Red & Black Revolution

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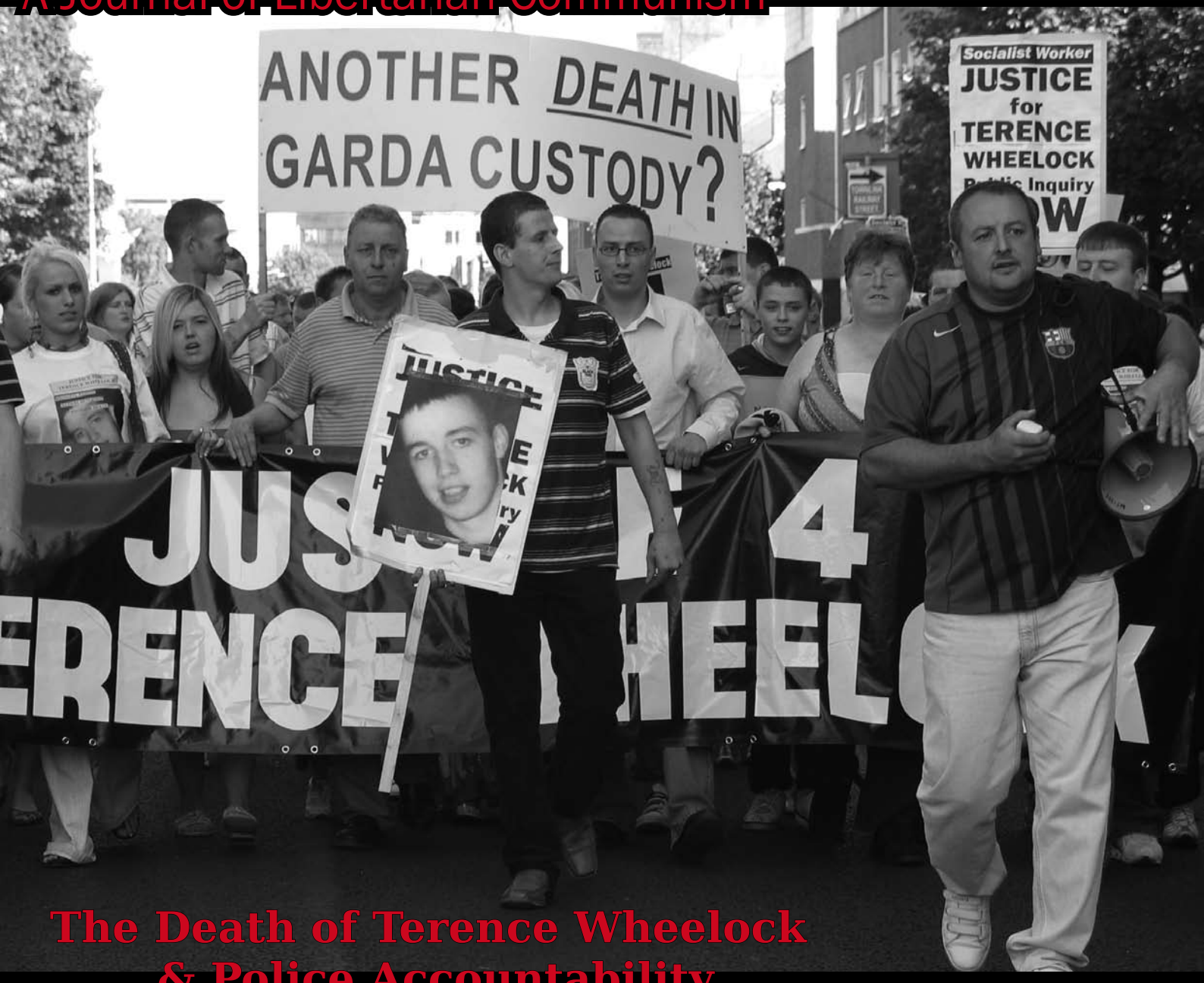

The Death of Terence Wheelock & Police Accountability

Also in this Issue:

Financial Weapons of Mass Destruction

The Struggle for Women's Right to Choose

Book Review: "Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take On The Global Factory"

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Like most of the publications of the left, Red and Black Revolution is not a profit making venture. It exists in order to spread ideas and contribute to the process of changing the world. If you would like to help out in this work there are a couple of things you can do. One option is to subscribe to the magazine. Another is to take a number of copies of each issue to sell. We are always looking for bookshops or stalls that will sell this magazine on a commercial basis. Our time and resources are limited and at times of busy activity our publications are often delayed. So any help that you can offer would be a real help in getting our ideas out to a wider audience. If you want to help out, get in touch at the address below.

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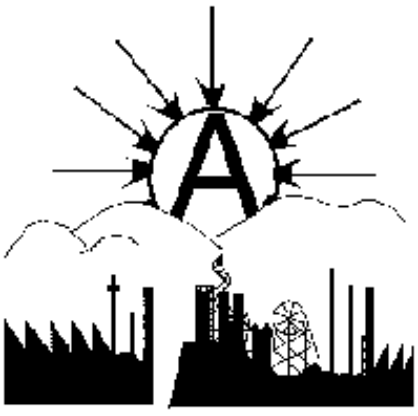
Front cover image: A.A. O'Carroll

Images of Wheelock Demonstrations: A.A. O'Carroll, Ronan and J Carax from WSM

Images of Miss D protests in article about the struggle for abortion rights: A.A. O'Carroll and Joe from WSM



About the Workers Solidarity Movement

The Workers Solidarity Movement was founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1984 following discussions by a number of local anarchist groups on the need for a national anarchist organisation. At that time with unemployment and inequality on the rise, there seemed every reason to argue for anarchism and for a revolutionary change in Irish society. This has not changed.

Like most socialists we share a fundamental belief that capitalism is the problem. We believe that as a system it must be ended, that the wealth of society should be commonly owned and that its resources should be used to serve the needs of humanity as a whole and not those of a small greedy minority. But, just as importantly, we see this struggle against capitalism as also being a struggle for freedom. We believe that socialism and freedom must go together, that we cannot have one without the other. As Mikhail Bakunin, the Russian anarchist said, "Socialism without freedom is tyranny and brutality".

Anarchism has always stood for individual freedom. But it also stands for democracy. We believe in democratising the workplace and in workers taking control of all industry. We believe that this is the only real alternative to capitalism with its on going reliance on hierarchy and oppression and its depletion of the world's resources.

In the years since our formation, we've been involved in a wide range of struggles – our members are involved in their trade unions; we've fought for abortion rights and against the presence of the British state in Northern Ireland, and against the growth of racism in southern Ireland; we've also been involved in campaigns in support of workers from countries as far apart as Poland, Nepal, Peru and South Africa. Alongside this, we have produced over 100 issues of our paper Workers Solidarity, and a wide range of pamphlets. Over the years we have brought many anarchists from abroad to speak in Ireland. These have included militants from Chile, the Czech Republic, Canada, the USA, Israel, Greece, Italy, and a veteran of the anarchist Iron Column in the Spanish Civil War.

As anarchists we see ourselves as part of a long tradition that has fought against all forms of authoritarianism and exploitation, a tradition that strongly influenced one of the most successful and far reaching revolutions in the last century – in Spain in 1936-37. The value of this tradition cannot be underestimated today. With the fall of the Soviet Union there is renewed interest in our ideas and in the tradition of libertarian socialism generally. We hope to encourage this interest with Red & Black Revolution. We believe that anarchists and libertarian socialists should debate and discuss their ideas, that they should popularise their history and struggle, and help point to a new way forward.

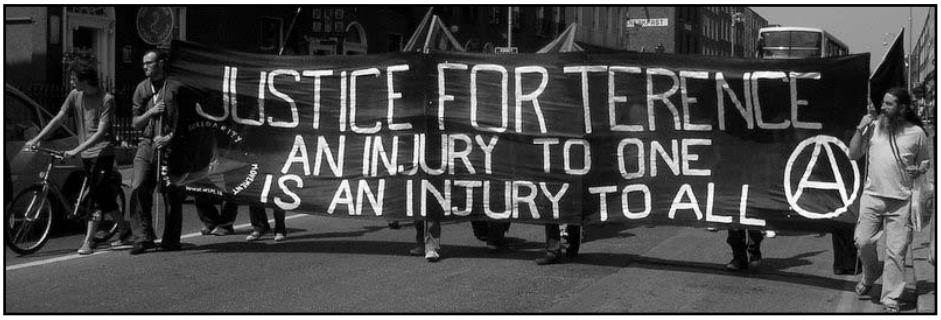
A couple of years ago, our paper, Workers Solidarity became a free news-sheet, which appears every two months. With a print-run of around 10,000, this means a huge increase in the number of people here in Ireland receiving information about anarchism and struggles for change. As more people join the WSM, we are able to do more to promote anarchism. If you like what we say and what we do, consider joining us. It's quite straight-forward. If you want to know more about this just write, email us or use the form at **www.wsm.ie/join**

We have also increased and improved our presence on the Internet. This move has been prompted by the enormous success to date of our web site and resources. The WSM site has been updated and moved to www.wsm.ie and we are adding new material all the time. A large number of people are now looking at and reading about our anarchist ideas on our site. Many of our papers, magazines, posters and some pamphlets are available in PDF format – allowing for material to be downloaded in pre-set format, to be printed and distributed right across the world.

“No Justice, Just Us”

Interview with Larry Wheelock

by Dec McCarthy



In June 2005 Terence Wheelock fell into a coma while in custody in a Dublin city centre police station. This 20 year old man never recovered from the injuries he sustained in a police cell and three months later he died.

The family and friends of Terence Wheelock are still waiting for a credible and complete account of what happened in the station from the Garda[1]. In 2005 they launched a campaign demanding an independent inquiry into the case. By tirelessly pushing the case in the media and organising meetings, protests and vigils they have managed to build a well supported and highly visible justice campaign based in Dublin’s north inner city, a working class community that has long suffered from heavy handed policing. The Justice for Terence Wheelock Campaign (JTWC) is currently the only such initiative that has managed to ask questions about the nature of policing in Irish society for any extended period of time[2] and because of that has become a reference point for other families who have experienced police brutality across Ireland.

The WSM and other Irish anarchists actively support and are involved in building support for the family’s campaign. In this interview, Terence’s brother Larry Wheelock, the main spokesperson for the JTWC, a determined man in his thirties, offers an in-depth and intimate account of his brother’s life and death, and his family’s ongoing struggle for justice.

Posters featuring Terence Wheelock’s face have become a common sight on Dublin walls and lampposts and his name is now used as shorthand for the general experience of Garda brutality amongst people from his community. Paradoxically, the fact that he has become iconic may have served to obscure his life so we began the interview by asking Larry to describe his brother when he was alive.

“My brother…was born and lived in the north inner city. He was very happy-go-lucky, loved sport, he was articulate and very, very bright” and completed his Junior Cert. and Leaving Cert.[3]. Terence was particularly good at maths and loved history and was “very artistic – he loved to paint and draw”. Despite being popular his brother points out, “He wasn’t the life and soul of the party and he wouldn’t’ve stood out in the crowd. He was more the fella at the back who stood and watched”. Asked about his interests his brother says “He was a mad Liverpool supporter and Tupac was who he was into”. Terence got on well with all the members of his large and close knit family and in particular, “He was very close and very protective of Gavan his younger brother”.

It is impossible however to describe the shape and texture of Terence’s life without some reference to the police and the courts. Like a large number of young men in his area, he began to get into trouble as he entered his teenage years. Larry remembers that “Terence was at a very delicate age at about 13…and would have been getting in with the wrong crowd. He was by no means a hardened criminal. Impish behaviour, you know, things that idle young lads get up to. Things that would be very normal in the area, not by everybody, but in most working class areas there is the gang at the corner”. Predictably enough these early experiences established a pattern and Terence found himself in and out of trouble over the next few years. “He was probably arrested first when he was about thirteen. He would’ve seen what a lot of young kids would’ve come across at that time. Public relations with the police were…dire and probably a lot of people in the north inner city would have been very badly treated by the police”.

When discussing the interaction between youths and the police on the streets, Larry is quick to note that minor anti-social behaviour “is not just endemic to working class areas. I have seen it in middle class areas but I have seen how the same problem in different localities is handled differently by the police”. Larry is emphatic that Gardaí show “total disrespect for lads in working class areas. I think ninety percent of the Garda join wanting to do good but they end up in the inner city and [get] corrupted along the way…It becomes ‘these are all scumbags’, ‘treat these in a certain way’ and the attitude is ‘everyone is a criminal in the north inner city’.

This understandably had an impact on Terence and “he knew full well what the police do to people in the north inner city and their attitude to people in the area and he had his fair share of beatings [from them]”. Larry says “I could see he was heading for that type of life and I was trying to turn him off by tell-

1 The police in Ireland are called An Garda Síochána which means in Irish the guardians of the peace.

2 There have been numerous Republican, community and left wing campaigns that have drawn attention to the political nature of policing and patterns of harassment but community campaigns that look at ‘everyday’ policing have been less common with the notable exception of some of the activity of the Prisoners Rights Organisation which enjoyed strong support in the north inner city and a number of other working class communities in the early eighties.

3 These are the two state exams in the secondary school cycle. The Junior Cert. is usually taken at age 15-16 and the Leaving Cert. at 17-18.

ing him about my experiences" but aggressive policing, circumstances, Terence's age, natural sense of pride and rebelliousness set him on a course in which police harassment and legal problems became part of the fabric of his everyday life. In fact, less than two weeks before his fateful arrest during a minor incident "they [the Garda] had hurt his arm badly" leaving it fractured and swollen.

