

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

April/May 2013

25 Years of Irish Anarchist News

Only Mass Action Can Defeat Austerity



Five years into an austerity program that is only working to make the rich richer, most of us are very unhappy about the lack of resistance from the unions. During the Croke Park campaign the SIPTU National Executive Council released a statement that included: "There is, of course, a wider issue of fairness in the Country as a whole because the wealthy are not contributing to the degree that they can or should. This is a consequence of the political choices made by the voters at election time."

Here, boldly stated, is the problem at the heart of modern trade unionism in Europe. Deeply built into its ideology is the acceptance that we have to accept the policies of whichever parties happen to win each consecutive round of the Xfactor-like electoral circus. This is why the so-called general strikes in Spain, Greece & Italy have not changed policy there. Those 'general strikes' are not aimed at bringing down the government but rather just on making it very

visible that the workers are unhappy.

As long as workers across Europe accept this limitation we will have austerity imposed on us. Tokenistic one or two-day actions, no matter how militant or noisy, cannot force the reversal of austerity. If that's what we want to see, it's not token action we need, it's striking to win.

We need to give up on pleading with the wealthy 1% to treat us fairly. Their strength is in their enormous wealth though which they literally buy politicians and the media. Our strength is in the fact they are 1% and we outnumber them 99 to 1. Our strength is in the fact that unless we work they make no money. And our strength is in their fear that if we act together, if we organise together, if we strike together we will realise that we have no need for the 1% at all.

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What the Frack?

One of the final acts of the last Fianna Fáil government was to award licences to a number of companies to explore for commercial gas in the Northwest Carboniferous Basin (commonly known as the Lough Allen basin). The Lough Allen Basin is a huge area that covers parts of Cavan, Donegal, Fermanagh, Leitrim, Mayo, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo and Tyrone. Significantly this area covers the headwaters of two of our largest water systems, the Shannon and the Erne. Right in the middle of the basin is an area that is dependent on water related tourism and recreation for its economic activity. It is estimated that 1,000 wells could be drilled. Similar plans are also being made for Clare. The drilling method that would be used in these wells is Hydraulic Gas Fracking.

Fergal S

What is Fracking?

Hydraulic fracturing, often called fracking or hydrofracking, is the process of fracturing or breaking a rock layer, using a highly pressurized fluid, in order to release natural gas for extraction. This fracturing is done from a well-bore or hole, drilled directly into the rock formation. The energy from the injection of highly pressurized fluid creates new channels in the rock which can increase the extraction rates and ultimate recovery of fossil fuels. A mixture of water, sand and chemicals is pumped into the rock at a very high pressure and it cracks it just like a windshield. The cracks go out a couple hundred feet on either side and that forms the pathway for the natural gas to migrate to the well bore and up to the surface. The fracture width is typically maintained after the injection by the sand or other particles that prevent the fractures from closing when the injection is stopped but still allow the gas to rise through them.

Why Should We Be Worried?

This process of deliberately fracturing the bed-rock is very risky and unpredictable. At the very least it raises some questions. For example what will be the effect on our groundwater? How can

the engineers be sure of what the extent and effect of the fractures will be? The practice of hydraulic fracturing has come under examination internationally due to environmental, health and safety concerns and has been banned in France and in certain parts of the USA. There are also temporary bans in place pending further research into its environmental effects in New South Wales (Australia), Quebec (Canada), Karoo region (S. Africa) and in parts of the UK.

What we are primarily concerned with is the effect fracking may have on the groundwater. The fact that President Bush made fracking exempt from the federal "Clean Water Act" in 2005 is a big hint at its potential effects on water quality. There's at least 11.5 million litres involved in the initial fracking of just one gas well. All of this water and chemicals have to be transported to and from the well heads causing a massive increase in traffic from the thousands of heavy trucks needed to do this job.

