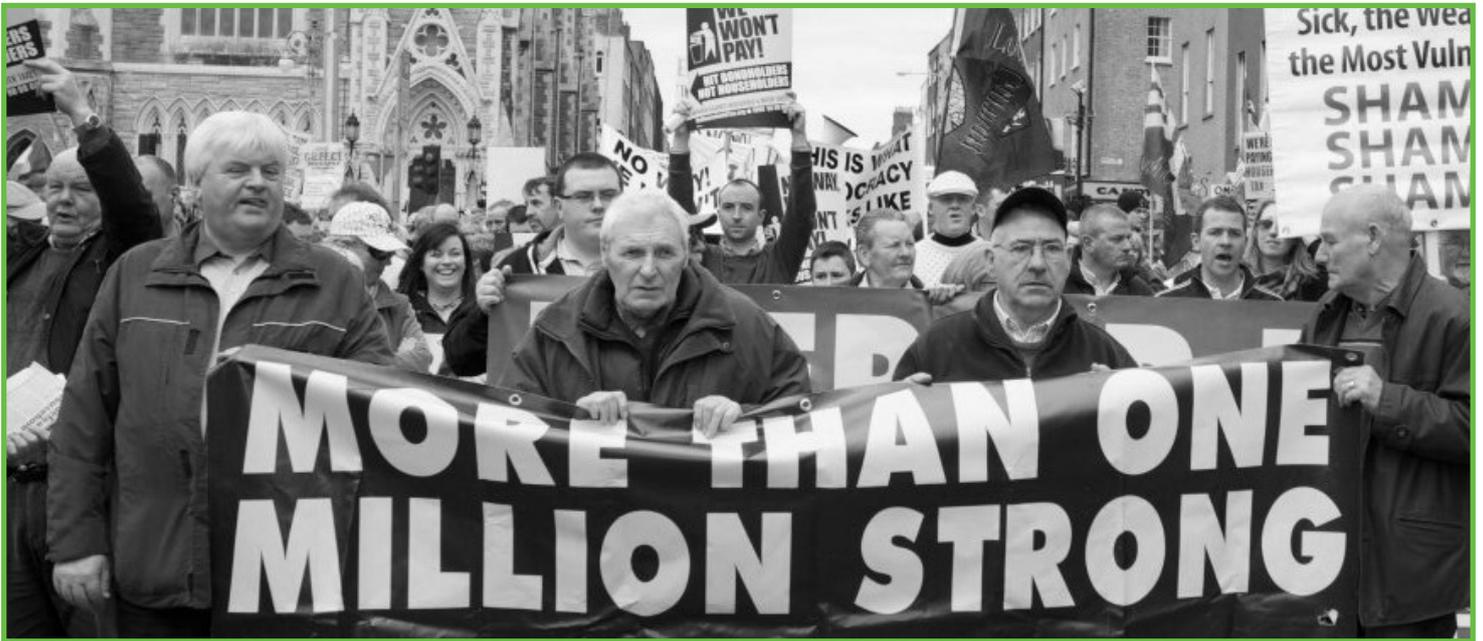


# WORKERS SOLIDARITY

November/December 2012

25 Years of Irish Anarchist News

## Begin To Question, Begin To Organise...



**Austerity IS working** – it's working for those at the very top of society. During the last 4 years, while the rest of us have suffered pay cuts, job losses, increased taxes and decimation of our social services, the very wealthy in Irish society have thrived.

In 2011, the wealthiest 1% of Irish people, about 36,000 people, owned 15.28% of all the wealth in the country – a total of €130.2 billion. That's an average of €3.8 million each.

The economic crisis is providing cover for the super wealthy to get even wealthier. Meanwhile Austerity is being heaped on us in order to pay the gambling debts of international financiers. The payments made and due to be made to bondholders are startling – the entire debt we are expected to pay amounts to something like €87 billion. That's the equivalent of every single one of us as good compliant citizens paying the household tax for the next

540 years!!