Despite the fact that Terence found himself enmeshed in legal problems and hassle from the Garda, Larry explains that his brother was trying to get out of trouble. "Terence had only done a safety pass[4]. He wanted to do an apprenticeship with Robbie [one of his older brothers] as a carpenter. He had a path in his mind". He also talked to his mother about moving away from the area. Larry reflects on the fact that Terence was already aware of the cost of finding himself at the wrong side of the law commenting that, "When you get locked up at say 16 you are still 16 at heart. Your life stops but all your friends move on so when you come out they all have kids and have settled down so you kind of get disillusioned".

Terence's arrest and injuries

Terence's plans were, of course, never realised and the gravitational pull of circumstances ultimately led to situation in which Terence was left fighting for his life and his family's life turned upside down. "It was the 2nd of June. It was a Thursday morning and Terence woke up and…he started to decorate his room and he went to get a paintbrush". Before going to the shops "he went to get a pump from his neighbour because his bike had a slow puncture". Unfortunately for Terence, a stolen car was being stripped nearby and the police arrived on the scene. Family members and neighbours are adamant that Terence had nothing to do with stealing the car and nothing to do dismantling it. Nonetheless, Terence was arrested with three other young men on suspicion of being involved in the robbery of the car.

It was late morning on a sunny day and as a consequence there were a lot of witnesses from whom Larry has pieced together what happened during the first couple of minutes of the arrest. "They put handcuffs on behind his back. They know his arm is very badly damaged. It was very badly swollen and the cops arresting him were the same cops who did it to him ten days before. They bend his arms up and he pushes back and says 'let go of my arm you are killing me'". There is a minor scuffle and he is hauled into the van. His brother Larry arrives at this point. "A girl is shouting 'leave him the fuck alone' and other people are saying 'Terence is getting nicked'. I heard the bang, the bang of his head being hit off the van". (It was later confirmed during a sitting of the Coroner's Court[5] by the other man in the van that Terence was assaulted and his head was banged off the side of the van). Nothing much happened following this except some minor banter between Terence and a Garda on the way to Store Street station. I ask Larry if he was concerned at this point and responds in the negative, explaining that he thought "he has nothing to do with it so he will be out in a couple of hours…I did think he was going to being remanded in custody but I was not worried".

At the station "they bring him in and they strip search first and they were trying to humiliate him. The cop says [in evidence at the Coroner's court] he doesn't react. I find this very strange. This is a bit 'too' honest because Terence would react to this". Larry says it is significant that "the only bruising noted on the custody records is on his arm". Also he finds it noteworthy that the Gardaí claim that "every seven minutes, they check him and he is asleep but Terence only woke up a couple of hours before, after a night's sleep!" Although the exact course of events in Store Street remains shrouded in mystery, two other detainees report hearing a commotion. A little later, Larry recounts, a new prisoner reported hearing a Garda saying "Get a knife. There is a fella after hanging himself" but that it seems staged to him. Larry notes there are even different versions of what the Gardaí did then with one Garda claiming that Terence was cut down and another saying he was supposedly lifted off the suspension point. He is then brought into the hall. Again "one said he is lifted out and the other says he dragged him". Indignantly, Larry asks "If a fella had a neck injury why would you drag him out?" Whatever happened while Terence was in that cell, he left Store Street in a coma.

The family was then notified that Terence had tried to commit suicide. Larry says, "I didn't believe it and I thought Terence might be feigning something after a bad beating – that he was acting. My ma was worried…she got a mad feeling in her stomach, in her womb, a mad empty feeling is how she described it and says 'I hope he is alright'". Oddly, the police bring Terence's mother to the wrong hospital on the south side of the city away from the station. Eventually, when this was cleared up, the family gathered in the Mater hospital on the north side where Terence was being treated. Larry describes the scene, "All my sisters were in bits…My da was the last one to get here except for Marcus [the eldest brother]. He says 'they are after saying Terence hung himself' and he falls into my arms". At this point, the family were informed that a Garda investigation had already started into events in Store Street. Instinctively they felt that Terence was an unlikely candidate for a suicide attempt as "he did not suffer depression". Moreover, because he had been in custody before and was unlikely to have been rattled by being detained and significantly, he had been busy making plans in the house and had even bought clothes for a party the following night. Besides this and more worryingly Larry had seen him in a pair of shorts that morning and he had no marks on his body except for his damaged arm. In the hospital, he was covered with abrasions and bruises.

He takes up the story recalling, "Sinéad [one of Terence's sisters] said 'look at the way they left him!'. He had no control over his body and tears are hopping out of my face. And we call the doctor and we say we want him photographed straight away. His lip was burst

4 A Safe Pass is a certificate that is required to work in the Irish construction industry"

5 The Coroner's Court sits to establish the cause of death when it is not clearly of natural causes. After several sittings and amid controversy in early 2007 a split jury found that Terence died as a result of a suicide attempt. Much to the dissatisfaction of the Wheelock family and their supporters, the court refused to accept independent forensic evidence, explain anomalies in Garda accounts or admit an engineer's report that found the Garda account of the 'suicide' implausible, if not impossible.

and his knuckles looked swollen and there was a chunk gone out of the finger. I remember thinking how the fuck could he hang himself in them cells – I have been in those cells!" At this point, Larry brings out the grim photos of Terence in the hospital showing abrasions, swellings and bruises all over his legs and arms. "We got in touch with Yvonne Bambery [the family's solicitor] and she comes to the hospital the next day and says…'he didn't do this to himself'. She gets the custody records and applies to see the cell. When she went down three days later with an engineer, the cell was renovated and painted. It was cleaned as well. We found a statement months later taken by the Gardaí from a cleaner who was woken at 7 in the morning and was told she had to come down and surgically clean the cell". Unsurprisingly, at this point the family decided to start a public campaign and begin legal proceedings to find out what had transpired in Store Street.

Terence's death & the Garda harassment of the family

Terence remained in a coma for three months. This was an extremely difficult time for his family and Larry describes how "for a long, long time my mother was begging her son to live. 'Fight Terence, fight!' and believed Terence could hear her even when he was in a coma". However, her son's health slowly degenerated. "He was supposed to be dead on the Monday. We were all sent for. He had double pneumonia in both lungs and a very low immune system because of what was done to his brain from oxygen deprivation. My ma was pleading with him not to die…even the doctors were shocked he survived so long. Then when my ma says 'look son, I know that you fought very hard for me. Just go now to my da and ma'. She just walked out. He then died. It was almost as he needed permission to die".

We discuss the funeral. Larry is proud to say that "we gave him a great send off" but "it shocked me to see to see how very visibly upset his mates they were – these would be considered tough young men but his friends were bawling out of their eyes as Terence's coffin was carried up Seán McDermott Street. For such a short life, if you look at the attendance at his funeral he was well got, well liked. I have yet to hear a bad word being said about him".

"I came back home I remember thinking to myself about people who come back to an empty home and feeling sorry for them. Later my brother Marcus came up. Terence slept with a T-shirt over his eyes and Marcus was so upset when he thought that he had nothing covering over his eyes. I remember when Terence was born and my ma brought him home. I had him in my arms and I remember saying 'Ma he has monkey feet!' and then I remember him dead. I could not remember his life. All I could see in my mind was him being born and him dead. It was a weird thing. I tried to focus on that day on something in between but I couldn't. It was my way of trying to be in control of a very bad situation. I didn't want to remember the funny bits, the happy bits, because I would've fallen apart. He was part of my life and now he's not in my life". Reflecting on the impact this has had on him personally, Larry remarks "I cried every day when Terence was in hospital and when he died I promised I would not cry again until he got justice. I haven't cried since. I suppose I grieve in my sleep".

The situation was made more all the more stressful because the family was subjected to a campaign of police harassment before and immediately after Terence's death. Much of this took place outside the family home and at one point "there was between two and ten guards outside the house with dogs and horses. It was surreal". Larry says that there were charges drummed up against family members and ASBOs served against those in the area who actively supported the campaign. On several occasions, Larry says he was taunted about his brother's death by local Gardaí, including officers making choking and hanging gestures. This culminated with a raid on the family home during which the Wheelocks were subjected to verbal and physical abuse. This proved too much to bear and most of the family decided to leave the north inner city.

The justice campaign: Who, why, what and who hasn't

From the outset, the family had no confidence in the internal Garda inquiry which was initially led by Oliver Hanley, a senior Garda who had been stationed for much of his career at Store Street. Since then campaign members have done some research on Hanley and Larry is convinced that "He has been used as the clean up man…a 'harm reduction', 'risk management' man in the sense that he comes in and steam-rolls investigations through so the only possible conclusion is that the Garda do nothing wrong".

Asked how the campaign got going, Larry replies, "I got in touch with all the politicians and started doing interviews. The family and friends organised a vigil on the 29th of September [after he died on the 16th]. It was huge. After Terence died, the cops were putting batons around young fellas and saying

we will do what we did to Fuzzy [Terence's nickname]". As some of the details of the case came to the community's notice, the campaign, whose central demand is for a full independent public inquiry, soon gathered momentum.

Since then the campaign has relied largely on friends, community members and the family to maintain its public profile although anarchists, Sinn Féin, the Labour party and independent left wing politicians have offered varying levels of support. While Larry is careful to stress that "the campaign is open to people of all political persuasions", he ruefully acknowledges "that on a political level very few people are willing to stick their neck out and call a spade a spade. A lot of politicians, not all of them though, in my experience, a lot [of] them…shouldn't be sitting in Dáil Éireann[6] supposedly representing our community because they don't. I suppose I have learnt to be very sceptical of people, of politicians mainly". He goes on to explain that even those who have pledged support "haven't been useful in that they do not do the legwork. They turn up when the cameras are about" but stresses that the WSM, independent libertarians and some Labour party members have been more dependable.

Asked what this felt like Larry responds "It has been very hard in the sense that sometimes I felt very much on my own but…I never felt like giving up. Politicians would promise you the sun, the moon, and the stars and journalists and media were not showing any interest in the campaign whatsoever" at the outset. As a consequence, Larry continues, "there has been a lot of stress on my family". The Wheelock family are particularly scathing about the Taoiseach[7]. "Bertie Ahern lives in this constituency. He is an elected representative of this constituency. My brother died and lived in his constituency and Bertie Ahern has done nothing for the campaign. I protested outside his office because of the harassment

my family received at the hands of the Gardaí. All I got from him was that he rang me up and said he knew my family very well. He doesn't know my family. My family aren't Fianna Fáil. I have got no help from him and I do not expect any help from him. He promised he would get me an internal Garda report two years ago and I am still waiting on it. He ain't interested in my brother and ain't interested in what happened to my brother".

Interestingly, established community workers[8] in the locality were also slow to help out. Larry believes this is because "they are all attached to projects funded by the Fianna Fáil government. Funding is a huge part of this. A lot of community activists are afraid to get involved. A lot of the jobs are funded and they are afraid of funding being withdrawn. They will show their face at protests but aren't really willing to challenge politicians. They sit down with the Gardaí at the Community Policing Fora,[9] which were set up to improve relations with the community…but if the police are going around battering young fellas, storming homes, attacking women and children that isn't better policing. When I went to the local forum, they were not willing to take my case on. I was told that my complaint was outside their remit. I wasn't asking them to punish the police. I was just asking to be a representative of my family – to mediate and allow my family to peacefully protest but they weren't willing to do that".

According to Larry, the treatment of his family by the state stems from the fact that we live in a society divided by class and power. Even before his brother's death Larry thought "there was no justice – just us. I was always aware of the two tier society". This has been reinforced over the past two years and he thinks one of the main lessons of his experience in organising his campaign for justice is that, "They all protect each other. No matter whether you are talking about hospitals, the police, or solicitors, they all look after each other. That is what I have really learnt. The hospital and the forensic lab were covering up what the police had done – huge levels of collusion with each other". He continues, "Ireland is a very small place [so] politicians and solicitors are all interlinked somewhere along the line". It is clear from further remarks that he does not see this as a conspiracy but as a shared culture linked to networks of power, wealth and influence.

Asked what this analysis means in terms of the campaign demand for an independent inquiry, Larry argues that, "whoever the people are who are given the task responsible for investigating the circumstances of Terence's death need to have carte blanche to question anyone…in the forensic department, the Garda or the hospital [and] who can question any independent witnesses and bring in their own engineers and pathologists. The Ombudsman[10] is not a public in-

6 Dáil Éireann is the lower house of directly elected politicians in the Irish parliament

7 An Taoiseach is the Irish term for prime minister. The current prime minister is Bertie Ahern, the leader of the Fianna Fáil party and one of the representatives of the north inner city. Fianna Fáil is a populist, clientelist party and the sort of manoeuvre described by Larry, when a made-up family commitment to the party is claimed, is very typical

8 Community based activism, ranging from Catholic ministry to radical grassroots projects, has been historically a very important part of Irish society. However, over the past two decades the community sector has become steadily 'professionalised' with volunteers being replaced by credentialised full time workers and the 'sector' becoming almost wholly reliant on state and EU funding.

9 Probably one the most significant grassroots working class movement of the past two decades was the anti-drugs movement (see the following two WSM articles: http://struggle.ws/rbr/rbr6/crime.html and http://struggle.ws/wsm/ws/2005/89/drugs.html). Harassment of activists led to significant tension between this movement and the police. As a response to this and as an attempt to improve community relations in general, a number of pilot policing fora were set up – ostensibly to liaise and consult with community representatives.

