

# WORKERS SOLIDARITY

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Twenty Two Years of Anarchist News

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## As Capitalists Waste Earth's Resources



*As another summer draws to a close, it's worth taking a snapshot of the state of the Ireland as the dawn of the 21st century casts its light upon us. The struggle for equality and justice continues unabated, whilst our elected 'leaders' and their corporate paymasters keep their head in the sand.*

Scandals and corruption pollute the air we breath, emanating from every institution of the state, be it the Guards in Donegal planting bombs that they then 'find', ministers selling of our resources to private companies who fund their shenanigans at the Galway races, or the justice system criminalising people who take democracy to be a living concept not a dry and dead idea consigned to his-

tory. So some things never change....

But there is a change in the air... somehow it just isn't the same. There is a whiff of empowered possibilities, of a fight back against this fucked up, mind numbing, soul-destroying logic of exploitation and empty rhetoric of capitalist 'progress'.

Workers are standing up themselves against the might of corrupt businessmen. Polish workers at Tesco, nursing staff in Offal, activists, sneered at by Bono and Sir Bob for attempting to shut down the PR face of institutionalised inequality that is the G8, were proved correct in their analysis that it's a talking shop, as unnecessary famine continues to ravage many nations and people.

Local communities in Mayo, Cork Donegal and elsewhere are linking their struggles and sharing confidence in collective organising, sharing the same disillusionment with bankrupt gombeen politics. The Rossport 5 and the Catholic Worker 5 inspire more than they know.

Anarchist ideas are shown to be inherent in all these things. No one is controlling this movement towards real and meaningful democracy. It is us. It is you. As our collective disillusionment turns to anger and its creative energy, we find each other again like old friends.

Solidarity carries us as we learn from each other, plotting a path to a future we all can shape and share. "Nothing is different it just isn't the same..."

by Mark Malone



Free Libertarian Socialist Paper



# Thinking About Anarchism: Organisation

*It is an old cliché that anarchists are against organisation - the media loves to point out an imagined contradiction between anarchism and organisation. The reality is that (among other things) anarchism is a theory of organisation. The circled A often seen sprayed on walls represents the A of anarchism within the O of organisation.*

The confusion arises because anarchists criticise all forms of top down organisation and all too often we are told these are the only forms that can exist. Whether it's the boss in the workplace or the politician in the Dail we are educated to believe this is the only way to get things done.

Of course in our day to day interactions with friends and relatives we never organise things this way. Can you imagine arranging a night out where one person ordered everyone else to turn up at a particular pub or to go to a particular cinema?

## Forms of anarchist organisation

There is no one right form of anarchist organisation. Rather, different forms are used for different purposes. What all these forms have in common is a desire to avoid the creation of any hierarchy while at the same time making sure that whatever needs to be done gets done.

### Informal organisation

The simplest form is the informal form where a small group of people want to do something, they discuss this and then they go ahead and do it.

This works pretty well for small scale individual projects - in particular if there is some reason why you don't want the project to be public knowledge. Opening up an abandoned building in order to squat in it might be an example.

## That's Capitalism

### THOSE CRAZY BOSSES

A trade union in the USA has been accused of voodoo. Harborside Healthcare has had to withdraw charges that the SEIU union had turned to voodoo to intimidate workers in its Massachusetts nursing home. Seemingly the union was concocting magic spells to force workers to join! Workers had voted 2:1 in favour of unionisation.

This is the second known case where

However it is not the best form of organisation for involving lots, i.e. hundreds or even thousands, of people or involving new people because the existing group of people already know each other well and those who people who are not in the core group of friends will tend to be excluded (accidentally or otherwise) from a lot of the decision making because of the informality. This form of organisation is sometimes called an affinity group.



*The WSM breaking their backs at the GPO*

### The Network

This is useful where a large group of people are interested in a common project and want to be able to rapidly involve as many people as possible. It might be composed of a collection of affinity groups and programmatic groups or it might simply be composed of individuals.

