

Imagining the Future: The Conquest of Robots.

**THE IRISH
ANARCHIST
REVIEW**

Free!

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**SALVATION OR
SOLIDARITY?**

IAR#8

*Solidarity &
Engagement*

*International
Reproductive Justice*

*Education &
Anarchism*

Editorial:

2013 has been a year of commemoration for the labour movement. In official and unofficial celebrations alike, the word solidarity has loomed large. Rather than acting as a beacon of hope, however, it hangs precariously, like a red neon lit sign on a crumbling building. It may feel good as we shout and whoop, "Solidarity!", it may give us a giddy little thrill, but when the banners are packed away, when we're back home, with our feet up watching television, do we think about it anymore? Do we concern ourselves with the fact that the solidarity our movement has celebrated has been solidarity for the few. Do we think about those left behind?

The idea of solidarity, for the trade union movement, revolved around the idea that "an injury to one, is an injury to (or the concern of) all", and the tactic of the sympathetic strike. This notion of solidarity however, while helping to lift the standard of living of a small Irish industrial working class, never extended beyond the workplace. The idea that unions could not be political and could only fight on economic issues took hold.

Those left behind included the thousands of women, including one hundred and fifty five, found in unmarked graves in Dublin, who had suffered sexual, psychological and physical abuse in the Magdalene Asylums, right up until the 1990's. Though, only then, did the true horrors of what had happened in the "laundries" come out in the open, that these places existed, had been a thinly veiled secret. Women who became pregnant outside of marriage, the sex workers of the Monto, or any other woman who did not confirm to the idea of faith, family and nation, could have their lives snatched away from them as the labour movement cowered in the shadow of the bishops cloak.

In the 1930's, when workers in Spain fought fascism, died, were imprisoned and tortured in their thousands, the Irish labour movement forgot about any notion of

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solidarity, as again, they feared the power of the Irish church. If an "injury to one", was "the concern of all", then surely, the annihilation of the the working class of the Iberian peninsula at the hands of the reactionary, ultra-catholic fascist regime, should have seen the mobilisation of Irish workers, by those who were best placed to do so.

Today, as the professional union bureaucrats, wax lyrical about the struggles of one hundred years ago, as they laud their ability to protect the interests of their members against the worst aspects of austerity, a suspect claim in it's own right, they are willing to leave behind asylum seekers who languish in direct provision centers. They refuse to recognise sex work as work, and support the moralistic crusade of an organisation with links to the religious orders who ran the Magdalene Asylums, that would see the standard of living of these workers drastically decline; and still, when around four thousand women a year are traveling to Britain for abortions, the gentlemen of ICTU, refuse to support the fight for abortion rights.

This issue of the Irish Anarchist Review, explores the idea of solidarity, beyond the workplace, as it extends to women in struggle, travellers, migrants and others. We look at how, solidarity and mutual aid, should involve, not just supporting the exploited and oppressed, but in assisting them in their struggles, and rather than presenting ourselves as saviors, with the solution to their problems, to listen and help amplify their voices as they work towards their own solutions.

We hope the articles here, provide some food for thought and we encourage our readers to reply with articles of their own.

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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SOLIDARITY FOR EVER?



Solidarity is a word that fills the songs, slogans and even names of movements in the anarchist, socialist and left tradition. Yet the meaning of the term is often assumed to be common knowledge that needs no further explanation or enquiry. In line with the theme of this issue of the Irish Anarchist Review this article aims to look a little deeper into the history and meaning of this term and how it should inform our activity today and the problems we face. Particularly in situations when equal empowerment between all the participants in the solidarity relation cannot be assumed as a starting point. Clearly solidarity, class and equality are all in some way intertwined, but the question is how, exactly?

History of the word

Let us begin at the beginning with the history of the word. The origin of the word "solidarity" is relatively recent, appearing first (in French) in the great Encyclopédie of the French enlightenment of the late 18th century. It appeared as a term for the legal situation of being jointly liable for a debt, solidarité being the noun derived from the adjective solidaire, from the legal latin "in solidus". That being the collective legal term for the named group of people, any one of

whom could be required to make good the debt at the creditor's request.

At some stage between the publication of the volume of the Encyclopédie containing the entry for solidarité and the publication in 1840 of Etienne Cabet's "Voyage en Icarie", the word had been appropriated by the nascent socialist and communist movement and acquired something close to its current meaning.

A French radical, Cabet had been exposed to the ideas of the original Co-operative movement while in exile in London from 1834-1839. Although taking his inspiration from the utilitarian philosophy of Irish proto-communist William Thompson, neither the latter's atheism or utilitarianism appealed to Cabet. In Thompson's philosophy, the utilitarian principle of benevolence underlay the appeal to welfare for all as the goal of social transformation.

"The problem with uniforms is there's always those that don't fit in them"

The passage from benevolence to solidarity in the language of Cabet and other French socialists of 1840 reflected perhaps not just a translation from English to French, but also a growing reflection of the specific appeal of socialism to the dispossessed and working class. In any case a clearer distinction is made between solidarity and altruism. The latter concept representing a benevolence towards fellow human beings divorced from any notion of personal interest in the matter. In distinction from benevo-

lence, the early French socialist adoption of solidarity as as core value reflects the notion of common interest of the initial legal term.

Moving from the pre-1848 socialist movement to the late 19th century, the notion of solidarity was taken up by the founding fathers of sociology. Sociology itself was initially a term associated with the early socialist movement, being the neologism popularised by the positivist socialist Auguste Comte for his "science" of society. However the founding fathers of modern sociology were motivated more by opposition to the socialist movement. Indeed the initial problem that these later sociologists set themselves was to how to make modern society sustainable and avert the threat of class war and social revolution that had first shown its public face in 1848. A motive that was to lead to a later sociologist, Talcott Parsons, into describing sociology as mainly concerned with "the problem of order".

The early sociologist who most adopted this approach to solidarity was Émile Durkheim. Nowadays in 21st century sociology Durkheim is deeply unfashionable, often dismissed as a "social conservative" with little other regard. While he was certainly committed to defending bourgeois society against social revolution, yet within the context of turn of the century France he was far from being unambiguously on the right. As not only a bourgeois Frenchman, but also a Jew, Durkheim was an ardent partisan of the pro-Dreyfus camp in the 1894 scandal that divided French society of the time, pitting the forces of anti-Semitism, Catholic integralism and far-right reaction against progressive, liberal and left Dreyfus supporters.

In like fashion, in his sociology Durkheim reacted against the thesis on solidarity by Ferdinand Tönnies, an early German sociologist. Tönnies invented the now infamous Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft dis-

inction, which translates roughly as (natural/traditional) community versus (artificial) association. To the two types of social order he ascribed corresponding bonds of "organic" and "mechanical" solidarity, respectively. Durkheim fundamentally rejected Tönnies' schema. Above all by reversing the polarity of mechanical and organic solidarity.

For Durkheim mechanical solidarity was based on the artificiality of sameness. By contrast, for him organic solidarity represented the interdependence of the different trades, professions (and classes!) of French citizens, whether Christian or Jew, in modern society with its developed division of labour. Of course in the post-WW2 West, with its recoil from the "blood and soil" themes of the Third Reich, Durkheim's view of social order has become part of the mainstream to the extent that it is generally no longer remarked on and all that remains in current sociology is his unfashionable "everyone in their place" social conservatism. But that doesn't mean that his objections to the "solidarity of the same" as a viable basis for social bonds are necessarily outdated.

Problematic - tribalism or charity?

In fact, the problematization of the "solidarity of the same" is going to be part of our discussion here. Historically the socialist movement, in all its forms, has tended to talk about solidarity and class primarily in terms of commonalities, the things we all share - or supposedly do.

In part this is both natural and necessary given the competitive nature of capitalism, that sets worker against worker, as well as against bosses, in the absence of any shared commitment to making common cause. This has historically been the role of solidarity

"solidarity must always work towards transformation and breaking down pre-existing divisions"

for the workers movement - as a unifying value. The shared ethos that allows us to unite against a common foe. That the "class enemy" often tended to be represented as a cigar-chomping, monocle-wearing, top-hatted cartoon villain, is one thing. But far more of a problem has been the same stereotyping tendency reflecting back on our own self-image of the representative "virtuous" proletarian. The problem with uniforms is there's always those that don't fit in them. No sooner did Marx and Engels declare in the Communist Manifesto that capitalism was more and more reducing all the world's producers into a single undifferentiated mass of proletarians, than Marx was inventing the category of the "lumpenproletariat" for all the "dregs" who didn't fit his Victorian prejudices of the ideal disciplined worker. Glorious proletariat or swinish multitude? Like Christ's poor, the "rabble" it seems are with us always.

Of course, solidarity has to be discriminatory to some, crucial degree. It's a basic of class solidarity that you can't support both bosses and workers in an industrial dispute. But even amongst people who share the same objective class situation of dispossession and wage slavery, you cannot act in solidarity with both strikers and strike-breakers. So solidarity cannot be unconditional, it relies on evolved norms

and rules of conduct, like "never cross a picket line".

But at the same time, the logic of excommunication cannot be allowed a free run. Otherwise before you know it, it's not only scabs that are cast out, but next the drug dealers and pimps and then the junkies and prostitutes follow and so on, until the restricted circle of "decent" working class people shrinks ever-tighter based on a moralising exclusionary logic. A logic blind to the economic and social forces of marginalisation that force people into ways of life they would never have chosen freely.

In summary what Durkheim called mechanical solidarity or the "solidarity of the same" is really the narrow tribalism of "looking after your own". In a capitalist world based on the competition of all against all and the progressive division of people into smaller and smaller fragments treating the "other" with suspicion and mistrust, such a principle can never be the foundation for the recomposition of a class counterpower capable of counterposing human need to capital's accumulation.

Solidarity and struggle

Without struggle there is no need for solidarity. Just as the original joint liability meaning implies opposing interests between the collective of debtors and the creditor, so solidarity implies standing together against a common opponent. In other words, that society is fundamentally riven by struggle.

In the bourgeois liberal utopia where there is a win-win solution to every problem, there is no need for talk of solidarity. Even the language of religious communities about the need for the congregation to help



"Solidarity is built by soft social skills, not hard men"

out less fortunate parishioners talks about the duty of charity, not solidarity. Charity is based on the idea that fortune or misfortune in some way reflects the "judgement of god" on individual virtue or sin or karma. As such charity is a demonstration of piety and humility based on "there but for the grace of god, go I". But there is no concept of the misfortune of others being based on a fundamental conflict in which you and the person you are supporting are on the same side, facing a common enemy. Charity is an act of submission to the cause of misfortune (the judgement of god) not an act of defiance that seeks to overturn it.

This distinction between charity and solidarity is all the more important in an era where much of the so-called "solidarity" performed by most of the left is really a form of secular charity, a demonstration of leftist piety. This cannot be seen as a general template for solidarity. Whereas charity is conservative rather than transformative, in leaving the basic divisions between giver and recipient unchanged, solidarity must always work towards transformation and breaking down pre-existing divisions. That goal of transformation must be reflected not only in the aims of the campaign but also in the way in which participants interact and work together within it.

“The point of the solidarity relationship is for all participants to be transformed, by becoming more equal and stronger for it”

“Solidarity under fire?”

But while the relation between solidarity and shared struggle is key in understanding the difference between it and charity, there is a third potential danger in over-emphasising the moment of conflict itself as its birthplace. That is, to take “solidarity under fire” as the model for the production of solidarity.

Of course solidarity given in situations of extreme crisis or conflict is invaluable. Sometimes the very intensity of the situation can call forth solidarity that was not previously shown in more normal times. Indeed the left’s favourite stories tend to be of this type - e.g the racist who was converted by support of the local Bengali community while on the picket line, etc.

But these “heroic” anecdotes hide the fact that generally solidarity relies on building up relations of familiarity and fellow-feeling in less stressed circumstances. The exceptions prove the rule that in general we cannot rely on crisis to prepare for crisis. Preparation, by definition, precedes the thing it is preparing for.

Once again we have a case of mistaking end for means. A kind of negative utopianism or better, a juvenile dystopianism, an all too common affliction of the left. This “worse the better” mentality of it taking a crisis to “wake people up” is, together with military metaphors like “solidarity under fire”, the intellectual cancer of the left. It leads to progressive detachment from reality and the normal emotive range of so-called “non-political” people and to a development of hyper-intensified, aggressive and paranoid psychologies and affects that alienate people outside of the micro-left bubble. Even if many people genuinely do have frustrations and angers that often overlap with some of the issues the “angry left” are shouting about.

The military model of brutalising recruits in preparation for the brutality of combat is an unworkable model for building solidarity amongst working class people in society at large. The love/hate relationship is an asymmetrical one. Love of kith, kin and community leads naturally to hatred towards those that oppress or threaten them. But simply sharing a common hatred will never create bonds of trust and solidarity between people by that fact alone. Quite the opposite. This is also a cause and effect relation that the partisans of class war sometimes seem to get the wrong way round. The difference between fascists and anarchist-communists is not the target of our respective hatreds and loves, as in those “Class war, not race war” banners. What matters is more than who is the target, but which one of love and hate is the rule and which the exception. Solidarity is built by soft social skills, not hard men.



Prefigurative egalitarianism

Now it’s time to turn to our initial question of the relationship between solidarity and egalitarianism. Egalitarianism must necessarily be the goal of solidarity, if it is not to be charity. But it cannot be the precondition for solidarity, otherwise this would be self-help rather than mutual aid. In other words, egalitarianism is prefigurative and solidarity is the transformational practice that allows us to go from a situation of less equality towards more of it.

By prefiguration we mean a transformative philosophy that rejects instrumentalism (“end justifies the means”) on the one hand and utopianism (“be the change you want to see”) on the other.

The default utopian approach to issues of inequality in solidarity campaigns is to begin by demanding that everyone must act as if they were already equal. The problem with that is that it too easily becomes acting, not in the sense of exercising agency, but in the sense of a fictional performance, like acting in a play, whether comedy, tragedy or farce, and often a combination of all three. Worse, when the less empowered participants, inevitably, make an intervention to point out that this charade is not addressing their issues, they then get the blame for bursting the bubble of illusory “all equals together” unity. Victim-blaming comes built-in as a standard with the utopian approach. As a transformative strategy it is a failure because it doesn’t in practice accept that we are not yet at the place we want to get to.

The instrumental approach to the problem of inequality amongst participants within campaigns is simply to rely on the goals of the campaign as an alibi. If the success of the campaign is seen in some way as an advance against inequality, then what does it matter if an anti-racist campaign, say, is dominated by middle class white people already holding political and other institutional power, and within it the voices of black participants with little or no such power, are marginalised? Isn’t the campaign against racism a good thing? Stop making trouble and follow the lead of the people who know best how the levers of power work, then...

The problems of overt and crass displays of this sort of logic are obvious. Both to the people with the

greatest stake in the issue, even if they start with the least power. As well as to anyone with a scepticism born of past experience with institutional authority figures. Which is not to say that it is rare, albeit in perhaps in slightly more masked forms. The point is that by being carved out of any real control over the process, the potential participants from the community or group that the specific solidarity campaign is for, the original divisions are simply being recreated and re-inforced, just as we’ve already seen in the case of charitable “solidarity”. In fact there’s a good deal of overlap between the instrumental and charitable versions of sham solidarity.

What is to be done?

So if ultimately both utopian and instrumental approaches fail to be transformative in practice, how should a prefigurative practice of solidarity proceed?

First of all we have to recognise that solidarity is not simply an ideal or a value, but a practice. What’s more, a practice that aims to have real transformative effect. Going on anti-war marches around London with “Not in my name” placards, for example, is not an act of solidarity but of conscience-salving. But the problem of finding an effective practice, both in terms of the campaign making positive impact in the wider world, and also being empowering for the participants, is not a simple one. Everybody wants it, nobody knows how to get it. At least not in terms of simple, sure-fire, success guaranteed, rules of operation. But just because there are no magic formulas out there, doesn’t mean that nothing is known at all, that everything has to start again from scratch every time. If there are no “rules”, as such, there are certainly “tools” around - i.e. practices that other groups and people have used successfully in diverse struggles in different places and in living memory.