10 Historically, the Gardaí have only ever been investigated by themselves. Unsurprisingly, they rarely discovered problems with the way policing functions. The post of Garda Ombudsman, modelled partly on reforms in the north of Ireland to the PSNI, is a recent innovation and is looking at the Wheelock case 'in the public's interest'. As such, it is still an unknown quantity and it is too early to say what sort of approach the Ombudsman's office will take but there are, as Larry notes, statutory limits to its

quiry because it can only deal with the Gardaí. An independent inquiry would question everybody…[to find out] first of all why was Terence arrested, find out why he had injuries…explain the detail. Somebody who has no ties with the Irish state at all. We know that the police can't police themselves. Secondly, the Ombudsman has some ties to the judiciary and the police. The people we need cannot be compromised in any way. I want people named, shamed and charged. Having said this, Larry then tails off and observes, "There will never really be justice for Terence. My brother died. You cannot equate someone going to jail with a life".

Despite these obstacles, the campaign "is bigger and stronger than before and…we are opening this up to any one to anyone who believes in it". "Right now it is very hard to ignore. Just look at the last meeting [a large public meeting in the city centre that brought together other families and communities that have experienced police brutality]. There were loyal supporters but the majority of people were new faces. It is working and…it is having a desired effect. Discussing why the campaign has such a resonance, Larry notes that, "the campaign builds on its own merits [as] people know what extremes the police will go to. The feedback I get has always spurred on the campaign and has given a voice to the voiceless and hope to hopeless". "The thing is police brutality is all over the country; it is prevalent and Terence's story is not shocking to a large proportion of our population. This is what brings people onto the streets. People have an empathy because they share similar experiences – maybe not to the same extreme – but at some stage during their life, they have been brutalised by the Gardaí. Now, I know how hard it is to get anybody for what happened to Terence but we are in a position that shows the ordinary man can make a difference and that what happened to my brother does merit an independent inquiry".

Asked what practical impact the campaign has had Larry responds "I think we are winning already… we are winning in what has been put in place since Terence's death. There are now cameras in the station focused on the custody area. We know a lot of beatings that take place with the police happen in transit. I hope by the end of the campaign, we hope, there are cameras in vans and cars too… You can get your own GP [into the station] and the custody records are now catalogued and itemised so they cannot be ripped out[11]. There is also this new law providing for a liaison Garda to check if there has been any mistreatment in custody. This is directly connected to the campaign. They may not be learning their lesson but it has put mechanisms in place that might be very useful down the line should [someone] be assaulted or die in custody". There is also anecdotal evidence that the visibility of the campaign has reigned in some police excesses for the time being. "Before Terence there were a load of young fellas brought up to the Phoenix Park and fucked out of cars, brought up the mountains and young fellas were broken up but since Terence that hasn't happened".

Certainly in the north inner city the relative longevity of the campaign has meant that received wisdom about demanding justice from the state has shifted away from a defeatist and pessimistic attitude to the idea that the state and the police can be put under scrutiny. When this is put to Larry, he agrees, "What we have shown is huge. People are surprised that we are still here …Even after my family was harassed out of their home, even though I had charges thrown…at me and my brother…we are still going. It some way…has inspired a lot of people to – at the very, very least to complain".

Larry and other supporters see a broad-based peaceful campaign as the key to any future success with the campaign. This means for Larry that, "Rather than setting the city alight like they have done in France, we have to find a way to make that people think this campaign is their campaign and that people are willing take upon themselves to give out literature. At every meeting, at every single meeting, [and] even on the street, people I have never met before…are only too willing to tell me their story. [The campaign] gives them a voice – it gives them a forum to talk about what is going on [in] their lives in regards to Garda brutality and harassment".

Larry hopes that people use all the resources at their disposal to make sure the case stays in the public sphere asking people to "come out and show their support at demonstrations and public meetings, write to political magazines, newspapers, politicians, talk about it with their friends so it is always there". And outside of Ireland, "set up support groups that are willing to distribute information [and] get in touch with human rights groups to show that something like this – as bad as it is – it has broke boundaries".

We finish the interview with a discussion about Irish anarchism. I ask Larry how he saw anarchists before meeting them through the campaign and he replies, "I always thought that anarchists were people who wouldn't pay their bus fare (laughs). No, more as late nineteenth century hooligans…ready to antagonise the state and who do no good". This has changed because the "anarchists [are] willing to do the work, help with fund-raising, networking and leafleting…and have helped more than any other political group in the country. Asked whether anarchist ideas are relevant he says, "There may be people who lean towards their ideology in working class areas" but "very few people where I come from would know what anarchism is or even what socialism is" and that the fact that most anarchists are often not from a similar background is a limitation in his opinion. Finishing the interview, Larry says, "I have learnt that things like this are not solved overnight and there is a lot of legwork involved and [it] is a huge commitment that really infringes on your everyday life. But because of that, because of all we have put into this, it makes me more determined".

The WSM would like to thank Larry and his family for their generosity and time during the interview sessions. You can contact the Justice for Terence Wheelock Campaign at larrywheelock@hotmail.com

power to investigate allegations of police corruption and brutality.

11 The custody records in Terence's case had been amended and altered including changing the names of the Gardaí involved in his arrest.

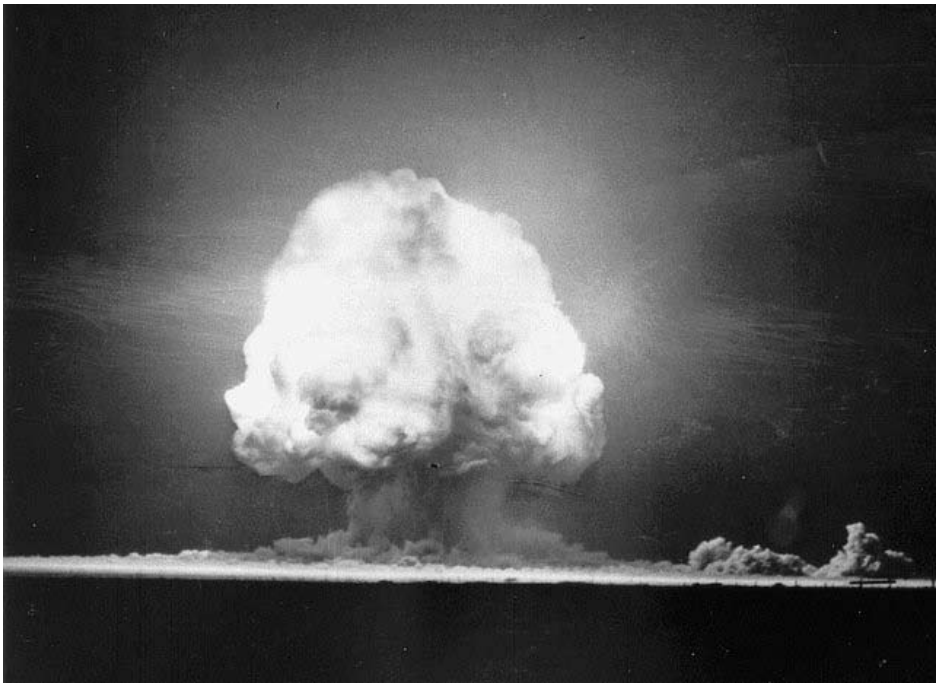
Financial Weapons of Mass Destruction

by Paul Bowman

This is the first part of a series of articles investigating the capitalist financial markets from a critical perspective. Such a large topic cannot be fully covered within the limits of this article so it is complemented by a longer on-line version at **http://www.wsm.ie/story/3613** which covers the broader background of financial markets in more depth.

We begin the series by focussing on the area of most recent innovation and greatest change known as the derivatives markets. All commentators agree that an exact definition of what a derivative is is difficult, if not impossible to frame. While some of the instruments that come under the derivatives heading have been around since the days of speculation in the Dutch tulip market back in the 17th century, the move of derivatives from the periphery of financial market trading to become the central driving force of the international capitalist financial system is very recent as we will see below.

The novelty of derivatives along with the unheard-of scale of risks they make possible have led Warren Buffet, one of the USA's leading capitalist investor gurus, to label them as "Financial weapons of mass destruction". Certainly they have been central to all the major financial scandals of the last years from Nick Leeson and the Baring's Bank collapse, the Long Term Capital Management near-collapse and bail-out and the most recent scandal at Société Générale associated with Jerome Kerviel. To understand the potency of these strange new developments, not only to provide us with the spectacle of multi-billion scandals in the distant realm of high finance, but to affect our more immediate struggles for everyday existence against capitalist exploitation, we must start with an introduction to the origins and mechanics of these peculiar instruments.



Currency Markets

Trade & Balance of Payments

International trade requires changing money from one national currency to another. This was carried out in the past by money-changers in markets and temples (religious centres have always been strategically placed on trade routes) throughout the pre-capitalist world. In the modern capitalist financial system, money-changing, known as foreign exchange, abbreviated as forex, is carried out in an electronic, de-centred global market that never sleeps and operates 24/7. The story of the historical development of the successive regimes of global financial orders will be covered in more detail in the article to follow this one, but for now we want to look at one recent feature of international currency and financial flows, the rise of the Eurodollar.

Stateless Money & the Rise of the Eurodollar

A Eurodollar is a US dollar that is deposited in a bank outside of US control. In finance the prefix "euro" to a currency means deposits of that currency outside of the regulation or control of the state or central bank that issues it. It has nothing to do with Europe or the Euro currency. As well as Eurodollars there are now Eurosterling, Euroyen and even, since 1999 and the introduction of the Euro currency, the linguistically abominable, Euroeuro.

The Eurodollar has its origins in the cold war. Due to import and export business, the Soviet Union had stocks of US dollars. In the aftermath of their invasion of Hungary in 1956 they were terrified that their deposits of dollars in the United States might be seized or embargoed in retribution. To avoid this they moved all of their dollars out of US jurisdiction and into European registered banks that they controlled. At this time

Jérôme Kerviel, Société Générale, Lost $7.1 Billion in 2008,

banks around the world would only take deposits in the national currency of the country they were registered in. The Soviet-owned banks in Europe decided that they may as well put these dollar deposits to work to earn some interest, so started offering them for loan to corporations on an anonymous, "no questions asked, so long as you pay the interest", basis. The Moscow Narodny Bank, a Soviet-owned, British registered bank was one of the main players in this activity and its telex address was "Eurbank" – hence the name Eurodollars. Given the amount of US dollars outside the states due to the Marshall Plan and a negative balance of payments (i.e. the US was paying more dollars out for imports than it was receiving back in for exports), the market, once established grew explosively.

The main activity in Eurodollar trading was inter-bank loans. Given the volatility of these loans, interest rates for individual loans varied by the hour and the minute. Eventually there was a need for an average interest rate measurement and this was set up by the biggest traders of Eurodollars, who were based in London, and is known as the London Inter-Bank Offer Rate or LIBOR – more on which later.

The importance of this Eurodollar, or more generically, eurofinance market, was that although based on currencies issued by state national banks, they were outside the jurisdiction of any state monetary body. In other words they were stateless money. The role of this market in state control-free money in undermining the Keynesian Bretton Woods system will be told properly in the article that follows this one. Our interest here is in the impact the Eurodollar money market had on the development of financial, as distinct from commodity, derivatives. The first entirely cash-settled futures exchange was opened in Chicago by the Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) to trade interest rate futures in Eurodollars in 1982. Eurodollar futures are used to hedge interest rate swaps, the first of which had taken place in August 1981. As Eurodollar deposits are time deposits that cannot be traded, Eurodollar futures were of necessity the first futures intended never to result in actual delivery of the underlying asset.

The futures rates were set in relation to the LIBOR which has continued to this day to be the main international reference interest rate. As national currencies have their interest rate which is set by the national banks, so the stateless currencies have their interest rates in the LIBOR, set by market trading.

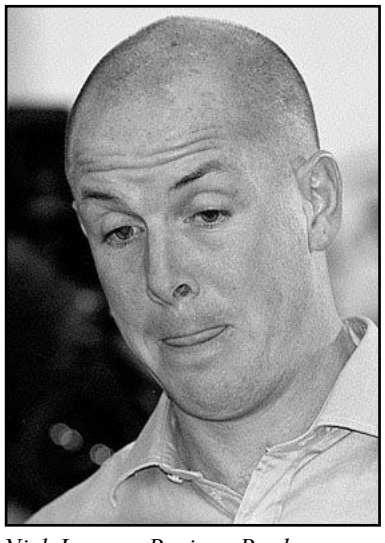
Derivatives and Hedges

The future is unwritten–Risk

The warning on the adverts for investment trusts always say "remember that the value of your investment may go down as well as up". This is true of all financial dealings so the twin to the capitalist obsession with profit is an obsession with risk. Risk is always linked to time, so any financial contract that involves an element of time must, of necessity, also involve an element of risk. The sizing and estimation of the likelihood of those risks is vital for capitalists. What's more, finding ways to limit the impact of negative events, should they occur, is an important part of financial activity, called hedging. Hedging is the process of putting in place damage-limitation instruments in case the future moves of the market turn out to be against your interests. Hedging is widely seen as one of those "good capitalist" or "legitimate" operations. It is usually opposed to its evil twin, "speculation" carried out by those "bad capitalists" who are motivated solely by seeking profit at the expense of anything else. In fact, both the "good" capitalists seeking to hedge risk and the "bad" capitalists seeking to make money through "speculation" are operating in the same market, using exactly the same financial instruments and carrying out the same operations. It is also the starting point of this article that all capitalists are motivated above all else by the drive for profit. But before we can discuss sensibly on the validity or otherwise of the hedging/speculating dichotomy, we must first look at the financial instruments they use to trade in future profits and risk.