It's a good form of organisation for one off protests or events. Typically there will be one or more assemblies that define and redefine a set of goals/mandates and alongside this lots of sub-groups and individuals who will implement these mandates or do what is required to fulfill the goals.

However its open nature makes it easy for hostile opponents and others to 'infil-

trate' it. Its lack of anything but basic agreement on core principles mean that over time disagreements within the network may grow to paralyse it and prevent it taking action.

Networks in Ireland in recent years have included Dissent, Dublin Grassroots Network and Grassroots Network Against the War.

### Project Groups

These are useful when you want to achieve some single long term aim like opening a bookshop, creating an indymedia or sustaining a social centre where part of the goal is to bring new people into the project. Seomra Spraoi is one such project.

### Programmatic Groups

This is where people come together around an agreed detailed programme and set of written positions. Because of the often quite detailed agreement between the members it is possible to have a long running organisation that builds up considerable resources.

It also will develop a reputation (for better or worse) amongst those who come into contact with. Internally it should build a high level of trust and mutual understanding between its members which allows a high level of solidarity and mutual aid.

The greatest advantage of such a form of organisation is its ability to weave a common thread between a number of projects and struggles through both involvement of its members in them and through a publication that details each of them to many people.

The disadvantages of this form of organisation is that it requires a level of commitment to join and quite a lot of time spent in internal discussions to reach collective agreements. Because of both of these it will seldom be able to grow very fast without losing its original purpose. The Workers Solidarity Movement is an example of this form of organisation but our members are also involved in all the other forms discussed.

*by Andrew Flood*

a company has turned to the state for protection against voodoo. Both involved Haitian staff, who managers claimed used magic to win union rights. Why they didn't use these powers to win a 100% pay rise or a four hour day is not explained!

### TAX CHEATS LOOKED AFTER ...AGAIN

Tax cheats who did not avail of the two opportunities to come forward and escape prosecution and pay reduced penalties were given yet another chance in July. If only the law was as easy going with the rest of us as it is with the millionaires who hide their cash in bogus

'non-resident' and offshore accounts.

### GREEDY RULERS & STARVING CHILDREN

In the part of Africa south of the Sahara desert, 320 million people live on less than \$1 a day. Worldwide 2.7 billion people live on less than \$2 a day. Meanwhile Forbes magazine tells us that the world's 691 known billionaires have a combined wealth of \$2,300 billion. That's more than two years income for each of those 2.7 billion people. Imagine what could be achieved if all that cash was invested in health, education, useful jobs, and clean water supplies.

# Why Would Gays Want To Marry?

**The issue of gay marriage has come to the fore again recently with both Canada and Spain approving bills to make it legal. In this interview we talk to Judy Walsh, from the Equality Studies department in UCD about how marriage and partnership rights are currently constructed in Ireland.**

*WSM:* Can you explain how marriage and partnership rights stand at the moment in Ireland?

*JW:* There is a very clear hierarchy in the Irish legal system. Marriage is the very privileged family form and that is confined to straight people. At the moment it excludes people who have a different gender identity that hasn't been recognised.

In terms of what this contract involves, once you sign up for marriage you take on fairly extensive obligations towards your partner but you also have a range of benefits conferred on you largely around tax, social welfare, employment benefits.

*WSM:* Do the policies around partnership rights have a negative impact for all relationships outside of marriage or is it just same sex couples?

*JW:* Anything outside the marital family unit is treated less favourably; so solo parents, people who are heterosexual but are cohabiting or not and are not married are all treated as lesser forms of family than the marital family, the courts have made that very clear. The constitution prescribes special protection for the married family.

In relation to social welfare last year the government introduced legislation to say that gay or lesbian co-habiting couples are not to be treated as couples for the purpose of social welfare.

In most areas you find that married couples are benefiting and have the most defined set of rights. If you own a property and if you are married your spouse has an automatic share in the property, moreover married couples don't have to pay inheritance tax. If you are not married and you are in the same situation and your partner dies it depends whether you have written a will

or not. Your partner is a stranger to the law.

*WSM:* Are there other ways in which people who can't legally get married lose out?

*JW:* Sure, children are probably the one is most acute in people's actual lives.

