

# WORKERS SOLIDARITY

May / June 2012

Twenty-Eight Years of Irish Anarchist News

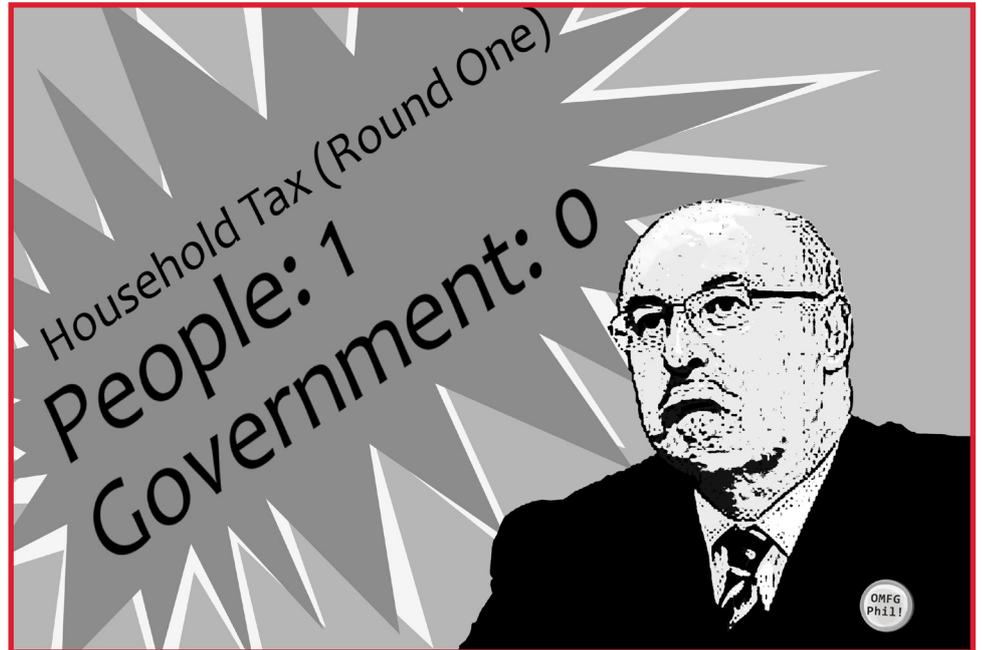
## The Household Tax: Where to Now

The Campaign Against Household and Water Charges (CAHWT) has been hugely successful so far in several ways: in encouraging mass non-payment; in making the taxes a big political issue, even in the mainstream media; in getting tens of thousands of people involved in protests and public meetings.

However, significant areas of the country e.g.: the Beara peninsula, Mayo, parts of Cork and Dublin cities etc have not become organised or active. Getting those areas to organise is a major key to winning the campaign. Regions should play a major role in reaching out and helping to initiate activity in areas, which are not yet organised.

For that to work, ordinary people in those areas will have to feel they have a real share in the ownership and control of the campaign, which means not only attending meetings and protests but participating in a properly democratic structure. People need to know that the grassroots is in control of the campaign, not just those people who are affiliated to left-wing organisations and not just people who are already experienced activists. To be actually democratic the structure needs to be participatory, not just representative. Local groups should elect delegates to the regional level of the Campaign, and those regions should elect delegates to the national body. Those delegates should be accountable, and recallable if they don't accurately report the views of the groups that choose them. The delegates should be changed frequently in any case so that everyone, or at least as many people as possible, get experience of being a delegate.

Different local groups will have very different ideas about what tactics and activities they want to focus on. There should be very broad acceptance of



these differences in approach while working towards the same goals. For example some groups may want to focus on lobbying politicians, others on fundraising, or picketing politicians surgeries, or producing their own leaflets, or protesting, or writing to the media etc. The central national structure should not attempt to impose the dead hand of uniformity on this diversity of tactics.

The Campaign has many dynamic and effective older people in its local groups, but we have not yet done enough to reach out to home owners in their thirties and forties who may have bought their houses at the height of the boom and now become trapped in negative equity. That particular age group may not have much positive experience of engaging in political struggle, partly due to years of partnership between union leaderships and governments.

