

WORKERS SOLIDARITY



Irish Anarchist Paper

No. 77 - Sept/Oct 2003
www.struggle.ws/wsm.htm

PDF version

The service charge con



Taking from workers to give to the rich

The service charges that are being brought in north and south of the border are part of a process of further increasing the proportion of tax paid by workers. The trend in global capitalism is to replace 'progressive' taxes (like income tax) with flat-rate taxes (like VAT, service charges, etc) to further shift the taxation burden from rich to poor. This is the policy advocated by the world bank, IMF, WTO and virtually all of the institutions of global capitalism.

In the south all through the Celtic Tiger workers' pay rises were never much more than the inflation rate. But at the same time the bosses were making super profits. This could be sold to workers because of cuts in the rates of PAYE tax which meant that at the end of the day we ended up with more money in our pockets.

The imposition of service charges (e.g. the Bin Tax) will take this money back. PAYE workers are giving the self employed and corporations tax breaks. And even within the PAYE sector low paid workers end up paying a greater proportion rela-

tive to more highly paid workers. Simply put, the service charges are all about shifting the tax burden even more onto the shoulders of ordinary workers.

Minister Martin Cullen has indicated that he hopes to get the bin charge up to 700 Euro a year. And we know that they hope to get other charges up by a couple of hundred as well. The key thing about these charges is that a millionaire like Tony O'Reilly pays the same as a cleaner or a bus driver.

Take two households. One has an income of 20,000 the other 150,000. For the household earning 20,000 paying out 900 euros in service charges is equivalent to an over 5% hike in income tax! For the one earning 150,000 a service charge bill of 900 euros is equivalent to a 0.6% hike in income tax.

So for many workers the introduction of service charges has wiped out years of take home pay gains due to cuts in PAYE tax. The rich have kept the benefits of these percentage cuts, ending up thousands or tens of thousands of euros better off. It's time to tell them where to get off.

Liberia: The myth of humanitarian intervention

Every so often the newspapers fill with stories of a crisis in some third world country. We see pictures on our screens of gunmen, starvation and suffering; inevitably we hear calls for humanitarian intervention. Over the summer, we were told of a crisis in Liberia. A brutal civil war, a corrupt leader, child soldiers, starving civilians: it seemed that the whole world was crying out for intervention by the US or UN.

The cries did not fall on deaf ears. 3 US warships carrying 2,300 marines anchored off the coast and the UN authorised a peacekeeping force to intervene to stabilise the country and enforce a ceasefire. On August 11, Liberia's president Charles Taylor stepped down, under pressure from the US. A peace deal was signed and West African peacekeeping troops arrived. Liberia has since disappeared from our TV screens. It would appear that the crisis is over and the foreign intervention has worked.

At least that is what you would think if you only knew about Liberia from newspapers and television. Unfortunately, the reality of the situation is entirely different. Unbeknownst to most of those who were appealing to the US to intervene, the US government has been actively intervening in Liberia for a long time and were directly responsible for the most recent humanitarian crisis.

Liberia, founded by freed slaves from the US in the 19th century, has always been a client state of the US. They have intervened covertly to replace Liberian governments that they didn't like on a number of occasions [1]. President Taylor, whom they initially supported, incurred their displeasure in the late 1990's when he backed rebel groups in neighbouring Guinea and Sierra Leone, in a bid to seize some of the extensive diamond deposits of these neighbouring countries. The US then began a long campaign to oust Taylor.

They funnelled money through their regional ally Guinea, to create a proxy army, the LURD, which invaded Liberia. The LURD campaign was based on terror, reminiscent of previous US proxy armies in Africa and Latin America. Human rights reports have documented how the LURD press-ganged children into their army, kept their troops high on drugs, shelled civilian areas, massacred villagers and requisitioned their food, thereby ensuring a mass exodus into the capital.