In terms of parent child relationships, if you are married both parents are automatically the legal guardians of their children. Where the parents of the kid are not married to each other the mother is automatically given custody and rights over the child.



Married fathers are presumed to be automatically good parents and unmarried fathers are seen as having a lesser status. The real problem here is not discrimination based on gender but on marital status.

*WSM:* How does this effect same sex couples that have a child?

*JW:* The biological parent, whether they be a man or women is the guardian. The partner would fall outside the parental unit. There is no provision at the moment to have a gay or lesbian partner to be appointed as guardian.

*WSM:* Do you see these laws changing so that same sex couples will be able to get married?

*JW:* Marriage is somewhere off in the distant future. The gay and lesbian lobby have various positions, which is not necessarily a bad thing. Many groups

that have put in proposals are saying they don't want marriage per se; they just want some form of recognition. For example GLUE who are concerned mostly with people whose partner is outside the EU want some form of recognition; for them it's an urgent issue of being able to be with their partner in the one place.

David Norris drew up a bill to put gay and lesbian relationships on some sort of legal footing with opposite sex non-married couples. This was introduced last year but it has been deferred. The government indicated that it would draw up its own proposals. The issue is gaining some political momentum and

I can imagine there will be a larger debate around this fairly soon.

*WSM:* Do you think that state should be regulating interpersonal relationships?

*JW:* There needs to be some form of ground rules to protect people from being exploited, from violence and abuse.

Traditionally the state has used marriage for the base of many things, basically maintaining inequalities, privatising responsibility and care. Basically the state subsidises marriage, we give it financial benefits, we need to ask why don't we subsidise solo parents. At the moment children are inheriting the poverty of these parents. People talk about meritocracy and I think it's a joke.

*WSM:* What is your utopian vision of relationship formation and regulation?

*JW:* Autonomy and equality as the two core values, where every individual would have autonomy and the right to self-determination, to freely choose the type of relationships they want to form with whom, when etc. Subject to their not being able to exploit or abuse someone else. If each individual had a basic standard of living regardless of gender or marital status, the questions about what happens when you cohabit or get married become more or less irrelevant.

by Tobie\*

# Popular Response to Shell's Pipeline Shows Way Forward

Over the Summer in a small corner of Mayo a mass campaign of non-violent direct action systematically, and in part spontaneously, shut down a major development being carried out by several multi-national corporations and the state. Speeches decrying state subservience to big business were heard at rallies in Ballina, Castlebar and Belmullet.

Links were made with resisters of so-called "miscarriages of justice" (aka frame-ups) with Frank Mc Brearty Jnr speaking at the Ballina rally, and with Paul Hill and Nicky Kelly visiting the Rosspport Solidarity Camp.

The campaign had already made significant international links, with relatives of Ken Saro Wiwa having previously visited the area to speak at public meetings, and Erris campaigners having attended Shell AGMs alongside people with similar problems from around the world.

During the summer people in Louisiana who live beside a Shell refinery held a solidarity protest with the people in Mayo resisting the construction of a Shell refinery.

The significance of all this can be seen in the scantiness of a tradition of popular struggle which this campaign can draw upon. Most historical references being to events in the 19th century, bar the occasional brief mention of a tax refusal movement in the 60s.

Moreover this is in an area where according to one local resident the tallies in his village are usually 99% Fianna Fail. If this campaign is successful, and while its opponents are formidable its participants are steadfast and so it stands a good chance of being so, the people the corporations and state are trying to turn into victims will have no doubt that they can fight and they can win. The same is true, although less so, of

people watching, in the first instance people who face similar problems of incinerators or superdumps or whatever being built next to their homes.

The Grassroots Gathering objectives, the nearest thing the libertarian left in Ireland has to a common platform, reads in part:

*Organise for the control of the workplace by those who work there.*

*Call for the control of communities by the people who live there.*

*Argue for a sustainable environmental,*

this summer its Irish wing was in Erris and is mostly divided into small groups with surnames, rather than small groups with acronyms.