The problem can be seen in two interlinked parts, internal and external. The external is how the actions of the group or campaign are seen by the outside world, particularly those parts of the class that are the intended targets for becoming part of the solidarity relationship.

Most importantly that relationship has to be understood beyond a simple capitalist balance-sheet divi-

sion between givers and takers. The whole basis of mutual aid is that it is far more than a zero-sum game, each side, by cooperating, receives more from working together than they could get alone. In the solidarity relationship the more empowered section of the class is not only going to act as provider for the less, but will also, in the process receive vital knowledge about the workings of the system that oppresses us all, new ways of understanding situations and experiences of exploitation and oppression and different traditions of organising and evading state surveillance.

But neither should this two-way flow between participants in the solidarity relationship be mistaken for the capitalist model of exchange between two distinct groups that gain only "wealth" from the interchange, without being otherwise transformed by it. The point of the solidarity relationship is for all participants to be transformed, by becoming more equal and stronger for it. These may seem like abstract ideals, but in the absence of programmatic rules, directional principles are the best we can do at a non-specific level.

Of course descending to the unique problems of specific campaigns requires selecting concrete tools for organising, communicating and collective decision-making processes. Here a balance must be struck between doing nothing and doing too much. The problem with doing nothing is obvious. By doing "too much" is meant the problem of adopting so many novel and unfamiliar tools for egalitarian organising that newcomers, particularly those from the more disempowered target audiences, will feel out of place or intimidated by an unfamiliar language and habits (funny hand signals, anyone?) unknown to them and alien to their experience and culture. Here the very measures that are supposed to create a supportive and welcoming environment, turn into their opposite and become another mechanism for exclusion and monopolisation of space by self-appointed "horizontalist specialists" and professional activists. Finding the balance right for any particular collective is an art, not a science, and relies above all on people genuinely listening to each other, rather than assuming they already know what's best.

Coming back to the link between the internal and external dynamics of a campaign, feedback of how the campaign is seen externally is key. Here there is another area to be handled with some native wit and sensitivity. It is reasonable to think that campaign participants who are themselves from the less empowered pole of a particular solidarity relationship may well have better connections for hearing what people externally, from that same constituency, may be feeling and thinking about the activity of the campaign. But it can be pretty oppressive for those participants to suddenly find themselves shanghaied into the position of representatives of their presumed communities or groups. For instance, how many radical left or anarchist groups with terrible gender balances, continually make the mistake of trying to impose the role of ambassador of all womankind on their female members?

A related danger, albeit from a different direction, is uncritically accepting people who put themselves forward as "community leaders" or similar go-between figures. If forcing representative status on people is always wrong, the problem of how to deal with people who put themselves forward in that role is sometimes a little more complicated. If solidarity is prefigurative we have to accept that we don't start from a position where all oppressed or marginalised communities have already freed themselves from authoritarian structures and the power-brokers that inhabit them. Of course we prefer to work directly with the followers of such figures (and of none), but it can sometimes be utopian to hope to achieve that without having built relations of trust first. Getting



"solidarity is like a play - it is performed in acts"

around this knotty problem is always difficult, but generally only successful actions can make it happen. On the other hand, what is absolutely guaranteed is that any campaign, whether from lazy instrumentalism or naivety, that relies uncritically on community leaders and mediating figures, is doomed to failure as the state eventually makes them a better offer when enough pressure is created. If no effort has been made in the interim to create direct bonds of trust and solidarity with community members that do not pass through the mediation of such figures, then the campaign is effectively finished at that point.

If these are the interior problems of mediators, whether self-appointed or press-ganged, there is also the related problem of representationalism in external communications. The mainstream media, famously operates a rigorous process of creating representatives for campaigns or movements, if necessary entirely independently from any willingness of a given campaign to play ball with this process. Not even defiantly anti-hierarchical groups like tunnelling anti-roads protesters can escape this process as the "Swampy" case demonstrated some while back.

Refusing to engage with the media is also no guarantee of avoiding the problem as even keeping external communications to your own public meetings and media still means that someone needs to take the role of spokesperson at the head table or narrate the youtube clip. Having masked spokesperson reading prepared statements doesn't really work as a communication strategy either, unless the message you're really trying to get across is that you're a bunch of dangerous lunatics. Having said that, if people are genuinely unable to speak openly due to

legal restrictions (say on asylum-seekers barred from making "political" statements), fear of reprisal or due to intense social stigma against their circumstances, then clearly means have to be found for their voices to be heard nonetheless. The cardinal sin that any solidarity campaign can make is "ventriloquism" in the name of being a "voice for the voiceless".

And finally...

Time then for a final word. This article, as we said at the outset, has concentrated on the challenges of solidarity between groups or sections of the class who start from positions of real inequality in power. More so than usual in an article on class solidarity from a broadly socialist or anarchist perspective perhaps. But the parting contention is that the problems examined with this focus actually apply generally to all solidarity struggles. What's more given that women are the majority of the class and we live in a society that is not only based on capitalism but also sexism and male privilege, the problem of inequality for class solidarity can hardly be called a marginal issue. Similarly, the problematic dynamics of self-appointed representatives, spokespersons and "specialists" and professionalisation are universal to any sufficiently upscale organising. There hasn't been enough room here to really dive into the detail of the concrete tools that campaigns, workplace and neighbourhood groups and movements can use. But hopefully some of the broad issues and big questions have been opened up for productive discussion in whatever struggles you are active in. Solidarity remains one of the greatest things lacking in our lives today in an inhuman, commoditised economy. So lets keep on discussing, arguing, challenging and struggling until we find the ways to get more of it, produce more of it. And never forgetting, solidarity is like a play - it is performed in acts.



Apartheid, Irish Style.

WORDS: D. SREENAN

Solidarity is unity (as of a group or class) that produces or is based on community of interests, objectives, and standards.[1] It refers to the ties in a society that bind people together as one.

A good barometer of any society is how it treats people who are the most socially disadvantaged. In other words we are talking about people on the edge or on the bottom of this heap. In Ireland we have a pyramid structure which has 1% of individuals at the top owning 34% of the wealth. At the broad base of this triangle we have people who are treated appallingly, who are discriminated against, stigmatized and ultimately written-off before they reach the age of adulthood. People who are never given a chance; many Travellers find themselves here.

A sophisticated mechanism has been developed in terms of how the oppression takes place, but it still takes place on a daily basis. This machinery is institutional racism.

Institutional racism comes as standard. Institutional racism as a term was popularised by the Macpherson enquiry into the UK police's handling of Stephen Lawrence's murder, where it was defined as:

"The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people, because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people".
(Macpherson, 1999, p 28 Stephen Lawrence Enquiry)

The advantage of this institutional approach is that it depersonalises racism. There is no longer a need to have an ugly scene of an ogre enacting racism in an individual capacity. The scenes exist: witness Minister Phil Hogan's letter to constituents assuring them that Travellers were not going to be allowed live in the area; or Donegal Fianna Fail Councillor Sean

McEniff's anti-Traveller statements, which no doubt did nothing to discourage a mob who subsequently burned down a Travellers families home there; or the Judge Seamus Hughes last year talking about Traveller men stating "they are like Neanderthal men living in the long grass, abiding by the laws of the jungle."

In Ireland institutional racism has evolved to come fitted as standard. At the same time the State dithers about making the decision on whether or not to grant Travellers ethnic status. As the Stephen Lawrence family lawyer, Imran Khan stated – when you write laws of the land specifically for a people – it is a sure sign that you recognise them as a specific group when you bring in laws that pertain only to them. So, in Ireland, are Travellers specifically targeted in the Anti-Trespass Act brought in 2002 and Section 24 of the Criminal Justice Act (1994).

"Institutional racism brings with it a message that it's nothing personal, it is just the way things are"

Now the racism that is felt by Travellers from the state can be impersonal, or institutional. Much like the generic term used at Fianna Fail Ard Fhéis 'Mistakes were made' – it acknowledges that mistakes were made but it doesn't tell you by whom, with good reason. Similarly, racism exists, but no-one is responsible for it, least of all those who use institutional routine as a reason not to deliver a service. There are laws stating that appropriate accommodation should be provided for Travellers, but when it does not get delivered, there is a shrug, and no one is responsible.

Institutional racism brings with it a message that it's nothing personal, it is just the way things are.

The Discrimination Lab

Really the case of Irish Travellers and their relationship with this State is like a laboratory for the perfection of discrimination. Marginalization is the first step, the group is excluded from the rest of the population, and removed from being decision makers or having any power in that society. Then the groups close around each other, and an 'us and them' mentality develops. Next the stereotyping occurs, quickly followed by some stigmatization, lastly the scape-goating.

If we look at the document produced 50 years ago by the State entitled 'A Commission on Itinerancy' ("Itinerant" is the state's word and a reason why it is abhorred by all Travellers as a racial slur) was founded on the basis of looking at the following[1]

- (1). To enquire into the problem arising from the presence in the country of itinerants in considerable numbers
- (2). To examine the economic, educational, health and social problems inherent in their way of life
- (3). To consider what steps might be taken
 - (a) to provide opportunities for a better way of life for itinerants
 - (b) to promote their absorption into the general community
 - (c) pending such absorption, to reduce to a minimum the disadvantage to themselves and to the community resulting from their itinerant habits[2]

A picture emerges very quickly of the intentions behind the commission. 1. Travellers are a problem because they exist. 2. There are problems arising from the way they live. 3. The solution to these problems is to 'absorb' them into the general population, i.e. stop them being Travellers, as that would stop the problems their existence and way of life is causing us. This is paraphrasing, but both texts are produced here for the reader to judge. Let us skip to the end because within the confines of these narrow minds there is not much light. What are the recommendations that come from the Commission? A Commission which did its work without bothering to involve any Travellers.

The chilling recommendation

"there can be no final solution to the problems created by itinerants until they are absorbed into the general community"[3]
[1963 State Report on Travellers]

To which the ITM review responded:

It seems extraordinary that the term "final solution" to the "problems created by itinerants" could be used in 1960, in light of the genocide of Jews, Roma and Sinti by Nazi Germany in the very recent past. Could this be simply be complete ignorance of recent history and an unfortunate choice of words?[4]

Now let us quickly snap back to the present day. We are now in the era of integration, multiculturalism or interculturalism, depending on who you listen to. Here is Fingal county council official in 2005 "Fingal county council are of the view that the balance of blame with regard to the poor Traveller accommodation provision as it presently stands in the Finglas area lies with the Traveller Community." Sounds familiar to the Commission's findings doesn't it. Travellers are to blame. Here is a local authority, a provider of accommodation, blaming Travellers for that accommodation.

Here is the current Minister of Education on 27th March 2011 in the Dáil:

"In a sense, the first step for the Traveller community in maximising educational opportunities for their children is to become settled." [5]

There is a man who has full appreciation of ethnicity, given that there is a long tradition of nomadism amongst Travellers, some might go so far as to contend that it might be the reason for their name. How different is it to the absorption policy?

Growing the ties that bind – Building Solidarity

The flag of austerity has been used against Travellers to eliminate specific provisions which were hard fought for by the Traveller movement. The most recent census shows us unemployment running at 84.3%. Cuts to Traveller programs since 2008 are 'egregious', with education down 86% and accommodation down 84%, in comparison to the 4.3% average cuts we have seen in Government spending overall. [6] The powerless in society suffer when the powerful need to pay the bills.

But unfortunately at a time when there is a desperate need for a vibrant active Travellers movement with links and supports from other committed anti-racist activists, there is little to point to. There are difficulties to be overcome and some of the actions which saw such solidarity develop around the eviction at Dale Farm in Essex, need to be replicated here.

"It is often easier to become outraged by injustice half a world away than by oppression and discrimination half a block from home." [7] I know I've lost count of the number of embassies I've picketed and demonstrated outside of, but the injustices levelled daily on the Traveller community warrant that we build links and include them as an integral part of the fight against racism here, at home.

That is a starting point. Building it around specific actions like the picket on Sean McEniff's Hotel after his recent comments was a good place to begin. Those links, if they can be, should also be built locally. It would be naïve to pretend that there are not many obstacles in our path, but I think in many ways this is the litmus test for the type of society we wish to create. Anarchism or Barbarism was a headline on one of the WSM papers years ago. Society is rapidly going in one direction and fighting racism on our own block is the obvious step towards building the type of neighbourhood we wish to live in.

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"there can be no final solution to the problems created by itinerants until they are absorbed into the general community"

-1963 State Report on Travellers.

Horizons of our imaginations: Anarchism and Education.



WORDS: TOM MURRAY

Tom Murray looks at anarchist principles of education and argues that autonomous, co-operative learning is central to our finding new ways of challenging authority and discovering freer, more equal ways of being in the world.

In their own words, the Free Skool at Santa Cruz, California is 'a completely grassroots effort, a collection of folks who decided to act collectively and autonomously to create a skill-sharing network'.^[1] Groups meet regularly to learn about hacktivism, bike maintenance, arts and crafts, singing, local history and philosophy among other things. Underpinning these activities is Smokey's message (opposite) of self-reliance: 'only you can prevent an empty calendar'. Simply by their existence, free skool initiatives like these raise important questions about who controls what you learn as well as how we might collectively organise or institutionalise cooperative learning. Education is always conditioned by the kind of society in which it takes place, invariably to produce the men and women it needs. In capitalist so-

cieties, learning to be productive and toe the line, whether through schooling or the wider experience of everyday life, has far-reaching and deeply rooted implications, particularly for popular understandings of what is possible politically.

Anarchists have not just opposed educational forms associated with compulsion but have created humane and reasonable alternatives in doing so. In this article, I want to map some of the early critiques and ideals of education that have emerged from the ever flowing river of anarchism, partly out of curiosity and partly to suggest their ongoing relevance today. I am going to argue that the impulse to defy authority is bound up with an individual's intrinsic motivations, the kind that cannot be generated for someone on their behalf, and that these instincts for revolt are best discovered and nurtured through a culture and practice of mutual aid.

Learning to Toe the Line

Historically, Church, State and Capital have all used people's formal and informal educational systems to propagate authoritarian morality, coercive discipline

and mechanical work, with varying degrees of intensity and success. The specifics of these familiar despotisms need not detain us. Generally characterised by a hierarchical division of labour, these institutions' enforced emphases on unintelligible jargon, discipline, morality and marketable skills come at the expense of independent reasoning, emotions, creativity or wider sensibilities. 'Instruction' smothers the horizon of our imaginations. It is through the school, Paul Goodman observed, that people learn that 'life is inevitably routine, depersonalized, venally graded; that it is best to toe the mark and shut up; that there is no place for spontaneity, open sexuality and free spirit'.^[2]

Beyond the school, of far greater importance to our education is the far greater realm of everyday life. ^[3] It is here that we really learn, consciously or unconsciously, through our experiences, notably of family in the private sphere or of civil society associations in the public. Here too is the terrain where collective learning for revolutionary organisation and social transformation must take place. Yet how busy people's lives are, perhaps too crowded for them to engage in the labour of collective self-organisation? Work and family commitments matter here. So too

"the impulse to defy authority is bound up with an individual's intrinsic motivations, the kind that cannot be generated for someone on their behalf, and that these instincts for revolt are best discovered and nurtured through a culture and practice of mutual aid"



does living in a relatively affluent, consumer society where a great many needs can be met through the market and where the motivation for collective action presents itself less frequently.[4] Finally, with mass media dominated by private corporations and the state, 'the political' is invariably defined by their interests and understood more generally in fairly remote or unchangeable terms. In these ideological, material and behavioural circumstances, popular capacities for collective action tend to be displaced by a grim fatalism towards existing conditions. Politics becomes like the weather: something we tend to talk about a lot but can do little about personally.

Unsurprisingly, authoritarian educational practices and pathologies of this sort tend to resurface, consciously or unconsciously, among groups or organisations claiming to challenge exploitation and oppression. I find Leo Tolstoy's argument convincing here: reversions to compulsion in education occur

"Anarchists try to 'teach' people as little as possible"

either through haste or insufficient respect for the other. Speaking with leftists-who-know, to take a well-worn example, often resembles conversations with religious evangelicals, eager for converts to a fixed canon of beliefs.[5] To varying degrees, conversations are based less on listening than on waiting for the other to stop speaking so as to assert one's identity as a believer and testify to the true doctrine. Organisations that promote class analyses like leftist answering-machines invariably isolate themselves, partly because reasonable people tend to dislike obedience and partly because revolutionary

analyses will struggle to establish ideological hegemony on the terrain of everyday, capitalist-consumer life. So what's the alternative?

