

WORKERS SOLIDARITY

September / October 2010

Twenty-Six Years of Irish Anarchist News

Inequality is the Problem

The 2010 Inequality Survey published by independent thinktank TASC has shown that 87% of respondents believe that wealth in Ireland is unfairly distributed. This is up from 70% in the equivalent survey carried out in 2008. 91% of respondents believe that active steps should be taken by Government to address this inequality and reduce the income gap between low and high income earners.

Gregor Kerr

The survey 'The Solidarity Factor: Public Responses to Economic Inequality in Ireland' was carried out by Behaviour and Attitudes on behalf of TASC between March 26th and April 8th 2010 and published in mid-August.

As well as surveying people's views in relation to economic inequality, the survey also probed views on the steps which people feel should be taken to address this inequality. This threw up some interesting results with 29% saying they favoured the introduction of a maximum wage, 16% supporting an increase in the minimum wage



and 49% favouring some combination of these two measures.

The practicalities of how a maximum wage might operate are referred to briefly in the report, and were not the subject of a question in the survey. But the fact that almost half of all respondents were willing to support the possibility of such a measure shows that new measures to address inequality are beginning to form part of people's political thought.

Commenting on the findings of the report, TASC director Paula Clancy said "The recession has coincided with growing awareness of economic inequality, and with a public willingness to adopt

a range of measures to address it. This public willingness is far ahead of government policy." TASC's Head of Policy Sinéad Pentony commented "It is clear that the public is not only very aware of economic inequality, but wants steps to be taken to address it. The challenge facing us now is to translate public opinion into a public policy imperative."

The survey can be accessed at:

http://www.tascnet.ie/upload/file/Solidarity%20Factor_upload.pdf



FÁS Giveaway

State training body markets free labour for greedy companies.



Spanish Anarchism 100 Years

2010 celebrates 100th anniversary of founding of anarchist union CNT.



Civil Partnership

LGBT still treated as 2nd class citizens despite civil partnership bill.

Institutionalised Discrimination

The Civil Partnership Bill was signed into law in July and the first civil registrations are expected early next year. The new legislation provides same-sex (and heterosexual) couples with 'marriage-like benefits' and can be seen as a move towards equality for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transsexual) people.

Jonny Merrill

However, the legislation does not place civil partnerships on an equal footing with civil marriages (for straight people only). Families based on civil partnership will not be provided with the same legal protection as families based on a married couple. As such, LGBT parents will not be entitled to the same adoption and guardianship rights, while the areas of tax and social welfare entitlements have yet to be finalised.

The WSM does not support the civil partnership legislation and calls for the right to full civil marriage for LGBT couples. Some people argue that civil partnership is a worthwhile reform, because it is better than no rights at all, and at some point in the future, we can struggle for further rights for LGBT people on the basis of this legislation.

The WSM accepts and fights for worthwhile reforms all the time, notably in the area of reproductive rights for women. However, we feel that this is one reform that just doesn't go far enough as we do not see why full civil marriage rights were not extended to same-sex couples. In similar societies to Ireland, such as Spain, Portugal, Canada, Argentina, Sweden and Norway, among other countries, same-sex marriage is a right for LGBT couples. Civil Partnership will



institutionalise and maintain the continued discrimination of LGBT couples and families based on LGBT parents – separate rights are not equal rights!

The society we live in is capitalist; a system based on inequality, which creates many types of discrimination, and maintains and benefits from them, so it is hardly surprising that LGBT people are discriminated against. Anarchists believe in equal rights for everyone in society and the elimination of all types of discrimination, whether it's based on class, sex, disability, race, gender, age or sexual orientation. We want a society based on equality, which can only come from the organisation and collective action of ordinary people struggling to overcome discrimination. The WSM supports the LGBT movement in its aims to achieve full civil marriage and full equality and to force the Irish state to stop supporting the continued discrimination against LGBT people and their families.

