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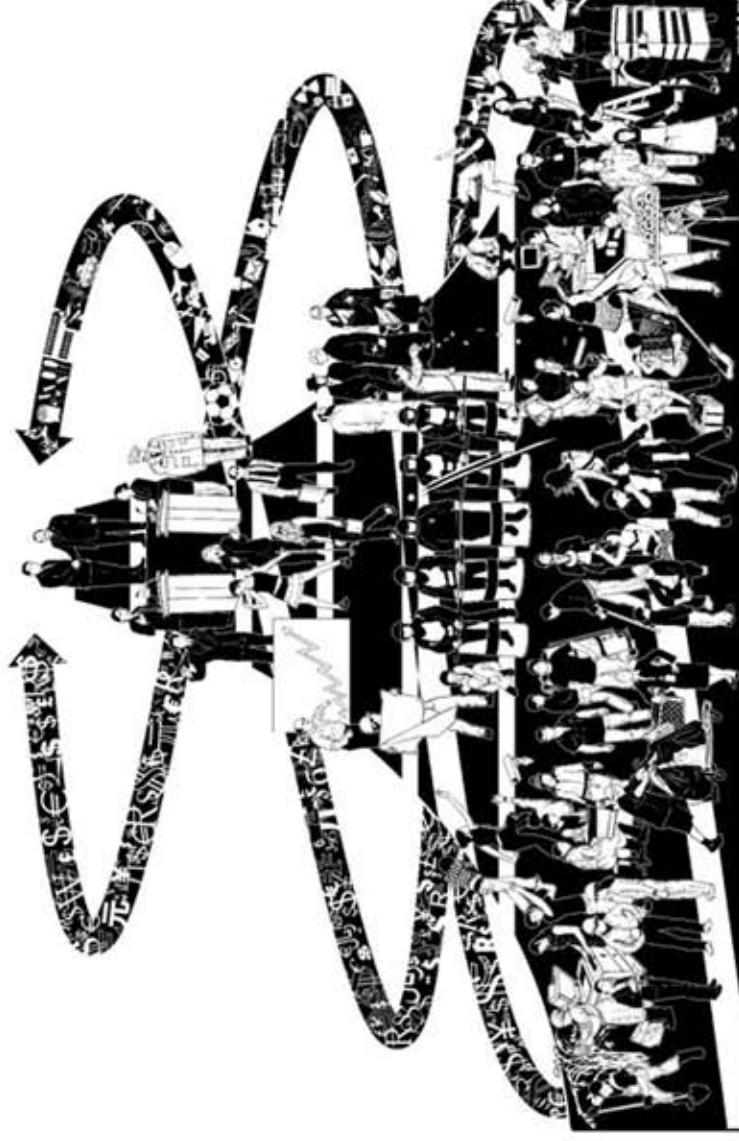


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The Irish Anarchist Review

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Re-building a movement
from below.

welcome/

Welcome to issue seven of the Irish Anarchist Review, published by the Workers Solidarity Movement. One hundred years on from the great Dublin lockout, the labour movement in Ireland stands at a crossroads. In this issue, we look at some of the struggles of the past that lead us to this moment in history and consider ways that we can progress the reconstruction of working class organisation. We don't think there is a magic formula for success; rather we hope this magazine can be a forum for debate for activists who are involved in the struggles that are going on in 2013.

In January, the general president of SIPTU, Jack O'Connor, gave an oration at Glasnevin cemetery to commemorate the sixty sixth anniversary of Jim Larkin's death. He used the occasion to attack those to the left of him and to try to draw a link between the union bureaucracy's negotiations with the government on behalf of public sector workers and Larkin's role in the lockout. "It was precisely because we believed the economy would not grow that we advocated the Croke Park agreement. We were not prepared to lead tens of thousands of workers into an enormous confrontation." Linking his strategy to that of Jim Larkin and the ITGWU of 1913, he said, "(Larkin) no less than any leader, would not choose to lead vulnerable men and women, and their families into a head-on collision with overwhelmingly superior forces." If cynicism is your cup of tea, O'Connor's speech was the whole pot. When Larkin's union entered a dispute, they organised to win. The current union bureaucracy on the other hand, entered the battlefield waving the white flag. It is clear; we need to rebuild our movement from below.

In 'Locked Out: Dublin 1913', Donal Ó Fallúin looks briefly at the politics, ideas and misconceptions around the Dublin Lockout of 1913, and shows that the event is much more complex than it has been allowed to be, by those who would narrow it down to a small event within the nationalist narrative of the period. Putting the lockout in context, he considers the role of syndicalism in the dispute and gives an account of media attacks on the union. He notes that, contrary to the approach of the union leaderships of today, "central to the radical political philosophy of Larkin was the sympathetic strike, something James Connolly would describe as "the recognition of the working class of their essential unity."

When we speak of rebuilding a movement from below, it is important that we do not exclude the voices of the marginalised. In "The Politics of Voices: Notes on Gender, Race & Class", Aidan Rowe looks at some of the pitfalls we face as class struggle anarchists attempting to build a society without hierarchy. He rejects vulgar Marxist ideas "of the base-superstructure model (that) holds that the base determines the superstructure absolutely and the superstructure is unable to affect the base" and the implication that if we end class exploitation, all other forms of oppression will disappear. At the same time he also rejects "a stultifying and inward-looking liberal-idealist identity politics, concerned with the identification of privilege and the self-regulation of individual oppressive behavior, an approach that excludes organised struggle, which, while amplifying the voices of the marginalised, consigns them to an echo chamber where they can resonate harmlessly" and argues for "bringing together a diversity of experiences and struggles in a spirit of solidarity and mutual recognition".

Even speaking of the tasks that face us can be mentally challenging. When as activists we devote lots of time and energy to struggle we can get burned out. This can lead to people dropping out of politics altogether, yet it is a problem we rarely face up to. Amber O'Sullivan tackles this issue in "Avoiding Burn out - Self Care and Support in activism" and asks "How can we protest differently? How

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can we organise ourselves so group cohesion, fun, positivity and self/collective care can be part of our practice?"

Over all the forms of oppression and exploitation we face today, debt is cast like a shadow. In "Capital's Shadow", Paul Bowman analyses left wing theorisations of debt and concludes that there is a lack in their understanding of "the real nature of money" and poses the need for a "new research project that analyses not only value, but value at risk over time, and through that the role of credit, risk and the world market in the current global regime of accumulation."

We hope the ideas expressed here can help open up a debate on the kind of movement that is fit for the twenty first century. We would like those who read the magazine to develop on them and perhaps respond with ideas of their own.

WORDS: MARK HOSKINS

about the wsm/

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

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

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

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Editorial Committee

Paul Bowman, Farah Azadi, Mark Hoskins, Brian Fagan, Dermot Sreenan, Leticia Ortega. Thanks to all members of the WSM for contributions, discussion & feedback. Big thanks to Brian Fagan for layout.
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www.anarkismo.net
www.wsm.ie

PO Box 1528, Dublin 8
facebook.com/workers.solidarity
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Locked Out: Dublin 1913

In this article, Donal Ó Fallúin looks briefly at the politics, ideas and misconceptions around the Dublin Lockout of 1913, and shows that the event is much more complex than many have allowed it to be, by attempting to narrow it down to a small event within the nationalist narrative of the period.

The 1913 Lockout is a monumental event in the history of the Irish working class. It marks the single greatest confrontation between the forces of labour and capital in Irish history, and the six-month dispute which tore Dublin apart saw a new, militant spirit of trade unionism collide with the force of native capitalism in an unprecedented manner.

It was a dispute during which some workers would lose their lives, and during which international solidarity and the tactic of the sympathetic strike were central to the workers cause. Yet while 1913 features within the state 'Decade of Centenaries', as historian Brian Hanley has noted the real irony is that "the Lockout has been sanitized beyond recognition and will be commemorated this year by many who would prefer to ignore the reality of what took place in 1913."

The article aims to examine the tactics and lessons of the Lockout, and to challenge some of the myths which have grown up around the events. Firstly, it is important to briefly put the event in its correct context, before later examining the role of syndicalism and the idea of sympathetic strike in the dispute. The Lockout is too often spoken of within the nationalistic narrative of the period, but this article aims to show that the event itself, and the broader working class movement at the time, are distinct from the nationalistic narrative of the 'Irish revolutionary period'.

The Lockout in context:

By the end of nineteenth century, only a small percentage of the Irish working class found themselves within trade unions. As noted in *Divided City: Por-*

trait of Dublin 1913, by the time of the first Irish Trade Union Congress there was about ninety-three unions in Ireland, which represented only 17,476 workers. Still, the very foundation of an Irish Trade Union Congress in the 1890s marked an important moment in the development of trade unionism in Ireland. While trade unions succeeded in establishing themselves in the industrial heart of Belfast, Dublin was a different matter entirely. In Dublin, 'craft unions' did exist, but these lacked militancy and were often in cosy alliances with employers. Seeking to only organise workers within a particular industry along the lines of the particular craft, these unions differed greatly from industrial trade unionism, and the vast majority of the Dublin working class remained outside of trade unions. It is crucially important to note, as Brian Hanley has, that bosses in Dublin were quite content with craft unions, but rejected more militant forms of working class organisation:

"Murphy tolerated craft unions in his companies, provided they accepted strict codes of conduct for workers. He and his fellow employers made clear on several occasions that they had no difficulty in negotiating with 'responsible' trade unions."

Not alone was a huge percentage of the Dublin working class outside of any kind of trade union movement, but they lived in abject and today almost unimaginable conditions of poverty. The slums of Dublin, and the working conditions of the poor, were truly alarming. Charles A. Cameron, a Protestant Unionist and the Chief Medical Officer for Dublin, wrote in 1913 that "in 1911 41.9 per cent of the deaths in the Dublin Metropolitan area occurred

WORDS:
DONAL Ó FALLÚIN



in the workhouses, asylums, lunatic asylums, and other institutions" and he went on to note that "in the homes of the very poor the seeds of infective disease are nursed as if it were in a hothouse."

There existed a belief too that the shocking conditions of the working class were something they had come to accept, or to see as their "natural lot", something embodied by the remarks of the contemporary historian and social scientist David Alfred Chart when he noted of the poor working class Dubliner:

"He accepts the one-roomed tenement, with all that the one-roomed tenement implies, as his natural lot and often does not seem to think of, or try for anything better. If he had any real resentment against that system, he would not have elected so many owners of tenement houses as members of the Corporation."

"In many ways 1913 is unfinished business"

The arrival of industrial unionism in Dublin and other Irish cities would give many of these people their first real sense of class consciousness. C.Desmond Greaves has written that 'new unionism' made its debut in England in 1889 "when the unskilled workers claimed their place in the sun." By the early 1890s, "the tradesman had been organised, legally or illegally, for over a century, at least in Dublin and Cork." The beginnings of trade unionism among the mass of the working class however in Ireland marked a significant turning point, and the early twentieth century would bring significant confrontation between workers and employers in Ireland, north and south. Strikes and lockouts became common place, ranging in scale from the great Belfast dispute of 1907 which saw Protestant and Catholic working class dockers down tools and equipment for four months, to the first attempts at working class militancy among precarious Dublin newspaper boys, who took strike action in 1911. Central to this period was Jim Larkin, a Liverpool born trade unionist who would bring a new type of unionism to Ireland in 1907.

The arrival of 'Big Jim' Larkin in Ireland. Belfast 1907.

"The consequences of Larkinism are workless fathers, mourning mothers, hungry children and broken homes. Not the capitalist but the policy of Larkin has raised the price of food until the poorest in Dublin are in a state of semi-famine. The curses of women are being poured on this man's head." – Sinn Féin president Arthur Griffith denounces Larkin.

There is a danger in history, not least the history of the left, to over-emphasise the roles of individuals at the expense of mass movements. Jim Larkin has become an almost mythical character in the history of the Irish working class, his place in Dublin folk memory in particular well secured. Larkin was a difficult character, with what Emmet O'Connor perfectly described in his biography of him as a "brash personality", which frequently brought him into confrontation with others within the union movement. Yet Larkin was an incredible organiser and orator, described by Countess Markievicz as almost "some great primeval force, rather

than a man." His effect on the Irish working class, in installing a confidence in them that was lacking before, is immeasurable.

Born on 28th January 1874 in Toxteth, Jim Larkin was the son of Irish migrants. Greaves has noted that the Liverpool Larkin grew up in was a "a hotbed of Fenianism, and it would have been hard for Larkin to escape the nationalist influence", but an equally important influence on Larkin's political development was the docks he knew as a place of work. His decision to join the NUDL (National Union of Dock Labourers) in 1901 would change the course of his life to come, as it was in this capacity that Larkin was sent to Belfast in 1907 as a union organiser. In Belfast, a society existed in which Greaves has correctly noted religious sectarianism "had been deliberately fostered by employers to keep the working class divided", and Larkin was instrumental in the rapid growth of the NUDL in the city, growing to 4,000 members and with three offices to its name by late April 1907. When dock workers in Belfast would strike for union recognition, Larkin succeeded in bringing out a wide range of Belfast workers in solidarity with them, including women from the city's largest tobacco factory. The sympathetic strike tactic, which would bring out workers not directly involved in an industrial dispute in solidarity with other workers, and Larkin's tactic of 'blacking' goods (with workers refusing to handle goods that were deemed tainted by scabs), represented a new kind of radical trade unionism in Ireland. The strikes even led to an unprecedented police mutiny, when a 'More Pay' movement within the police force took action demanding increases in their salaries. The Belfast strike of 1907 represents a very significant moment in the history of the Irish working class, because as John Gray has noted:

"When we look at the 1907 Dock Strike in Belfast and the police mutiny of the same year simple myths begin to evaporate. We find unskilled workers, mainly Protestant, fighting the employers, many of their future leaders in the UVF, we find policemen, many Protestant, mutinying....."

This incident, six years before the Lockout, showed the abilities of Jim Larkin as a union organiser and working class militant, and was terrifying the employers across the island. Not surprisingly, Larkin was dismissed from the NUDL for his militancy, which led to him forming an alternative union, which would become the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and subsequently, his later union activities in Dublin.



Larkin, William Martin Murphy and Dublin.

In his history of Dublin tramworkers historically, Bill McCamely notes that the Dublin of the early twentieth century presented Jim Larkin with three important employments he would have dearly liked to unionise. In the case of Dublin Corporation and building workers, these men enjoyed their own unions, albeit unions which were far from radical. Guinness, a huge powerhouse of industry in Dublin also appealed to Larkin as a potential base, although these workers enjoyed working conditions and benefits which made the workforce content, many argued. It was in the Dublin United Tramways Company that Larkin found his target, as this was an industry which had seen off multiple attempts at unionisation, and which contained a hugely significant body of unorganised workers in the capital.

"Murphy himself was an Irish nationalist"

The trams were owned by William Martin Murphy, one of the leading capitalists in the Dublin of the day, and an incredibly complex character. In Murphy alone one of the great contradictions of the popular narrative that exists around the Lockout is found. While some speak only of the event as a sort of 'dress rehearsal' for the Easter Rising, and a confrontation between 'Irish workers' and 'British business', Murphy himself was an Irish nationalist. Indeed, Murphy was even a former Irish nationalist MP, who had actually refused a Knighthood from King Edward VII, on the grounds that Home Rule was denied to Ireland. Murphy was a man of charity but also ruthless businessman, who built a commercial empire on an almost unprecedented scale in the city. Pdraig Yeates has estimated that at the time of his death "he had accumulated a fortune of over £250,000, had built railway and tramway systems in Britain, South America and West Africa, and owned or was a director of many Irish enterprises, including Clery's department store, the Imperial Hotel and the Metropole Hotel." Crucially important to the story of the Lockout however was Murphy's press empire, which included the Irish Independent, the Evening Herald and the Irish Catholic.

When workers in Murphy's tram company demanded union recognition and waged industrial action, he responded by 'locking out' all workers across his business empire who were affiliated to Larkin's unions, and other Dublin capitalists followed in his footsteps. This is crucially important to the story of 1913. While slogans like '1913: Lockout – 2013: Sellout' have become common place on the left in this centenary year, it is important to stress that the industrial dispute in 1913 was a bosses offensive, and not something instigated by the workers. Murphy took aim at what his media empire termed 'Larkinism', and Larkin took aim at a man he believed embodied all that was wrong with the capitalist class.

What was 'Larkinism'?

A word which has vanished from Irish political and trade union discourse today is 'syndicalism', although it was central to debates at the time. William Martin Murphy's Irish Independent repeatedly attacked syndicalism, for example upon its front

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page on September 21st 1913 which showed a worker blindfolded (with the blindfold reading 'syndicalism') while his family begged him to return to work. Murphy frequently lambasted the concept in his speeches, but what did it mean and why did it cause such fear among Dublin's leading employers and more even conservative trade unionists? Condemned as 'Larkinism' in the Irish press, John Newsinger writes in his work *Rebel City* that:

"It was a revolt against the authority of the employers, a rejection of the place the working class had been given in society and it contained within it elements capable of developing into a coherent challenge to the employing class and the capitalist system. Certainly, this is what well-informed contemporaries believed"

Larkin believed in the power of the 'One Big Union', and that industrial action could be the primary means by which the working class could overthrow capitalism. Speaking towards the end of the dispute, Larkin stated that:

"The employers know no sectionalism. The employers give us the title of the 'working class'. Let us be proud of the term. Let us have, then, the one union, and not, as now, 1,100 separate unions, each acting upon its own. When one union is locked out or on strike, other unions or sections are either apathetic or scab on those in dispute. A stop must be put to this organised blacklegging."