The Campaign also needs to reach out to people who have already registered or paid the Household Tax this year, and come up with strategies to win them over to non-payment. Local groups need to build up a store of funds so that they can react rapidly to any enforcement procedures by the state against people who haven't registered. Groups need to aim to keep up a steady, sustainable level of activity rather than over-reaching themselves. Co-operation between neighbouring local groups in carrying out their activities should be encouraged as a way of lessening reliance on direction from regional and national levels of the Campaign.

*This article is based on an interview with campaign activist and WSM member, James McBarron.*

# Musgrave Strike Continues

SIPTU issued a press release on 24/4/12 as follows:

*SIPTU members in the Musgrave Group are continuing their strike action at the company's warehouse in Cork in a dispute concerning changes to their conditions of employment. The industrial action, which began on 18th April, involves approximately 135 salaried staff members withdrawing their labour at the Cork Chill warehouse.*

SIPTU Organiser, Karan O'Loughlin, said; "The workers decided to take this action due to the management of the company attempting to introduce changes to their terms and conditions of employment which were not agreed."

"SIPTU is calling on the management of the company to commit to constructive engagement with the workers' representatives to bring an end to this dispute."

The Musgrave Group is the country's largest retailer supplying a number of supermarket chains including SuperValu and Centra.

Workers Solidarity chatted with one of the SIPTU shop stewards on the picket line at Musgraves, who outlined the position on the shop floor:

"The workers who are on strike do a demanding, physical, outdoor job and deserve fair pay and conditions. We are exercising our right not to accept the non-binding

Labour Court decision and instead to use collective bargaining to defend conditions and pay,

something we are perfectly entitled to do. The bosses want a worse sick pay scheme, something that has already been implemented at other Musgrave plants.

Musgraves are currently employing 30 strikebreakers, plus reluctant office staff. Siptu are effectively forcing their members who are on hourly rates to work during the strike saying that unless the striking (salaried) workers are suffering actual hardship it is unacceptable for hourly workers to come out on strike in solidarity with them. Also, Siptu did not push Musgraves to comply with the 2016 deal, which would have implemented a 6% pay-rise. Musgraves should have been forced to attempt to plead inability to pay. Musgraves are now attempting to use an offer of a 5% pay rise as a bargaining chip, but that's something which workers are already owed.

Musgraves are also attempting to impose new voice-based ordering technology and procedures and refusing to consult the work force on how that should be implemented. People who are not able to adapt to the new methods will lose their jobs, regardless on how long they have been working at Musgraves. The average age of workers at Musgraves in Cork is about 40. The situation is made more complex because different groups of workers at Musgraves are working under for different contracts, with four different sets of wages and conditions. Please boycott Centra and SuperValu (who are being supplied by strike-breaking labour) and tell them why you are boycotting them."

## Contacts

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**Derry Anarchists**  
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**Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group**  
PO BOX 10785, Dublin 1.  
<http://ragdublin.blogspot.com/>

**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>

**Just Books**  
*Belfast Radical Bookshop*  
13-15 Clarence Street, Belfast.  
[justbooks@rocketmail.com](mailto:justbooks@rocketmail.com)

**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](mailto:choiceireland@gmail.com)  
<http://www.choiceireland.org>

**Residents Against Racism**  
*Opposing racism and deportations.*  
24 hour helpline: 087 666 2060

**Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign**  
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**Free Education for Everyone**  
*Active in colleges around the county, North and South.*  
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**Campaign Against the Household and Water Taxes**  
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# Dublin Anarchist Bookfair Returns

