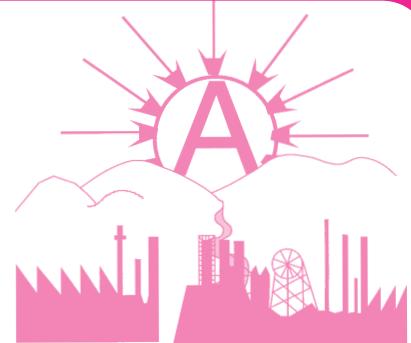
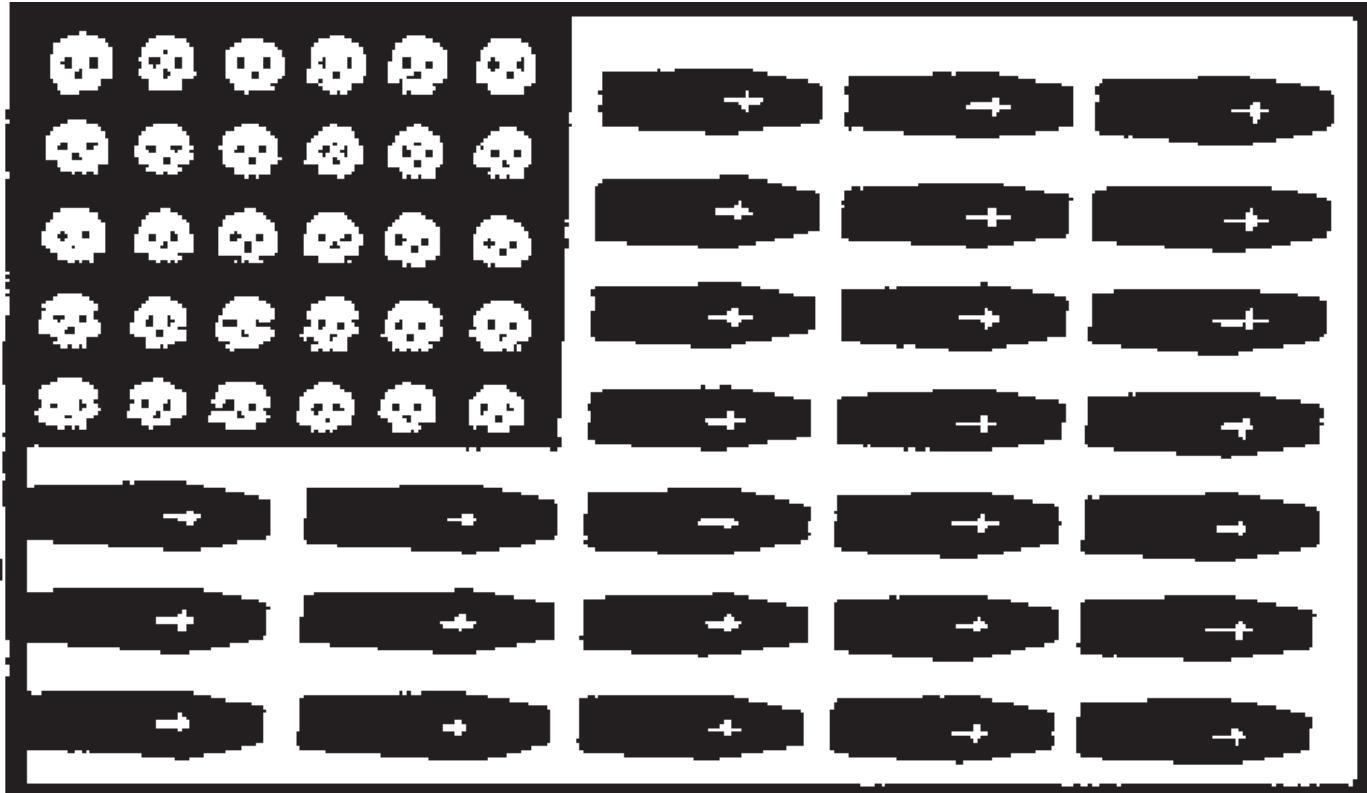


WORKERS SOLIDARITY

Irish Anarchist Paper



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War: who is it good for?

As war looms in the Gulf again we can be sure that, whatever the outcome, hundreds of thousands of lives will be destroyed by the conflict. A UN report leaked in December estimated that the war will cost the lives of half a million Iraqi civilians and create a million refugees as a result of both direct deaths and the deliberate destruction of infrastructure. Furthermore the unwilling soldiers of Saddam's conscript army face whole-scale butchery at the hands of the powerful US war machine.

Regardless of the outcome of the war, Iraq will emerge as a devastated country, strewn with rubble, corpses, depleted uranium and other long-term environmental toxins. In the unlikely event that the US invasion is defeated, all they have to look forward to is more of the same, suffering under the twin evils of a brutal dictator and an "international community" that makes the people pay for the existence of this dictator through sanctions and bombing.

If the US wins, as it surely will, the only difference will be that the name of the dictator will change and instead of the economy being ruined by sanctions, it will be ruined by the

burden of repaying the American war costs. Senior figures in Bush's administration openly state their intention of installing a friendly dictator, occupying the oil fields and using export revenues as "reparations" for the enormous cost of the war.

US soldiers are likely to suffer far fewer casualties on the battlefield. However, many of them will still return home with their lives in ruins. 36% of US soldiers who saw conflict in the first Gulf War have filed compensation claims for "Gulf War syndrome" and 87% of claims have been granted. This syndrome has multiple causes, from psychological ('shell-shock') to exposure to toxins (depleted uranium...) and experimental vaccines.