Anarchist Visions of Education

Anarchists try to "teach" people as little as possible. In general, the golden rule is that successful learning flows from intrinsic motivations and natural talents. The anarchist vision of education thus begins and ends with trusting in the individual's capacities not just to think for herself but to relate to others as equals and develop a social consciousness.[6] William Godwin, the 18th century anarchist thinker, argued that the ultimate aim of education was happiness. Godwin strongly identified this with forming a critical, independent mind. Emma Goldman developed this idea more explicitly. The goal of education, she claimed, was for the individual to develop through 'the free play of characteristic traits' and, in so doing, to discover herself as 'a social being'. Similarly, for Herbert Read, this goal of 'individuation of the self' required that the individual's sense of uniqueness was informed by a social consciousness (and vice versa).[7] Both Goldman and Read recognised the neglected role of the emotions and emphasised how important it was to encourage the individual's self-confidence, primarily in order to overcome residual fears of using natural talents.

On the question of means to achieve these ends, Tolstoy makes a useful distinction, this time between 'education' and 'culture'. 'Education' he defines as essentially coercive. Everything that does not spring organically from your will to educate yourself is an imposition of some sort by an external body, dissociated from your real needs and aspirations. In practical terms, compulsion, whether through haste or insufficient respect, not only retards would-be students' ability to learn but also their desire to do so. Conversely, Tolstoy argues that 'without compulsion, education is transformed into culture', associated

with a more lively will to self-educate. Beyond terminology, what is important here is the precise observation that success in developing anarchist ideas and practices will ultimately depend on the individual's intrinsic motivation to learn and on the existence of conditions of trust and mutual aid where guidance can be offered if requested. Hence, to paraphrase Godwin, the anarchist as educator can excite curiosity, warn, inform, even instruct - but never inculcate. In practice, developing conditions of trust and mutual aid is a very time-consuming process, rooted in regular contact, dialogue and co-operation as well as example - which Goldman described as 'the actual living of a truth once recognised'.

Unsurprisingly, anarchist forms of education do not have a checklist of operations or easy 'how to' guides. Instead, I think they begin to resemble Japanese martial arts where participants are instructed in a kata or 'way of doing' - only free of charge and without authority figures (hopefully). Here, regular, systematic practice is aimed not at transmitting rigid techniques but developing natural reflexes, principles of movement capable of infinite adaptation to one's self and circumstances. Three principles of development seem to recur throughout and may be consid-

"the ultimate aim of education was happiness"

ered fundamental. The first of these Colin Ward has described as 'believing in your own experiences', or starting from your needs, experiences and aspirations for life and discussing how anarchism relates to and emerges from those. Obedience to authority, often contingent on the threat or practice of coercion, also tends to get smuggled into our everyday lives almost unconsciously, occurring at a level resistant to articulation. Naming the world - attempting to choose consciously how we think about and relate to it - is central to developing a critical understanding of it.[8] Doing so in dialogue with others is central to developing capacities for independent thought.

Hence, the second principle is listening. The general attitude - 'nothing you say surprises me' - stems from a culture that tends to value having strong opinions and winning arguments, typically associated with patriarchy and patron-client relations whereby powerful men (e.g. politicians, bishops, economists) are accustomed to passive and respectful audiences. Contemporary capitalist society fosters these tendencies.[9] Anarchists thus have to take seriously the creation of conditions for thoughtfulness, fostering collective listening, attentiveness and dialogue in civil society. Horizontal dialogues constitute the slow, molecular transformations necessary to develop co-operative practices and, ultimately, confidence in both individual and collective effort. The third principle is 'example' or 'learning by doing'. Anarchists have traditionally disliked abstract scholasticism, a product of the division of labour into manual and mental work. So, in the present instance, we cannot simply learn these 'ways of doing' by reading about them. Ultimately, that which we must learn to do, we learn by doing.

The Politics of Education: Then and Now

True to this last principle, anarchists' visions of education did not stem from the library alone but rather emerged from a much broader, popular contestation

“that which we must learn to do, we learn by doing”

of both church and nation-state systems of education. Conventionally, opposition to compulsory education has been interpreted as evidence of working class parents’ unwillingness to lose the extra wages provided by their children. Recently, however, social historians in Britain have shown that working-class neighbourhoods overwhelmingly preferred community-owned schools to charitable, religious or state schools. These schools used individual as opposed to authoritarian teaching methods, wasted no time on religious studies or moral uplift and successfully conveyed useful skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic.[10]

More directly, anarchists across geographies and generations developed co-operative educational principles in the course of setting up and vigorously defending experimental schools of their own. Today’s free schools have distinguished predecessors, including the Free School movements in the United Kingdom and the United States as well as the ateneos or cultural centres of pre-Civil War Spain. In particular, Francesco Ferrer, founder of the ‘modern schools’

“Those who fight to learn soon learn to fight”

in Spain, inspired the advance of secular education more widely. The effects of these patient revolutionaries have been profound. Ward attributes to them a quiet revolution in the classroom insofar as their example undermined some of the worst authoritarian practices in the state schooling system, notably corporal punishment.[11] We can and should take heart from these early, ongoing and sometimes un-



seen successes as we face into contemporary battles over education.

The latest crisis of capitalism, occasioning greater pressures towards making our societies less democratic and less equal, is reshaping formal education systems the world over. Public education is under attack as new measures are introduced to bolster discipline, including tuition increases, managerialism and corporatisation.[12] In response, student protests have been held in Britain, Canada, Chile, Taiwan and elsewhere. In Ireland, where similar pressures are readily apparent, there appear to be two key clusters of opposition. The first centres on those fighting to make more democratic and more equal the existing educational system, encompassing students’ unions as well as more radical groups such as F.E.E. (Free Education for Everyone) explicitly opposed to neoliberalism. The second involves the example of autonomous or popular educational forms provided by such diverse groups as Seomra Spraoi (Dublin’s premier social space), community-based People’s History Projects or even the WSM’s annual Anarchist Bookfair.

More generally, experience of recent struggles has demonstrated the enduring need to challenge ‘capitalist realism’, the pervasive ideological hegemony of the capitalist class, and the apparent necessity of austerity. (For what is austerity if not a ruling class ‘blaming its victims’ for their own excesses?)[13] If we want to challenge those ideas and the practices they justify, then we have to pay attention to popular education. Anarchist principles have an important role to play here. The horizontalist squares of late 2011 indicated the potential of assemblies as sites for autonomous learning, a potential that often fell victim to state hostility, resource constraints and sectarianism among other things.[14]

More recently, the success of Quebec’s ‘Red Square’ student movement suggests a new and possibly better synthesis of the two oppositional forms mentioned above: ‘occupy’-ing a single issue. Here, reg-

ular, popular assemblies were an important means of mobilising, learning and confidence-building among students challenging university tuition hikes.[15] The consequences of their example for wider social struggles may yet prove enduring. As one banner in Chile’s earlier wave of student protests proudly declared: ‘Those who fight to learn soon learn to fight’.

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- [3] See generally Paul Ginsborg (2005) *The Politics of Everyday Life*, an excellent summary of the practical barriers to mobilising politically in contemporary societies.
- [4] Wolfgang Streeck, (2012) ‘Citizens as Consumers: Considerations on the New Politics of Consumption’ in *New Left Review*, 76, pp. 27-47.
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- [15] The WSM is currently organising a speaking tour in Ireland’s universities of Vanessa Vela, a CLASSE delegate and feminist organiser during the mass student strike in Quebec. For background to the student strike, see <http://www.studentstrike.net/>

WORDS: FARAH AZADI



NO BUY OFFS, SELL OUTS, OR TRADE OFFS.
ALL OF US OR NONE
ALL OF US OR NONE
ALL OF US OR NONE

I was recently in the National Maternity Hospital on Holles Street for an appointment with a gynaecologist. The doctor requested I get some blood work done, and so I was placed in a chair outside an in-take room. After waiting a few minutes, three people emerged from the room, two in medical uniforms and another in religious clothing.

After the one in religious clothing had left the hall area, the two in medical uniforms looked at each other in shock. One of them then says to the other,

"Well I never. . ."

The other cuts across her, "Me neither. Where was she from?"

"Iran. Wow."

I giggled internally, and imagined the headline (from The Onion), "Two medical students were in shock today when an Iranian woman visits a maternity hospital after finding out she is pregnant." There was something interestingly post-modern about the situation as both the woman in religious clothing and myself are Iranians, but admittedly quite different in appearance. My multi-ethnic, US-born background means that difference for me is almost exclusively felt in these instances by medical professionals' inability to pronounce my family name when calling me from the waiting area (this trip was no exception). I remember often apologizing profusely for the unintentional embarrassment caused by the 'exoticness' of my surname's combination of fourteen letters, and how grateful I was that my parents (who couldn't agree on much but made a valiant effort when it came to assimilation), gave me a 'normal sounding' first name.

Many shades, second sex.

I might be named after the wife of a brutal Middle East dictator, but at least White America can pronounce it! I do find it, however, oddly ironic that a professional class that regularly uses words like Anhydrohydroxyprogesterone, (26 letters, just saying) have failed throughout the years to even muster an attempt at my name.

Dismantle the master's house!

Synthetic hormone aside, it was this experience in the National Maternity Hospital that got me thinking about the unique position people of multiple identities hold in the struggle for reproductive rights.

My early political formation happened primarily through the post-9/11 anti-war movement. I was an eager young person, just out of secondary school when I boarded my first international flight to Baghdad in protest of the economic sanctions. It is because of this experience that I became crucially aware of the lethal role imperialism played in the world, and the centrality of racism in the economic machinery of the U.S.

It was an experiential lesson in what Martin Luther King named the triplets of American pathology: racism, materialism (read capitalism), and militarism. The experience, however, also offered me a way to understand how different systems of oppression and injustice can work to reinforce each other in what is fancily called the 'matrix of domination'. The matrix of domination is a concept that conceives the expe-

"For many in the North American experience, this kind of intersectional engagement was the direct result of a unique history of colonization and slavery"

rience of being discriminated against as one that is different to different kinds of people. These differences include gender, race, class, ableness. . .

Social uprisings, art, collective campaigns, political organizations and national liberation struggles across the globe from the music of the Harlem Renaissance, to the example of the Zapatistas or Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional (EZLN), to the movimiento negro in Brazil, to the Association des Femmes Haitiennes pour l'Organisation du Travail in Haiti, to the Nyabingi movements in East Africa and the Caribbean, to the jamiht-i nesvan-i vatan-khah women's associations in Iran, to politicization of traditional practices such as Anlu in Cameroon, all gave voice and feet to a diversity of struggles from which scholars drew wider theories on subject areas such as de-colonization, national liberation, civil and political rights, post-colonialism, and feminism.

These 20th century movements and the scholarship that aimed at defining them (successfully or not!), gave rise to paradigmatic shifts in both – formulating a fundamental challenge to the authority of the nation-state, and providing activists from various struggles the possibility for transnational perspectives. This means in our present day lives that activists, like those demanding the right to abortion in Ireland, can catch courage and ideas from their comrades in Egypt demanding an end to the use of forms of gender based violence against protesters in Tahrir Square.

The idea of 'bodily sovereignty' and intersectional identities

The knowledge of these global movements assisted interventions in all kinds of social justice-centred campaigns, including that of the reproductive rights movement. In the North American experience, feminists organizing around suffrage and the framework of 'choice' were consistently challenged by womanist, anti-racist and working class movements.

Notions of 'bodily sovereignty' and the ability to control reproduction, which formed the core of mainly White, middle-class reproductive rights organizing, had to be re-analyzed by activists in light of intersectional identities.

This made intersectional organizing for reproductive rights an essential element in re-framing reproduction as a matter of justice not choice.

For many in the North American experience, this kind of intersectional engagement was the direct result of a unique history of colonization and slavery,



“Audre Lorde once said, “It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences,” that lead us towards tolerance instead of change. ‘Difference,’ Lorde teaches, ‘should act like polarities through which our creativity can spark like a dialectic.’”



and the resistance of both Native Americans and Africans against these forms of domination. The central fact of slavery was the theft of another’s labour, be it through the forced form of internal reproductive work, or forced forms of external reproductive work in kitchens and cotton fields. Thus, the necessity to have sovereignty over the body has long been an economic justice issue.

The conception of bodily ownership and the need to deconstruct patriarchal, White supremacist notions of ownership over feminized bodies is not just an issue external to communities of colour. Black Panther Party member Kay Lindsey’s 1973 Poem was written specifically as a critique and intervention into a growing conception in the party of ‘revolutionary motherhood’ as an ideal of Black womanhood. Revolutionary motherhood was the idea that black women should reject contraception and the legalization of abortion on the grounds that they were needed to create an ‘army of Black babies’ to fight for the emancipation of the ‘Black race’. Lindsey’s poem belies ‘revolutionary motherhood’ as an anti-imperialist practice, and instead connects the notion to the exploitation of African women’s bodies through the formation of the sex-obsessed ‘Jezebel figure’ brought to the Americas to ‘relieve Black men’ and produce more free labour. Lindsey writes:

*“I’m not one of those who believes
That an act of valour, for a woman
Need take place inside her.*

*My womb is packed in mothballs
And I heard that winter will be mild.*

*Anyway I have given birth twice
And my body deserves a medal for that
But I never got one.*

*Mainly because they thought
I was just answering the call of nature.*

*But now that the revolution needs numbers
Motherhood got a new position
Five steps behind manhood*

*And I thought sittin’ in the back of the bus
Went out with Martin Luther King.”*

In recognizing the historical relevance of ‘bodily sovereignty’ or ownership over one’s own body for women of colour, and sovereignty’s intimate connection to labour, the association of reproduction with ‘choice’ or ‘right’ takes on a more complex meaning. Savita, Racism and Reproductive Justice

When Savita Halappanavar died late last year, the issue of reproductive rights, an issue that had gone twenty years without legislation, was put forward as the central legislative issue in the country. Social media was alight with arguments, right, left and centre on the debate over legislation. Expressions of grief and anger rang out over rallies, protests, pickets and marches across Ireland and the world, and Savita’s face became the symbol of the abortion rights movement.

Yet, what is troubling about the use of Savita’s image as the symbol for abortion rights in Ireland is how little her experience as a woman of colour has been examined by proponents of reproductive rights, and how this fact impacts the ways in which reproductive rights as a national discourse is defined, strategized and won.

I think nobody would deny that the haunting statement, ‘this is a Catholic country,’ made by the midwife in charge of Savita’s care was meant, not only as a means of establishing the role the Catholic church, but most prudently as a way of ‘othering’ Savita. Chicana activist and writer Gloria Anzaldúa defined an other’ as ‘the attempt to establish a person as unacceptable based on certain criterion that fails to be met.’

Womanist poet Audre Lorde describes others in her work as ‘anyone that differs from the societal schema of an average, middle class, White male.’ Othering, in my opinion, gives rise to two different but related forms of social narcissism. The first is the establishment of another as ‘not one of us’. Perhaps in Savita’s case this meant not only that the viability of the foetus was put before her own life, but that her own life was not seen or valued as important in the same way as other patients because of her ethnicity.

The second form of social narcissism is a sort of hyper-identification, where another’s difference is the basis for their experiences being appropriated. I think this happens quite often on the left where we read situations with our own tribal/sectarian lens and do not allow the particularities of someone’s experience speak for itself. This happens very often in academic circles too, where people’s lived experiences of oppression become ways for academics to advance their careers and intellectually point-score, whilst their work reinforces dominating paradigms and further alienates their very own subjects.

Either by appropriation or devaluing an individual’s or a groups subjectivity, we formulate a myopic sense of the world that makes it difficult to achieve revolutionary aims. I think we combat othering by

understanding the important roles difference plays in our movement – in this case the movement towards reproductive justice. Unity, rather than sameness, recognizes the compelling role cooperation across difference, or solidarity, plays in creating dynamic global justice movements.