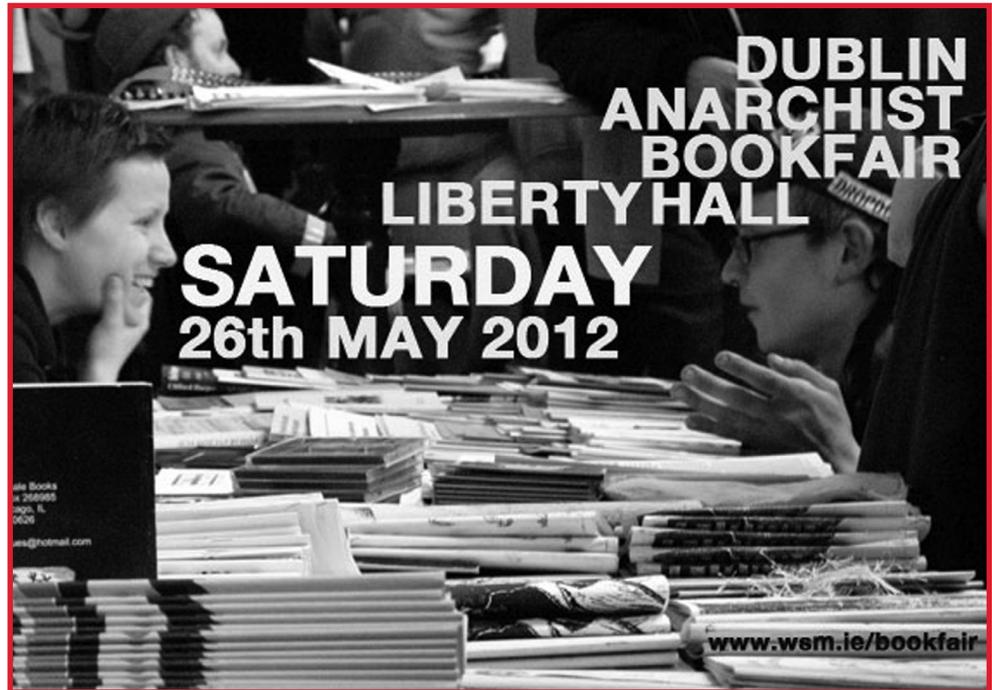
This May sees the return of the annual Anarchist Bookfair to Dublin, the seventh to be held to date. Since the first, back in 2006, the event has grown hugely in scale, against the background of the bursting of the Celtic Tiger bubble, the IMF/EU bailout and the catastrophic effect of austerity on Irish society. The Bookfair consists of a day of meetings, debates and discussions and will also host bookstalls and information stands from a large number of political organisations and campaigning groups.

The Bookfair started out with numbers in the hundreds at the first event in the St. Nicholas of Myra Hall in the Liberties. After a couple of years in the Teachers Club it was clear that more space was again needed so the event moved to its current venue in Liberty Hall.

In our first year there we brought you ex-Black Panther turned anarchist, Ashanti Alston, and author of "Free Women of Spain", Martha Ecklesberg. The following year we heard from the authors of "The Lost Revolution", Scott Millar and Brian Hanley. In 2011 we hosted speakers from our fellow bailout countries who spoke about struggles against austerity there and Conor McCabe on his book "Sins of the Fathers: Tracing the Decisions That Shaped the Irish Economy", as well as meetings on the "Arab Spring" amongst others.

Highlights on the meeting schedule for this year include:

Eyewitness Afghanistan - the current political situation in Afghanistan as told through interviews conducted with Afghan politicians, artists, religious leaders, community organizers, journalists and activists; a Forum on Radical and Underground Publishing; Racism in the Recession with a speaker from the Traveller community; The Sue Richardson panel: My Life in Struggle, Women Speak - a forum on women in activism; Is it kicking off in Ireland? - discussion on the Irish response to austerity; a talk on Dublin's Other History hosted



by the authors of the popular blog Come Here to Me, a GP speaks on the Right to Choose, a debate on the fiscal treaty referendum as well as introductions to anarchism and the WSM.

The Bookfair will also host a showing of "Bernadette: Notes on a Political Journey" with a Q&A session with director Leila Doolan and "The Viking Way", a documentary about how Iceland responded to the crisis.

Bookstalls carrying an array of radical literature will be set up for the day. Among the organisations from home and abroad will be: PM Press, AK Press, WSM, RAG (Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group), Manchester Anarchist Federation, Solidarity Books, Look Left magazine, Organise and Just Books, Oxfam, the Irish Labour History Society, Corporate Watch and Freedom Press.

Several campaign groups will be present with information stalls including: IPSC (Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign), Choice Ireland, Shell to Sea, LASC (Latin America Solidarity Centre), FEE (Free Education for Everyone), AFA (Anti Fascist Action) and the Campaign against Household and Water Taxes.

The Anarchist Bookfair is a day out of the ordinary; a day away from the mundane, where the best thing to leave with is not the book, or pamphlet, or badge you've just spent your hard earned money on, but the experience of the day itself. It's a great opportunity to mingle, meet, and talk to not only anarchists, but activists from all walks of life, as well as the passers-by and interested onlookers that it always attracts. Come along, drop by the WSM stall and say hello!