Another result of fracking is that methane, brine and other fluids (some of them radioactive) normally trapped in the rock layers can come to the surface with the natural gas and these must be disposed of somewhere. There's also the problem of what to do with the millions of gallons of waste fracking fluid. In the USA environmentally damaging spillages of fracking fluids, diesel and other chemicals from gas wells have been recorded, affecting river systems and drinking water wells.

US EPA tests have found suspected fracking fluid chemicals in drinking water wells, and a study by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation identified 260 different chemicals used in the process. Companies zealously guard the secret of what exactly makes up their individual fracking fluid in the same way Coca Cola keeps its recipe secret. Companies also dump used fracking fluid back beneath the surface, usually injecting it into other formations beneath the shale. The long term effects of this form of deep dumping are unknown (Scien-



tific American, March 2010).

We are being asked to trust an industry that is effectively saying "we only polluted over there, because we were allowed to, of course we won't do that here because it's against the law." We are being told that we should rely on our stiff anti-pollution regulations to protect us from this wanton destruction. This comes at a time when all public services including environmental regulation are being cut back. With the best will in the world our state services definitely don't have the manpower to do this job properly. Even if they did, we have an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which is immune to prosecution and run by a former IBEC adviser who is famous for remarks about facilitating industry with light touch regulation.

The big question is: when all the money from these energy companies starts sloshing around, what will happen to our regulators then? History shows us that greedy politics takes over. Where were the regulators of the banks when we needed them most? What about the planning tribunals? Have we really learnt enough lessons from these debacles to trust that our own principles will be enough to shield us from the damage already seen in the USA? The goal of any of these private gas companies is to make money and if there is any short cut that will improve the bottom line then it will be taken. Ireland has the smallest tax take on the exploitation of any of its natural resources so we won't even see any meaningful additions to the public purse.

*For further information and what you can do see the longer version of this article at **FILL THIS PART IN***

Fighting for abortion rights in the North

In the North, abortion is prohibited under the Offences Against the Persons Act (1861) - with some common law exceptions. If continuation of the pregnancy threatens the life of the woman, or would adversely affect her mental and physical health where the effects are 'real and serious' or 'long term', are two such examples.

Maria

The 'Attitudes and practice of gynaecologists towards abortion in Northern Ireland' survey claims that the majority of gynaecologists in Northern Ireland "do not support the current abortion law as it stands". Many also say they would carry out abortions under certain conditions. Sexual health charity FPA said this "rubbed" claims by anti-choice groups and politicians that "there is no place for abortion in NI". Of 42 gynaecologists working in Northern Ireland, 37 took part in the survey giving a response rate of 88%.

The recent opening of the Marie Stopes clinic in Belfast provides abortions for women up to nine weeks via the abortion pill and also provides other sexual health services - at a cost of up to £400 - £2000 for the consultation and care including the abortion pill. The abortion pill, or misoprostol, will terminate a pregnancy up to 12 weeks.

Desperation

Due to the lack of adequate abortion provision for women here, 40 women a week leave Ireland to obtain abortions in Britain. Those who cannot afford to travel and have no options fall victim to unscrupulous internet scams which claim to be selling the abortion pill, or in desperation go to loan sharks of which there has been a rise since the introduction of the austerity measures across the board - putting these women and their families into serious debt.

In the 2009 case to remove Department of Health guidelines on Terminations for the medical profession, Lord Justice Girvan claimed that giving advice as to the availability of abortion services elsewhere in the UK was 'arguably unlawful'. The European Court of Human Rights decided in a case against Ireland in 1992 that prohibiting women from receiving such information was a breach of fundamental rights in the European Convention.

Lord Justice Girvan put forward a proposed amendment in February of this year which would restrict even further the allowance of any abortions in the North to be carried out legally not under NHS and also restrict the limited legal framework. This was despite the Marie Stopes clinic having



been more than willing to receive any inspections/assessments set by the Dept of Health/Health Minister. Edwin Poots, the current Health Minister, commented 'If this is the backwoods, I'm glad we're in it' - showing a complete disregard for women's ability to make their own choices about healthcare and reflective of a wider effort to steer the abortion debate away from choice.