Central to the radical political philosophy of Larkin was the sympathetic strike, something James Connolly would describe as "the recognition of the working class of their essential unity." There are numerous examples of this tactic being utilised during the dispute, for example at Easons when dockworkers refused to handle any goods addressed to the company after Larkin had come into conflict with it. While widely condemned in the establishment media at the time, there was great truth in the words of one independent observer who wrote at the time of the hypocrisy of employees who condemned the sympathetic strike, while "they had no qualms of conscience in having recourse to the sympathetic lockout."

Larkin's ideas and tactics are diminished today by trade union leaders who argue that 'different times call for different tactics', and incredibly at a recent memorial service for Jim Larkin in Glasnevin Cemetery, Jack O'Connor of SIPTU spoke of how his union refusing to mount a fightback to austerity was somehow in the tradition of Larkin, noting that:

"Of course, once war was declared, Jim Larkin fought to win with every morsel of his being. Yes he was a revolutionary socialist, a syndicalist who aspired to the transformation of society along egalitarian lines. But the reality was that, no less than any leader, and he was a brilliant leader, he would not choose to lead vulnerable men and women and their families into a head-on collision with overwhelmingly superior forces."

Syndicalism, in the words of historian Emmet O'Connor, "remains the most underestimated and

misrepresented ideology ever associated with Irish trade unionism"

Was the Lockout a failure for the union movement?

Undoubtedly, the dispute which dragged into 1914 can only be described as a failure for the organised working class in Ireland. Yet there are lessons which can be learned from the dispute and the approach of the left to it. One aspect of the period and the struggle the left has tended to overlook is the role of media in the dispute. While the Irish Independent and Murphy's other outlets were able to attack Larkin and the union movement, Larkin succeeded in bringing socialist politics to a very significant percentage of the Dublin working class through the Irish Worker. Established in 1911, C. Desmond Greaves has noted that while the huge circulation Larkin claimed this paper enjoyed is almost certainly not true, even very reasonable estimates from the time show us the mass audience the primary trade union paper reached. While Sinn Féin's nationalist newspaper had a circulation that fluctuated between 2,000 and 5,000, Larkin's paper enjoyed a healthy readership, with up to 25,000 copies a week being sold during the dispute.

"Syndicalism remains the most underestimated and misrepresented ideology ever associated with Irish trade unionism"

Early in 1914, huge chunks of the Dublin working class crawled back into employment, even pledging to distance themselves from 'Larkinism' in the future. As Greaves has noted though, one of the key effects of the Lockout "on the workers of all industries was to strengthen their consciousness of themselves as a class". The incredible solidarity shown during the dispute, not only from other Dublin workers but also those further afield who sent crucial economic support, is an inspirational part of the story. The Irish working class would reassert themselves on several occasions during what is broadly termed the 'revolutionary period' in Irish history. For example during the show of strength against conscription in 1918 when workers across the island downed tools and equipment in protest at imperialism and war.

Yet the state which emerged from independence did not honour any of the promises that had been made to the Irish working class by mainstream Irish nationalism during its years in revolt. The suppression of labour disputes in a newly independent Ireland demonstrated how for the working class in Ireland, little changed after 1922. Indeed, it is difficult to disagree with the conclusion histo-

rian Cathal Brennan draws in his study of the 1922 postal strike (the first significant strike the new Irish state faced) where he writes that:

Despite the attainment of a sovereign, independent state (for the twenty - six counties at least) the aspirations contained in Dáil Éireann's Democratic Programme of 1919 seemed as far away as ever.

The Lockout must not be seen only as a part of the nationalist narrative of the 1912-23 period, but as the most significant confrontation between labour and capital in Irish history. Whether that confrontation occurred under a British flag, or the flag of an independent Ireland, is irrelevant to the class struggle that was central to the story. The spirit of Dubliners and others who fought back so bravely in 1913 should inspire us today, but it must be remembered that in many ways 1913 is unfinished business, in an Ireland where some workers even lack the right to workplace union recognition today.

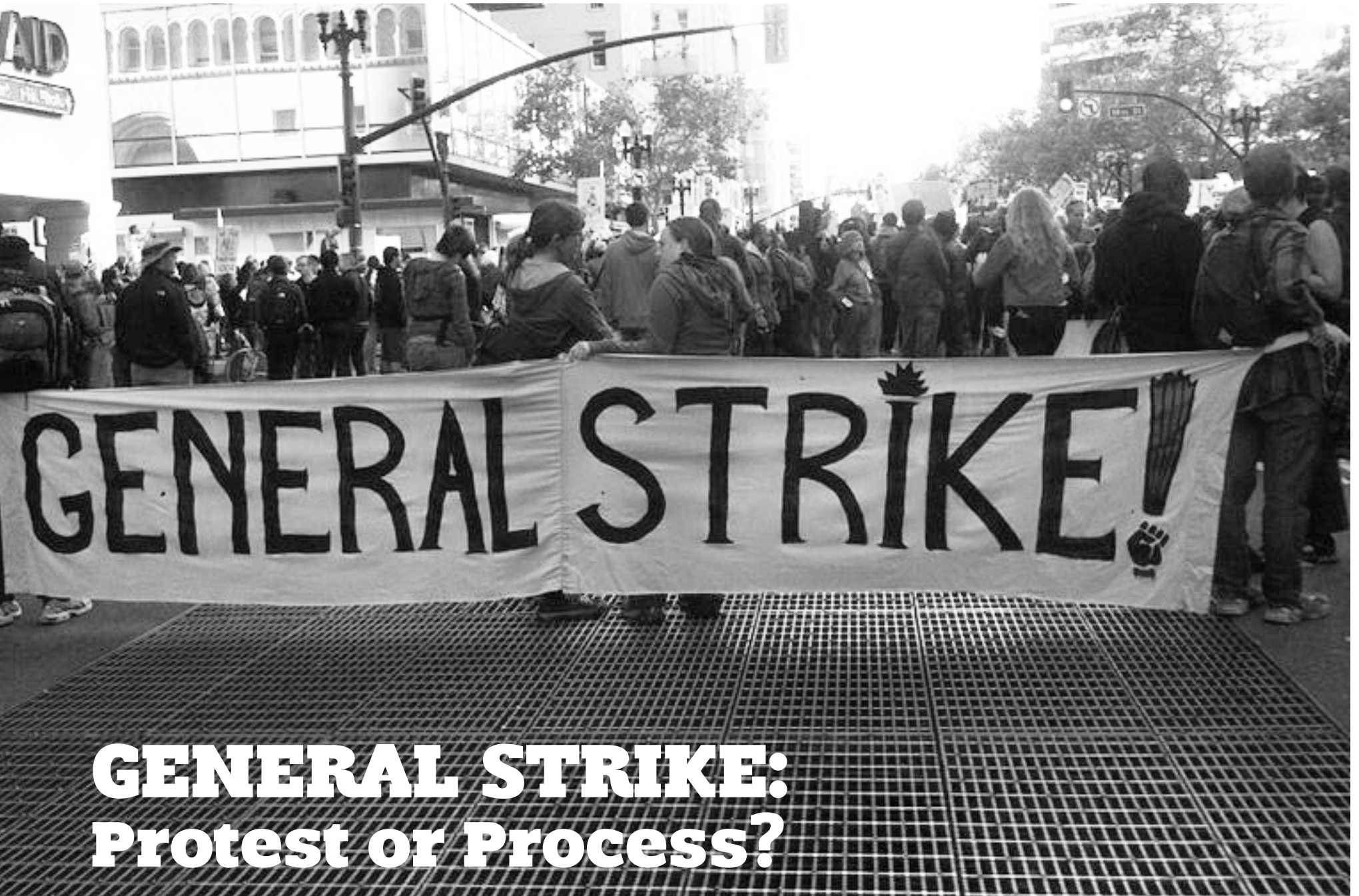


Information on the author:

Donal Ó Fallúin is a historian, co-author of the blog and book, **Come Here to Me** and a contributor to the podcast "**1913: Unfinished Business**" <http://ub1913.wordpress.com/>

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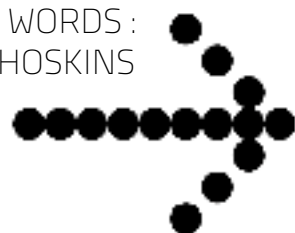
(Attribution for the Murphy/Larkin image - Moira Murphy)



GENERAL STRIKE: Protest or Process?

On Merrion square, an evacuation is in progress. Thousands of people scatter in all directions; panic is etched across their faces. To the casual observer, this is a life or death situation. There is however, no crazed gunman, no volcano, no earthquake nor alien invasion. They are fleeing the catastrophe that is the Irish Congress of Unions (ICTU) bank debt protest.

WORDS:
MARK HOSKINS



Now, the streets are all but empty, the air is filled with the sound of inoffensive entertainment and the tarmac is littered with discarded leaflets and socialist newspapers. Amidst this scene, activists attempt to corral the stragglers into signing petitions calling for a general strike.

The call for a general strike has loomed large in the left narrative around the crisis and austerity. Since the opening guns of this latest battle in the class war, it has been presented as the solution to all our woes. Various hues of Leninists have been calling for union leaders to act, to name the day when workers would down tools in a show of strength. At the ICTU demonstration in February however, despite impressive numbers, it didn't feel like there was any strength in the movement, it didn't feel like we were marching to battle; it felt like the approach of entropy. One participant described the feeling as "like attending your own funeral".

What is missing from this plea to the trade union leadership is agency. At various protests the ICTU bureaucracy has been heckled by sections of the crowd, but this resembles the cry of a frustrated football fan as their team's €30 million striker misses the goal from close range. The socialists are able to tell us what the unions are doing wrong, but they are unable to change it. We are at once treated to the perspective of the spectator and the commentator, never the participant.

Not with a bang but a whimper

The absence of memory is a fatal flaw in the current left discourse. While calling for a one day general strike, it is seldom mentioned that we very recently experienced something that closely resembled that type of event. In November 2009, 250,000 public sector workers took to the picket lines in an attempt to stop cuts in jobs, services and pay. At that point, the average public sector worker had lost the equivalent of fourteen days pay and the feeling was, enough was enough.

When the placards were stacked and stored away however, the feeling was that another days pay had been lost. Workers returned to the office to catch up on work that was left and the pay cuts happened regardless. In some areas, work to rule actions were carried out for the next few months but their nature and duration was dictated from union head offices. The outcome, rather than heralding a reverse of the cuts, was the meek waving of the white flag of surrender, with the signing of the Croke Park Agreement. 28,000 jobs were lost, meaning extra pressure to do more work on those who remained. On top of that, there was a commitment not to take any further industrial action for the duration of the agreement. This was billed by the trade union bureaucracy as some kind of victory.

At that time, and in the present as we are being told that the "extension" to Croke Park is the best

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deal on offer, we are prone to accusing the union leaders of being sell outs and traitors. If being a traitor is to betray your own, then, they are nothing of the sort. When they negotiate with the government, and then turn to negotiate with us, they are at all times representing their own interests. The Croke Park agreement was a victory for the bureaucracy. They successfully kept a lid on the anger that was emerging from below, and at the same time appeased the state and the employers. The public sector strike of 2009, was a means of strengthening their hand in negotiations with the government, while in turn, the threat of strike, of further days pay lost was used to strengthen their hand in negotiations with us.

"The Croke Park agreement was a victory for the bureaucracy. They successfully kept a lid on the anger that was emerging from below, and at the same time appeased the state and the employers."

To demand the leaders of the unions name the day for a strike, is to demand our own defeat. A one day general strike of that kind would only be an event, a singular moment of protest that would pose no threat to the establishment. In fact, the government may see it as another saving from the public sector pay bill. Without workers being in control of any industrial action, it reduces, rather than increases their sense of their own power, and diminishes the idea of the general strike in the popular consciousness.

We might do something for the Island. Hellenise it

Elsewhere along the periphery of Europe, in the countries where mass workers movements are re-emerging, the general strike is commonplace. In Greece and Spain, there is a real tradition of worker militancy, so memory of events of the recent past informs the action of today. Even there, where there have been multiple general strikes, with a strong element of grassroots activity, austerity has not been defeated. In Greece and Spain however, these strikes are not singular events, they are part of a process of resistance that entails many other elements, they are the generalised expression of a wave of strikes that have gripped those countries.

The most recent general strike in Greece took place on the 20th of February. The country was paralysed. Public transport ground to a halt, ferry services and flights were cancelled, schools were closed and even farmers markets shut down. Hundreds of thousands turned out to protest and there were clashes with the police. This is set against the backdrop of ongoing local strikes and factory occupations.

On February 12th, workers at the Vio Me building supplies firm restarted production under workers control. The website, Libcom, reported that "The mobilization kicked off with a big assembly of the workers and solidarity organizations and individuals in a central downtown theater the previous Sunday. Here the course of action of the solidarity movement was discussed, and everyone had the chance to take the microphone and to express their opinion on the workers' struggle"[i].

This is a positive step, yet, despite this militancy and despite the fact that there have been over twenty general strikes in Greece since the beginning of the crisis, the government continues undeterred with its austerity agenda and the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, continues to recruit members in a country that seems without hope. The labour movement in Greece is far in advance of the movement here, yet there is clearly a long way to go. If there was a general strike that was completely under the control of autonomous workplace committees, that could restart production in the way that the workers at Vio Me have, we would be looking at the beginning of a revolutionary process. This would be a true manifestation of the general strike, or mass strike that has been held up by the left as the greatest weapon the working class has in its armoury.

Over nine waves to the Milesians

The situation in Spain is of particular interest to anarchists. There is no other country in Europe where the ideas of anarchism and syndicalism have such influence in the working class. Despite a low level of unionisation, due to the representative system of industrial committees[ii], over 70.000 people are organised in the two main anarcho-syndicalist unions.[iii] These unions operate in a participatory manner, advocating direct democracy, direct action, solidarity and autonomy. Last year, the Confederation Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) and the Confederacion General del

Trabajo (CGT) along with the smaller Solidaridad Obrera, participated alongside the other unions in two twenty four hour general strikes.

José Luis Carretero, an organiser in the Madrid metro, describes the purpose of these strikes as to "pull together the different struggles that are taking place in the whole of Spanish society in a major show of force that can make the government feel that it is alone in its attempt to impose austerity measures dictated by the Troika. The strikes were officially convened against the latest reform of the labor law passed by the government in February 2012, which imposes much greater flexibility in labour relations, layoffs and facilitating changes in schedules, duties and salary, as well as disrupting the Spanish system of collective bargaining."

Results have been mixed. "The austerity measures have continued as have layoffs and wage cuts. But the general consciousness of people is changing rapidly, and it is customary to speak about things like social change or the end of the monarchy that would not be heard of before. Many things are changing and the regime is mired in an increasingly acute crisis without end. It opens spaces for many voices that were previously marginal."[iv]

In Spain, the one day general strike is part of a series of tactics that is used by the Spanish workers' movement. There are ongoing strikes against privatization in the health sector, street cleaning and against mass redundancies in private companies. In the communities, neighborhood committees of indignados organise ongoing protests. The general strikes were a combination of these processes, with participation from those who are organised in the combative trade unions and the indignados. In this sense the general strike is not a singular event, but the process of forming a new social movement.

Waiting for Godot

Here, in Ireland, it seems like we're on a different planet to Greece and Spain. Despite being subjected to five years of austerity budgets, there has been little fight back from the unions. In 2012, there were almost 8,500 days lost to industrial disputes, which was an increase on 2011. There were however, only five strikes and two disputes accounted for 72% of days lost, while



there were no days lost in the fourth quarter. [v] It seems ridiculous to argue for the generalisation of struggle when there is virtually no struggle to generalise.

The only mass expression of resistance has been the boycott of the household tax. Hundreds of thousands of people have still refused to pay and the government has been forced to implement legislation giving the revenue commissioners draconian powers to collect the new property tax. The problem for the Campaign Against Home and Water Taxes (CAHWT) is that while passive resistance has been successful to date, these new powers mean that the property tax can only be defeated if mass mobilisations accompany the boycott and in particular, if workers in the revenue commissioners refuse to process the tax. Here, it has become clear that unlike in Greece and Spain, there is a huge gap between the most militant sections of the working class and the majority. The task we face is to bridge that gap.

One of the key areas where struggle could emerge is, once again in the public sector. There is discon-

"In Spain the general strike is not a singular event, but the process of forming a new social movement."

tent over the terms of the extension to the Croke Park agreement. At the time of writing, no ballot has taken place but the leadership of the largest unions in the sector will support it. Despite this, several of the smaller unions have come out against the agreement and a campaign is underway to bring about a no vote. If this succeeds, the only option will be strike action. This, linked to the fight against the property tax, would lend a political edge to the movement; but what kind of strike action?

A singular one day strike like that of 2009 would achieve nothing, if not followed up with a sustained campaign of industrial action. We would be relying on the union bureaucracies to convince workers that more was necessary. The most likely scenario would see them going back to the negotiating table and in all probability sign the agreement. This is almost inevitable if we leave our struggle in the hands of the same union leaders, those who have their own interests to preserve and who are not facing the deterioration of their working conditions. The type of generalised strike movement we want to see will not fall from the sky. We need to rebuild our movement from below.

This machine kills militancy

There is no doubt that the majority of our union leaders are a cynical bunch. The fact that they use strike action as a threat against workers rather than employers testifies to this. They present a hopeless situation where a general strike would inevitably lead to defeat. This of course is a self-fulfilling prophecy as a general strike under their stewardship would be a defeat. They have no

"If we popularise the idea of industrial direct action on a small scale, using real examples and modern communication technology, we can begin to talk about a general strike, about generalising the struggle that exists in society."

wish to rock the boat; their aim is to solidify their position as a group with its own distinct interests, at the negotiating table with the government and IBEC (The employer's federation). They yearn for the return of social partnership, where the union bureaucracy was essentially part of the state apparatus.

