

## Resist to Win Rollover & Lose

**A bully is strolling across a schoolyard in Clara. He steals from, humiliates and hits the other kids. Whatever you decide is the best way to deal with him, there is one thing you probably won't do. You won't sit down with him over tea and biscuits and try to hammer out an agreement about how to convince everyone else that bullying is inevitable and might even be good for them.**

A big majority of trade union members voted for a strike on March 30th against pay cuts, whether that be through refusal to pay the agreed annual increase or through the pension' levy imposed on public sector workers. Already we had seen 120,000 people march through Dublin. There could be little doubt that most union members were up for a fight to stop PAYE workers and the poor being targeted to pay for the crisis of the rich.

So what did the Irish Congress of Trade Union (ICTU) do with the mandate they received for a one-day national stoppage on March 30th? As soon as Brian Cowen invited them to talks, they cancelled it and scuttled off to Government Buildings. Nothing concrete had been offered.

In fact, Cowen used the words 'societal ownership' in describing how to deal with the crisis in his letter to ICTU. In plain English this says, and ICTU is agreeing, that society as a whole

must accept responsibility for the crisis. The bullied must take some responsibility for being bullied.

Most of us have never even been inside a company boardroom or Minister's office; let alone made decisions about closing factories, axing hospital wards, giving a low tax regime to the extremely rich or turning a blind eye to dodgy banking. But we somehow share the responsibility and must "share the pain", so that the rich can remain rich. It's nonsense.

The plan is to drive down wages in order to protect profits. The Taoiseach has talked about a 10% drop in living standards over the next two years. IBEC has advised its members not to concede pay increases for the next two years. The small and medium sized employers' organisation, ISME, has already boasted that its members had cut wages by an average of 13% in the six months up to March.

With the new levies many public sector workers have seen their tax bill double. And every time we roll over and do nothing about it the bosses come back looking for more and more from us.

There is a very real recession and the big question is who should pay. Should it be those who run the system in their own



class interests? Or should it be those who have no say at all in big economic decisions? Should it be millionaires or working people?

We are not powerless. We do have the power to put a halt to the employers' offensive. If most of us strike together what can they do but make concessions? As the songwriter and union organizer Joe Hill said:

***"If the workers take a notion, they can stop all speeding trains;***

***Every ship upon the ocean, they can tie with mighty chains;***

***Every wheel in the creation, every mine and every mill,***

***Fleets and armies of the nation, will at their command stand still."***

A good start will be putting more life into our unions on the job. The workplace is key because that is where we have the possibility to move beyond protest and start effectively resisting. It can't be done for us, but – together – PAYE workers are more than capable of doing it for ourselves.

# Government Gives Away €315 billion!

**Long-term Rossport campaigner, Sean Mallory, gives his views on the give away of Ireland's natural resources and the recession.**

While the Irish economy was built on a construction boom and massive inward investment, it seemed to go unnoticed that, by our governments own February 2009 estimate, there is €315bn worth of oil and gas deposits all along our western seaboard. At the same time, the government tells us that it has no money to pay for cervical cancer tests and the construction of specialised multiple sclerosis units, amongst other vital services.

Everyone has heard of Ireland's gas and oil. From time to time, the vicious treatment by the State of the communities in North Mayo trying to stop Shell destroying their area makes national news. What is often neglected is who owns the gas and oil.

A series of multinationals known as the "super-majors" own these resources. Shell, Statoil, Marathon and Esso have been given blocks of offshore areas to explore by the State. Whatever they find, they keep and write all costs, including exploration, off against tax whilst the Irish Government claims nothing.

So, how did we get to this situation? Well



it is simple, Shell and the other corporations did business Irish-style. It seems they greased the palms of the usual suspects. The exploration companies got their most favourable terms from Ray Burke in 1987 and Bertie Ahern in 1992.

The opposition were no better. Labour and Fine Gael were in Government after the 1987 and 1992 deals but didn't overturn them. The so-called "clean" party, the Greens, are currently in power with those who have given away our natural resources.