The effects on the 'grunts' underlines just how little the US leadership cares about the soldiers who do their bidding. The only people who have anything to gain from this war are the elite. Saddam may get to hang onto power, Bush may extend US control over the world and its oil supplies, but whatever the outcome, it will come at the expense of millions of ruined lives, lives which are of no concern in the power games of Bush and Saddam. Both armies would be much better off turning their guns around and saving their bullets for their billionaire rulers and their war-mongering cronies.

Thinking about Anarchism Movement

War is the health of the State

Recent revelations in the Washington Post regarding Bush's eagerness to engage in war on Iraq only serve to prove what is morbidly obvious: War is always in their sights. Six days after the Trade Centre strikes in New York the Bush Administration had already initiated plans to take Iraq out. Is it just coincidence that Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the world? One should not be shocked - such political behaviour is *de rigueur* in a system, in a society, that places the relentless quest for wealth and power above the lives of the inhabitants of the planet.

Why is it that the casualties of war are rarely the rich and powerful, but rather the working, often starving masses? Why indeed is it, that wars are almost always instigated, supported and prolonged by those in power - the governments of the world, the corporations? The reason is this: amongst other things, without the threat and reality of war, fear could not be instilled in the minds of the people and they would be impossible to control - then would come the inevitable overthrow of the state, and an end to the minority monopoly of power.

Perhaps we should say briefly what the State is. The State is the combination and

indeed culmination of the different elements of repression (including the government, the police and the army) that exist in every country under various auspices, in order to control the wealth and means of production and quell unrest and resistance in the majority of the population. The existence of the State necessitates the strict division of people into bosses and workers, rulers and ruled. It ensures that the wealth of the world remains in the hands of a few.

Through fear-mongering, the State subdues the people as they are taught to be terrified of alien power, terrorists et al, even though it is their own governments as well as for-

eign that they must hate and fight to eradicate. Similarly, institutionalised racism prepares the people for apathy when war breaks out. Immigration laws, as are seen here in Fortress Europe, actually succeed in dehumanising 'foreigners' so that when their respective countries or neighbours are blown to pieces, they are believed to deserve it.

Munitions funding is therefore justified - another delightful attribute of the war machine. The lucrative nature of the business that is the buying and selling of *weapons of mass destruction* enriches greatly the economies of almost every nation of the world, especially those who purport to having national and international security as a main priority - for example, 25% of US GDP is created by the arms industry.

There are different kinds of wars, of course, each assuming different *modi operandi*, but the eventual aim and outcome of every war is the same. Civil wars are first and foremost divisive of the working classes. One need only look to Northern Ireland to see how well one imperial master succeeded in damaging the unity of the working people. Territorial wars involve the wielding of power over weaker non-compliant neighbours or indeed indigenous peoples, for example the ethnic cleansing by the Turkish government of Kurds or the Israelis of Palestinians. Closely related to this kind of war, in terms of global support, are the Star Wars-esque international wars, i.e. superpowers wreaking havoc on disobedient states, for example the ongoing and now escalating war on Iraq by the US.

The real reasons for most wars are covert, and rather more pious and fictitious reasons, reminiscent of the crusades, are perpetuated by mass media, itself owned and controlled by the state and the capitalists. In a recent article, Larry Everest* outlined succinctly the usual motives of war, in particular the impending devastation in Iraq - "*This agenda encompasses many strategic goals: monopolizing world energy resources, maintaining military superiority over potential adversaries, having open access to key global markets and vast sources of raw materials, and creating the conditions for the unchallenged exploitation of hundreds of millions of labouring people worldwide.*"

Indeed, truly broken and divided people are easy to manipulate and exploit; they can be placated with minute pay increases and seeming concessions in workplace conditions. Their cheap labour will go on to fund and extend further wars, thus the process continues ad infinitum until the working people of the world unite and realise: there must be no war but the Class War, and our only enemies are the State and the monsters it protects.

*quoted in Z Magazine, August/September 2002

Roisin Dubh

International Direct Actions against the war

The large demonstrations in Britain (300,000) Italy (1,000,000) and the US (200,000 DC, 150,000 San Francisco) against the war have got some media attention. Alongside these is a spreading wave of direct action. These protests are far, far smaller, in part because the mainstream anti-war movements have failed to promote (or even opposed) them. But they are significant because as the politicians continue to ignore the popular anti-war sentiments direct action is a way we can bypass them and start to bring this war to a halt.

The actions in Ireland have received some coverage. Last year there were at least seven anti-war direct actions at Shannon airport, including one occasion when 150 people tore down part of the perimeter fence and invaded the runway. Three separate actions actually involved damage to US warplanes on the tarmac.

In Britain there have been many military base invasions and attempts to blockade bases and naval ports. Airbases where activists have entered the base include RAF Fairford and Midenhall. Military bases blockaded have included Feltwell and Northwood. An ex-marine attempted to blockade the gates of Portsmouth Naval base. Days later the greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior accompanied by smaller boats blockaded the entrance to the port. The most significant action that occurred in terms of future possibilities was in Scotland where two train drivers, taking advantage of their unions (ASLEF) anti-war stance, refused to drive a munitions train.

In the US itself actions have varied from minor ones like the smashing of the window of a Marine Corp recruitment office during a demonstration in Pittsburgh to a 2,000 strong breakaway march in San Francisco that attacked the British consulate and the INS offices (The INS are involved in interning hundreds of Middle Eastern men).