Unity through difference

Audre Lorde once said, “It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences,” that lead us towards tolerance instead of change. ‘Difference,’ Lorde teaches, ‘should act like polarities through which our creativity can spark like a dialectic.’

In our reproductive justice struggle, I wonder what it would mean to interrogate Savita’s experience from the perspective of a person of colour attempting to get care in hospital in Ireland? If the centrality of her identity as an Indian was the culminating force that gave rise to a national discussion on race relations, and treatment of those with contingent resident statuses like asylum seekers or refugees. I wonder if we believe Savita’s case would have captured the same level of recognition if she had been working class-- a shop keeper, domestic worker or English language student, instead of a dentist. Or, indeed, what difference would it have made if she was White – would she still be alive?

An inclusive, intersectional, anti-racist feminist class war (wooh!) begins by the building of a compelling political vision with our minds and our feet. Free, safe, legal abortions are appropriately an aim worth winning, but the movement for reproductive justice needs to be more diverse than that if it is to include the experiences and specificities of all members of our movement. Bodily sovereignty and reproductive rights is a justice issue for refugees and asylum seekers, for transgendered and gender queer folk, for travellers and the differently abled.

Difference is a crucial strength in solidarity activism. Savita’s death and the hundreds more like her, make it ever more urgent that we see our struggles and need for cooperation across them as an imperative strategy in fostering deeper connections with each other and building tangible forms of solidarity.



THE CONQUEST OF ROBOTS.



WORDS: MARK HOSKINS

BREAD AND ROBOTS: AUTOMATION, URBAN FARMING AND THE ABOLITION OF WAGE LABOUR.

**"Let us be lazy in everything,
except in loving and drinking,
except in being lazy."
- Gotthold Ephraim Lessing**

"Tea, Earl Grey, hot"; I'll have an Americano, double shot. If I had the chance to sit down for a coffee with Star Trek's Captain Jean Luc Picard, after he poured scorn on my choice of beverage and I asked some awkward questions about the need for military rank in a communist society, we may turn to discussing the technology that allows the citizens of this future utopia to live as free people, released from the chains of wage labour, housework and other forms of drudgery. What would it be like to live in such a society, a society where the provision of everyone's needs and desires were taken for granted? Could the good Captain imagine a situation where the acquirement of a cup of his favourite hot drink, required one to sell their labour, to do anything, regardless of their interests and skills?

A disastrous dogma

It is the opposite for us, now, a decade into the 21st century. Work is in and of itself, seen as a virtue, a requirement if one is to be a valued member of society. Those who don't work are often vilified as lazy or as welfare scroungers in the media. Job creation makes the headlines, both in the local and national press. To receive social welfare payments, the unemployed person must be "genuinely seeking work". To be known as a hard worker, is to be respected. But, why do we work? And for whom?

Do we work for ourselves? In capitalist society, we work to obtain income for things like food, clothing and lodgings. Necessities, without which life would be unbearable, even impossible. If I were to decide tomorrow, that I no longer wished to work, I would find it very difficult to procure these things. In this case, work is a necessity; But what if the necessities of life could be produced without labour? After all, most people in Europe work in jobs that do not directly contribute to the production of anything. Many work in what David Graeber, described in an article in Strike Magazine, as "bullshit jobs".

**"couldn't we just
stop working and
let robots do
the work?"**

"Over the course of the last century, the number of workers employed as domestic servants, in industry, and in the farm sector has collapsed dramatically. At the same time, "professional, managerial, clerical, sales, and service workers" tripled, growing "from one-quarter to three-quarters of total employment." In other words, productive jobs have, just as predicted, been largely automated away (even if you count industrial workers globally, including the toiling masses in India and China, such workers are still not nearly so large a percentage of the world population as they used to be).ⁱ

If so many jobs are unproductive and unnecessary, and industrial production could be largely automated, couldn't we just stop working and let robots do the work?

Robots of dawn

The word robot, conjures up images of science fiction, of the imaginative output of individuals whose feet are not resting firmly on solid ground. Yet, few would dispute the reality that much of the industrial production that was once carried out by the oft-vaunted blue collar worker, is now carried out by machines. The first industrial robot, Unimate, went to work in a General Motors factory in New Jersey in 1961. It was a primitive machine that consisted of a drum memory box, that stored systematic tasks, which was connected to a robotic arm. It's job was to carry die-cast moldings from an assembly line and weld them onto car bodies.

Since Unimate, advances in robotics mean that single machines, with high powered computer brains and sensors that act as eyes, can carry out multiple tasks. In 2011, in Tianjin, China, Great Wall Motors

opened a plant with thirty workstations occupied by twenty seven robots that can perform four thousand different welding operations. They can complete the welding of a single SUV in eighty six seconds. The implication of these advances in robotics is far-reaching. Any task that requires an assembly line is suitable for robot labour. Even the notorious Foxconn corporation, manufacturer of iPhone's and iPads, in 2011, announced that it would install up to one million robots in its factories in the next three years.

In construction, much prefabrication is already carried out by machines. We may soon, however be able to replace construction workers with robots. Last year, in a Paris warehouse, a team of flying robots were the first of their kind to construct a tower. They "seamlessly worked together with the help of a group of motion cameras installed in the ceiling of the art space to place the bricks in order one by one until the tower was built. The robots each have a suction device on their underbelly that grabs onto bricks and allows the robots to fly with them. When a robot gets tired it automatically plugs itself into a charger to juice up while another robot taps in and takes its place."ⁱⁱ In the same year, another construction prototype, that operates by moving along trusses was developed. This robot can move, horizontally, vertically, make ninety degree turns and flip itself over on a beam.ⁱⁱⁱ

Robots at point zero

Of course, labour is not just something that occurs in the factory, in the office or in the fast food restaurant. Due to the fact that many of the revered thinkers of the socialist movement were men with extravagant beards, few stopped for long to consider the issue of housework, long deemed to be the domain of women. The feminist writer, Silvia Federici, wrote in her 1975 essay, Wages against Housework: "The difference with housework lies in the fact that not only has it been imposed on women, but it has been transformed into a natural attribute of our female physique and personality, an internal need, an aspiration, supposedly coming from the depth of our female character."^{iv}

Federici argues for demanding wages for housework,

"In the era of robots, vertical farms and libertarian communism, a life of leisure will not just be the preserve of a small elite"

not as a narrowly economic demand for remuneration, but as a means of recognising housework as labour. In a world where men still dominate both the corporate world and left political organisations, it remains a crucial demand. But while we argue for this recognition, like all labour, we argue for its abolition. The material means already exist to make this a reality. Washing machines, dishwashers, microwaves, self cleaning ovens all exist in the here and now. The unequal system we live under, however, means that these products are luxuries that the majority of the world's population can not afford.

Even more out of reach of the average household, are devices like robotic vacuum cleaners and floor cleaning machines. A company called iRobot, produces compact robots that vacuum, sweep, mop and clean gutters. The cost of these items however, means that the closest most of us will get to see one in action is the web-famous video of a cat dressed in a shark costume riding one around a kitchen.^v Further developments in humanoid robots, like Honda's Asimo, could lead to the possibility of robots to dust, do dishes, iron and hang up clothes. Of course, with the abolition of housework, along with wage labour, there would be more time to share out more equally, currently gendered work like childcare, that we probably wouldn't want to leave to robots.

From the plough to the stars

While it is true, that it is possible to automate most industrial production and housework, it is also true that we can't eat cars, or spotless houses. Agriculture, however, is nowhere near as labour intensive as it used to be. Large fields can be ploughed and

grain can be harvested by a single individual driving a piece of agricultural machinery. Even at that, this work could be automated too. As of now, General Motors, Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Volkswagen, Audi, Nissan, Toyota, BMW, Volvo, and Cadillac are all testing driverless cars; i.e. cars that are driven by computerised navigation systems. If these machines can navigate complicated road systems, they should have no problem ploughing and harvesting.

Another solution to the world's food problems could be to build upwards. Urban vertical farms, greenhouse skyscrapers, have their detractors, but there have been significant advances in the field in recent years. In Singapore, Jack Ng's "Skygreens" development is the world's first commercial vertical farm system. "Trays of Chinese vegetables are stacked inside an aluminum A-frame, and a belt rotates them so that the plants receive equal light, good air flow and irrigation. The water powering the frames is recycled and filtered before returning to the plants. All organic waste on the farm is composted and reused. Water wheels are gravity aided, which take little electricity. According to Ng the energy needed to power one A-frame is the equivalent of illuminating just one 60-watt light bulb."^{vi}

There are still concerns about energy costs for larger facilities, however solutions such as pyramidal structures, using mirrors to reflect sunlight and rotation systems have all been put forward as solutions. In the society we long for, one without borders, nations and wars, a fraction of the research that goes into military technology, including drone aircraft that bomb civilians, could quickly solve any outstanding problems. We could live in a society where automated vertical farms, grow grain that is harvested by robots, packed by robots, transported by driverless truck to factories where robots make bread.

The players of games

It may seem now that a life without work is something unnatural, yet do the rich work in any way that we would recognise as labour? Do millions dream of winning lotteries, so they may be freed of the necessity to toil for the right to exist? The work ethic, has only been ingrained in our psyche for a few hundred years, and only so that those of wealth and power can live in luxury without labouring. As Paul Lafargue wrote in *The right to be lazy*, "The Greeks in their era of greatness had only contempt for work: their slaves alone were permitted to labor: the free man knew only exercises for the body and mind. And so it

was in this era that men like Aristotle, Phidias, Aristophanes moved and breathed among the people; it was the time when a handful of heroes at Marathon crushed the hordes of Asia, soon to be subdued by Alexander. The philosophers of antiquity taught contempt for work, that degradation of the free man, the poets sang of idleness, that gift from the Gods."^{vii} Even the god of the old testament worked for six days, then rested for eternity.

In the era of robots, vertical farms and libertarian communism, a life of leisure will not just be the preserve of a small elite, luxury will be the birthright of all. Under capitalism, automation drives up unemployment or drives people into "bullshit jobs", in an anarchist, post-capitalist society, the slogan, "from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs", would be a reality. How we organise to overthrow the capitalist system and how we replace the functions of the state, is another day's discussion. Here, the line is drawn at the fact that the material conditions to realise the abolition of labour and a society of abundance, exist in the here and now; If we want such a society, it is up to us to "make it so".

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"We could live in a society where automated vertical farms, grow grain that is harvested by robots, packed by robots, transported by driverless truck to factories where robots make bread"



Creating an Anarchist Theory of Privilege

WORDS: DÓNAL O' DRISCOLL

Guest writer, Dónal O'Driscoll, contributes to the ongoing discussion on intersectionality and privilege theory.

Privilege and the theory around it is a significant topic of debate at the moment among those interested in radical social change. Touching on many issues dear to the hearts of anarchists, it is hard to avoid.ⁱ Yet, the two are not fitting together as well as they should and there is a sense of unease about this.ⁱⁱ Much of this is because privilege theory has emerged from US academic circles rather than anarchist ones and, ironically, has been co-opted to protect middle-class privileges.ⁱⁱⁱ This is a situation in need of repair if we are to maintain our links with feminist, anti-racist and other struggles against oppression. If we are to create a mass movement capable of social change then it has to be able to engage with everyone in the first place.

Solidarity cannot be built on blithe assumptions we are getting it right by virtue of being anarchists, or that every oppressed group is our natural ally. Nor is not sustained by being patronising or repeating forms of oppression in daily interactions. Anarchist should sidestep the mistakes of liberal NGOs and policies that are more about assuaging guilt than genuine mutual aid. That requires recognising privileges we take for granted. Often privilege theory is nothing more than a useful tool for pointing out

unacknowledged assumptions and behaviours that liberal-capitalist-patriarchal society has instilled and which ultimately throw up barriers between those who should be allies.

I. The flaws of privilege theory

Current society is set up to advantage some groups over others, consciously or otherwise. Thus privilege theory is a way of identifying how nearly everyone benefits in some fashion from the oppression of others, whether or not it is intentional. At its heart is the understanding that hidden hierarchies exist and maintain individuals and institutions in positions of power^{iv} – something anarchists should instinctively challenge.

Yet, the overwhelming privilege conferred by class and education is ignored by many. Much of the work of privilege theory appears to be about giving people access to a system built on exploitation. Tinkering with the social order rather than recognising that it is the current social order itself that maintains the inequalities.

The failure to use privilege theory with a revolutionary analysis of economics and power is the source of its problems. In this first part I shall look at how it is being implemented from a purely liberal perspective. The result is a perversion as it is pressed into

service of maintaining individual social standing and systemic inequality.

This happens, in part, because too often the theory is deeply embedded in academia, available only to those with the education and time to access it, and their own privileges to maintain. These same liberal theorists are unable to envisage radical solutions, but see the answers as lying in reformism and state institutions. Capitalist society is inherently competitive which gives rise to the desire to use privilege to maintain status in the face of this pressure, whether in academia or otherwise. Without wider political analysis such as anarchism, this will be a fundamental weakness of privilege theory.

(A) Middle Class Protectionism

Privilege theory has been wholeheartedly co-opted by middle class liberals of all stripes to maintain their position. Walter Benn Michaels^v astutely recognises this, noting how obsession with diversity in social institutions is used to cover up wider economic inequalities. This works to make the middle classes of minority or oppressed populations feel comfortable with their position rather than recognise that there remains a larger number who are not, regardless of how they are to be categorised. The dominant middle-classes are provided the moral high-ground for having done something, while the illusion that everyone can climb the social ladder is maintained.



“privilege theory is a way of identifying how nearly everyone benefits in some fashion from the oppression of others, whether or not it is intentional”

Thus, undermining justified anger at the inequality of the whole system

It is re-enforced when journalists and politicians discuss the need for 'positive' cultural / ethnic minority role models. Examples used are consistently drawn from those who have reached elite positions and emphasis is placed on upward social mobility. Rarely are champions of resistance exemplified.

We see it again when anti-oppression professionals complain they are merely teaching the language to avoid being called out for racism, sexism, ableism, etc., but without changing deep-seated prejudicesvi. Yet, rarely do they questioning the very system that causes this. It is not recognised that their critique incorporates the flawed politics of liberalism, with its emphasis on the individual, and meritocracy as the basis for position and power in society – two notions that work to maintain the (economic) status quo.

(B) Binaries

On a practical level, the way privilege theory is incorporated into anti-discrimination politics focuses on the individual in ways that drastically simplify the world. Thus when individuals recognise themselves in oppressed groups it comes with an implicit hierarchical baggage. This is embedded in the language of anti-discrimination. So, while stereotypes of oppressed groups are denounced, it often comes at the cost of an implicit stereotyping of everyone else.

This manifests in several ways, including a simplistic view of privilege through reductionist binaries. An example of what I mean by this is the notion of

'whiteness' and 'blackness'. This is an important failure as it undermines a key part of privilege theory – recognising difference as valuable in and of itself, to be celebrated even.vii Sticking with whiteness as a useful example for the moment, what we have is a very simplistic view of race that is used in many circles to overlook other issues. For instance, by focusing on skin colour, other examples of racism and ethnic struggle are glossed over – e.g. the six counties, travellers and Eastern European immigrants are all examples of inter-'white' racism that is ignored. 'White' has become synonymous with the privileged / hegemonic group.

It treats all 'non-whites' as a homogenous group whose experience is universal – that is of being oppressed. Inter-group tensions and racism is likewise ignored. It allows people to ignore how social class and national culture affects experience of racism for different peoples.

Just because someone has an attribute that confers privilege in some contexts, there are other factors which mean they don't get those benefits in others. Their experience is not so much devalued as considered non-existent. This is something commonly seen in the way 'white male' is used as a set phrase, yet also is played on in a classist way, for example in discussions of 'chavs'. Experiences of patriarchy and economic powerlessness are relevant across situations of concern to privilege politics, and are just as destructive to people who fall into the broadly drawn 'oppressor' groups.