In an article entitled "Class Struggle Versus Summit Protests" Matti from libcom.org argues that: "The fact is that summit protests are yet more disconnecting of politics from the lives of working class people. They are totally symbolic and for all their radical talk, couldn't even being to build a movement capable of challenging capitalism. Our politics are only relevant if we

ground them solidly in our everyday lives and orientate ourselves towards our workmates and neighbours to solve the problems faced by our class."

The problem is in a generally quiescent society this can be something of a major task, the solidarity model employed in the Shell to Sea campaign, that of solidarity

pickets and the solidarity camp, allows libertarian activists everywhere to swing behind a localised popular struggle.

## What You Can Do:

Contribute to the Rosspport Five Legal Defence Fund: Account Name: The Rosspport Five Fund, Bank: Ulster Bank, Main Street, Belmullet, Co Mayo. Sort Code: 98-53-14, Account Number: 23987020 Write to prisoners: Willie Corduff, Philip McGrath, Brendan Philbin, Vincent McGrath and Michael O'Suighin at Cloverhill Prison, Clondalkin, Dublin 22, Ireland.

Participate in local Shell to Sea groups and actions, including picketing, blockading Shell and Statoil garages in your neighbourhood in order to pressurise the fat cats into moving their operations off-shore.

by Terry Clancey



Handsome anarchists (and sexy republicans) picket Statoil, who are shareholders in the Corrib Gas Project

*economic and social system, agreed by the people of the planet.*

For this to be remotely realisable a lot of people need to be empowered with a sense of their collective strength and this empowerment comes about through resisting capitalisms' impositions in our daily lives. Moreover such practical involvement reveals more profoundly the truth about the nature of parliamentary politics, the Dail and the courts than acres of trees spent on subversive propaganda ever could. Furthermore popular struggle is the process which equips us all with the skills and organisational forms necessary to control workplaces freed of corporations, and to control communities freed of the state. If "anti-globalisation" or "anti-capitalism" means challenging corporate/state power and means building links with people in struggle the world over then

# Tescos Exploits Foreign Workers

During July and August, major Polish newspapers, TV and radio stations carried a story about two Polish workers, who were dismissed from TESCO in Dublin, because of their fight for workers' rights.

Pickets organized by TESCO Temporary Workers' Defence Committee into being took place in several towns of Ireland, Britain, and Poland. Polish newspapers called the case 'global protest against TESCO'. One of sacked warehouse attendants, **Radek Sawicki** tells us about the struggle against TESCO and its consequences.

## MODERN FORMS OF EXPLOITATION

For workers from Poland and other central and eastern Europe countries, work in Ireland is often only the possibility of



earning pretty good money. Since we entered the EU, the Irish labour market stands open for us. Many people take advantage of this situation, and to-day, there are Polish, Czech, Lithuanian and

Slovakian workers in almost every factory in Ireland. Despite the fact, that according to Irish law, all workers in Ireland have equal rights, dishonest employers often try to cheat temporary workers. In my case, the conflict with the employer took some time to mature, because it took time and many observations to realise the mechanisms by which I and many other workers were exploited..

## Arriving in Ireland

In November 2004, I arrived in Dublin, and got employment via the GRAFTON Recruitment agency. The agency sent

me to work in TESCO Distribution warehouse, where I worked for eight months. My main task was preparing ordered goods to be sent to shops, which means carrying packages.

I was one of many agency workers; in addition to us, there were workers who were employed directly by TESCO. They were doing the same job as us, but their wages were on average €200 higher.

Unlike us, they had every second Saturday off, received holiday bonuses, and had the full benefits going with normal employment. Naturally, every agency worker dreams of being employed directly by TESCO, but the corporation avoids signing contracts with workers, so it's very difficult to get off the agency's leash.

Signing a contract obliges the employers to do many things: it's favorable for them not to get burdened by responsibility, and to take advantage of agencies' provision of cheap labour. The arrangement between TESCO and agencies turned out to be useful for Tesco, when we protested against rising of daily norm. Leaders of the protest were withdrawn from TESCO's warehouse by agency employing them. This way TESCO got rid of the loud, inconvenient workers.