The fact the government won't move on

the overly generous deals that the oil and gas companies enjoy gives lie to their "share the pain" rhetoric. The track record of the political parties in the Dail, both in government and in opposition, shows that they have no intention of making the rich and powerful elites pay. Instead, the government is bleeding us dry to get 4 billion while it lets exploration companies walk away with €315b. We are the only ones who are carrying the burden, while they are continuing as normal.

**Sean Mallory**

## Contacts

### Anarchist Organisations

#### Workers Solidarity Movement

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#### Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group (RAG)

PO BOX 10785, Dublin 1.  
http://ragdublin.blogspot.com/

### Libertarian Networks

#### Indymedia Ireland

Alternative user-generated Irish news.  
http://www.indymedia.ie

#### Seomra Spraoi

Dublin Social Centre  
10 Belvedere Court, Dublin 1.  
http://www.seomraspraoi.org

#### Galway Social Space

24 Middle Street, Galway.  
http://www.galwayspace.org

### Campaigning Groups

#### Free Education for Everyone

Campaign to stop the reintroduction of college fees and to promote the right to free education for all.  
stopfees@gmail.com  
http://free-education.info/

#### Shell to Sea

Campaign to move Shell's gas pipeline offshore from Co. Mayo.  
http://www.shelltosea.com

#### Hands Off the People of Iran

Anti-imperialist network for solidarity with Iranian trade unionists & the women's rights movement.  
http://www.hopoi.org

#### Choice Ireland

Abortion rights action group  
choiceireland@gmail.com  
http://www.choiceireland.org

#### Alliance for Choice (NI)

http://allianceforchoiceni.org

#### Residents Against Racism

Opposing racism and deportations.  
24 hour helpline: 087 666 2060

# London Calling to the Faraway Crowds

At the beginning of April, the G20 group of major world economies met in London. Media attention focused as much on the confrontation between police and demonstrators outside the conference as on what was going on between the suits inside. The London police were their usual charmless selves and even managed to kill an uninvolved man, Ian Tomlinson, on his way home from work.



Despite the hype from the media and police, the actual fracas on the streets was relatively minor. That the media spent more time on this shows the total lack of expectation that the conference itself would deliver anything of significance. But who were the attendees, what was it supposed to be trying to do and why did no-one expect it to deliver?

The G20 was informally put together in the aftermath of the 1998 Asian Financial crisis and formalised five years later. It consists of the G7, the old "West" (USA, UK, Canada, France, Germany and Italy) plus Japan, combined with 13 other economies from Asia and the rest of the emerging world. Whereas in the aftermath of the 1998 crisis it was very much the G7 laying down the law to the Asian and other G20 countries, ten years on, this relationship has, if not reversed, radically changed.

The G20 is now the G7 plus all the main countries they owe money to - the other members being China, Australia, India, South Korea, Indonesia, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, South Africa and Saudi Arabia, plus the EU. Collectively, the G20 economies comprise 85% of global GNP, 80% of world trade (including EU intra-trade) and two-thirds of the world population.

The reason for the meeting in London was the current financial crisis and what to do about it. The reason that no-one really expected it to achieve anything significant is because, although the G7 is now no longer in a position to dictate terms to China and the rest, neither are they yet powerful enough to tell the USA how to clean up its act. So, despite all the spin about how much of workers and taxpayers money the governments are going to spend to bail out their friends in the banks, no-one is surprised that the result is a stalemate.

Whatever the changes in the move from the G7 to the G20, one thing stays the same, Ireland is still not invited. This is not the first time in history that a meeting to decide the economic fate of Irish workers has been held in London without our having any say in the matter. But it is symbolic of what's wrong with the way the world is being run, from the days of the British empire, through the USA-led G7, to the new East-West G20.

We are excluded from having any say not because we are members of something that is too small, the Irish nation, but because we are members of something too big, all the ordinary people all around the world who don't have a say in the running of the world economy.

We can't be allowed to have a say, so long as the priority for the system and the political and business elites is furthering their own power and profits at

our expense. Until that problem is solved, no group of governments, unanswerable to their own people, whether elected or not, can stop the crises happening again and again.