The US aggression against Liberia was hardly much of a secret for those who cared to look. Ed Royce, the chairman of the US house sub-committee on Africa, warned Taylor as far back as 1999 that "[Taylor] should be made to realize that the US has the ability and the will to undermine his rule." The Liberian govern-

ment themselves referred to "a policy of 'regime change' in the form of a proxy war." [2] After deliberately creating the humanitarian crisis, the US cynically used it to justify the final intervention to replace Taylor. The Liberian crisis was suddenly bathed in the full glare of the global media spotlight. We heard liberal media commentators appealing to the US to intervene on humanitarian grounds. This media focus allowed the US to complete the Liberian regime change, as the UN authorised an intervention force and Taylor was forced into exile. The world's media went home as soon as the US had achieved their objective, regardless of the fact that the crisis hadn't been solved at all. A week after the 'peace deal' up to a



thousand villagers were massacred by rebel troops in Nimba county [3].

The story is horrific, but sadly typical. This is what intervention and peacekeeping always means. Peacekeepers can't be deployed against the wishes of the permanent members of the UN security council, who also happen to be the big imperialist powers. In general, they are only employed to maintain the status quo once it has reached a balance favourable to these big powers. Humanitarian catastrophes are a favourite ploy, not only to justify intervention to the world, but to depose an

unwanted ruler without actually having to fight against him and to decimate the society to such a point that not only will there be no resistance, but they will be welcomed with open arms.

When such intervention is being talked about in the media, you have to ask, "why this? why now?" The answer is almost always because it is in the interests of one of the big powers to intervene, and they want to enlist the liberal humanitarians as cheerleaders for their invasion. Western media is pervaded by a deep-seated racism which means that they don't even bother to try to investigate the background of conflicts in Africa, they just adopt an implicit assumption that this is the type of things that Africans always do. At the same time as the Liberia crisis was in the headlines, the world's media had been steadfastly ignoring the much bigger, bloodier and strategically important war in Congo-Zaire, which has caused an estimated 3-5 million deaths in the last 5 years - so much for humanitarianism.

We live in a world where there is no international force that is capable of intervening to prevent humanitarian crises. Western governments are continually intervening in the third world, but power and greed are their motivations - humanitarianism is simply not a factor. The most important thing that ordinary people in the West can do to help Africa is to prevent our governments from intervening in any way; their interventions are always selfish.

If we think of Africa as a drowning woman, we can best help her by making our governments take their foot off her head.

Chekov Feeney

1. eg Tubman 1971, Tolbert 1980

2. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200307230997.html>

3. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/cover/226082003.html>



Rudolf Rocker: Nationalism and Culture

Rudolf Rocker is recommended by Chomsky, whose own anarchist thinking is strongly influenced by him, as one of the best writers on anarchism and this is probably his finest work - a brilliant libertarian analysis of the development of power, the cult of the state and their relationship with human liberty and culture.

Rocker sees the impulse to power as a vital element in influencing the type of society we have. Though acknowledging the crucial role economics plays in the structure of society, he argues that explaining the types of society solely in terms of their underlying economic structure is utterly inadequate.

He sees power relationships as a restraining factor on human development because when you're compelled to carry out orders, you become little more than a machine rather than an individual with a free will, personal thoughts and feelings.

Rocker argues that brute force is insufficient to command obedience over long spans of time and the ruling classes have always sought to implant the idea that their rule is legitimate and inevitable. This is why they have supported ideologies as far apart as Christianity and Bolshevism, both of which support a ruling caste and encourage voluntary submission for the masses.

As Alexander Berkman noted, such voluntary belief is actually stronger than outright tyranny, for when opposition grows, it is flexible enough to survive whereas the dictatorships often snap and come crashing down.

(Black Rose Books, 592 pages)

€23.00 inc p&p from the WSM Bookservice

Rocker surveys the development of State power from ancient times, paying particular heed to developments after the Renaissance when nation-states increasingly came to be formed. He also devotes considerable space to those who set the intellectual climate for the triumph such as writers like Rousseau and Fichte and contrasts their deadening visions with the value of liberty and free expression for the development of culture.

For Rocker, nationalism was the foremost ideology - or mythology - which the ruling classes were using to bind the working class to them in an ever tighter form of voluntary submission.