Control

A Petition of concern was signed by Sinn Fein, Alliance and the Green Party - which fortunately prevented the amendment being made. However women's legal right to abortion is under constant threat of attack from the right wing, predominantly Christian, male dominated Stormont Assembly who not only want to retain the control of women via reproductive rights and choices but support the continuance of the unacknowledged labour of women, and ensuring in the wider context the production of cheaper labour.

With the introduction of austerity measures we will see not only continuation of lack of provision for healthcare for women but a reinforcing of the status quo. The only women having access to abortions, even within the common law restrictions of private healthcare at great cost, are middle and upper class women showing it is not a moral issue but a class issue.

Solidarity

The cross border efforts between the North and the South show a strong support base for pro-choice campaigners. What is needed is to continue to renew efforts to collectivise power, show solidarity with NI and ROI comrades to ensure the fight continues until free safe and legal abortion on demand for all women can be provided via the healthcare system in place - presently, the NHS. Alliance for Choice Belfast and Derry are very active in keeping the debate open.

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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

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
<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

Irish Palestine Solidarity Campaign
01-6770253 | info@ipsc.ie
<http://www.ipsc.ie>

Free Education for Everyone
Active in colleges around the county, North and South.
www.free-education.info
stopfees@gmail.com

Campaign Against the Household and Water Taxes
www.nohouseholdtax.org
1890 989800

The Human Cost of Cuts to Public Services: Thoughts of a Dole Worker

The following text was sent to us by a reader who works in a social welfare office. It illustrates just one aspect of the human cost of the Croke Park agreement and of the further deterioration that will occur under the "extension", if it is passed.

Life in a social welfare office can be heart-breaking sometimes. Sitting there, behind the glass, you have a very limited range of available responses available to a broad expanse of problems. As the crisis deepens, people's problems become more serious and varied and our responses and the time available to respond narrow.

At the same time, despite wishing you could help more, you are often the one left sitting taking abuse from people who are frustrated at a system that is letting them down. Meanwhile, the people who have created this situation never have to face the everyday reality of the fall out of their actions.

The social welfare office that I work in is one of the busiest in the country. The first Croke Park agreement has had a noticeable impact on our ability to provide services to the public. Waiting times have significantly increased before people even get to submit their claims for social welfare. After that they can be waiting months for a decision on their claim. This is not through any fault of the staff. It is a direct result of



the fact that staff who are out on long term illness, maternity, on shorter working years etc. are not being replaced.

When staff leave, or get transferred, it can take months to replace them or they are not replaced at all. They are sometimes only replaced by temp staff, who the rest of us have barely enough time to train in, and even then, because they are temps, they can be gone in a few months and you have to start the process all over again. This means some public hatches are closed and there is no cover when someone goes out sick or has a family emergency. When extra work is taken on by the office, we have to make the resources we have stretch further.

When the government talk about "savings", the human cost is never mentioned. The people who are getting evicted because

of a delay in their rent allowance application, the people who are telling social welfare staff they are going to commit suicide because they have no money and can't live, the people who are ashamed to be claiming social welfare because they are being made to feel like spongers, the people having nervous breakdowns; this is what we see on a daily basis. These are the people who it will be more and more difficult to help, and that takes its toll on us too. We, the staff and them, the people who come to us for help - to the number crunchers, we are just statistics. We are just another way to make sure the people who caused the economic crisis don't have to pay for it.

People's lives are being destroyed. The country is being destroyed. It's time we said enough is enough. It's time we fought back.

West Belfast - 2nd highest levels of child poverty in the UK

The recent report commissioned by the 'End Child Poverty' campaign found that out of 650 parliamentary constituencies, West Belfast has the second highest levels of child poverty in the UK. 43% of children within the West Belfast constituency grow up in poverty. And while this is a reduction on the previous year from 46%, other areas saw a greater percentage drop in poverty levels over that year.

