



*Gluaiseacht* for global justice

NEWSLETTER - AUTUMN 2012



*Guess it's going to have to be us*

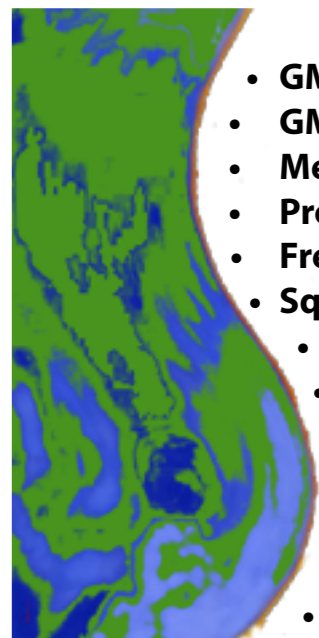
Gluaiseacht is a non-hierarchical environmental and social justice movement bringing together grassroots organisations, concerned individuals and student groups from all over Ireland to raise awareness and take direct action on social, environmental and political issues. We're a diverse group, a loose campaign and skills network who share a vision of a democratic and sustainable society.

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We are currently living in very interesting times. At the start of October, the Government announced that they plan to sell the harvesting rights of 7% of the land in Ireland for the next 50 to 80 years to the highest bidder. This will be done by selling off parts of Coillte, along with this they also plan to sell off parts of Bord Gais, Aer Lingus and the ESB. It's not too long ago that all the services of these state companies were viewed as of strategic importance to Ireland. Now these are all being sold off to service a debt which was placed on the shoulders of the Irish people mainly to bailout failed private financial institutions. That all this has come about without ever being put before the people of Ireland to decide on which course to take, in my view this means that Ireland can no longer be viewed as a functioning democracy.

John Perkins, author of "Confessions of a Economic Hitman" previously worked closely with the IMF and World Bank creating economic reports which would then be used in mounting a campaign of colonising the selected country for private interests. Towards the end of the book, Perkins quotes a woman from the Andes saying "The world doesn't need to be saved. The world is not in danger. We are. We humans. If we don't change our ways, Mother Earth will shake us off like so many fleas". The recent drilling campaign by Shell in the Arctic shows us that the people in power across the world haven't changed their ways and are not heeding the many warnings. Instead they see the fact that the Arctic sea ice has hit it's lowest level ever recorded as a opportunity to extract more fossil fuels. It is therefore up to us, all of us to try to be the change we want to see.

Ireland has been very poorly served by the media during the Celtic Tiger years and even more so since the economic recession kicked in. I suppose that it probably never was served too well bearing in mind George Bernard Shaw's comment "Newspapers are unable, seemingly to discriminate between a bicycle accident and the collapse of civilization". As is becoming increasingly clear the vast majority of media is not there to serve any public interest. Rather farcically it is the same media commentators who we hear today, that had so little critical to say as Ireland dug itself into the social, environmental and economic hole that it is currently in. Critical thinkers such as Richard Douthwaite (RIP) or Fr Peter McVerry and many others who foretold of the dangers of the path that Ireland was and is on, have largely been ignored. We, therefore need to create new and different models for spreading information on social justice and environmental campaigns and this newsletter is an attempt to do that. The aim is to publish articles and points of view that are rarely published in other print media.

Thanks to everyone for all the articles for the newsletter. It's great to see the work and analysis that's going on. We're hoping to put out a Gluaiseacht newsletter every few months so if you have any comments or suggestions for future articles we'd love to hear from you at [gluaiseacht@riseup.net](mailto:gluaiseacht@riseup.net)

Eoin  
Gluaiseacht

## GM: People Get Ready – They Are Coming For Your Life.

by Michael McGaughan

As Teagasc carries out a GM potato field trial in Carlow, it is worth reflecting on a couple of related issues in India, the country where GM giant Monsanto has worked hardest to win the battle for the right to grow genetically modified objects.

India's Green Revolution, launched in the 1970s, segued directly into the GM age and was based on the assumption that technology is a superior substitute for nature and thus a means of ensuring growth unconstrained by nature's limits. The proponents argue that nature is a source of scarcity and technology a source of abundance. However the GM issue is not simply a question of proving or disproving a scientific theory - it is about a vision of self reliance versus dependency.

Over the past four decades as Indian agriculture experienced a 'Green Revolution' (GR) with hybrid seeds and constant chemicals, over 250,000 farmers have taken their lives. In the Punjab region, this science-based transformation of agriculture through 'miracle seeds' should have produced food abundance and community wellbeing. Instead, the GR delivered discontent and violence, diseased soils, pest-infested crops, waterlogged deserts and indebted, unhappy farmers.

As Ireland opens up a much needed debate on GM it is important to listen to the GM lobby. In a presentation before the Joint Oireachtas Committee On Agriculture (2/7/08) Professor David McConnell from Trinity College, Dr, Charles Spillane (NUIG) and Professor Fergal O'Gara from UCC outlined their vision of GM in Ireland. There is no reason to think that their opinions have changed since then and it is worth quoting at length; 'The safety and value of those (GM) crops has been borne out by more than ten years of commercial plantings of GM crops on a massive scale worldwide without any adverse effects on health or anything else.'

It is the 'or anything else' which sends a shiver up the spine, reminds us that the doubt-free path of scientific certainty is akin to religious faith, its results trumping



**GM is an industry which has no popular support, no public rallies, no benefit gigs, despite claiming it can help solve the global poverty crisis.**

the lived experiences of millions of farmers worldwide.

This blissful doubt-free zone is usually just a step behind 'the facts'- ah, here they come.

'The facts are that 40,000 people will die today from hunger. Our colleagues around the world from the leading scientific authorities in the developing countries ... are convinced that GM technology has a major role to play. I will give the committee one slightly curious example.

Some 70% of the cotton in India is now GM cotton grown by small farmers. It greatly affects their standard of living and their ability to feed their families...The majority of GM crops have been developed to improve our health and livelihoods. No one has died in 38 years of this technology because of GM.'

### No one has died?

If anyone argued in this sweeping manner 'from the other side' they would be dismissed as cranks or homeopaths but when the blessings of scientific certainty arise, infallibility is duly conferred.

This presentation before a parliamentary committee would be alarming in itself, aris-

ing as it does from years of taxpayer-funded research in TCD and NUIG and UCC, but the compliance of Teagasc delegate Jimmy Burke, comes perilously close to a conflict of interest.

Burke of course has a legitimate, indeed vital interest in the GM debate, on behalf of Teagasc, (the Irish Agriculture and Food Development Authority) which must maintain an open and curious mind on all aspects of agricultural knowledge.

***“On a balmy midsummer’s day in June 1998, former Environment Minister John Gormley, self sufficiency guru John Seymour and many others tore up GM crops in a field in Wexford, signalling that citizens would not tolerate GM interference in the food chain.*”**

However the following statement by McConnell, one of the academics present, leaves no room for doubt; ‘We are joined in this delegation by Dr. Jimmy Burke of Teagasc, the director of Oakpark research centre and he will make a separate statement. We have discussed this matter in detail with him and he supports our main advice.’

The ‘main advice’ is the urgent and overwhelming need to allow GM crops into Ireland on the same terms as in the US, where regulation has been virtually absent. ‘GM technology is highly regulated and it is safe. It is valuable for farmers, for food processors and for consumers. It should be as available to Irish farmers, processors and consumers as it is in many leading agricultural countries, notably the United States, Argentina and Brazil.’

The point was hammered home again and again; ‘The idea of a GM-free island of Ireland is impossible...We should seek the opposite; to bring the process of approving GM technology in Ireland more or less into line with the way it is approved in the US, Brazil and Argentina. We should introduce GM technology whenever it makes scientific, environmental and economic sense.’

The manner in which GM technology has been ‘approved’ in the US involves bribery, intimidation, blackmail and falsification of

‘scientific’ evidence. This isn’t my opinion, it is the outcome of exhaustive research, legal opinion and court cases arising from the silencing of scientists and the suffering of communities on the receiving end of illness allegedly caused by GM.

In the US lawmakers and judges have uncovered evidence of corruption at the heart of the GM approval and regulation process, a familiar commercial and political practise exerted by any billion dollar lobby, whether it is selling the health enhancing properties of tobacco or the benefits to tourism of oil exploration. The proposal that Ireland adopts a similar regime to the US is akin to inviting fracking companies to draw up their own safety guidelines, bomb the Burren with chemicals and then report back on the results in their own time.