And they were successful; nationalism became the new religion of the people. The logical and grotesque conclusion of this awe of the nation-state arrived with the Nazis, from whom Rocker fled in 1933 just as he was finishing this book. He demolishes their ideas of race theory, with their pseudo-scientific babble about the Nordic race with its pure language and superior culture. Given the rise of racism here, these chapters are unfortunately not out of date; readers looking for ammunition to challenge 'Irish Irelanders' will find plenty here.

It's not cheap, but it's great book, beautifully written. If you're interested in history or politics it's a must read.

James O'Brian



Getting involved

We are an Anarchist organisation in existence now for nearly twenty years. In that time we've helped to put across the ideas of anarchism as worthy of serious consideration to anyone in the movement against capitalism.

We produce over 6,000 copies of this paper and our message is getting to more and more people. If you want to live in a society that is free from the enslavement of the state and where democracy is more than a nice idea poorly practiced then you have to be prepared to fight for it.

We are not the sole reason why Anarchism is on the map but the fact that this paper is distributed in Athenry, Belfast, Castledermot, Cork, Drogheda, Derry, Dublin, Fermoy, Galway, Kilcock, Kilkenny, Lurgan, Manorbhamilton, Maynooth, Naas, Oughterard, Sligo and Thurles has helped gain acceptance that anarchism is a real option on this island for those wishing to fight for change.

We get involved. This is an important difference between us and would be leaders who sit in towers and contemplate how the future world should be run but never actually work towards achieving that. Where there is struggle to oppose the Bin-Tax, to oppose the privatisation of public transport, or even against the war you will find activists from the WSM involved. We defend ourselves when we see attacks against our class.

We are as involved as we can be in this given our numbers. But there is so much more that we can achieve. Whilst many of the struggles are defensive, (not paying an unfair double tax, opposing an unjust war and the occupation of Iraq, opposing the rampant race towards neo-liberalism and the pursuit of profits above all else) we also continue to get the message out of what the alternative is to this system. Like all revolutionary groups we need people to join so that we benefit from the energy and ideas that people will bring towards this task.

We can get the message out that there is a solution to the mess the world is in. Those answers can be found in the ideals of freedom and real democracy where we are free from the treacherous tyranny of leaders and their plans to further enslave us; A free society is not something that others can win for you, you have to win it for yourself. Get involved and find out more about becoming part of the revolutionary anarchist movement.

NEFAC web site

<http://nefac.northernhacking.org/>

The NEFAC web page is to be found at <http://nefac.northernhacking.org/> This would be my first and only major problem - well niggle really. Basically its not the most obvious or intuitive address. On the other hand it's the first thing that comes up when you put "North East Federation of Anarchist Communists" into google. (They are located in the US and Canada).

This quibble aside the site looks nice with a good overall presentation with no dumb ass flash or java scripts to annoy you and your browser. The layout is simple and graphically very easy on the eye with a nice red and black colour scheme that doesn't look annoying (believe me this can be hard to do!). The layout is somewhat similar to the approach of most Indymedia type sites with coloured bars to break up the text and the home page is covered with the latest news and articles. It boasts an excellent search engine conveniently located on the side bar. A search for Workers Solidarity bought up hundreds of hits including audio and video. They also have a button to churn out a printable version of any page which is always very, very handy! A small set of links at the top left guides you through NEFAC's pages.

There is quite a bit of information on the Federation. There were some excellent articles from their theoretical paper. I'm not sure if they have the entire magazine up in pdf

format yet, but there are hundreds of articles from it accessible through the search engine. Overall, an excellent, well laid out, up to date site from NEFAC and a fine addition to anarchism on the "inter-web".

Conor Mc Loughlin



Subscribe:

Send 10 Euro to WSM, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8 and we will send you the next 9 *Workers Solidaritys* and the next 2 issues of our magazine *Red & Black Revolution*

International rates (for 6 WS + 1 R&BR), Britain 5 STR, Europe 7 Euros or equiv, rest of world 10 USD. Send cash or cheques made out to WSM to WSM, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8, Ireland.