More details on all these actions and more at <http://struggle.ws/stopthewar.html>

NEWS FROM THE WSM VIA THE INTERNET

Our email list Ainriail distributes regular news updates and notices of events to subscribers. There are 4 - 8 emails a week. To join the list just visit

<http://struggle.ws/mailman/listinfo/ainriail>

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

Have your say

Write a letter to us at WSM,
PO Box 1528, Dublin 8.

US anarchists against the War

One of the favourite arguments of the pro-war crowd in Ireland is that anyone who opposes the war is 'anti-American'. Leaving aside the fact that they are reducing the one billion population of the Americas to the 250 million resident in the US is there anything to this claim? The hundreds of thousands who have already demonstrated against the war in the US obviously don't think so. Anarchists in the US are part of the anti-war movements there. Below we reproduce the text of a leaflet produced by one anarchist group there for the January 18th anti-war demonstration in Washington DC.

NO WAR BUT CLASS WAR

The elite of the USA and Iraq, personified by George Bush and Saddam Hussein, are leading their countries and much of the world, into a disastrous confrontation on the plains where civilization arose. The cost of this clash of powers will be paid, in sweat and in blood, by millions of people across the globe to enrich the coffers of the sultans of industry, their executors of State, and officers of war.

In this struggle over petrochemical wealth we will have no share of riches, only sorrow. This war, and all future wars of nationalist futility, will never be prevented by appeals to those who would be our masters. Only when we, whose toil creates their wealth, cast off these murderous despots, can we enjoy the peace and freedom which is the right of each and all.

The hollow excuses for this war cannot be defended. The tyrannical regime in Iraq, while a misery for its citizens and a threat to its neighbors, is to Western powers but an opportunity to introduce a greater military presence in an economically and geographically strategic point on the global chessboard. Even as heads of State prepare for war against Iraq, they dance diplomatically around North Korea. Even as they demonize a despot in Iraq, they support monarchies and dictatorships around the world. They would wage war against Iraq not because they must, but because they can.

Unemployment, low wages, lack of education and decent housing in the USA are mirrored by outright starvation and continual warfare in Iraq. Our mutual suffering is for the benefit of the elite and the States they control. Taxes on American workers fund the military that guarantees control of cheap oil for industry and the profits of its owners. For their pleasure we pay the State, in sweat and in blood.

The oil for which we toil and kill, poisons the very earth itself. Instead of developing sustainable energy and managing resources for the benefit of all humankind, the energy most easily controlled is extracted and marketed for the profit of the

powerful. These oil wars are not only wars against humanity, but against the earth itself.

The current economic crisis of overproduction, wage slavery, and rampant speculation in the financial markets cannot be solved by the gluttonous destruction of war. War will only increase the miseries of we who must pay for the pleasures of those who exploit the world for their own desires. Americans, and citizens of the world, must say no to Iraqnophobia and yes to freedom! No to the war on our fellow citizens and yes to war against the bosses and States! War will only end with the end of capitalism

and nationalism. No to the war on our fellow workers and yes to war against all of the international ruling elite! NO WAR BUT CLASS WAR!

Roundhouse Collective (North East Federation of Anarchist Communists), Baltimore, Maryland, USA



That's Capitalism

At the Lake City Army Ammunition Plant in Montana, production is at its highest rate in 15 years - higher than during the Gulf War. They recently received a \$92 million contract to produce 265 million rounds of small-caliber ammunition for the US Army. Why so many bullets? There are approximately 24 million people living in Iraq, thus it seems it is either lunatic overkill, or the excess is for use against other peoples living within Bush's "axis of evil", or it's a cash gift to his arms business pals.

The latest study by the Revenue Commissioners has shown that Ireland's top earners pay tax at less than 15%. The study was based on data from 1999/2000, a time when ordinary income tax rates were 26% and 44% respectively. The study shows that the tax rates are in fact meaningless for high earners in the 26 Counties. About 12% of top earners were paying less than 5%. The top 400 earners took home tax allowances of €74 million (often for investing in hotels and car parks).



Getting involved

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

We want to bring about a society based on real grassroots democracy where power remains at local level and is organised upwards through workplace and community councils.

We do not want to become rulers nor do we want to seize power "*on behalf of the working class*". We have no interest in replacing one set of bosses with another. Instead we work for a free socialist society where everyone can have a direct say in making the decisions that will effect them.

This society will only be brought about through revolution! There is an old anarchist slogan which says that if elections changed anything they would be illegal. The thinking behind it is that real democratic change cannot come from the top down but must be built from the bottom up. Instead of voting in elections and effectively giving someone else control of our lives, we stand for direct action and solidarity among and between workers.

The Workers Solidarity Movement has been campaigning against the refuelling of US war planes at Shannon. Our members have helped organise or taken part in around eight protests there over the past year. Members of the WSM are also active in the campaigns against the bin tax, and in the ongoing struggle against racism. We produce this paper, the magazine *Red & Black Revolution*, and the occasional *Anarchist News* bulletin. With our relatively small numbers there is a limit to what we can do. That's why we need people like you to get involved.

We are asking people to commit to donating 5 or 10 Euro a month towards the cost of printing this paper and to take at least 50 of each issue to distribute. We don't just want your money and time though; we also want your input to make the paper better. So anyone who becomes supporter of 'Workers Solidarity' will also be asked to attend an annual planning meeting and to elect two delegates onto our editorial group. If you have email you can ask to be added to the WS production email list where you can comment on articles submitted for publication and suggest topics for articles.

Over the next year we hope that a couple of dozen people will become supporters of this paper. In that case we will be able to expand production to 8 issues a year each with a print run of 8,000. Help us and become a supporter today.