The ‘scientists’ will argue that none of the 250,000 farmers in India, supposedly enjoying a miracle crop of GM cotton, died directly from these crops. And they are right. Suicide by GM remains difficult to prove ‘scientifically’. The link between a switch to GM cotton and hybrid seeds and the resulting indebtedness, dwindling yields, rising costs, corrosive sense of shame and stigma of failure, all played out in a small community, does not constitute, as yet, a crime.

The corporate GM lobby has, as one activist in India told me last year, ‘taken a lot of back seat’, defeated by popular pressure, as evidenced by BASF’s recent decision not to continue with plans for GM expansion in Europe, even though it had received the required permissions.

The GM PR lobby now works quietly through academics and state research bodies, like Teagasc.

On a balmy midsummer’s day in June 1998, former Environment Minister John Gormley, self sufficiency guru John Seymour and many others tore up GM crops in a field in Wexford, signalling that citizens would not tolerate GM interference in the food chain.

Teagasc has carefully avoided some of the pitfalls associated with previous attempts to introduce gm crops to Ireland, claiming it has no connection to any of the commercial GM interests and no interest in making money from its findings. Remarkably it is

Teagasc which also funds the work of the Irish SeedSavers Association (ISSA), a critical safe haven for Irish GMO free seeds.

The GM lobby, working primarily through academics and politicians, enjoys a platform largely insulated from public debate and popular pressure. There are no public fund raisers or public meetings to win support for their position. I recently directed a radio documentary about seeds and seedsaving in which the issue of GM crops arose. It wasn’t the principal focus of the programme but once India’s leading scientist on the issue, Dr Pushpa Bhargava, had raised the issue, it became relevant to the programme.

In Ireland I asked around for names of people who could argue the case for GM in a convincing manner. I found two individuals with a long track record of GM research, eloquent and passionate about their work. Neither of them would speak on the record. Or if they did, they wanted to revise the entire script first. It is only fair to brief interviewees on the content of a programme, outlining the main speakers, the thrust of the argument etc but quite another to allow them exclusive access to everyone else’s contributions. Once I had mentioned Dr Vandana Shiva, a leading physicist and environmental scientist, the interviewees blew up as if I had told them a holocaust denier was going to be framing a debate around the Second World War.

It is time for the GM believers to come out of the lab and into the light, to meet the public, to share their good news with us, beginning perhaps with first hand testimony from India, giving an opportunity to some of the thousands of allegedly happy small farmers to express their gratitude for the miracle GM has wrought in their lives. ENDS



## GM: Lessons from the Past

In 1999, author of “The Guide to Self-Sufficiency”, John Seymour (RIP), then 84 years of age, was prosecuted by Monsanto (along with 6 other campaigners) for ripping up genetically modified sugar beet in Co Wexford.

John Seymour stated ***‘...if a government does not take action to protect its citizens from serious danger, is it not reasonable that the citizens should take action to protect themselves?’***

***If an army of Normans landed again at Baginbun [Co. Wexford] and started looting and destroying I should expect the Irish army to go and try and stop them. If it did not then I should feel it my duty to go and try and stop them myself, if not with a pike then at least with a pitch fork and I should do so.***

***And when a huge multinational corporation comes and starts planting completely untested and untried genetically mutilated plants in the country where I have made my home, and the government agencies which are supposed to be there to protect us from that sort of thing fail in their duty, then I feel it not only my right but my duty too to do something to try to stop them.***

***And if I have to go to prison because of it then I will go with a good will, and make the best of it, and when I get out I will try to stop them again!’***

***“Never be afraid of being called a crank. Look up crank in the dictionary. It’s defined as a useful object that starts revolutions.”***

*John Seymour*

## Mexico Mágico, Mexico Trágico

### Irish-latina activist finding their way in new lands.....

by Nancy Serrano

The sunrise over the Chiapan mountains is most definitely a magic event, if you can catch a glimpse of it amongst the rising dancing mist of the cloud forests surrounding many of the little pueblos in the Altos of Chiapas, in Southern Mexico. Living at 2,000 metres in relatively cool San Cristobal de las Casas, I often forget that most of the nearby towns are bathed in sweaty heat day and night during the rainy season which lasts from May to October.

Zapatista-country...that's what some activists would mostly know about these lands. The infamous EZLN army (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional – National Zapatista Liberation Army) which marched into San Cristobal and various other towns in the region on Jan. 1st 1994 declaring certain areas autonomous. The indigenous peoples of Chiapas, after 500 years of being trampled on, had had enough. On that date, the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, came into force and opened up Mexican trade to corporate US and Canadians to shit all over them. The Zapatistas wanted to make it clear that NAFTA was not welcome in Chiapas along with many other Mexican right-wing Government policies which mostly lead to indigenous people getting poorer and the few wealthy lining their pockets. After years of negotiation, most of the agreements reached were never kept by the Government and so the Zapatista struggle still continues to this day. That's not really what brought me here though. I have many reasons but one of the main ones was to have first-hand experience and learn how social and environmental issues are seen and lived here, from a devel-

oping country's perspective, and because my family are Latin-American; I wanted to see if I'd like living here and learn about my own cross-cultural identity. I also wanted to learn more about permaculture and alternative technologies.

But why Mexico? My parents are from Colombia and Perú. I have no family here. I figured I'd start with the COP16 in Cancún in December 2011 and then maybe continue more south after some months. But low and behold, Mexico reeled me in and I'm still here.

So what have I learnt? What's activism like in another country? After most of my life in Ireland, it's quite a big change, not to mention the fact that seeing some of the complexly entwined social and eco-problems more face-to-face is a huge eye-opener. I have logically understood some of these issues from afar, but their immediacy and complexity hits home. In some ways, the world feels more real here...in the sense that the massive eco-socio problems we are causing in the rich countries are being lived out here on a daily basis by the poorer more vulnerable people which are a majority here. There's none of that delayed effect. It's here and now. I feel it's easier to act because you can't ignore the problems so easily by saying "climate change will affect us in the future" or "It's in some distant country so it's not my problem". Especially here in Chiapas, one of the poorest regions of Mexico, there is no denying the daily hardships and persecutions that many indigenous people live just to give us in the northern countries our food, our cars, our lifestyles.

I'm learning slowly, and learning patience from the indigenous peoples' long-term outlook in this struggle. These problems didn't start yesterday, and they ain't going away tomorrow. We're definitely in this struggle for life, for many lifetimes actually. I'm starting to think that wanting to see serious changes in my lifetime is actually quite egotistical, and being in for the long-term intergenerational haul is more realistic and helps me grow patience and stamina!

There isn't a lack of issues to get involved in, from illegal logging, to Canadian mining companies trashing virgin territories, the farce that is bio-fuels with huge African palm plantations being included under REDD+



programmes (supposedly to mitigate climate change but with severe consequences for local people). Chiapas is rich in biodiversity, minerals, hydro-systems and culture, and the Mexican and foreign elites are eternally making land-grabs to make a quick buck without a thought for local peoples' rights.

As an eco-activist, it's a different kettle of fish here because the context is so different and the consequences are higher. Mexico is well known for its human rights abuses, although the north is much more dangerous than the south due to drug and people trafficking over the US border. Mexican activists can easily be imprisoned for years or abused by the police/military at protests. Foreign activists if arrested will be deported. Even writing an article lightly criticizing some government activity could get you deported here though! I myself wanted to get more involved in permaculture while here and after almost a year volunteering in different projects, I landed a job with an edible school gardens project. Now I'm up to the gills doing school visits and teacher training which is great (and I get to work with a few autonomous teachers which is pretty cool!), although I do miss the more direct campaigning and want to look for ways to support that too if I can. It does scare me though as it's way more risky to be a front-line activist here, so my taking more of a back seat here is fine by me for now. I'm still getting my bearings after all.

There's plenty of opportunities for learning from others as San Cristobal is a buzzing hive of activist activity! Since the uprising in 1994, many national and foreign activists centred attention on this region due to the international call-outs and gatherings organised by the Zapatistas. This has brought some great independent projects

to the area, as well as all sorts of other in-betweeners from self-perpetuating NGOs to spiritual hippies to growing wannabe-eco tourism. All colours of the rainbow pass through here...it's a transient place for all the good and bad that brings with it.