And on top of that more than half of all mortgages (affecting approx 380,000 households) are in negative equity. And then there's household tax, property tax, water tax, septic tank tax, increased VAT, universal social charge, health & education cuts, cuts to home help services.....

It's pretty clear. If we continue to be good compliant citizens, our society will be destroyed and there will be nothing left for our kids and grandkids.

Those of us who care about the type of society we live in can no longer afford to just give out about things. We all need to get involved. We need to begin a conversation about how we can replace this rotten mess and what we can replace it with

Begin to question, begin to organise.....

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- Turning Off The Red Light?
- The Croke Park Agreement – the very antithesis of Larkin's trade unionism

# Turn Off The Red Light: Should we advocate it?

The subject of prostitution is becoming part of mainstream discourse again as a number of European countries look to legislate to curb demand, whereby the punter rather than the prostitute is criminalised. Ireland has also been looking to write this into law since the high profile campaign Turn off the Red Light (TORL) was launched.

TJ

The approach which TORL are advocating is an abolitionist approach to sex work, whose aim is to end prostitution by criminalising those who profit from sex work, such as brothel owners or those who offer advertising space for prostitution businesses. This includes the method famously known as the Swedish Law or the demand approach, which is banning the purchase of sex, the idea being that the punter is criminalised and not the prostitute. Unfortunately in practice this is often not the case under abolitionist legal systems as prostitutes are regularly targeted.

The introduction of the Swedish Law would criminalise the purchase of sex but there are already stringent laws in place for prostitutes. Prostitution is legal in Ireland but several of the activities surrounding it are illegal. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act of 1993 prohibits soliciting, living off the earnings of prostitution and keeping a brothel. Advertising brothels and prostitution is prohibited by the Criminal Justice (Public Order) Act



of 1994.

If we look at countries that have already introduced this law, it is clear that it doesn't work as intended. Statistics from Norway and Sweden show that human trafficking for the sex trade have increased since the law was introduced. PION, a Norwegian sex workers' organisation, gave a report on their own conclusions about the law and how it affects sex workers. They feel sex workers have fewer rights and their privacy has been invaded. They give various examples, including that their operations are revealed to landlords and hotels or that a woman's identity is revealed on purpose to the media when they carry out operations. Women are less likely to come forward to the authorities when they experience violence since the law was introduced. These women are also driven away by police when they work on the streets accusing them of encouraging criminal activity. Even if clients see that the women are trafficked, they are unlikely to report in fear that they will be prosecuted.

Another major problem is the rise of STI/STDs as sex workers in Norway prefer not to carry condoms or lubricants as this could be found by the police and used as evidence against them for selling sex. Since the new law has been introduced the number of punters has decreased, but punters have more bargaining power demanding services such as unprotected sex.

Decriminalisation is the best legal approach to sex work in our current system as it destigmatises it, and removes the threat of arrest and police interference for sex workers and others involved. It also deems it as a legitimate business, which means workers have a legal framework to work with if they are treated unfairly, especially when they experience violence. It would be treated like any other business and subject to employment laws, health and safety and zoning laws. This would mean that brothels would be subject to safety code standards, which would create a safer working environment.

# Marian Price: Internment without trial

In August 400 people marched through Dublin to protest the internment without trial of a 58 year old woman in ill health for over a year. In May her husband told the *Belfast Telegraph* she “is so ill that she had to be taken to a recent visit in a wheelchair. Her hair is falling out, she has lost a lot of weight, and her arthritis has got worse. She is suffering from severe depression after a year in solitary.”

**Andrew Flood**

Her case could be described as an obvious stitch up, except that she hasn't been charged with any crime. So why only 400 people on a protest march? With the exception of the WSM and other anarchists, the left, the far left and the radicals involved in Dublin NGOs were almost entirely absent. Despite being a well-known republican (she received two life sentences for bombing the Old Bailey in London) there were only a handful of Sinn Fein members on the demonstration.