Michael Moore's censored America

Michael Moore is an American film-maker and political commentator. He's probably best known for his documentary *Roger and Me*, which charts the effects on his hometown Flint, Michigan when General Motors, the town's largest employer, decide to relocate their factories to Mexico. That breakthrough film was followed by TV series, such as *TV Nation*, and now another film, *Bowling for Columbine*, and book, *Stupid White Men*.

Stupid White Men (and other sorry excuses for the state of the nation) is divided into chapters dealing with different aspects of American life. As you'd guess from the title, George Bush comes in for a lot of criticism, as does the conduct of the presidential election which brought him to power. Bill Clinton and Al Gore are also criticized, and Moore spends a lot of time showing that the differences between Bush and his Democratic opposite numbers are largely cosmetic. But there are also chapters dealing with race relations in America, education and health care, and international issues like Ireland and Palestine.

Bowling for Columbine examines the issue of gun violence in America, asking why the US should be so much more violent than other countries with similar histories, cultures, or gun ownership laws. It includes visits to a bank that gives guns to people opening accounts, South Central LA, and Canadian towns just over the US border, as well as interviews with the brother of one of the other men convicted along with Tim McVeigh (the Oklahoma City bomber, Marilyn Manson, and Charlton Heston (President of the National Rifle Association).

The most harrowing sequence shows close-circuit camera footage from the Columbine school shootings, alongside interviews with witnesses and victims of this and similar shootings. Bowling for Columbine works much better than Stupid White Men. The book is often unfocussed and scattershot, while the film manages to move between subjects without losing sight of a central theme. Moore has a better feel for film, and knows what level of detail to include, and when to sit back and let things speak for themselves. Both are worth your time, but Bowling for Columbine will stay with you longer.

Almost as interesting as anything in either work is the story of how the book came to be released. Stupid White Men was written in 2001, and was due to be released that September. Thousands of copies of the book were sitting in a warehouse, ready for distribution, when the WTC was destroyed on September 11th. Moore agreed to a delay in the book's release, but as October and then November arrived he learned that the publishers had changed their mind completely. In the 'new America', they said, there was no room for books so critical of George Bush. It wasn't until the American librarians' association learned of the situation and threatened to boycott HarperCollins that the book was released.

NewsInternational (HarperCollins' parent company) has a history of this sort of censorship, so perhaps Moore shouldn't have been so surprised by their behaviour. But

even after publication the book ran into problems. Although it was the top-selling non-fiction book in the US last year, 90% of newspapers haven't reviewed it (and many haven't reviewed Bowling for Columbine either). There are obviously large numbers of people interested in what Moore has to say, but the corporate media is continuing to ignore critical voices.

Even those outlets that do review Moore operate a subtle form of censorship. Stupid

Report of EU summit Copenhagen protests

In December protests were held at the EU summit in Copenhagen. Ian Lynch attended the demonstrations and tells Workers Solidarity a little about it.

On the morning of the 13th, while up to 50 'Politi' raided the offices of the service provider for many left-wing alternative websites in Denmark there was a march, called by 'global rodder' (global roots) of about 1000 on 'bellacenteret', the appointed place for the summit talks. After this another march had an anti-racist/Fortress Europe theme and saw a few thousand march from the west of the city, past boarded up McDonalds, Burger Kings, to the centre of the city.

The morning of the 15th saw the biggest manifestation of the weekend, with 10,000 people from many diverse groups marching in opposition to not just the policies, but the very existence of the European union. During the demonstration, many undercover police tried to join the march, however their disguises were so ridiculous, that they were easily spotted and surrounded in a doorway, a thrown bottle cutting one of them on the side of the face, before they made a hasty retreat.

It must be said that before the weekend, most of the groups taking part in the protests had signed an agreement with the police, agreeing that no one within their ranks would take part in any 'violence'. They had planned on having a meeting after this march, on the subject of 'violent protesters', thus succumbing to the hysterical media clichés, concerning violent/non-violent protestors, and ignoring the issue of police provocation/brutality. In response the Anarchist Federation called a protest, whilst this meeting was taking place, against 'police state Europe', which marched on the prison 'Vestreafengsel'. On the way back into the centre, the march (which remained peaceful throughout) was completely surrounded by riot police, who tried to provoke (unsuccessfully) and snatch protestors out of the crowd. As the demo was reaching its destination, it was reported that the police had managed to arrest one of their own (undercover), much to the amusement of the crowd.

White Men is reviewed as an attack on Bush, while other chapters, that fall outside the simplistic Democrats vs Republicans model of politics, are ignored. Bowling for Columbine is often reviewed as a straightforward call for more gun control, because that's a familiar debate with obvious 'sides', even though Moore makes it clear that countries with similar gun laws don't have the same problems. Race is an important topic in both works, but most reviews ignore it. So Moore's dissenting voice is silenced in three ways - they try to prevent him from publishing, then ignore him when he does publish, and finally, if he can't be ignored, his arguments are misrepresented.

Ray Cunningham

Pamphlets on anarchism

There is an increasing number of books about anarchism being published every year. As anarchism grows in popularity more anarchist organisations are able to produce books, and mainstream commercial publishers certainly see this growing popularity as a way of making extra cash.

However, not a lot of people will want to spend 15 or 20 euro on an anarchist book unless they are already interested in the politics. In short supply have been the cheap pamphlets that allow you to check out anarchist ideas without spending the equivalent of two or three hours pay.

The South African anarchists who run Zabalaza Books have been busy doing their bit to fill this gap. Their website [www.zabalaza.net] has free pdf versions of over 100 anarchist pamphlets ready to print out if you have a computer and printer.