***"I'm learning slowly, and learning patience from the indigenous peoples' long-term outlook in this struggle. These problems didn't start yesterday, and they ain't going away tomorrow. We're definitely in this struggle for life, for many lifetimes actually."***

But what are the Zapatistas up to now? They are still going strong though with lesser numbers, and not as open to outsiders coming to visit them as before. With so much government and corporate spies trying to infiltrate them, they've become more cautious. It's not all romantically perfect either. There's things I'd disagree on how the Zapatistas act, like how much coca-cola they drink as do all people here, but there's much more to admire than criticise. And who am I to point the finger with many polluting flights under my belt. It's still possible to visit some of the organisational hubs, but getting involved with some projects takes some more time as people here want to know who you are first before opening their doors.

It inspires me daily to think that I'm living right beside completely autonomous zones, beside people who despite all the severe hardships that it brings, have decided to say enough is enough to the government and live by their own rules, through their own means, relying on their communities and lands for most of their needs. There are other autonomous groups too....they aren't all Zapatistas, but the Zapatistas have inspired a lot of them to keep going or new ones to spring up. The reality that many people live here is a harsh one. Yet there's a surreal sense of magic too....their courage, their perseverance, their sense of community, their joys and sorrows all bind them together. Some have already taken a step into creating that other world many of us dream of and are fighting for....community autonomy, having control over our own lives and trying to live more sustainably with mother nature. ENDS



Long live autonomous education

## Protest or permaculture?

by Paul

### You can fix all the world's problems in a garden

*"You can fix all the world's problems in a garden... You can solve all your pollution problems and all your supply line needs in a garden... and most people actually today actually don't know that and that makes most people very insecure"* - Australian permaculture designer Geoff Lawton.

Lawton's statement was made while narrating a video showing how permaculture - a design system for creating sustainable human habitats - rehabilitated a patch of hopeless looking desert to grow fruit. For millions of people permaculture design and ethics are a revelation and Lawton's statement rings true. Where we are masters of our own destiny much of what is stopping us from living personally sustainable lives is down to our own bad choices. Bill Mollison - co-originator of the permaculture concept - describes the phenomenon thus: *"It's curious that we never apply what we know to how we actually live"*.

If every one's ecological, social and economic problems were just down to poor (or lack of) design, then Lawton's assertion would be pretty accurate. But for most people his statement must be offensive - it seems like it could only come from a background of freedom and access to resources.

### Banished from the garden

Lawton's statement doesn't consider oppression and deprivation. What if GM pollen contaminates your crops and Monsanto sues you for patent infringements? What if Shell gets a Compulsory Acquisition Order over your land to lay a pipeline through it? What if there is an invasion and settlers kick you out of your home (and garden)? Permaculture tells us that these are unnecessary and unsustainable developments, but it doesn't hold the answers for how to stop them. If we just want to improve resource management then permaculture is the one-stop shop. But if we want to change who controls resources then we need politics, protest and direct action - the rich and powerful won't just go along with plans that reduce their interests and influence.

### Patrick Whitfield to the rescue

Thankfully the ecological movement doesn't neatly divide into permaculture and protest. In *The Earthcare Manual* - the text book for many permaculture design courses - author Patrick Whitfield is open to options when dealing with GM: "Solutions to the problem of genetic engineering must be more political in nature. Since profit is the motive we can completely undermine it by refusing to buy genetically engineered products. Consumer boycotts have already had a significant effect on slowing down the development of genetically engineered crops. Direct action, including destroying the crops in the field, can also be effective."

Right on Patrick! Permaculture isn't a religion that bans political activism, protest or direct action. All it is, is an holistic planning and design method with the ethics of sustainability at its core. In the same way that science doesn't cover higher philosophical questions, permaculture isn't too concerned with politics, not because politics isn't important but because it exists higher up the hierarchy. Permaculture needs some resources - especially land - to be put into practice. It's politics that decides whether or not you'll ever have access to that land.



### A winning combination

So should we just protest until we get things sorted politically and then practise permaculture? I don't think so, because we already have a lot of freedom and resources and with those come a personal responsibility to use them as well as we can. Besides, any revolution dependent on the system it aims to challenge won't get very far. Self reliant groups are better equipped and can better afford to challenge power. There's nothing to stop us from using permaculture principles in designing our protest camps or in organising our campaigns. Neither permaculture nor protest can solve the world's problems in isolation but where both are valued then the fighting, resilient communities of the future could emerge. ENDS

## Free Education For Everyone – Fighting for our Right to Education

by Senan Mac Aoidh

Free Education for Everyone was launched in 2008 in universities throughout Ireland to fight the rising costs of education and the looming threat of full blown university fees. FEE is now active in all of Ireland's main universities, including University of Limerick, University College Dublin, Trinity College, Dublin, NUI Maynooth, University College Cork, NUI Galway, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology, Queens University Belfast and Derry City. FEE has been in the limelight, bringing attention to the struggle of students for free education through its spectacular protests, most notably its occupations of politicians' offices and government buildings and blockades of universities at the visits of government ministers.

FEE is essentially the Irish expression of an international students' movement that is combating the neo-liberal attack on our right to education. The student struggle is inherently tied up in the international fight back against a failing and increasingly aggressive and ruthless capitalist system that is attacking the working class in all areas of life, including education. Student revolt has been erupting in countries all over the world in recent times. In Chile students have rocked the entire state with countless marches that have been attended by hundreds of thousands of people. The Chilean students movement has formed links of solidarity in the fight for social justice with workers, the indigenous Mapuche people and the LGBT community. Camila Vallejo, a young Communist Geography student, the leading spokesperson of the Chilean students' movement, describes the aims of the movement, "We do not want to improve the actual system; we want a profound change; to stop seeing education as a consumer good, to see education as a right where the state provides a guarantee." While Quebec has seen "the largest act of civil disobedience in Canadian history", led by the radical students movement CLASSE, with 300,000 students on strike from their classes at the movement's height. CLASSE have been extremely effective and have forced the Liberal government, along with their anti-student and draconian laws, out of office. In Ireland, like many other countries, the wants of capital have to be fulfilled by the public, i.e. we students are paying for the bailout of the banks. This has to stop. The capitalist

system has nothing to offer us and wants to take all at the expense of poorer students who struggle to gain access to third level education. FEE therefore is an anti-capitalist organisation and sees the future of education as free, democratic, emancipatory and without corporate control. The situation regarding education in Ireland is a dismal one. Costs are rising and third level education is increasingly becoming a privilege of the wealthy rather than the widely accessible right that it should be. Every few years since the 'abolition' of fees in 1996, the government has attempted, or made mention of, the reintroduction of fees in a variety of forms: full-fees, deferred loans, graduate tax etc. In recent years, the registration fee charged has increased dramatically, e.g. from €900 to €1500 to €2000 to €2,250. Increases in the registration fee have been cloaked in a claim 'at least you don't have to pay full fees'. Coupled with this has been a reduction in the block grant for third level institutions. The intentions of the major austerity parties (FG, FF, Labour) are quite transparent: a transfer of the cost of third level education from the state to the individual. At the moment third-level fees are planned to rise to €3000 by 2015. The maintenance grant for post graduate students has also been scrapped as part of the governments continuous onslaught, what amounts to a sacrifice that will only benefit the rich. The abolition of post-graduate maintenance grants is a maneuver which flies in the face of establishment



propaganda about “smart economies” as does the fact that Irish universities are only afforded 60% of the funding of their EU counterparts and since 1996 the proportion of exchequer income spent on education has dropped from 19% to 16%; given these statistics it is not hard to see why Ireland is a lowly 27th out of 31 OECD countries when relating education spending to wealth(GDP). Of course, third-level education is not the only public educational facility that is being sacrificed, primary and secondary students are also unjustly bearing the cost of capitalism’s failings. Increased school transport charges, cuts to English language teachers for newcomer children and the planned closure of smaller primary schools are all direct attacks on those in primary and secondary education and their families. All of these attacks on the right to education will have disastrous effects long into the future. What we are talking about is the neo-liberal restructuring of education, the state is withdrawing its responsibility to citizens, and the only thing that will stop this regressive assault is our own mass action and organisation.