Thinking about Anarchism Mutual Aid

Mutual Aid is the fuel an anarchist society will run on. It is also what keeps capitalist society going in spite of all the hardship, greed, and exploitation that exists. Like all good ideas it's simple to understand. In order to get by in a tough world, it's necessary to get a bit of help from others. And as well as receiving help you also give it, not simply because it's nice to be nice, but because you know that sometime in the future you'll need a bit of it yourself.

The culture of solidarity took a battering during the Thatcherite '80s and booming '90s. An onslaught of right-wing propaganda and the attacks on workers' collective action (e.g. the 1990 Industrial Relations Act) combined to give the impression that you could get ahead by focussing on yourself and your career. This has resulted in both collective action and workers organising in unions dropping off dramatically.

We constantly hear that competition is good and efficient, so much so that you'd be forgiven for thinking that there is no alternative to selfishness and Mary Harney. But the world would be a horrible place if everything was based on competition where the loser got to starve or to die from not being able to afford proper medical care.

Right-wingers point to nature and the Darwinian survival of the fittest and proclaim that there is no place for decency in the real world: what matters is who can win out.

Anarchists turn this argument around.

Mutual aid is a vital factor in determining who is the fittest. For we cannot possibly survive on our own. We are physically far weaker than many other animals and nature itself would have us beaten in no time. But by combining with others and using a bit of intelligence we can outsmart potential predators and make use of nature rather than be overwhelmed by it.

And so it is with bosses. On a one-to-one basis they too have greater resources available to them, and it is only by pooling our strength and showing solidarity that workers can resist. This can lead to mutual aid developing out of struggle. A strike is simply workers acting together, rather than going it alone and cutting individual deals with the boss.

Workers who are involved in a protracted strike often seek sympathy strikes from workers in different industries. Such secondary action makes a big difference in the amount of pressure put on the bosses. Unfortunately such actions are becoming rarer due in part to the strangling of struggle by the trade union bureaucracy as well

as to the change in wider attitudes as outlined above.

However, though weakened, the sense of mutual aid persists. For example the current bin tax campaign will be won or lost depending on the degree of mutual aid given by people. At the time of writing, campaigners in Fingal have engaged in blockades of Bin Trucks because of the Council's policy of non-collection. This in itself is an example as they are showing solidarity with all of those who have refused to pay the double tax.

They have done really good work so far, but it is possible if they remain out on their own that the pressure will not be enough to cause the Council to back down. The head honchos at the Council - like all bosses - know full well that the best method to defeat people is to divide and conquer. They will implement non-collection first in certain areas where they expect little resistance hoping that no reaction will take place. This way they will isolate the other areas and eventually wear them down.

However, if people in the other Council districts could start blockading trucks, irrespective of whether non-collection has started in their own areas, this would crank up the pressure a lot and hopefully force them to back down.

Such actions are good in themselves and have the added bonus of indicating the future of the anarchist society: people acting for themselves in solidarity with others. The alternative is to have leaders permanently screwing us over.

James O'Brian

Red & Black Revolution 7

The latest issue of Red and Black Revolution is now out

In this issue of our magazine, we continue our tradition of dealing with the pressing issues of the day for anarchists and libertarians, and for all who are seriously interested in bringing about a new society. We carry articles by a member of the North Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists in relation to the future of the Black Bloc, and another by a member of Doctors For Choice on abortion rights (or the lack of them!) in Ireland.

We look at one of the most successful periods of anarchist history - the Spanish revolution - and, specifically, at how the workers' collectives in Spain were organised. Their success and the success of anarchism at that time remains a beacon of hope for the future. Another article argues that, if we want to create socialism it will have to be based on voluntary co-operation, not State power

One of the consequences of capitalist globalisation and of the 'War on Terror' has been a further tightening of border controls as Western governments build more and more barriers against the free movement of people. While anarchists are obviously opposed to all forms of immigration control, we don't have all the arguments to answer the fears and worries of working class people when the right wingers issue their dire warnings about 'floods' and 'waves' of immigrants coming to take all our jobs and houses.