There is no mystery to this lack of support. Price is a member of one of the most unpopular political organisations on the island: the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, associated with the 'Real IRA.' This was the organisation that in 1998 bombed Omagh killing 29 people and injuring 220, as well as the shooting of two pizza delivery workers who were being used as bait to lure soldiers out of Massereene barracks in 2009.

The 32CSM embody some of the most reactionary aspects of Irish 'republicanism', particularly the view that there is no need for any popular base to their 'war': that the dead hand of the dead generations gives them the only mandate needed. Faced with a million northern Protestants (and growing numbers of Catholics) with no interest in unity with the south, their strategy is a campaign of bombing and assassinations aimed at deepening sectarian divisions, alongside a bombing campaign in Britain that could easily result in large scale civilian casualties, and a subsequent major retaliation by the British state in the North or against the Irish community in Britain.

All of this is aimed at provoking the resumption of a war in Ireland that no one wants, while their former republican comrades now hold distinguished positions within the Northern Irish devolved government – a further explanation as to why there is little support coming from the ranks of Sinn Fein, other than a respectable nod in favour of her release.



Add to this that one of the other prisoners interned (this time on ancient charges from 1981) is the far-right Catholic nationalist Gerry McGeough, who used his magazine to attack “left-wing revolutionaries and anarchists” and their “strong homosexual undercurrent”. This makes the lack of opposition to internment understandable but it is still short-sighted, counter-productive and wrong. To put it simply: we can't only oppose human rights abuses when they happen to those we agree with.

After the overwhelming majority accepted partition by voting for the Good Friday agreement, the Workers Solidarity Movement went through a period of debate about what that meant for anti-imperialist politics in relation to Ireland. We recognised that the agreement opened up the possibility of a reactionary end to partition. While the armed actions of the RIRA are hardly likely to succeed, they illustrate that sort of possible outcome, where revolutionary republicanism is replaced by sectarian head counts. But we also recognised that state repression needs to be opposed, even if it is directed at this sort of reactionary nationalism (or indeed loyalism), writing “We generally support all calls for public enquiries and oppose all state repression even where we disagree with the politics of those who are the victims of the repression.”

No revolutionary can allow the state to define and intern its enemies arbitrarily. Once that practise becomes established all of us are targets. It's worth remembering that as recently as 2004 sections of the Irish media were claiming that anarchists were planning a bombing campaign and to “Gas Bertie and 10,000 Dubliners.” Once a state is allowed to use these tactics with one group it rapidly expands their use to target others it defines as enemies. We would urge our readers to actively oppose the internment of Marian Price and other prisoners despite the contempt you may hold for their politics.

## Contacts

**Workers Solidarity Movement**  
PO Box 1528, Dublin 8.  
[www.wsm.ie](http://www.wsm.ie)  
[national@wsm.ie](mailto:national@wsm.ie)

**Organise!**  
<http://organise-ireland.blogspot.com/>  
[organiseireland@yahoo.com](mailto:organiseireland@yahoo.com)

**Derry Anarchists**  
<http://derryanarchists.blogspot.com/>

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

**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.hopi-ireland.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

**Anti-Deportation Ireland**  
*Campaign against deportations and the direct-provision asylum system*  
[facebook.com/AntiDeportationIreland](https://facebook.com/AntiDeportationIreland)

**Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign**  
01-6770253 | [info@ipsc.ie](mailto:info@ipsc.ie)  
<http://www.ipsc.ie>

**Free Education for Everyone**  
*Active in colleges around the county, North and South.*  
[www.free-education.info](http://www.free-education.info)  
[stopfees@gmail.com](mailto:stopfees@gmail.com)

**Campaign Against the Household and Water Taxes**  
[www.nohouseholdtax.org](http://www.nohouseholdtax.org)  
1890 989800

## Desperate Measures No Match for Well-Organised Campaign

Despite increasingly desperate attempts by the government to extract their pound of flesh from householders, the Campaign against Household and Water Taxes (CAHWT) continues to rack up victories.