**“The government has given billions of tax-payers’ money to fund un-secured bondholders. This is robbery and it shows that the government are liars and only care about protecting the interests of the rich.**

FEE is determined to stop the gombeen government and their cronies in their tracks. We intend to form an alliance of forces to fight for our right to education, engaging with campus trade unions and others to maximise the anti-austerity cause in response to government attacks. We are far more than an anti-fees campaign and we recognise the university as a site of class struggle. Attempts by government politicians to convince us that there is no other choice but to cut back on education must be defeated. The government has given billions of tax-payers’ money to fund un-secured bondholders. This is robbery and it shows that the government are liars and only care about protecting the interests of the rich. Contrary to claims by the establishment, vast wealth exists in Ireland. According to figures from Credit Suisse and the CSO, the richest

5% in Ireland (180,000 people) own €220 billion, or 47% of wealth. This highlights the potential of, and urgent need for, a wealth tax to fund services and move towards a more equal society. The richest 5% also earn over €18 billion per year and pay less than €5 billion in tax. To cover the cost of higher education (around €2 billion), the effective tax rate on this group would have to be increased to less than 40%. The government must accept that third level education is a public resource and a right that should be funded through taxation on those in society that can afford to pay. We also need to reclaim our oil and gas resources which amount to at least €420 billion. FEE will not rest in its mission to organise the resistance to capitalism’s assault on our right to education.

Beirimis Bua!

ENDS

### Squatting in Dublin *by Bobby*

When my housemates-to-be and I first met we discussed squatting as if it was a viable alternative to paying high-rent. Many people told us that squatting was illegal, or simply impossible, but with so many derelict and empty properties we decided it was worth trying.

We moved into our first house in 2010, which was Georgian mansion in Dublin City. During our first night the Gardaí arrived - it turned out our neighbor didn’t want squatters next door. We stayed put while the Garda shouted profanities, shone a spot-light and generally threatened us. I was worried as we had very little knowledge of the laws and no other experience to go by. Eventually they left and it seemed like a great victory. We spent the week talking with neighbors, openly coming in and out, and began to make one part of the large building quite comfortable. At the end of the first week, early in the morning, a large Garda and council presence arrived and gained access. The council claimed ownership, three out of eight of the people occupying the building were arrested. The rest of us waited outside the Garda station and handed in reading material for the arrested squatters. The important thing in this situation is to say nothing to the Gardaí. You must give your name and address if arrested or threatened with arrest – unless you want to give false details, a separate ‘criminal offense’ - but should reply ‘no comment’ to every

subsequent question. Eventually, each of the cases was dismissed in court. This first occupation was bold as it was in a central, historically important street, and in a large, potentially beautiful property. It was also allegedly owned by the Dublin City Council.

**“If the state cannot provide for the safe and secure housing of the most vulnerable in society, then we should rightfully occupy and squat empty properties**

Completely undeterred we continued. The next house was in Dublin 7, a derelict. We had a sympathetic neighbour and with the space lasting three months we found a comfortable and safe home with a good group of people from vastly different backgrounds. It was in this house I was first arrested. After a week or so of living there, I was alone one evening and opened the door to what I thought was a friend, I found myself staring at three Gardaí. After a lengthy back-and-forth conversation with the Gardaí, I quickly discovered they had about as much knowledge on the subject and legal status of squatting as I had. In a regretful tone I was told I was being arrested for ‘trespass’. I was charged with Section 11 of the Public Order Act; trespass with intent to commit a crime or trespass with intent to unlawfully interfere with the property. That night we learned not to open the door to people we didn’t know, or to the Garda. The case was dismissed in court. In the end, the ‘owner’ of this house was contacted by someone who knew him, informing him of our living arrangements. We agreed to leave when he told us he wanted to commence building work – which he never did - and agreed to give us time to leave. In a positive manner, we began to look for a new home.

Our third home is one which many people came to recognise. We lived in a thriving community on a main street on the North-side. We lived here for a year, known and supported by many neighbors, even local businesses and the local Gardaí knew about us. During this year we built strong links with others, locals, people from around the island and even outside of Ireland. Many people had lived here, from migrants with no where decent to stay, to students, to badly paid workers. One common experience was our negative interactions with the state;



whether it is social welfare, the Gardaí or the courts etc. However, it was a unique and rich experience. We became an autonomous, active group, practising self-reliance and were involved in various actions; opening new spaces, involving ourselves in solidarity actions and participating in various protests. We had a portfolio of properties all over Dublin – which still exist in many people’s heads, and a network of sympathisers ready to help.

In Dublin, there now exists a small but thriving squatting community, with several buildings being occupied at any given time – each different from the next. It’s not always a first or easy option, and sometimes spaces don’t last as long as you hoped they would. Sometimes it’s difficult and challenging, other times it’s inspiring and empowering. But the more people who occupy and squat, the bigger the support network and resistance to evictions is. As the time of writing an unknown fate awaits 300 asylum seekers in Galway due to the threatened closure of Lisbrook House. People in Ireland are clearly experiencing financial difficulties, and are either being chased by banks or being harassed by landlords, we rejected both. If the state cannot provide for the safe and secure housing of the most vulnerable in society, then we should rightfully occupy and squat empty properties, especially state-owned, bank-owned and NAMA properties. Simply put, every human demands a decent home, and squatting is a temporary solution to long-term or permanent arrangements.

**Squatting is an option for anyone, anywhere. To help, the first edition of a squatter zine has been produced by some squatters in Dublin. It is very useful in explaining various techniques, also giving tips and advice. The best place to find this zine is in Dublin’s autonomous social centre, Seomra Spraoi.** ENDS

## Whiddy Island Oil terminal - What benefit?

by Conor McCabe

On 6 May 1969, the Taoiseach Jack Lynch officially opened the Gulf Oil terminal on Whiddy Island in Bantry Bay, Cork. It was situated on 350 acres of land which had been purchased from local people on the island at a cost of £120,000, or just over £342 per acre. There was no harbour authority for Bantry Bay and the county council's jurisdiction ended at the quays of Bantry itself. This meant that Gulf Oil did not have to pay any harbour or tonnage duties, nor was it answerable to any local or official body. The Irish State happily ceded control of Whiddy Island and Bantry Bay to Gulf Oil, who could do as it pleased with the area. Not surprisingly, that is what it did.

The main suppliers of crude oil to the terminal were Kuwait and Nigeria. The senior vice-president of Gulf Oil, Dr Jerry McAfee, said at a press conference in Dublin in April 1966 that the company had set three criteria in its search for a suitable site for its new terminal. It 'had to be built alongside very deep water offering a draft of more than 80 feet. It had to be fairly near the company's European refineries and had to be suitable for operation seven days a week and 365 days a year.' Bantry Bay and Whiddy Island met all these requirements. Not only that, as the Irish government pointed out, Whiddy Island was 'virtually the only location near the company's European oil refinery in a sheltered bay with sufficient draft of water to ensure all-the-year-round operation of the huge tankers which will bring the oil 11,000 miles around the Cape of Good Hope from Kuwait'. And at £350 an acre, no harbour fees, and no interference from local authorities, it represented an unbelievable bargain. This was, quite simply, a giveaway.

During the eighteen months of its construction, the Whiddy Island project employed nearly 1,000 people, and contributed an average of £30,000 a week to Bantry's economy, making the town for that period one of the most prosperous of its size in Ireland. 'Unemployment has virtually ceased to be a problem', wrote the Irish Times, 'emigration has been cut, emigrants who had been away for years have come home; shops, pubs and hotels have been opened or restored.' However, the locals were a lot less sanguine

about the prospects offered by the terminal. 'There'll be a lot of unemployment when the construction is finished', said one of the locals. 'People here are keeping their fingers crossed that something else will come about.'

The terminal upon completion provided direct employment for around eighty-six men. 'When the Whiddy Terminal is fully operational', wrote The Irish Times, 'it will be run by three teams of twelve experienced oilmen and a group of twelve men will be employed on maintenance. A further twenty-four men will be employed on tugs, fourteen will be on standby.' It was reckoned that around twenty men would be employed in ancillary industry. With just over a hundred jobs as a result of the terminal, and with no actual revenue from the terminal itself, the boon to Bantry came first of all through the construction of the terminal, and there afterwards from the wages of the employees.