## Tesco Grinds Harder

When I started work, the daily norm in TESCO was to lift 750 packages per day. However, agency workers very often used to pick 900 or even 1000 packages, hoping, that their diligence would be noticed, and rewarded with signing a contract with TESCO. No way! The officiousness of these naive workers provoked TESCO to raise the norms. First, to 800, and then to 900 packages a day.

At that moment, a group of Polish workers employed by Grafton and Jobs went to the manager, and asked about the reason for raising the norm. We were told that if we had a problem, we could find ourselves some other job.

As a form of protest, the next day I put on a t-shirt with the inscription on it: WE ARE PICKING 800. NO MORE. The atmosphere got nervous. SPITU trade union offered its help, and agency workers – despite intimidation attempts made by the agency – started joining it. Negotiations between SPITU, TESCO and the agencies started. In spite of that, the norm was risen again in June – to 1000 packages a day!

Also an employee was fired without any reason being given, which probably was his refusal to lift more than 800 boxes. As sign of solidarity with him, I put on the provocative t-shirt, again.

Polish media took the topic, and started informing about the arrangement, unfavourable for workers, between TESCO and the agencies, and about the workers' rebellion.

One day after a big article was published in one of biggest Polish magazines, I was called to Grafton agency office, and informed that there is no work for me in TESCO anymore. One of the reasons TESCO wanted to get rid of me was the criticism triggered by us in the Polish media. The same day Zbyszek Bukala, who was also engaged in the protest, lost his job too.

Our reaction to this attempt to silence us was to establish TESCO Agency Workers'



Defence Committee. We organized a picket in front of gate of the warehouse we used to work in. We demanded our jobs back, the abolishment of the 1000 packages a day norm, and adoption of a rule saying that after three months of working in TESCO, an agency worker automatically signs a contract with TESCO. Solidarity actions, organised by anarchists, took place in several towns in Poland, Britain, and Ireland. Polish workers in other factories started talking about problems of agency workers.

Our protest was supported by trade unions and workers' groups in several countries. If we try to summarize the outcome of the conflict with TESCO in Dublin, we have to say, that it's an unquestionable advantage in publicizing the problem of agency workers, a problem still unsolved in all European countries.

# Politicians - We Don't Need Them!

*Evidence that Ireland is run by a golden circle of the rich is everywhere. Bertie Ahern earns close to 250,000 euros each year. Other cabinet members receive 197,000 euros a year. Since Bertie has taken office, his salary has almost doubled.*

Cabinet members wages increased in 1996, again in 2000, and again this year they get a pay rises of 7.5%.

Now Bertie's weekly pay is almost €4,807. This is fifteen times the pay of someone on the minimum wage, eight times the average pay of someone working in a local authority or of a man on the average industrial wage. Prison Officers, with a weekly wage of €1,106.71 are the highest paid public sector workers according to the Central Statistics Office ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)) yet they still earn four times less than Bertie.

## Suits You Sir

These pay levels put Bertie and his cabinet colleagues into a small elite group of high earners. And the decisions made by this wealthy cabal reflect their class position. They don't use the public health service, they send their children to private schools, they know they won't have to depend on state pensions and they can afford to hire private childcare for their children.

So it is no surprise that when they talk about ealthcare, ducation, care of the young and the old they talk about tax breaks to people so they can buy more private services. More private services means less spending on public services which also means that the only way to access basic services is to go private, which most of us can't afford.

We would like a world where public services are available to all, not just those with money. In this day and age it is scandalous that many Irish people don't go to their GP when they are sick because they can't afford the cost of the visit.

In fact, when you look closely at how Ireland is run, you discover that the unelected friends of the politicians, who are also members of the wealthy elite, govern much of our society. The National Roads Authorities oversees the Irish road networks. Its members are unelected, appointed by government.



body that decides whether business mergers can occur. Its members are unelected, appointed by government. Dublin's urban regeneration projects, whether it be in Temple Bar, the Docklands, or the Digital Hub in the Liberties are all run by unelected boards of managements.