ANARCHISM, it's Aims, Methods and Principles Explained. Written by Irish and South African anarchists, this gives an overview of class, direct action, private property, the state, trade unions, democracy, religion, and much more. 44 pages for €2.50

POWER AND AUTHORITY by Mikhail Bakunin. The guy sometimes called the 'father' of modern anarchism spells it out. 8 pages for €0.50

THE WAGE SYSTEM by Peter Kropotkin. Can we do without the wage system. 12 pages for €0.75

MANIFESTO OF LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM by Georges Fontenais. Written in 1953 by for the Federation Communiste Libertaire of France. It is one of the key texts of the anarchist-communist current. 32 pages for €2.00

WAR by Peter Kropotkin. Written almost a century ago, recent warmongering by Bush, Blair and Hussein show how relevant it still is. 8 pages for €0.50

CUBA: Socialist paradise or Castro's fiefdom? By Dermot Sreenan. Is Cuba socialist? What do we mean by socialism? 8 pages for €0.50

SISTERS IN ARMS: women in the Spanish Revolution. A collection of articles looking at the role of anarchist women. 28 pages for €1.50

THE FREEDOM TO SUCCEED by Deirdre Hogan. The reality of the rural collectives during the Spanish Civil War. Anarchism in the countryside. 8 pages for €0.50

Direct Action & fighting to win

Anarchists are not particularly interested in protesting against the evils of the world - we would prefer to abolish them! Political parties, of both left and right, are happy to make statements and mount ineffectual protests that are intended to achieve little more than a bigger profile for their own party. And when their party gets big enough they will sort out everything for us.

That might be alright for those who merely want to change their rulers. It holds no appeal for anarchists who want to abolish the division of people into bosses and workers, rulers and ruled.

There is a very real connection between the means you use and what you end up with. Thirty years ago a British libertarian organisation called Solidarity summed it up very well: *Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self-activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification.*

Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others - even by those allegedly acting on their behalf.

As well as working for a complete change in the way society is run, we all have to live in the here and now. We try to stop things getting worse (cutbacks, new charges, wage restraint, etc.) and we struggle for what improvements can be achieved.

Anarchists have been active in the growing movement against war. We have used our paper to explain why war is not in the interest of ordinary working people and have made suggestions for taking that movement forward.

Marching around Belfast, Cork or Dublin to show opposition to war is not going to stop it. This doesn't mean that public demonstrations have no role to play. They can draw attention to an issue, they can bring likeminded people together and break down the media induced feeling of being in a tiny minority.

But getting a few thousand names on a petition or even a few thousand people on the streets will not make the government change its mind about anything it considers important. Nor will 'witnessing' for justice or small stunts. There is little point in appealing to the 'decency' of politicians who have interests diametrically opposed to our own.

Ireland's contribution to the war for oil is allowing the use of Shannon airport for refueling US military airplanes on their way to the Gulf. Surely then, the key task for anti-war activists is to stop this. Ahearn, Harney and their pals won't tell George Bush that Shannon is closed to his war machines.

We can either rely on 'public opinion' (which is ignored when it suits our rulers - health cuts being a prime example) or we can take action ourselves. A few thousand people at Shannon Airport taking down the fence and

sitting around the military planes, if repeated a few times, would probably be enough to see them off. If this happened Shannon wouldn't be exactly the most secure location for servicing troop carriers and bombers.

Of course the state could respond by mobilising every spare Garda they could find and maybe even some Irish soldiers - but that would be a big risk for them. It would lead to a lot more people taking sides, and the chance of a big demonstration breaking through a major force of cops would be very damaging to their authority.

The choice is between impotent protesting and fighting to win. Protests can be used to build a large confident movement or they can become just an end in themselves. A good example is the success of the campaign which won the abolition of the water charges. There were those who told us to trust the 'better' politicians, to vote differently, to leave it to them.

They were irrelevant to what happened. Socialists and anarchists went into their own neighbourhoods and built a mass movement based on non-payment. They didn't ask anyone to do anything for them - they did it themselves. And it worked. The government had to cave in and the tens of thousands who had resisted the legal threats and refused to pay got a small taste of their potential power when they get together.

Today a similar movement is being built against the bin tax. And it is growing fast because a lot of people know that we can win. There are no certain victories but the experience of the water charges shows that winning is possible.

If we really want to change the world (no small task!!!) we need two things: a huge number of people who understand the alternative that could be created, and the confidence that they can do it. We attach particular importance to struggles that can be victorious, and we insist that that mass participation and real democracy are essential. It is out of the confidence that you taste in victory that we can begin to inspire people to start to take control back over their own lives. We want people to be empowered into being individuals who dispense with the idea of being led anywhere, and who feel in control to decide and determine their own destinies. These victories as well as giving us gains now, they also prepare us for the bigger battles of the future.

We have no need for small groups of wannabe leaders to do things for us. Everyone involved should have the opportunity to play a full part in making the decisions. Afterall, isn't socialism essentially about who makes decisions - the few or the many.

'Partnership' deals

Mating Season in the Ind. Relations Jungle!

Once every three years or so we enter into a special mating season in the industrial relations jungle. The mating of three unlikely species, the government, the bosses and the trade unions takes place. This spectacle is so spectacularly ugly to witness that it's never covered by TV cameras. This time in 2002/03 attempts were under way to sire a son to the 'Programme for Prosperity and Fairness'.

The way these negotiations took place reveal the contempt in which the union leaders hold the ordinary members. Firstly, they don't give a toss what we actually want or think. They don't consult with us on whether they should enter talks, they don't ask us whether they should walk out, they don't care what our opinion is on whether they should go back in to talks. Furthermore they predict "chaos" if ordinary workers and their shop stewards are entrusted with the task of sitting down face to face with their bosses to negotiate wages and conditions.