The idea that we need to rebuild the movement from below, is one that everyone on the left would agree to on paper, but in practice, most of the left are moving to try to rebuild it from above, via the shortcut of winning positions on union executives. This tactic can only serve to perpetuate the clientelist model that currently exists, where the rank and file plays almost no role other than as pawn under the control of the player on the left, rather than the player on the right. A general strike called by left union leaders would still entail a process that the majority of union members played no role in, other than to cast their vote.

The left union bureaucrats, though sincere, are still separated from the majority of workers by their status as leaders and it is they who would give the order to go on strike or to return to work. The picket lines would be organised by branch officials, for the ordinary union member it would be a matter of taking a placard in hand, doing your shift on the line and going home. For a general strike to be meaningful, it is important for it not to be that singular event we have come to expect, a form of militant protest. It must be a process that elevates class consciousness and transforms the way we organise our workplaces.

To get to a point where our unions are organisations controlled by the rank and file, there are two tactics available. One is to try and use the existing structures to bring about change. This would entail being active at branch level and bringing motions to democratise trade union structures to branches and annual conferences. This is the only option available in times of industrial peace and it has some major drawbacks. One problem lies in the fact that the debate would only be carried out among existing union activists. At every step of the way, the bureaucracy and the junket chasers who support them would throw obstacles in our way. The other problem is that even if you win, the rank and file who has not been part of this process may not care and may not feel the need to implement a union structure that is based on grassroots democracy. Taking back the power in our unions seems a lot more important, when our unions are engaged in struggle. Times of industrial unrest then, present us with another option.

Solidarity, autonomy, direct democracy and direct action

While it is clear that industrial struggle is at a low level, it should also be clear that there is a high level of unrest in society. Workers are faced with increasing insecurity. Politically, we can see from polls that confidence in the government is low. A Milward Brown poll, recently published in the Sunday Independent, showed that three quarters of those polled were dissatisfied with the government. People do not have these thoughts in isolation. Their opinions on politics are forged in conversation with others, very often in the workplace.



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When people talk about their dissatisfaction with their conditions with work, it is often with their work colleagues. Slowing down what you are doing at work to have one of these conversations is the most natural thing in the world and it is a form of resistance. You are taking back the time you sell to your employer, you are empowering yourself.

These conversations, in office sections, on factory floors and in staff canteens are the basis for workplace committees and workplace autonomy. Organisers can help to increase the frequency of these conversations, to discuss industrial action, to talk about what that would entail and how it would be organised, so that those ideas become part of the consciousness of the workplace. They can win support for industrial action, even informal actions like refusing to carry out unpopular tasks. Though the number of left organisers is small at the moment, these ideas can be rapidly popularised through social media. Workers in HMV and La Senza who occupied their workplaces won widespread support via this method, and the idea of workplace occupation became part of the popular consciousness.

If we popularise the idea of industrial direct action on a small scale, using real examples and modern communication technology, we can begin to talk about a general strike, about generalising the struggle that exists in society. Organising solidarity funds for strikes that are in progress, solidarity pickets and spreading information can be a process that rapidly transforms the situation. A few successful small scale strikes could become contagious.

The biggest and most famous general strikes of the past were not called by union leaders. The French general strike of 1968 began as a student protest. When the state used force against protesters, workers downed tools in solidarity. Grievances that were bubbling under the surface boiled over. Workplace committees were formed and France moved to the brink of revolution. This process can be seen in Russia in 1905, Barcelona in 1919, Italy in 1969 among others and in all these cases it was official labour organisations that reigned them in, took control and organised the return to work. A strike movement that became generalised in this way, would need to prevent this from happening, it would be the basis for new organisations of the working class that would be living extensions of the lives of working people. Beyond that, it would soon become clear that this form of organisation based on the principles of solidarity, direct action, autonomy, mutual aid and direct democracy was the basis for a radical transformation of society from below.



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[i] <http://www.libcom.org/news/factory-greece-resumes-production-under-work...>

[ii] A system of industrial representation where all workers get to vote for union representatives to bargain on their behalf.

[iii] Based on 2010 figure, reports suggest rapid growth since then but no figures were available at the time of writing.

[iv] Interview with the José Luis Carretero, February 2013

[v] <http://businessetc.thejournal.ie/industrial-disputes-764790-Jan2013/>

[vi] From Trans Global Express by The Jam (Lyrics - Paul Weller)

"Imagine if tomorrow the workers went on strike
not just British Leyland but the whole world
who would earn their profits?
who would make their bombs?
you'd see the hands of oppression fumble
and their systems crash to the ground
and you men in uniform
will have to learn the lesson too
not to turn against your own kind
whenever governments tell you to." [vi]



CONTROVERSIAL GROUP WANTS

ACTION ON HOUSING

Aims of D.H.A.C. explained



SINCE ITS FORMATION last year members of the Dublin Housing Action Committee have picketed and held public meetings, been involved in riots with police, chained themselves to condemned houses and interrupted meetings of the Dublin City Council.

In the Dail they have been classified among groups described as "reds and fellow-travellers."

Here an *Irish Times* reporter discusses the organisation of the committee, and quotes the views of some of its members.

The Dublin Housing Action Committee (D.H.A.C.) formed a little over a year ago, grew logically out of the activities of the Sinn Féin Citizens' Advice Bureau. The bureau which holds weekly "clinics"

need office blocks? There is capital for office blocks, not for houses."

Miss de Burca cited an example which she feels illustrates the dire housing conditions of many Dubliners: "I went to 13 Meath street, on the second floor. I had to step over rubble from the ceiling as I went up the dark stairs. There

Urban Politics and the Dublin Housing Action Committee: 1968-71

The contemporary crisis of capitalism has made markedly visible the relationship between finance capital and property speculation, between the concentrated money-power of bankers and speculators and the shaping of the built environment in our towns and cities.

This relationship has had all manner of disastrous consequences for the working class (inflated rents or mortgages, lower living standards, ghettoisation and suburbanisation etc.) and for the environment (distorted flood plains, abandoned buildings, the prioritisation of car commuting over public transport etc.). Today, it seems that one of the real challenges for the working class is to change that relationship, to claim a 'right to the city' for its inhabitants.[1] Dublin, as it turns out, has quite a significant heritage of anti-capitalist urban politics of precisely this sort, notably the Housing Action campaign of the late 1960s. Given that this kind of activism is beginning to re-emerge - Unlock NAMA being a recent example - it might be useful to assess that history.

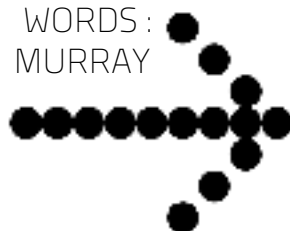
The political economy of Dublin's urbanisation

Owing to decades of state-assisted slum landlordism, housing conditions for Dublin's working class were notoriously bad throughout the early twentieth century. In the 1960s, however, a number of factors combined to make the chronic acute. Austerity cutbacks on housing provision in the 1950s combined with population increases in the 1960s to pressure the state's available housing resources. (Some 10,000 applicants waited

on Dublin Corporation's 'approved' housing list; an equivalent number waited off it). At the same time, inner-city tenements were collapsing, resulting in numerous fatalities. The Fianna Fáil government's immediate response was to condemn the buildings and to compel several hundred families to be re-housed in suburbs without social amenities or public transportation. This fitted a broader urbanisation process whereby Dublin's working class were to be suburbanised and the city centre adapted for offices, retail and car parking spaces. [2] Given the extent of housing waiting lists, however, the government's attempts to clear tenement residents triggered an intense political campaign. In May, 1967, left-leaning members of Sinn Féin (predecessors of the Workers Party) established the Dublin Housing Action Committee (DHAC), which soon expanded to include a range of left-wing organisations, including the Irish Communist Organisation, Labour party branches, Connolly Youth, trade unionists and a variety of local housing groups such as the Ballymun Tenants' Association and the Dublin Flat-dwellers' Association.

The DHAC combined building voluntary networks of the homeless with holding prominent, public demonstrations aimed at publicising demands for social housing. Initially, the DHAC picketed Dublin Corporation meetings to call for more housing.

WORDS:
TOM MURRAY



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"Owing to decades of state-assisted slum landlordism, housing conditions for Dublin's working class were notoriously bad throughout the early twentieth century"

By September 1968, however, the Committee had moved to direct action, organising homeless families to squat vacant property. Throughout 1968 and 1969 the DHAC contested office developments such as those in Mount Street and helped the homeless resist evictions. Its publication, *The Squatter*, disseminated information on suitable locations. Similar organising models were adopted by Housing Action Committees in Derry and Cork. [3] The DHAC, like the DUA before them, appealed to a combination of direct action, civil disobedience and moral force. Alternative interpretations of the constitution – notably the priority of the rights of the family over the rights of property – featured prominently in their legal and public defence. When the legal system continued to serve injunctions against the DHAC, it responded by challenging the justice system.

Wave of protest

Of all the DHAC squatters taken to the High Court, the most high profile was perhaps Dennis Dennehy. During the summer of 1968, Dennehy, a member of the Irish Communist Organisation, squatted with his wife, Máire, and children at 20 Mountjoy Square, the property of landlord, Ivor Underwood. [4] Up to that point, the family had been living in a leaking caravan with the children 'shivering at the side of the road'. [5] Local residents had previously signed a petition demanding that the square be rebuilt as working-class housing (not as offices or gentrified, single-family dwellings), and marched to the Custom House to raise awareness of the city's housing shortages. When Underwood sold a number of houses on Mountjoy Square to a development company, slogans denouncing the sale were painted on the walls of his Dalkey residence and his car was damaged by a home-made pipe-bomb. [6] Although the Dennehy family offered to pay rent, the landlord refused and subsequently sought an injunction to restrain them from occupying the premises. Dennehy was subsequently imprisoned for failing to comply with the order. [7]

The imprisonment of DHAC members focussed media attention on the state's housing policy and ignited popular discontent at housing shortages. When Denis Dennehy went on hunger strike, a wave of protest erupted across Dublin. Public meetings took place outside the GPO where nightly marches would set off for Mountjoy prison to support imprisoned squatters. Hundreds also took part in regular sit-down protests at O'Connell Bridge. Joseph Clarke, a veteran of the 1916 Ris-

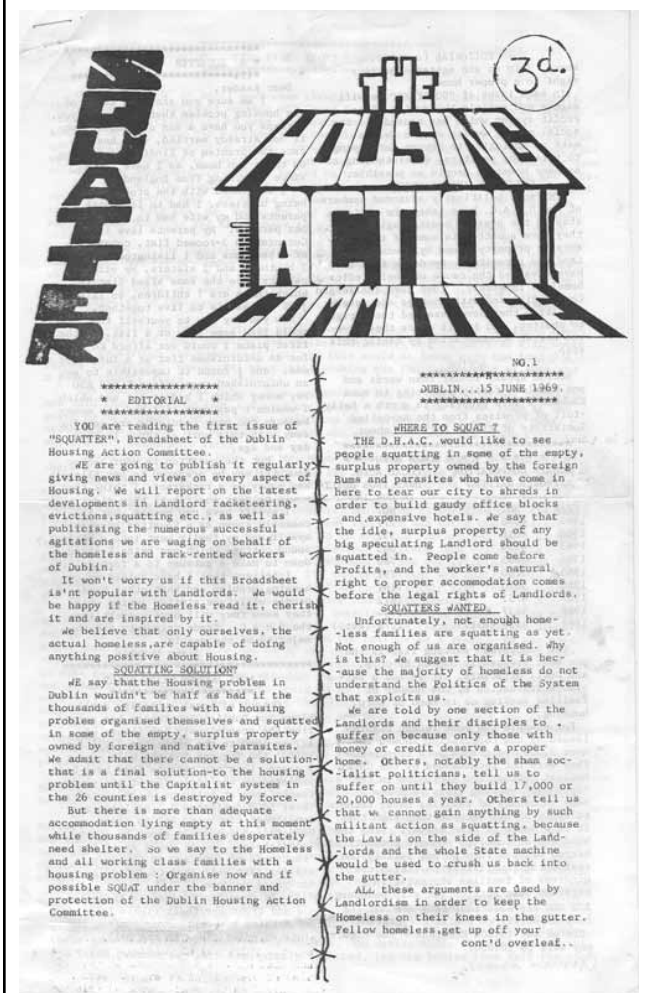


ing, interrupted State celebrations in the Mansion House commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the first Dáil to protest Dennehy's treatment. As security guards carried Clarke outside, students greeted them with banners proclaiming 'Evictions: English landlords, 1868; Irish landlords, 1968-69'. People's Democracy, en route from Belfast to the GPO as part of its campaign for civil rights for Northern Ireland's Catholic minority, held a meeting of 800 people outside Dennis Dennehy's squat at 20 Mountjoy Square to protest about the housing situation on both sides of the border. The Dublin Trades Council passed a resolution calling for street demonstrations by trade unionists. Dennehy was eventually released and found housing. Undeterred, he supported a more extensive campaign of squatting.

"Dublin Corporation's 'crowbar brigades' were ejecting people daily without recourse to the law."

These protests aimed at foregrounding the judiciary's complicity with the property-owning class. In September 1969, five members of the DHAC (three women and two men) occupied the Four Courts in Dublin. [8] The group arrived at 11am and announced that they had an appointment to see a senior counsel. When they found the Master's Court vacant, they barricaded the door with furniture and then painted a sign on a window blind overlooking Inn's Quay proclaiming: 'DHAC. We are occupying the Four Courts to demand the release of jailed homeless'. The object of the

demonstration was to protest at the imprisonment of Patrick Brady and Patrick Geraghty for refusing to vacate a squat at the Carlton Hotel, Harcourt Street. Seán Dunne, vice-chairman of the DHAC, claimed that Brady and Geraghty were being treated as criminals and that their food had been cut off when they complained about the prison's 'atrocious conditions'. At 1pm a force of twenty gardai arrived, cleared photographers and reporters from the corridors and broke down the barricade. [9]



Despite the Four Courts group making it clear that their protest was peaceful, that no damage had been done to property and that no resistance was contemplated, the gardaí beat and kicked them around the room. Eric Fleming and Isolda Byrne claimed they were forced to sit on the floor while gardaí kicked them in the head and mouth. The DHAC insisted it was not 'anti-police', citing as proof their helping a Garda widow threatened with eviction from her home of 35 years.[10]

Repression

Various protests and squats across the city typically met with a violent state response. Hilary Boyle, a seventy year old social justice campaigner, described how the gardaí charged at one such march 'like mad bulls...They hit out with their batons, they kicked and punched and generally acted as agent provocateurs'. As the conflict in Northern Ireland escalated, the government introduced a raft of 'law and order' measures, some of which aimed at breaking the DHAC. The Prohibition of Forcible Entry and Occupation Act (1971) changed squatting from a civil to a criminal offence and, furthermore, made its public endorsement illegal. Throughout 1971, a diverse coalition attempted to oppose the legislation, including Citizens for Civil Liberties, the National Association of Tenant Organisations, the Union of Students of Ireland, Labour party branches and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.[11] sixty-five RTÉ workers signed a petition opposing the Bill on the grounds that it permitted one-sided media coverage only. Some forty gardaí prevented a group of protestors from going beyond the gates of Leinster House to lobby politicians directly, the first time in the history of the State that this had occurred.[12]

"they barricaded the door with furniture and then painted a sign on a window blind overlooking Inn's Quay proclaiming: 'DHAC. We are occupying the Four Courts to demand the release of jailed homeless'"

By this stage, however, the anti-squat legislation was almost unnecessary: Dublin Corporation's "crowbar brigades" were ejecting people daily without recourse to the law. These evictions came as the DHAC was fracturing under the pressures of its own internal politics, largely centring on how members interpreted and responded to the Northern Ireland conflict. However, in a large number of cases, the DHAC had succeeded in negotiating on behalf of tenants with Dublin Corporation and pri-

vate landlords, a number of whom, unwilling to be publically shamed by protests, accepted squatters as legal tenants.[13] Members of the DHAC identified their primary achievement as one of deeper politicisation. Speaking of the thirty or so families she had encouraged to occupy empty houses to defy the law, Máirín de Búrca observed: 'They won't ever lie down again and accept whatever the law says if they think the law is unjust'.

Urban Politics: Then and Now

Urban campaigns adopting popular direct action re-emerged in later years, notably the Dublin Squatters' Association of the 1970s and the Coalition of Communities against Drugs of the 1980s and 1990s.[14] During the boom years, notwithstanding the persistence of unequal and often dire living conditions, the state succeeded in incorporating civil society energies from these urban centres, primarily through social partnership mechanisms. Meanwhile, successive governments encouraged banks, speculators and developers to make out like bandits through 'public private partnerships', maximising profits at the expense of inner-city living conditions. Of these PPPs' spectacular unfairness, the abysmal failure to re-develop O'Devaney Gardens on Dublin's North Circular Road is emblematic.[15] The contemporary crisis demonstrates how this toxic collaboration operated on an even larger geographical scale.

Following the property crash, the commuter belts of Dublin, Cork and Galway are daily emerging as regions haunted by ghost estates, negative equity and escalating mortgage arrears. In the coming decade, exorcising these demons is likely to be pivotal to all forms of politics in Ireland. Unlike younger, mortgage-less people currently fleeing Ireland in droves, populations in these areas are more closely tied by mortgage and family commitments to the island and its political system.[16] Admittedly, the demands of private homeowners are not traditionally associated with radical politics. Nevertheless, as David Harvey argues, there are grounds for social movements and progressive groups to take seriously the possibility of contesting the politics of the built environment as opposed to fighting around sectional interests or single issues. If such a politics were to take organisational form, the Dublin Housing Action Committee would approximate a good working model of direct action and co-operative practice that communities, left political parties and non-aligned activists could aspire to.

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- [2] Conor McCabe, 2011, Sins of the Father, pp.31-32.
- [3] 'Gardaí hurt in street row in Cork' in Irish Times, 17.02.1969.
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[10] 'Housing Group seeks inquiry into police attitude at Four Courts' in the Irish Times, 27.09.1969.