Davy

West Belfast has constantly been at the top of the statistical lists for the areas of greatest socio-economic deprivation case for decades. January's 2013 release from the 'Office for National Statistics' also has West Belfast men as the highest

rate of benefits claimants at 15.2% in the UK. West Belfast has also seen a dramatic rise in youth unemployment, with Northern Ireland as a whole amongst the highest youth unemployment rate in the UK at over 20%

The issue of housing sees West Belfast also topping the polls with the highest waiting lists in the North for social housing. At the same time repossessions of home owner's properties are reaching an all-time high. In recent years West Belfast has also seen a rise in suicides, one of the biggest causes of premature deaths in the area. Alcohol and drug dependency have also spiralled in local areas while food and clothing bank charities are inundated from people seeking help.

What are the local politicians doing

about this growing poverty and deprivation? We have seen local politicians being responsible for implementing austerity measures resulting in continual closures and cuts to our public services.

We have also seen Unionist politicians whipping up sectarian division over the moving of the Union flag upon Belfast city hall to designated days only. This situation has seen months of street mobilisation from loyalist working class communities and the rising of sectarian tensions. All of this is further creating sectarian divisions while pushing many more into poverty. Whether it be West Belfast, East Belfast or Catholic and Protestant working class communities across the North, it is time to stand up to the sectarian politicians for our collective class interests rather than to stand with them for their self-interest.

Find out more - Check out www.wsm.ie

Thinking About Anarchism: Campaign Against Home and Water Taxes – inspiring people to demand participatory democracy

At a public meeting of the Campaign Against Home and Water Taxes (CAHWT) in Kildare last month, a query was raised from a woman anxious about the upcoming local elections. She explained her complete frustration with the austerity policies of the Fine Gael-Labour Government, and described her despair at not having the power to challenge policies that were ravaging her community, stating there “really is no one legitimate left to vote for.”

Farah

I think her anger with the Government, and the despondency the austerity policies, such as the property tax legislation, elicits from working class people in Ireland and across Europe, can be instructive for all those of us who wish to resist these policies. It is a realisation that the ruling class has kept the majority of us from questioning the inequality of a system where we are threatened into paying heavy taxes for which we get almost nothing in return – the insanity of paying more and more, whilst getting less and less.

Struggle

However, being angry with elected representatives is not enough. Simply threatening to vote for yet another party will not pose the sort of significant challenge necessary to reject austerity and its roots in neoliberal, transnational capitalism - a system that has proven time and again to ignore the votes and democratic decisions of communities across Europe.



American trade unionist and philosopher Rick Roderick has said, “Once capitalism invades the whole of life, then struggle involves the whole of life.” It is easy to see the numerous ways in which austerity is ravaging our community, from the property tax legislation and water charges, to cuts to social welfare and wages of public sector workers. It isn’t always easy to see how to resist, especially when we have been told that the centre of gravity of our political participation is found in the ballot box.

The example of what this Fine Gael/Labour government has done should be enough to confirm to us not only that voting is entirely inadequate (at best) as a way of changing our society, but also that a sort of political participation that is participatory and empowering, where we feel we can have power over the decisions that effect our lives, is a far more meaningful democracy.

Separation

I think that our anger at the present policies can make us feel quite alienated from politics because we begin to

feel that so many of the conditions of our existence are not under our control, and the possibilities we imagine for changing that situation feel a lot more distant. I think representational democracy exploits the separation between those of us whose capacity to have power over our own lives has been stolen from us, and those in control of these processes who benefit from this separation by accumulation either of power or wealth – or both! We begin to feel like we are spectators on our own lives, and our ability to imagine other possibilities diminishes until we get to the same desperate state of that woman from Kildare who knew there had to be more to democracy than choosing between party A or B.