The actual content of this latest deal is probably the worst of any of the social partnership deals. In both the public and private sectors, the wage increases will not even keep pace with inflation, meaning that we are in fact being given a cut in our standard of living. Private sector employers will of course be able to plead 'inability to pay'. In the public sector, the 'benchmarking' increases - in themselves inadequate in many cases - which should have been paid as part of the PPF, are now to be tied into the new deal. And in order to receive these increases - which were supposed to be payment for productivity already given - public sector workers will be expected to agree a whole new series of 'modernisation', in other words more work.

The very concept of 'social partnership' is what must be challenged. The bosses are not our partners. It's a simple message, but one that the so-called 'leaders' of the trade union movement don't agree with. Politically and ideologically, the ICTU leadership has bought fully into 'partnership'. In fact ICTU President, Senator Joe O'Toole, has been described by one political commentator as "*that reliable Government supporter*".

What is needed is to put forward real alternative strategies which will change our unions from meek participants in 'partnership talks' to fighting democratic organisations. Such strategies would include the lodging of and fighting for real pay increases across both the private and public sectors, using sectoral and cross-industry claims in order to ensure that weaker groups of workers are not left exposed. Furthermore, they would include cash rather than percentage claims to help the lower paid; solidarity action for workers in struggle or whose bosses refuse to grant decent pay rises; the use of the power of the unions to support the poor and marginalized by demanding and fighting for, for example, action on the housing crisis, on hospital waiting lists etc.; opposition to anti-union legislation such as the Industrial Relations Act.

Colombia 3 - wrong people in the dock

The trial of the Colombia 3 has produced a frenzy of speculation in the Irish media about whether they are guilty or not, and how this might effect the 'peace process'. What is all too lacking, however, is any background to Colombia itself. This is not too surprising. Andrew Flood looks at the situation there and argues that it is the Colombian state that should be in the dock.

According to the US based NGO Global Exchange "In 2001, nine out of every ten trade unionists who were killed worldwide were Colombian, making Colombia the most dangerous country on the planet in which to be associated with a union." Since 1984 around 4,000 have been killed. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the vast majority of trade union murders are committed by either the Colombian state itself - e.g. army, police and DAS (security department) - or its indirect agents, the right-wing paramilitaries.

By September of 2002 over 4.1 million US trade unionists had voted to end U.S. military aid to Colombia. The Communication Workers of America (CWA), for instance stated that unions' fight for peace and against corporate power in Colombia make them, "targets for assassination, torture and dismemberment by the rightwing paramilitary AUC (Colombian United Self Defense) often acting in league with transnational corporations and official government forces and with almost absolute impunity from prosecution or court action."

US funding for the Colombian military and police make it the 3rd largest recipient of U.S. military aid in the world. In addition the U.S. government has trained over 10,000 of Colombia's military troops at the School of the Americas (SOA) in Fort Benning, Georgia. SOA training manuals show that the SOA encouraged troops to torture and murder those who do "union organizing and recruiting," pass out "propaganda in favor of the interests of the workers," and "sympathize with demonstrators or strikes."

Amnesty International cites the example of "the attempted murder of trade union leader Wilson Borja Diaz in December 2000, in which several active and retired military and police officers were found to be implicated. Immediately after the attack, national paramilitary leader Carlos Castaño admitted responsibility for it". Castaño has been quoted elsewhere as saying "In the case of trade unionists, we kill them because they prevent others from working."

The right wing paramilitaries are closely connected not only with the Colombian state but also with western corporations. On July 20, 2001, the United Steelworkers of America and the International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF) filed a lawsuit in U.S. district court against the Coca-Cola Company and its locally-owned bottling company in Colombia, the Panamerican Beverage Company (Panamco) alleging that management at Coca-Cola plants in Colombia have used paramilitaries to crush unions with a campaign of threats, kidnap and murder. The

suit was filed on behalf of a Coca-Cola union in Colombia, SINALTRAINAL (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Alimentacion).

The case was taken after Mr. Munera Lopez was gunned down in the doorway of his mother's home in Barranquilla during a short visit to his family. He was murdered just days after a favourable ruling by the Colombian Constitutional Court in his human rights case Mr. Lopez, was the eighth trade union leader working for Coca-Cola bottlers to have been murdered in recent years, according to the United Steelworkers of America President Leo W. Gerar.

Of course all this also goes some way to explaining why political activists visiting Colombia might feel the need to travel on false documents. But in any case it's quite clear that it's the Colombian state and not the Colombian three should be in the dock. They are accused of aiding the largest of the armed groups that oppose the Colombian state, the FARC. Below a Colombian anarchist active in Antimilitarismo Sonoro writes about the roots of the armed struggle in their country and its effect today.

"At the beginning of the 1960s several communist experiments were born, among them the commune which became known as 'Marquetalia'. This commune was bombed and destroyed by the army in alliance with the US army. The very few survivors of this massacre funded what was later to be known as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The destruction of the commune led to the formation of several other guerrilla groups. Among the ones that can be mentioned are: ELN (National Liberation Army), M19 (April 19th Movement), EPL (Popular Liberation Army), a co-ordination they tried to form in the 1980s called CGSB (Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinator), and Quintin Lame (named after an indigenous outlaw, this was an indigenous guerrilla group).