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[12] '40 gardai curtail Dail lobby' in Irish Times, 24.02.1971.

[13] Mary Maher, 'The Making of a Revolutionary' in Irish Times, 19.01.1970.

[14] Alan MacSimoin on 'The hidden history of squatting in Ireland'; <http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/ws/squat48.html> . See Aoifer Fisher, 'Review of Andre Lyder's "Pushers Out: The inside story of Dublin's anti-drugs movement"'. <http://struggle.ws/wsm/ws/2005/89/drugs.html>

[15] The property developer in this PPP was Bernard McNamara. Christine Bohan, 'After more than 15 years, plans for O'Devaney Gardens officially scrapped' <http://www.thejournal.ie/o-devaney-gardens-scrapped-694646-Dec2012/>

[16] Since 2007, Irish property prices have fallen by some 50-70%. As of 2012, Irish citizens carried the largest mortgage debt per head of population in the world while at least 40% of all Irish households were in negative equity and some 10% are in mortgage arrears of more than three months. See also Morgan Kelly 'If you thought the bank bailout was bad, wait until the mortgage defaults hit home' in Irish Times, 16.11.2010.



.....The Irish Anarchist Review

IAR Interview: Felipe Corrêa

IAR: First of all could you tell us a little about yourself and your involvement with Brazilian anarchism and how you came to be involved?

FC: I became an anarchist in the end of the 1990s, in the wave of what people used to call the "anti-globalization movement", after a past of Marxist affinities, both with reformists and revolutionaries. I knew about anarchism in the "counter-cultural" movement - ie. I used to be straight edge - and then started to get involved with collectives in São Paulo that were very active in the resistance movement against neoliberalism, like Ação Local por Justiça Global [Local Action for Global Justice] and Centro de Mídia Independente [Indymedia Center]. I also got in touch with anarchist social/cultural centers, both Centro de Cultura Social [Social Cultural Center] (CCS) and Instituto de Cultura e Ação Libertária [Institute of Libertarian Culture and Action] (ICAL).

Later I was part of an anarchist collective called Terra Livre [Free Land], that still exists as a library (Biblioteca Terra Livre). During this process, I had some contacts with São Paulo especificistas of an organization called Luta Libertária [Libertarian Struggle] (LL), that after became Organização Socialista Libertária [Libertarian Socialist Organization] (OSL). After some conflicts concerning the model of anarchist organization and its role, I left Terra Livre and started to get involved with Federação Anarquista do Rio de Janeiro [Anarchist Federation of Rio de Janeiro] (FARJ), in which I was integrated as an organic member and developed some interesting work by 3 or 4 years. As I was living in São Paulo, and as I had to go frequently to Rio de Janeiro to work with FARJ activities, we decided to start a process of reorganization in São Paulo (LL/OSL had ceased to exist) and then we organized the process that culminated in what is today OASL. Parallel to these works I was directly involved in the foundation and management of Faísca Publicações [Spark Publications] and other anarchist projects.

Now, I'm part of the Communitarian Front of the organization and the current Political Education Secretary.

IAR: Here in Europe we have a very self-centred view of world such that if we sneeze we think the world has a cold. Here we speak of "The Crisis" in referring to all that has happened since 2008 and assume that the way it is affecting us must make it a global catastrophe. But what has been the experience of the last five years from a Brazilian perspective?

I think this is common to Europeans. If you see the history of anarchism, at the same time we had great experiences in Americas (mainly Latin America), Africa and Asia, the books always discusses, mainly, European experiences!!! So it's kind of normal the Europeans generalize their reality as it was the world's reality.

I think this crisis shows a change in the correlation of world forces. Brazil is, at least apparently and until now, relatively "safe" from the crisis. The government is investing in the expansion of the credit system and in social programs, trying to stimulate the economy. The analysts are divided. Some of them maintain that this shows Brazil's new reality as a world power, others say that the crisis is just arriving.



According to our Relationship Secretary, who is most involved with this discussion, "both of these analyses are correct. Brazil, thanks to historical facts, did not completely liberalize its financial system and healed its public debts in the beginning of the 2000s. So, the global financial crisis has not directly reached Brazil. But, in the measure that the crisis is aggravating and impacting the real economy, with recession in production and consumption, this will make the commodity prices of Brazilian exports to fall, and the country will be without external savings to develop the projects that are guaranteeing the small rates of growth we're having. So, crisis will arrive, but, for secondary effects, it's not here yet."

Anyway, the point is that: - it's difficult to deal with a reality where people, in general, think they're living better; - we are not "catastrophists" and we do not maintain that a crisis will necessarily lead to something better; - so, we think our aim is to continue our work through our anarchist organizations inserted in social struggles and to reinforce our mass strategy, because, for us, any change, smaller or bigger, to approximate our revolutionary and socialist long-term objectives, has to be strongly permeated with a class culture based in self-organization practices, democratic initiatives, combative movements and so on. Any movement, whether motivated by a crisis or not, to approximate our aims, has necessarily to count on these "libertarian" features.



The state is not a "neutral" institution, it's an institution of domination. And the process of institutionalization that occurred with the PT is showing that, doing that, the party adapts more to the system it proposes to change, instead of the contrary.

IAR: Is the imminent arrival of the World Cup in Brazil next year creating any tensions or struggles over land and resources?

Sure! Like a lot of other countries that received the World Cup, Brazil is also facing these kind of problems. It's possible to indicate two of them: the first, a priority of investment by national and local governments in projects that will only have any function during the World Cup; the second, some social "consequences" of the World Cup, especially evictions and attempts to mask Brazilian poverty and social issues.

I think that this priority of governments is completely improper, taking into account the social problems we still facing in Brazil and the public who will really make use of the works that are being done for the World Cup... This will not be a popular event, in our class sense of the word.

In terms of the social consequences, a lot of communities are mobilizing against evictions, in places that will be used for works and the whole left is denouncing the attempts to hide our poverty; every place where tourists will pass are being "cleaned" in a process that some specialists are calling "gentrification".

IAR: I guess you must get tired of being asked this all the time by people from outside of Latin America, but still our readers would never forgive us if we didn't ask you: what is Especificismo?

FC: No way! It's always a pleasure to expose our

project of which I'm a huge enthusiast! I think that "especificismo" is a word that we use to express a set of anarchist positions.

Especially our mass strategy, that is focused in building and participating in popular movements (syndicalism, communitarian, rural/peasant and students movements) with some clear positions: its class struggle and combative positions; the position against "ideologization" of the movements (for us, similarly to classical revolutionary syndicalists, popular movements should not be anarchist, marxist or something like); the clear defense of class autonomy and independence from political parties, State, and other institutions that push back against what we call popular movements "protagonism"; the defense of the necessity to reinforce democratic features of the movements, with decisions being taken by the grassroots militants, with self management and federalism serving as the main tools of organization; the revolutionary aims of the movement, reinforcing that we seek a social change in which the main agents are the popular movements, even when we are struggling for reforms – that's what we call "to build popular power".

So, what we've been doing since then is to do, what we have called, "to reinsert anarchism in the social struggles", the place where anarchism came from and should never be separated from.

But mainly, especificismo is related with our conception of anarchist political organization, or anarchist "specific" organization. We maintain that anarchists should be organized on two levels: as work-

ers, in the popular movements, and as anarchists, in the anarchist organizations. We defend what could be called a "programmatic model of organization". Basically, we think that there are lots of differences and contradictions among those who consider themselves anarchists and the solution for that is to create a strong organization with huge political affinity among its members to intervene in an adequate way in the mass struggles, before, during and after the revolution. We also defend a self-managed and federalist organization, with its "organicity" well defined, with equivalent rights and duties, self-discipline and responsibility, unity in terms of ideological, theoretical and strategic/practical issues, trying to use consensus, but using majority vote when necessary.

IAR: When you spoke about the recent history of especificismo in Brazil at the St. Imier Congress last year, you mentioned that at a certain point in your recent history you made a transition from a "traditional" style of anarchist grouping, which you characterised as based on allegiance to an "abstract" politics, to a new model of organising. Can you tell us something about when and how that transition took place and the change of philosophy and practice it led to?

This is basically the way we see anarchist recent history in Brazil. In the 1980s, at the end of the military dictatorship, anarchism re-emerged, mainly focused in cultural centers and affinity groups, investing, we could say, almost all of their time in cultural work (lectures, editions and so on). Although we consider this "first phase" really important, we also see its main limitations.

In the middle of the 1990s, when our current started to develop in Brazil, influenced by some Brazilian experiences and the contact established with Federação Anarquista Uruguia [Uruguayan Anarchist Federation] (FAU), the main issue was: this cultural work could be interesting, and even very relevant, but we saw that in the field of the social struggles anarchism did not exist. In our analysis, one of the reasons that all popular movements of that time were involved with the Partido dos Trabalhadores [Workers Party] (PT) and/or adopting authoritarian forms of organization, was that anarchism was not a political force in these movements.

So, what we've been doing since then is to do, what we have called, "to reinsert anarchism in the social struggles", the place where anarchism came from and should never be separated from.

To use another expression we like here, we think that anarchism has to "regain its social vector", that is, a concrete and effective mass line. I think, not without lots of problems, we have been able to develop this project a lot since then.

Any movement, whether motivated by a crisis or not, to approximate our aims, has necessarily to count on these "libertarian" features.

IAR: Again in Europe part of our political landscape is a bipartisan neoliberal consensus between centre-left and centre-right political parties. But in Brazil for over ten years now, and more recently in other Latin American countries, you have governments that come from the anti-neoliberal left and promote a "progressive" line against neoliberalism, at least in words. How does this affect your work of social insertion, for e.g. in MST, do you find problems with support for the PT government amongst popular organisations, based on past loyalties?

I think Brazilian PT experience have to be studied, because we can find some interesting things.

PT was formed in the 1980's, basically by the unions, communitarian movements (linked, in lots of places, to Liberation Theology) and exiled militants that participated in the armed struggle against the dictatorship. In the beginning, it was a party with a huge mass base and a radical democratic proposal to enter into parliament, with politicians "responding" to the grassroots positions of the movements. Something like the "Greens" in Germany. But the political process since then showed something that we, anarchists, sustain



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since Bakunin.

The state is not a "neutral" institution, it's an institution of domination. And the process of institutionalization that occurred with the PT is showing that, doing that, the party adapts more to the system it proposes to change, instead of the contrary.

A great part of the social movements and left unions are today linked to PT. So, this is something we have to deal and the defense of class autonomy and independence is a banner that we constantly defend in these movements; we try to show that State bureaucracy is our class enemy, not a possible ally. But sure we point it in the same time that we try to reinforce these movements; so it's not a sectarian position or just a radical discourse. We are part of these movements and we still use a phrase that we also like a lot: "it's better to take one step with a thousand, than to take a thousand steps with one".

IAR: From the outside it looks as if there has been something of a renaissance of anarchism across Latin America in the last ten years. Is this the case? What do you make of the prospects for the movement over the next ten years?

Coms, at the same time that I'm a great enthusiast of anarchism, I also know that we're doing a long term job. Looking for our last 20 years, at least in Brazil, we've started from small and sporadic cultural activities to a stage that we are present in almost 10 states of our country, with our Brazilian Anarchist Coordination (CAB), that aims to be a national organization in some years.

We are now in some popular movements: unions, landless movements, peasant movements, communitarian movements, homeless movements, student's movements, involved with lots of struggles. Even as a minor force, anarchism starts again to reappear in these spaces and also to be respected by other political forces. Things are going in this direction. But we have a lot of work to do...

So, by my point of view, in the next 10 years, the objective, at least in Brazil, is to continue firmly growing in terms of our anarchist organization and its "social insertion" in the struggles. If we can deepen this, I think it will be great.



IAR: Do you have any final words or some tips to our comrades that want to know more about Especificismo and its theory and practice in Brazil?

I would like to thank you very much for this opportunity and I also put here some links where people can find some material in English:

CAB. Declaration of Principles
<http://www.anarkismo.net/article/23028>

CAB. Organization that Make up the CAB
<http://www.anarkismo.net/article/23056>

CAB. Libertarian Socialism Magazine
<http://www.anarkismo.net/article/23037>

FARJ. Social Anarchism and Organization
<http://anarkismo.net/article/22150>

http://zabalazabooks.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/social_anarchism_and_organisation_farj_en.pdf

ZACF Interview of FARJ
<http://zabalaza.net/2011/04/23/especificismo-in-brazil-an-interview-with-the-anarchist-federation-of-rio-de-janeiro-farj-3/>

FAG. Message to the Founding Congress of the CAB
<http://www.anarkismo.net/article/23027>

NEFAC Interview FAG
<http://anarchistplatform.wordpress.com/2010/06/14/the-global-influence-of-platformism-today-brazil/>

Adam Weaver. Especificismo: The Anarchist Praxis of Building Popular Movements and Revolutionary Organization in South America

<http://www.nefac.net/node/2081>



INTERVIEW BY: PAUL BOWMAN.

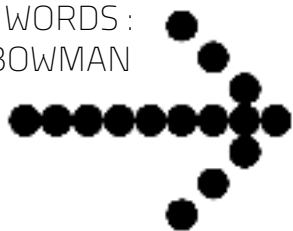
*** Felipe Corrêa (FC) is a Brazilian anarchist who is member of Organização Anarquista Socialismo Libertário [Libertarian Socialist Anarchist Organization] (OASL), which is part of Coordenação Anarquista Brasileira [Brazilian Anarchist Coordination] (CAB).**



Capital's Shadow

A century ago this year Dublin was seized by the great social upheaval of the Lockout. As today organised labour was in the process of being crushed under the combined forces of the bosses and the state. Yet so many things have changed in the intervening hundred years. For a start, more free meals are being served out daily in Dublin 2013 to workers faced with hardship, than at the height of the Lockout.

WORDS:
PAUL BOWMAN



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But then of course Dublin is many times larger today than then. But another of the great differences is that hardship today occurs in a society not only unrecognisable from the eyes of 1913 in material terms - the cars, smartphones, iPads, etc - but also in terms of social relationships. Today hardship for workers, locally, nationally and internationally, means being faced not only with unemployment and empty pockets, but also by debt.

It's not that debt is a new thing. In many ways it's as old as civilisation. But if the locked-out workers of 1913 struggled to feed themselves and their families and falling behind on the rent meant the threat of eviction, yet of negative equity, mortgage arrears, car loans and credit card bills they knew nothing. No finance companies a hundred years ago seriously considered making an industry out of lending substantial sums of money to workers. For sure the pawn shops and loan-sharks (that are with us still) were an important part of working class life at the time, but the idea of lending a sum of money equal to 10, 15 or 20 years of wages to an ordinary working man or woman was unimaginable.

Today the talk from the politicians and newspaper editorials justifying austerity and social destruction are legitimised not by the sovereignty of some foreign crown, but by appeal to the authority of "The Debt". Here debt is raised up from being a condition of individual impecuniosity to the status of a social actor, practically personified as the new sovereign power of capitalism in the austerity age.

Debt and the Crisis

It has become a commonplace to blame the onset of the crisis on the now infamous subprime mortgages. Or in other words, the creation of "bad" debt

in the US housing market, particularly in the period of the "jobless recovery" between 2001 and the onset of the financial crash in the Summer of 2007. Since then, in a European context, the subsequent banking crisis led to the bank bailouts, nationalising the bad debts of the banks, transferring them from the private, supposedly risk-taking investors onto the shoulders of the populace at large. The resulting crisis within the Eurozone then became labelled as a "Sovereign debt crisis". But whichever of the various conflicting explanations of how this process unfolded, and who is and is not to blame, the common thread is that "the Debt" has become synonymous with "the Crisis". Unsurprisingly then, the question of the debt, whether it should be "honoured", negotiated down or repudiated entirely somehow, is a key dividing line in political debate today, both in Ireland and across Europe. In that case, it's important for us to look at what exactly we mean by "the Debt" itself.

Three Levels of Debt

When we talk about debt we need to distinguish three levels. The "micro" level of personal debt. The "macro" level of national or "sovereign" debt. And, last but not least, the "super macro" level of international debt. Of course all three are intimately interrelated, and in the case of the last two, their components are subsumed into the same national accounts. But distinguishing between them is important when creating an account of origins and causes, as we will see further on.

Personal debt is the issuance of financial credit to households and individuals. Whether for consumption (credit cards) or loans for consumer durables

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"the debt linked to domestic housing remains the central contradiction in Irish economic life"

(cars) or domestic property (homes). In most cases the same financial channels can be used either for simple reproduction of self and family, or for acquiring materials, tools or property for self-employed or sole trader enterprise (taxis, investment properties, etc). But the debt remains personal rather than the liability of some incorporated trading identity of a business or firm. Given the distribution of would-be entrepreneurs versus wage earners and the strong incentives to incorporate even the smallest of businesses (avoidance of personal liability, VAT and tax efficiency, insurance and legal requirements) the vast bulk of personal debt is for personal consumption and self-reproduction, in the broad sense including families.

The proliferation of personal debt is actually a relatively recent phenomenon. The general expansion of "Hire Purchase" and later credit cards, did not really take off until the 1970s. Since then we have seen drives in nearly all developed countries to get workers to buy their own houses (through the virtually ending of post-war social housing), get consumer loans for cars, household durables, and run up credit card bills on everyday consumption items.

Some commentators have even talked of an emerging pattern of "privatised Keynesianism". The idea being since the death of Keynesianism in the 1970s and the failure of real wages to rise with productivity since, the resulting gap in aggregate demand has been filled, not with government spending, as in classical Keynesianism, but by credit-fuelled private household consumer spending. Most of this private household debt being anchored around the property value of the family home itself. The difference between the deficit spending of the state and that of private households being that in a credit crisis situation, the state can use its central bank to monetise or inflate away state debts, whereas households have no such power, thus any economy based on their ever-expanding consumption is then trapped in long-term depression when the credit fuelling that consumption collapses along with the house prices that underpinned it. In our current situation it is clear that the end result of this process is that the debt linked to domestic housing remains the central contradiction in Irish economic life.