The Derivatives Revolution

Up until the 1970s derivatives were a marginal part of capitalist financial activity, being mainly limited to hedging risk for agricultural commodities. However from the late 70s and through the 1980s a radical transformation came about. Derivatives moved out of being an adjunct to the commodities market and proliferated in every area of financial trading. Further the volume swelled enormously until it has now become by far the largest part of financial trading activity. From a few million in 1987, total outstanding value of derivatives contracts has grown to $516 trillion in 2007. The largest global financial market in the world today, is the foreign exchange market which does over $3 trillion of trading every day. Two thirds of that is derivatives. To give some idea of scale, the total value of global international trade in goods and services in a whole year barely reaches $6 trillion – a mere two days of forex trading. The entire aggregate gross national product of the Irish Republic amounts to $2 billion. That is every single cent made by every man, woman, child, corporation, bank or public service institution in this country, from the richest to the poorest, in a whole



Nick Leeson, Barings Bank Lost $1.4 Billion in 1995

year amounts to little more than an hour and a half's worth of trading on the global forex market.

This rapid and radical transformation both drove and was driven by, the transformation of the regime of global financial governance from the "Bretton Woods" or Keynesian order, to the new order that we live in today, which has attracted various names such as "neo-liberalism" or even "globalism". But before we can look at the meaning of the derivatives revolution and its relation to the big picture of changes in regimes of global financial governance, we must first look at the mechanics of how derivatives work.

Forwards

Derivatives originated in commodities markets. In financial language, commodities are specifically agricultural products or other industrial raw materials. They must be "commodifiable", i.e. different batches of the same amount of the good must be interchangeable in usefulness and value, regardless of origin. Derivatives arose from the need to protect against the risk of unpredictable rise or fall of prices of commodities, particularly agricultural commodities whose annual production and price are at the mercy of the weather and other unpredictable factors.

Consider the wheat farmer and the miller. Before sowing his fields with wheat the farmer is faced with an uncomfortable risk, what if after all his work, he finds at harvest time that the price of wheat has fallen so low that selling his produce will not cover his overheads and cost of living? On the other side, the miller, who consumes wheat as an input, wants to protect himself against the risk of the price of wheat rising.

The solution is a forward contract. At the beginning of the year the farmer and the miller make a contract for a transaction of an agreed amount of wheat at an agreed price, come harvest time. If at that later time the then current market price (called the spot price) of wheat is lower than the forward contract then the miller is paying more for that amount of wheat, but at least he has protected himself against the risk of the price rising and, more long-term, he knows that the same farmer is going to be around to grow more wheat next year. If the price goes up then the farmer has lost the difference between the forward contract price and the spot price, but this is a small price to pay for being able to plan your annual income and have certainty of still having a farm next year.

Futures

These forward contracts have two disadvantages. First, if the spot price moves substantially away from the forward price, one side of the contract is always tempted to break the contract. Secondly, there is the disadvantage of being tied to a direct relation between the buyer and seller, tied to particular place, etc. This forces the seller to locate an individual end user before he can fix a price.

By standardising amounts, quality and places for delivery, forward contracts can be replaced by futures contracts. Futures can be bought by producers/sellers without having to worry about who the eventual consumer/buyer will be. They can be freely transferred and traded – that is to say they have "liquidity". Further, as they are a means of protection from the difference between the desired future price and the actual spot price, they can be "cash-settled" – that is, redeemed for the cash value of this price difference without having to deliver or receive the underlying commodity.

There are other technical differences between a forward contract and a future (futures are "rebalanced" daily to stop large potential losses growing up between start and finish time, also they are guaranteed by the exchange, rather than having to seek costly redress through the courts in the case of a default on a forward contract), but the separation of future-proofing against price change risk from the ownership of the underlying asset is what makes a future specifically a derivative, as we will look at later.

Options

Another disadvantage of forwards is that both sides are bound into the transaction. Wouldn't it be nice if you could get a contract that would fix a future price for either selling or buying that would protect you against movements in price, but that you had the option not to go through with, if the eventual spot price turned out to be better than the one you fixed in the contract? Financial markets came up with a forward-type contract with this optional get-out clause called, perhaps inevitably, options.

Myron Scholes
Long Term Capital Management (LTCM)
Lost $4.6 Billion in 1998

There are two types of options – "call" options which allow you the option of buying in the future at the agreed "strike" price, or "put" options which allow you to sell at the strike price. Note, however, that for these contracts to work, one side must be under an obligation to buy or sell at the agreed price if the buyer of the optional side decides to exercise his option. So in our original example above, the farmer could, at the start of the growing season, buy a put option for a price he can live with. The cost of this option is a very small fraction of the "principal" – i.e. the full amount to be paid if he exercises the put option at harvest time. That initial price is not refundable. So if at harvest time the farmer finds that the spot price is now considerably higher than the strike price for his put option, he has lost what he paid for that option, but counts it a small price not to have to sell his produce at a price fixed well below the current market rate. Should the spot rate turn out to be lower than the strike price, the seller of the farmer's put option is forced to take the loss. Either the option seller buys the grain from the farmer at the strike price – this is called physical settlement – or, as is more common, the farmer sells his grain on the spot market and the options seller re-imburses him with money to make up the difference between

the spot price and the strike price, i.e. cash settlement.

Swaps

The other main derivative is something called a swap. Unlike futures and options, swaps did not originate from dealing in physical commodities; they are specific to financial assets. Conceptually a swap is two cash-settled futures contracts in succession: the first to set up the swap, the second to swap back to the original status quo. What is swapped here is not rare stamps, football cards or even commodities, but cash payment and income streams.

Swaps started in the foreign exchange markets. They were first set up to evade the exchange controls under the Bretton Woods system of global governance in place until the 1970s, specifically the exchange controls imposed by the British Labour government of 1974-1979. From these semi-clandestine origins, the abolition of Keynesian currency controls initiated by Margaret Thatcher in 1979, allowed the first public swap to take place in August 1981 between IBM and the World Bank, organised by Salomon Brothers.

To go through this first transaction as an example, the World Bank (which is Swiss-based) wanted to borrow a sum in Swiss francs (SFr) and IBM wanted to borrow a similar value in US dollars (USD). They were both going to do this by issuing bonds. At home in the US IBM would have had to pay a fairly poor base rate plus 45 basis points (US treasury interest rate + 0.45%), but due to the rarity of IBM bonds in Swiss markets, was able to issue bonds there for the SFr base rate. The World Bank could issue bonds at base rate plus 20 basis points (bp + 0.20%) in Switzerland and base rate plus 40 in the States. So IBM could borrow SFr cheaper than the WB and the WB could borrow USD cheaper than IBM could. IBM issued the bonds in Switzerland and the WB in the US. IBM loaned the WB the SFr at Swiss base + 10 and the WB loaned the USD to IBM at US base + 40 bp – result being, IBM gained 15 bp and the WB 10. The net repayment was transferred between them for the life of the loans (and Salomon was paid an undisclosed amount for setting it all up).

However, despite their origins, once concocted, swaps proved to be altogether more potent than anyone initially could have suspected. The types of swaps have proliferated greatly from the simple fixed-fixed interest swaps like the above into a vast diversity of instruments.

Once again, like cash-settled futures and options, swaps do not require any transfer of ownership of the underlying assets they are deriving their payment flows from.

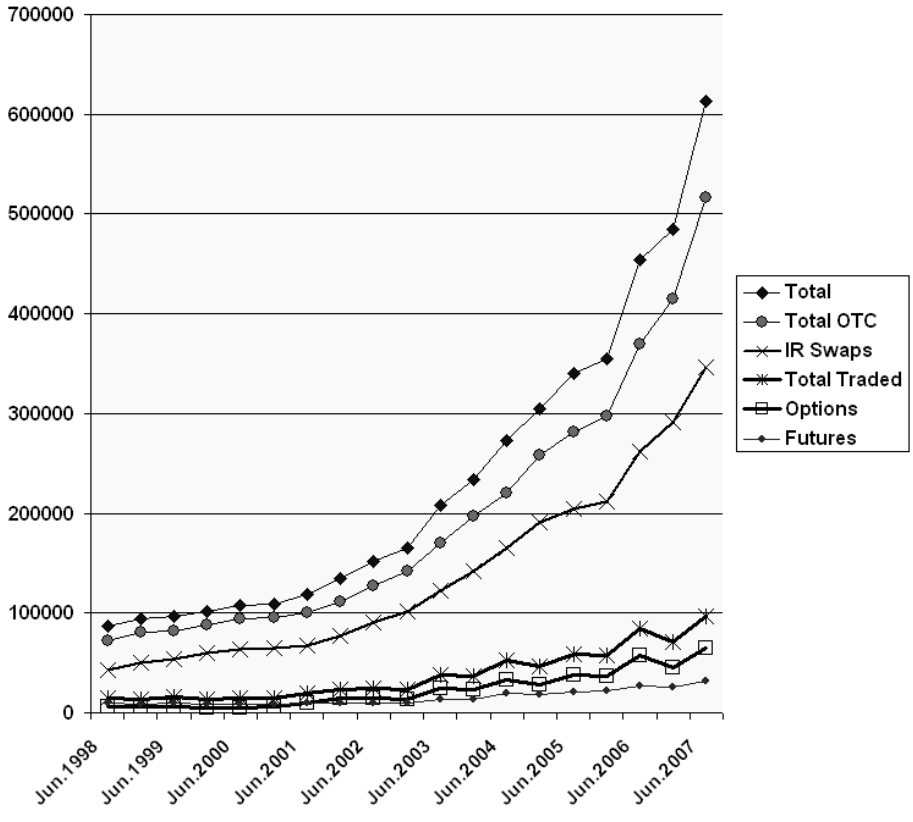
Swaps, however, bring something entirely new to the tool-kit. Forwards, futures and options, particularly in the commodity markets they originated in, each remained tied to markets segregated by the underlying instrument. Futures or options in pork bellies could only really be compared against the spot market for pork bellies. Of course you could liquidate – i.e. sell for money – your position in pork bellies and invest in futures for grain, but you couldn't rate your pork belly future against the grain spot market directly. Similarly, in the old world, bonds were bonds, stocks were stocks and forex contracts were forex contracts. Now, thanks to the power of swaps, all these segregating divisions are being dissolved. Swaps have the werewolf DNA that allow one type of financial security to be mutated into another directly – or have the option to swap nature by means of a "swaption", combining an option and a swap. They allow direct comparison of rates of risk, volatility and any other generic attribute to be competitively compared across markets that, until now, had no means of directly comparing themselves. Swaps are the philosopher's stone of finance capitalism that allows the direct transmutation of lead futures into gold options.

Proliferation

The four derivatives mentioned above are what's called plain or "vanilla" derivatives. In practice they are the basic building blocks which are combined to form more complex or "exotic" instruments. As many of these combinations involve both buying and selling derivatives, the term "taking a position" has replaced buy or sell.

Over the Counter–Under the Radar

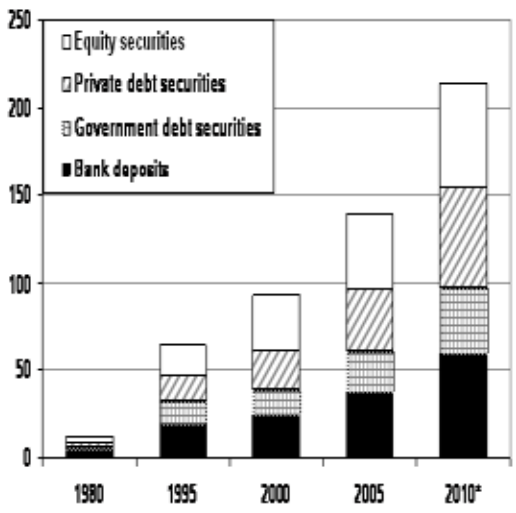
In our discussion of swaps above, there was one additional difference between swap and futures and options that we have not so far mentioned. That is that swaps are overwhelmingly not exchange-traded instruments like futures and options. They are nearly exclusively arranged as what's called "Over



Growth of the Derivatives Markets in Billions of Dollars: 1998-2007

The Counter" (OTC) trades – that is direct arrangements between the two counter-parties. Naturally this was the only way to operate in the early days of clandestine currency swaps undertaken to bypass currency controls. However, as the instrument is for transforming the payment/income stream for an agreed period, rather than hedging against (or taking a punt on) the future price movements in an underlying, it has continued to be arranged almost exclusively by direct, bi-lateral and customised agreements. Nearly 80% of all derivatives trades are OTC swaps, 75% of them being interest rate swaps. In addition to this we have to add the "off-balance sheet" nature of these arrangements, i.e. as no actual exchange of ownership is taking place, no evidence of it need appear on the companies' audited balance sheets.

All of this has added up to a huge increase in the opacity of financial markets. Far from increasing transparency and perfecting "market intelligence" (a contradiction in terms, if ever there was one), the explosive growth of OTC derivatives has meant that increasingly governments, regulators, risk assessors and all market participants have less and less idea what the real exposures of other players are. This is one of the major factors in the current international banking crisis sparked by the sub-prime mortgage fiasco in the US. The actual size of the sum at risk from bad sub-prime loans is relatively small, the fear in the financial markets is a fear of the dark – no-one can see where the actual bad debt is, they just know it's out there somewhere.



Interpretations

A deafening silence

Considering the scale and importance of the transformation that has taken place in the last couple of decades, there have been surprisingly few attempts to analyse its wider social implications.

On the one hand, the people with the most knowledge of the new developments in derivatives are the professional traders and dealers in these instruments. But the interests of this group are limited to the implications for their search for profits in capitalist markets so they have shown no interest in the wider social implications.