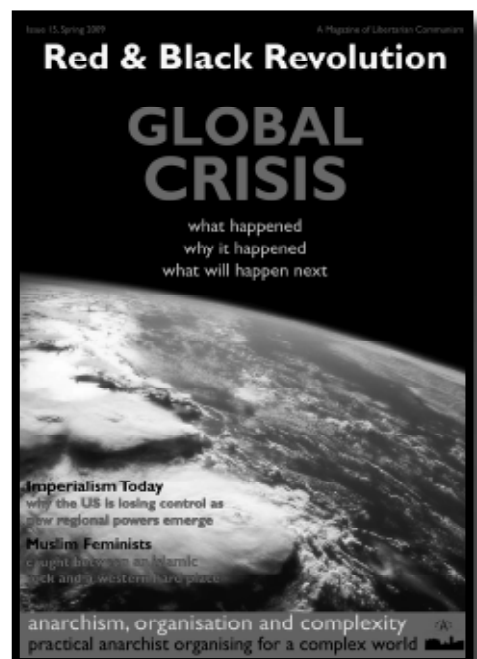


Paul Bowman

## Red & Black Revolution

The latest issue of the WSM magazine looks at the crisis and sets out to explain why it happened and what we can expect next. Other articles look at how anarchists organise in Ireland, feminism in the Muslim world, science and complex systems, and profiles of some of the women who played a huge role in the Industrial Workers of the World.

€1 / £1 from WSM members or  
P.O. Box 1528, Dublin 8.



# The Budget - Where's the Reaction?

WorkersSolidarity109

**When Brian Lenihan announced his budget last October, two of the measures in particular were met with howls of outrage and his government was forced to back down post haste. The first of these - and the one most people remember because of the dramatic pictures of the Age Action meeting in Westland Row church where Minister of State John Moloney was booed off the stage - was the attempt to take away the automatic entitlement of over-70s to medical cards.**

The other issue which met with a lot of opposition was the attempt to impose a 1% 'levy' on the wages of all workers - including those on the minimum wage. As a result of the protests against this attempt to take money out of the pockets of those who could least afford it, the government was forced to take a slight step backwards and announced within a week that the levy would not apply to those earning less than €17,500 per annum.

Just over 5 months after that partial climb-down, Brian Lenihan announced that workers earning as little as €15,028 per year will have to pay not a 1% levy but 2% of their income. Where is the reaction? Where is the anger? The budget was a blatant case of Robin Hood in reverse.

The range of thieving from the pockets of workers and the unemployed includes:

- A doubling of the income 'levy'
- Halving of jobseekers allowance for those aged 18 - 20
- A 2% annual cut in social welfare payments through abolishing the Christmas 'bonus'
- Abolition of mortgage interest relief after the first 7 years of the loan
- Doubling of the health levy
- Halving and eventual abolition of child-care supplement

In addition to this, Lenihan made it clear in his speech that there will be more of the same to come in the next couple of years. And for what? So that bankers and property developers can be rescued.

Setting up a National Asset Management Agency is a mechanism whereby the bad debts of property developers will be shifted onto the shoulders of ordinary workers. Those who caused the crisis through their reckless gambling and speculation will be protected and the futures of workers and their families are being mortgaged to the tune of anything up to €90 billion. In fact those who caused the crisis will actually be net beneficiaries of this budget. Robin Hood in reverse - take from the workers and give to the wealthy.

And Lenihan's contention that "Those who can best afford it will pay the most" needs to be treated with the contempt it deserves. While it's factually true to say that someone earning €250,000 per annum pays more (6% = €15,000) than someone earning €30,000 (2% = €600), the figures that matter are what the person has left. The person earning €250,000 can afford to pay a hell of a lot more. Lenihan's budget has continued the political strategy of defending the wealthy. Where is the reaction? Where is the anger?