Although there is not the space to treat this properly here, the other potential debt or surplus holding bodies at the micro level are individual private firms or corporations. What is worth mentioning in our current context of debt-depression and general dearth at the household level (apart from the 1% who are doing nicely as usual), is that the net balance of the corporate sector as a whole is massively in surplus. Mainly because the corporations and their finance providers do not see any profitable opportunities for investing in increased production when the economy is depressed.

National debt is conceptually the debt accumulated from any deficit in the difference between the income and expenditure of the state. This is in contrast to the international debt, which is conceptually the state debt run up as a result of a trade imbalance between its imports and exports to the rest of the world. Although we distinguish these two forms of debt conceptually, in actual fact the net accumulated debt or surplus of the state exists in one balance account, for practical purposes. That

is, a deficit in domestic income and expenditure can be offset by a trade surplus, and vice versa. But it is still important not to confuse the two for causative purposes. For example, trying to eliminate a state debt originating mostly from a trade deficit by slashing public spending on health and education, may well fail.

Right-wing politicians and economists often act as if any national debt is necessarily due only to a mismatch in domestic tax and spend policy. They also tend to act as if the current deficit is always a "structural" deficit. The distinction between the two, is that the idea of a structural deficit is supposed to correct for the so-called economic cycle of periods of growth, punctuated by regular "corrective" recessions. The idea being that recessions naturally produce temporary changes in the national accounts, as people are laid off from work, stop paying taxes and start claiming dole, so income goes down and expenditure goes up. This and other effects of what's called "automatic stabilisers", are to be balanced out by comparing the deficit or surplus during periods of growth and recession and averaging them out. A structural deficit exists only if there is an overall deficit when averaged over the whole cycle. Which sounds sensible and fine, except for the minor detail that there is no agreed standard way to do this calculation. The end result is that the "deficit hawks" will argue during any period of recession that the current annual deficit is really a structural deficit, justifying savage cuts in the teeth of depression.

If the more social democratic or left orientated commentators are generally opposed to this kind of argument that confuses current and structural deficits, they can often be curiously less vocal on the need to distinguish between domestic and international sources of debt. This despite them often repeating many of the slogans or ideas of the anti-or alter-globalisation movements of the 1990s and 2000s. This may be due to a bias towards looking at the economic problems of the local state as being due entirely to bad or rapacious domestic political policy, which can easily be rectified by electing a sufficiently left-wing alternative. The problems of analysing and understanding global trade imbalances and world market crises are perhaps too intimidating for those more used to framing their anti-capitalist critique in a more parochial frame. Besides Marx didn't live long enough to write those volumes he planned on international trade and the world market and crisis. And for those who like to claim that Marxism is a complete "science", such problematic topics are better glossed over, rather than drawing attention to a gaping hole in the dogma.

Theorising debt

The most common theorisation of debt is cast in the frame of a "good cop, bad cop" model of capital. The "good capital" is that invested in firms that produce goods and services that consumers and other firms can use. The "bad capital" then, also known as "speculators" and a host of other names, emphasising their supposedly parasitic nature, is that of financial companies who make profit through financial dealings that do not directly produce "real-world" goods and services.

"It is the mortgagee not the house that is mortgaged. Bricks and mortar never owed anybody anything"

In this frame, debt is seen as a lack - an absence of "real wealth" - or even as a "fiction". There is a huge variety of theories in this basic frame, ranging from the obviously paranoid or nutty, to seemingly sober and credible analyses, both right-wing, liberal and left-wing. Here we will only concern ourselves with the left-wing variants. And rather than give an exhaustive overview of the variant forms in this sub-field, we will content ourselves with picking one exemplar which will serve to illustrate the limitations of the field as a whole.

For our purposes, John Bellamy Foster and Fred Magdoff's 2009 book, "The Great Financial Crises: Causes and Consequences", will serve adequately. Foster and Magdoff's story is in fact one they have inherited from the founders of the Monthly Review (quite literally in Magdoff's case, being the son of Harry Magdoff who co-authored the original MR narrative with Paul Sweezy amongst others).

In outline it says that capitalism has progressed from the competitive stage that Marx analysed in the 19th century, to a stage of Monopoly Capitalism, where giant firms and conglomerates make use of their host state power to overcome the problems of overproduction through Keynesianism at home and policies of imperialism abroad.

Since the end of the late 1960s when the theory was originally crystallised, it has had to undergo certain modifications due to the crisis of Keynesianism in the 1970s and the subsequent onset of Neoliberalism. Still, the claim is that the passage from capitalism's classically competitive phase to that of monopoly capital represents the end of capitalism's dynamic, productive period, and the onset of the period of decline where the social relations of capitalism become "fetters on the forces of production" as in the classical or orthodox interpretation of Marx's 1859 Preface.

The thesis is that capitalism has been in decline since the Great Depression of the 1930s, only interrupted by the effects of WW2 and the subsequent twenty year boom, as a consequence of the destruction of fixed capital in the war providing opportunities for rebuilding, and a Keynesian and imperialist policy designed to hold off the problems of overproduction long enough to prevent a Soviet victory in the Cold War.

Foster and Magdoff provide multiple economic statistics, tables and graphs to show that real wage income and real profit rates (in the US) have stagnated since the end of the post-war boom and the crisis of the 1970s. For them the rapid increase in financialisation since the 1970s and especially since the financial deregulation of the neoliberal era, is just the construction of a decadent speculative "fictional capital" cancer on the stagnating underlying "real" economy.

As in so many other Marxist narratives in the "orthodox" tradition, the underlying cause of everything, the "ghost in the machine" is the "Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall" (TRPF), a supposedly objective law of capitalist dynamics that determines

development irrespective of class struggle or other historical contingencies of war or redistribution of economic and political power across the global theatre.

What is characteristic in this schema is its isolationism. Effectively the impact of international trade, the global market and economic relations beyond the national borders of the USA are treated as at best marginal, at worst as irrelevant. The development of the US economy, which as the largest and most developed capitalist economy in the world, is assumed to be a viable stand-in for the development of global capitalism as a whole, is seen to be governed primarily by the effects of domestic economic policy.

A peculiar side-effect of this position is the effective disconnection between US domestic economic policy and US foreign policy. The former is to be critiqued, "economically", through the prism of the TRPF, according to the Marxist "science" of capitalist dynamics, understood to operate objectively. The latter is to be critiqued morally or politically. Ironically, for a generation originally blooded in the struggle against the Vietnam war, the economic analysis of the "decline" of US capitalism of today's neo-orthodox Marxists has nothing to say of the effect of that war, as it is compartmentalised as a political rather than economic event.

Here the isolationism of the neo-orthodox narrative of US economic decline due to the TRPF reflects an underlying assumption of the disconnectedness of the political and economic spheres, except insofar as disturbances in the former are symptomatic of underlying issues in the latter, in the classical base/superstructure model of orthodox Marxism.

The Securitised Worker

Before moving on to alternative theorisations of the debt question we want to take a brief interlude to look again at the increasing role of personal debt in the lives of workers already touched on above. We already mentioned the notion of "privatised Keynesianism", the idea that with the transition to neoliberalism, the burden of economic stimulus via deficit spending moved from the state onto the shoulders of private households, with the associated shift of housing from social housing and the private and public rental sector, into home ownership. For much of the neoliberal era it appeared that the developed world was moving from the industrial age not so much into the digital age as into the plastic age, the age of the "plastic fantastic" of the credit card, our "flexible friend".

This proliferation of consumer credit was underpinned by the financial revolution in derivatives explored elsewhere and securitisation. Securitisation is really just an extension of the logic that transformed a large portion of company debt into corporate bonds in the 1970s. The idea is to transform a contractual debt obligation between two fixed parties, into a generalised obligation, that can be bought and sold, like any financial security - hence the name - at the creditor end. To standardise the performance of securitised debt, so as to smooth away the different risks of individual debtors defaulting, loans are pooled and tranching according to some fairly complicated, and as it turns out, not entirely reliable, maths.

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"we could call neoliberalism the age of the Securitised Worker"

But the details don't matter so much as the overall picture of how securitisation helped fuel the consumer credit boom, by turning private household debts, whether for mortgages, car loans, student loans, etc, into a tradable financial asset class. What matters is to look closely at what exactly is being securitised. In line with the fetishism of commodities, we routinely talk of the objects as being the subject of the loan - the house is mortgaged, the car is on hire purchase, and so on. But in fact, in every case, the real "object" of securitisation is not the commodity or service (in the case of a university education, for e.g.) being purchased, but the person to whom the debt is being attached. It is the mortgagee not the house that is mortgaged. Bricks and mortar never owed anybody anything. From the perspective of the expansion of consumer credit that accompanied its rise, we could call neoliberalism the age of the Securitised Worker, with the associated process of the becoming-asset of labour.

Post-welfarism

The wider implications of this move from commodified to securitised labour are too many and various to fully explore here. But suffice it to say that prior to the 2007-8 crash, apostles of the new order dared to dream of the extension of the student loan idea to cover all aspects of social services previously provided by the Keynesian welfare state.

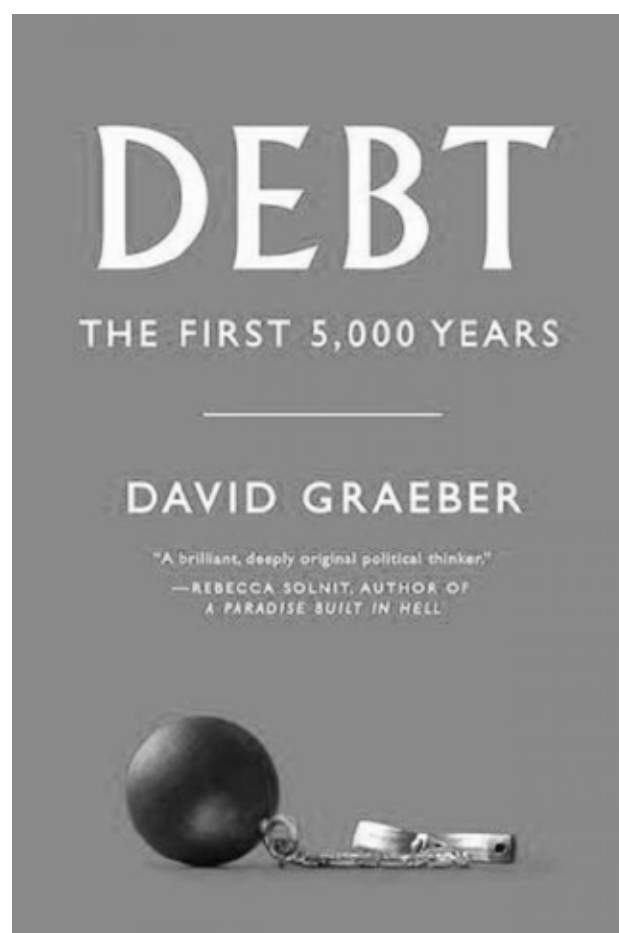
In this neoliberal utopia, the worker would become a kind of human derivative, able to trade options on her or his future earnings to pay for nursery, school, health and other services throughout their life, without ever troubling the state or public sector - which could then be fully privatised. Needless to say, this particular utopia has come crashing down with the epochal crisis of neoliberalism we are now plunged into. Indeed the very situation of many workers in the developed world being saddled with notional debts that bear no relation to real-world asset prices or current earning potential or ability to pay, is itself a major component of the debt-stagnation trap we are currently in.

But even if the neoliberal utopia of the post-welfare human derivative is a bust, the flipside is still evident in the austerity age. The new austerity strategy of extracting money from the population is in some ways a return to a very old one - the "we know where you live" domestic taxation of pre-industrial times, of hearth, chimney and window taxes. But despite its archaic resonances, this return to a "new feudalism" mode of taxation, also emerges from the derivative model. Derivatives have the function of disaggregating a particular income-generating object into its component parts of risks and performances, so as to be able to take a position on the desired facet without buying into the underlying whole package itself. With the increased flexibilisation of work under neoliberalism, the proliferation of precarious, self-employed or

grey economy work, the incentive grows to isolate the 'having income' facet of living labour from the underlying process of earning it.

In this sense the strategy of the troika in attempting to extract money through new home-based taxes (including the privatisation of water and surcharges on electricity, as in Greece) is the dark side of the application of derivatives to living labour. An attempt that has reached a new apogee in the Cyprus crisis occurring at the time of writing, where the troika have attempted to dispense even with the potentially conflictual mediation of domestic taxes and seize the money directly from the accounts of Cypriot workers.

Naturally this mode of disintermediated appropriation raises its own contradictions. Whereas exploitation in the workplace via the struggle between bosses and workers can wear the disguise of a vol-



untary "market" relationship, the struggle between state and citizen over taxation dispenses with that voluntary appearance and manifests as a pure relation of force. The anonymous exploitative power of capital operating through the labour market becomes personified in the struggle between government and people, and the capitalist separation between the political and the economic is brought into question, and potentially into crisis.

Profit or Rent?

A number of these new developments have been taken up by the collection of post-autonomist theorists historically loosely grouped around the Paris-based Multitudes review and Toni Negri, including writers such as Carlo Vercellone, Christian Marazzi and Maurizio Lazzarato. One of the questions they raised was whether exploitation has escaped from the classically Marxist wage-labour form, extracted

in the factory or workplace, and been replaced by a more generalised means of exploitation, spread somehow throughout the "social factory" as a whole. The common point of all these theories being the starting point originally posed by Negri back in the 1970s, of the supposed crisis of the classical law of value. The question is sometimes posed as "the becoming-rent of profit"

This phrase, is Carlo Vercellone's, who has made this question of rent versus profit one of the centre-points of his analysis. In his analysis the becoming-rent of profit is a feature of a "cognitive capitalism" where the value-creating process can no longer be pinned down to a specific subsection of the worker's life, in a particular place and time, but is spread throughout their whole waking life, and even dreams. There is a clear element of truth in this in the work of "creative" producers, whether writers of songs, novels, or obscure academic texts on social theory. For those of us who still like to leave our work in the office or workshop, though, the notion that this tendency has taken over the world of work as a whole, is less credible. And certainly the dormitory cities of the factory workers of Shenzhen and the Pearl River Delta will not recognise their lives as being governed solely by "cognitive capitalism", even if the iPads they manufacture end up in the hands of latte-sipping "cognitariat" creative workers in the West.

Christian Marazzi continues the cognitive capitalism theme with his notion of biofinance. Biofinance, is the idea that financial capitalism has taken over from industrial capitalism as the dominant mode of production. And that rather than extracting surplus value from the wage-labour of externally-directed labour in the workplace, it now extracts surplus value directly from the tendentially self-directed creative labour of the cognitariat, through the various mechanisms of consumer credit and debt. As a descriptive concept, biofinance is a seductive label for the developments we have been talking about, yet its analytical content is at best weak.

By contrast Maurizio Lazzarato, once a significant contributor to the cognitive capitalism research project, has, in his latest book, defected and now says "it seems to me that my friends in cognitive capitalism are mistaken when they make 'knowledge' the origin of valorization and exploitation [...] knowledge cannot provide the basis for the class struggle for either capital or the 'governed'". His alternative takes inspiration from Nietzsche and Deleuze and Guattari's description of debt as power and Foucault's idea of "making an enterprise of oneself".

Yet ultimately, he too remains loyal to the overall problematic of the post-autonomists, re-asserting once more the crisis in the law of value and if anything, applying even more explicitly on the idea that "The financial and banking systems are at the center of a politics of destruction/creation in which economics and politics have become inextricable."

Despite the unorthodox Marxian heresies of the post-autonomists over the question of value and the relative autonomy of the economic from the political, their contributions on the question of debt remain oddly mired in the same Euro- (or US-) centric isolationism of the TPRF-inspired "decline" or-

thodoxies of Foster and Magdoff and their ilk. The notoriously euro-centric perspective of the post-autonomists leaves little room for the role of globalisation in relocating production from the West to China and the rest of Asia and the southern emerging economies in Latin America and South Africa. The idea that the explosion of domestic consumer debt in the West was fuelled by the build-up of huge international trade debts between it and the emergent economies is simply ignored.

The irony here is that whereas the isolationism of the neo-orthodox stems from their assumption of an almost complete disconnection between politics and economics, in the post-autonomists, the opposite assumption - the total lack of such a separation - leads to the same result. Which brings into question how much either side are extracting their analyses from the facts of the current global economic situation, and how much they are simply extemporising from their pre-existing corpus of theory.

A 5000 year old moral quandary?

Nietzsche's absurd inversion of the blood debt values in barbarian honour codes, that so inspires Lazzarato's essay, is rightly poo-pooed in Graeber's "Debt: The First 5,000 Years". Together with his associated dismissal of the "primordial debt" theory of the French regulation school, a school that has had a strong influence on the Paris-exiled post-autonomists, like Vercellone and Lazzarato, Graeber's book would be worth reading for that alone. In fact it contains much more than that, being a veritable treasure trove for those interested in broad sweep history and anthropological tales relevant to challenging the received ideas of our own time and culture about economic interaction, senses of obligation and debt.

Of course it is impossible to do justice to such a book in a short article such as this, but if we had to "pitch" it we might say, it's an anarchist take on Polanyi and Arrighi. It's the element of an Arrighi-style cyclical "theory of history" in Graeber's narrative that has drawn much critical fire. Graeber posits an oscillation between two different forms of money - bullion and virtual/credit money - as an overarching pattern of history. There are clear parallels to Giovanni Arrighi's idea of the oscillation between processes of commercialisation followed by financialisation, along with the "longue durée" of Braudel and the world systems theory schools. The justification for such "theories of history" is no more visible here than elsewhere.