**//**  
***The Whiddy Island terminal is but one example of a multinational which entered and exited Ireland with all but the tiniest of imprints on the wider economy.***

A pattern was forming, one that would repeat itself over the next forty years. The initial boom in construction and ancillary services caused by the arrival of the multinational corporation was followed by relatively low levels of direct and indirect employment, with equally low rates of taxation and local rate payments due from the company. This meant that the low number of waged employees were virtually the sole contributors to the local economy.

At the same time the social, economic and environmental impact of such an industrial policy helped to undermine efforts to develop indigenous industry based on the resources of the State. With regard to Whiddy Island, this was seen in the treatment of the local fishermen by Gulf Oil, and the numerous setbacks to the attempts to expand Bantry Bay's shellfish and herring



***The burning wreck of the 'Betelgeuse' which exploded at the Whiddy Island oil terminal in 1979 with the loss of 50 lives.***

industry – one that, at its height, employed more men than the terminal.

From 1968 to 1979 there were thirty-three oil spills recorded at Bantry. On 21 October 1974 over 650,000 gallons of oil were pumped into the bay after a 16-inch valve was left open for thirty minutes by a seaman on the tanker Universe Leader, which was loading a cargo of Persian oil for a refinery in Spain. It was, up to then, the largest ever spillage recorded by Gulf Oil, and the company waited eight days until making the story public. The terminal's stock of 20,000 gallons of dispersant was used up after four days, and one week after the spill the company said that an estimated 325,000 gallons of oil remained in the bay.

The disaster led to an immediate review of procedure and thirteen new precautions were put in place to ensure that this type of accident would not happen again. 'We are going through all other procedures asking ourselves is there some way some particularly incompetent or malicious person could circumvent something or cause something to happen', said Mr Herbert J. Goodman, chairman of Gulf Oil's trading company. 'We are going to revise our system to make that impossible.'

On 10 January 1975, two months after the Universe Leader incident, a tugboat collided with the 210,000 ton Afran Zodiac while the tanker was being prepared for open sea. One of the Afran's side plates was fractured, releasing 115,230 gallons of heavy fuel oil

into the bay. The Minister for Transport and Power, Peter Barry, immediately announced his intention to press ahead with a harbour authority for Bantry Bay. It came into effect in October 1976.

On the morning of 8 January 1979, the terminal suffered its greatest disaster when the oil tanker Betelgeuse caught fire and exploded with the loss of fifty lives. The salvage operation was delayed due to the toxic fumes which surrounded the wreckage. Over one million gallons of oil was subsequently released into the bay.

Although the government had established a harbour authority for Bantry Bay, it was soon revealed that it had no power to enforce safety regulation in the bay. The necessary legislation was never fully put in place by the government, despite having been passed by the Dáil. Gulf Oil had been allowed to continue its self-regulation with regard to Bantry Bay, despite the oil spillages and safety concerns; it had been allowed to continue to use the bay essentially for free, and it did had done so with the blessing of successive Irish governments who had used the parliamentary authority of the Dáil as cover. The terminal, which was seriously damaged in the Betelgeuse explosion, was not repaired, and in 1986 it was taken over by the State.

The Whiddy Island terminal is but one example of a multinational which entered and exited Ireland with all but the tiniest of imprints on the wider economy. The motifs which were used by the State to justify

tax incentives and capital expenditure on foreign investment echo through the years: low wages are better than no wages; modest jobs are better than none; guarantee the profits and the benefits will trickle down; either way, there is no alternative. Indeed, successive Irish governments embraced each and every one of these assumptions about Irish economic life. Even when they were presented with alternative strategies and achievable goals, they simply offered to believe there were none, finding comfort in the realities of their assumptions, rather than the reality which embraced them.

The continuity in direction lies with the middlemen – the businessmen who act as intermediaries between foreign capital and the resources of the State. In the case of Bantry Bay and Corrib, Navan mines and Kinsale, the resources are physical. With regard to the IFSC and finance capital the resource is the ability of the Irish state to make its own tax laws. The effect of this 'middleman' business model on the Irish people has been utterly devastating. However, until it is recognised as such it will continue to destroy both the natural and human resources of our country, protected by the manta, There Is No Alternative.

[ Dr. Conor McCabe, School of Social Justice, UCD, is a historian and author of the 2011 publication, *Sins of the Father: Tracing the Decisions that Shaped the Irish Economy.* ]

Suggested further reading:

- Robert Allen, Robert & Tara Jones, *Guests of the Nation: People of Ireland Versus the Multinationals* (London, 1990)
- Chris Eipper, *The Ruling Trinity: A Community Study of Church, State and Business in Ireland* (Aldershot, 1986)

ENDS

**Google - Winner of the  
"We're all in this together" award**

**Google Ireland paid only €8 million in tax last year despite making €9 billion in gross profit. This is effectively a tax rate of 0.089%. This is done by claiming to have administrative costs almost equaling its profits. The profits are then routed via Holland to Bermuda**

## Occupation in Erris *by Betty Schult*

Below are quotes from my neighbours, family and friends about their experiences, thoughts and emotions over the past 10 years of living with Shell in Co Mayo.

- When I go and check on my cattle at night, torches light up and shine in my face.
- I wake up in the middle of the night because a jeep full of private army personnel had landed on my car park.
- I go to my local church and find the car park is full of paddywagons and patrol cars. When I ask why they are here, I'm told that's none of my business
- When my wife hangs out the washing she realises she is being filmed.
- I need to visit my elderly client. A policeman insists on driving me there in my own car.
- Strangers come here and know everything about me while I will never even know who they are.
- I come home at night and the boss of the security firm pulls away from my driveway.
- I worry when I've a squad car sitting behind me on the road when I'm driving along by myself or with my mother.
- My post has been tampered with
- When I talk on the phone I'm always aware someone might listen to the conversation
- Private security men direct the local traffic

### It's always there- It occupies all senses:

- I built my house so that we can see the beach and the Ocean from every window. Now what we see is military style fencing, flood lights, cameras, watchmen.
- I feel cut off from the outside world. Swarmed on all sides and no way out... claustrophobic.
- I close my curtains so the constant glare from the flood lights does not get in.
- I have to keep the radio on all the time to blank out the noise from the machinery.
- When I close my eyes I see engraved on my retina the picture of men and women wearing a uniform the colour of high vis yellow, jackets, white helmets and black masks.
- I see the police, security vans, construc-

tion vehicles whenever I leave the house, going to the shop, to the doctor, or to work.

- I wake up from loud rumbling outside my house: the convoys of Lorries have started to come.
- My stomach is in knots. My blood pressure is too high.
- I have nightmares
- When I leave Erris for a day, I feel relieve, less anger, happier thoughts cross my mind.

### Loss of freedom, arbitrary arrest, arbitrary judgments, arbitrary abuse.

- The police pushes me back from bringing my wheel bin to the roadside
- The police stop me from leaving my car park.
- I travel home from a swim. Out of the blue the police stop me, flashing their blue lights and search my car.
- I always lock my doors of the car when I'm driving anywhere local, I wouldn't do that in Dublin city centre
- My family wants me to move away because they fear for my safety
- A sense of powerlessness
- I realise that I cannot protect my family from this.
- When I took my granddaughter on her first train journey, she asked me why the men in yellow jackets also rule the train station .
- I'd like to go cycling canoeing, walking but I can't bring myself to face the security installations.
- When I do go, I'm constantly aware that I'm being watched and monitored. I cannot enjoy these activities any longer.
- I see a crime being committed and the police arrests the victim, not the perpetrator
- I meet Vans with blacked out windows on the village road all the time
- Media blank outs.

### Loss of trust

- My elected representative lies straight to my face
- I experience hostile response from authorities
- I witness the judge in court not batting an eyelid when listening to blatant perjury by police.
- Looking at recent media reports about the surveillance of people here makes

me realise that Shell's occupation of our environment is regarded as a given fact.

- What was always there, making up our community is now being claimed by the multinational company: the beauty of the landscape, the spirit of community and volunteerism, love of sports, fishing grounds, skills, resources.
- Sometimes I feel like crumbling under the raw sense of loss.