The 'Dirty war' was crude, seriously weakening several of these groups, which would enter peace talks and return into civilian life, ending up as political parties. Later, 'paramilitary' groups would massacre many of the militants of these groups, including Carlos Pizarro Leon-Gomez, Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa and Jaime Pardo Leal, all of them running for president in 1990s elections. This massacre included over 3,000 militants of UP (political party formed from M19) during the following decade, as well as hundreds of different labour unionists, students, teachers human rights, left-wing and social activists etc.

This situation, which blocked alternative routes to power for these groups intensified the war and took it to the point it is at today, where what is being discussed is the share of power each group is going to have. There are two sides in struggle. Both are extremely militarist, both are convinced that they are capable of winning the war and both lack wide political support among the civil population. For both, their expectation is instead a political leadership based on economic and military strength.

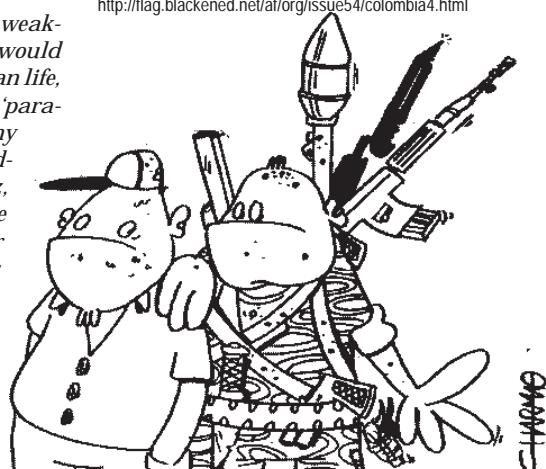
Recently, peace talks with FARC have been taking place in the southern 'demilitarised' area of San Vicente Del Caguan. The reality is that the so-called demilitarisation of this area is more of a smoke screen because FARC has traditionally had complete control over this area (which is the size of Switzerland but very poorly populated as it is in the middle of the jungle), and the state and its military has never had a very active presence.

The current situation of war in Colombia and the everyday decreasing credibility of the guerrillas and their political programme have helped feed alternative movements of resistance. These come from the idea of civil unarmed resistance, and preach positions such as 'Civil Disobedience' as alternative strategies. Although they are generally reformist in nature, they have looked for creative ways to oppose official policies.

Another example is that of the NGO's who have been targeted by paramilitaries and who lost many of their militants over the last decade, resulting in their development of incredible networks of 'contra-information' that can now be used by radical activists.

On the other hand, the indigenous movements have a huge tradition of resistance. Quintin Lame, an indigenous person from Colombia, bears the record for the most times in prison in Colombia, due to his different activities of resistance, and an indigenous guerrilla group in the 1980s was named after him, as mentioned earlier."

The interview in this article is an edited version of one from the British anarchist magazine Organise No. 54. Read the full interview online at <http://flag.blackened.net/af/org/issue54/colombia4.html>



Couriers organising

Cyclone pushbike couriers gained a small but significant victory last November when they achieved a pay rise in the face of considerable management opposition. Though the pay-rise was only in line with inflation, management had flatly rejected this proposal and so provoked an organised response.

Only a few weeks previously management had unilaterally introduced changes in work practices. This had left a sour taste in a few mouths but little could be done as management had dealt with the workers on an individual basis.

The militant couriers decided to act collectively when agitating for the pay rise as one to one bargaining with an employer always leaves the worker negotiating from a position of weakness. How can it be otherwise when your livelihood is at the mercy of the other party? Collective action protects against that to a large extent, particularly when a spirit of solidarity animates it.

Cyclone, as usual, tried to wear down the resolve of the couriers by dragging the process out for weeks and issuing bullshit proposals to counter the workers' demands.

It would have been easy to let the matter drop as it's a physically demanding job. However, the agitators persevered and put in the hours after work for two months talking to fellow workers, seeking their support and participation in the struggle.

Faced with united employee opposition the management gave way completely, perhaps realising that resisting such a modest pay-rise was effectively serving to unionise the workforce.

This was the second year in a row that Cyclone was hit by an uppity workforce. A notable feature of both campaigns was the democratic manner in which the workers acted; simple things like having open meetings, free votes, a rotating negotiating team (so that people could gain experience as well as to prevent the emergence of leaders) contributed to this.

However, due to the high turnover of staff, the benefit of this experience was lessened as the more active workers had left during the year. Unfortunately that situation is already repeating itself with this year's militants leaving or likely to in the next few months and so a young workforce will be left to reinvent the wheel again.

This has the effect of preventing campaigns from moving beyond seeking modest pay-increases to getting sick-pay, holiday pay, insurance, abolition of piece rates and PAYE status (never mind self-management!) all of which are absent in the industry.

Attempts are currently being made to set up a more lasting organisation for pushbike couriers (DBMA) but whether it can survive as more than a social network now the current crop of militants are departing remains to be seen.

Nevertheless, the Cyclone couriers' success was a heartening one; people with absolutely no experience in industrial confrontation won for themselves a less unreasonable wage. They demonstrated the potential of direct action by a workforce to achieve improvements in their working conditions.

James O'Brian & Antón Mac Aodháin

Useful contacts

Dublin Bike Messengers Association
085-7126487
dublincourier@yahoo.co.uk

Communications Workers Union
(trade union interested in helping couriers organise)
575 North Circular Road,
Dublin 1.
01-8366388



public meeting

ANARCHISM

socialism, freedom and direct democracy

Stoneybatter, Dublin 7

Tuesday 25th February, 8pm

see local posters or phone 087-7939931
for details of venue

Dublin Open Meetings

Every month in Dublin we host a gathering of anarchists and other libertarian socialists to discuss a topic of interest over a pint. The meetings, for experienced activists and new comers alike, normally feature a local guest speaker with some expertise in the area, and are intended for thought provoking open discussion - not indoctrination!