That is why I felt I needed to not only be critical, but to mobilize my frustration into action, and why I got involved with the CAHWT. For me the campaign represents the possibility to profitably reset my political compass, and that of our country, to not only boycott the property taxes and water charges, but to demand a more meaningful and accountable democracy.

Grassroots

The grassroots nature of the campaign, and the democratic structures it has in place - where any person from a local area can put forward ideas and help make decisions that will be implemented nationally - is a small example of the sort of participatory democracy I would like to see in other spheres of my life – my workplace, my university, and my neighborhood. Don’t get me wrong, debating things out with people who may have quite different ideas of what to do hasn’t been easy, but it has forced me to see issues more complexly through the eyes of lots of different people, and seek compromise and imaginative possibilities that are never presented in traditional “winner” and “loser” sort of electoral democracy.

Participatory democracy also makes me accountable to my local community, whether it’s simply showing up at a meeting every week or making sure to accomplish the tasks I’ve been given the responsibility for.

I think CAHWT has the potential to inspire significant resistance in this country not only through boycott of the property tax, but through strikes, walk outs, occupations and other forms of protest. And I think we can only win by way of the meaningful involvement of the broadest layer of activists, who feel ownership not only over the campaign, but more and more, over their own lives. I see the possibility that this campaign can inspire people to demand the same participatory democracy in their unions, in their schools, in their workplaces and local communities.

Anarchism & the WSM

A round-up of recent WSM activity.

Our members in Cork and Dublin have been active at local, regional and national levels in the Campaign Against Home and Water Taxes, helping with stalls, leaf-letting and demos, and arguing for greater grassroots democracy within the campaign. WSM members were also involved in occupations of council offices and TDs offices in Cork and Dublin as part of the campaign.

Members have also been involved in the recent wave of pro-choice activities following the death of Savita Halappanavar in Galway, working to help build protests and were involved in the foundation of the new Abortion Rights Cam-

paign.

On the 6th of April, the 8th Annual Dublin Anarchist Bookfair, organised by the WSM, took place. This year, talks and workshops were based around the theme ‘1913-2013 - Rebuilding a Movement from Below’. Issue 7 of our free political analysis magazine, the Irish Anarchist Review was also published and distributed at the bookfair.

WSM members were involved in an anti-racist picket at the Camden Court Hotel in Dublin following inflammatory anti-Traveller comments by Fianna Fáil TD Séan McEniff, who owns a share of the hotel.

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. A series of excellent events were held in the space for International Women’s Day, which included films, talks, drama and dance performances, wrapped up with a meal courtesy of Veg Out!

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

Conversations About Anarchism

7:30 Seomra Spraoi
10 Belvedere Court, Dublin

Monthly discussion in a friendly and relaxed environment for those interested in finding out about anarchism

Types of Anarchism (2 May)
Anarchism & Queer Liberation (6 June)
Anarchism & Fascism (4 July)

An Irish emigrant in Sydney - life, work & radical politics

Sydney is a vast city of over 4 million, the economic boom in Australia is driven by the phenomenal growth of the Chinese economy and their hunger for Australian mineral resources - everything else flows from that. Indeed the crash experienced in Europe and the US barely caused a ripple here.

Consequences of the boom however are not all positive, the mining industry has a huge influence on government policy and the money sloshing around the banks combined with government policy has given rise to a huge housing bubble, familiar territory if you're Irish. The average house price in Sydney is \$657,000 (about €500,000) so out of reach of Australian workers whose average wage is just short of \$1,000 per week.

A consequence of this is a huge increase in the rental market which is also overpriced. Consequently you have the phenomenon of immigrants living in hostels and working from them as there is a housing shortage for low and medium priced rents.

Work

The Irish have arrived in numbers, about 20,000 a year on working holiday visas and another 5,000 last year on 457 visas (skilled workers sponsored by employer). Of course there are countless others here "on holiday". There is certainly work available as the unemployment rate is low. There is resentment building up amongst certain sections of the population against skilled foreign labour getting jobs in the mining sector and this is being cynically exploited by the politicians.