The 7th Anarchist Bookfair will take place in Dublin the weekend of 26th May 2012 at Liberty Hall, Eden Quay and 'The Dark Horse Inn' on Georges Quay. See <http://www.wsm.ie/bookfair> for updates.

Doors open at 10am and the first meetings start at 11:30 so forgo the weekend lie-in, grab a coffee and come on down! Help with promotion by RSVPing to our Facebook event for the 2012 Bookfair, inviting any interested friends and then sharing the event to your profile. You can also follow the Bookfair on Twitter - hashtag #dabf. Admission is free but a donation to costs is appreciated!

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

# From Protest to Resistance in the North

The decision to approve the new Welfare Reform Bill earlier last month signals yet another devastating blow to those living on or below the British government's very own recommended guidelines on poverty. Prior to the initial bill being passed, attempts were made to water it down in the House of Lords but that too fell on deaf ears, despite the fact that it may violate international conventions on human rights. However in welcoming the move, one Tory politician jokingly remarked: "desperate times, calls for desperate measures", but desperate for who? Certainly not those on a politicians salary in Westminster or up in Stormont.

**Sean Dubh**

Across the north, concern is growing with regards to successive attacks on those of us already on low pay or benefits. Dramatic changes in the welfare system have already begun and it's clearly affecting the most vulnerable within society. Welfare campaign groups such as Child Poverty Action have painted an extremely grim picture. By their calculation, over 122,000 children in the north are now living in poverty. Similarly, according to recent official statistics, poverty in areas such as North and West Belfast remains high, with west of the Bann, namely Strabane and Derry, coming out among those with 'the highest rates of poverty in the UK'.

The figures show that for those who have only recently been dumped onto the dole queues, young people in receipt of Housing Benefit, people on DLA, Incapacity Benefit, etc. are finding it even harder to claim benefits needed to pay for housing, childcare or even to supplement low wages. All



this comes as a systematic overhaul attempts to reduce the numbers obtaining welfare, effectively driving people into greater poverty and worsening health problems.

Other government programmes like Workfare and Steps To Work are merely shuffling numbers around whilst providing multinationals such as Tesco with a steady supply of free labour doing menial jobs as well as undermining the conditions of employed, waged workers. Unashamedly, all these developments have taken place long before any introduction of a Welfare Reform Bill.

The measures implemented by the bosses and politicians are a direct attack on all the achievements gained by the working class through decades of struggle. It is nothing short of an attempt to clawback what they can for themselves on deals, agreements, rights and privileges we fought long and hard for. But in saying that, attacks such as these aren't going on unnoticed or unchallenged. Our class, on both sides of the sectarian divide, through workplace and community actions, have brought thousands on to the streets, something that hasn't

been witnessed here for years. Strikes, work stoppages, pickets and protests have all taken place, with more to come. Public sector workers are currently planning further industrial action in a follow up to last year's unprecedented strike on November 30th over attacks on pensions. Claimants too have begun to organise against cuts in housing benefits, picketing social security offices as well as stores involved in the practice of Workfare, rendering a potential modern-day slave trade virtually unworkable.

In the weeks and months ahead, as our class take the fight to the streets, it will give us a greater sense of strength and confidence in the potential power we possess. In doing so we must be mindful of those who would view such unity as a possible threat. None more so than those who have everything to gain from our division; the bosses and the politicians in Stormont. They will undoubtedly act as they have always done, fomenting meaningless tribal divisions in an attempt to derail genuine working class resistance, while continuing to implement Tory policies.

# Thinking About Anarchism: Organisation

**An accusing finger is pointed at anarchists any time the word organisation is mentioned. Many people believe that anarchism is against organisation and just another word for chaos, but is it? The simple answer, of course, is no, but that does not explain the confusion surrounding the question, nor the accusations thrown at anarchists.**

Organisation, for anarchists, is one of the most important questions to be settled. Firstly, anarchists recognise that only through organisation can the bosses' system be smashed. For example, the fact that during the Miners Strike in Britain, massive and co-ordinated police mobilisation was used to break the picketing and isolate the miners makes this point evident. The employers have at their disposal an efficient state apparatus, which will move to crush any opposition to it.