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Shell to Sea
Campaign to move Shell's gas pipeline offshore from Co. Mayo.
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Hands Off the People of Iran
Anti-imperialist network for solidarity with Iranian trade unionists & the women's rights movement.
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Spanish Celebrate 100 Years of Anarchist Trade Unionism



Members of the Anarchist CGT demonstrating on the streets of Spain

2010 marks the 100th anniversary of the National Confederation of Labour (CNT), a militant anarchist union in Spain.

Alan MacSimóin

When General Franco led his fascist revolt in 1936 workers rose up throughout the country. Where anarchist ideas were popular (as in Catalonia and Aragon) a social revolution occurred, showing that society could indeed function along anarchist lines. In hospitals, factories, mills, bus & train services, water & electricity, the workers of the CNT reorganised and administered production, distribution, and public services without bosses, managers, or the authority of the state.

More than 60% of agricultural land was collectively cultivated by the peasants themselves, without landlords, without bosses, and without any 'need' for capitalist competition to spur production. And in keeping with the CNT's rejection of sexism women played a major part in the union, on the barricades and in the militia columns.

After Franco's victory in 1939, the CNT continued the struggle underground and in exile. His death in 1975 saw the end of almost 40 years of dictatorship and the revival of the CNT. Unfortunately in 1979 there was a major division over whether or not to participate in the government's proposed works councils*.

The problem is that people elected to these committees are not bound by any mandate, and it is seen as way of undermining unions in the workplace. Some insisted on a boycott and they kept the name CNT. Those who felt that not participating would mean marginalisation ended up as the CGT and Solidaridad Obrera.

Today anarchism is again growing in strength among working people in Spain. We can see this by looking at the 2.5 million union members in Spain, about 15% of all workers. This is much less than in Ireland, but in Spain most large and medium-sized firms have works councils. Every worker, not just union members, gets a vote. The unions put forward candidates, and their vote is a reflection of the support

for a particular union's position. Overall, about three quarters of the workforce take part and practically all vote for union candidates.

The two main trade unions, the CCOO and the UGT, have each about 800,000 members. The anarchist CGT has about 65,000 members, but in the last works council elections it received votes from over 1,000,000 workers who wanted the CGT to represent them. What makes this interesting is that it does not just show support for a more aggressive response to the employers' offensive.

This is support for a union that makes no secret of its politics, one that rejects any form of 'social partnership' and constantly proclaims its anarchism. Nobody joining or voting for them could be unaware of their politics. Indeed their youth committees are called 'Anarcho-Syndicalist Youth'.

The CNT is considerably smaller, but does have several thousand members in over 100 branches. A third union, Solidaridad Obrera, has members in Alicante, Menorca and a particularly visible presence in Madrid's underground rail system. To mark the anniversary this union decided to give its members copies of José Peirats' book 'The CNT in the Spanish Revolution'.

As the crisis gets deeper and more of us face pay cuts, unemployment and uncertainty, the desirability of a better way of running society is undeniable. In Spain the 'anarchist alternative' is growing in popularity among those who want a socialist and truly democratic society.

*** *Comité de empresa. Elected every four years in workplaces with fifty or more employees to negotiate agreements with the employer. Elected representatives get time off to consult with the workforce and attend to union matters.***

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FÁS says 'Work for No Pay'

The state employment and training service, FAS, is telling the unemployed to work for nothing. On the 29th July 2010 they had 484 work experience positions on offer. Not only do these jobs pay no wages, they are allowing bosses to get rid of staff and replace them with free labour.

Joe King

The vast majority of the advertised unpaid jobs are full time (38-40hrs a week) and last for nine months. Some examples are (we give the FAS reference number for each):

A chef de partie at Blarney Golf Resort (JB557332) with "a City & Guilds qualification or the equivalent". They are also looking for an unpaid Commis Chef. Eviston House Hotel in Killarney (JB557946) is looking for someone to work in housekeeping, where "candidates will learn to have an eye for detail in ensuring rooms serviced to guest's satisfaction".