**Gregor Kerr**

## Anarchists Take Over Liberty Hall

**Around 1,000 people attended the 4th annual Dublin Anarchist Bookfair in March for a day of meetings, films, debates and - of course - lots of books. One of the organisers, Colette O'Reilly, felt the "growing interest in anarchist politics is reflected in the larger attendance and bigger book sales than last year".**

The first bookfair in 2006 took place in a south inner city community hall, for the following two years it moved to a bigger venue at the social club of the INTO union. This year saw another move to the even bigger Liberty Hall, headquarters of the SIPTU union. In the centenary year of the union founded by Larkin & Connolly



it was a particularly appropriate location.

Guest speakers included Ashanti Alston, a former member of the Black Panther Party & Black Liberation Army who gave a talk that was both entertaining and inspirational about his experiences and the lessons he draws from them. Authoritarian leadership and a militarist culture were two of the things he said must be avoided in future struggles for liberty.

Other speakers included the historian Martha Acklesberg, Nidal Saadeh, a leftist Palestinian activist from Bethlehem, former CPSU President Denis Keane, Dan Finn from the Irish Socialist Network, and Julien Brophy from the student Free Education for Everyone campaign. The meetings were recorded, and some were videoed, so you can listen and watch at [www.wsm.ie](http://www.wsm.ie).

*Find out more. Check out [www.wsm.ie](http://www.wsm.ie)*

**Informacje i artykuły w języku polskim dostępne na stronie [www.wsm.ie/polska](http://www.wsm.ie/polska)**

That's  
*Capitalism*

Young Fine Gael just can't get away from their Blueshirt roots. Trinity College YFG vice-chair, Thomas Broe, has called for everyone between the ages 18-25 who has been unemployed for a year to be conscripted into the army.

Among the novel ways of spending the extra taxes taken from PAYE workers was using the Government jet to take Ministers to a rugby match in Limerick. The jet costs €7,890 an hour. 25 of the 83 journeys taken since October were to and from destinations within Ireland, even though Ministers also get free cars and drivers.

The cost of flying Tánaiste Mary Coughlan and Defence Minister Willie O'Dea to Texas on the government jet for their pointless meeting with Dell boss Michael Dell last December has been confirmed to be more than €164,000, even though the cost per person on a scheduled service would have been less than €1,000.

More than \$3 trillion worldwide has been given to banks and big business from government funds. This represents the largest shift of wealth from working class taxpayers to the rich in world history. What is a Trillion? It's a thousand billion or a million million. One million seconds is 11 days. One billion seconds is 31 years and one trillion seconds is 31,546 years.

[www.anarchistblackcat.org](http://www.anarchistblackcat.org)



A friendly and respectful online discussion board for anarchists of all stripes and those just interested in seeing what anarchists think.



International Anarchist website  
with news & discussion from  
all five continents.

# Thinking About Anarchism : What Can A Strike Achieve?

People often pose the question, what can a strike achieve? The WSM policy on trade unions states the following: "What is anarchism? When we get down to basics, it is workers collectively running a free society. Instead of taking orders from the boss and serving his/her mad rush for profit at any cost, it is about working together for the common good."

This doesn't mean that strikers set out with clear anarchist goals in mind. They don't. But collective action is the only way to win a strike - so the logic of the workers' position: collective action in production, collective action in struggle; takes us in an anarchist direction. And once in struggle peoples' ideas can change. They gain confidence, a sense of their ability to take control of their own lives.

This is why many workers who go on strike with faith in the "impartiality" of the police or with sexist ideas (to give but two examples) can find these ideas challenged by their experience in struggle ... It is only the self-activity of masses of workers that is capable of mounting an effective challenge to the bosses and their state."

Thus, for a worker to join a trade union means recognising, to at least some degree, that he or she has different interests from their boss. Unionised workers understand that they have to organise along class lines in order to defend or further their interests. We argue that this organisation should take the form of direct action in response to exploitation in the workplace and strikes are a perfect example of this.