My own experience of Sydney has been a fairly positive one, where being Irish is a bonus. There are plenty of sites worth seeing, the city is ethnically quiet diverse, but it is obvious that the "White Australia" policy of previous years did affect demographics here. After settling in I went to visit Jura books (<http://jura.org.au/>) an anarchist bookshop going over 30 years and now settled on Parramatta Road. It is an impressive set-up with a very good selection of books, a library, anarchist archive, printshop and kitchen. The space is used for political discussions, meetings, film showings, gigs etc..

Protest

The first demonstration I was on was the 9th anniversary march for justice for TJ Hickey on February 14th. TJ Hickey was a 17 year old aboriginal boy who died after his bike was clipped by a police car that was chasing him and he ended up impaled on an iron fence in Redfern where he lived and died. The Redfern riots followed his



death. His family, aided by aboriginal rights activists and others, have been pressing for a reopening of the inquiry into his death that absolved the police. His mother is still visibly grieving his loss and this was quite an emotional occasion.

Aborigines today make up less than 4% of the population and are over-represented in terms of social deprivation and prison population. Redfern has been largely gentrified as a part of government policy since 2004, but the two social housing tower blocks still dominate the area. The march was a good eye opener into the nature of the state's attitude to the aborigines, an antidote to the many public buildings that fly the aboriginal flag, shops that sell original aboriginal art and the frequent empty apologies from politicians.

Politics

I went along to a few sessions of politics in the pub (<http://politicsinthepub.org.au/>) a lefty kind of discussion night. The format of two speakers followed by questions, with little tolerance for making interventions, is a little bit flawed in my opinion, but nonetheless the sessions are informative. The policy of questions rather than comments isn't really conducive to debate and the start time of 6pm militates against workers, consequently the audience is overwhelming pensioners or those living nearby, nonetheless an interesting evening on occasion.

Sydney also has an active branch of the IWW and I hope to get along to some of their events and activities.

That's all for now from down under.

Review: Why It's Still Kicking Off Everywhere

Today, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Yet something else is stirring. 2011 occasioned a transnational impulse of 'outrage' against the cruelties of global financial institutions and the petty thuggery of enthralled states. The occupation of the world's squares was simultaneously an impulse of 'hope', 'solidarity' and 'the commons', directed towards a dimly perceived yet somehow more just and humane future. Tracking their emergence, evolution, fading, and re-emergence worldwide – now Cairo, then Syntagma, here Zuccotti Park, there Puerta del Sol - Paul Mason, BBC journalist and author, has provided an insightful record and (more questionable) analysis of these revolts.

Tom Murray

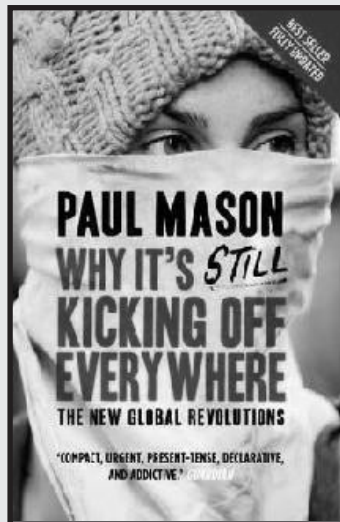
2012's Why It's Kicking Off Everywhere documented the evolving wave of revolt and revolution from the Arab Spring to riots in Athens and Manila, from the student occupations in the UK to the emergence of the indignados in Spain and Occupy in the US. The updated edition, Why It's STILL Kicking Off Everywhere expands on the flowering and repression of revolt in Russia, updates the analysis of Greece and Spain and revisits Mason's thesis of the 'networked' revolution. The book is a terrific read, largely because Mason – while never losing sight of historical, economic or political context – foregrounds the voices and actions of the discontented and the dispossessed. And, of course, as even Financial Times journalists will admit, much of what the protestors have to say is worth listening to. This direct reporting is a real strength.