This brutal change of our lives has been forced on all of us. Nobody can escape the reality of what happens when a multinational company succeeds in manipulating a government, when greed and recklessness seem to rule.

But: Occupation is never permanent. To live under siege might feel like a nightmare that is smothering us.

But it is not.

It seems like a thick layer of oppression was spread out over the community. But underneath this layer there is life: Resourcefulness. Words, music and colour. Laughter and loyalty and friendship Resistance!

There is strength and an awareness which creates resilience and change. We feel a real urge for change and a spirit of renewal that not just sustains us but that we can share with others. Sometimes we feel weak and tired and muddled. But really, we are not. We are strong and determined and clear!

Occupation can never last.

ENDS



*Shell security march out to secure Glengad beach*



## Good Protester, Bad Protester

by Erris

The recent farmer "Day of Action" in Dublin led to broadly positive newspaper coverage including such titles as "Enormous show of strength and masterclass in peaceful protest" in the Independent. The Independent doesn't treat all protesters with such warmth. Take for example an article on Corrib protesters again from the Independent which was entitled "Banish these troublesome, preposterous protesters out to sea, not the refinery".

In this article I will examine how protesters are portrayed by the Irish media. What, in their eyes makes a "good protester" or a "bad protester". Every case is different and each press has its own bias.

So what is a good protester? Is it someone who is local to the area, who protests peacefully without breaking the law? Or maybe someone who has no history of being in trouble with the law previously; someone who's a victim of circumstance - their livelihood has been threatened, or whose land/job/health/family are in jeopardy?

And is a bad protester someone who is not local, has come into an area possibly from abroad looking for trouble. Is it someone who's potentially violent? Do they have a history of being in trouble with the law, are they a "drifter" or a "crusty"? Someone who lives outside society yet gets all the benefits of social welfare?

So why is it that two people who engage in the same means of protest can be treated completely different by the press? To start off we must examine the external bias of the media. Who influences the decisions of the media? The view of the average peo-

ple of Ireland; would be a lot of people's first response. However I would argue that most people are influenced by the media just as much as they influence the media. The next category is the government, and finally people of wealth an influence ( e.g. multinational corporations).

***"Why are those who are protecting their own, and only react when destruction is on their very doorstep, seen as good protesters?"***

We can clearly see why the government would promote these two stereotypes. To them a good citizen is someone who complies with the law. Who has a job, house, wife and family and only when these are threatened does he march on the streets with a banner displaying his outrage...but at the end of the day he goes home.

***"Why are people who help their neighbours overcome a problem that will not directly influence their lives seen as bad protesters?"***

People in positions of wealth and power particularly corporations of course have their own agendas. They, like the government want to see people complying and being a good consumer. So they get richer. They don't want to see an increase in people living alternatively to or questioning the system as it would undermine their power.

And what's to be said about your average Irish person? Well to be fair Ireland is still quite a conservative country. Most people simply cannot relate to the above description of the "bad protester". A lifestyle

of squatting, lock-ons, benders, dumpster diving and permaculture is simply worlds away from most people's day to day reality. The speculation that these people leech dole money off the state, and engage in "protest tourism" again reinforces their mistrust. Without doubt violence (whether it be directed at a person or property) is vastly different from methods of protest most people would be comfortable with.

It seems to me that a protester is seen as "bad" if they are seen to be an outsider of society. Now let's examine this concept of an "outsider". For as soon as the concept of society emerged, so did the concept of outsiders or those who were cast out or opposed to society. So long as the existence of society there has been people not playing by its rules or simply people who don't fit into that system. So emerged the idea of separation, the concept of "them and us".

For me some very important questions emerge from this reflection. Why are those who are protecting their own, and only react when destruction is on their very doorstep, seen as good protesters? Why are people who help their neighbours overcome a problem that will not directly influence their lives seen as bad? Do we have to rely on those who are seen to be outside society, to inform us when we're going wrong in society? Solidarity is looking out for ones fellow man, and working together with others with common interests. This idea of separateness is the single most destructive concept to our planet.... Is it not funny that a group seen as separate work in solidarity?

ENDS

## More Farmers, Better Food! – An update on Food Sovereignty in Ireland

by Sian Crowley

Food sovereignty was developed by global social movement La Via Campesina during the Food and Agriculture (FAO) World Summit in Rome in 1996. It puts agricultural producers and consumers at the centre of the social and political debate on food, and supports all peoples in their right to produce and consume food which is economically, ecologically, socially and culturally appropriate to local conditions, with the aim to empower people at a grassroots level to define their own agriculture and food systems rather than being subject to international market conditions.

A group of seven people from Ireland, three of whose travel expenses were funded by Gluaiseacht, attended the first Nyéléni European Forum for Food Sovereignty in Austria in 2011. We are now at a time when the European Commission is preparing the draft laws for the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which is one of the biggest trade agreements in the world. Thus, the conference's purpose was to formulate a collective grassroots response to the main challenge facing agriculture today: how to sustainably develop small-scale farming and how to maintain the socio-economic and cultural fabric of rural areas in Europe. Nyéléni has become essentially a civil society movement to represent the grassroots: producers, consumers, community, youth and women's groups, environmental, social justice, trade and development organisations, as well as being a platform to facilitate direct communication at an EU institutional level.

On 7th March 2012, almost exactly six months after the conference took place, European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) and Nyéléni Europe organised a public conference on food sovereignty called 'More Farmers, Better Food' in Brussels. The conference focused on the future of the CAP and food sovereignty and was designed to bring the outcomes of the forum to the EU institutional level. The conference was hosted by the Committee of the Regions – the EU's Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives – and there a **short documentary** 'European Nyéléni Forum for Food Sovereignty' was screened and the **Synthesis Report and Action Plan** from Austria 2011 was distributed. Both the **Synthesis Report**



Irish farmers park their tractors in Merrion Square during a protest in Dublin



A lock-on protest on a road used for Shell haulage in Mayo



New Ad from ArticReady.com

and the **Film** are available for download on the website <http://www.nyelenieurope.net/en/> and are highly recommended.

Here in Ireland, we are making slow but steady progress in developing a strong nation-wide food sovereignty network, and envisioning what our own movement might look like. In February of this year, at the Cloughjordan farm CSA conference in Tipperary, we held a successful meeting widely attended by a diverse group of interested people including farmers, consumers, development and community workers, members of NGOs among others, on developing an Irish food sovereignty network. We discussed how we need to develop a concept of food citizenship rather than food consumers and examined how we could relate food sovereignty in a way that would encourage the movement to be part of an expanded notion of Irish Civil Society.

This meeting established a nation-wide network of people interested in and committed to food sovereignty in Ireland, broadening the conversation out to a much wider group of people than previously. Our hope for the coming months and into 2013 is to create the space to engage in dialogue with different parties about what food sovereignty actually means, and what it might look like in an Irish context. This means not only engaging at the grassroots level with focused environmental interests, but seeking to engage with conventional farmers, consumer and community organisations, and policy makers. We are back in action for the winter months, so please get in touch if you are interested in any aspect.

Throughout 2012, there has been a balanced interaction at both the European level and the Irish level. In April Nyéleni Europe and La Via Campesina International sent a call for a day of solidarity for International Day of Peasant, and a number of groups at various Irish locations held their own acts of solidarity. More recently, the colourful Good Food March to Brussels took place, which called on groups all across Europe to 'march' to Brussels by September 19th, when a day of actions and demonstrations took place to demand a more fair and sustainable CAP. For those who could not travel, a brilliant photo action was designed, where anyone could write their demands for their desired food system on an A4 card, have their photograph taken with it, and upload it on to the campaign's website. The photo campaign has



been so successful that it has been extended and it is still possible to participate, so if you would like to look at the photographs already taken or participate yourself, please visit <http://www.goodfoodmarch.eu/>

The next important event on the European food sovereignty movement's calendar is Urgenci's meeting on Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) and other distribution systems for food sovereignty taking place from 10-12 October 2012 in Milan. The CSA model is gaining support throughout Ireland, with examples popping up throughout the countryside and around cities alike, and marks the beginning of a paradigmatic shift in the way we relate to agriculture and sustainable food production, whether we interpret this as being food sovereignty or not.