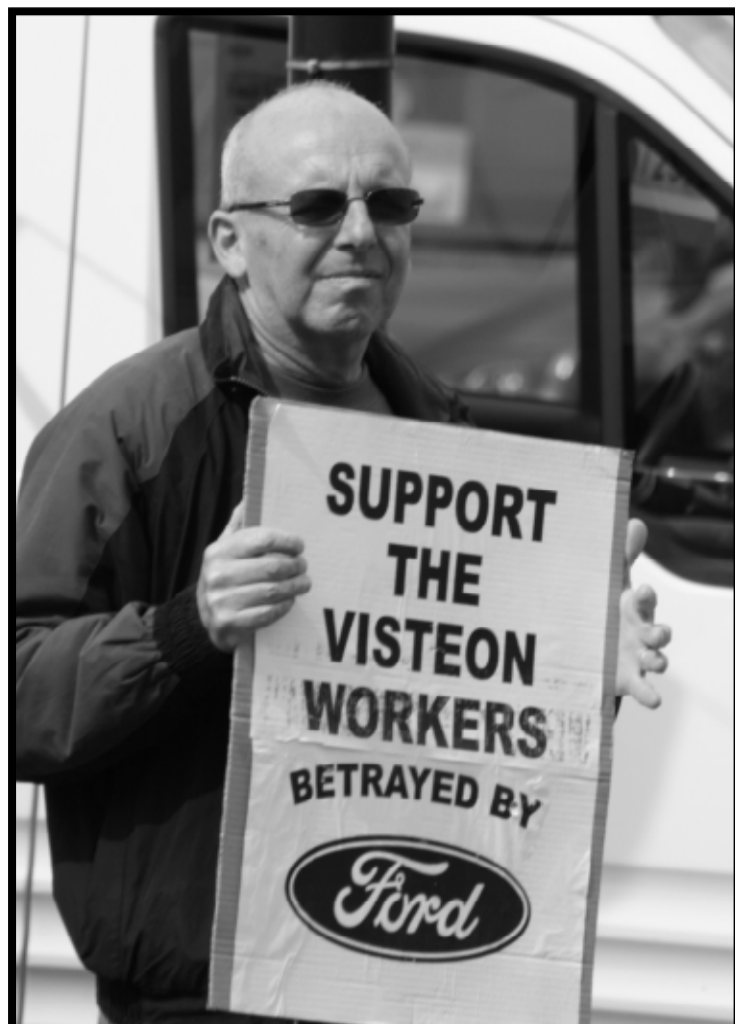
When workers strike, it demonstrates working class self-help, without having to rely on others, be it politicians or the industrial relations organs of the state. It is a lesson in the benefits of working co-operatively to try

and achieve an aim and builds confidence within our class. So, while our trade unions may be imperfect in a number of ways, activity within them is educational as well as necessary.

Fundamentally, anarchists believe in democratic control of all facets of our lives, including our workplaces. While a strike will generally have limited goals, we ultimately aspire to moving beyond limited demands to taking over, or self-management, of the workplace. Strikes are therefore important in developing the confidence and skills required to co-operatively make decisions and then carry them out.

Self-management allows for the input of all workers and thus a wide range of skills and experiences, as opposed to the workplace under capitalism where decision-making powers are monopolised by the few, and used in their own interests. Ultimately, workers' control of the workplace will also allow for the development of workers abilities through their participation in the decision-making process.

They will learn about and gain an understanding of the various processes in their workplace, rather than simply focusing on



>> Visteon Workers have already been offered an improved redundancy deal through their occupation.

their, frequently monotonous, rote tasks as is required in a hierarchically organised work environment. Taking collective action, like striking, is a vital part of the process.

Vincent O'Malley

## Anarchism & the WSM

April saw Workers Solidarity Movement members from around the country meet for their twice-yearly conference. As the WSM has a much fuller concept of democracy, it organises itself quite differently to the way Fianna Fail, Sinn Féin, the DUP or Labour do. The conference is open to every member and every member can put a motion for consideration. Decisions are made by majority vote. As well as setting out policy, the conference also elects officers and discusses how to put our policies into action in our day-to-day political activity.