There are also instances where the unpaid work placement was very misleading in its description of what is on offer. Advance Pit Stop (JB551520) offers positions as Trainee Fitter/Fitter in locations including Athlone, Mallow and Cork. The trade of fitter is a designated apprenticeship and it is dishonest to suggest to unemployed people that by taking part in this placement they are on the way towards an apprenticeship or qualification as a fitter. Likewise, Paintbox is offering unpaid work for 40 hours a week for nine months as a Print Assistant, but there is no warning that this is not an entry route to become a Print Media craftsperson.

There are some instances where the quality of experience on offer is very limited and does not justify the length of time. Waltons music store (JB551484) wants a Retail Sales As-



sistant to work for 35 hours a week and for 9 months without pay. There are many other examples of stores throughout the country looking for retail trainees to work full time but without pay for nine months. And let's not forget Pat Woods Cleaning Services (JB553078) are offering unpaid work as a Window Cleaner, 40 hours a week for 9 months. Nine months to learn how to wash a window!

Some may even be contrary to safety rules. The driver of the land train down Dun Laoghaire pier (JB556929) is required to work unpaid for 40 hours or a Radiographers Assistant (JB555881) "who will be primarily involved in the department that provides MRI scans to patients, providing information and support to patients who maybe nervous about the procedure".

EuroDebt (JB538896) have an unpaid position as a Telephones Collections Officer for 37.5 hours a week for 9 months. They advertise that the "role is based in our telephone collections team and will involve contacting customers who owe money to our clients".

Lucretia Tiles want someone with a forklift licence to work as a warehouse operative for 38 hours a week again for 9 months with no pay.

And then there is "a highly motivated hard working individual with exceptional people skills" required as a Car Wash Manager (JB557056) where the advert tells us "vehicles are only washed by hand using the most up to date techniques".

Or what about General Assembly and Delivery Operator (JB550909) with Griffin Office Solutions? "This person will be assisting with deliveries, and also working alone on small deliveries. Clean full drivers licence is required. Small amount of forklift operation is also part of the job, so the candidate would also need a current forklift operating ticket".

There is nothing wrong with quality work experience and training. It can be useful to people just starting out on their career and as a way for unemployed people to maintain their skills and keep their CV up to date. But it is clear that greedy employers are taking advantage of the hopes of unemployed people. The government is complicit in this, FAS is a state agency. Should we be surprised? Not really, capitalism is all about making as much profit as possible, and what better way than to stop paying wages! It's welfare for the rich.





Dublin jewellery shop Weirs know the recession isn't hitting most of the rich. The Grafton Street business is currently taking orders for a limited edition Patek Philippe watch that costs more than €250,000. This summer Weirs sold one watch for €454,000.

A bidder has agreed to pay \$2.63 million for a steak lunch with the billionaire investor Warren Buffett in a charity auction. The highest bid in the 11th annual auction topped the previous record \$2.11 million paid in 2008 by Zhao Danyang, a Hong Kong investor. Wealth manager Salida Capital Corp of Toronto won with a \$1.68 million bid in 2009

Medical multinational Elan (which employs a third of its staff in Ireland) reported in July that losses had jumped from €54 million to €169 million and their stock value fell by 73%. So what happened to Chief Executive Kelly Martin? He got a 25% pay rise and a bonus of €635,000.

Sarah Risley (daughter of Canadian fishing billionaire, John Risley) and Guy Barnett honeymooned on the luxury yacht Northern Star. It boasts six decks, 'grand country interiors' and a helipad. The rent is a mere €651,000 a week.

The arrogance of the Russian ruling elite is famous but even by their standards this takes a bit of beating. As Moscow residents sweltered in an unprecedented traffic snarl-up, the governor of the region offered an unusual solution: "I fly in a helicopter. You should also buy helicopters instead of cars – then you do not need roads", Boris Gromov told the Novosti news agency.