#### **For more information:**

If you would like to join the email list to hear about what is going on within the Irish Food Sovereignty Network, volunteer to help out developing materials, or simply participate in the conversation, email: [foodsovereigntyireland@gmail.com](mailto:foodsovereigntyireland@gmail.com)

To subscribe to the Nyeleni International newsletter, visit: <http://www.nyeleni.org/> The current edition is Cities and Food. ENDS

## Political Courts

by Robbie

I was brought up with the view that the courts we have in Ireland are about truth and justice. That courts are about finding dishonesty or wrongdoing and holding that person to account. That the higher up the court system you go the more likely you are to get better justice. This view is reinforced every day in the media. But through actually attending courts, I now see this view as mostly incorrect.

I have seen numerous campaigners get up on the stand and swear earnestly and defiantly that they are going to tell "the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth". And then obvious truths being thrown aside by the presiding judge in favour of a more politically convenient judgement.

Now I view the judicial system that we have in Ireland is primarily a system that is there to serve the rich getting more riches. The list of priorities that I have witnessed seems to go something like this; 1 – protect the legal system; 2 – protect the state; 3 – protect business and elite interests 4 – get something approaching justice if 1, 2 or 3 aren't threatened, and make a lot of money doing it.

### Judicial Appointments

In the current system in Ireland, the Government selects the judges. This obviously ensures that close connections between the judges and political parties continues. This policy, which most other European countries have moved away from, has even been recently criticised by Chief Justice Susan Denham. In a recent interview on RTE with Charlie Bird, retired Judge Michael Pattwell admitted to approaching a Fianna Fail minister to get himself appointed as judge. Charlie Bird of course tried to pretend that was a thing of the past saying "Things have changed in the court system particularly, that wouldn't be counted now". However Michael Pattwell was having none of it saying "It hasn't changed, not at all". He continued "I'm not playing politics here, you look at every judicial appointment since the current coalition went in and you mark down behind them their political leanings, connections, they're all Fine Gael or Labour, so things haven't really changed". Of course, Judge Pattwell sees that the political patronage system works pretty well saying "All I know is that, with very

few exceptions, the system worked and very good people got onto the bench. And particularly under Fianna Fáil".

The higher up in the court system you go, the more politically indebted are the judges. The status quo has served them very well and they will do all they can to preserve that status quo and to quash any thing that they view as a threat to their system. The head of the Commercial Court Judge Peter Kelly recently stated that the appointments to the Supreme Court are "purely political".

**//**  
***If your political campaign is about truly challenging the status quo and hampering the rich getting richer then more than likely your political campaign will be appearing before the courts. Just don't go in thinking it's all about truth and justice.***

Last year, when Labour TD Anne Ferris was making a push to get a woman appointed as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, she stated "As it stands now, judicial nominees generally come from such a varied background as that of the wealthy, middle aged white man schooled in Clongowes, all the way to the wealthy, middle aged white man schooled in Blackrock". This statement is by and large true and tells us all we need to know about who the court system will be used to protect and serve.



**The statue of Lady Justice at Dublin castle is missing the usual blindfold indicating impartiality**

Similarly in the US, I don't see the make-up of the US supreme court as the much vaunted great divide between liberals and conservatives, rather it is a grouping of nine rich and privileged individuals that will primarily act in their own and their peers interests.

### Juries

It is clear that the authorities and indeed the judges don't trust juries to make the right decisions in political cases. In the Pitstop ploughshares trial, the jury acquitted five Catholic Worker Movement members of doing \$2.5 million worth of damage to a US army plane as their disarmament action had been reasonable. In Mary Kelly's case when she admitted damaging a US army plane, Judge Carroll Moran directed the jury, "If people are allowed to give expression to their political views by damaging property it would not be long before there would be mob rule and rioting in the streets." Judge Moran also refused permission for Mary Kelly to argue why she had reasonable excuse in damaging the plane. Mary Kelly was convicted in 2004. In 2011 this conviction was overturned when it was found that Judge Moran had misdirected the jury.

More recently it is clear from the handling of the protests against Corrib gas that the authorities don't want these cases being heard before jury trials. To avoid this Gardaí and the DPP are charging people with relatively minor public order offences that are kept at District court level and thus dealt with by a judge alone. In one case involving a prominent Corrib campaigner, a District Court judge refused jurisdiction for the case as it was alleged that a Garda had been injured in an assault, and so it was sent to the Circuit court. However, once there, the case was dropped as the campaigner could have opted for a trial by jury. The one Corrib case that has come before a jury (the alleged minor theft gave the campaigner the option of a jury), was thrown out half way through the case under direction from the Judge, when it was clear that no jury would find the defendant guilty.

### "If I have to send every farmer to jail, I will"

In 2005, when jailing the Rossport 5, then President of the High Court Judge Joseph Finnegan stated about his order to let Shell on their land, "if ignored then society breaks

down. If you insist then I can impose imprisonment and fines, for example hundreds of thousands of euro per day. I have no hesitation in having farms sold. If I have to send every farmer to jail, I will because I have made an order". When Rossport farmer Philip McGrath asked, "Who will guarantee our safety?", the all knowing and powerful Judge stated, "I can, because the pipeline can be laid but it won't work". Four years later, in 2009, when planning permission for the pipeline finally came before An Bord Pleanála, they ruled that the Rossport section of pipeline was "unacceptable" on safety grounds. That the senior judge in the High Court would give Shell the go-ahead to lay their pipeline even though no permission had ever been produced to the landowners, shows how far Judges will go to protect business interests. That he would even go so far as to threaten to jail other farmers who were not even before his court on a dodgy order is disgraceful.

### Operating within the Law

I feel that some political campaigners limit their possibilities by seeing the decision to operate within or outside the law as some sort of moral dilemma. Even when some people do come before the courts, they still somehow view the courts as a place where they can find some sort of vindication for their actions. In my view the courts are just a theatre, albeit a theatre with consequences, sometimes quite severe consequences. The Judge is just a rich person that was appointed by the powers that be. It's next to impossible that they have the same views on equality as me, so why would I be overly bothered by what they think. The only reason that I should be worried about what they think is that Gardaí, prison guards and the army will do what they say.

It should be remembered that most of what has been carried out in the bankrupting of this country would have been viewed as legal. Most of the pollution and destruction of the planet has been carried out broadly with the acquiescence of each country's legal system. If your political campaign is about truly challenging the status quo and hampering the rich getting richer then more than likely your political campaign will be appearing before the courts. Just don't go in thinking it's all about truth and justice.

ENDS

## Why fracking must be stopped

On the 26th of March 2010, the then Fianna Fail / Green coalition government, through the department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources announced that they were inviting applications for 'Onshore Licensing Options over the Northwest Carboniferous Basin and the Clare Basin.' The senior minister in the department at the time was Green Party member Eamon Ryan. Conor Lenihan (Fianna Fail) was the department's junior minister. On the day this invitation to the oil and gas industry was announced, Conor Lenihan stated: "Over recent months there has been renewed interest in targeting the natural gas resource potential of the two basins, which had been identified in earlier exploration. Finding and producing our indigenous natural gas resources is critical to enhancing Ireland's security of energy supply and reducing our reliance on imported fuels".



On the same day that the Fianna Fail / Green Party government made this announcement, Reuters published a story concerning the problems surrounding this industry with particular emphasis on problems in terms of water pollution. This article was just the latest in a stream of stories that were emerging for some time from communities and organisations all across the U.S. outlining the

by participants in No Fracking Ireland

trail of destruction this industry was causing as it moved closer to areas where people were living.

Almost a year later on February 14th 2011, Conor Lenihan announced "the completion of a detailed evaluation by his Department of the applications received for Licensing Options in the Northwest Carboniferous Basin and the Clare Basin." In offering the Licensing Options Minister Lenihan said that he was very pleased by the level of interest shown in the competition and by the quality of the applications submitted by the companies.

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One license was awarded to Tamboran Resources PTY Ltd for an area covering 243,635 acres in the Northwest Carboniferous Basin. Another license was awarded to Lough Allen Natural Gas Company Ltd for over 115,398 acres, also in the Northwest Carboniferous Basin. The last license was awarded to Enegi Oil PLC covering an area of 122,317 acres in the Clare Basin.