Ironically, this is also a form of US cultural imperialism and emphasises why we need to develop our

“The failure to use privilege theory with a revolutionary analysis of economics and power is the source of its problems”

own anarchist theory and practice of privilege theory. Much of what is adopted as the politics of privilege theory comes from the US perspective. In particular, the notion of 'whiteness' is very much based on US racial laws and is not applicable to the situation in other parts of the world. It is rarely asked if the wholehearted application to Europe is actually appropriate. The irony is that, contrary to theory, it is an imposition of identity by those who do not recognise it as such. Tariq Modood, in particular, points out how inappropriate the established anti-racist terminology of 'white' and 'black' as political terms is for the experiences of Muslim and South Asians in Europe (albeit, he is an example of the liberal intellectual who relies on laws and states for solutions)viii.

(C) Status

This simplistic approach also means that individuals can focus on that aspect of their life where they experience membership of an oppressed group and conveniently ignore all those other aspects in which they do experience privilege. As an anarchist the notion of how different oppressions overlap ('intersectionality', in the jargon) and affect people is something we can readily recognise through our own political critiques. However, often this intersectionality is only paid lip-service.

Instead, what we have the situation of the individual who seeks to protect the advantages they have in life by emphasising the particular oppressed group they belong to, even where they do not suffer oppression. The result is those with the loudest voice claim status in an inverse hierarchy of oppression, while less visible ones often get ignored. Thus, for example, we see working class carers being abused by middle class disabled employers. Or the needs of a person with a hidden disability being ignored because their ethnicity is white or they are cis-male. Action ceases to be about revolutionary change but asserting that they are members of an oppressed group regardless of context. One effect of this is a tendency towards separatism.

It is worth citing at this point that obsession with identity is a problem in itself. As an example, there was the Köln-Düsseldorf No Borders camp where migrants complained that a section of the European activists were too focused on dealing with 'critical whiteness theory' to the point it came to dominate

the camp – at the expense of the needs of the migrants the camp was there to help.

(D) Victimhood and Pacification

A side-effect of the middle-class liberal approach to privilege theory is an encouragement of victimhood and pacification of those suffering oppression. By constantly emphasising that those oppressed are victims, it is disempowers them from action. Yet at the same time, the oppressed are expected to be the source of radical social change. This vicious circle actually maintains the status quo. And where oppressed groups have sought to break out of it, famously the Black Panthers or the militancy of the suffragist movementix, that revolutionary history is denied or discretely written out of history. Expression and definition is very much controlled by a middle-class narrative, and outburst of anger are neutered or discouraged as being counter productive to the reformist approaches that serve their needs.

This 'pacification of the oppressed' aspect of the implementation of privilege theory is pointed out in the article, "Privilege Politics is Reformism," published by the Black Orchid Collective.x It argues it being applied in a way that the liberal-capitalist structure of society does not have to be challenged. The aspirations become not radical social change and a fair, just society, but about getting access to the class ladder. A focus on the individual makes it easier to ignore the wider impersonal social structures which are just as important sources of oppression.

So, apparently liberatory politics end up re-enforcing the very discriminations they want to challenge through poor application of the politics, something that goes right back to anti-colonisation struggles.xi Failure to recognise the role of class politics in shaping the theory is undermining it and what Audrey Lorde warned of when she famously wrote "The masters tools will never dismantle the masters house" is too often applicable.

Sadly, out of this we see emerging privilege theory as a way of maintaining status in some activist circles, where advocates of identity politics create in-groups based around a particular identity, rather than perceiving a wider notion of solidarity or recognising contexts. As what has happened in many places with consensus decision making, a particular form of the theory is being taken up in a dogmatic sense and being applied uncritically, thus undermining what it is seeking out to achieve.

We see implicit hierarchies of oppression and a culture of seeing individuals as victims of oppression thus denying them histories of rebellion and even the ability to see themselves as agent of change. People become entrenched in their positions and see those they are most naturally allied with as part of the threat rather than seeking to incorporate them as solutions. This is often closer to home than we like to admit – how many working class groups are focused around men, implicitly excluding women, arguing that class is more important than gender in revolutionary change....

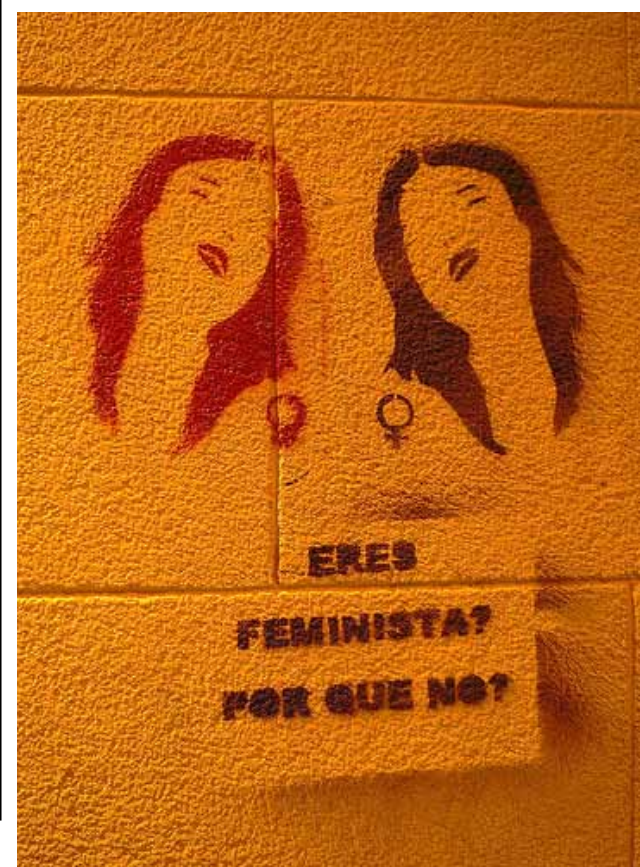
II.

Much of this is understood already. Feminists and people of colour have expanded the sites of social struggle from the workplace to the rest of society, challenging a Left which saw identity politics as distraction from the purity of class struggle. Those of a more radical background, particularly anarcho-feminists, highlighted the flaws of liberation movements too focused on the needs of the bourgeois.

In part, this was achieved by applying the central dynamic of anarchism – neither pure liberal individualism nor total submission to the will of the collective. The core of anarchism, as set out in Bakunin, Goldman, Landauer etc., is the constant balancing of these two needs. Thus, an anarchist solution to the flaws of liberal individualism within the politics of privilege theory is to remember the core principles of solidarity and mutual aid, combined with collective responsibility.

The anarchist dynamic introduces another important aspect that addresses flaws in privilege theory – awareness of context. Anarchism is not grounded in huge universal narratives and ideas, but in the struggle of every day life. When we lose sight of this, as often happens, we talk in grand terms of challenging social institutions, while ignoring daily reproduction of the oppressions we are supposed be fighting.

That does not mean we won't fall down; sometimes it is easier to fight against an abstract foe than actually see ourselves as being part of the problem. The fact that many anarchist groups only focus on larger ideas is a good reason to face up to the challenges of privilege theory. If we are not inclusive, then a chunk



“This simplistic approach also means that individuals can focus on that aspect of their life where they experience membership of an oppressed group and conveniently ignore all those other aspects in which they do experience privilege”



of the the problem lies within ourselves.

After all, why join a group if it means listening to particular voices dominate discussions and where the desires of a few are met without question at the expense of everyone else? When supposedly there are no leaders, so why are so many groups dominated by a few individuals in ways that are seemingly impossible to challenge? A bit more self-awareness would go a long way. Equality only works if everyone gets to say what equality means for them; it cannot be imposed. If the definitions are not compatible that needs to be brought out and if possible addressed, not dismissed, but we cannot tell others to accept what we consider equality to be.

Yet, the interaction between the individual and the collective can, if done right, give greater understanding of how oppression is played out and thus make solidarity with each other and other groups stronger. Demands to end hierarchies will only have strength when anarchist groups are not riddled with implicit hierarchies because they have failed to recognise how individuals have been shaped by the social conditioning of liberal-capitalism.

Understanding the importance of context in lived oppression via class provides tools to identify it in other spheres. It is uncomfortable to be challenged, but solidarity without seeing ourselves as part of the issue is an empty, even insulting, gesture. However, it is possible to explicitly break down labels and acknowledge practically that everyone has multiple aspects, and how they interact varies with context.

Conversely, collective responsibility is a tool for considering the materials produced around privilege theory. This is too short a space to go through all the issues, but I will draw attention to one approach of privilege theory practice that is problematic for anarchists – the principle that those in oppressed groups do not have to speak of their oppression. Thus, if you are concerned around issues of disability, the disabled person has the absolute right to not answer your questions. This is reasonable. As someone in this position, there are various times that I do not want to talk about it.

However, I resist the individualist implications some draw from this approach. Especially where it changes emphasis on those of the oppressed group to be the

source of change in themselves, while leaving those from the non-disadvantaged group who want to effect change floundering – only to be slammed when they get it wrong. This serves only individuals who have the ability to cocoon themselves or who want to identify themselves solely by their oppression. It misses the point that the lead for change must come within the oppressed groups.

It ignores that while I have a health disadvantage, I am fortunate to have another set of advantages that class society has given me, which I should not ignore. I have an obligation not to be silent. The above approach is indicative of the binary approach where everyone else would be defined by the privilege that I do not have. It is not how I face life, or how most people do. It misses utterly multiple identities and protects other privileges from being questioned. As bell hooks puts it,^{xii} we cannot let the reduction of our identities to simplistic terms (imposed by the discriminators in most cases) to blind us to our own complicities and accesses to other privileges.

This individualism is mitigated by collective processes. In my case, I resolve it by actively involving my community (a housing cooperative), accepting they are not going to get it right all the times and there are times when I am going to have to educate people on how they have disadvantaged me (I struggle to say it amounts to an 'oppression' when I look at that word in the light of other people's experiences). Standing up as a voice for others with the same issue but are less able to is putting my anarchist politics in action.

Anarchism teaches me that no state or institution can make my life better by simply legislating away discrimination. What improves my life is talking to my compatriots and working together to resolve disadvantages each of us face. My needs cannot be met solely by myself and there are things they require of me. There is a need to accept that not everything is possible all the time, but rather than tie ourselves up in theoretical possibilities, we address what is before us.

Thus, perfection is not required, but rather there is the flexibility to change as needed. However, if I am not prepared to enter into that dialogue, to trust my collective and them in trust me, there can be no effective solidarity, only ignorance and misunderstanding, an approach that scales up to all levels. At the end of the day, people are not going to get things right if competitive approaches get preference over respect, listening and co-operation. In my experience, many from oppressed backgrounds without middle class privileges are not looking for complete agreement, but acknowledgement they have a cause and to be able to be heard in their own voices – not to be spoken on behalf of or ignored. Something that applies even to the statements put out as part of our political struggles.^{xiii}

It is one reason why the ongoing interplay of individual and community that informs anarchism is such a powerful mechanism for analysing politics. However, an anarchist theory of privilege first needs to deal with how we have been infected by liberal ideology – and we all have.

It means taking identity politics seriously, but deciding our own reactions. It means being honest with ourselves that we all have both advantages and disadvantages and that they interact in complex ways. Solidarity includes awareness of the needs of others and adapting behaviour to ensure they are empowered. Rather than seeing these issues as a distraction, they can be consider an opportunity to support people standing up in the face of years of oppressive social conditioning and experience. If they are 'empowered', it does not make them offensive or 'over-privileged', rather it is because they have spent

“Anarchism teaches me that no state or institution can make my life better by simply legislating away discrimination. What improves my life is talking to my compatriots and working together to resolve disadvantages each of us face”

years fighting the crap thrown at them, which should be applauded as the achievement it is.

A collective is strong when it can communicate and show respect to all its members. It does not make assumptions about other people that suit how its want things to be. Likewise, anarchism does not let us off with the excuse of reducing ourselves to being victims. Not being silent is an important part of our politics. Rather than using advantages to offset disadvantages and sustain particular privileges an anarchist theory turns this on its head, the advantages should be used to challenged the reasons for oppression.

To be honest, this is mostly common sense. It does not have to be dressed up in the language of privilege theory to be recognised.

However, what I am bringing the table is the anarchist analysis of power and how it is used. Too often in the liberal conception of privilege this is the part that is deliberately ignored. Solutions are based in the state – laws, courts and commissions that do not address the economic inequalities feeding the oppression. Anarchism demands a challenge to all community leaders voicing their agendas in the name of communities they supposedly represent.

Likewise, anarchism is wary of definitions being imposed by the more powerful. What use is equality when it serves only one side? Unfortunately this is a common mistake in our groups, when we tell people from disadvantaged groups that they are equal to us in our eyes – what matters is how they perceive it. It is a matter of asking, not telling, and if the answer is they do not feel equal, then we ask why not.

In anarchism, empowerment through the self is an equally strong route to liberation. People who are encouraged through solidarity and mutual aid to stand up and resist will effect the change needed to end oppression. Those strands of privilege theory which have been adapted to encourage victimhood is a liberal individualism that puts the onus of support back into the hands of the State. This is where it is important to recognised that everyone has advantages and disadvantages and bring the former to the struggle against the latter.

Crucially, anarchism questions supposedly universal terms and methods. It suspects them of hiding hierarchies and power. For instance, there should be a suspicion of whiteness as a category, recognising there are many issues of racism within 'white' society that should not be devalued. Conversely, allying solely with one oppressed group shouldn't allow ignoring other issues of privileged in ourselves. Anarchism should challenge the inverse hierarchies of oppression in favour of a complex intersectionality were individuals have multiple facets. It is not a place to hide behind simplified notions of class, gender or sexuality.

There is the power to recognise how solidarity is offered. Resisting grand narratives imposed by middle class intellectuals helps us avoid the traps that plague much of the Left with its blind support for groups of dubious politics. We are capable of making our solidarity conditional, not caught in the trap of tolerance for groups whose politics really are opposed to ours.

Sometimes privilege theory can be used to shut down discussions when it reduced to being either all about the individual or monolithic narratives around race, etc. Anarchists have a powerful role in keeping these debates open, rooted in wide communities and in each individual's complex relationships with those communities, rather than fragmenting down to insular perspectives. For instance we can recognise racial hatred against one group while acknowledging that

group is deeply patriarchal, and actively address it. Or we can critique simplified comments on race and religion to ensure that other issues are not buried.

Not all identity-focused movements are necessarily to be adopted, but we can learn how they combat oppression. For instance, the queer scene counteracting the increasing commercialisation and co-option of the gay pride movement, or tranarchy groups challenging heteronormative concepts of gender within social structures. An anarchist politics of privilege theory will not place any group on a pedestal above criticism, but will seek to address issues raised from a point of view which taken into account the experiences of class and capitalism. Anarcha-feminists have already started this by raising the issue of misogyny as a working class issuexiv, something that needs to be extended to the related topic of multiculturalismxv.

III.

Having grand critiques of the great abstract ideas or of social institutions is not sufficient if we want to show solidarity and mutual aid on a daily basis. The police, the State and fascists are all clear enemies. It is harder to look at ourselves and acknowledge that we too are potentially oppressors. Nor is it sufficient to lump patriarchy and racism in with capitalism – capitalism needs patriarchy and racism to sustain itself, but they can both exist independently of them. If we did not have capitalism to fight against, we would still have patriarchy and racism to contend with. The struggle has to be thus against all oppression simultaneously.xvi

It is for this reason we need to de-liberalise privilege theory and use that to form a politics that is liberatory for everyone, demonstrating true solidarity.

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xi"The Wretched of the Earth", Frantz Fanon, a key text of the related notion of decolonisation theory.

xii"Outlaw Culture", bell hooks, 2006

xiiiFor example, the May 1st Anarchist Alliance statement "Towards an Anarchist Policy on Syria" and the response from Shiar, a Syrian anarchist, unpicking in a constructive manner the latent Orientalism in it at <http://www.anarkismo.net/article/26148>

xiv <http://anarchalibrary.blogspot.co.uk>

xvFor instance, how should we react or analyse when a man of an ethnic minority refuses to shake the hands of a woman on cultural grounds? Maybe unsurprisingly, where I have heard accounts of this it tends to be men from middle classes who express such behaviour. While I have not explored multicultural theory here, it is closely related and throws up many issues. As well as Tariq Modood, see also "Rethinking Multiculturalism" by Bhikhu Parekh, or "Cosmopolitanism" by Kwame Anthony Appiah.

xvi"A Class Struggle Anarchist Analysis of Privilege Theory", AFED Women's Caucus, <http://www.afed.org.uk/blog/state/327-a-class-struggle-anarchist-analysis-of-privilege-theory--from-the-womens-caucus-.html>

INTERVIEW: ANTI-DEPORTATION IRELAND

WORDS: LETICIA ORTEGA



Leticia Ortega (WSM) conducts a joint interview with a woman seeking asylum and Luke Budha of Anti-Deportation Ireland (ADI) and the Anti Racism Network (ARN).