Islamic fundamentalism has emerged as the new 'bogeyman' and the excuse for the aggression of Western governments in their so called 'War on Terror' in the wake of the September 11th attacks on the USA. The response of large parts of the left to the fundamentalists has been to adopt a 'softly softly' approach. In an article here, however, we argue that our enemies' enemy isn't necessarily our friend. We also take a look at the Irish anti-war movement during the 2003 gulf war. We carry two articles; one concentrates on the direct action movement, while the other looks at the political failure of the leaders of the mainstream anti-war movement.

Articles inside:

If you want to create socialism, it must be based on freedom.

Direct action against the war in Ireland

The dismal failure of the IAWM leadership

Repressing abortion in Ireland

Industrial collectivisation during the Spanish revolution

The trouble with Islam

Has the black block reached the end of its usefulness?

Anti-capitalist protest, global and local

Open borders - the case against immigration controls



Organising for Change

The last year or so has seen a hectic period for activists in Ireland. From the May 6th Gardaí attack on Reclaim the Streets in Dublin, through the anti-war campaigns, people have been coming into conflict with the state. In Dublin, we are now in the middle of a struggle with local anti-bin tax groups across the city taking action to defeat the councils refusal to collect rubbish.

There are some common lessons from these struggles. The government's continued support for US military refuelling at Shannon even after 100,000 had marched on February 15th shows how easily the government can ignore 'public opinion'. The introduction of service charges across the country, culminating in the Dublin bin tax, is another example of the government ignoring the popular will. The first time in service of imperialism, the second in the service of those who really run the country, the rich and the corporations.

The Garda attack on Reclaim the Streets showed not only the state's willingness to suppress those who move beyond complaining but the massive Garda cover up that followed it shows how even in clear cut cases it is one rule for us and another for them. All the more obvious when you consider that over 60 people who took part in anti-war protests were arrested; some have spent weeks in jail and others have been fined thousands of euro. Most of these arrests were at Shannon airport and over 20 people have been banned from the whole of County Clare for the next two years.

These are the cases everyone knows of, but there are others. The violent eviction by hired thugs of squatters from a house in Parnell Square in July saw the Gardaí arrest not the thugs but one of the occupants. The massive fines against Cork activists protesting at the exclusion of all but the very rich from the Old Head of Kinsale shows again that the law is on the side of the rich. The examples could go on and on.

These examples show how the odds are stacked against us, but often ordinary people stand together and win despite this. We feel confident that the bin charges in Dublin will provide one such example of a victory in the coming months.

But the defeat of the bin tax will not mean the government turns to tax the rich and the corporations. In the 90's we defeated the Water Charges only to see what is essentially the same tax being reintroduced with a different name. Fighting and winning some of the time is not enough. We need to also organise to transform society and to do away with the divisions into rich and poor, order givers and order takers.

The organisation which produces this paper, the Workers Solidarity Movement, is one of a number of anarchist groups in Ireland. We are anarchists because we recognise that as long as we limit ourselves to protesting the worst aspects of



capitalism we are trying to hold back a flood with wet tissue paper.

For many of our readers the experiences you shared with us over the last year demonstrate the truth of this far better than any well crafted words. Now is the time to do something about it, to organise not just for the struggles of today but also for the revolutionary transformation that is required tomorrow.

We are not insisting that the only way to do this is to join the WSM. We welcome

new members but we recognise not only are there already other libertarian groups who share our broad goal but that this struggle does not belong to any organisation; it belongs to all those who are exploited. But we do offer one way to organise in the here and now towards building a libertarian movement that will overthrow capitalism.

It is up to each individual to choose what is the way they wish to go forwards. But just as combining against the bin tax or against the war makes us stronger so too does combining in political organisations. Whether this means joining ones that already exist, or with others creating something new is up to you. But it is in all our interests that we start to organise now for the long term struggle that lies ahead.

