertie Ahern stood up in the Dail and claimed that 900 of them had already been put in place. It was a lie, a deliberate lie.

That figure included 255 "recliners", 298 "trolleys" and 83 "couches". So, of the 3,000 new beds, only 264 have been provided.

Of course there are no problems for the government and their wealthy pals. They have the Blackrock Clinic, Mater Private and many other private hospitals to go to. No waiting on trolleys there.

Is this an exception? Maybe it's just that health poses particular difficulties? In November Education Minister Mary Hanafin announced that the government's pledge to cut primary school class sizes to 20 by

2007 has been torn up.

As John Carr, general secretary of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, said "This was a specific commitment. It was unequivocal". But that means nothing to most politicians. They lie to get into power and then put most of their effort into looking after the wealthy. You can be sure there are no overcrowded class in Rockwell, Gonzaga, St Michaels or any of the other private fee paying schools.

And before some Public Relations chancer from Mary Harney's office tells us that there just isn't the cash for a decent medical or education service, think about the number of rich parasites who have so much money that they don't know what to do with it.

Over 500 women have put their names down on a waiting list to buy handbags that cost at least €4,000 and as much as €50,000. That's just in one shop, the Hermes store in Dublin's Brown Thomas.

EVENTS & CONTACTS

ANARCHIST GROUPS

Workers Solidarity Movement

Platformist Anarchist Organisation

*Publishes this paper
PO box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland
www.struggle.ws/wsm.html*

wsm_ireland@yahoo.com corkwsm@eircom.net

Organise! Working Class Resistance

Class Struggle Anarchist Organisation

*Publishes "Working Class Resistance"
PO Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ
organiseireland@yahoo.ie*

LIBERTARIAN NETWORKS

Networks and collectives with a libertarian ethos in which anarchists are involved

Grassroots Network

*Non-hierarchical Direct-Action Network
Network of grassroots social justice activists with groups in Dublin, Cork & Galway.
www.geocities.com/eufortress*

Indymedia Ireland

*Irish Branch of Global Media Collective
The place to find Irish campaign news.
www.indymedia.ie*

Red Ink Infoshop

*Anarchist / Radical Book & Zine Store
4 Upper Fownes St. Temple Bar*

ACTIVIST GROUPS

Activist groups fighting for social justice

Alliance For Choice

*Campaign for women's freedom to choose
www.struggle.ws/ireland/
allianceforchoice/index.html*

Residents Against Racism

*Campaign against racism & deportations
Meets every Friday at 7pm in the Teachers Club, 36 Parnell Square in Dublin
www.struggle.ws/rar.html*

EVENTS

WSM Dublin Anarchist Films

*Anarchist Cultural Afternoons.
First Sunday of every month, contact
WSM Dublin for details*

Anti-War Protest

*Global Demonstrations against the war
March 19th - Central Dublin*

Ploughshares Defence Campaign

*Demonstration at Ploughshares Trial
Monday, March 7th, all day, Four Courts.*

Dissent Network Fundraiser

*Mobilising for protests against the G8 in
Scotland in July 2005
8:30pm Friday February 18th
Voodoo Lounge, Arran Quay, Dublin 7*

EMAIL/WEB

*irishanarchism@yahoo.com
Big, high-volume anarchist discussion list*

*ainriail@struggle.ws
Low-volume newslst from the WSM*

*www.anarchism.ws/ireland.html
Index of Irish anarchist Internet resources.*

Workers Solidarity

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Affiliated to *International Libertarian Solidarity* <http://www.ils-sil.org>

Last year the Workers Solidarity Movement celebrated its 20th Birthday. It was also a year of firsts.

On May the first, Dublin Grassroots Network had the largest libertarian demonstration ever seen in Ireland. As the EU leaders met in Farmleigh house, over 4,000 people occupied Fitzwilliam Square, had a party on Gardiner Street and marched against the right wing agenda of the new EU. The media hype that preceded the event had to be seen to be believed. In the month preceding the event the press carried bizarre and fabricated stories about dangerous anarchists intent on burning Dublin to the ground.