Only by being as organised and strong can workers hope to overthrow the employers and their class. Workers, as anarchists see it, must organise in the one place where capitalism is powerless without them, that is their place of work. By organising together in all industries, workers would have the collective strength to create a revolutionary movement to overthrow capitalism and replace it with socialism.

Secondly, however, there is the question of what type of organisation anarchist workers should build to overthrow the employers. Two types of organisation are possible. The first type is the one that we are all used to, the capitalist mode of organisation, is a top-down structure, where most of the members (say 95%) have little or no say in the decision making process and simply obey what the other 5% decide. Though this 5% are often elected, as with the Dail, they are completely unaccountable and simply represent their own interests, which in the case of the Dail is that of business.

The second type of organisation possible is that which anarchists say is indispensable to a workers organisation if it is to build socialism. This organisation is based from the bottom-up that is with the rank and file involved in all decisions taken by the organisation. Such an organisation excludes any leadership emerging that would make the decisions for the membership. When decisions are made, accountable delegates are appointed by the rank and file to implement these decisions. Thus, in practice, the organisation remains under the control of the membership and not under the control of any leadership.

Some socialists organise on the principle that the working-class need a leadership, which will be the party of these socialists, without which, they

believe, anything of worth can be achieved. For them, the party is the brains, the vanguard of the class. Inside the party, the "best" members form the Central Committee and the "best" of this becomes the leader or leadership. The whole process leads to a strict hierarchy in which orders come from the top and democracy is pushed into the background. Anarchists maintain that this sort of organisation will lead workers nowhere except to more tyranny and exploitation as in China and the former Soviet Union.

Anarchists reject the capitalist mode of organisation, which all other left-wing organisations use on the basis that the means you use to achieve socialism dictate the end-result you get. Therefore, a hierarchical organisation will result in a hierarchical and totalitarian state and not a non-hierarchical socialist society. The claim is often made against anarchists that non-hierarchical organisation is inefficient and doesn't work. More often than not, though, this allegation is made because these people regard their leadership as all-important. They pay lip service to Marx's statement that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class themselves.



Anarchists are not opposed to organisation, but they do reject outright the principle by which most organisations operate. Participation by the mass of people in the decision making process is something that is absent now but that forms the very basis of socialism. Therefore, to achieve socialism, it only makes sense that we organise in a manner that guarantees mass participation and democracy.

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

## Anarchism & the WSM

During March and April, the main focus of our activities nationwide has remained the Campaign Against Household and Water Charges (CAHWT). We helped organise the extremely well attended national rally in the National Stadium in Dublin on March 24th, when 3,000 people attended to voice their opposition to the Household Tax (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/national-rally-household-tax-packed-out>). We played a similar role in the 8,000 strong protest at the Fine Gael Ard Fheis at the National Convention Centre a week later (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/household-tax-march-fine-gael-conference>). We were also present at a further protest, along with 3,000 others, at the Labour Party Ard Fheis in Galway on April 14th (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/galway-labour-party-protesters-attacked-pepper-spray>), when about 1,000 protesters decided to push through police lines in order to get as close to the conference hall as possible (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/labour-party-direct-action-household-tax>).

Apart from national events, we are active in our local CAHWT groups trying to expand campaign influence and membership and handed out a leaflet at the two protest mentioned above outlining "What it Would Mean to Win?"

(<http://www.wsm.ie/c/household-tax-what-mean-win-leaflet>). In Dublin we supported a CAHWT picket of the April meeting of Dublin City Council, when a motion calling for the removal of the Household Tax was discussed. Meanwhile, our Cork members were involved in discussions around the structure of the CAHWT (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/building-democracy-cork-delegate-meeting-household-tax>) and organised for a rally held in the Metropole Hotel at the end of March, which attracted 400 people (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/anti-household-tax-rally-cork-march2012>).

Aside from our work in the CAHWT, we also organised a successful public meeting in Wynn's Hotel in Dublin on April 12th, attended by about 80 people (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/dub-anarchists-who-we-are-and-what-we-are-public-meeting-dublin>). We held another solidarity books stall in Seomra Spraoi and continued our monthly meetings for supporters. Finally, we had a presence on the protests following the eviction of the Occupy Dame Street camp (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/scuffles-pearse-street-garda-attack-occupy-dame-street>). Internally, our twice-yearly annual conference, where we make all our major organisational and political decisions, was held in



Dublin on April 21st.