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

Feb 10th- Organising Direct Action

Within the Irish anti-war movements the issue of direct action, particularly at Shannon has rightly come to the fore. A discussion on what has happened and what is possible as well as the theory behind direct action.

Anti-war demonstrations

Feb 15 - Anti-war marches in Dublin and Belfast. (organised by IAWM)

March 1st - Direct Action at Shannon Airport. Assemble at the main gates of Shannon Airport at 14.00. As we go to press coach hire is being worked out, contact us for more information. (organised by Grassroots Gathering)

Contact the WSM

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

Workers Solidarity PDF version

What you are reading is a PDF version of the anarchist paper 'Workers Solidarity' which is printed and distributed in Ireland. The printed paper is laid out as an A1 foldover so there are differences between this PDF version and the printed version.

You are reading this either because you have downloaded it from our web site at <http://struggle.ws/wsm.html> or because someone else has done so and you have been given a copy or found one. We encourage you to pass this copy on to others to read or to download and make your own copies to distribute.

We have lots more PDF files on our web site including posters, short leaflets and magazines. You can get a list of these at <http://struggle.ws/wsm/pdf.html>

The Anti-Bin Tax - keep connecting with the punches

Despite the fact that the Dublin City Council effectively has its hands tied (not being able to take anyone to court until the case outstanding from September is heard in the High Court) they could not let the Christmas pass without trying to frighten people into paying their precious double-tax.

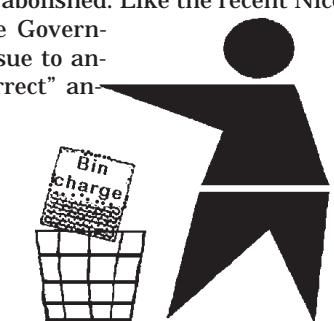
Thousands of letters were sent out to residents demanding payment for the bin-tax or threatening court action within eleven days of this nasty letter being sent out. Let's get some facts straight. The council cannot take anyone to court until the case is heard in the High Court. Yes - they did have one case awarded in their favour but that was because the person summonsed to appear did not contact the campaign, seek our help or even show up in court on the day itself.

So, thanks to the high level of non-payment, the city manager and his cronies were busy trying to scare the living daylights out of people by threatening to take them to court for Christmas despite this being legally impossible. It just shows you how strong the resistance to this double-tax is when they have to resort to such lies and threats.

Then, also in no small part due to the immense work being carried out by the campaign, the councillors themselves decided to vote against the estimates for 2003 by 27 votes to 22. This is because the people throughout the City have let them know in no uncertain terms how they felt by their non-payment and protests. At the time of writing it's expected that there is going

to be some deal cobbled together on Jan 16th at another meeting to ensure that the council is not abolished. Like the recent Nice referendum it appears that the Government has decided to put this issue to another vote until it gets the "correct" answer it wants from the council.

For 2003 we can expect bigger bills arriving in the door. We can expect more threats and we can expect them to do everything in their power to make us pay. But we shall not pay. We shall build the campaign and be even stronger. We have to talk to our friends and neighbours and convince them not to pay this year's increased bin-tax. Together in our unity and strength we will drive the bureaucrats of the council, the Government and Europe even more demented as they try and squeeze money out of us for a service that we have already paid for.



BIN THE BILL

Dermot Sreenan

Next meeting of Dublin Activists - Feb. 17th 19.30hrs Teachers Club 36 Parnell Sq. D2

Contacts: Campaign Mobile - 087 - 2837989
Dermot - 087 - 6277606

More on the bin tax at
www.struggle.ws/wsm/bins.html

'Justice' and 'Equality' in action

Just in case you had any illusions about the fairness or impartiality of the Irish 'justice' system:-

On the same day as 'celebrity chef' Tim Allen was allowed to buy himself off a prison sentence for the possession of child pornography, five Romanian men were jailed after a court found that "it was reasonable to infer that they intended to commit an offence in a shop in Co. Wicklow last November". Allen's sentence of a nine-month prison sentence was reduced to one of 240 hours community service on the payment of EUR40,000 to a child welfare charity - proof, if proof is needed, of the fact that there is one law for the rich and another for the poor.

Meanwhile, as soon as five Romanians entered a shop in Laragh Co Wicklow last November one of the shop assistants - according to her evidence in court - "was aware of them because when they had come in before they had made her very nervous". The shop owner became suspicious "when he saw the five men spread out all over the shop."¹ Despite the fact that nothing had been stolen and that the men gave evidence that they had paid for any items they got and had never been in the shop before, Judge Donnachadh O'Buachalla had heard enough to convict saying that a reasonable inference could be drawn that their intention was to commit an offence. Four of the men were sen-

tenced to four-month terms of imprisonment, and the fifth - because of a previous conviction - was jailed for six months.

And there's more - at Castlebar Circuit Criminal Court in Co. Mayo, Judge Harvey Kenny told a Nigerian woman who was appealing a EUR1,750 fine for driving without insurance that she should be "put in jail to stop all other Nigerians committing similar offences". And just to prove that he approaches all his cases with an open mind, this administrator of 'justice' went on to say "I don't think any Nigerian is obeying the law of the land when it comes to driving. I had a few of them in Galway yesterday and they are all driving around without insurance and the way to stop this is to put you in jail. Word would go out then in the Nigerian community that if you must drive, you must have insurance... You are lucky you are not going to jail."²

And these fine judges are employed by a Department with the words "Justice" and "Equality" in its title!! They wouldn't even know the meanings of the words.

Gregor Kerr