Between the three licenses awarded, vast areas of eleven counties in the republic are now zoned for exploration. Tamboran Resources also hold a license for exploration in Co. Fermanagh. Much of the area zoned is in the Shannon Basin Region and stretches from Fermanagh all the way down to Cork and Kerry. This area covers the natural drainage basin of the Shannon itself. Under the EU Water Framework, this area, its waters and ecosystems are supposed to be "protected", "enhanced" and "promoted" as a sustainable environment and as "quality" water resources. This ecosystem includes the rivers, lakes, canals, groundwater and surface waters of the region.

Over just a few short years in the United States, Canada and Australia, as onshore fracking for unconventional gas drew closer to inhabited areas, where there are water systems, aquifers and rivers, local communities began to suffer the consequences of this rapidly expanding industry. Reports of contaminated water in rivers, lakes and domestic water supplies were coming to light. As time moved on further reports of disappearance, sickness and death in wildlife and livestock were also being reported, as well as a rise and commonality of various illnesses, including various cancers and respiratory problems in people living in areas where unconventional gas extraction was taking place.

Since then, over the last number of years in the U.S. thousands of complaints have been lodged with the government, the EPA, public representatives, health authorities and the industry.

A massive billion dollar public relations campaign by the industry followed and many

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professionals and individuals who were outspoken about the effects of the industry were issued with gagging orders. Finally in the U.S. the national mainstream media began to pay some attention, and as New York State became the industry's latest target, the New York Times decided to devote a whole series of investigative articles to 'fracking'. This series was entitled 'Drilling Down'. One of these articles included leaked, insider emails describing the economics of the industry as boom bust, evidence of companies overstating gas deposits, other articles covered issues of land, air and water pollution, serious health risks, political interference, a crash in the value of land and housing, problems of toxic waste disposal, accidents and spills. The list goes on.

Because of the very nature of this huge, extensive and invasive industry, in the U.S. and elsewhere people's lives and the environment have been irrevocably ruined. Sadly for many communities all over the States, Australia and Canada the damage is already done. But because of these people

speaking out and standing up alongside others who are currently being threatened by this industry there is a global people's movement emerging right now to ban unconventional gas extraction.

In the U.S. some opponents to the industry say it is not possible to shut down the industry immediately - that this would take time. However it still is possible to stop it from spreading and being introduced elsewhere. The extraction of unconventional shale gas is inherently a contaminating, flawed industrial process. A mixture of up to 500 chemicals is used during the process. Eighty to three hundred tonnes of chemicals can be added to one to eight million gallons of water each time a well is fracked.

Scientists are still trying to find out which chemicals various companies are using during the process. This mixture of chemicals, sand and water is pumped down through aquifers at high pressure which fractures the shale and props open fissures that enable natural gas to flow out of the well.

Apart from chemicals being added to the water, scientists have stated that the process is also dislodging and mobilising naturally occurring radioactive compounds such as uranium, radium, and strontium, as well as other heavy minerals. Problems of water contamination mainly come from leaking well casings. In Josh Fox's new short documentary 'The Sky is Pink', the director explains how through leaked industry documents, the problem of leaking well casings for the industry has been known for some time and is, by their own admission, insolvable.

From information obtained from industry documents, Fox states that over thirty years, 50% of all well casings fail.

He goes on to say that there is a period for which we need these well casings to last, so that they do not allow our water to be



**In a scene from Gaslands, Mike Markham lights his tap water on fire**

polluted, that period of time is "forever" and this is one of the major problems that the industry will not own up to. In Europe and here in Ireland, the industry, aided by the EU and our government are

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trying to tell us that shortly the process to extract unconventional gas will be improved through regulation, more monitoring and better cement well casings. They are also claiming that very soon there may be fracturing which does not use chemicals or even water. As the industry, supported by government, scramble to sell us a non-existent improved process - what they fail to realise is that the problems surrounding this industry are not just about the technology or one aspect of how it pollutes. The problems caused by this industry are multi-faceted. Basically speaking, the problem is the industry itself, from beginning to end. Scientists have clearly indicated that the full effects this industry will have on people and the environment will not be known for years to come.

Not only will the industry cause irreversible pollution to our water, land and air through various stages of the process, it will also industrialise hundreds of thousands of acres of our landscape. It takes hundreds of trucks over two months to service one well. Tamboran propose to have up to sixteen wells on each well pad. A well pad can be up to five or six acres in size. They envisage having hundreds of pads all over the northwest, which would entail miles and miles and miles of pipes linking these pads. Once these wells have been drilled they are there forever. There is no 'fill them in and forget about it' option. These wells will continue to leak and release highly toxic substances for their entire lifetime.

The introduction of this type of industry on this scale, will threaten existing sustainable industries such as farming, tourism and renewable energy. It will also threaten the future supply of the country's domestic water. Plans are already underway to take water from the Shannon Basin region for the

Dublin metropolitan area. Unconventional gas extraction and the resultant local use of this fossil fuel will also threaten any hopes we have of meeting our carbon emission targets, and seriously undo efforts to reduce the growing negative impacts of climate change.

We will receive nothing beneficial from this industry apart from a few short-term, low paid jobs. The gas extracted will be sold on the global market to the highest bidder. In a recent article in the Irish Times it was reported that there is perhaps just enough shale gas in the North West Carboniferous Region to supply Ireland for a mere 12 years. Five county councils have called on the government to ban shale gas extraction in Ireland. Several countries, various states in the U.S and federal regions in other countries have banned or are putting in motion plans to ban the industry. The evidence is already there to support our united call for a ban on this industry. There is a vast amount of information available from various sources on the numerous, harmful aspects of this industry. This evidence includes peer reviewed academic research, documentaries, studies and investigations from health authorities and NGOs and most importantly the endless first-hand accounts of people living in areas where this industry is active.

Further info at [www.frackingfreeireland.org](http://www.frackingfreeireland.org)

ENDS

**No Fracking Ireland** is a grassroots movement of various groups and individuals peacefully campaigning, networking and lobbying at various levels to have this industry banned on this island. We believe that the actions of previous government parties and the present government by ignoring all the available evidence are putting the interests of the oil and gas industry before those of the people. Because of this we believe we must build a movement of people across this island to ensure this government do not allow the industry to proceed any further in the licensing process. We encourage others to join the anti-fracking movement in Ireland and get involved in whatever way they can and help us reach our aim. We believe that by banning this industry we are protecting Ireland's most important and vital natural resources, our land, air and water and in turn the health and future of our children for generations to come.

Some Gluaiseacht people are interested in exploring the possibility of there being an anti-GM camp or gathering around Carlow next spring.



If you are interested then please contact [gluaiseacht@riseup.net](mailto:gluaiseacht@riseup.net)

Some Gluaiseacht people are interested in linking up with other groups campaigning about fracking. If you want to get involved email [gluaiseacht](mailto:gluaiseacht).



If you are interested in helping out with the organising of a Gluaiseacht skill-share in spring 2013, we'd love to hear from you.

If you like what you read, have any comments or want to get involved in Gluaiseacht, we will be having a Gluaiseacht get together in the next few months. Everyone interested is welcome.

Email: [gluaiseacht@riseup.net](mailto:gluaiseacht@riseup.net)

[www.gluaiseacht.ie](http://www.gluaiseacht.ie)



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## GM Poetry Corner

### GM spud i do not love you

*by Kerr Pink*

i am so not in love with you  
gm spud,  
you break my heart  
you rancerous tumescent tuber,  
you might make some-one's tummy sick  
but not mine,  
oh i grind my teeth  
when i think of you,  
i will not be biting  
into your 'engineered flesh',  
or salting your chips in the chipper

plains spuds in their jackets  
with butter melting about them  
or plain spuds roasted with rosemary and  
olive oil,  
but you,

You're no plain spud,  
you've got your DNA cells all muddled  
Genetically Murky, i'd call you  
i can't trust you,  
for i don't know who you are?

Still,  
though i can't say you are upper class either  
i shall just have to not associate with you  
'you are not invited to dinner  
'you can leave your jacket on  
and i won't be taking you out  
- of the ground  
except to kill you

### GM Usurper *by Irish Cara*

GM spuddy buddy  
mama nature crys when she sees you  
your days and nights  
are in the wet earth  
wet with her tears  
at the usurper in her furrows  
her breast tumbled and heaved  
in upturned sods  
to make way for you  
scientific upstart