In the south, our Cork branch continued its ongoing cinema nights in our Solidarity Books store and hosted a vibrant celebration of International Women's Day on March 8th (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/international-womens-day-2012-cork-solidarity-books>). In Galway, at the very end of February, our members assisted in the organisation of and participated in a FEE (Free Education for Everyone) march and occupation of an AIB branch (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/fee-galway-march-occupation-aib>). Up North, we attended the Belfast Anarchist Bookfair held in

the last weekend of April and supported a community rally against dissident republican death squads (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/community-action-against-vigilante-group-derry>) as well as a march in support of the release of the interned Marian Price.

As you can see from the above, there is always plenty of organising to be done! If you are interested in being part of it, then for further information and other breaking news see [www.wsm.ie](http://www.wsm.ie).

# Mary Harris "Mother" Jones

Mother Jones was "the most dangerous woman in America" according to Reese Blizzard, a West Virginia District Attorney. Born around 1837, Mary Harris Jones was an Irish woman who became one of the most important revolutionary trade union organisers in the history of the USA. Her courage in standing up to mine owners, politicians and their armed thugs (who often killed striking workers) is legendary.

For more than half a century she led strikers in picketing and encouraged the workers to stay on strike when management brought in strikebreakers and militias. She was often thrown into jail and was demonised by the press for fighting for the cause of coal miners and other workers. She organized miners' wives into teams armed with mops and brooms to guard the mines against scabs.

Mother Jones will be honoured this summer in the Shandon area of Cork City, where she was born 175 years ago. The centrepiece of the celebrations will be the unveiling of a bronze plaque bearing her image and one of her most famous sayings: "Pray for the dead, but fight like hell for the living." She also said that "I have never had a vote, and I have raised hell all over this country. You don't need a vote to raise hell! You need convictions and a voice!"

The proposal to erect the plaque was passed by Cork City Council on International Women's Day, 8 March 2010, on foot of a motion by Workers Party Councillor, Ted Tynan. There will also be concerts, public lectures and discussions held in the Maldron Hotel and the Firkin Crane centre as well as an exhibition in the Firkin on the life and times of Mother Jones.

The celebrations will be around August 1st, the most probable date of her birth, although during her lifetime she claimed May 1st as her birthday - because May Day is International Workers' Day (in memory of the 1886 Haymarket Massacre when Chicago police fired on workers during a general strike for the eight hour working day.)

Mother Jones, along with anarchist Lucy Parsons, and two hundred other socialists, anarchists, and radical trade unionists, was one of the founders of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), an international union which argues that all workers should be united as a class and that the wage system should be abolished. The IWW's goal is to promote worker solidarity in the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the employing class. Its motto is: "An injury to one is an injury to all".

By the age of sixty, she'd created a grandmotherly image for herself, "Mother Jones", which she found useful as a propaganda tool. She claimed to be older than she actually was, wore old-fashioned black clothes (usually a black dress, a lace collar and black hat) and talked about the mineworkers as 'her boys'.

Wherever there were miners on strike, that's where Mother Jones would be, giving them inspiration and advice. She supported black and white miners in Birmingham, Alabama during a nationwide coal strike. She was involved in the Lattimer strike in Pennsylvania in 1897, the Ludlow strike in Colorado in 1913 and the Paint Creek and Cabin Creek strikes in West Virginia in 1920.

Carl Sandburg, editor of the 1927 collection of folk songs "American Songbag", suggested that the song "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain" is about Mother Jones travelling the Appalachian Mountains, working to build up the miners union. Woodie Guthrie wrote a song about her called "Union Maid", calling on women to fight for women's rights and trade union rights.