On the other side, the academic and professional economist sectors, who you might expect to be interested in this question, are crippled by zealous adherence to the dominant economic dogmas. According to the dominant neoclassical "perfect market" dogma, the entirety of derivatives trading amounts to a zero-sum game which has no overall value. Further that with the increasing perfection of markets, the need or opportunities for hedging or speculation will increasingly disappear. In any case the dominant neoclassical economism tends to have a knee-jerk reaction against any analysis containing the word "social" unless it's to praise free markets as the creator of the best of all possible worlds.

The marginalised economist critics of such pro-capitalist positivism, are equally dominated by a slavish adherence to an orthodox Marxist dogma (not to be confused with Marx's personal contribution to the critique of capitalism which remains a fertile source) which states that as exploitation can only occur in the sphere of production, the entirety of financial market operations, including derivatives trading, is in the sphere of circulation and thus can be safely ignored as either having no impact on "real" capitalist relations or being "unproductive" – an orthodox Marxist swear word meaning "something nasty that should be eliminated". If the neoclassical position is a denial of reality on a par with the man who sailed round the world preaching that the earth was flat, then the orthodox Marxist position is akin to closing your eyes, sticking your fingers in your ears and loudly proclaiming "Na, na, na, I'm not listening!".

In between the dominant neoclassicals and the marginalised orthodox Marxists are the (neo) Keynesians. While not explicitly anti-capitalist, like the orthodox Marxists, they are advocates of the need for state intervention and regulation to make capitalism run efficiently and with some vague concession to popular needs. However, the Keynesians have no more idea what to make of derivatives than their neoclassical or Marxist economist colleagues. If anything, they tend to follow Keynes' distinction between the "real economy" and speculative market trading, thus siding with the Marxists.

Breaking the silence

Given the lack of interest or dogmatic inability of the bulk of professional market traders and the partisans of the various economic orthodoxies, the work of trying to analyse the social implications has been left to those few economists critical or sceptical of capitalism as a force for good, but not bound by the blinkers of orthodox Marxism Among these contributions is last year's book by two Australian academics Bryan and Rafferty, referenced in the acknowledgements below, and on which a lot of the following is heavily reliant.

Ownership & Competition

Bryan and Rafferty and a number of other authors they reference, liken the recent takeover of financial markets by derivatives to the impact of the introduction of the joint-stock company in the mid-nineteenth century.

Like the current rise of derivatives, the introduction of the shareholder-owned or "joint stock" company was seen by many commentators of the time as threatening the productive economy with the disruptive and parasitic effects of speculators and bringing with it the threat of volatility and new crises of instability. It was also an innovation that transformed the scale that it was possible to do business on, both in terms of capital and labour employed and distances covered, while changing profoundly the relationship be-

tween the directing of production, its ownership and the distribution of its profits. Corresponding to this was an extension and intensification of the relations of competition between businesses and between capitalists and labour.

In a similar fashion these commentators claim that the derivatives revolution is introducing a similarly epochal change in these three aspects of capitalism. Bryan and Rafferty label this the "Three Degrees of Separation".

The first degree of separation is the separation of people from the land and the means of self-sufficiency to create a class society of individual owner-capitalists and a dispossessed class of wage-labourers, such as happened in England and Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries. In this stage of separation, control over production and ownership of the means of production are united in the body of the "masters". Competition is primarily the direct conflict between master and "hands" over profit versus survival.

The introduction of the joint stock corporation transforms this network of relationships. The process of incorporation gives a degree of legal recognition of the business as being itself a legal entity having rights and being able to own property. Ownership is now spread amongst the shareholders who have no direct individual rights to the property of the corporation. The direction of production is entrusted to a person demoted from the condition of being a "master" into being a mere "boss", them self an employee capable of being fired by the concerted will of the shareholders. While the conflicts between bosses and workers are equally capable of ferocity, the effect of ownership by stockholders who can compare the return of their shares in a given company, to that of a competing firm in the same industry and, if profitable, transfer funds to find the most profitable, means that competition now extends between firms within a given industry. The conflict between boss and workers is mediated by the conflicts and conditions of production in all the competing firms in that industry. Much has also been written about the possible conflicts of interests between bosses and shareholders.

Shareholders may often find short-term gain in courses of action that may be damaging to the firm or even lead to its premature extinction. Similarly bosses may find to enrich themselves at the expense of the shareholders and workers. But both, to some extent, find their freedom of movement and power over the enterprise constrained by the legal recognition of the corporation as an entity with rights and the intensified conditions of competition with other corporations in the same market.

The third degree of separation, through derivatives, involves a further loss of power and autonomy by both bosses and shareholders in the face of a third body, the derivatives market that derives profit from the performance of their corporations without having or needing any legal ownership claims at all. Another change is the ability of derivative instruments to relate and compare performance across different industries. The joint stock corporation had made it easy to compare productivity and profitability between different firms in a given industry (in a given currency area) but difficult to relate the productivity of, say chalk miners with cheese-makers without selling out of the chalk mining industry and investing in the cheese business. Derivatives have evolved specifically to relate previously incommensurable activities directly, without any need for change of ownership in underlying stocks. With derivatives, chalk and cheese can be compared directly and the achievements in advancing productivity in one industry can be set competitively against the other.

At this stage it must be mentioned that B&R are not proposing that these be seen as "stages" in the sense that one gives rise to, and is replaced by, the next. Although each has provided the basis for evolving the next level, each prior level continues to co-exist with the later ones. Along with the 21st century "third degree of separation" of derivatives-dominated financial capitalism, the East Asian "enterprise zone" clothing factory owners whose sweated workforce make the sportswear for the post-industrial workers of the west, are operating very clearly in the framework of the first degree. Derivatives feed off the multinational joint stock corporations they evolved to serve.

Implications for the class struggle

The Left Bereft

Ever since the fracturing of the nascent socialist movement in the late 19th century, the non-anarchist fractions of the left, despite other disagreements on doctrine and methods, have been united by a common belief in the nation state as the indispensable tool for delivering socialism.

This fervent belief in the nation state as the sole possible means of our collective deliverance has given the state socialist left a huge emotional investment in denying even the possibility that the power of the state to substantially limit or man-

age the flows of contemporary capitalism has been fatally undermined by the developments of the 1970s and 1980s. Many of them still cling to the belief that the deconstruction of the Keynesian international financial order that took place in that period was entirely the result of a purely political "neoliberal" conspiracy or coup that can simply be rolled back when truly social-democratic governments come back into power.

As we have seen in the section on interpretations above, most of these state socialists or social democrats are aided and abetted in this position in a Keynesian or Marxist (the two are in practice much closer bed-fellows than either would care to admit) economic dogmas which prevent them from even looking at the mechanics of the systemic changes that have taken place, never mind trying to analyse them.

The fact is that the Eurodollar money markets and clandestine currency swaps of the 1970s were successful in their attempts to get around the regulatory architecture of the Keynesian world order. Today's proponents of measures like the Tobin tax have yet to explain how they will tax operations like currency swaps or other derivatives based operations which achieve the same end as foreign currency transactions but without any actual monitorable or taxable exchanges taking place. The same logic applies to the arguments of those who propose the re-imposition of Keynesian exchange controls – how to prevent them being bypassed by the very mechanisms that evolved specifically for that purpose? The state socialist dream of using the power of the capitalist state to discipline and control capitalism for the benefit of workers is definitively dead. They are a Left bereft.

What is more important, from an anti-capitalist point of view, is that the "lost paradise" of Keynesian social-democracy that these nostalgics long to regain, was a class compromise based on workers accepting their subjugation within capitalism and submitting to wage-restraint deals. It was the smashing of these wage restraint deals by workers in the late 60s and 70s that drove the inflation that in turn pushed up the interest rates in Europe that sucked dollars out of the US and into the Eurodollar market. Keynesianism was not simply undermined by capitalist innovation in the area of derivatives, but by workers' struggles in Western Europe and, on a global level, by the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese people to US imperialism. We will cover this history in the next article in the series, but the point remains – will the state socialists in their turn adopt the position taken by the Western European Communist Parties in the 60s and 70s that workers must accept wage restraint "in order to build the productive forces", in the Marxist jargon? This line has nothing to offer the struggle for the break-out from the prison of capitalist social relations.

Darkness visible

Under the first two degrees of separation, the class enemy directly visible to the struggling masses were first the masters and then the corporations with their bosses and shareholders. Even today in the anti-globalisation movement, the majority of the non-communist activists see the "bad guys" as the loathed MNCs – the Multi-National Corporations. From the beginning the analytical communist tendency was able to say that the ultimate enemy was neither the masters, the bosses, the shareholders or the corporations, but capital itself. Yet capital remained a theoretical abstraction only, inferred as an emergent tendency of the collective action of the actual, visible class enemies. Now with the rise of the derivatives markets, before which the corporations, even the multi-national ones, are expendable pawns, a new situation has arisen. As the actions of this new force in capitalist society moves increasingly from the back office of anonymous financial companies and onto the front pages and television news reports, and its logic is increasingly seen to control the economy and our lives, it will reveal itself as "Capital made flesh", as capital in itself, for itself. A concrete, directly visible enemy. And an enemy we can see directly, we can fight directly.

The outlook for the future of the class war

While the state socialists may either mourn or remain in denial about the passing of the nation state as a platform for reforms to mitigate the evils of capitalism, we libertarian communists have the freedom of vision to see these new developments for what they are, free from the ideological blinkers that blind the rest of the bereft left. The impotence of the nation state to defend workers' living standards poses the challenge of linking our struggles across borders. The ability of the new financial instruments to pit workers competitively across industrial boundaries raises the challenge of organising solidarity and resistance between workers, waged and unwaged, in different industries and productive activities. That with the increasing impossibility of fighting for reforms and half-measures within capitalism, we will be forced more and more to confront a newly visible capitalism itself directly. Then we must say, without under-estimating the size of these challenges, or indeed, the likely savagery of some of the struggles to come, that this is a most excellent development.

Acknowledgements & References

To try and properly footnote and reference the above text would have been too intrusive for what is, after all, not an academic text. Nonetheless some acknowledgements and references are both proper and handy as guides for further reading.

For general "non-political" reference material on financial markets (and much of the glossary) I have made extensive use of the open source Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki). In the category of copyrighted but freely available on the web material, I must also mention the extremely well-informed and lucid www.riskglossary.com. For pure statistics the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) produce the best available estimates of derivative volumes (www.bis.org) and the OECD (www.oecd.org) are good for general global financial statistics.

In the category of works contributing to a critical and political perspective, as already mentioned above, the best book available is "Capitalism with Derivatives", Dick Bryan & Michael Rafferty, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. I would particularly also like to acknowledge the influence of the work and generous aid of my comrades Dave Harvie and Massimo de Angelis, many of whose texts on this and related topics are freely available at www.thecommoner.org.

How free can you be if you can't even control your own body?

by Alan MacSimoin

The WSM & the long struggle for abortion rights in Ireland

Last year saw a pregnant woman carrying a foetus which could not survive. The state insisted that she carry it to term. That is what Ireland's anti-abortion law meant for Miss "D", a 17 year old in the care of the Health Services Executive. She was four months pregnant when her foetus was diagnosed with anencephaly. The outlook for individuals with this is extremely poor; stillbirth or death a few hours after birth. As the Choice Ireland group said at the time "No woman should have to endure the trauma of carrying to full term a child who will not live more than a few hours. By preventing "Miss D" from travelling to Britain for an abortion the Irish government are defining women as uterine incubators rather than individuals entitled to basic human rights".

Abortion has been illegal in Ireland since the passing of the British 1861 Offences against the Person Act. And in Holy Catholic Ireland, it was not just illegal but also not spoken about. The only time it was mentioned in the newspapers was when Mamie Cadden was sentenced to death by hanging (eventually commuted to penal servitude for life) in 1956 for carrying out backstreet abortions.

When the British 1967 Act made abortion legal and relatively easy to access (if you could afford the cost of travel, accommodation and the procedure) it was not extended to Northern Ireland. Thousands of women from both sides of the border could, and did, travel to England each year to end crisis pregnancies. Nobody talked about it, the vast majority of women went alone and in secret.

At the beginning of the 1980s the Catholic church and its activist wing (the Responsible Society, Knights of Columbanus, etc.) became afraid that public opinion might change in the coming decades and the courts might say that abortion is permissible in particular circumstances, or even that the Dáil might eventually bring in limited legislation. There was no possibility of anything like that happening in the 1980s but they decided to plan ahead.

In 1981 the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign (PLAC) was formed with the goal of getting a Constitutional amendment, which would guarantee "the absolute right to life of every unborn child from conception". Just over a month after it was formed, PLAC had been given promises by the leaders of Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Labour Party to hold a referendum.

A referendum was called in 1983 and an amendment giving the "unborn" an equal right to life was proposed. Having agreed to a referendum, Fine Gael and Labour subsequently had second thoughts and ran very muted and token Vote No campaigns. It was probably down to a mixture of fear of what might happen if they annoyed the bishops and a bit of 'cute hoorism' whereby both the Yes and No sides could be 'supported' in the hope of not losing their votes at future elections.

A small Women's Right To Choose Campaign had been set up in 1980 by courageous women and men like Mary Gordon, Goretti Horgan and Pete Nash. This was tiny, but was taking the first steps towards opening up a debate about women's rights rather than about whether the foetus had a soul.

Along with liberals, feminists and the left they formed the Anti-Amendment Campaign. Immediately, it was obvious that the AAC had a problem. While PLAC and their allies thundered against the "murder of babies", the AAC were unwilling to argue their case on the basis of promoting women's rights, and countering the lies about abortion. They were not unique in this, and it is difficult today to visualise the political atmosphere when the Catholic Church was an almost unquestioned authority on moral issues in Ireland, and opposing them was not done lightly. Much of the anti-amendment case was stated in terms of rejecting "sectarian laws" and supporting "pluralism", rather than arguing for abortion rights.