Mark Hoskins

In September, campaigners in Clare were contacted by a local resident who had received a letter from the County Council asking her to furnish proof of payment of the household tax before they would release her third level grant. It was clear immediately that this demand had no basis in law. If the campaign had not acted so quickly however, some householders may have caved in to what was a clear attempt to exploit families' fears of risking a student's chance at a college place.

Early in the week, the councils had the full force of the state behind them, with government ministers including Minister for Education Ruairi Quinn and Minister for the Environment Phil Hogan defending them, with Hogan saying "They are doing what [I've] instructed all local authorities to do - to ensure that we get a higher level of compliance with the household charge."

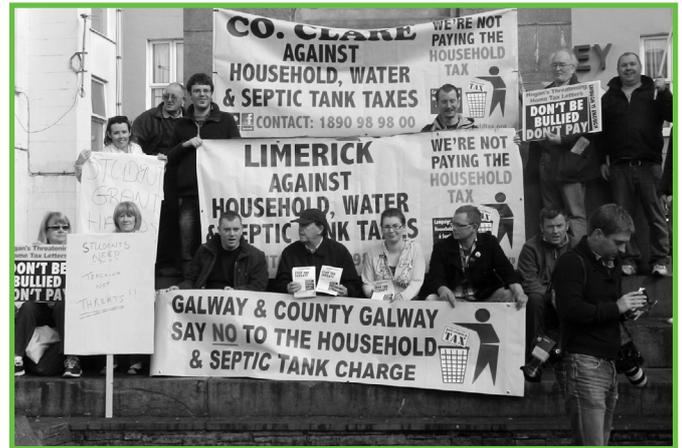
Clare CAHWT, with help from neighbouring areas and the national campaign, began to apply pressure on Clare Co. Co. and national politicians to have this deci-

sion reversed. Student groups including Free Education for Everyone (FEE) and the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) issued statements calling for the letter to be withdrawn and members of USI picketed the offices of South Tipperary Co. Co. (who had sent a similar letter to grant applicants).

Within two days, Taoiseach Enda Kenny was forced to admit that County Councils had no legal basis to withhold or delay grants. Not content with this statement, however Clare CAHWT announced plans to proceed with a protest planned for Friday.

Two days later it was all over; the threats were withdrawn and an apology was issued to all those who had received letters.

As Paul Whitmore of Clare CAHWT put it in a statement "We marched into the Council Offices to demand a clear written promise from them that they would not in any way discriminate against non-payers, and would stop sending these threatening forms to grant applicants. As a sign of the huge impact of people power, we have now received these guarantees in writing,



This is a huge victory for our campaign. Hopefully in the future, the council will think twice before attempting such scare tactics."

The lesson from this episode is clear; if CAHWT had not been there to pull the mask of legitimacy from the councils, they could well have gotten away with these threats. A genuine, tightly organised local campaign can be the eyes and ears of the CAHWT in a community. It is also clear though, that direct action, in the form of non-payment by hundreds of thousands is what gives the campaign its real strength. Through local organising and direct action we can defeat the household tax.

## Student Loans = Student Debt

This college year has seen a large increase in the number of students taking out loans in order to go to college. As part of an aggressive advance into the student debt market, Bank of Ireland has already agreed schemes to provide "discounted loans" to students in DCU and Trinity, and to postgraduate students across the country (in this case the scheme was negotiated directly with the State). B of I is also said to be in "advanced discussions" with over 10 other 3rd-level institutions.

Aidan Rowe

After the raising of the so-called 'registration fee' (which in reality is tuition fees by another name) to €2,250 over the years of the crisis, many students are now left in a situation where they need credit in order to attend third-level college. Clearly, with the registration fee due to rise to over €3000 in the next few years, the student debt market will only continue to expand.

This should be seen as the 'thin end of the wedge' in a creeping privatisation of 3rd level funding. The austerity agenda of the government and the EU/IMF, coupled with a pre-existing neoliberal ideological commitment to transforming public services into businesses which must turn a profit, means that the funding of 3rd level education by means of private credit is an attractive policy. Students are increasingly treated as consumers of a product rather than participants in an educational process which benefits society, and are increasingly expected to act as a revenue source for the state, for universities and for financial institutions.