Andrew Flood



Workers Solidarity Movement, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8 or E-mail wsm_ireland@yahoo.com, cork_wsm@yahoo.com
Phone/SMS **087-7939931**
On the web - <http://struggle.ws/wsm>

Cork meetings

Sept 24th (Wed) **Anarchism, Technology and the Environment** @ Venue to be announced 8 pm

Ideas and action - Saturday 18th Oct
Venue: Joyce Room, Metropole Hotel, McCurtain St, Cork
Time: 1-5pm

1) Direct Action - WSM speaker and Catholic Worker speaker

2) Anarchism or Marxism - WSM speaker and Socialist Party Cork Branch speaker

More information from cork_wsm@yahoo.com Ph: (021) 4503262

Dublin - for details of Dublin meetings please contact the national address

If you'd like to join the WSM just talk to any of our members, write to us at PO Box 1528, Dublin 8 or email us at wsm_ireland@yahoo.com. We'll tell you what's involved, you can also check our website.

Why all the fuss about Aer Rianta?

The state company which runs Cork, Dublin and Shannon airports is to be broken up if the government get their way. As it is one of the most profitable state firms, what is the reason for this privatisation? Is it good for air travelers, for airport staff, for the ordinary taxpayer, or just for a few rich friends of the government?

Seamus Brennan says it will be good for travelers. The three airports are supposed to compete against each other, and that will "benefit passengers". Are we really supposed to believe that people will travel from Dublin to Shannon to catch a plane for a weekend break to London or Paris?

To aid this



for years. Instead it will be done by the McEvaddy Brothers (whose French villa Mary Harney and Charlie McCreevy holidayed in a couple of years ago), or even Ryanair. This will most likely see a refusal to deal with unions, as happens in Ryanair. And they don't want unions, because they want to pay lower wages and make staff work in worse conditions.

Two competing terminals in the same airport will see even more of an attack on wages in order to be 'competitive'. Each group of workers will be encouraged to compete against each other, to be cheaper.

In Cork and Shannon workers are also in for a rough time. The Shannon stop-over is finished. The two airports will have to sell themselves as low cost operations. Much of their business may well be summer holiday charters, meaning that some staff will only get seasonal contracts. Goodbye to having a job all year.

supposed 'competition' all the debts of Cork and Shannon will be transferred to Dublin, and from then on those two airports are on their own. To service this debt, we suspect that Dublin Airport will have to sell off the successful Great Southern Hotel group. And rich pals of Brennan and Harney will get their hands on a very profitable business.

The debt also means that Dublin Airport will not have the money to build the second terminal that has been talked about

Whether it is bus, rail or airport workers - the problem is the same. Job security, wage levels, pension entitlements and working conditions will be sacrificed in order to fatten the bank accounts of Bertie's wealthy pals. The way to stop this is for transport workers to unite in action. Free fare days and strikes are the way to go, anything less just isn't taken seriously by the government

Alan MacSimoin

Become a supporter of this paper

I'd like to become a supporter of the Workers Solidarity paper,
Please send me 50/ ___ copies of the next issue of the paper to distribute. I enclose my
first months donation towards costs of 5/10/___ Euro.

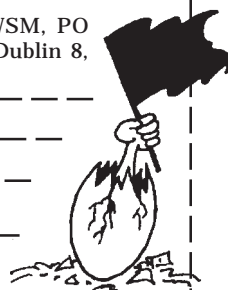
(Send to WSM, PO
Box 1528, Dublin 8,
Ireland)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



That's Capitalism

In Britain the 'Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income' report revealed that, under Thatcher, 1979-90, the fifth of the population with the lowest incomes had their share of post-tax national income cut from 10% to just 6%. The richest fifth increased their share of post-tax national income from 37% to 45%.

Things got a little better under Major. But under Labour to 2001-02 inequality again increased. The share of the bottom fifth slipped back to 6%, while the top fifths share moved up to 46%. The rich are getting richer while the poor get poorer.

While the average-paid have had increases of 3-4% in recent years, Britain's highest paid executives had salary increases of 21% in 2000, 19% in 2001, and 16% in 2002. Inland Revenue statistics show that 150,000 highly paid directors and others with earnings over £50,000 a year enjoyed additional fringe benefits worth an average £10,880 each. The company car etc benefits, amounts to £7,800 a director on average which is nearly twice what a pensioner has to live on.