Yet for our purposes here, it is less the cyclical theory of history that interests us, rather more the similarity and divergence with Polanyi's "Great Transformation". In that book Polanyi also proposes different modes of economic intercourse in pre-capitalist or "primitive" societies: redistribution and reciprocity. By contrast Graeber, proposes three modes: communism, reciprocity and hierarchical. However while Graeber's splitting of what appears in Polanyi under redistribution, so as to distinguish between redistributive relations between classless societies or groupings, and those between hierarchically unequal or class-divided groups, is an advance on the original, his inclusion of relations of exchange in the same category as reciprocity is a major regression.

With Polanyi, the whole thrust of his schema is that exchange of the commercial market or capitalist type, is radically external to the economic relations that are compatible with the cohesion of economic and social relations within a single social dynamic.

By subsuming both reciprocity and exchange within the same category, Graeber commits a fundamental error that clouds his ability to diagnose exactly what has changed with the emergence of capitalism that has "broken" his posited cyclical progression of history. This is all the more ironic given that he provides in the book all the real-world examples of different social systems needed to explain the difference between the two.

The example he gives of the reciprocity system of the Nigerian Tiv people where each neighbour is careful never to entirely "balance out" the gifts previously given, for fear of giving the impression of wanting to terminate reciprocal relations, illustrates this perfectly. The whole point of exchange is precisely to sever any ongoing relation of reciprocal obligation - hence why it is possible for the same people to practice both reciprocal gift giving amongst neighbours and community members and exchange buying and selling with strangers.

Despite the similarity of form, exchange is the inversion of reciprocity in content. This is best illustrated by the role of blood debt payment in barbarian honor code societies. Here payment is made not to prolong or recreate a pro-social or cooperative relationship, as in the gift-giving of the Tiv women, but to end the anti-social antagonistic relation of violent clan blood feuds.

With exchange the relation is inverted. With exchange it is the cooperative relation (of swapping goods) that finds closure by payment. It is the failure to close out the exchange with a payment that opens the debt relation - the anti-social relation of compulsion that instrumentalises rather than socially validates the subject.

It is the failure to distinguish this inversion that leaves Graeber struggling to find the means whereby the relations of obligation created by reciprocity become transformed into the relation of debt in exchange-dominated societies. By exchange-dominated societies we of course mean ones where living labour has been separated from the means of production and must sell its labour power as a commodity, as per the common Marxist-influenced socialist tradition.

Although the association with the act of severance of transacted "objects" - whether goods or people - is continually remarked in "Debt", as well as the observation that obligations in reciprocal systems are interpersonal, the connected insight that capitalist debt severs that interpersonal bond and replaces it with a relation between the debtor and the impersonal force that is capital, notwithstanding that the latter be represented by the agency of a financial intermediary, be it bank, credit card or loan company, seems to be not fully grasped.

"Despite the similarity of form, exchange is the inversion of reciprocity in content."

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It is a point, however, that Hardt and Negri do grasp in their latest text, "Declaration". In it they make it explicit that if we want to be rid of debt for good, then not only do we have to get rid of the rule of money, but the relations of impersonal debt to capital must be replaced with new interpersonal relationships of mutual obligation. They express this concept as the need to "invert the debt".

"The refusal of debt aims to destroy the power of money and the bonds it creates and simultaneously to construct new bonds and new forms of debt. We become increasingly indebted to each other, linked not by financial bonds but by social bonds"

With the material that Graeber gives us, we can see this project of Hardt and Negri, for a 'creative destruction' of debt, as a return to a society of reciprocity rather than exchange. Once we have properly understood the gulf that separates the two.

Where Graeber is completely correct is in drawing our attention to the way that discussion over fundamental economic categories like debt are overcoded by moralistic discourses. Debt bad, credit good. And the book is full of stories and linguistic information on how those moral tales and baggage have become ingrained in our treatment of the subject.

But to a certain extent, the very title of his book, along with its subsequent activist programmatic transformation into "The Debt Resisters' Operations Manual", stills cedes an important point in the very choice of the word "debt" itself. Like all writers on the topic, Graeber accepts that debt is merely the reverse side of credit. But there is a fundamental asymmetry between these terms. To call for the end of the debt is not the same thing as calling for the end of credit. By wanting the end of the (bad) debt, without being against the (good) credit, we are ultimately trying to have our cake and eat it, or falling into the path of least resistance in calling merely for the temporary salve of a short-term reform - i.e. the writing off of currently existing debt in a jubilee.

By calling for an end to credit - the origin of debt - we are calling, inescapably, for the end of capital. Because capital and credit are not two separate "substances". In fact, although both are measured in money, neither is a "thing" at all, rather they are social relationships, the relationship of command over living labour. If credit is the carrot, command that promises reward for compliance, then debt is the stick, command that threatens punishment for non-compliance. Credit is the light of capital and debt is its shadow.

But if we are calling for an end to credit and capital, we need to understand not only their historically specific form and contradictions, but also the general social function they fulfill in their particular way, so we have some idea what we will replace them with. In that light, one of the most striking similarities in the diverse left theorisations of debt we have looked at above is the absence of the term most commonly associated with credit in conventional economic discourse - risk.

Risk is another category that does not appear either in Graeber, nor in the differing Marxisms whether the orthodoxies of Foster, Magdoff and co, or the heresies of Negri and his comrades. The absence of risk as a category in Marxism, adds weight to the contention of Michael Heinrich that in fact a full theorisation of credit does not actually appear in Capital, despite Engels attempts to make it look so. Simply put, it is not possible to theorise credit without an analysis of the category of risk, which is currently almost entirely lacking in the existing economic analyses of the left.

Here we need to make note of Jacobin magazine editor Mike Beggs' critique of Graeber's book from an economist's perspective. Beggs notes correctly that it is impossible to talk about debt without addressing the nature of money, something which Graeber accepts from the outset. However Graeber displays a basic lack of knowledge of the different existing monetary theories, developing a posited confrontation in the book between commodity or metallic money and "fiat" or state-created and credit money, which he identifies with chartalism. As Beggs notes, Graeber's assertion that the dominant economic theory of money promotes the former at the expense of the latter is far from the truth. In fact most contemporary economists accept modern money as state-created fiat money, expanded by bank created credit money. The big economic debate between economists is over what determines the value of such money, and the extent to which governments actually control its supply.

Roughly speaking this is an unequal three way split between a dominant quantity theory position, a sizeable minority of neo-Keynesian chartalists and a tiny marginal group of post-Keynesian circuitists or "endogenous money" theorists. Without going into the details (and why the first 2 groups are wrong), which would take an article in itself, Graeber's understanding of chartalism is simply incorrect from an economic point of view, which is symptomatic of his general approach of throwing the analytical baby out with the ideological bathwater of bourgeois economics. Unless we accept the millenarian visions of the likes of the Communization tendency who believe that all scarcity is an artificial imposition of capitalist malevolence and the need for managing scarce resources (a.k.a. the environment) will disappear, as if by magic, come that glorious day, then economic analysis will remain an integral requirement for the movement of self-emancipation of the class. And an analysis of the genuine dynamics of money in capitalism will also be a precondition not only for its critique, but also its overcoming and abolition.

So, in summary, at the end of our inquiry into left-wing theorisations of debt, we find ourselves in a very unsatisfactory, but perhaps not all that surprising, state of affairs. It becomes obvious that left-wing analysis of debt is lacking certain basic theoretical foundations including the real nature of money, not at the level of abstraction of Marx's value form analysis of chapter 1 of Capital I, nor yet at that developed in volume III, but one in the more concrete context of a full theory of credit and risk and international trade and the global market. On the plus side, given the current incoherence and ineffectiveness of left-wing responses to the crisis, it would be even more worrying to examine our collective analytical framework and find no obvious gaps. The need for a new research project then,

that analyses not only value, but value at risk over time, and through that the role of credit, risk and the world market in the current global regime of accumulation, lies clearly before us. But alongside that analytical project, and inextricably linked to it, is the need to engage in the struggle against debt, one of most significant fronts in the class struggle today.



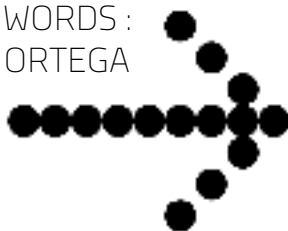


On The RAG

A conversation between Clare Butler and Angela Coraccio of the Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group (RAG) and Leticia Ortega of RAG and the Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM).

RAG is a diverse group of anarcha-feminist women in Dublin. They produce a magazine, The Rag, organise film screenings and fundraisers, host public discussions, conduct workshops and 'zine distro.

WORDS :
LETICIA ORTEGA



Leticia: Why did you join RAG?

Clare: I've been involved in RAG since before the first edition came out about eight years ago and was involved in putting that together and getting the group going at the beginning. I was already involved in activism in Galway and Dublin and was really excited to see a group coming together that had a specific feminist agenda. All the members of the group were really good fun and everyone was really positive.

Angela: I joined because I read the magazine and really liked it. I thought I'd just submit an article. Someone explained that it doesn't really work that way, but the more I learned about how RAG worked, the more I wanted to get involved.

Leticia: Why did you feel the need for a specifically anarcha-feminist group?

Angela: For me, it was the magic of RAG! I'd never identified as anarchist before moving here from America. It was a through learning the collaborative process that RAG uses and getting to know the group that I ended up learning about anarchism. It's no coincidence that I started to explore anarchism since moving to Ireland. Back in America, I had a pretty decent job and lived relatively comfortably. Then I moved here and I've been unemployed for the last four years. Being on social welfare for the first time helped me turn to alternative ways of thinking.

Clare: I hadn't set out to be part of a specifically anarchist group, but an anarchist analysis and method of organising just made sense. I felt this type of group was much more accessible and provided a space to explore and interrogate our internal and external politics.

Leticia: You have people like Katie Perry coming out and saying they aren't feminists. Do you think feminism is a dirty word?

Clare: I think things have changed a lot in the last two to three years, in Dublin anyway. There are a lot more people calling themselves feminists and a lot of new feminist groups out there.

Angela: I think 1989 was when I started to identify as a feminist when I took a women's studies class in High School. I remember Kathleen Turner, yer wan from Roger Rabbit, speaking at my sister's graduation and describing herself as a feminist, in the early nineties it was ok, albeit slightly rebellious to call oneself a feminist. A whole counter culture was created around young politicised women's voices. But then in the late nineties, there seemed to be a backlash that we're recovering from just now. Riot grrrl fashion is back in; there are women half my age listening to the bands I was listening to in university.

Clare: Another thing is that the re-emergence of

.....The Irish Anarchist Review

feminism could be related to the recession because now people are not prepared to sit around and believe everything is going to be okay. You see all these young women suddenly getting involved in feminism and all the pro-choice stuff, maybe because they don't have the options they did a few years ago, where they'd be getting a job and buying a house. When they look around they're probably thinking, "What the fuck is going on here? We're being taken for a ride." Once they question one thing, they start thinking, reading, looking around and when you see inequality in one place you may be quicker to see it in relation to gender as well. Also, issues in relation to body image are on the increase, so while there are more people identifying with feminism, there are more people feeling shit about themselves too.

Angela: I think in Ireland the media still has a long way to go. There needs to be more female hosts of shows, more shows about women's issues, there needs to be more female voices in radio that aren't just what's-her-face Finucane. There needs to be a chorus of voices.

Leticia: Not a lot of people know it was RAG who organised the first meeting that lead to the establishment of the Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC). Could you tell us a bit about that?

Angela: We were in a RAG meeting and we were talking about how frustrating it was that there were so many pro-choice groups but none of them were working together, so we said let's just organise an open meeting and ask all the pro-choice groups to come. So from that we established the Irish Choice Network which was to be an umbrella group. At the second meeting, which was a day of workshops, about eighty to one hundred people

showed up. From there, working groups were created and from there the campaign just really took off.

Clare: That was the most amazing meeting. I'd never been to anything like that where you had all these women in their twenties who had never been involved in anything before and just wanted to do something.

Angela: Then we ended up with this national campaign and right from the start you could see these hierarchies forming. There was this real solidarity moment where those people who had been involved in stuff before, recognised what was happening and said, no, this is not how we want the campaign to be organised.

Clare: There is significant anarchist involvement in the ARC, but most of us don't go around trying to recruit anybody and the majority of roles the anarchist-leaning people do is the back room work; there's no glory. I think it's just what all of us want to do. We don't have an interest in being on television or being up on a stage.

Leticia: Is there a challenge in the ARC to convince people of the need for abortion on demand? Are there some people who only want X-case legislation?

Angela: There was one meeting early on where I asked if campaigning for abortion on demand might be too far for some people, but that fear was immediately shot down.

Clare: Everyone in the campaign is 100% signed up for free, safe and legal abortion on demand. They all recognise the connections between the church and the state in controlling women and

that there isn't much point in it being safe and legal if it's inaccessible, so it should also be free. There's been a massive change in society too. You can say the word abortion on the street; six months ago you couldn't. We were talking about names for the campaign and we kept coming up with ones that included the word "choice", but now, of course it's the Abortion Rights Campaign, what else would you call it?

Leticia: What are your goals for RAG for the future?

Angela: I do like the magazine being produced and ultimately I'd like us to go back to that format or have an established, regularly updated website. At the same time I like the lack of pressure to create those things. That's what makes RAG so cool. There are periods when we don't feel the need to have meetings every week and when people are motivated, stuff happens. Right now the pro-choice thing is really prominent in what members are doing, so we don't have much time for RAG. Not having a schedule to keep helps us not see it as work. When we did that before, we all got pretty burned out, and burnout is really hard to bounce back from.

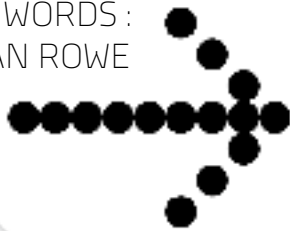
Clare: I'd like to see it continue to exist for its members the way it existed for me. It's strengthened my politics, it's strengthened my confidence. We organised lots of events that opened people's eyes to feminism, that introduced people to anarchism, and if it can still fulfill that role for its members, then that would be a wonderful thing.



The Politics of Voices: Notes on Gender, Race & Class

As class-struggle anarchists dealing with the relations between gender, race and class, we must, in theory and practice, pick a path between two pitfalls.

WORDS:
AIDAN ROWE



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On one side is economic reductionism – the reduction of all political questions to the social relations of production – which erases the perspectives and struggles of women, queers and people of colour; submerges their voices within an overly generalised class narrative, in which the idealised Worker is implicitly white heterosexual and male; or consigns their struggles to a secondary importance compared to the “real struggle” of (economic) class against class. On the other is a stultifying and inward-looking liberal-idealist identity politics, concerned fetishistically with the identification of privilege and the self-regulation of individual oppressive behaviour to the (near) exclusion of organised struggle, which, while amplifying the voices of the marginalised, consigns them to an echo chamber where they can resonate harmlessly.

While both poles described are actualised within the anarchist milieu, we should not make the mistake of thinking that both pitfalls are equally imminent. White supremacy and patriarchy[1] are hegemonic within our society and this is reflected in anarchist spaces: dismissive “critiques” of identity politics are far more common than over-enthusiastic engagement. Therefore this piece will not offer yet another of these critiques, which more often than not function only to justify the continued ignorance and inaction of those unwilling to destabilise their privilege.[2]

Rather this piece deals with a more difficult question: “How does one reconcile the diverse political perspectives of feminists, queers and activists of colour with the tradition of class-struggle anarchism?” I do not offer a complete or authoritative answer, but rather attempt to move forward a conversation which seems to be perpetually reiterating its own beginning: “we must begin to talk about gender and race issues”. Indeed we must, but we must also move beyond beginning.

The traditional approach

Most class-struggle anarchist understandings of the inter-relation of gender, race and class allude in one way or another to the Marxist base-superstructure model of society, whereby the relations of production are the base of society, which generate the political superstructure which includes the state, culture, gender and race relations etc. A vulgar Marxist idea of the base-superstructure model holds that the base determines the superstructure absolutely and the superstructure is unable to affect the base. The implication of this is that no specific agitation on gender or race issues is needed: if women, queers or people of colour wish to improve their position in society they should simply participate in the class struggle which will necessarily and automatically result in the dissolution of all hierarchies. A particularly crude but somewhat instructive example of this thinking tells us:

In any class society—thus, in any society in which the state and the economy exist—only the ruling class can be truly said to have privilege... [S]o-called privileges are nothing more than a minimal easing of the conditions of exploitation experienced by people in these specific social categories. They are intended to convince these people that they have more in common with their exploiters than with those not granted the same “privileges” and to convince the others that their real enemy is not the ruling class, but rather those granted a less intense level of exploitation... Since only the ruling class truly has privilege, the destruction of privilege will only occur when we destroy all rule. [3]

This sort of utopian thinking denies that gender or race have any autonomy from class: patriarchy and white supremacy are merely tools employed by the ruling class to divide the workers. Of course, in reality, the establishment of a com-

“If left unexamined, our subconscious habits in social interactions will reproduce the marginalisation of the already marginalised within the anarchist movement.”



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unist economic system does not preclude the continuation of patriarchy or white supremacism. One can easily imagine, for example, a communist system where women are held to be the collective sexual property of men, with sexual access ensured by systematic rape and battery, whose economy is perfectly functional.

"Who among us has the power to define the "objective" interests of the working class?"

More sophisticated variants of this model, often accompanied by some dialectical flourish, acknowledge the necessity of specific anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic, and anti-transphobic agitation, lest these dynamics persist "after the revolution", but still understand gender and race issues as being essentially forms of bigotry fostered by the ruling class to divide workers against themselves to prevent the realisation of their collective "objective" interests as a class. Gender and race struggles are thus positioned as ancillary to the class struggle, even if they are formally considered "central" to it. Patriarchy and white supremacism are not understood as constituting systems in their own right and forms of power other than the economic are rendered invisible. The pertinent question here is not whether this picture is correct in some "objective" sense - whether metaphysically all power "really" resides in the means of production - but rather: which voices are amplified by this framing and which are muted? What forms of action are opened and foreclosed by choosing this framework at the expense of another? Who among us has the power to define the "objective" interests of the working class?