Of course, not all decisions can wait until the next conference, so each branch sends two delegates to a monthly Delegate Council (DC) to set policy between conferences and co-ordinate between branches. An agenda is circulated in advance, so that members can discuss the pros and cons of suggestions. A branch can vote on a motion and have their delegates bring those votes to the DC, e.g. 9 for and 7 against. Sometimes a branch will give their delegate a 'flexible mandate' to decide which way to vote after hearing the debate at DC.



>> Bookstall at the Anarchist Bookfair

When we need to make a really quick decision about something where we have no existing policy, we have an Interim Decisions Committee made up of one elected member from each branch.

So that every member can always know what's going on, minutes of all meetings and records of all decisions are posted on our internal website, where members can also engage in political discussion and debate.

The most important body in the WSM is the local branch where members meet (weekly or fortnightly) to discuss political matters and organise the work of the organisation. This is where power lies in the WSM, we have no time for domineering leaders or all-powerful committees. In a small way we hope that how we organise ourselves gives some indication of what anarchists mean by real democracy.

If you like the idea of a socialist and freedom-loving society you can do your bit. Get in touch and find out more about the WSM, we have members throughout the country and are happy to meet up with you. Take a bundle of 20 (or more) copies of this paper to give to friends, work colleagues or to put through neighbours' letterboxes. Readers are already doing it in Belfast, Cork, Derry, Dublin, Greystones, Letterkenny, Sligo, Galway, Bray, Bushmills and Limerick. Just drop a note to our address or email [wsm\\_ireland@yahoo.com](mailto:wsm_ireland@yahoo.com).

# UCC Censors Pro-Choice Students

**Any excuse will do for the University College Cork "Societies Guild" in order to suppress the freedom of speech of pro-choice students.**

First it was that "a society already exists which caters for debate in the area of abortion and choice". That society being the clearly anti-choice "Prolife" society – who have no interest in debate on the issue.

Well-funded by conservative christian

groups, in Ireland and abroad, the actions of this group are the very reason that UCC students felt the urgent need to provide another side, a pro-choice side, to the debate. The anti-choice idea of debate is expensive billboards against stem cell research and parading around campus with glossy posters of foetuses, labelling anyone who disagrees with them as "murderers".

Second it was due to the "flaws in the constitution". A surprising conclusion given that the draft constitution written by the pro-choice students was based on a template provided by the Societies Guild themselves!

When the pro-choice students were told that a more broadly-defined society, that took into account issues such as women's health and reproductive rights, would be accepted, they did as they were asked. In-

stead of acceptance the response they received was that a number of other societies dealt with these issues!

None of the listed societies, whether they be debating societies, anti-choice or health promotion societies are interested in promoting the cause of a woman's right to choose and her reproductive rights, week in, week out. It is this need that inspired 100's of UCC students to sign petitions for the right to organise on campus.

But it hasn't been just petitions – the pro-choice UCC students have been meeting weekly to discuss their plans, share their knowledge and skills and invite guest speakers to talk about pro-choice activism. They have held information stalls and communicated with the media, on campus and

across Cork, even appearing in the national press.

With exams around the corner, the battle has subsided for this year. But those UCC students, including a number of Cork WSM members, who have been meeting and organising weekly over the past year, are not going away.

They will return re-energised in September and this time won't be taking 'No' for an answer. The message that it is a woman's right to choose will not be stifled in UCC – whether the students who organise are recognised or not.

**Alan Ó Murcháin**

# Why We Celebrate on Mayday

**The struggle against capitalism and authority is constant but each year on May Day the labour movement takes time out to celebrate its history and achievements. Rather than dwell on the hardships of struggle we take to the streets and remember what it is we are aiming for – the emancipation of our class. Climbing a mountain means paying close attention to the ground you walk but it's important to look up now and again in order to focus on exactly where it is you're headed.**

May Day's association with class struggle stems from the trade union movement in the nineteenth century which fought for an eight hour working day. Their demands remained unheeded and direct action was then seen as the most effective way of creating change. Workers and unions set a date of May 1st 1886 on which workers would create the eight hour day themselves.