IAR: Tell me about your involvement in ARN and ADI.

Luke: ARN is very different from other groups, because we are not a charitable not-for-profit organisation. Our message is: all who live here, belong here. Everybody must be treated on the basis of equality. It is very important for us, migrants and indigenous people, to organise ourselves and do things by ourselves.

ARN is in this way. We do not really do anything on anyone's behalf. Those who think they have a problem and they want to do something, but want someone to do it on their behalf have to go to NGOs. Our message is to fight for ourselves, not to help other people fight for us. In ADI we want the asylum seekers to lead the campaign and use their own voices, which is different from other organisations in Ireland.

IAR: Tell me about your life in a Direct Provision Hostel in Ireland.

Woman: I am an asylum seeker. I am four years in the system. I been living in a direct provision hostel for four years now. Originally, when I came to Ireland, it was only supposed to be for six months. I am still waiting to hear if my application for asylum will be accepted or rejected.

While in the centre, we receive Fetac Level Two education from small colleges. Asylum seekers are prohibited from third level education, and we are also prohibited from working. We would like to choose how we want to live, and make our own choices. But right now we are living by other people's choices. We are controlled by a reality tv show. The way we live is so difficult and it affects us and our children. Some of us experiences mental illness because of this situation. Some of us have committed suicide, and some have died, but the numbers are not being recorded.

[In the centres] we are mixed in the rooms. Some of the rooms are occupied by 3 people and we have to share toilets with the people in the hall. We also cannot choose what we want to eat. We only eat what is there, and it is usually not healthy food, just things

like cheap sandwiches and chips.

We get 19e allowance for a week but a lot of us take medication, and we need to pay 1.50 for each medicine so our allowance is not enough even for medication sometimes. Also, I need to hygiene products and there is not enough for that. I would love to work so that I do not have to depend on the government, but I am not allowed and it is very frustrating.

If I need to go to the doctor, I need to pay for transport. Sometimes they refund me, but if not how can I go to the doctor without money for transport?

IAR: Can you specify what is the particular situation of being a female asylum seeker?

Woman: As a woman I am deprived of my freedom. I want to choose where to live. I have children, and the years we have lived in the hostel was not what I expected. I would love to have my own place to live with my children, I do not think this situation is the best place to raise my children.

I live in a hostel with men and women, but they do not share rooms. Women share the rooms with their children, as many as they have, in just one room.

Sometimes the father is in the room too so there is no privacy for the adults or the children. I would love to live in a two bedroom apartment so my children can sleep in their own bedroom.

IAR: What is the reason you will not identify yourself?

Woman: The reason I am afraid to give my name is because once I give my name I will be targeted. If I give my name I will most likely be transferred to another hostel, which is what happened to other asylum seekers when they participated in political protests.

I do not want to be forced to move to a different part of the country if this is the decision of the providers. This is the reason why other asylum seekers do not want to be involved, but I am involved in ADI not just for myself but for everyone. I stand up for them and I know one day they will be thankful.

IAR: I remember you speaking at the last Dublin Anarchist bookfair about how you desperately wanted help from other activists. I think it is really important for us, as anarchists, to understand the difference between solidarity and salvation. I want to help your cause, and I also think is really powerful that you maintain your own voices yourselves. I think it is really difficult not to cross this line. How do you think we can give you support, but without doing it 'on your behalf'?

Woman: What I want from the Irish society is to support us without leaving everything up to us. I would love Irish people to be against what the state is doing to us. For example, demand the closure of all direct provision hostels, and demand that we are able to contribute in society. Some asylum seekers are really educated. We would like to see that our children have opportunities too. I would love to see Irish people to help give us a platform for others to listen to our voices so then the government can hear us. We need positive support from Irish people to be able to make a change.

IAR: Why did you choose to work with ADI and not other organisations who are also involved in Asylum seekers issues?

Woman: I choose ADI because they want all the Direct provision Centres to be closed, as opposed to organisations like the Irish Refugee Council that demand to improve the Direct Provision Centres, but not to close them. I think merely improving the conditions of the food we eat or building playgrounds for our children at the centres, doesn't solve the issue. We do not want that. We want stability, and to have our own homes. I want to make my own choices.

IAR: In Ireland, the pro choice movement has grown so much in the last year. Last november, the death of Savita made a huge impact on all of us who want to fight for women and sexual reproductive rights in this country, but we also have to remember that Savita was a migrant woman who was told that " this is a catholic

country".

We always remember the 12 Irish women who daily need to travel to the U.K to have an abortion, but there are cases of migrant and asylum seekers who do not even have that choice and they are forced with unwanted pregnancy. What is your opinion about that issue? Do you have any stories related to that?

Woman: I personally do not know any women who had this experience. I am sure there are some. In my opinion, I know this country is dominated by the Catholic Church, but the government should not put limitation on women's choices. Or anybody's choices. I think the State and the Catholic Church must understand that they are not the only ones in this country who are present. Every culture and nation is present here. We do not have to throw away our own culture. We need to respect Irish culture, and Irish culture needs to respect other cultures.

Regarding to abortion legislation, the government should focus on what is best for women and every women should have abortion rights for whoever needs it.

IAR: Luke, you have been an activist for a long time. What made you be part of ADI and ARN instead of other organisations or NGOs?

Luke: What I am fighting for is for equality. I do not only care about the asylum seekers or migrant issues, but also about the communities we live in. We



are very involved in other issues too, as for example the issue of austerity policies in this country. That is why we have a banner that says, "Cuts breed racism!" This is to show that we do not only care for asylum seekers. However, the issue for asylum seekers has been there for the last 10 years, yet the mainstream media barely write any stories about it. Every six months, at least, there are stories related to deportations.

NGOs do a lot of good work, as much as they can do, but they work in the context of what they are meant to be doing, whereas we bring out the root of our real issues. For example, the incident over what happen to the African asylum seekers in the church. The asylum seekers were isolated in their community, and a few activists went to the church to defend them. This created solidarity between these communities.

Regarding deportation, people think this issue is a fiction. You cannot discuss deportations in other organisations.

As activists, we are taking control over the agenda ourselves. The problem is that in some left or liberal circles, people tend to believe that volunteering for NGOs is going to bring about a fundamental change. I think this hinders people in bringing forward more radical ideas.

We also have to remember that unlike NGOs we are all volunteers and a part of a larger spirit of social movement in Ireland and we want to be a part of debates that affect our lives. We want more people to become politicized in this country, and we want to be able to say what we want to say and do it ourselves.

IAR: ARN was founded in 2010 and ADI is now one year old. How do you see ADI and ARN's future work?

Luke: For ADI as we said in the beginning, it needs to be led by the people who are facing deportation themselves. The number of asylum seekers involved is very low so what we want to see in the upcoming years is an increase in the number of asylum seekers involved. We would also like to see ADI as a vehicle for them to use to say what they want to say and get the social services they need from NGOs. But also ADI should be able to make the bridge between asylum seekers and other communities. We want to bring the communities to fight side by side with them because there is a danger in waiting, lobbying NGOs.

For ARN, we would like to see an egalitarian society, and we would like to see many different groups involved like the Roma people, Travellers and us as migrants. We really do need that to use our independent voices.

ARN now publishes a journal that we think is important for us to have. For us this journal is a way to express our ideas and what we are doing. Our journal is unique because it is written by a mixture of migrants, activists, academics and everyone who is involved in a way in ARN and working together. We produce it twice a year and hopefully we will start to produce it 3 times a year now.

IAR: Thanks for your time.

ARN public meetings take place on the last Thursday of every month in Dublin Central Mission , Abbey Street Dublin 1.

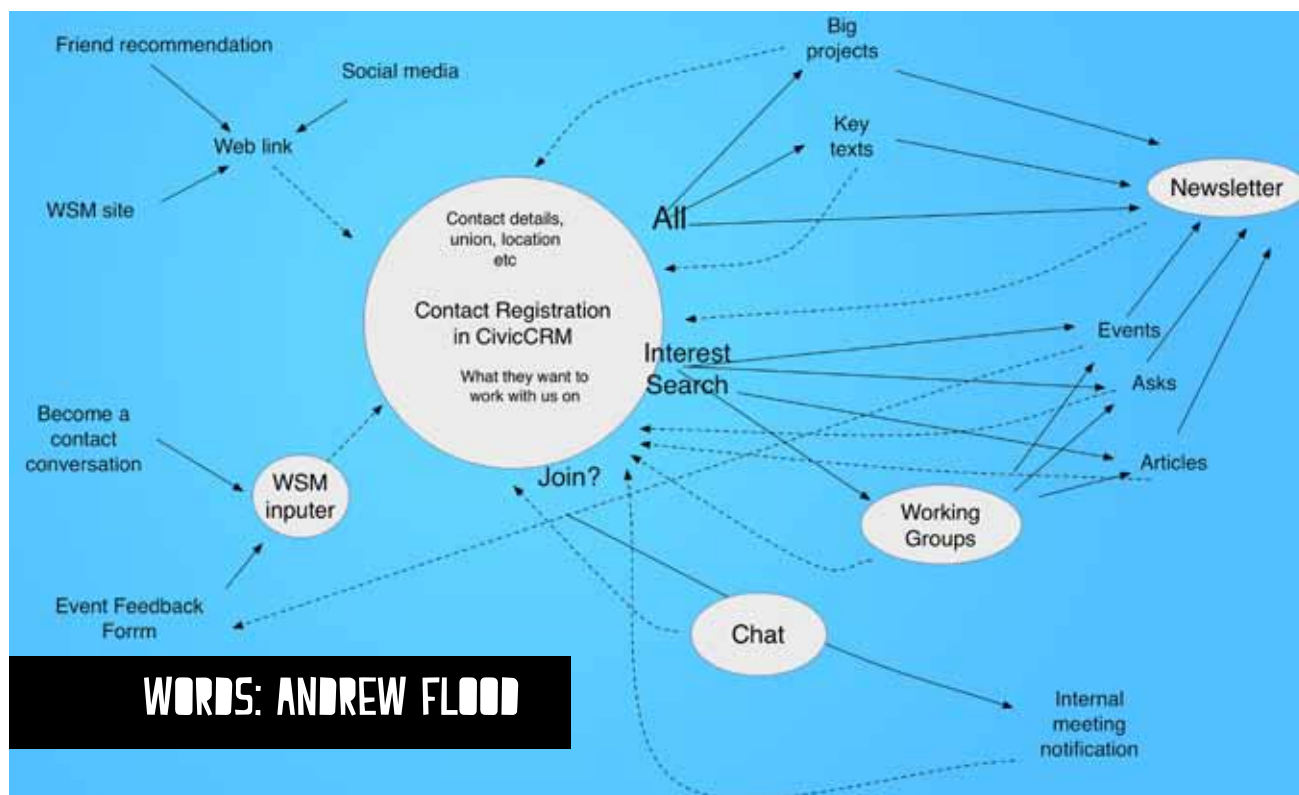
For more information <https://www.facebook.com/arnireland> , www.arn.ie <http://arnireland.blogspot.ie/>.

Our email is arnireland@gmail.com

Everyone is welcome.



SOLIDARITY, ENGAGEMENT & THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION.



WORDS: ANDREW FLOOD

Over the last couple of years the WSM has been going through a process of re-examining the way we relate to people interested in what we have to say. Alongside this we have recently begun to try and get a better understanding of what it is we do. Both these processes have some major implications in reaching an understanding of what the usefulness of a revolutionary organisation is in the modern era of broad and loose social networks.

What does WSM do?

Part of what the WSM does is easy to see and understand. We publish a newspaper Workers Solidarity, a magazine Irish Anarchist Review and maintain a website at WSM.IE. These are all very visible. We organise the annual Dublin Anarchist Bookfair and

periodically hold meetings & speaking tours in our own name. Again very easy to see and understand. However most of our activity is much less visible and at times this means that people presume what has already been listed is actually the limits of our activity.

We are dual organisationalists - a specialist term that indicates those groups within anarchism that implement the bulk of their campaign, community & union activity through broad mass organisations rather than setting up their own unions, front groups etc. Unlike some on the left we don't attempt to make our presence very visible in such struggles by demanding speakers on every campaign platform or turning up with hundreds of branded placards for every demonstration. That's because we recognise that this sort of behaviour is generally counter productive for winning on that particular issue and we don't put the interests of our organisation ahead of the interests of the struggles we are involved in.

One major negative side effect of this though is that it makes our involvement in struggles hard to see unless you know who our members are. To an extent you can construct a picture of what we are

probably involved in through carefully following our press, Facebook and Twitter output. Although even this won't give a complete picture as it's dependent on the members involved writing up experiences and advertising events, something that often won't happen.

What might perhaps be surprising is that even internally we don't have a very accurate picture of the range of our activity beyond some broad generalisations. This is because most of our campaign activity is generated from members' individual initiatives and informal linkages between members working in the same area. We maintain coherency not because we have a centre directing our activity (most of the left has a layer of 'full timers' who fill this role) but because we operate off a common collectively agreed set of political position papers. This means that in almost all cases the answer to 'what should be done' is fairly obvious, at least in a broad sense.

At times we do focus in on particular issues and operate in a more coordinated fashion where this is needed. Most frequently this will tend to be in mass struggles where the manipulations of left parties mean that there is a requirement to micro-manage a collective response, to avoid being blind-sided. The campaign against the Household Tax (CAHWT) was one recent example. But as an all-volunteer organisation that seeks to work on a wide range of issues, including struggles against racism and sexism (what today is called an intersectional practice) we simply don't have the time resources for detailed coordination on every one of those issues. Many things inevitably happen on a looser, ad hoc basis.

At the start of the summer we held a WSM members discussion weekend in Cashel and as part of that attempted to map out what the activity of our members over the previous year had been. We are not a large organisation, we had around 34 members nationally at the time of the Cashel meeting, but all the same even internally it turned out that no one had anything approaching a full picture of our broad range of activity. We knew the most about activities that were regularly reported on by members, either publicly or through internal reports. But we might collectively know nothing about similar levels of work that were being conducted elsewhere, but not being reported on.

The method used was simple. Every member was asked to write down those external organisations they have been involved in at the level of attending organising meetings over the previous year. One piece of paper was used for each member's involvement in each organisation. Then in Cashel we physically laid the pieces of paper out, the size of any stack for an organisation representing the amount of collective effort that had gone in. The stacks were moved around into natural groups, for instance the unions were grouped together as were the anti-racist groups. The resulting patterns were used for discussions about engagement that are beyond the scope of this article.

After Cashel I used photographs of the resulting maps to create the Cloud diagram seen here. As you can see it's pretty complex with very many organisations represented, so to reduce the complexity I had to remove the information about the number of members involved in particular organisations. I also removed a lot of individual social networking initiatives, things like Facebook pages and profiles. The diagram is incomplete as not every member was able

“it’s now possible for a small volunteer organisation to maintain engagement with large numbers of people”

to attend the Cashel meeting and not everybody who didn't make it responded to a request to supply the information afterwards. But it is a first approximation of an answer to the 'What does the WSM do' question that we opened this section with.

It also illustrates why its much more useful to talk about solidarity / intersectionality on a collective basis rather than an individual one. As a collective WSM activity fills many more spaces than any individual could hope to reach, even if they spread themselves so thinly that they were only ticking boxes.

And in particular, when you are volunteering your time, the reality is that to be effective you often need to focus in on just one area of struggle for long periods. Outside of a collective organisational context this could be a very frustrating experience for anyone who recognises that there is more than one simple universal fight to be won.