'Scientific socialism' and subjectivity

No theory, no ready-made system, no book that has ever been written will save the world. - Mikhail Bakunin[4]

A particularly egregious influence of Marxism on anarchist thought is the supposed need to understand the world systematically - to render the world objectively knowable through the development of a theoretical system, which totally describes reality, and provides a set of objective truths against which other understandings of the world can be compared - related to the failed project of "scientific socialism". Anarchists (Bakunin in particular) have long recognised the authoritarian nature of this project: a movement mobilised according to scientific theories can only be a movement of "experts" leading the masses - the "false consciousness" of the masses can only be directed to revolutionary ends by the Party, which, by some unknown means, comes to be the bearer of true consciousness backed up by objective scientific facts.[5]

Objective or universal knowledge is impossible. We exist within a web of social relations and only a god would be able to view the totality of social

relations as an objective observer. What we see and what we do not see is dependent both on how we are positioned relative to others and in which directions we choose to look. Since men don't experience the world as women, for example, the reality of women's oppression is knowable to us only indirectly and partially. The systems we develop for understanding the world are therefore products of the particular web of power relations in which we are situated; are necessarily at best partial, subjective and tentative. They reflect both the oppressions and privileges to which we are subject. Their proper function is as working theories that enable us to act as effectively as possible within our social context, not as dogmas to which reality must be made to fit. Claims to objectivity and universality are nothing other than a power grab; what is considered central to the struggle for human liberation is a reflection of who has power within the movement. The centrality of economics to our theory, and our particular conception of what class struggle entails and what it does not must be critically re-evaluated in this light.[6]

"Claims to objectivity and universality are nothing other than a power grab; what is considered central to the struggle for human liberation is a reflection of who has power within the movement."

Intersectionality and privilege

[T]here is an important value in overcoming the fear of immanent critique and to maintaining the democratic value of producing a movement that can contain, without domesticating, conflicting interpretations on fundamental issues. - Judith Butler[7]

Feminist theory provides useful theoretical tools for analysing the inter-relations of gender, race and class. Critiques of second-wave feminism, particularly from women of colour, highlighted the role of universalist feminist narratives in the marginalisation of working-class women, women of colour, and those whose gender expression or sexuality deviated from the norm: the idea of a universal female experience in practice meant the universalisation of the issues of the most privileged sections of the feminist movement. The theory of intersectionality was developed to address the issue of how a movement could begin to accommodate the incoherence of perspectives entailed by the abandonment of universalism and still continue to function effectively.[8]



Intersectionality recognises that these incoherences are not merely intellectual disagreements, but rather reflect real differences in the experience of oppression from different subject-positions. We are all oppressed and privileged in various ways within various systems, and these systems interact in complex ways to produce a totality within which gender, race and class cannot be disentangled and approached as distinct objects: ones positioning with respect to race, for example, changes qualitatively what it means to be a certain gender. We must therefore reject the notion that the class struggle is or could be the same for everyone, and turn to the more complex task of treating class as contingent on other hierarchies.

Dare to look at the intersectionalities. Dare to be holistic. Part of the heart of anarchy is, dare to go against the grain of the conventional ways of thinking about our realities. Anarchists have always gone against the grain, and that's been a place of hope. - bell hooks[9]

Examining intersectionalities means not just developing an understanding of the different forms of oppression and the struggles against them, but also means asking certain questions about the ways in which they intersect. To illustrate, let's examine two seemingly distinct areas of recent WSM activity - the Campaign Against the Household and Water Taxes (CAHWT), which is a particular tactical engagement in a more generalised struggle against austerity, and the campaign for abortion rights in Ireland, which forms part of a wider struggle to maximise reproductive choices for women - and ask: what is the relationship between austerity as a generalised imposition on our class and the restriction of reproductive choice as a particular imposition on women? What are the common forms of social control mobilised in these two seemingly discrete spheres?

Both are biopolitical projects; that is, both aim, at the level of the individual and of the population at large, at producing certain kinds of people and not others in the furtherance of particular objectives. Austerity, which is commonly understood as a mechanism of extracting capital from the population and transferring it to a capitalist class in crisis (which is true), is also a project aimed at reshaping our lives to produce austere subjects: idealised workers primed for participation in neoliberal markets, who provide a maximum of productivity at a minimum cost, living lives with a minimum

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of material comforts, a restricted sphere of social activity, whose activity is continually aimed at maximising marketable skills, actively seeking job "opportunities" etc.[10] The restriction of reproductive choices, while often seen as merely a result of backward religious moralism, must also be understood in this way: by denying women access to abortion outright and ensuring that access to contraception is expensive, sexual activity (and the social activity surrounding it) is disciplined toward the production of life within certain normative contexts (i.e. the stable monogamous relationship, called marriage in its ideal form) while other forms are precluded.[11] Both involve the mobilisation of many of the same mechanisms of social control: the police, the judicial system, the contraction of the welfare state (in particular the cuts to child benefit function to prevent problematic sections of the working class from reproducing and placing a burden on the state, while imposing a particularly cruel form of discipline on those that do), the taxation system (VAT on condoms, for example), education, public health etc.

"We must... reject the notion that the class struggle is or could be the same for everyone, and turn to the more complex task of treating class as contingent on other hierarchies."

An intersectional approach thus reveals the deep interconnections between superficially distinct spheres of political activity. Women's struggles and the class struggle are found to be inseparable. The slogans "Can't Pay, Won't Pay" and "My Body, My Choice" resonate deeply with one another, as both involve a refusal of biopolitical control and an assertion of the right to live self-directed lives autonomous of the demands of the powerful. Intersectional praxis involves, in part, uncovering these interconnections and writing them into the public discourse.

Speaking and listening

As anarchists, we are not immune to the effects of being formed within a social context in which women, queers and people of colour are systematically oppressed. Practices of dominance and submission are deeply ingrained into our culture and habituated within normative forms of social interaction, and cannot simply be dispelled with the performative declaration: "I am anti-racist", "I am anti-sexist", "I am an anarchist" etc.[12] Put simply: if left unexamined, our subconscious habits in social interactions will reproduce the mar-

ginalisation of the already-marginalised within the anarchist movement.

If, as I have argued, the building-blocks of anarchist theory and practice are the subjective perspectives of those who experience oppression directly (as opposed to ready-made theoretical systems) then an awareness of the ways in which privilege manifests in interpersonal relations is of particular importance.[13] The ability to contribute to shaping the direction of the movement is predicated on the ability to speak and be listened to by others within the movement. The ability to speak from an authoritative position, with the expectation of being listened to, understood and treated seriously, the ability to rely on certain culturally-specific assumptions (common sense[14]) in making a point, and so on, are more readily available to those who are already privileged by power structures than it is to those who are not. Awareness of privilege, then, is an important counterbalance to social forces which produce marginalisation, which allows us to organise more effectively against those forces. This is the precise opposite of the liberal-moralist theory of privilege, which elevates privilege awareness to the status of an abstract good.

The class struggle

At this point one might be wondering what precisely the implication of this argument is. Do I mean to say that class must no longer be at the centre of anarchist politics? Or am I saying that class is understood in a way that is too narrow? I am saying both of these things, or, more precisely, both are valid ways of parsing the same argument. If class is understood as being simply a matter of economics, and particularly those aspects of capitalist economics that appear most pressing to white heterosexual men; if class-centricity means that a deep understanding of the way in which capitalism produces capitalists and workers is essential for all anarchists, while deep understandings of the way in which patriarchy produces men and women, and white supremacy produces white people in relation to a multiplicity of (in) subordinate races[15], are not; then class must be removed from the centre of our theory. If, however, class is understood as encompassing the totality of hierarchical social relations, as being the product of many systems acting sometimes in concert and sometimes autonomously of one another, and moreover as bringing together a diversity of experiences and struggles in a spirit of solidarity and mutual recognition, then this is precisely the heart of anarchism.

[1]I am using these terms in a broad sense for the sake of readability. White supremacy encompasses all oppressions on the basis of race, ethnicity, culture, nationality and migration status which function to empower whites. Similarly, patriarchy includes the oppression of women, queers, trans* people and others oppressions on the basis of gender.

[2]For a balanced critique, see "The Poverty of Privilege Politics" by Tabitha Bast and Hannah McClure, Shift Magazine, <http://shiftmag.co.uk/?p=679>

[3]"A Question of Privilege", Venomous Butterfly, http://www.geocities.ws/kk_abacus/vb/wd8priv.html

[4]Quoted in Michael Bakunin (1961) by E. H. Carr, p. 175

[5]Within the Marxist tradition, this attempt to attribute the "perspective of totality" to the Party has been criticised by John Holloway. See Change The World Without Taking Power, p.35, <http://www.edtechpost.ca/readings/John%20Holloway%20-%20Change%20the%20World%20Without%20Taking%20Power.pdf>

[6]At the risk of stating the obvious, I am not advocating here a rejection of science as a methodology or the embracing of irrationalism; rather we should embrace a certain epistemological modesty and reject the power effects of positioning a particular set of ideas as scientific/universal/totalistic.

[7]"The End of Sexual Difference" in Undoing Gender by Judith Butler, p. 176

[8]See "Refusing To Wait: Anarchism and Intersectionality" by Deric Shannon & J. Rogue, <http://www.anarchist-studies.org/node/339> for an account of the history of this development, as well as an excellent exposition of intersectional theory.

[9]"How Do You Practice Intersectionalism? An Interview with bell hooks", Common Struggle, <http://commonstruggle.org/bellhooks>

[10]In particular, various reforms of the social welfare system have a particular aim of disciplining the unemployed in this way.

[11]The fact that this project is increasingly an abject failure producing an assortment of individually and socially problematic situations is besides the point here.

[12]See, for example, "Towards an Anarchist Anti-Racism" by Dónal O'Driscoll, <http://www.wsm.ie/c/toward-anarchist-anti-racism>

[13]For another class-struggle anarchist perspective on "Privilege Theory", which takes a somewhat different approach from mine, see "A Class Struggle Anarchist Analysis of Privilege Theory" from the Anarchist Federation Women's Caucus, <http://www.afed.org.uk/blog/state/327-a-class-struggle-anarchist-analysis-of-privilege-theory--from-the-womens-caucus-.html>

[14]"Many quite nefarious ideologies pass for common sense. For decades of American history, it was "common sense" in some quarters for white people to own slaves and for women not to vote. Common sense, moreover, is not always "common" -- the idea that lesbians and gay men should be protected against discrimination and violence strikes some people as common-sensical, but for others it threatens the foundations of ordinary life." "A 'Bad Writer' Bites Back" by Judith Butler, <https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/wash/www/butler.htm>

[15]See "Abolish Whiteness" by Noel Ignatiev, <http://imaginenoborders.org/pdf/zines/Abolish-Whiteness.pdf> for a development of this point.



Avoiding Burn Out - Self-Care and Support in Activism

This is a glimpse into a process of investigation into ourselves and each other. It's neither the beginning nor the end and so it's open to change. It's never static. For now, at least, it's the culmination of a year of conversations around what it might look like to be part of a movement that cultivates an environment of collective and self-care, support, revolutionary love and self-determination.

The opinions that will follow are my own but i will use the word 'we' throughout this piece to reflect that these ideas were inspired by others and created through conversation and dialogue. I take responsibility for them but am open to suggestions and the possibility that they will change where better versions replace them.

"Consciously organising with collective-self-care in mind makes our unconscious domination over others more tangible and open to challenge."

A little background - we have all come from different places in our political lives. We feel the need to be active in the struggles to effect change in our specific circumstances and beyond. We feel the pressure from the strain we put ourselves under and that we find ourselves dealing with. We have come up against burnout on personal and collective levels. Burnout, which in most cases would have been avoidable if we had had practices, structures and mindsets in place to deal with it. The participants are one of the most valuable assets in our movements and if we cannot sustain ourselves in healthy environments then how do we envision achieving our goals short or long term? So we started to talk about all of this; the cultures we create and partake in; the martyrdom we act out within our organisations and workplaces; the oppressions we recreate; the bad practices which we continue to do. We recognise that change needs to happen on a societal scale, and we also know that change needs to happen on smaller scales; personally, collectively and within how we organise and act. The way we think motivates the ways in which we behave as individuals and as collectives, which in turn has a knock on effect on us and our movements. We are at once part of something bigger than us and at the same time comprised of smaller parts. Understanding the interplay between large and small scale change is vital. Understanding the interplay between personal and social change is imperative. We do not claim to know which place needs to change first and frankly we don't care (there are way too many good minds focusing on theories which we will never be able to know fully. Claiming universalised truths is not our game). What we do know is that we are ready to start challenging the taken-for-granted on all levels and we await the outcomes.

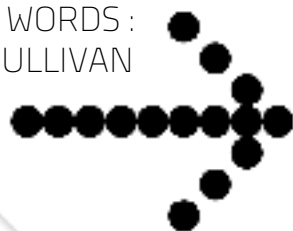
Self-care and collective-care within movements and campaigns is an area we find to be lacking. Too often do we overwork ourselves until we either drop-out or become disenchanted with what we are doing. We see each other running ourselves into the ground in the name of some cause which is 'bigger' than us and 'better' than us. Worthy causes no doubt, but worthy of our self/collective sacrifice? If our political work is so important to us and the notion of not working toward a better society is unthinkable, then why can we not step back and put our energy into reorganising in more healthy and balanced ways? If we can achieve this then we can sustain our resistance for longer and for the better. We can plan more efficiently and we can work towards our ends, together, keeping in mind, and in action, the ethos of how we want to live 'after the revolution'. So how do we go about this?

"Taking the control of our minds and bodies away from others and putting the decisions back into our own hands has been undeniably empowering."

Firstly we need to rethink the idea of self-care. This notion has been colonised by neoliberalism. To many of us it conjures up images of over-indulgent consumers buying their karma tokens at the nearest yoga centre. Or individualistic new age practitioners who do not see a collective vision of enlightenment. This is not what we are advocating. But we are also not suggesting that there is no such thing as looking after yourself on a personal level and in the ways that appeal to you. We all have specific ways of sustaining ourselves and having fun and these are not things that we should feel guilty about. Guilty pleasures are a hangover from a time gone by. We should not condemn ourselves or each other for partaking in the good things in life now and again. If we are striving for a better world then that world is also for us to live in. This is not to say that we ignore our privilege where we find it but that instead of getting bogged down in guilt we use these feelings to harness energy to challenge these privileges and change the structures that created them.

People often relate to self-care in an instrumental way. One that has us periodically taking part in

WORDS:
AMBER O'SULLIVAN



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Avoiding Burn Out - Self-Care and Support in Activism////////

"Capitalism has devalued the emotional, the spiritual, and the feminine as weak and unproductive. Re-instituting these aspects into our political work can be a subversive act in itself."

something that will nourish us. This, we feel, is flawed. We are not vessels that need to be cleaned every now and again to be kept in good condition. We are vast and complicated beings and self-care needs to be something we make part of ourselves, the way we think and the way we act and react. The type of self-care we are looking for is not an individual thing but a collective act. We do not exist alone, or in some vacuum, we are social, we exists alongside others whether we like it or not and the healthy functioning of the entirety will only do us good. If the people we are engaging with everyday are being cared for then we get to work in an environment which will be much more functional. I'm sorry if this is starting to sound like a managerial or marketing plan, but I am trying to sell this idea to people. Big businesses and corporations have team building and support systems in place because they want to make their workplace as profitable as possible. Our difference is that we are not out to get a monetary profit. We, as anarchists and activists do not view social change in terms of profit, instead we view it as a myriad of things that need to happen on different levels in order for us all to live in a world which is more equal, just and humane.

Something that we have noticed is how we don't have a metric for failure within our organisations. Big businesses have this as a self-serving rule in order not to waste time, energy and resources on dead ends. But what structures do we have in place when we try to evaluate how effective we are being? How do we know when we are doing something wrong or when we should stop when we haven't collectively figured out what failure might look at? How do we know what to change when we're doing it wrong when we don't organise around this possibility. And does it not seem irrational to ignore these ideas?

This might be one of the reasons why we find ourselves repeatedly banging our heads off walls. It seems to make sense that we should try to understand the warning signs if we want to be more

effective. Putting this into practice is another challenge. Accepting our own vulnerability on personal and collective levels may also be quite useful. Failure and making mistakes is human and can be immensely helpful in teaching us how to do it right the next time. If we can communicate this to each other then maybe we won't feel like we need to be ashamed of needing a break, or time out, or just working less. People accept that self-care is important, who would say otherwise? But when it comes down to it we think it is for other people, and rarely ourselves.

If, as anarchists, we believe that domination needs to be understood on a person-to-person basis, as well as on a wider level then it seems that the idea that self/collective-care becomes integral to mutual support, sustainable communities, self-determination and an effective working practice. Any politics we wish to create become representative of the selves we bring to it. With these ideas in mind we have another way of looking at how we recreate self-oppression, mirroring how we are viewed under capitalism – not worth the care and love that we know people deserve and only good for our incredible self-abasing work ethic.

So how do we do this practically within our groups? What would a reorganised workspace look like if self/collective care were vital parts of the structure? From our perspective we first need to rethink the idea of self-care, critically asking everything we can about how to go about it, what care is, what the self is and how we relate to each other. We don't have answers here that will fit everyone's circumstances and so it is up to us to begin talking about this together. We have found that simply communicating these ideas to each other or talking about our worries and issues in a group context is a great way to understand our common experiences and so to begin to question how we can do things better. People create themselves in relation to others and so it will only be through others that we can really try and change ourselves. In this sense we see that people are in an ongoing process of constructing ourselves anew and so self-care becomes an ongoing process instead of a periodic one.