The upshot of this is that access to education will increasingly depend on students' (or their parents') ability to access credit, and to handle the debt burden. In other words: this will function as a barrier to working class students accessing higher education.

So far, political opposition from the student unions and the Union of Students in Ireland has focused on the details of

the plan rather than on the issue of free education. USI have criticised the 'punitive' interest rates being charged to students (around 10%) and have raised issues around access to loans, but have thus far remained relatively mute on the wider political issue of who should pay for education (despite being mandated by students to fight for free fees funded entirely by the Exchequer).

As anarchists, we oppose the reshaping of education to the logic of the markets and oppose all class barriers to education. However, we also recognise that this can only be achieved if students organise, in solidarity with other working class people, and take direct action to fight for our right to an education.

*WSM members are involved in Free Education for Everyone, a grassroots campaign of students, education workers, and others affected by these issues, which opposes the neoliberal restructuring of education.*

For more see: [free-education.info](http://free-education.info)

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

# Thinking About Anarchism: A Question of Choice: The X case is not enough

*I remember when I was 13 trying to work out my view on abortion. Abortion was in the news, a pro-life referendum had just been passed. Most of my friends' mothers had campaigned on the 'pro-life' side. Abortion was in the classrooms. I remember a teacher, walking between our desks, saying 'abortion, abortion', rolling the rrrs, making the word stretch. "Aborrrrrrtion - even the word is ugly". I remember sitting there, too afraid to question.*

Aileen O'Carroll

I remember watching an English woman being grilled on the "Late Late Show" by Gay Byrne about her abortion. She said "I had a back-street abortion when I was not quite 21 years old. I had it for various and several personal reasons. I was a single woman. I had very little money." That interview influenced me more than anything else. I decided that while I would never have an abortion myself, I wouldn't try to stop anyone else having one. I wouldn't make a decision about the circumstances of another woman's pregnancy. Though I didn't know it at the time, despite being influenced by the catholic world I lived in, I supported a woman's right to



choose.

Fast forward thirty years and once more there is a struggle between the 'pro-life' and 'pro-choice' positions. Although the X-case court judgement and three referendums allowed for abortion under restricted circumstances, no laws have been drafted which would allow hospitals to carry out those abortions. The courts and the people have already spoken and said that where there is a risk to the life of the mother, including the risk of suicide, women should be able to obtain abortions in Ireland.

All the ruling parties – Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, the Greens and the Labour

party - have prevaricated, delayed, avoided and ignored the issue. This has led to two further court cases where girls in care had to go to the courts in order to be allowed to travel to another country. It has led to court cases over ownership of eggs used in IVF. It has, no doubt, led to the forced pregnancies of immigrant women who cannot travel. It has led to women ordering abortion drugs over the Internet. It has forced women to travel under stressful conditions at great expense to other countries, including women who are carrying foetuses who will not survive birth. Whether it's due to cowardice or callousness, all the ruling parties have shown little concern for the misery

they inflict on women's lives.

Perhaps twenty years ago implementation of the X-case judgement would have been a step in the right direction. Not now, not anymore. The X-case judgement is not a right to choose. It doesn't affect the majority of women who seek abortions. 13 women travel each day from Ireland for a foreign abortion in another country. Those numbers won't change very much if the X-case is written into law. Most pregnancies don't threaten the life of the mother, most women aren't suicidal when pregnant. This is why we need to be clear in saying, the X-case is not enough. It is not up to us to say who can have an abortion and who can't, who will be forced to remain pregnant and who won't, who will be forced to travel and who won't. If we believe that women faced with a crisis pregnancy are the best people to decide, then we have to support a woman's right to choose, we have to say, the X-case is not enough.