Nice to see that the rich still have a few bob to spend on really vital things.. like their art collections. London art auctioneers Sotheby's and Christie's have sold a Picasso for over £34 million, a Manet for over £22 million and a Klimt for just under £19 million. Despite the recession, the auction houses reported "records being broken".

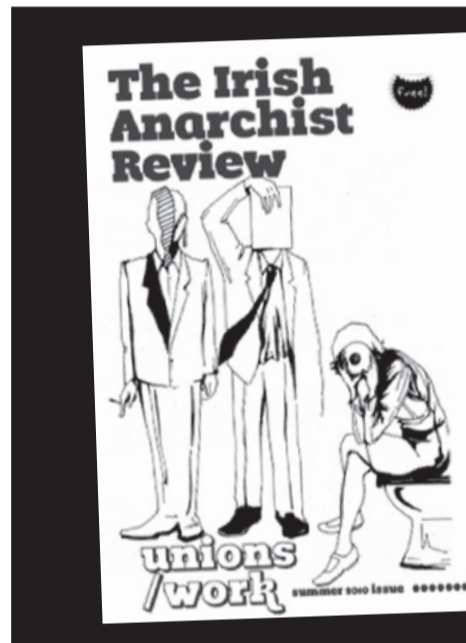
Thinking About Anarchism: But People Are Selfish

"Human nature being what it is, you could never have an anarchist society – not one in which both individual freedom and co-operation exist anyway". How often have people who are fighting for real change heard statements like that?

Greg Ryan

It is constantly put to you that people are naturally short-sighted, apathetic or prone to violence, and are incapable of creating anything better than the present mess we live in.

The idea that there is some abstract and eternally flawed 'human nature' that we can't do much about gets plenty of plugging from the churches and others with an interest in the



Irish Anarchist Review

This magazine explores ideas and practical struggles that can teach us about building a revolutionary movement today. We will take, print, and discuss anything that we find useful for our needs. We hope that readers will have a similar attitude, and will use the magazine to discuss, debate and develop ideas. We also welcome submissions and responses to articles.

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present set-up. But for anarchists the way people behave reflects the type of environment they find themselves in, and not the after-effects of some mythical original sin.

The reason selfishness and self-centred behaviour are so common is because we live in a society where in order to succeed or even survive people must take part in a system of ruthless competition for jobs, money, etc. Apathy is the result of the lack of power which most of us have over our own lives. War, crime and poverty all have their roots in the system which puts the accumulation of profits before all else, rather than in some undefined 'human nature'.

Yet in spite of all the madness of the capitalist system human beings remain social animals (otherwise any form of society would be impossible). When people are motivated they show themselves capable of tremendous acts of solidarity, such as when they support the struggles of others. And we can look at the huge public response towards the disasters in Haiti and Pakistan. Although charities cannot tackle the root causes of world poverty, they do show that people are not 'naturally' or irredeemably selfish.

However it is during periods of mass struggle that the most striking changes in the everyday attitudes of people take place. Faced with the struggle against the ruling class, if we are to win, we must act as a class rather than as individuals and must strive to involve as many people as possible. It is through struggle that we learn the value of group action and co-operation, thereby laying the basis for a new kind of society.

It is the struggle for a better world that creates the spirit of solidarity and the attitudes necessary for an anarchist society to exist. It is this that makes a new society possible and it is why no small elite or conspiracy can make the revolution. An anarchist society can only be created by the activity of masses of ordinary people.

Anarchism & the WSM



Attendees at the Kilbarrack Activist Fleadh

do we fit in? How do personal transformation and the development of leadership come into the struggle for a better world?" With this in mind, there were workshops on social inequality, fighting the cutbacks, sustainability and global justice, creative media and bringing about change, amongst others.