In another first, the Late Late Show featured anarchists explaining why they intended to march. The look on Pat Kennys face when he realised the woman he was interviewing was actually an anarchist caused many of us to chuckle.

A month later, we were on the go again, this time heading down to Shannon (some of us cycled!) to protest at the arrival of George Bush. Unfortunately, though the majority of the Irish people are against the war, Shannon airport is still being used by the US military on their way to Iraq. It wasn't our first time at Shannon, and neither will it be the last. As long as the US persists in its occupation of Iraq, we will oppose the use of Shannon airport as a military base.

Before the Bush visit we took part alongside the Campaign Against the Racist Referendum (CARR) in campaigning in the citizenship referendum, and were disappointed but not too surprised when a huge majority of the Irish population accepted this racist proposal. The rise of intolerance and racism is perhaps the most ugly side of Irish society today.

In June there was another first, we rented an office in Dublin. The lack of meeting space is a major problem for any group trying to organise itself and although the office costs us a lot, it makes political activity much easier. In the next year, on the first Sunday of each month we will be showing political films and documentaries there, as well as using it for our normal discussions and meetings

In October, we spoke at the Irish Social Forum and later that month, again as part of the Dublin Grassroots Network, we helped organise a demonstration against the Less Lethal Weapons Conference.

This year some of us, unfortunately, had to spend time attending court cases. There is a definite trend to criminalise protest, with more and more protesters being arrested often on spurious charges. Just before May Day three English anarchists were arrested near an abandoned building. Two of them were forced to stay in Dublin for six months while they waited for their trial. Happily the case was thrown out for lack of evidence, but in a sense thanks to the truly draconian bail conditions, the activists had already been punished. This use of the court system is cynical in the extreme. On another pessimistic note, all but one of the police who were shown on RTE news beating Reclaim the Streets protesters were, astoundingly, found by a jury to be not guilty of assault. The mind boggles. We were delighted that Mary Kelly did not have to serve prison time for her action against the US military machine in Shannon. The other Shannon defendants will be facing the courts again shortly, as will some of those arrested after the May Day demonstrations on the Navan road.

The year wasn't all hard work. We attended two Grassroots Gatherings, one in Cork and one in Belfast. The next Grassroots Gathering is in Dublin so those of us living in Dublin will be busy helping to organise that. During the summer some of us went to the Anarchist Summer Camp, for a gentle weekend of relaxation by the beautiful mountains of Mourne.

Last year was quite busy and this year probably will be as well. One development we really like is the 'seomra spraoi' initiative (see article elsewhere). A year ago it would have been hard to see this coming together, let's see what happens by this time next year!



by Aileen O'C

Devolution Ain't No Revolution

For almost a month in late November/early December we were treated to nightly reports from RTE journalists and others - delivered in bated breath - on the possibility of a return to 'devolved government' and 'power-sharing' in the North. This was coupled with acres of newsprint about 'historic breakthroughs' etc.

Then 'the deal' collapsed apparently because while the IRA were willing to dispose of their weapons, they wouldn't allow photographs to be taken. The blame game began. Whose fault was this lack of agreement? Provo intransigence? DUP insistence on humiliation?

After a couple of weeks of this nonsense, came the Northern Bank robbery and suddenly all was changed.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) pointed the finger of blame at the IRA and politicians and 'political commentators' North and South of the border rushed to put as much distance as possible between themselves and the whiff of sulphur which they could suddenly smell from Martin and Gerry. Perhaps the funniest image of all was Gerry Adams issuing a statement complaining that Bertie Ahern was not returning his phone calls. One could almost imagine Gerry sitting weeping by the phone waiting for Bertie to call him and invite him to tango once again!!

Who gives a flying ****?

But in all reality, who gives a damn?? The 'holy grail' that everyone is supposed to be waiting for with bated breath is the prospect of a devolved government in the North which will include the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Fein. Ian Paisley or Peter Robinson as 'First Minister', Martin McGuinness as his deputy. What about the exciting prospect of Gerry Kelly as Minister for Policing or Arlene Foster in charge of health? The prospect is enough to make the skin crawl.