Mason's analysis of why global uprisings are taking place is also valuable, not so much for pointing out the ongoing role of a pronounced crisis of capitalism as for detailing the particular features that make the revolts somewhat unique this time around. These particularities include the intra-elite mechanics of austerity policies and currency manipulation, the role of speculation in raising food prices (central to the Arab Spring)

and, common to all risings, the potent force presented by 'the graduate without a future'. But Mason is probably best known for emphasising the role of 'networked individuals' in the revolts, the increasing numbers of us who use communications technology such as Facebook and Twitter to socialise and, as occasions arise, to organise. Techno-fora users, characterised as people with 'weak ties, multiple loyalties and greater autonomy', create horizontal social networks capable of challenging repressive states on the one hand and closed ideas or dogmas (rightist or leftist) on the other.

The book's first weak point relates to its understanding of 'everywhere'. The focus is on Europe, the US and the Arab Spring. Manila is also analysed to include a section on slumdwelling (increasingly important politically in a rapidly urbanising world). But new student movements in Canada and Chile are not considered. Neither are the networked rioters in London in 2011. China is barely mentioned, notwithstanding its tentative 'jasmine revolution' or increasing waves of 'mass incidents' arising from peasant, worker, urban and ethnic struggles throughout the 2000s and 2010s. These include strikes at the Foxconn Zhengzhou factory plant where the hardware for social networking (such as the iPhone) is produced. The most glaring omission though is South America, particularly the Zapatistas in Mexico or post-financial crisis movements in Argentina. The horizontal practices that evolved here in the 1990s and 2000s are a vital reference point for contemporary waves of resistance.

This brings us to the book's second weakness: it's analysis of 'why' it's kicking off. To an extent, Mason has hit upon the uptake of social media, emphasised its use as the new factor and, in doing so, just confirms what he initially expected to find. Alternative emphases exist. What if the emergence of horizontal forms of revolt is not the product of commu-



nicative/technological change but is the last-ditch option for civil society once the state has been captured, directly and visibly, by international governance networks (e.g. the IMF) and the private interests they serve? What is left for those who want a more equal, democratic society but to start assembling in squares, to institute direct democracy?

This seems to me an important part of the story in Chiapas, Argentina and everywhere the IMF has 'come to town', which the book omits.

Summing up, Mason draws an uncontroversial conclusion that the economic crisis is here to stay (for the next five years at least) and so too is the politics of contesting austerity. Starkly, this means that the possibility of something 'viscerally fearful', such as a fascist breakthrough in Greece or Northern Europe, remains. Meanwhile, the social movements of 2011, having been ousted from the world's public squares in 2012, are now faced with a logjam-inducing relationship to existing political institutions. In the short to medium term, Mason suggests, their questioning of methods and aims will probably occur alongside 'cooperative economic practices' such as took place with Occupy Sandy in New York or the local solidarity economies in Spain and Greece. It would be wrong to dismiss the powers and interests arrayed against these movements. But in 2011, unprecedented in its scale, pace and development, the genie of transnational solidarity escaped from the bottle. As the conditions for provoking revolt remain, so too does the potential for that solidarity to evolve into something more potent – a future worth constructing.

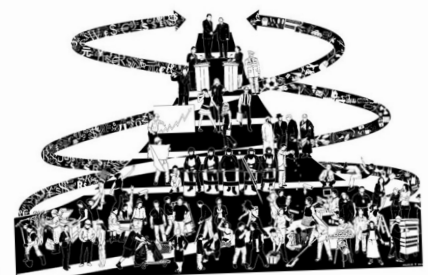
solidaritybooks



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
spring 2011 issue *****



Re-building a movement from below.

Irish Anarchist Review

The Workers Solidarity Movement is very pleased to announce the seventh 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-7>

www.anarchistblackcat.org



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

anarkismo.net

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