Unelected bodies 'quangos', have responsibility for a wide share of Irish society from the health service, to tourist promotion, to inland fisheries. And who gets appointed to these boards? The wealthy and the powerful. For example, Fianna Fail appointed their friend, the builder Joe Burke as chair of the Dublin Port Tunnel and Bertie recently appointed his ex to the National Consumer Agency.

Is it any wonder that Ireland ranks 17<sup>th</sup> out of 146 countries on the Global Corruption Index.

## Anarchist Democracy

As opposed to dodgy politicians and their well heeled mates. Anarchists have a very different idea of democracy. We are in favour of direct democracy rather than representative democracy.

With representative democracy people are elected to 'represent' the views of the

general population. We know from bitter experience that in reality politicians ignore the wishes of the electorate for the three years following a election.

A cunning party like Fianna Fail spends the year preceding a election doling out grants and funding in the hope of buying a couple of votes, only to cut-back drastically once elected. The bottom line is that under the sham democracy we live in today, there is nothing much we can do if a politician displeases us, bar wait for the opportunity to vote for his or her equally self-interested colleague at the next general election.

## Direct Democracy

Direct democracy is different. It is a democracy from the bottom up, where people have the meaningful opportunity to participate in decisions that affect them. Here rather than electing people to represent us on all possible issue that may come up, people gather in assemblies, whether at work or in the local community, to discuss and decide issues that concern them.

When the issues concern people from different areas or workplaces, delegates are mandated to represent us only on the particular issue that is under discussion. So for example, if a decision needs to be made on a new road or on hospital funding, each local area would discuss and decide on proposals, and these proposals would be taken to a meeting of delegates from all the relevant areas.

If the issue is a controversial one, the delegates can bring the discussion back to the local level with the ideas of other communities and the debate continued again. This sounds slow, but in reality, as the decision making with regard to the Shell pipeline in Mayo illustrates, its inclusivity is far more efficient than depending on alleged experts, profiteering capitalists, and corrupt politicians.

Furthermore, delegates would not be paid anymore than anybody else. And unlike the politicians in Dail Eireann, they would be re-callable. That is, if a local area is unhappy with the work done by the delegates, they would have the power to immediately replace them. This is the world where people would have the power instead of a minority of very wealthy, self serving politicians.

*Demonstrators assembled at the GPO just before the main DGN protest on Mayday 2004 where they decided to go ahead with the demo.  
Photo: Noise Machine, indymedia.ie*



# Rebel Girl: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's Autobiography

Gurley Flynn was of Irish descent and came from a long line of rebels and revolutionaries. She begins her autobiography describing the exploits of some of her ancestors who joined the French when in 1798 they landed in Killalla Bay to help free Ireland from British rule and set up an Irish Republic.

Growing up in New York around the start of the 1900s she describes how from an early age she was aware of social injustice and had a keen hatred of poverty. In her family "ideas were our meal and drinks and sometimes a substitute for both.

It is not strange, therefore, that in such a household our minds were fertile fields for socialism, when the seeds finally came". The first seeds came in the form of leaflets distributed door to door advertising a Socialist Sunday night forum which she and father began to regularly attend.

She quickly read as much radical literature as she could get her hands on and was greatly influenced by anarchist Peter Kropotkin as well as the writings of Marx and Engels.

"Socialism was a great discovery – a hope, a purpose, a flame within me, lit first by a spark from anthracite".

In 1906, when still only 15 years old, she gave her first public speech entitled "What Socialism Will Do For Women" and from then went on to give speeches regularly at mass meetings. She threw herself into the labour movement and was too impatient to finish school "With the Revolution on my mind I found it difficult to concentrate on Latin or geometry." At the age of 16 she already had a great reputation as a passionate socialist orator and as one of the most active workers for the cause in New York City.

She gives a fascinating account of New York around this time: how the East side was a hotbed of radical ideas – with "the Revolution" on everybody's lips; full of immigrants from all over the world, living in dire poverty and working in sweatshops for starvation wages.

in all different languages "Jewish, Russian, Polish, Italian, German and others".