Since the onset of the so-called peace process, what passes for politics in the North has gone from the absurd to the ridiculous. Of course the ceasefires and the relative peace brought by them are welcomed by everyone, but



Aiming for Westminster?

the 'peace process' and all the endless hours of 'jaw-jaw' that have accompanied it has, at the end of the day, been about the institutionalisation of sectarianism, effectively an acceptance that there are and will always be two sides - orange and green.

The pre-Christmas talks were basically all about a flexing of muscles. Both the Paisley/Robinson and Adams/McGuinness tag teams are trying to portray themselves as the hard men defending the rights of 'their' community. With one eye on the forthcoming Westminster elections, neither could be seen to be conceding a millimetre.

Deal likely

It is more than likely that following the Westminster election SF and DUP will cut a deal, although nothing can be predicted with any degree of certainty when Northern politics are being considered. But the one certainty that we'd all be safe wagering our next decade's wages on is that the re-establishment of a 'devolved government' will do absolutely nothing for the Northern working class.

Sinn Fein's pretence at being a 'Socialist' party is shown up for the nonsense that it has always been when they are willing to even consider facilitating the elevation of the arch-bigot Paisley as 'First Minister'. Taken in conjunction with their salivating at the prospect of entering coalition with Fianna Fail in the South, those members of Sinn Fein who still swallow the 'socialist' rhetoric must be either extremely naive or stupid.

At any rate the 'devolved government' which the people of Northern Ireland can look forward to will simply offer more of the same. What difference does it make to communities fighting for better education or health services, for decent facilities etc.

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Communist - Anarchism

by James O'Brian

For anarchists a person's full potential is most easily fulfilled in an environment of freedom. Rather than mechanically following orders, where one is essentially nothing more than the extension of another's will, in a free society people think and act for themselves. This in turn would enhance the society as a whole.

Anarchists have a rounded conception of freedom; it is not merely the absence of tyranny, but the meaningful opportunity to shape one's own life. As well as being free *from*, one ought to be free *to do*. And you can't be free to do much if you're constantly weighed down by the threat of poverty.

But what environment facilitates the blossoming of freedom? Anarchists have consistently maintained for over 100 years that a communist society is such. A communist society would be where the production and, importantly, the consumption of goods would be held in 'common': from each according to ability, to each according to need. If there is a scarcity of goods then they can be rationed in an equitable manner. We already have a form of rationing, the money system - if you have lots of money you can get whatever you like. If you don't, tough.

In addition to being convenient, communism is entirely fair as everything produced in a modern society is produced in common; the brainiest doctor depends on a whole array of medical workers, from nurses, to cleaners, to the factory workers who make the implements to do a good job. There is no real way of accurately calculating any particular job's true value to society¹. And the attempt to do so ensures a useless layer of workers and bureaucracy; from central banks to control the money supply, to insurance companies which

put the bandages on during the bad times... to the police who contain the discontent.

The Super-Fucking Rich



We regularly read in the papers about Michael Smurfit or some other well groomed thug making millions every year and, as the figures are so outrageous, we never really take it in. But why should he have more wealth than he can use for himself in a thousand lifetimes when the hospitals are at breaking point? Particularly when the actual work that makes his millions is being done by others as his 'job' is to invest his capital and hire others to do the work.

Probably the real reason for massive disparities in wealth is the one offered by Orwell in *1984*: without differences in wealth, the need for inequality in society will disappear. Wealth is the currency of power. But without inequality the justification, always dubious, for the existence of a ruling class disappears for they will no longer have power over others, and this is obviously not a welcome prospect for them.

A communist society is in contrast to the current capitalist set-up where a tiny minority of bosses made up of the likes of Tony

O'Reilly and Dick Cheney, control the wealth produced by the rest of society. And because they control the wealth they get to issue the orders. This has profound implications for everything from environmental degradation to your working conditions. Capitalists aren't going to base their decisions on what's best for the community. What counts is how much profit they can make. And if that means an oil spillage here or a strict hierarchy at work there, then so be it.