We need to adopt a really critical perspective when it comes to thinking about what we think about and why we think it. It also means radically intervening on ourselves and each other when we see the need. An example is about how we relate to others who could be described as 'broken people'. We recognise the damaging effect that capitalism has on all of us – 'breaking' us, in a sense. But when it comes down to it we find it hard to deal with broken people and fittingly we find it hard to see ourselves as part of the broken bunch. If this sounds dramatic I don't intend it to. Broken doesn't have to mean damaged irreparably. Instead think of it as something waiting to be reconstructed anew. It's good to keep in mind here that our thoughts and behaviour may be deeply colonised by our oppressive societal structures. Simply identifying as anti-capitalist or disproportionately focusing on domination in 'traditional' institutional terms – state, patriarchy, race etc. – and forgetting about the selves that make up these institutions and continue their oppressions, ultimately is not enough. It also undermines our abilities and goals to reach out to, learn from and support people around us who don't identify in the

same terms or with the same lexicon but who are nonetheless involved in social change. Decolonising our brain and our responses is an extremely political act. One that challenges the supposition which much of our groups have that we are doing everything in the best way possible, again leaving no room to talk about possible failure on some level. This is disempowering for those involved who feel that things aren't being done right but who lack the capacity to voice their opinion in an environment which doesn't hear it.

Consciously organising with collective-self-care in mind makes our unconscious domination over others more tangible and open to challenge. If we maintain cultures of rationality and over-work we undoubtedly push those away who have felt the immense oppressions of living in a deeply unequal and divided society. Caring for ourselves and each other in an autonomous fashion has been one of the building blocks of the feminist movement. Taking the control of our minds and bodies away from others and putting the decisions back into our own hands has been undeniably empowering. But it is not just within the boundaries of the feminist movement that this should happen. Capitalism has devalued the emotional, the spiritual, and the feminine as weak and unproductive. Re-instituting these aspects into our political work can be a subversive act in itself.

We propose collective forms of self-care because in doing so we lessen the potential for care to become exclusively a privilege for white, middle-class activists. Political activism as an act of solidarity with others enlivens the passions and drives us forward and through hard times. It's ugly sister being the left-wing vanguard rhetoric of work-more, gain-more, martyrdom. This model doesn't seem to suit the majority in the long-run. Especially not those who for physical, mental or emotional reasons just plain cannot work themselves to the bone and often only survive because of a clear understanding of their necessity for care, love and support.

So how can we protest differently? How can we organise ourselves so group cohesion, fun, positivity and self/collective care can be part of our practice? How then do we also politicise the ideas and realities of failure and sadness and make them part of who we are and how we learn? How do we create spaces for these ideas to be fleshed out more and discussed openly? How can we notice the warning signs along the way so we don't run ourselves and each other into the ground? What do we do when our groups aren't receptive to these ideals? And how do we not pathologise what we do and why we do it along the way?

Many questions. Many answers. We would love to hear your ideas and experiences.



Review of Volume 2 of the Anarchist FAQ

WORDS: ANDREW FLOOD

Back before many people had discovered the internet a small group of anarchists including this writer began work on the Anarchist FAQ. We were tired of having to provide the same basic explanations over and over as new people joined the news net group, alt.soc.anarchism, so we began the FAQ so newcomers could be referred to it.

I soon dropped out of the project as did most of the others involved but a small group, with Iain McKay the most active among them, kept working on it year after year. In the sixteen years that have passed the FAQ has become huge and an exhaustive argument for anarchism.

Long texts are hard to read off a computer screen so publication of the FAQ in a printed form was an obvious step. Volume 2 of the FAQ has just been published by AK Press, it is a six hundred plus page volume containing sections G-J of the FAQ. Each section is broken down into twenty or more specific questions which once posed are answered with extensive references to current research in that area.

Section G, 'Is individualist anarchism capitalistic' reveals something of the origins of the FAQ. The arguments we found most tiresome back in the 1990's were those with so called 'anarcho-capitalists'. Although this is a very rare ideology, in the early days of the web the numbers on the anarchist forums were way out of proportion with the numbers found offline - I had never in fact met one anyway. That's because the early web included a lot of techies influenced by the ideas of Ayn Rand, a Russian exile who preached a particularly anti-social message of individualism and naked capitalism.

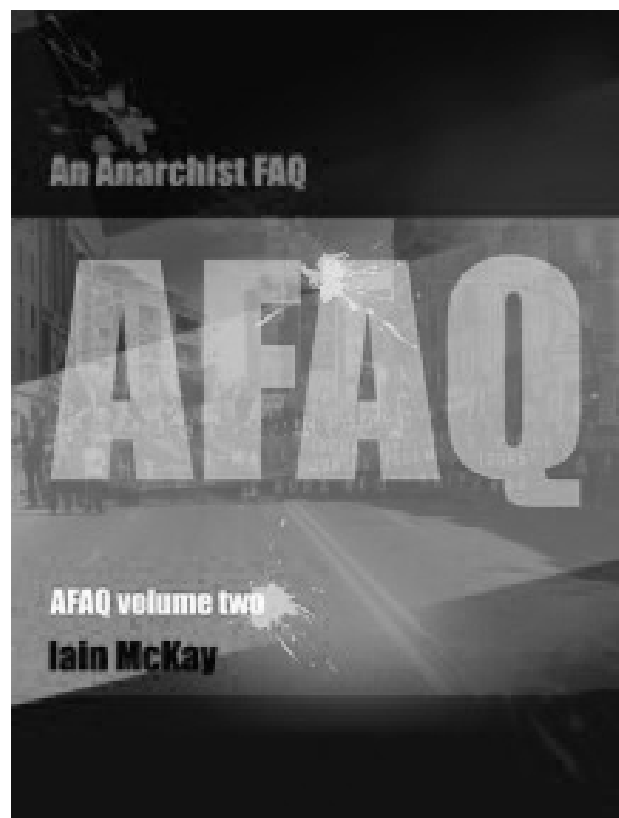
Rand was popular with Silicon valley types, because her ideology provided them with justification for trying to enclose the commons that comprised the early internet into the 'for profit' structures that are taken for granted today. This is a tension that remains today, between those who see the internet as a personal route to becoming rich and those who see it as an important tool for the liberation of information and people. It's no coincidence that an electronic form of the FAQ has been distributed with Debian variants of Linux, including Ubuntu and Mint for many years.

Rand was for a minimal state rather than the abolition of the state, but some of those influenced

by her started to promote a version in which they wanted the state entirely replaced by private security companies enforcing contract law. And some of these decided not only that this could be called anarchism but that it was the only real anarchism.

As part of that process they tried to claim the individualist anarchists as their intellectual fathers. Section G of the FAQ started as a reply to that attempt, but today is a very detailed description of what Individualist anarchists believed and where they differed with the social anarchism or organisations like the Workers Solidarity Movement.

Section H flips the discussion of Section G on its head to look at the arguments between anarchists and the state socialists. For anyone on the left this is probably one of the most useful sections of the FAQ, covering as it does everything from looking at how Marx and those who followed him often misrepresented anarchism to a detailed account of anarchism and the Russian revolution.



Section G & H between them remind me of one of the best snippets of the Russian anarchist Michael Bakunin, that "Liberty without socialism is privilege and injustice; socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality." The flip side of the anti-state capitalist embracing the early internet as a way of making profit, was the fear of much of the authoritarian left of that same technology as being beyond the grasp of their mechanism of top down control of the channels of information and debate. The point at which the FAQ has jumped from the internet into the 'real world' of inland paper has also been the point where both those tendencies have seen their dreams and fears come into being, transforming the world we all live in as they have done so. On the one hand online companies like Google & Facebook dominate the economy and our lives as the right libertarians wished while the spread of the internet into everyone's lives is bringing to an end the organisational models of the vanguardist left.

Section I will be of considerable interest to the general reader as it tries to answer the question

'What would an anarchist society look like?'. The goes from the specifics of anarchist economics, replies to the common capitalist attacks on anarchism, all the way to a detailed look at the largest attempt to put anarchism into practice on a mass scale, the Spanish Revolution.

This is a tension that remains today, between those who see the internet as a personal route to becoming rich and those who see it as an important tool for the liberation of information and people.

Much of this section is in fact an answer to the right libertarians and an explanation of how socialism & freedom would work together in practise. As elsewhere what is presented is not a single vision but rather the range of what anarchists have described how a free society might work.

Section J is based around the question 'What do anarchists do?' and covers key areas of organisation, direct action and involvement in social struggles. It is the closing section of the FAQ, if you include the Appendices (which have yet to appear in print form). Again this isn't a single perspective on what anarchists do, instead the various debates within anarchism and the contrasting forms of organisation anarchists advocate are sketched out.

The FAQ is not perhaps something to pick up and read cover to cover, that would be a long task. However, as well as skim reading it for the particular questions you'd like to hear the answers to, I suspect it would probably also work well as a tool for collective discussion and theoretical development by a group of people discovering or deepening their anarchism. It's not that I agree with everything it contains, but it does systematically bring together a vast body of knowledge and history in a very accessible form that can be the basis for many conversations.



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Review of Fighting for Ourselves:

WORDS: JOSEPH.

Introduction:

"Fighting for Ourselves: Anarcho-Syndicalism and the Class Struggle" is the recently released short book produced by the Solidarity Federation (or Solfed) which is the UK section of the anarcho-syndicalist International Workers Association (IWA).

Released in time for the London Anarchist Bookfair in October 2012 where it quickly sold out (many thanks again for the comrade who beat the queues to get me a copy!), it is the effort from Solfed to clarify their perspective on anarchist organisation and class struggle as well as an introduction to historical anarcho-syndicalism and the wider workers movement, as well as placing the current crisis in context of previous crises and upswings of the workers movement.

Overview:

The book begins with a brief introduction explaining who Solfed are and talking about the current levels of class struggle in the UK (i.e. the recent history of student protests, one-day public sector strikes and the August riots along with the Government attacks on welfare and healthcare systems). The book itself is then split into five sections: -the mainstream workers movement, radical currents within the workers movement, anarcho-syndicalism in the 20th century, capitalism and class struggles since WW2, and anarcho-syndicalism in the 21st century.

The section on the mainstream workers movement covers the historical birth of trade unions and social democratic political parties, as well as the state-socialist revolutionary parties, which are included in the "mainstream workers movement" presumably due to their historical force and popularity leading to abject failure, as well as the tactical conservatism of representative politics.

The original proto-unions in the industrialised countries were temporary organisations that ebbed and flowed (or disappeared altogether) around specific grievances and the levels of struggle present. However as time passed these unions began to amalgamate and become larger and more permanent, alongside the beginnings of a "service model" such as providing unemployment benefits.



The section on radical currents within the workers movement covers three significant movements on the libertarian left: anarchism, syndicalism and council communism. Anarchism is presented as the anti-state wing of the socialist movement, which is further divided by economic outlook into mutualism, collectivism and libertarian communism. The early history of the anarchist movement is covered, particularly with an eye on how it related to the unions of the time. As such the debate between Monatte and Malatesta over "neutral syndicalism alone vs. the need for anarchist political organisations separate to syndicalist unions" is presented. Malatesta's view that unions should be kept apolitical is contrasted to the Platformist view put forward by the Dielo Truda group that unions should be "anarchised", but that the only way this happens is by the continuous work and involvement of anarchist organisations within the unions so they wield the most influence. Syndicalism is put forward as militant and anti-bureaucratic unionism, with three historical models put forward being the French CGT, the US IWW and the rank-and-file networks in early 1900's Britain. Finally council communism is put forward as "Marxism without a Party" along with a view towards political-economic organisation, and hostility to permanent "economic" workers organisations, the influence of which can be seen somewhat in Solfed's strategy although they make sure to point out that they are highly critical of this view and indeed use it as a contrast point between council communism and anarcho-syndicalism itself.

The third section of the book details the historical anarcho-syndicalist movement, specifically the ideas of Emile Pouget who left the CGT after it's drift towards reformism, and the models of the FORA in Argentina, the FAU in Germany and of course the CNT in Spain. Without going into exactly the differences and distinctions between the above mentioned groups and people, this section essentially goes into detail about these groups

ideas and strategy, as well as their historical rise and falls, as well as their flaws (particularly in the case of the CNT). This section is primarily useful in that it shows that anarcho-syndicalism was not a homogenous movement set in stone but rather fluctuated in accordance with local conditions and that it was a mixed bag in itself with a wide range of conceptions of organisation and revolutionary change, and that although the CNT is often held up as the prime model of anarcho-syndicalism it was in fact a mix of competing revolutionary and reformist tendencies throughout its entire existence.

"it shows that anarcho-syndicalism was not a homogenous movement set in stone but rather fluctuated in accordance with local conditions"

The fourth section of the book details the class struggles of the 60s and 70's such as Paris '68, the Winter of Discontent in the UK and the "Hot Autumn" in Italy both as important historical events and as how concepts of a revolution could possibly develop in an industrialised Western society. Particular attention is shown to the processes by which workers struggles were co-opted/institutionalised then in turn gives an overview of neo-liberalism and the general decline of the workers movement.

Association vs. Representation

Throughout the book there is one common theme: that of categorising politics, models of organising and the relationships of the workers themselves as either associational (i.e. the process of coming together and working in a coordinated manner) or representative (i.e. the process by which someone represents a worker/group of workers and tries to sort it out for them). Associational organising is not necessarily non-hierarchical, and representative organising covers more actions and issues than just being a critique of the "service model" of unionism. Representation covers elections, union elections, social partnership, contracts and even the goal of union legal recognition by an employer. This rejection of representation is similar to the direct unionist current within the IWW who advocate building workers power alone to set demands directly, without union negotiated contracts or union representation elections. As Solfed say, "a consequence of representing workers to capital is that you also must represent capital to workers, becoming a barrier to militant rank and file initiative". Likewise, representation has been used a

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method of incorporating and side-lining class struggle, such as in Italy with the factory assemblies in the late 60's being institutionalised by the trade union with delegates being reduced to representing dwindling assemblies, and even taken away from the workforce as full-time organisers. Or, as a manager from a multi-national company in South Africa said when asked why his company had recognised a union, he replied "have you ever tried to negotiate with a football field full of militant angry workers?".

What is a union?

When reading the book a thought struck me that maybe much of the debate around anarcho-syndicalism could be reduced to terminology and definitions. In Germany when the FAU formed it deliberately used the word "Union" instead of "Gewerkschaft", i.e. association instead of a bureaucratic trade union. Which is why maybe some of the difficulties of (mis-)understanding anarcho-syndicalist unions would be eased if they were thought of as associations of anarchists in the workplace (or wherever).

With that in mind, we come to the fifth section, "Anarcho-syndicalism in the 21st Century". This sets out Solfed's conception of the form and role of the anarcho-syndicalist union, and how revolutionary unions should be formed from small propaganda groups that exist now in many countries. Solfed put the point across that even though trade unions today are "mass" organisations, in their opinion what they really amount to are minority organisations of worker activists in a given workplace or area who organise mass meetings during struggle, and this is essentially the mode of organisation they seek to copy, i.e. groups of anarchist/revolutionary worker activists who organise assemblies of the workforce during a dispute. Likewise they eschew reforming existing unions ("bureaucratisation is a one way process"), and use the example of the British syndicalist networks to shown a previous effort wasted rather than organising workers directly. They similarly dismiss rank-and-file networks due to prior experience both with political manoeuvring within them, and that to organise effectively they have to water their politics and actions down to "neutral syndicalism" due to differing ideas and ideologies being present. Solfed through winning small manageable victories at first to gain experience and support should build Industrial Networks and Locals (I think it is implied that ideally these local groups would become actual premises) based in the workplace and communities, and importantly aspire to create and generalise a culture of direct action within the working class. Most importantly Solfed seek to make anarcho-syndicalism directly relevant to people's lives and actively achieving results.

Conclusion:

There is nothing I would fault the book on in terms of production and style, and I really enjoyed reading it. Politically, I would have disagreements, in terms of the fusion of political-economic. While myself and my organisation are dual organisationalists, I am not against politics in a union, and I think that tactics themselves are political. So a syndicalist union that eschews representation, is directly democratic and uses

direct action is functionally economic and political as well, in terms of mistrust of bureaucracy and a militant attitude. Such a union might even be pro-workers control which is in itself revolutionary as it directly challenges the right of management to manage. However this does not equal support for libertarian communism as an ideology which an anarcho-syndicalist union must. While the "active minority" analysis solves this problem, I find it hard in some ways to see how it would play out in practice, and after finishing the book I find I have more questions than answers in my head. That in itself is no bad thing, and I think is a sign that what the book is talking about is challenging old paradigms and trying to find something that works in the here and now. In the book Solfed say that they don't have all the answers but they think are asking the right questions, which I think is a healthy way of approaching things.

Likewise one of our own member's Andrew Flood has written extensively on the topic of "Revolutionary Organisation in the Age of the Networked Individual", which deals with how in the current world of individuals with multiple loyalties and influences within easy communication reach (for example multiple page likes on facebook), what exactly is the role of the anarchist organisation? According to Solfed it is to organise class struggle directly in the here and now, and what doesn't come across in the book is the heavy emphasis in training their members to become organisers through a formalised Organiser Training. And whatever they are doing, it seems to be working as they (looking from afar) seem to be the anarchist organisation in the UK with the most momentum behind them, with a steady growth in the past two years.

I'll finish this review with a quote from another review by Nate Hawthorne on Recomposition. info: "Seriously, read this pamphlet." This is really the only thing I can recommend; the book is brilliant and is essential food for thought for any revolutionary today.

"I find it hard in some ways to see how it would play out in practice, and after finishing the book I find I have more questions than answers in my head."