It was around this time she met James Connolly who was living in New York at the time and was an IWW organiser. He became a family friend and she was one of those to form the Irish Socialist Club – with Connolly as chairman and Gurley-Flynn's sister as secretary.

Elizabeth Gurley-Flynn joined the (The Industrial Workers of the World) IWW in 1906 and the bulk of the autobiography describes the various, often bitterly fought struggles she was involved in as an IWW organiser. She describes the IWW as "a militant, fighting, working class union. The employing class soon recognised this and gave battle from its birth. The IWW identified itself with all the pressing, immediate needs of the poorest, the most exploited, the most oppressed workers."

Gurley-Flynn gives a great account of the culture of the IWW and of how they organised, the battles for free speech, of the strikes they won and lost. She also writes of the various well known figures from US labour history she knew such as Big Bill Hayworth, Joe Hill,

Mother Jones (originally from Cork!) as well as famous anarchists such as Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman.

This book ends around the time of the state murder of Italian anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. There is another part to her autobiography which details her life after having joined the Communist Party.

Already a communist party member when she wrote this autobiography she unfortunately dismisses some of her early activity – in particular for example her famous pamphlet on workplace sabotage.

Nevertheless the book is a passionate and inspiring account of a life dedicated to a revolutionary ideal from a remarkable woman.

Before Joe Hill was executed he wrote a farewell letter to Elizabeth Gurley Flynn where he writes "you have been more to me than a Fellow Worker. You have been an inspiration....locate a few more Rebel Girls like yourself because they are needed and needed badly." This book, already 50 years old, will certainly continue to inspire and encourage others to follow in her footsteps.

by Deirdre Hogan



## CONTACTS

### ANARCHIST GROUPS

#### Workers Solidarity Movement

Platformist Anarchist Organisation

Publishes this paper  
PO box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland  
[www.struggle.ws/](http://www.struggle.ws/) wsm

[wsm\\_ireland@yahoo.com](mailto:wsm_ireland@yahoo.com) [corkwsm@eircom.net](mailto:corkwsm@eircom.net)  
Affiliated with International Libertarian Solidarity

#### Organise! Working Class Resistance

Class Struggle Anarchist Organisation

Publishes "Working Class Resistance"  
PO Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ  
[www.organiseireland.org](http://www.organiseireland.org)

### LIBERTARIAN NETWORKS

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

#### Grassroots Network

<http://flag.blackened.net/infohub/grassroots>

Non-hierarchical Direct-Action Network

Network of grassroots social justice activists with groups in Dublin, Cork & Galway.

#### Indymedia Ireland

[www.indymedia.ie](http://www.indymedia.ie)

Irish Branch of Global Media Collective  
The place to find Irish campaign news.

#### Barracka Books

Radical Book Store

61 Barrack Street, Cork City  
[barrackabooks@yahoo.ie](mailto:barrackabooks@yahoo.ie)

#### Cork Autonomous Zone

Social Space

61 Barracka St., Cork  
[corkcaz@yahoo.ie](mailto:corkcaz@yahoo.ie)

#### Red Ink Infoshop

Anarchist / Radical Book & Zine Store  
4 Upper Fownes St. Temple Bar, Dublin 2

### ACTIVIST GROUPS

Activist groups fighting for social justice

#### Shell to Sea

[www.shelltosea.com](http://www.shelltosea.com)

Website of campaign to move Shell's pipeline offshore from Co. Mayo

#### Alliance For Choice

Campaign for women's freedom to choose

[www.struggle.ws/ireland/allianceforchoice/index.html](http://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.residentsagainstracism.org](http://www.residentsagainstracism.org)

### EMAIL/WEB

[irishanarchism@yahoogroups.com](mailto:irishanarchism@yahoogroups.com)

Big, high-volume anarchist discussion list

[ainriail@struggle.ws](mailto:ainriail@struggle.ws)

Low-volume newsletter from the WSM  
Announcements, Reports, Articles

[www.anarchism.ws/ireland.html](http://www.anarchism.ws/ireland.html)