It is one of the more significant benefits of being part of even a fairly small formal organisation with a coherent collective political outcome - it allows you to concentrate on a narrow field while knowing that your comrades are not only stuck in elsewhere, but are all the better able to concentrate on the area they are currently working in, for what they also consider important.

Engagement

The other related area that the WSM has spent a good bit of time on recently, is the question of how we engage with those who find our political and organisational methods interesting and indeed useful. The enormous drop in the 'cost' of communication (in both price and work hours) that new technology has brought means that it's now possible to try and engage with large numbers of people on an ongoing basis without a huge paid staff licking stamps and sealing envelopes. Previous limitations meant that the WSM tended to have an engagement cliff between people who were members and everyone else. Something made worse by the lack of subdivision between the high commitment levels we expect from members and the mass of society who would find such commitment strange.

On the technical side we now have a set of online resources that make it very straightforward to communicate with thousands of people. Our Facebook page which has the second largest following of any political organisation on the island of Ireland has 11,400 people on it at the time of writing and there are another 3,300 following WSM on Twitter. Twenty years ago there was no possibility of us being able to interact instantly with 15,000 people several times a day. Back then our interaction with contacts comprised of licking stamps and stuffing envelopes for a manual postal list that seldom numbered more than 50. Communications took days and it was very seldom that you saw a result to a particular post. This and other technological advances mean that it's now possible for a small volunteer organisation to maintain engagement with large numbers of people. But we are also trying to get beyond that engagement cliff in the second sense, through opening up communication methods with people that are closer to us than those 15,000 online followers.

Part of our routine at real world events is to ask people to complete a contact sheet (normally alongside a feedback form on that specific event). These details go into an online contact management system called CivicCRM, open source software that is also used by mainstream NGO's like Amnesty. We have chosen this method because we don't want to be one of those left organisations that gets people to sign a petition about some issue and then proceeds to spam them with every activity they organise and constant join requests for the rest of their days. The method we use means that people understand they are giving us their details so that we can contact them and it allows them to define what their interests are so we only contact them around those interests. Finally, and importantly, anyone on the system can remove themselves or alter their contact details or inter-

ests at any time, simply by visiting www.wsm.ie/user/. You can self-register online for this system at that URL (just click 'Create New Account') but 80% of the 600 people on it at the moment are people who have attended one or more of our events.

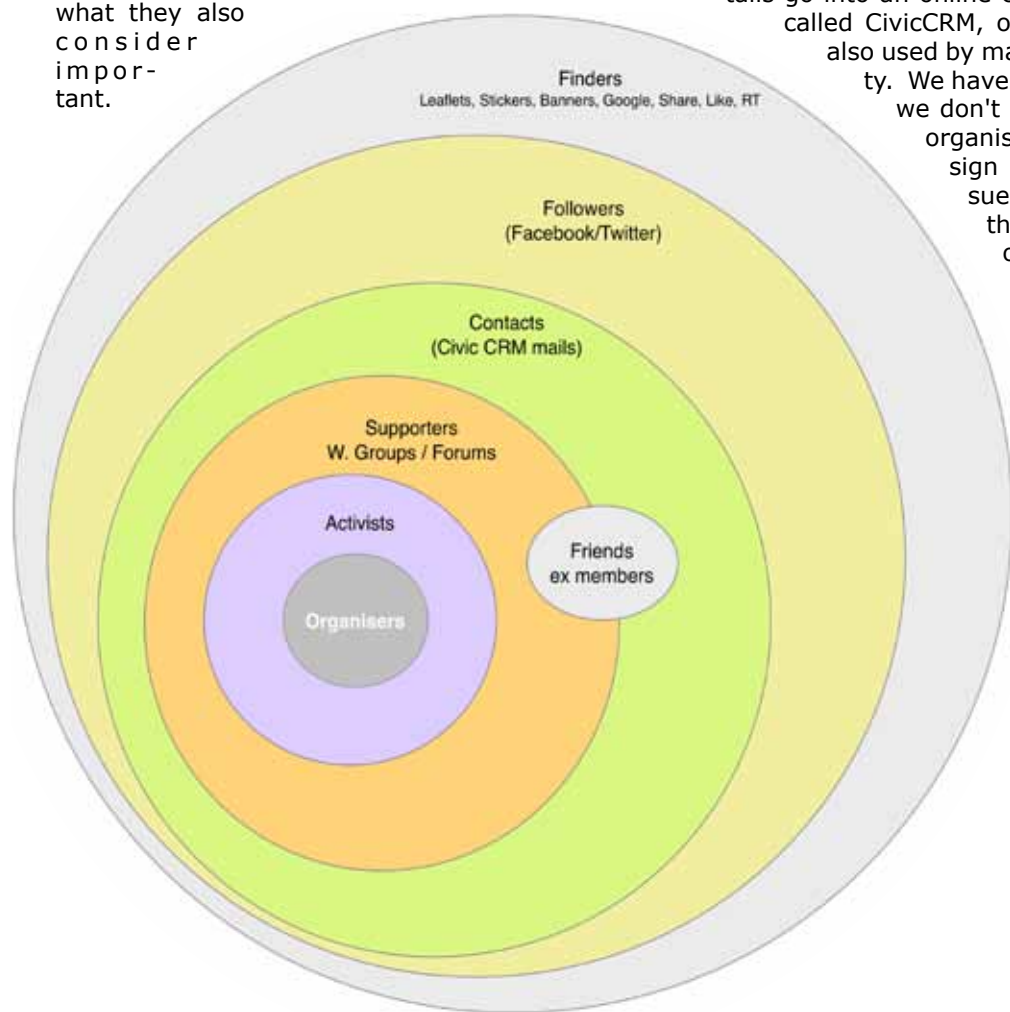
Finally we have started introducing a supporter status for the people who broadly agree with the politics & activity of the WSM but at this moment are unable or unwilling to commit to membership. The volunteer nature of WSM means we can only function well when our membership is overwhelmingly comprised of motivated, committed people who will take the initiative in making sure collectively agreed ideas are implemented. We don't have full timers to manage our labour and spot stalled projects in need of restarting, if there is a problem we have to spot it and fix it.

“Browbeating people into premature activity only serves to burn them out and disillusion them”

But that is quite a commitment to make, which is why we now have a supporter category without such rigorous expectations of commitment. As with followers and contacts the supporter category is easiest to understand as a communication level. In this case, supporters are given access to many of the internal discussions on our forums and are invited to many of our internal meetings. Over time some supporters become members, but importantly this isn't the role of the supporter category, so others do not. Although the technical side of this Sphere of Engagement model is perhaps tedious, the organisational and political possibilities it opens up are important.

When the crisis hit Ireland one major limitation that we, and the rest of the left, suffered from was that we had no ability to engage with large numbers of people. Sure you can (and we did) do large print runs of leaflets but that sort of instant, once off engagement doesn't shift people very much or in a lasting way. That's not surprising, you have to balance that one leaflet every few months against constant exposure to Joe Duffy & the Independent. It doesn't matter how well you craft your words (and if we are honest most of us are not wordsmiths anyway) the sheer volume of tripe & bile buries the nuggets of truth.

Counteracting the influence of the media will only start to have big effects when we can talk of thousands of active revolutionaries consistently providing a different point of view to their neighbours and



workmates. Basically at least one on every street and in every work unit / team. We and the left in general are a long, long way from that. Most left groups inflate their membership figures to create false prestige (or register as a political party for electoral purposes) but the active far left in Ireland is in the low hundreds.

Being an active member of a revolutionary organisation though, demands considerable commitment and brings little, or indeed nothing, in the way of material reward. Despite Daily Mail fantasies of 'professional protesters', pretty much no one gets paid, unless you count the handful of 'full timers' some far left groups employ on sub-minimum wage levels. The only career path is the electoralist one, for those organisations that allow their members to run for elections (we obviously don't).

All of that means that, outside times of mass struggle, it's unlikely that the active committed membership of any revolutionary organisation will be all that large. The problem here though, is that when mass struggle starts to break out, it does so rapidly and people will often look to the most visible organisation who appears to be saying roughly the right thing, or whom they hope is about to. With the crisis in Ireland this could be seen in the way an ICTU-called march could bring out 100,000 but one called by a far left group was lucky to get 1,500 even though they were putting considerable effort into making it look like a broader event. And most people didn't eventually realise that ICTU were useless and move on to the far left, they learned that ICTU were useless, got demoralised and went home and perhaps prepared to emigrate.

This is the strongest reason for maintaining spheres of engagement, rather than simply treating engagement as a one way street to full membership, as the left tends to. Browbeating people into premature activity only serves to burn them out and disillusion them with the left in general after they discover the over-hyped next big protest is just another stunt in a long line of stunts. Sure, if you concentrate on little else, you can recruit the next round of leaflet distributors and poster putter-uppers to replace the contingent you just burned out, but that hamster wheel is going precisely nowhere and, in the medium and long term, is counter-productive for the construction of a healthy radical movement. It also burns out the committed core who keep the wheel turning. Or turns them into bitter cynics, fully self-aware of the damage they are doing, but not caring, providing they regularly get one over on their left rivals.

In terms of our sphere of engagement, we are not particularly concerned that 90% of people are only interested in following us somewhat randomly through Facebook or Twitter. If they are not yet interested in carrying out concrete tasks alongside us then that is grand, but those who are, become contacts. Likewise, we are not trying to drive all of those contacts into the level of political agreement required of supporters. If someone likes what we are doing around unions or pro-choice struggles and wants to give a hand from time to time, that is enough for now. They will be exposed to all our other activity and our critique of capitalism and the state as they work with us. We cannot expect the entire package to make sense from the get-go. And in normal times only a few of those supporters who broadly agree with our politics are going to be willing, or able, to take on the protracted commitment of membership and becoming the person responsible for making sure things happen, rather than just turning up to offer a hand. Our interest is very much more in growing all of the spheres than trying to push everyone from a more external zone into a more internal one.

Solidarity & the revolutionary organisation

What connects these two distinct organisational techniques is the question of solidarity. Solidarity, as an abstraction, everyone can agree with - the difficulty is turning that abstraction into a lived reality. As individuals our circles of contact and experience are necessarily small.

There are only so many things we can experience in our lives and only so many people that we can connect with. What is more, upping either of these things will, by necessity, also reduce their depth. There isn't a right answer to the question whether its better to have 3 good friends or 100 acquaintances - it all depends on your particular circumstances at

“The emergence of a sense of a common struggle should be something we can contribute to”

a given moment. But we recognise the difference between these two. And the same could be said as to whether it is better to give your all to one particular struggle or to work in some small way across a range of struggles.

Revolutionary organisation means we can do both, not in an individual sense but in the collective one. This could be done through informal organisation. An affinity group of close friends who share a lot of their lives in common can have a similar range of broad collective relationships. But affinity groups of that type are by necessity small. In order to scale the concept up, to the thousands or tens of thousands we need here in Ireland to realise revolution, you need something other than the trust that comes through close friendship to build on.

That something is political and organisational agreement around a set of ideas that can be discussed, debated and recorded in a written form. In this way people who have never met can, in different cities, be part of the same collective intersectional process, even if working in very different areas of struggle. Revolutionary organisation - if done right - makes the realisation of solidarity very much more straightforward.

Extending solidarity into society runs into the same limitations. The left likes to relate strong positive anecdotes like how gay organisations turning out in



support of the 1984 Miners strike won the miners union to active support for gay rights. Or how an individual with racist ideas had these ideas challenged and then transformed though standing on the picket line with Black or Asian workers. Intense struggle can indeed create solidarity. But intense struggle is rare, so how do we promote and sustain solidarity in the periods between such moments?

Part of the answer to this, is the revolutionary organisation transmitting news from all the struggles it is involved in, throughout its engagement sphere. Just because someone is strong in one particular struggle, doesn't necessarily mean that they will automatically understand and be in solidarity with other struggles from the outset.

Someone who starts to follow our Facebook updates, because they liked what we have to say about the Household tax, may not actually agree with Queer liberation, indeed they may find it completely alien in the context of their own life experience and what they have been brought up to believe. Nevertheless, over time they are going to be exposed to these ideas over and over in many different forms, if we are consistent in reporting on all spheres of our activity. They are probably going to start to recognise something of themselves in such reports, even if just initially at the level of conflictual relationships with the state or other institutions of power.

If, as a result of that online engagement, they develop a greater interest in anarchism then perhaps they will attend the annual Dublin anarchist bookfair. There they should hear voices that they would not otherwise hear and recognise that as things stand those voices are often denied a platform just as they are. The emergence of a sense of a common struggle should be something we can contribute to, even outside of times of mass militant struggle that spontaneously create solidarity. Having the mechanisms and intention to do so is one of the key benefits revolutionary organisation brings to the table.

Why I became an anarchist.

As is the case with most of my comrades, I did not suddenly wake up to find out that I am an anarchist. It was rather a gradual process that started with a determination to fight racism, challenge patriarchy and doubt the existence of some omnipresent old man with white beard.

I was born in 1987 to a Russian mother and a Georgian father in Siberia during the last years of the USSR and spent most of my childhood travelling back and forth between Russia and Georgia, changing different cities and schools and meeting people who were very eager to prove to me how much of a better nation Georgia is in comparison to Russia and vice versa. What affected my ideology the most was my family's decision to move to Greece where I got to meet many interesting people and during the last years of school together with friends to start reading books on atheism, feminism and anarchy.

The reasons for which I consider myself an anarchist, have to do with my belief that every human being regardless of their ethnicity, gender, colour, religion etc., should be able to enjoy equal rights in every part of the world; something that is obviously not the case at the moment and never will be unless something is done to change it. And the reason I do not consider state Communism to be a political system worth fighting for is, apart from the fact that any form of hierarchy is unacceptable to me (especially the one that gives absolutely no option to express any different thought that challenges the way society works) the fact that in a communist society where

my parents lived, even though they both had the same responsibilities as far as their working hours and conditions were concerned, my father enjoyed much more freedom in his everyday life than my mother did.

Moreover, as a migrant in Greece, a country with many migrants and even more problems, I had to learn to get used to being the 'other' who is an easy target to blame for everything by the state, should it be a left wing party or a right wing one, as well as by the media who would always try their best to emphasise the nationality of a burglar should it be a non-Greek one. In this society I was extremely lucky to meet people for whom categorizing human beings according to their race, among other things, was unacceptable and while we were helping migrants to learn Greek in our migrant language school with a symbolic name 'Odysseus', we ourselves were learning from our students and from each other how meaningless and superficial these categorisations are.

For the last two years I have been living in Ireland where apart from the racism and class issues, to a lot of people, a woman's life is of less value to that of a fetus. Something that, together with every other less or more important issue I witness on a daily basis makes me more confident to believe that the only way people can live in a more just world is to stand in solidarity with each other and fight for everyone's rights whether it affects us or not.

"Moreover, as a migrant in Greece, a country with many migrants and even more problems, I had to learn to get used to being the 'other' who is an easy target to blame for everything by the State"

WORDS: NEPELE



"The tragedy that was the crushing of the revolution by the fascists on one side, and the Stalinist controlled state forces on the other, is well known to anyone with an interest in anarchism and revolutionary history"

venge on the catholic church, an institution that was firmly in league with the landowning classes and who had oppressed them for centuries. Despite the pleas for restraint from official CNT channels, churches were burned and many clergy were executed. We are shown images of workers dancing with their corpses that were used as pro-fascist propaganda in Ireland and other countries.

As the war raged on, the gains of the revolution were eroded, in part due to the compromises of the CNT leadership, participation in the popular front government and in part, due to the balance of power in Barcelona shifting to the Stalinists, who were now receiving supplies from the USSR. Nick describes the may days and other events that saw the return of capitalist social relations as we wind through Barcelona's narrow streets.

Shadows of a revolution - Nick Lloyd's Spanish civil war walking tour.

WORDS: MARK HOSKINS

Ask an anarchist for an example of a time and place where their ideas were put to the test and they will most likely reply with "Barcelona, 1936". In July of that year, the workers of Barcelona, mainly organised around the anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT; "National Confederation of Labour") rose in opposition to the fascist generals' coup that was gripping the south of the Spanish state.