At 72 Mother Jones was held under house arrest for weeks in West Virginia. Aged 83 she spoke in Chicago in support of striking dress-makers in 1924. She died in 1931. Her politics around the role of women were questionable, she seems to have believed that women shouldn't work outside the home, but she provided a great example in her own life that women are capable of taking on any work they choose. She wasn't an anarchist, although she worked with anarchists. But she is a working class hero that all anarchists can take inspiration from.



solidaritybooks



43 Douglas St., Cork

Solidarity Books is a radical bookshop in Cork open for the past 2 years. It has a wide selection of books on anarchism, socialism and Irish history. It also holds regular radical film nights and is a meeting space for progressive groups in the city. It is run by WSM.

The Irish Anarchist Review



power, resistance & possibilities

Irish Anarchist Review

The Workers Solidarity Movement is very pleased to announce the fourth issue of The Irish Anarchist Review. This magazine is dedicated to understanding the contemporary political, economic and social situation that confronts us, and finding ways to advance alternatives.

Contact us with your postal address if you would like to receive a copy or download a PDF from <http://www.wsm.ie/c/irish-anarchist-review-4>

[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.

# Unlock NAMA Unveiled

Unlock NAMA (UN) hit the headlines in January after occupying a NAMA building in Great Strand Street, Dublin 1. The aim of the occupation was to open a NAMA building to the public for a day and hold a series of talks on the subject. The group, along with around sixty supporters, were eventually evicted by the Gardaí after the intervention of the receiver but that was only the beginning of the campaign.

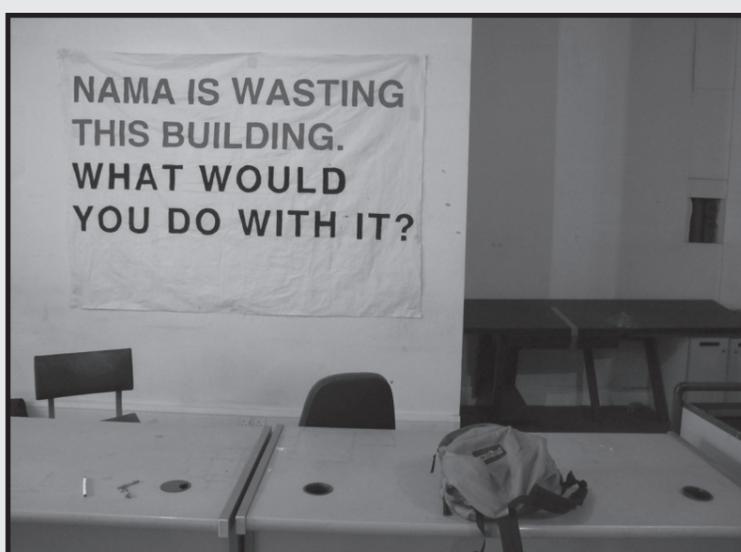
Marcas Mac Caomhan

Since January the group has been busy planning its next moves and working towards the campaign's aims: To access NAMA properties for social and community use, to lift the veil of secrecy surrounding NAMA and to hold the agency to account.

Most of the work so far has centred on the second aim. A poster campaign around the city drew attention to areas with NAMA buildings using the slogan: "Warning: NAMA is operating in this area. May cause ten years of austerity". Meanwhile the research and education team has been working hard to make information available to UN activists and the general public. To achieve the second goal, a NAMA Wiki is being established and will go live later in the year.

A successful public meeting was held in March with around one hundred people in attendance. These included trade unionists and people from community groups who also see a need for public buildings to be opened up for public use. Trade unionist Michael Taft and historian Conor McCabe spoke about property speculation and NAMA's role, while UN's Mick Byrne spoke about the campaign. UN has since spread its wings and held a public meeting in Limerick at the request of some local people who are interested in engaging in similar activity.

The campaign, however, was never intended to be a small group of



activists working on behalf of the public. It believes that communities themselves must play a role in accessing NAMA assets for public use. An outreach campaign is in process that will engage with people in city neighbourhoods where there are buildings on the NAMA enforcement list. The idea is to find out what the needs of these communities are and help organise them to campaign for access to NAMA buildings in their area.

With resistance to the government's programme of cuts and unjust taxation spreading, UN should be seen as part of a wider movement. If it is successful in organising communities around its first aim, it could grow to become a nationwide campaign. With a number of the group's activists also involved in the Campaign against Household and Water Taxes and other anti-austerity campaigns, it is clear that many members of UN do not see this as a single issue and the key to success may lie in getting the general public to make the connection.