Around 60 people from different community and political organisations, as well as individuals, attended the event to try and provide answers to the above questions. One of our contributors at the event pointed out that "we need to use the [trade union and community sector] structures that exist, as they can ... mobilise the greatest numbers. ... We need to instil in our unions that ability to organise and fight again. We need to spread ... this into the communities where the brunt of these cuts is being felt. We need ... to build a widespread network of people who are going to resist what is going on, and to build towards change. It is also time to eradicate this fear, ... fighting for something is better than accepting the idea that your neck is free from the axe for now." Another WSM member who attended the event concluded that "it appeared to be the first step in bringing together various groups, community activists, political parties, organisations and campaigns to get us moving in the same direction." As ever, such proposed solutions will only succeed if we get large numbers of people involved so if you want to be part of that solution, or simply would like to find out more about the WSM, then contact us!

With the summer months traditionally a quiet time politically, we have been focusing on internal discussions around how to mount an opposition to the next round of cuts that we will face in the 2011 budget. We have also been involved in external dialogues and, to this end, we attended the Kilbarrack Activist Fleadh in mid-August. As per their programme, this event was "designed to enable us all - activists and non-activists, radicals of all ages and people in many different communities, move-

ments and struggles - to find spaces to talk to each other about what we have in common." It aimed to address the following questions: "What are the big structures of power and inequality that shape our world, and how do we meet them? How can we find effective ways of protesting, disrupting, constructing alternatives and taking action? How can our local struggles connect to large-scale strategies for change that have a real chance of success? What is the "big picture" in terms of global justice and ecological sustainability, and where

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Ardoyne Riots

This summer's Belfast riots must have been the most anticipated for some time, being widely predicted throughout politics and the media. The August rioting in Ardoyne (and Short Strand, the Markets, Lower Ormeau, New Lodge, Broadway; and Lurgan, Derry & Armagh) saw three days of trouble, shots fired at police and a landmine attack in South Armagh.

James McBarron

What has been lost in the smoke, plastic bullets and water cannon however is the truth and the bigger picture. Most residents of 'catholic/nationalist' Ardoyne did not want this sectarian parade to pass through their neighbourhood, the Orange Order and loyalists most certainly did. The right of people to live free of sectarian harassment and bullying was denied. And it's worth remembering that the UVF sectarian killer Brian Robinson is always commemorated on this parade.

Of course there was a good number of people ready to riot, this is inevitable as they know year by year the residents' arguments will be ignored, peaceful protest, talks and lobbying will fail and the parade will be forced through, then the stage will be set. In pre-

vious years Sinn Fein and the IRA policed the protests and calmed or even aborted the rioting, but their writ no longer runs here, not in the sense that they can force people to obey.

The opposition to the parade is genuine and as long as the marchers insist on the route and are pushed through by state forces there will be a reaction. The crazy statements by Sinn Fein reps around the riots calling for children to be put in care or families removed from the area are a sign of their decreasing power within that community, and amongst a layer of former supporters and members. The Provos have been integrated into a political system they once opposed, not just politically but also with methods identical to Ardoyne's rioters.

The gap that has opened up in working class communities previously monopolised by SF and the IRA is being contested by a variety of republican organisations, some purely military, some purely political and some with a hand in both. Much of the trouble was organised and encouraged by various militarist groups (CIRA, RIRA, ONH, etc.). It is beyond doubt that these want to increase tension and conflict around contentious Orange parades. It's all part of their wish to "destabilise" the North and drag us back to war. It also works for them to get young people battered by the PSNI, so they can then present their 'armies' as the way to



hit back.

It is also true that there is an element of "recreational" rioting. Young people with little to look forward to, other than low paid jobs or the dole, are often found in the front line of street trouble. There is a whole new generation of young people who feel disenfranchised and angry.

Since the end of the IRA campaign and the co-option of Sinn Fein into the political system, the economic situation for both working class Catholics and Protestants has not improved. The question is can any

of the organisations seeking to replace SF offer people a vision and a strategy to defeat sectarianism and build a society where working class people actually see improvements in our lives.