On this day an estimated half a million people took to the streets across America. In Chicago, where anarchists were the strongest organised force among workers, violent incidents involving police and strikers led to a crackdown on the labour movement by state forces. Eight well-known anarchists of the time were arrested and prosecuted as part of a campaign of terror aimed at crushing the strike movement.

Their subsequent trial closed with State Attorney Grinnell's speech: "Law is on trial. Anarchy is on trial. These men have been selected, picked out by the Grand Jury,



and indicted because they were leaders. There are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. Gentlemen of the jury; convict these men, make examples of them, hang them and you save our institutions, our society." Four of these men, Parsons, Engel, Spies and Fischer, were hanged, while another man, Lingg, committed suicide in his cell and the three other men sentenced to lengthy jail terms.

May Day has since become a tradition of celebration of how far we have come in the struggle for democracy and freedom, a symbol of resistance, of people power and direct action. Every year, workers globally gather to celebrate the social and economic achievements our struggle has gained so far. One of the largest May Days in Ireland in recent years was in 2004, When an EU summit in Dublin clashed with our annual holiday. A week-end of activities was organised celebrating May Day and opposing the capitalist agenda of the summit.

May Day today poses the question – why should we continue to celebrate? Well, we should never forget our history or the potential we have to take control back of our lives. Here in Ireland, the labour movement has forced the bosses and the state to give many concessions around workplace conditions and basic social needs. We are well capable of defending these gains and of going on to win much more.

**P. O'Connell**

# Book Review: *Living in an Abnormal Society*

***The Spirit Level* by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (Allen Lane) £20.00 / €23.65**

**This book sets out to show that unequal societies are bad for everyone in them. It does this by collating decades of research in the areas of health, crime, trust, mental health, obesity, education, teenage pregnancy and social mobility, all of which demonstrate statistically the connection between social inequality and social problems. The authors explain that, in hierarchical societies that are unequal in wealth and status, our social class affects all aspects of our lives. From an Irish perspective, one of the most interesting points they make may be about the connection between inequality, levels of trust in society and**

**corruption.**

The authors, one of whom is an anthropologist, argue that research now proves that, for most of human history, we lived in fairly egalitarian societies that were based on values of cooperation and fairness. It is the unequal class-based societies in which we now live that are abnormal for us.

It's not surprising then that the more unequal the society we live in, the more anxiety and depression we suffer from. We even comfort eat more, the more unequal the community we live in is! The book debunks the myths that social problems are caused by 'bad people,' 'culture,' or lack of morals. Those notions have been overtaken by research in the real world. The great contribution this book makes is in giving all of us access to research that can help us to understand the real roots of our problems, and therefore solve them.

The book also makes the connection be-

tween equality and freedom that was once commonly understood. It suggests that the miserable failure of the authoritarian communist states such as Russia led people to believe that equality wasn't compatible with freedom.

The authors remind us that there was a reason why the French revolutionaries called for 3 things, 'Liberte, Egalite and Fraternite'. The Spirit Level now provides the hard evidence that freedom for all of us to achieve our full potential is only possible in societies based on egalitarian values.

Where the book fails is in its proposed solutions. The logical conclusion of all of their evidence is that an egalitarian society is the one that we humans thrive best in. This is, naturally, what anarchists have consistently argued. The authors propose employee-owned and controlled enterprises as a solution.

This is another word for the workers' control

which anarchists demand. However, the authors are not prepared to challenge the core issue of eliminating hierarchy itself. They presume that workers will still be prepared to have a CEO who earns many times what they do. They would like to merely reduce inequality. This is a laudable aim, but once we understand that something is so detrimental to us, why does it make sense to keep any of it?

They don't argue that a little crime is a good thing, or that a little poverty is healthy, or that a bit of inequality is good for us, so why the timidity of the solutions? This book is a good first step and provides hard facts for those who instinctively know that something is not right in our society. But if we want lasting solutions then we're going to need a little more imagination than the authors are prepared to provide.

**Lucy Parsons**