> *"not only did the leaflet not mention abortion, it did not mention women!"*

In its leaflet asking people to vote no in the referendum The Workers' Party achieved the seemingly impossible – not only did the leaflet not mention abortion, it did not mention women! One put out by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions opposing the amendment similarly avoided mentioning abortion, although women did make an appearance in the final sentence.

A woman's right to abortion, even in very limited circumstances, was rarely mentioned by AAC spokespeople. Anarchists and other socialists were accused of "playing into the hands of PLAC" for advocating a woman's right to choose, while liberal celebrities who started their speeches with, "I am totally against abortion, but also against the amendment," were praised.

If the abortion issue had been faced honestly and openly, the Catholic right would still have won, but the debate would have been more advanced. Instead public discussion was dominated by lawyers and doctors whose case was that the proposed amendment was not really about abortion but about legal and medical issues ordinary people could not possibly understand. The PLAC message, on the other hand, was very simple: "abortion kills babies – vote yes".

On 8 September 1983 the eighth amendment to the Constitution of the Republic was approved in referendum by two thirds of the vot-

ers. Article 40.3.3 of the constitution now read: "The state acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right."

In Holy Catholic Ireland things went on pretty much as before. Just four months after the vote 15 year old Anne Lovett died giving birth alone by an outdoor grotto to the Virgin Mary in Granard, Co. Longford. Her baby died with her.

While looking for votes PLAC was anxious to assure voters that it was interested only in stopping the legalisation of abortion in Ireland. It had no intention to stop Irish women travelling to England for abortions. PLAC also said it would not oppose ending the stigma attached to single mothers. It was lying on all fronts and its hypocrisy was seen in the middle of 1984 when Eileen Flynn was sacked from her teaching job in a New Ross convent school for having a baby outside marriage. PLAC's response was silence.

Defending her dismissal, a Jesuit priest wrote: "Ms Flynn's pregnancy is significant only as being incontrovertible evidence that her relations with the man in whose house she resided were in fact immoral. Had her immorality remained genuinely private, it might have been overlooked". In other words, had she gone to England and had a quiet abortion, she would not have been sacked.

The wheels of reaction kept turning. 1986 saw us lose, by 2:1, a referendum to get rid of the ban on divorce. Defying the 'advice' of the Catholic bishops was not seen as an option by most voters. There was also much scaremongering by anti-divorce campaigners about women being left penniless. This was easy for them, as the government had not indicated what type of law they would introduce if the referendum was passed.

It was to be 1995 before we finally, and very narrowly, won, and the ban was scrapped. Interestingly, the only people to the left of the Labour Party who were elected to the executive of the Divorce Action Group were two WSM members. This reflected the respect that anarchists had gained through a strategy of uniting as many people as possible to remove the Constitutional ban, while reserving the right to put forward our own specifically anarchist positions (see 'Divorce: Undermining the Family?', WSM 1986).

> *"The Bishops: they hid priests who raped children; now they lecture us about morals and children's rights. Vote YES"*

The WSM produced a poster with a picture of the notorious paedophile priest, Fr Brendan Smyth, who had been protected by the church authorities for decades. The slogan said 'The Bishops: they hid priests who raped children; now they lecture us about morals and children's rights. Vote YES'. Media analysts reckoned that this poster contributed to the victory by reminding people of the barefaced hypocrisy of the anti-divorce crowd.

Once the ball started rolling there was no stopping it. Exposure followed exposure. Annie Murphy, who had had a love affair with the most populist bishop in Ireland, Eamon Casey, wrote a book revealing that he had a teenage son with her. Then we found out that Fr Michael Cleary, "the singing priest", had had two sons by his "housekeeper".

The massive and ongoing spate of scandals involving heartbreaking brutality in the Magdalen laundries, savage beatings of imprisoned children in Artane and Letterfrack, secret affairs by clerics who preached chastity and literally hundreds of child rapes by priests and Christian Brothers, were to destroy the moral authority of the Catholic Church.

A decade earlier it was a different story. Two years after the Eighth Amendment, in 1985, the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) went to court to try to close down the two pregnancy counselling centres which provided information about how to get an abortion in Britain–Open Line Counselling and the Dublin Well Woman Centre. The Supreme Court ruled that providing such information was now unconstitutional.

Books, including "Our Bodies Ourselves" and Everywoman, which contained information about abortion, were removed from Dublin libraries. Magazines like Cosmopolitan had to be printed with blank pages for Ireland when advertisements appeared for abortion services. One issue of the Guardian was seized from the Belfast-Dublin train and taken to Store St. Garda station because it contained an advert for a clinic which performed abortions.

Next SPUC went after the national students' union, USI, and the students' unions in UCD and Trinity College. Their members had voted, in college referenda, to defy a High Court injunction and continue to give details of abortion services, as well as adoption agencies and single parent groups, in their welfare guidebooks. Students were taken before the High Court but none were jailed for their 'contempt of court'.

The fact that hundreds of students accompanied their representatives to each court appearance, blocking the street outside, was an indication that something was changing. Throughout the country the general mood seemed to be that censorship of information was not a good thing. One might be against abortion but banning information on the grounds that women couldn't

be trusted with it was a bit too much. Perhaps the judges decided it wouldn't be a good idea to turn brazen lawbreakers into martyrs?

At this time some of the students saw a need to move beyond the colleges, and link up with other pro-choice supporters. Thus were born the Cork and Dublin Abortion Information Campaigns. These brought together students, feminists and left wing community and union activists. The ban on information was defied, openly and publicly.

They also made "choice" a central part of their platform by saying that the choice to have children must also be fought for. No woman should suffer poverty, problems at work, poor housing or any other disability because she chooses to continue a pregnancy.

Leaflets with the phone number of the injunction-busting Women's Information Network were given out in their tens of thousands in city and town centres. Posters appeared on walls and hoardings, stickers in women's toilets. Live TV reporters had to watch out or someone holding a poster with the WIN number could suddenly appear in the background.

WSM members were very involved in all this. Our argument was that defiance of the ban was both possible and desirable, and would hopefully make that law unenforceable. Workers Solidarity carried the WIN number in every issue, challenging the state to bring us to court. Maybe the fact that some of our members can eat two Weetabix at a single sitting scared them off, but they never accepted our challenge.

The state did not look invincible, and that gave confidence to the new pro-choice movement that was emerging.

> *"effectively interned and forced to continue a pregnancy against her will"*

On February 6th 1992 news broke about a 14 year old girl, pregnant as a result of rape by a neighbour and reportedly suicidal. To protect her identity she was named as 'X' in the courts and the media.

Her parents brought her to England for an abortion. While there they phoned the gardaí, asking about what DNA evidence the clinic should retain for a possible prosecution of the rapist. Instead they were told that they must return home immediately.

Attorney General Harry Whelehan had obtained an interim injunction on the basis of the Eighth Amendment restraining her from obtaining an abortion in Britain. The injunction was confirmed by the High Court 11 days later, when it ruled that the girl and her parents were prohibited from leaving Ireland "for a period of nine months from the date thereof".

Up and down the country there was an explosion of anger. Thousands of mainly young women and men poured onto the streets to say "Let her go." School students from several convent schools, particularly in Waterford and Cork, walked out in protest. Protesters took to the streets of Galway, Limerick, Waterford, Cork, Dublin, Tralee and smaller towns as well. Overseas the case received huge coverage, with more foreign news crews arriving every day.

Nobody had expected anything of this magnitude. At a lunchtime meeting before a Dublin demonstration the following Saturday the organisers were debating what to do if less than a few hundred turned up. An hour later at least 8,000 were in O'Connell St. Some reports said 10,000. That few expected anything like these numbers was evidenced by there only being five banners present (including the big red & black one of the WSM), but a sea of home-made posters.

This was not a moany tramp through the city centre; it was angry and energetic. People were shocked at the way 'X' was being effectively interned and forced to continue a pregnancy against her will. They also clearly felt enthused to be among so many others prepared to say abortion should be a choice available to every woman who needs it. I remember us bringing 1,000 WSM leaflets titled 'it's every woman's right to choose'. Within a five minutes they were all gone, people we had never seen before were giving it a quick read and then taking handfuls and passing them out.

This writer was the rally chairperson, and remembers that for weeks afterwards he was being approached in the street by strangers, often older women, who wanted to thank the "young people" for finally breaking the silence.

For the first time a lot of people were seeing abortion in terms of a real living young woman, rather than emotive sloganising and theological debates. Thinking about what should be done if it was to be your own mother, or sister, or daughter, or aunt, or friend, changed a lot of people's views. At the very least it left them willing to listen to a rational case for abortion rights.

Faced with growing anger the government took the unprecedented steps of offering to pay the costs of an appeal to the Supreme Court, enabling Ms X to travel to England. In doing so it interpreted the Constitution in a new way and changed Irish law in regard to abortion.

The Supreme Court judges who heard the appeal were not known to be harbouring any liberal or feminist thoughts. One of them, Hugh O'Flaherty, had represented SPUC in earlier cases against abortion information providers. It was an open secret that the government was putting pressure on the judges to make this case go away.

> *"a legal right to pregnant women to travel out of the country"*

They got their wish when the majority ruling turned the constitutional amendment on its head. It decreed that abortion was lawful in Ireland in the event of there being "a real and substantial risk to the life, as distinct from the health, of the mother" as in the case of threatened suicide. The judges stood the law on its head and agreed that 'X' had a right to abortion.

However in any other case, it would still be possible to obtain injunctions in order to prevent a women travelling. The "pro-life" movement was up in arms about abortion on hallowed Irish soil. The government did not want to face the embarrassment of further injunctions.

It was faced with two possible solutions to the thorny problem it faced: Either to resolve it through

legislation, which would entail introducing abortion in some form into Ireland. Or to hold a referendum, thus avoiding the necessity of stating their own position on the issue. As politicians they did not want to alienate the "pro-life" movement, which is influential in rural areas. Neither did the party want to isolate the mass of new liberal working class voters that they were wooing as their traditional rural base dwindled.

Their attempt to sit on the fence resulted in a referendum wording which neither side liked very much. The X case resulted in three proposed constitutional amendments, which we could all vote for or against in three separate referenda on November 25th 1992.

The Twelfth Amendment – the so-called substantive issue – proposed that the prohibition on abortions would apply even in cases where the mother was suicidal. The wording allowed for abortion in this country where "the life as opposed to the health" of the women was threatened "excluding the threat of suicide".

The remaining two amendments were more straightforward: The Thirteenth Amendment would give a legal right to pregnant women to travel out of the country while the Fourteenth Amendment would allow (under conditions) the publication of information about abortion services in foreign countries.

Soon after the "X" case DAIC adopted a Right to Choose position and made this the main focus of their arguments around the case. People with divergent political ideas from the Workers Solidarity Movement, students, members of the Labour Party, the Irish Workers Group, the Greens, Red Action and other activists came together to distribute information, canvass, put leaflets in letterboxes, and organise meetings and marches.

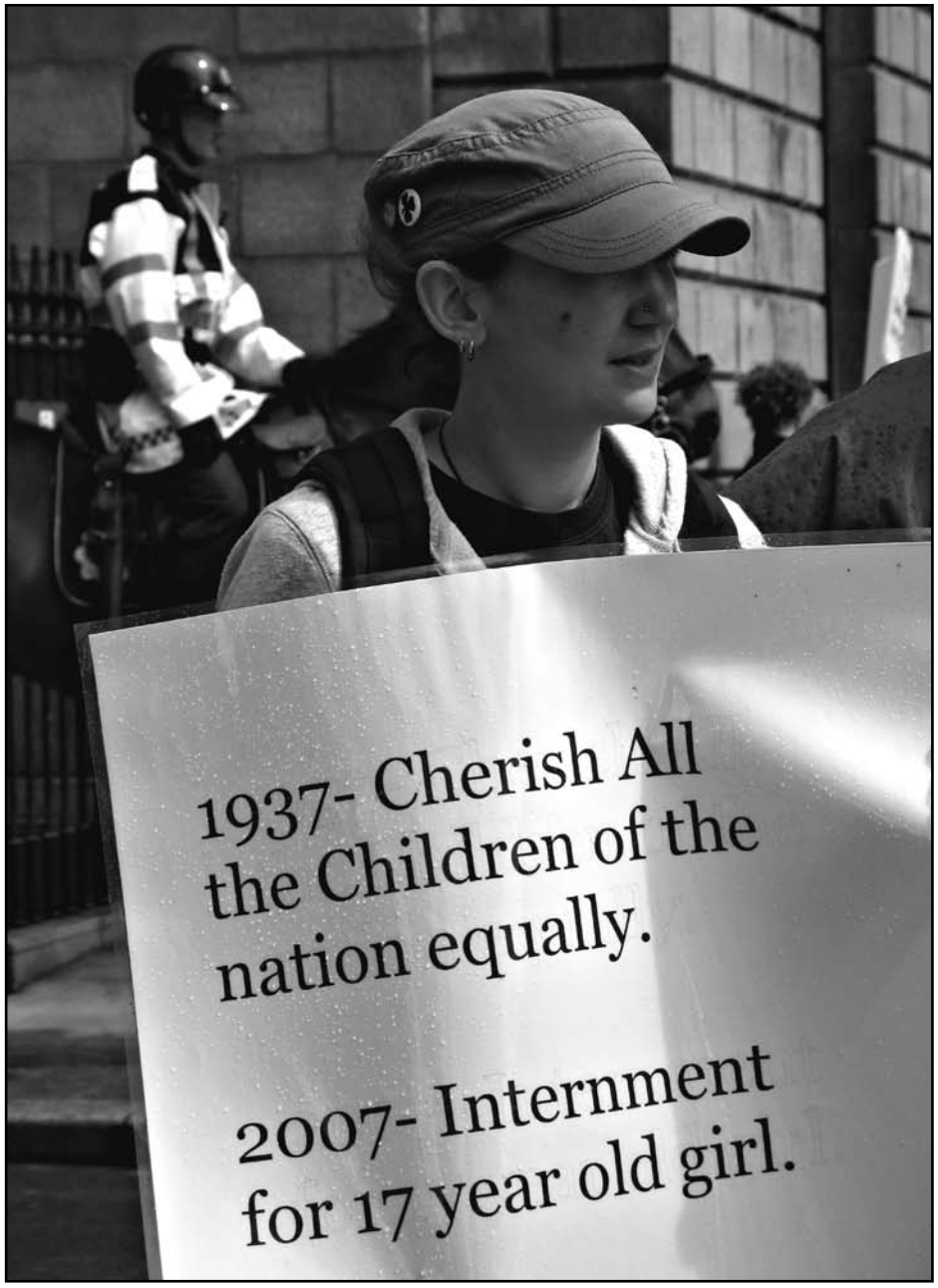
In the months that followed there were various different attempts to set up more broad based campaigns. DIAC continued its separate existence, co-operating with other groups on the ground where possible. Before the referendum, DAIC targeted different areas of the city for door-to-door leafleting and postering.