Over the following months, the workers of Catalonia, guided by anarchist ideas, attempted to create a new society, based on the principles of solidarity, equality and mutual aid and fight a civil war against the generals, along side the forces of the republic, at the same time.

The tragedy that was the crushing of the revolution by the fascists on one side, and the Stalinist controlled state forces on the other, is well known to anyone with an interest in anarchism and revolutionary history. Nick Lloyd's Spanish civil war walking tour, however, brings those events from the pages of our history books to life. The tour begins at Plaça Catalunya, where Nick, holding a copy of George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, goes through the basics for those not so familiar with the various groups who took part in the conflict. He goes on to describe the events of the 21st of July 1936, when armed workers and the the civil guard prevented the fascist coup from taking Barcelona and the crucial battle at Plaça Catalunya.

Equality and Freedom

The next stop is at the site of the hotel on Las Ramblas, where Orwell stayed while he was not fighting at the front. Here, he reads a famous passage from *Homage to Catalonia*, describing the city under workers control.

"It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle. Practically every building of any size had been seized by the workers and was draped with red flags and with the red and black flag of the Anarchists; every wall was scrawled with the hammer and sickle and with the initials of the revolutionary parties; almost every church had been gutted and its images burnt. Churches here and there were being systematically demolished by gangs of workmen. Every shop and cafe had an inscription saying that it had been collectivised; even the bootblacks had been collectivised and their boxes painted red and black. Waiters and shop-walkers looked you in the face and treated you as an equal. Servile and even ceremonial forms of speech had temporarily disappeared... Practically everyone wore rough working-class clothes, or blue overalls or some variant of militia uniform... Above all, there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom. Human beings were trying to behave as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine."

Afterwards, he plays a recording of the CNT anthem, a las barricadas (to the barricades), and asks participants to squint as they look down las ramblas and imagine the scene described by Orwell. It is an emotional moment, if you are an anarchist, to feel like you are in the midst of social revolution, at a time where wealth and power has crumbled before a working class armed with libertarian socialist ideas (and guns of course). As you imagine the militias leaving for the front, while social relations are being transformed, a little sadness will grip you as you think of what happened afterwards.

Anticlerical violence

The next part of the tour deals with anti-clerical violence during the revolution. In front of one of Barcelona's many churches, while other tours consider the architecture and hear stories of the medieval city, Nick describes how the liberated workers took re-

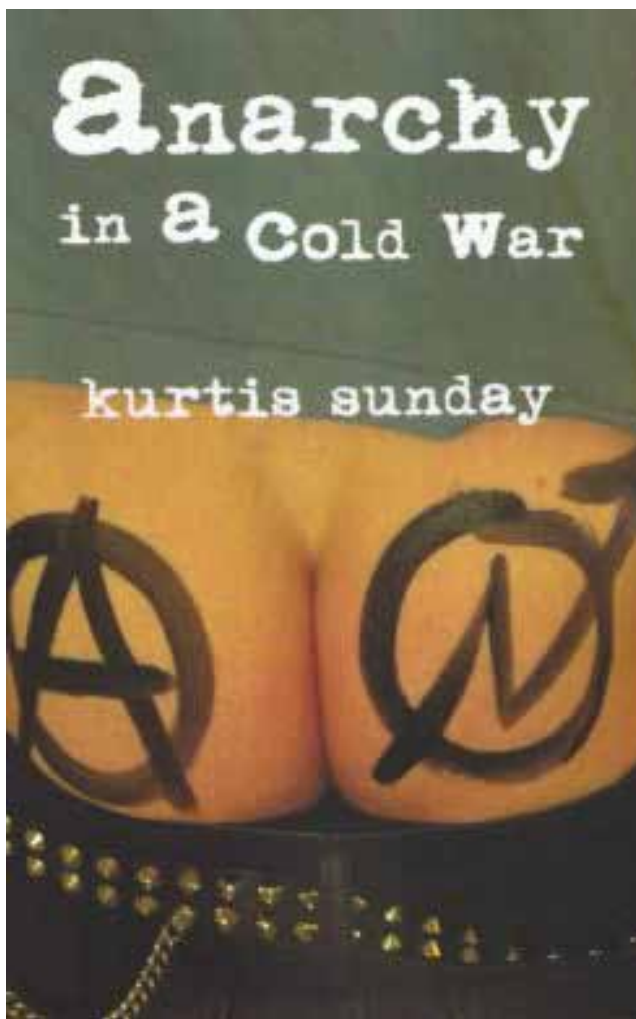
Days of darkness

The 1938 bombing of the city by Mussolini's air force is described in great detail. On the 18th of March that year, seventeen air raids took place at three hour intervals. The bombing wasn't restricted to military targets and the use of delayed fuse bombs devastated the whole city. Around a thousand died and two thousand were injured. You can still see bomb damage in the walls of some buildings. Photo's of the damage and casualties give you an idea of scale of this atrocity.

The final stops on the tour, deal with the defeat of the revolution and the fascist victory in the civil war. At a church we get to see a stone carving depicting "bad" workers destroying a church in 1936 and another depicting "good" workers rebuilding it in 1940. Finally, we return to las ramblas to the place where Andreu Nin, erstwhile Trotskyist and then leader of the left wing marxist POUM, who were allied with the CNT, was last seen alive before his kidnap and death at the hands of Stalinist agents. It is a poignant ending to a tour that takes us from the hope of 1936 to the dark days of the Franco regime's victory.

The tour then decamps to la libertaria, a bar run by the local CNT, where Nick gets a discussion going on the revolution and civil war and european politics today. Though, as Sergio, a member of the CNT told me, "Today, Barcelona is not the most important city for anarchism in the Spanish state, Madrid is the cutting edge of the class struggle", it was the city where our hopes and dreams came closest to being realised. Nick Lloyd's tour is probably the best way to experience that today and if you go at the beginning of your visit, the rest of your holiday will certainly be enriched.

REVIEW - ANARCHY IN A COLD WAR



They say you can't judge a book by its cover. The cover of the book, however, which has a picture of someone's buttocks with a circled A on one butt cheek and the squatter's symbol pretty much told me what was in store.

Anarchy in a Cold War is a novel about squatting in West Berlin during the early eighties, specifically 1981 and was actually written during that period. The novel is an attempt to give people a glimpse of what life as a squatter was like a city that came to symbolise the Cold War. It also became a city which attracted radicals, as it was also the only place in Germany, where men could go to to avoid conscription. The book focuses around a group of people who know each other and their different perspectives about the wave of squatting happening in Berlin and the repression against it.

The book has no clear plot, but we discover early on that there has been an upsurge of squatting in the last year in Berlin, in particular the area of Kreuzberg. Most people who have visited Berlin know that this area was where a big concentration of migrants lived, especially "Gastarbeiter" Turkish migrants who came over to work in Germany doing the menial jobs

"They are proud of their lack of appeal to mainstream society and display a moralism against those who do not share their values"

that no-one wanted. We learn in the book that there has been urban re-generation in Berlin so people on low incomes are forced to re-locate to that part of Berlin.

This book could have been an interesting and informative fictionalised piece about the squatting movement in Berlin at the time. On occasion it did have interesting tidbits, where magazine interviews or snippets of newspaper articles are worked in to give a better insight to the situation at hand or the author gave some background information, for example the formation of Berlin and the relationship this had to tenement buildings. This is probably one of its more redeeming features of the book. It feels that throughout the book we are simply watching a bunch of hedonistic youths partake in riots for the sake of it, where you are left with characters making statements such as "If you don't think that throwing stones at cops and smashing bank windows isn't serious, go out and do it yourself" and characters think it is perfectly reasonable to be drink alcohol during a protest, where you know more than likely there will be police repression.

Many of the characters do not seem actually to have any sort of established politics and just want to create a counter cultural area by squatting. One character talks jokingly about creating an "Anarchist Republic of Kreuzberg", where the languages would be Turkish and the other "Szenedeutsch", in which "Szene" is defined as "scene, subculture, as in 'die alternative Szene'". The bar Spectrum, where a lot of the character spend their time is described as "the largest Freak watering hole around", where Freak is defined as "a scene word, taken from the English, describing anyone alternative, hippyish, Punky, not derogatory." They are proud of their lack of appeal to mainstream society and display a moralism against those who do not share their values.

Towards the end, we start to get to know a young single mother called Kalypso, who is introduced earlier on in the novel, but her character is never really explored. She is one of the more sympathetic characters in the book, she decides to squat because of the lack of housing options she has as a single mother and became political when she got pregnant, as part of the means of pulling herself together. I interpreted that getting involved in politics was her way of fight-

ing to provide a better future for her child. She was a refreshing difference from the rest of the characters.

Another feature of the book which bothered me was the glorification of the riots and violence around the protest. It seemed to ignore the problem that can occur, when violence is sustained constantly throughout a campaign, which usually leads to burn out, especially when there does not seem to be a win in sight.

Overall, in my opinion, this book seemed like an adolescent exercise in hedonism where people with vague politics looked for any chance to have a drink including during a riot! It has certain redeeming features, highlighting the housing and migration issues in Berlin during that time. But if you are looking for a book to give you an insight on squatting in Berlin during the 1980s, I would search somewhere else.

"Another feature of the book which bothered me was the glorification of the riots and violence around the protest"

WORDS: T.J.



WORDS: VANESSA GAUTHIER VELA
INTERVIEW: BRIAN FAGAN

Interview: The Quebec student movement.



Having recently completed an all Ireland speaking tour, Vanessa Gauthier Vela answers some questions on the nature of the 2012 Quebec student uprising.

1. Can you briefly summarise the struggle of 2012 for our readers?

In March 2011, the Liberal government of Quebec announced an increase in tuition fees of \$ 1,625 over a period of 5 years starting in the fall of 2012. Ultimately, this increase would have nearly doubled tuition fees. At that time, the radical part of the student movement, organized under a national student union called ASSE.

The unlimited general strike officially started on February 13, 2012 when the first student unions voted the strike in their local general assembly. At the peak, we reached more than 300,000 students on strike, that is to say, three-quarters of all students in Quebec.

Actions were multiple and included flash mob as civil disobedience. There was an escalation in the range of tactics used. As the strike got longer, the actions turned to be more radical. If we could hold on long enough, we knew that the government would be willing to negotiate. At least, that's what previous gen-

eral strikes in the history of Quebec student movement had shown. When negotiations were finally contemplated, the offer made by the government was perceived as an insult by the student movement. A spontaneous evening rally ensued, followed by demonstrations every evening for more than three months.

At the end of April, further negotiations with the government were announced, but they failed once again. In May, the government voted a special law, Bill 78. Spontaneous demos became illegal and organizations or individuals who participated or organized were subject to heavy fines. Also, the semester was suspended until the end of the summer, making strike votes non-effective since there were no classes anyway. Suddenly, we were strikers on lock out.

Even people against the student strike wanted to denounce the anti-democratic law. It created what we called "les manifs de casseroles" or "pots and pans protests". People from different neighbourhoods left their homes at 8PM and joined in the streets to protest loudly. The Metropolitan area and several towns saw joyful chaotic demos happening every evening. One of the positive long-lasting outcomes of the strike which emerged at that time was the autonomous neighbourhood assemblies. They started with neighbours protesting with pots and pans and became spaces for people in the same neighbourhoods to organize themselves around political issues.

"We reached more than 300,000 students on strike, that is to say, three-quarters of all students in Quebec"

In August, the Liberal government called an election. From that moment on, the student movement broke up. On September 19th, the new government, formed by the Parti Québécois, officially abolished the tuition hike by decree and repealed the Bill 78.

2. In the beginning, how did the student movement engage with the rest of the student population on the fee increase issue and get them to take action when the issue first arose? How did the student movement get other students to become aware of the issues and radicalise them?

The plan had already proved itself in past strikes. It had to mobilize as many people as possible on

the topic of unlimited general strike not only with a massive information campaign, but also by involving students in decision-making about the struggle.

The keywords were information and participation. In fact, the more people are actively involved in decision making and in the development of the action plan, the more they feel responsible and are ready to be radicalized.

3. Was there already a student movement in the Universities? Or was it born when the tuition fees were increased?

Quebec has a long tradition of student activism dating from the 60s.

5. Education can become an issue for everyone in society. How did activists engage with and mobilise other groups in society to involve them in the student struggle?

Did students practice solidarity with these other groups?

From the moment the student movement was organized and positioned itself as an active actor in a social crisis of great scale, and that the government continued to refuse to negotiate with it, all social movements mobilized themselves in solidarity, and individuals who composed them were part of them

A lot of different people were involved in the strike others as being part of an organized group. We have seen unionists, anarchists, communists, feminists, anticolonialists, members of community groups and other groups being part of the movement and participate at actions and demos organized by students.

The strike was a space where a majority of activists channelled their energy towards the student movement.

6. Can you briefly describe CLASSE and its structure? How did the different groups communicate with each other effectively?

The CLASSE was a coalition of local student unions at the time of 2012 strike. It existed because the ASSÉ, one of three national student unions, opened its structures to make possible for the local unions that weren't members of ASSÉ to be part of a national organization for the time of the strike. The ASSÉ is recognized as the most radical association. It promotes free education and acts on behalf of its values of direct democracy and syndicalism.

The legitimacy and the accountability of the structure pass through the local general assemblies. In local general assemblies every member can make proposals and every member has a vote. Proposals can have local or national effects. They could be about principles, actions or in support with other struggles. When the objective of the proposal is to have a national effect, the delegation of the union that voted it in first place has to bring it to the congress as it could be discussed with all the other delegation members of the national structure.

The congress is the tool that allows the communication and decision-making at a national level.

7. What was the specific importance of feminist organising in preparation for the struggle?

Minimal. Feminist made a place for themselves during the strike but they were not invited as feminists in the preparation of the strike. In fact, there were so many conflicts between the national team and the feminists in the ASSÉ that the whole women's committee resigned a little before the strike.

8. Were there any issues around sexism or racism to deal with during the struggle?

Yes. First of all the dynamics between the former "comité-femmes" (women-committee) of the ASSÉ and the national team at the beginning of the strike did set the tone for the feminists who found that throughout the strike women's issues were put at the bottom of the list. Throughout the strike, the feminists criticized these paternalistic reflexes in the movement and proposed many solutions to those issues. The anti racism and the anti- colonialism had much less space.

9. Were there any tensions within CLASSE or the student movement?

The strike also raised the tension between people who understood their struggle as a fight against the government and the others who thought about it like an opportunity to convince "the public opinion" with pacific ways. Strangely, those who wanted to convince the public opinion always were the quickest to strike violently people who were smashing or tagging buildings and windows.

10. What tactics did the State, the media and the police use to try and defeat the students? Were any of their tactics particularly successful?

First of all, there was a constant struggle between the students' protest movement and the State, the bourgeois media, and the police, about the question of legitimacy. At the very beginning, the State tried to minimize our strike by using the word boycott and with the complicity of bourgeois media it tried to isolate completely the movement. They created a separation between bad-students-who-don't-even-pay-taxes and good-citizens-who-pay-taxes-and-don't-block-streets.

The physical brutality of the State against the students' movement and the judicial repression are certainly the tactics which had the most impacts on

the students. While students were hit, lost eyes, got broken bones, were searched without mandate and imprisoned without being under arrest, the government, the bourgeois media, and the police, presented this violence as being the same thing as broken windows and graffiti. The sad thing is that a big part of the public opinion has never made the difference.

11. Has the struggle left a lasting impression on social movements in Quebec?

The strike of 2012 is the most impressive demonstration that a social movement left in Quebec since several years. Activists' networks were established, spread, or solidified. There was a transmission of knowledge as regards the resistance at the repression of the State, and people generally became more radical. The Strikes politicization created new ties. One of the gains of the strike is the autonomous assemblies of districts that bring together neighbours who want to get organized politically.

At the end of the strike the principle of direct democracy is known by the public and that the bourgeois media speak about it are definitively gains. Of course the general population did not adopt these principles, but at least they were known, and we had given the proof that it was possible for direct democracy to work on a large-scale.

We couldn't fit the whole interview in this issue so in order to read the full interview, please visit: www.wsm.ie/irish-anarchist-review



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