*Note: This piece was written before Savita Halappanavar died needlessly due to the failure of the state to legislate for lifesaving abortion. See <http://www.wsm.ie/c/20-years-inaction-abortion-tragedy> for more on this issue.*

## Anarchism & the WSM Celebrating 21 years of Anti-Fascist Action

*A round-up of recent WSM activity.*

Our members in Cork and Dublin have been active in the Campaign Against Household and Water Taxes, at local, regional and national levels, helping with stalls, leafletting and demos, and arguing for greater grassroots democracy within the campaign.

In October we published the latest issue of the free, political analysis mag The Irish Anarchist Review.

Several WSM members travelled to and took an active part in the International Gathering of a couple of thousand anarchists in Switzerland in August, the Anarchist Studies Network Conference in Loughborough University in September and the London Anarchist bookfair in October.

Cork, Dublin and Galway branches have been involved with building opposition to the recent Youth Defence bigoted "road show", and in helping mobilise for (and publishing many fab photos of) the national March for Choice, and the demonstrations in support of the Marie Stopes Clinic, as well as helping to organise local pro-choice events.

In Galway our members have been working in solidarity with

local asylum seekers' sadly unsuccessful fight to stop the closure of Lisbrook House.

In Cork our local branch, along with other volunteers have been keeping the friendly, neighbourhood anarchist bookshop and community space up and running. Solidarity Books hosts weekly community meals and weekly showings of radical films as well as providing a cheap, comfortable, welcoming venue for the meetings of various campaign groups. We have run educational on e.g.: the anarchist movement in Germany and Russia, and abortion rights.

Solidarity Books also held a very successful bookstall at this year's Grassroots Gathering in Galway, and WSM members led some of the discussions at the Gathering (e.g. on fighting austerity, and on using the social media)

WSM members in Cork have been involved in helping organise the LGBT Pride Festival and march, as we have been for the past several years, and we have been actively involved with our local branch of the Independent Workers Union

Dublin WSM have also been organising the popular informal 'Conversations about Anarchism' discussion series in Seomra Spraoi.

**On the weekend of 5th-7th October, Anti-Fascist Action Ireland held a series of events to celebrate their twenty one years in existence. The organisation was founded in 1991 with the aim of fighting fascism both physically and ideologically as and where the need arises.**

**Bob Conway**

The events, planned months in advance, looked to unite anti-fascists from across Europe in a way that has not been possible in recent years. For while fascism is on the rise across Europe, with Greece seeing the emergence of the Golden Dawn Party, Italy seeing an alarming increase in support for the autonomous nationalist Casa Pound and Eastern Europe experiencing the continued growth of neo-Nazi groups, Ireland has remained relatively threat free, due in part to the hard work of AFA.

Friday's events saw over one hundred activists gather in the Teachers' Club for the launch of a one hundred page book called "Undertones: Anti-fascism and the far-right in Ireland 1945-2012." The book, while examining the history of the far-right in Ireland, also looks at the militant anti-fascist resistance that has always accompanied it. The evening was also a good opportunity to network with some of the foreign activists who had made their way to Ireland for the weekend's events as somewhere in the region of one hundred and twenty travelled.

Saturday started off with another meeting in the Teachers' Club, this time a forum on the future of militant anti-fascism across Europe. Speakers from Ireland, England, Italy, France, Poland, Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Germany and the Czech Republic took to the stage to speak about their experiences at home, and where they see themselves in the future. Over one hundred and sixty activists packed the hall for two hours of very useful discussion. The debates carried over to the Grand Social on Liffey Street that night where a sold out gig of two hundred and eighty people witnessed five bands and six DJs play for over seven hours under the banner of anti-fascism.

Sunday morning, and again a large crowd; After meet-



ing at the Jim Larkin statue on O'Connell Street, four groups of forty people left for a walking tour of Dublin, culminating in the unveiling of a plaque on Connolly Books in Temple Bar dedicated to those Irish volunteers who made their way to Spain in 1936-1939 to fight Franco and the rising fascist tide. Speakers included Manus O'Riordain, whose father Michael spoke on platforms with AFA Ireland in the past, Tom Redmond from the Communist Party and Councillor Cieran Perry.