A Repeal the Eight Amendment Campaign (REAC) was formed in March 1992 on the basis of campaigning for a removal of the 1983 Amendment, for the provision of non-restrictive information and for the right to travel. It drew its membership from people who had been involved in the 1983 campaign and had been dormant since that defeat, from the existing abortion information campaigns and from members of the feminist movement with an orientation towards community politics (who also organised as the Women's Coalition). It intended to be a broad based national campaign.

Meanwhile the more conservative elements of the feminist movement set about setting up a group, 'Frontline', based around the service organisations (Well Women Centres, Doctors For Information, etc.). They saw their role almost solely as a lobby group around the major political parties.

REAC was primarily based in Dublin, Cork, Waterford and Galway. From the beginning the campaign was split between the feminists who favoured lobbying and the left who emphasised campaigning on the ground. Of course it was said that the two approaches were not incompatible, but in practice REAC activity was centred on press conferences and letters to the Irish Times, at the expense of workplace and door-to-door leafleting and local organising.

One of the Women's Coalition's main spokespeople, Joan O'Connor, produced a discussion paper at a Dublin activists meeting on 1st September 1992, which said "To adopt a policy of abortion on de-



mand is not only politically incorrect if we wish to advance women's rights in Ireland, but it is also a term which is extremely offensive to many women".

> *"faith in the power of 'leaders of opinion'"*

This was coming from within the group which controlled REAC, which caused many activists to wonder what the point of the campaign was. Further tension was generated by the fact that most of the 'leaders' did not attend local meetings or engage in any of the 'donkey work' of leafleting and postering.

Public meetings and marches were not supported and not built for and, surprise surprise, not successful. A good example of this is that a REAC public meeting held in Dublin's Liberty Hall, on the 20th October, just over a month from the vote was attended by just over 70 people.

As often happens, the divisiveness within the campaign was blamed on personal differences rather than politics. Eventually it became a waste of time and effort for activists to remain in REAC. The Dublin group collapsed, with most activists joining DAIC. The Galway REAC changed its name and went its own way.

In the months before the November 1992 referenda a broader Alliance for Choice was set up. The role of the Alliance was to make available posters and leaflets, and to co-ordinate press conferences. At last we had an umbrella structure to facilitate co-operation by pro-choice forces, but not a great one!

The Alliance however was hugely top heavy with a lot of affiliates who sent representatives to committee meetings but didn't do much work. Most of the postering, leafleting and canvassing in Dublin was still done by DAIC and, to a lesser extent, the Women's Coalition. This was only a few weeks before the vote. With the exception of Cork, Galway and Waterford few active groups existed around the country.

The main problem affecting REAC, Frontline and the Alliance was their faith in the power of 'leaders of opinion' to win the battle for us. Letters were written to the Irish Times who came out in our favour. Press conferences were repeatedly held, none getting more than a few minor mentions. The committee produced detailed briefing documents, holding meetings with organisations varying from the Council For the Status of Women to Fianna Fáil's women's committees.

Yet in the end, the target audience, the progressives with power, refused to be pushed. For the most part the voice of the pro-choice movement in Ireland was not heard by the Irish people. REAC acted as a flea on the back of the liberals but the liberals weren't scratching. Increasingly, a lesson was being learnt that if abortion rights advocates don't bring their case directly to the people, nobody else was going to step in and do it for them.

The weakness of the pro-choice movement was matched by the confusion within the "pro-life" movement. Not only were they abandoned by Fianna Fáil but they were split on a number of fronts. Firstly between those who wanted to campaign for a No vote in all three referenda and those who preferred the more acceptable face of allowing a Yes vote on Travel (their argument being that as you couldn't actually stop women from travelling the amendment was impractical).

The Catholic bishops collectively released a statement saying that Catholics could legitimately vote either way to the substantive question. Although a few bishops then broke ranks and called for a No vote, the "pro-life" movements' mainstay argument that they represented the true wishes of Irish people had been undermined. Even on the question of abortion Information on which all elements agreed in opposing, the "pro-life" campaign didn't even come close to matching the intensity and ferocity of the 1983 campaign.

> *"attacked with pick axe handles and snooker cues"*

With the setting up of a new "pro-life grouping proclaiming itself as the organisation of the "pro-life" working class youth, a further split occurred. Youth Defence was publicly launched on Fr Michel Cleary's 98FM radio show. They modelled themselves on the tactics of Operation Rescue type groups in the U.S. On marches they chanted "we don't need no birth control, hey Taoiseach leave the kids alone".

They leafleted on Saturdays in the city centres with gruesome pictures of supposed abortions. They picketed TDs' houses, including those of Nuala Fennell and Eamonn Gilmore, and even Brendan Howlin's elderly mother. They rang in death threats to Radio Dublin when they wouldn't carry interviews with them. In one incident on Dublin's Thomas Street pro-choice campaigners, were attacked with pick axe handles and snooker cues, resulting in broken bones. Youth Defence marches were "stewarded" by hired goons, complete with rapped knuckles.

The music paper Hot Press ran an exposé on Youth Defence, following which the editor, Niall Stokes, had a concrete block thrown through

WSM Policy Statement on Abortion Rights

1. Why we believe in a "woman's right to choose"

The WSM is entirely opposed to women's oppression. Women's biology, pregnancy and child-bearing have copper-fastened their inferior position in capitalist society. This has been extended so that they are also stuck with child rearing and child-minding within the family. Therefore women's access to work, education, leisure and any chance of self-advancement has been strictly limited. This is especially true for working class women.

Women have always tried to control their own fertility. Anti-abortion laws have resulted in back-street abortions and induced miscarriages. World-wide, one woman dies from a back-street abortion every three minutes. Winning full control over their own fertility is an essential step towards ending women's oppression. The technology has been developed under capitalism to make this both safe and possible. Women must have the right to use this technology to decide if and when to have children.

We support a woman's access to full, free and safe contraception. If she finds herself pregnant but does not wish to have a child then she should have access to free, safe abortion on request.

2. What do we mean by a woman's right to choose?

We believe in real options and real choices for women. A woman who wants to have a child shouldn't have to spend the rest of her life looking after it. This is why we favour the option of full child-care provision paid for by the state, maternity leave and flexi-time for working, public crèche facilities and restaurants. The present role of many women as full-time unpaid childminders within the family must be ended.

A woman who finds herself pregnant and does not wish to remain so should have a right to free, safe abortion on demand. This is not an abstract political slogan, we don't go around shouting "free abortion on demand" in the belief that it can only be gained in the context of a socialist revolution. We believe that it is merely one of the basic first steps in freeing women from the constraints placed on them by capitalism.

Our argument for abortion rights rests on women's right to control their own fertility. The quality of a woman's life can never be made equal to that of an unborn foetus. The foetus is totally dependent on the mother; it cannot be said to have an independent existence. To give it such rights (as per the Irish constitution) reduces women to the status of breeding machines or walking wombs. Just as an acorn can become an oak tree, a foetus can become a human baby. But a foetus is no more a baby than an acorn is an oak tree.

However, politically, there is little point in entering debates on "when does life begin?" or viability of the foetus. Our arguments must focus on a woman's right to control her own body.

3. The current legal situation

In 1861 abortion was made a criminal offence in Ireland. This was still the case in 1983 when the anti-choice lobby got the government to hold a referendum which amended the Constitution to give equal rights to the "unborn". This is the 8th Amendment.

In 1992 the High Court granted an injunction preventing a 14 year old, pregnant as a result of rape, from travelling to Britain for an abortion (this was the X-case). The WSM was centrally involved in organising protests of up to 10,000, which led to the injunction being withdrawn and a major shift in public attitudes towards abortion.

In the same year two referendums passed, which amended the Constitution to protect the right to travel and to have information about abortion services abroad. A third option, to exclude suicide as a life-threatening risk which would legally justify abortion, was rejected.

In 2002 voters rejected another constitutional amendment to allow abortion where a woman's life is at risk from pregnancy, but not suicide, by 50.42% to 49.58%.

No legislation has ever been enacted to allow for the very limited grounds established by the X-case. To legalise abortion in any other circumstances first requires a referendum to overturn the 8th Amendment.

4. The situation today and the strategy of the WSM

(a) The anti-choice and religious fundamentalist groups are losing support, all major opinion polls show a majority of voters prepared to permit abortion in at least some circumstances.

(b) The major political parties want to ignore the issue, using the availability of abortion abroad as a 'safety valve'.

(c) The number of people active in the abortion rights movement will be small until the possibility of a referendum to repeal the 8th Amendment becomes apparent.

(d) We favour uniting all who will work for repeal – with the proviso that the explicitly pro-choice position be represented, along with more limited views, on all platforms.

(e) The building of a visible pro-choice movement is a vital part of the 'battle of ideas' that will see eventual legalisation.

(f) The movement should be primarily based on the needs of working class women: for free, safe & legal abortion provision as part of the health service.

(g) In Northern Ireland we call for the enacting of the British 1967 Abortion Act.

(h) Real choice means being able to end a pregnancy or have children without suffering major economic or social costs. We call for:

- The provision of a guaranteed minimum income, housing and childcare facilities for all women who continue their pregnancies and keep their children.
- A supportive attitude to all women who decide to opt for adoption, and recognition of the rights of women and children in this position.
- Provision of non-directive pregnancy counselling to all who require it.

(i) The struggle for abortion rights is part of the struggle for more liberty; men as well as women should be involved.

5. Choice Ireland

(a) We have been an active part of the pro-choice movement since our foundation. Recently we helped to form Choice Ireland.

(b) We will argue within Choice Ireland for it to continue being an agitational and outspoken advocate of a woman's right to choose.

the back window of his car. The "pro-life" movement which had been careful building up an acceptable middle class image were horrified and attempted to disown the organisation. However mud sticks and Youth Defence became a graphic example of the threat of Catholic fundamentalism. This was later compounded in 2002 when its leader Justin Barrett was exposed as speaking alongside Hitler worshippers at neo-Nazi rallies in Germany.

The ATGWU and SIPTU ran a joint campaign within their own unions calling for a "Yes, Yes, No" vote. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions released press statements opposing the government wording on abortion and produced over 150,000 leaflets arguing their case. Unfortunately years of centralised bargaining had left the unions with little activist core to draw on, many of these leaflets never made it out of their wrapping paper. However it was indicative of the change that had occurred when two of the biggest working class organisations could take a strong position without any resistance from their own members.

> *"a victory that dared not speak its name"*

In the end the electorate voted Yes to Travel, Yes to Information and No to the substantive issue. What did this mean? Considering that no "pro-life" group called for a "Yes, Yes, No" vote and "Yes, Yes, No" won, it's likely that the majority of the vote on the substantive issue was for liberal reasons.

However it was impossible for many commentators to say this. On one hand political parties such as FF and FG contained both sides of the argument within their ranks. A politician would run the risk of alienating half of his party if he claimed victory for one side over another. On the other side many liberal commentators were unable to identify themselves as pro-choice. Instead of calling a spade a spade they stumbled over awkward phraseology. Rather than accepting this as a win for the pro-choice side it was for 'those forces with a pro-women perspective'. It was a victory that dared not speak its name.

Previous to the referendum the Irish Times was warning "if the politicians who so vociferously criticised the FF wording do not revert to the issue…it will pass". Yet the politicians did ignore the referendum and the wording did not pass. It is the view of many liberals that politics is for high profile players only, politicians, judges, journalists, professionals and bishops. The Irish people are only capable of looking on.

> *"Home rule is Rome rule"*

In the previous 12 months the Irish people had changed politically. They voted for a woman's right to information on abortion, they voted against a distinction between a woman's life and a woman's health. Yet just one year before the popularly held opinion among those fighting for abortion rights in Ireland was that we'd be lucky not to lose abortion information never mind a referendum on abortion itself. We were on the run. So what caused the change?

In general, the make up of Irish society had changed. Emigration had slowed down, with many young people returning to Ireland believing it better to be unemployed at home rather than in London or Manchester. An IMS poll for the Sunday Independent on February 23rd 1993 showed clear differences in attitudes to issues such as abortion and divorce along age lines.