Index of Irish anarchist internet resources

[www.anarkismo.net](http://www.anarkismo.net)

International Anarchist Website



# The Price of Being Reasonable

*There were fewer strike days last year than in any year since the 1920s. At the same time the number of disputes referred to the Labour Court was up 21%. Does this mean that 'going through the procedures' and being 'reasonable' is paying dividends of workers?*

Well, not for the workers who are getting one euro an hour in Irish Ferries after the Irish crews were dumped and replaced with super-exploited East Europeans and Filipinos. Not for the Aer Lingus workers whose bosses were circulating a document on how to intimidate people into taking redundancy. Not for the vast majority of us who have seen our bosses make huge profits in recent years and at the same time seen our pay rises restricted.

Thirty years ago 77% of national income went on wages & pensions, today it has dropped to 55%. For most of us, living standards have certainly improved but we are getting a smaller proportion of the wealth we help to create.

Many of our union leaders seem to be as opposed to militant action as would be any IBEC representative. Almost two decades of 'social partnership' deals with the employers and government have made them very hostile to anything that might endanger their cosy deals.

And the 1991 Industrial Relations Act leaves unions open to legal action if they don't give advance notice of industrial action to the employer or if they support sympathy strikes, legal action that could cost them millions. Most union leaders did not oppose this law. We now have the absurd situation where the largest organisation in the country, one with the power to shut down everything, reduces itself to passively lobbying the government.

SIPTU President Jack O'Connor sees the problem: "This widening gulf between workers' rights on paper and their experience in practice highlights the abysmally inadequate resources allocated to the enforcement of the legislation. There are only 21 labour inspectors to cover 1.6 million workers.

"Even if, against all the odds, an unscrupulous employer happens to



fall foul of a labour inspector, the penalties for breaches of the legislation are so paltry as to have absolutely no deterrent effect.

However O'Connor can't see the solution. The best he can do is to call for "a properly resourced labour inspectorate". Does he really believe that polite lobbying will be sufficient?

After all he said (on April 12th) that "the exploitation of workers by Gama and others were not accidents. They were the inevitable consequence of a ruthless institutional policy promoted through the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment".

Our unions, for all their caution and conservatism, are important. People in unionised jobs have better pay and conditions than in non-union ones. We stay in our unions because we know that they are useful.

But, if we don't return to the combative trade unionism of Connolly and Larkin, we will let the bosses think they can get away with almost anything.

by Alan McSimoin

## Solidarity - The Working Class Weapon

British Airways bosses are investigating whether they can prove that the T&GWU union helped organise last month's one-day strike at Heathrow airport. Sympathy strikes are unlawful in Britain (and in Ireland too). If they can prove it, they can sue the union.

The stoppage was in support of sacked staff at Gate Gourmet, BA's in-flight caterers. Management there have admitted that they began planning eight months previously to get rid of their staff and replace them with Eastern Europeans who would be paid much lower wages.

Interestingly, the parent firm of Gate Gourmet, Texas Pacific, is headed by David Bonderman, who is also chairman of union-busting yanair.

The law says it is ok to plot to sack workers and replace them with people on pathetically low pay. The law also says it is illegal for unions to organise support from another employer's staff for their members. And they say the law is impartial!

In reality, sympathy strikes are a workers' best weapon as individually we have little power compared to the boss. Standing together, however, we can defend our rights. The bosses know this, hence the attack on even the barest form of solidarity by workers.

The more this type of non-unionised labour is accepted, the worse it will be for all workers as over the race to the bottom will sooner or later trickle down to unionised workers as bosses claim they need cut ben-

efits in order to compete.

An Post's vulnerability to non-unionised courier companies is an example of this; the bosses there are putting pressure to reduce the conditions of postal workers claiming they are under threat from private courier companies.

The response of the workers in this situation needs to be to pressurise their union to begin a recruitment campaign in these other companies so that working conditions are raised for all workers in all companies instead of a futile short sighted attempt to protect current workers.

Solidarity amongst workers - rather than cunning negotiating skills of bureaucrats - is the strength of the workingclass. Let's return to that.