Socialism

Socialism² would ensure that the constant worries over rent, the kids' future, the lack of money to go to the doctor would be eased. These stresses of everyday life, particularly when they begin to pile on top of each other, grind us down, making it harder to find the time, the money, or even the desire to pursue the good things in life. In a society as rich and as technologically advanced as the modern world, there is no good reason that everyone should not have a high standard of living. It is feasible; it is no longer a dream. At this point in history it is more a question of consciousness, organisation and desire than about whether it is materially possible.

Given the experience of the USSR³, which as the anarchists of the time noted, was a lesson on how not to introduce communism, extra care needs to be taken to ensure that a communist society is also a libertarian one. In fact, the most logical communism is anarchist communism, for it carries through to all spheres of life the basic propositions of communism: that humans are a social species who not only like to live with others but who live most happily when these relationships take the form of friendship amongst equals without the need for authoritarian structures to control the people.

Footnotes

(1) The so-called 'free' market is a joke which is thoroughly distorted by control from above through devices like advertising and, when necessary, war.

(2) I use the terms 'socialism' and 'communism' interchangeably.

(3) As the USSR had a minority ruling class, i.e. the leaders of the Bolshevik Party, which controlled the wealth

of society and issued orders to everybody else it clearly wasn't communist, despite the rhetoric of both it and its opponents.

Devolution cont.

whether the decision to deny them those services is being made in London or in Stormont?

Democracy and unity

Real democracy is about more than simply transferring the 'centre of government' across the water. Real democracy will demand a complete transformation of society in the North, south of the border and in Britain and elsewhere. In the North what is needed is a united struggle to win people away from sectarian

politics and to socialism.

This won't be easy, we have to build real workers' unity and this means winning protestant workers away from loyalism and unionism and breaking the nationalist/republican hold over catholic workers. We need to convince workers from both sides of the sectarian divide that they have more in common than what divides them.

Anarchists favour direct, not representative, democracy. This means that mass meetings are held in workplaces, schools and communities and negotiators are elected on the basis of

the mandate of these meetings. If they don't obey these mandates they are booted out. Genuine community delegates should be doing the talking.

What's going on in the North at the moment is a far cry from real democracy. Battles around real issues such as the current fight against the imposition of water charges provide the common ground on which the sectarian barriers can begin to be dismantled. It is to such campaigns that we should look in the hope of building real workers' unity which can boot out all the parasitical politicians.

by Gregor Kerr



Shannon Activists Trial

The State Persecutes the Ploughshares People



In a battle between a hammer and a US Warplane I know which side I am on.

The Irish State is to put on trial the Ploughshares activists, Deirdre Clancy, Nuin Dunlop, Karen Fallon, Damien Moran and Ciaran O'Reilly. On March the 7th they will face charges on two counts of criminal damage, one to a US warplane (\$2.5Million) and one for a bit of double glazing repairs to Shannon Airport (€200). They already have spent one month in prison in Limerick following their arrests on February 3rd 2003 for their brave stand against this war and our island's part in it.

If convicted they could get sentences of up to ten years imprisonment.

It is indicative of the nature of the gombeens in power that they are busy having a case prepared against these pacifists whilst last summer they rolled out the red carpet for the war criminal Bush. Despite the horror of Abu Ghraib, despite the tens of thousands of deaths in Iraq, despite the chaos that still exists there and despite the wholesale plunder of that land, the Irish State is busy prosecuting people who took a non-violent stand. Before this particular hammer went through that particular nose-cone of that particular plane, many people appeared oblivious to Shannon's complicit servicing of the US War machine. Illusions lay shattered along with bits of that piece of military hardware and we, the Irish, could no longer ignore our role in this war.

Now it is our turn to support them through protests and donations.

See the Events Column, overleaf, for details of how you can support the ploughshares activists.
See their website at: <http://www.ploughsharesireland.org> for more information