While 74% of those aged 18-34 thought the Eighth Amendment should be scrapped, the figures were 60% for those between 50-64 and 50% for those over 65. Many emigrants were returning from more secular countries and their attitudes on these issues reflected their experiences abroad.

With fewer US visas and rising unemployment in Britain in the early 1990s, emigration was no longer an easy option. Ireland was no longer exporting its most energetic and idealist youth. Young people who thought they could get out when they finished school or college found themselves staying at home in a country where there was still some truth to the unionist cry of "Home rule is Rome rule". But they had a new sense of what they should be entitled to. They took to the streets in support of X, and to show they would not meekly accept the clerical domination suffered by their parents' generation.

A second difference in Ireland was the movement of people from rural communities to urban areas. Within cities and larger towns, there are more opportunities to meet people with different experiences and a greater variety of ideas. People were not as bound by the ties of tradition.

The third and very important factor was the "X" case. This not only horrified many people but also for the first time identified a pregnant woman as more than just an incubator for a foetus. The reality of what it meant to deny women the right to abortion was made clear. X put a human face to what had seemed an abstract issue.

Useful contacts

Irish Family Planning Association
60 Amiens Street, Dublin 1.
Tel: 01-8069444
www.ifpa.ie

Choice Ireland
choiceireland@gmail.com
www.choiceireland.blogspot.com

Cork Women's Right to Choose Grou
cork.womens.right.to.choose@gmail.com

Safe & Legal
http://safeandlegal.blogspot.com/

2001 saw a dramatic initiative announced. The Dublin Abortion Rights Group (the new name of DAIC, which reflected the win on information and a new confidence about the possibility of winning the argument for abortion rights) and the Cork Women's Right to Choose Group invited the "abortion ship" to visit Ireland. Moored outside the three mile limit, it would provide abortions for Irish women.

Women On Waves was a Dutch based group of doctors, nurses and women's rights activists who had hired a ship and installed a medical facility. Dutch law would apply to the ship while it was in international waters. And the result of the travel referendum would make it hard for the state to prevent women going out to the ship.

This was a big story. Newspapers gave it the front page. Spokesperson, Dr. Rebecca Gomperts was on the Late Late Show. The whole country was talking about abortion. On the pro-choice side there were those who felt that this would be like waving a red rag at a bull and the likes of Youth Defence could seize the ship or beat us off the streets. Others, the majority, saw it as moving from the defensive to a proactive outgoing type of campaigning.

Only when the ship pulled into Dublin and tied up by the Ferryman pub on the south quays, did the Irish organisers learn that a permit required under Dutch law had not been secured. Without this, insurance for patients would be cancelled and there could be no question of providing any medical services.

It was a big let down, and everyone was angry at the Dutch for not telling us about the lack of a permit. It made the ship look like a publicity stunt rather than a real challenge to the government. Much more seriously, desperate women who had turned to the ship for help because they could not afford a journey to England had to be turned away.

Because of the public nature of the ship we had not expected many women to contact us seeking abortions but over 300 people contacted us. This astonishing number graphically illustrated how many women with crisis pregnancies have huge difficulty raising the money to travel abroad.

Only tiny protests by Catholic fundamentalists and lone nutters materialised in Cork and Dublin. There were no bomb attacks, no marches, nothing of any note from the anti-choice side. They hadn't gone away but they were a pale shadow of what they had been ten years earlier.

The pro-choice side, on the other hand, had put abortion rights back on the agenda, got 10 days of pro-choice articles into the media, shown the particular issues affecting working class women and demonstrated that much of the violent fanaticism of the anti-choice extremists had withered.

> *"fifth referendum in less than twenty years"*

The anti-choice brigade was demanding yet another referendum to overturn the X-case ruling, lest any suicidal woman might seek an abortion. In 2002 the government gave them their fifth referendum in less than twenty years. The people who had worked together during the ship's visit managed to bring together a wide range of liberal and left groups in an 'Alliance for a NO Vote' to oppose this.

Opposing us were Fianna Fáil and the Catholic Church, historically the two strongest forces in Irish society. With a general election due a couple of months after the referendum the other political parties kept a very low profile, not wanting to alienate any potential voters.

Practically all the canvassing, leafleting and postering around the country was done by the Alliance. With a budget of just £15,000 from fundraising, the ANV ran a very visible campaign, and one that did not shy away from the 'substantive issue' of abortion. The vote was extremely close, just over 10,500 votes separated the two sides, 50.42 per cent voted No, while 49.58 per cent voting Yes.

A strong urban and rural divide was evident, with the urban areas strongly rejecting the proposals. Constituencies which rejected Fianna Fáil's proposal included those of Bertie Ahern and then Health Minister Micheal Martin.

We had stopped them turning back the clock but, as a WSM statement for that year's International Women's Day celebrations said "Nothing will change for women who are not judged suicidal unless there is a real movement demanding the provision of abortion facilities for any woman who wants one in Irish hospitals. Irish Anarchists will continue to be at the forefront in building this movement".

2007 saw the struggle joined by a new grouping which united a new group of younger people with those who had been active since the 1980s. A meeting hosted by Labour Youth, and addressed by speakers from the Labour Party, Workers Solidarity Movement and the Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group, saw a new pro-choice group come into being. Choice Ireland set itself the initial task of exposing the bogus pregnancy advice service calling itself the Women's Research Centre, and also organised the daily solidarity protests outside the High Court during the Miss D case (as described in the introduction to this article).

The WRC, which operates from 50 Upper Dorset Street in Dublin, is run by Christian Solidarity Party members but advertises itself as if it provides abortion information. Instead, they try to stop vulnerable women considering abortion by telling lies such as "having an abortion would increase their risk of developing breast cancer, becoming an alcoholic and abusing children". Choice Ireland produced hundreds of stickers for use in the immediate area with warnings about the WRC's real purpose. They have also drawn attention to the WRC's lies with protests, leaflets and media coverage.

It is unlikely that there is going to be a sudden political will to change Irish abortion laws. Commitments made by political parties to legislate along the lines of the X case usually evaporate as they get closer to general election time. As Dr Mary Favier has written in this magazine "any change to allow for suicide risk and foetal malformation would involve only a very small change in the law and would not substantively affect the lives of Irish women seeking abortion. The Labour Party has supported such a change in the law, if they were returned to government. They argue that this is all that can be achieved now and is thus better than nothing. It serves their private expressions of a pro-choice position while publicly sitting on the fence.

Pro-choice activists need to be cautious about being drawn in to any broad alliance of support for such a limited legal change. Doctors for Choice would argue that this is a mistake as it continues to deny the reality of the 7,000 women travelling to England every year. At all times this issue should remain the focus of any campaign to change the law. Scarce energy and resources are better spent on creating an acceptance of abortion as a reality in Ireland. Any campaign should start with where it means to end – Irish women have a right to access abortion services in Ireland and the law needs to be changed accordingly".

Ireland still is a conservative country; the Catholic Church has been historically intertwined with the southern state. The majority of its citizens belong to the Catholic Church. Catholic ethos was enshrined in the constitution, in the laws, and in the education system. Catholic tentacles made their way into most areas of public policy.

A sea change had occurred on the emotionally charged issue of abortion. As anarchists we are committed to changing the present system. This will only occur when the working class no longer accept the legitimacy of capitalism. It is frequently argued, usually by those with a blinkered knowledge of the past that, it is impossible for society to change in such a fundamental way.

Yet societies do change. People do break from the fixed ideas of the past. The human race is not inevitably stuck in a rut. What happened in Ireland in the 1990s is proof of that.

Ireland's Safety Valve

Between January 1980 and December 2004, at least 117,673 women travelled from Ireland for abortion services in Britain. There are no statistics to account for the number of women who travel to other countries for abortion services. (Figures from UK Department of Health)

Book Review: "Sweatshop Warriors: Immigrant Women Workers Take On The Global Factory"

(continued from Back Cover)

La Mujer Obrera and the Korean immigrant Workers Advocates' Workers Organising Project have plenty of lessons for all involved in the fight against global capitalism.

The strongest message that this book gives is that that battle against global capitalism is almost always a series of local battles. "When these immigrant women workers were confronted with the big picture of sweatshop exploitation, to paraphrase labour agitator Mother Jones, they didn't just get mad – they got organised." In the Ireland of 2008, sweatshop conditions such as those described in this book don't exist. But with the increase in immigration to Ireland in the last number of years, there is no doubt that wage rates have been driven down and exploitation and abuse of workers' rights has increased exponentially. Small skirmishes against that exploitation have taken place – the most high profile being that of the GAMA workers in 2005 (see **http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=463** for details). Many more of these battles face us, and the stories of the immigrant workers detailed in this book give heart and guidance as to how these battles might be won.

Because the subjects of this book are women, they found themselves contending not alone with the exploitation of their bosses but also with the demands of the patriarchal society in which they live. Some of the women interviewed migrated to the USA before their families and worked to make the money to bring their families after them. In other cases, they followed their families. All of them have unique stories to tell but all of them have faced common hurdles. As well as providing an income for their families they have had to deal with the challenges of childcare, cooking, cleaning etc. Yet they have overcome all of these challenges to establish their own organisations most of which are run by women and all of which have a majority of women members. The challenges they have faced and the issues they have had to deal with have not alone been issues of exploitation in the workplace but have often involved challenging some of the sexual stereotypes which they have come across in their communities.

There is no blueprint for how exploited workers might organise themselves to fight back. To some extent every battle is unique. But there are also plenty of lessons to be learnt from those battles which are fought, especially those which are successful. All workers in Ireland took heart from the tremendous fighting spirit showed by the GAMA workers. The lessons learned in that battle will be used by other groups of workers in future struggles. Belatedly, trade unions here are at last starting to wake up to the need to get serious about the organisation of immigrant workers. But what this book shows is that it is the self-organised community and labour groups which will take the battle to the bosses – and that often the official trade union leadership can get in the way just as much as be of assistance.

This book is a refreshing and informative read, and should serve as an inspiration to all of us to trust the human spirit and to believe in the dignity of the fight-back. It is also a call to arms – a challenge to take up that fight wherever each of us might be. The author sums it up, "Listening to the women speak cannot be an act of consumerism. Seeing them fight for their rights cannot be an act of voyeurism. Listening to the women means returning to the source, to the heart of what today's struggles for justice and dignity are all about. Just as the women have stepped forward, pushed themselves harder, and struggled to take on new challenges with oh-so-scarce resources, so each of us is called upon to do the same, wherever we may work and live, with whomever we consider our sisters and brothers, co-workers and community. We must ask ourselves individually and collectively what we are doing to challenge the pyramids of oppression we face. Turning down the volume of the elite's chatter, we must train our ears to listen harder to hear the vibrant voices and lyrical leadership of grassroots folk on the bottom, the foundation rock of mass movements…"

Book Review Sweatshop Warriors:

Immigrant Women Workers Take On The Global Factory

by Miriam Ching Yoon Louie.
Published by South End Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Reviewed by Gregor Kerr

This book was published in 2001 but 7 years later its strength still lies in its simplicity. Throughout, it seamlessly alternates between the direct testimony of the 'Sweatshop Warriors' themselves and analysis of the growth and spread of globalised capitalism. It gives voice to "immigrant women workers who are barred from rooms where deals get cut…who get punished for telling the truth; who are asked to speak only as victims…" And by giving a platform to these too often unheard voices, the book demonstrates that self-organisation is the key to successfully fighting back against the exploitation and abuse faced by those at the bottom of the economic ladder.

"Luckily for us…", writes the author – who herself has spent over thirty years working in various solidarity organisations thus gaining a unique insight and access to the people she writes about – "…these workers are chiselling through thick walls of censorship to make themselves heard. They are organising themselves in workers' centres, creating their own groups when the labour or community organisations that already exist fail to meet their needs. Contrary to conventional wisdom that leans heavily on white and/or male academics, these women are the real experts about the inner workings of the global economy, labour markets, and immigrant communities – speaking to us from the bottom of the sweatshop industry pyramid."

Even for those already familiar with the nature of capitalism, and aware of the even deeper exploitations attached to globalisation and the growth of sub-contracting, this book's stark and vivid description of the "pyramid of labour exploitation and profit generation" is useful. The manner in which huge US retailers such as Wal-Mart, K-Mart, etc. and designers such as DKNY are able to wash their hands of any responsibility for labour conditions and wages in the factories in which the goods they sell are made, the way in which they can pit sub-contractor against sub-contractor thus driving wages down even further, the way in which the sub-contractors themselves can pit more established workers against newcomers and 'documented' workers against 'undocumented' – all of it contributes to painting a picture of exploitation as stark as it is possible to imagine. Two statistics quoted in the book's introduction sum it up: "Garment workers in Los Angeles…each produce about $100,000 worth of goods in a year, but are paid less than 2 percent of the total value. For a dress that retails for $100, $1.72 goes to the sewer, $15 to the contractor, and $50 goes to the manufacturer." "In 1960, CEOs made 41 times their average employee's wage; in 1990, 85 times; but in 1999, the gap sky-rocketed to 475 times."

With its descriptions of the horrific labour conditions endured by its subjects, this book could easily have become depressing and downbeat. But far from it. The women interviewed and featured in the book are living testament to the human spirit and their stories of fighting back against the exploitation they are forced to live under are a source of encouragement to all who would fight for a fair and just world. Chinese immigrant women garment and restaurant workers in New York, Mexican immigrant seamstresses in El Paso, San Antonio and Los Angeles, Korean immigrant women restaurant workers in Los Angeles' Koreatown all speak to us directly of the experiences that shaped their need to get active and fight back. The experiences of campaigns organised by these women such as the Garment Workers Justice Campaign of Asian Immigrant Women Advocates,

continued overleaf ...