Following on from this, the crowds made their way to Smithfield where a mural was unveiled on the side of the Cobblestone pub in memory of Bob Doyle, deceased veteran of the Spanish Civil War who grew up on North King Street nearby. Afterwards, the growing crowd retired into the Cobblestone where they were treated to an evening of trad music from Ronán Ó'Snodaigh of Kila, Lynched and Troika.

An AFA statement on the weekend read: "Without a doubt, this was one of the most important anti-Fascist events this country has ever seen. Hundreds of people from all over Europe and the island joined us. Ireland benefits hugely from having such a small and fragmented neo-Nazi and far-right movement. The failure of these kinds of groups to develop into real threats in Ireland is not just down to political and historical reasons but also the constant, vigilant work of anti-Fascists. This weekend was a celebration of that and an acknowledgement of the struggles of past generations."

# The CAHWT: A locally-led national campaign

Since the foundation of the Campaign Against Household & Water Taxes, WSM members have been pushing for a strengthening of grassroots democracy in the campaign, and we believe that the more democratic the campaign is the more likely it is to succeed. In this article, **Brian Fagan**, a WSM member involved in the campaign in Kildare, outlines his experience of being involved in building the campaign in his local area.

Mass civil disobedience has happened and will continue to happen until government attempts to extract thousands of Euros from each and every one of us to pay the new taxes have been defeated. Ordinary people, most of whom have no political background, have built a national campaign which has effectively thrown a spanner in the government's plans.

Had you asked the members of the campaign a couple of years ago what they would be doing in the future, it's unlikely that they would have said they would be participating in civil disobedience as part of the largest mass campaign since the Land League.

## Organising

While the government schemes in Leinster House, the rest of us are meeting in pubs, function rooms and in each other's homes to organise this national non-payment campaign. The members of a campaign branch discuss and organise every activity from leafleting and doorknocking to protests and fundraising. Motions are discussed and delegates are mandated to carry their branch's decision to the National Steering Committee (NSC). There is no leadership that gives orders to footsoldiers, we can all have an input into the functions of our branch. The leadership in the CAHWT are the branches themselves, it would not be such a successful campaign if this were not the case.

We don't wait for decisions to be made by a leadership and then follow them, we do things ourselves. If we decide a public meeting should be held in our area, we know we have to put up posters, advertise online and in local papers, inform supporters, book a room, arrange a speaker, etc. Meeting regularly, branch members volun-

teer to complete these tasks and report back to the group either during meetings or via email or texts. In this way members can feel ownership of the campaign because it was us that organised that meeting, that march, that picket. No-one did it for us. The value of this DIY approach to social and economic problems is enormous, not least because it is the most effective approach, but also because it's only through struggle that ordinary people can develop an understanding of their power.

Simple things like ensuring that everyone introduces themselves at the start of the meeting so that everyone knows everyone else, that the meeting chair/facilitator encourages contributions from everyone and tries to ensure that the meeting is not dominated by a small number of people are important. These methods help to develop people's confidence and ensure that everyone feels comfortable in contributing to the meeting, however small their contribution may be.

## Lessons

If we win this campaign, the lesson we must all take to heart is that it was not political activists who won the battle, it was ordinary people. It may be suggested like in the Anti-Water tax campaign in the 90's that a politician getting elected will win the battle. But getting 3 or 4 sympathetic politicians is not going to make much of a difference. We have to make the collection of the taxes impossible through our non co-operation, our civil disobedience.

If the campaign advances to the point that we are clearly not going to be defeated and are growing ever stronger, the government will back down or change tack but will try to claim that they were against the tax from the beginning but that the Troika wanted it implemented. Whatever happens, we must remember that they do that because they are afraid of our collective power and terrified of the possibility of us realising that power. Let's stop playing their game, on their turf, by their rules. Let's continue to build the CAHWT as a democratic campaign in which everyone can have a say and ensure that our future is decided by us and not by Phil Hogan and his parasitic class.