"I spent 33 years in the Marines. Most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big business, for wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism. . . . I helped in the rape of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of wall Street."

General Smedley D. Butler, U.S. Marine Corps



Dublin Bin Charges

Blockade the trucks

Don't fall for council scams

As we go to print, the bin charges battle has started in earnest in Dublin with Fingal Council's attempt not to collect non-payer's bins. Trucks have been blockaded across Fingal forcing the council to cancel all collection services. Elsewhere campaigns are gearing up to blockade trucks in solidarity with Fingal or when the other Dublin councils attempt to implement non-collection. In our next issue we hope to report in full on how the councils were defeated. In the meantime you can follow events on our web page. Below we report on South Dublin's council attempts to con households into paying.

South Dublin County Council – rattled by the huge levels of non-payment of the bin tax – has initiated what it describes as a “Pay By Volume Trial” in 5 selected areas across the County. The Council's own figures show that over two-thirds of those eligible to pay are boycotting what is widely viewed as an unfair double tax. Now they hope to make the tax appear more acceptable by making it a weekly rather than an annual payment.

Residents in the 5 selected trial areas – in West Tallaght, Rathfarnham, North Clondalkin, Firhouse/Ballycullen and Lucan – have been receiving trial packs of bin liners from the Council. These have the South Dublin County Council logo on them and householders are asked to use these liners in their wheelie bins. If the trial is successful, the Council intends to use this tactic as a means of identifying who has paid the charge. Under legislation passed by the Dáil before the summer, local authorities now have the right to refuse to collect bins from people who don't pay the tax.

The Council is also attempting to sell this initiative by claiming that it will be cheaper on the householder. In promotional literature

sent to residents' associations in the affected areas, the Council claims “*The customer effectively pays for the waste collection on each occasion that a bin is presented for collection, as opposed to the standard charge that is levied at present.*”

They don't of course tell how much they intend to charge for the bin liners, or – more importantly – how much they will be charging for them in a few years' time.

The Campaign Against Refuse Charges has responded swiftly to the Council's latest initiative. Before the trial packs of bin liners

were even delivered by the council, all households had received a leaflet from the Campaign describing the trial as a con and urging a boycott of it. “*They still don't seem to realise that the reason why the refuse charge is being resisted by householders is because WE'VE ALREADY PAID.*”

It is the strength and solidarity of a united campaign which will put an end to this bin tax. Just as the water charges were defeated five years ago, this tax too can be beaten.

Gregor Kerr



Anti-war demonstration

Day of Action Against the Occupation of Iraq and Palestine
Demonstration begins 2pm Parnell Square Dublin

Organised by Irish Anti-War Movement, Peace and Neutrality Alliance & NGO Peace Alliance

To contact the Campaign Against Refuse Charges in South Dublin, ring 087-6996046.

For details of the campaigns in other areas, ring Dermot on 087-6277606.

Have your say

Write a letter to us at WSM, PO Box 1528, Dublin 8.

€25 million worth of “community service”

We are told, usually by the councillors themselves, that running for election to the local council is matter of “community service”. They want to “give something back to the community”. Yet local councillors across the 26 counties claimed a total of more than €25m in “expenses and allowances” last year.

229 of them collected more than €40,000 each, while 54 collected more than €50,000. The highest earner was Fianna Fail's Jimmy Maloney, a councillor in Mayo, who picked up more than €75,000 in 2002.

The Labour Party's Paula Desmond, in Cork, received more than €74,600, while Fianna Fail's Francis Conaghan, in Donegal, collected €69,255. Kerry councillor Paul O'Donoghue (FF), a brother of Tourism Minister John O'Donoghue, also received more than €68,600.

Now that's a lot of traveling to meetings!

NEWS FROM THE WSM VIA THE INTERNET

Our email list Ainriail distributes regular news updates and notices of events to subscribers. There are 4 - 8 emails a week. To join the list just visit

<http://struggle.ws/mailman/listinfo/ainriail>

Our web page www.struggle.ws/wsm includes a huge archive of articles about the history of anarchism and Irish struggles.