The elements who are arguing for a return to war are no threat to SF as the vast majority are plainly opposed to this, only a route that offers a redistribution of wealth will answer the needs of ordinary people. Only such an approach has any prospect of gaining a hearing in the Protestant working class, who are now by and large in the exact same situation as their Catholic fellows.

The earthquake that devastated Haiti and shook the world could have heralded a new start for the perpetually impoverished Caribbean nation. But the reconstruction plans have made it clear that local and global elites wish to continue the policies that lie behind Haiti's history of violence and deprivation.

Darragh McAodh

Much of the country's political powers have shifted to the Interim Reconstruction Commission, an unelected and foreign-dominated body that will oversee the deployment of relief and reconstruction aid, that grassroots organisations fear will become a de facto government. The reconstruction plans focus on capitalising on Haiti's primary 'comparative advantage' of abundant cheap labour, i.e. high unemployment. Capitalising on this means the expansion of the garment and assembly factories in the export zones of Port-au-Prince and Gonaives. This is simply the reinvigoration of the standard American policy line for the island's economy.

The Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Acts of 2006 and 2008 established tariff-free trade between Haiti and the United States. Touted, pre- and post-quake, as a continued basis for economic recovery, the preferential agreement most benefits major US corporations, such as Levi's and Disney, which subcontract out their assembly work to Haitian factory owners. The profits primarily go back to the United States, while the big brands are able to wash their hands of the conditions in their factories. It's standard sweatshop practice.

A New Beginning for Haiti?



The labourers are paid 'starvation wages', with most earning around three dollars a day. Conditions are poor and there are many complaints of sexual abuse of the female workforce. In a country with some nominal labour rights, but no government interest in the issue, employers are free to dismiss rebellious workers at will. Demonstrations, strikes and an act of parliament called for a raise in the national minimum wage last year, but President Rene Preval imposed an exception on the garment industry. The comparative advantage prevails.

The HOPE acts are themselves to be born again, with bipartisan legislation in the US Congress aiming to extend their terms until 2020. But free trade cuts both ways. The HOPE Acts also severely restrict the ability

of the Haitian government to restrict or control US imports via tariffs, taxation or price control. This is crucial for the continued existence of the apparel sector as a 'maquiladora', or assembly industry, where the raw materials are sourced in the US, brought into Haiti, manufactured into finished items, and then returned to America for sale.

It's also a notable limitation considering the massive outflows of cheap rice from subsidised US farmers that continue to undercut Haitian farmers. Cheap labour is not naturally occurring; this 'dumping' of subsidised American imports devastated local production and eventually drove costs up. The food riots of 2008, which resulted in scores of people being shot and killed by UN peacekeepers, were a direct result of the vulnera-

bility of Haiti to shifts in global food prices.

Migration from rural areas, the overcrowding of urban centers and the pauperisation of the population; the devastation caused by the earthquake is in large part a result of the destruction of Haitian agriculture. And while Bill Clinton expressed regret for his part in the damage done by his policies at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last March, there is little sign of any policy rethink.

Pre-quake, there were 25,000 Haitians employed in the garment industry, a quarter of what were employed a decade ago. Now, with rising fuel costs driving Chinese export prices upwards, returning Haitian garment production to the pre-embargo peak, as outlined in the Recovery Plan, will secure continued access to cheap garment production for major North American corporations.

Haitians aren't just victims though. Their history of violence and poverty is also one of great struggle and resistance. The country's reconstruction could follow an alternative path; with an increased role for popular organisations and unions. This isn't the path that international or local elites want, and it won't happen without struggle.

Now that the most immediate emergency is over, those of us outside of Haiti who genuinely wish for a new beginning, should support the organisations that can empower the impoverished to improve their lives. Organisations such as Batay Ouvriye, which organises garment workers in the free trade zones, fighting for a living wage and for dignified working conditions.