# The Croke Park Agreement – the very antithesis of Larkin's trade unionism

**2013 will mark the 100th anniversary of the Dublin Lockout. Members of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union, founded in 1908 with the principle of the strongest groups of workers taking action to protect the weakest at its core, were locked out by Dublin's employers in an attempt to smash the idea of trade union solidarity.**

**Gregor Kerr (Chair District 14 INTO – writing in personal capacity)**

But in many ways today's trade union movement has come to stand for the total opposite of the idea of the strongest protecting the weakest.

The Croke Park Agreement (CPA) was sold to union members in 2010 as the only way in which wages and conditions could be protected.

## The legacy of 'partnership'

After 20 years of so-called 'social partnership' trade unions had a whole generation of officials who only knew the language of 'partnership' and many members who did not see the union as being a collective which fought to protect and improve working conditions and pay rates.

So when the economic collapse came and with it the outright assault on wages and working conditions, the idea that we all as workers had the collective power to resist these attacks, and that the unions were originally built on the principle of being able to withdraw our labour in order to demonstrate our strength had been lost for many.

And so the union leadership were able to sell to the membership the Croke Park Agreement, 'threatening' that without it we would be powerless to stop further attacks on our wages and working conditions.

Those who opposed the CPA said that it was only by rejecting this deal and building a fighting movement that we could hope to protect both our wages and conditions and the integrity of the public services we worked in – education, health, social wel-



fare.... We also pointed out that the document referred constantly to 'existing public servants' and appealed to union members not to sacrifice the wages and terms and conditions of young people likely to join the public service in the following years in the hope of protecting our own.

## 'Told you so'

Unfortunately the last 2 and a bit years of the CPA have seen exactly that happen – the working conditions and pay rates of 'new entrants' to the public service have been savaged, and the services themselves have been slashed.

In 2008 a primary teacher starting out took home €557 per week after tax and other deductions, in September 2012 a starting teacher's net take home pay was just €406 – that's a reduction of almost 28%.

Newly Qualified Teachers – the weakest in terms of today's teacher unions - rightly feel that the principle of the strongest protecting the weakest has been ditched by today's trade unions.

Trade union leaders do not appear to have any alternative political strategy but have accepted the 'truth' that public spending must be slashed to pay off the gambling debts run up by international financiers and developers. This leaves them fearful of fighting any proposed cut to services – or the pay cuts for new entrants - because this might result in pay being targeted for cuts instead.

Having peddled the CPA through the fear

factor, the union leaders' mantra now is that members don't want to know about fighting cuts to services, or about taking action to protect the pay of new entrants. And there is a large degree of truth to this. Having been sold the CPA as 'the only way possible way to protect wages' and having the fear factor blasted at them daily from supposedly 'independent' commentators it's hardly a surprise that union members are reluctant to take any action.

## Ignoring the obvious

But, if today's union members do not feel they should take action to protect their weaker colleagues (the basis on which trade unionism has been built), pure self-interest should be enough to make them take what is being done to their younger colleagues more seriously.

After all, does anyone honestly think that in the post-CPA world (it's due to expire in early 2014) the pressure won't come on immediately to reduce all wages in line with the pay rates of 'new entrants'? Commentators are already gearing up for the next phase of the onslaught and already it is possible to hear the statements about 'greedy' public servants 'creaming it in' while their younger colleagues suffer on lower pay scales.

## Collective solidarity

In conclusion therefore, the CPA must be seen as the very antithesis of what real trade unionism should be about. Trade unionists who want to truly commemorate the spirit and courage of those who took to the streets in 1913 must first of all ditch the current strategy of appeasement and acceptance of the attacks on our living standards and our services. We need to re-forged the real soul of our trade unions as bodies based on collective solidarity. We need, in short, more than fine words about Jim Larkin and his colleagues, we need to re-discover some of the fighting spirit and sense of solidarity which Dublin's workers in 1913 had in abundance.

A longer version of this article is available at <http://www.wsm.ie/psa>

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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.



## 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.

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