Water tax in Northern Ireland

GET YOUR HANDS OUT OF OUR POCKETS

Northern Irish homes are to be subjected to a tax on water, unless enough of us get together to stop the government's plan. Friday 20th June saw the end of the "consultation" period, not that the government was doing much "consulting" with us - because they had already said that the next announcement would be about how to pay this tax! The decision had been made before they pretended to listen to our opinions about whether or not such a tax should be introduced.

The Government wants us to pay not once but twice. We already pay for domestic water through the rates. If we have to pay water charges as well, that's a double payment.

Unlike in the South, where there was a "waiver" scheme for pensioners and unemployed, there will be no help with payment for those on benefits.

Remember, when they try to scam us with talk of bringing us into line with the rest of the UK, that people in Northern Ireland have less income and a higher cost of living than people anywhere else in the UK. We pay more for food, fuel and childcare. Wages are, on average, 20% less. Put all their excuses aside, and you are left with one simple fact - they want to screw more money out of us.

The passing of the Government deadline was marked in Belfast with a bit of direct action at the Water Service Depot on the Old Westland Road. People from Communities Against the

Water Tax (CAWT) picketed the depot at the start of the day's shift.

Getting the campaign off to a good start, none of the workers crossed the picket line. Water workers are facing up to 600 redundancies as part of this 'tax and privatise' plan. Later that day there was a protest outside the Department of Regional Development offices in Belfast as trade unionists handed in thousands of petitions opposing the charge.



Boycotting the bills is the way to win. We will see politicians, especially those from Sinn Fein and the PUP, stating their opposition to the tax. But talk is cheap. Will Gerry Adams or David Ervine actually call for non-payment, will their party activists get involved in the campaign?

If we want to be sure of having a campaign with a real chance of winning, ordinary householders will have to build it. The people who have formed CAWT want to do just that. A similar campaign in the mid-1990s defeated the water tax in the south.

We can do the same here. Contact Communities Against the Water Tax, 54 Manor Street, Belfast BT14 6EA.

Joe King

Fight for a women's right to choose

Belfast High Court refuses to say when abortion is legal

We are often told that ignorance of the law is no excuse, but what are we to do when nobody will say what the law means?

The High Court in Belfast has said NO to a request that it spell out what is legal and what is not. The Family Planning Association had asked it to order the Department of Health to publish guidelines about when abortion is legal in the six counties.

The ruling restates the existing law, that abortion is legal if in the clinic judgement of a woman's doctor the physical or mental health of the woman is at serious or grave risk if she continues with her pregnancy.

Some doctors would interpret this fairly liberally, that compelling a woman to continue an unwanted pregnancy could put her mental health at serious risk. But, as there are no clear guidelines, those doctors could then be open to legal action from anti-abortion pressure groups.

This legal confusion has meant that the vast majority of northern Irish abortions happen in England. And this is why Northern women are three times more likely to have a late abortion. The delay is caused by the time spent having to find in the region of £700 for the clinic and travel costs.

If abortion were freely available on the health service why would any woman choose to have a late abortion? In Britain over 90% of abortions are carried out before the 12th week of pregnancy.

Dublin - Alliance for Choice launched

The 20th anniversary of the anti-choice referendum of 1983 saw the launch of a new pro-choice campaign, 'The Alliance for Choice' launched in Dublin. Since 1983 over 100,000 Irish women have had to travel to England for abortions.

At the launch Cathleen O'Neill, drawing on her experience over the past 20 years said:

"If I had a pound for every fundraiser I worked on to help working class women go to England for an abortion, I'd be a rich woman. Taking children into our homes for the duration of the visit - pretending that Mammy was gone to a funeral; holding pub quizzes, and running limited draws, as well as running sales of work and raffles under weird and wonderful names to preserve anonymity. Almost every other week. It's bad enough for those who can afford to travel, but for poorer women it's hell. It's time those who claim to represent us to get a grip on reality and take steps to end this nightmare."



The Alliance for Choice can be contacted at AfC, PO Box 8852, Phibsboro, Dublin 7 or by email at allianceforchoice@eircom.net