

# WORKERS SOLIDARITY

May / June 2011

Twenty-Seven Years of Irish Anarchist News

## The media and the Garda rape remarks

The media narrative regarding the Corrib Garda rape remarks played out with sickening predictability. Sticking as closely as possible to the Garda Press Office line, the news media decided that this was an isolated incident: yes, it was inappropriate for Gardaí to joke about raping captive women, but the matter is under investigation, and anyway it's all just a bit of private banter between colleagues. No need for a wider discussion about societal attitudes towards women, or about the militarised policing of political protest in North Mayo and elsewhere. Up popped Kevin Myers to explain why men are the real victims here, oppressed by the 'politically-correct' thought police, while Vincent Browne informed us that rape jokes "are just part of the lingo of Irish males" and that's that.

Aidan Rowe

But, of course, these Gardaí didn't make their comments in a vacuum – they made them at a specific time, in a specific place and within a specific cultural context. They are reflective both of a culture in which sexist and patriarchal attitudes and structures still pertain, and of a police force which is given free reign to act with extreme brutality in the repression of protest around the Corrib project.

In an Irish Independent piece on April 10th, we are told "no one was ever in any danger of being raped. You can't get raped by a joke." The problem is that jokes are never just jokes. Banter is never just banter. Jokes help to create a culture in which men have power over women, to reinforce sexist attitudes in men, to dehumanise women, and to trivialise the horrendous crime of rape which, overwhelmingly, is committed by men against women. We live in a society in which women are expected to laugh politely when crude sexist jokes are aimed at them for fear of being labelled a "humourless bitch"; where comedy clubs are thronged with "edgy" comics each trying to be more offensive than the other, using misogynistic language while hiding behind the defense of "irony", and if women complain, it's because they're not sophisticated enough to get the joke. Casual sexism, of which



rape jokes are an extreme form, creates a context in which men feel superior to women, in which some men feel entitled to rape, and in which raped women are afraid to report the crime because of the prevalence of such attitudes. Only about one in 10 women who are raped report the crime, and just 7 per cent of the reported cases go to court.

Meanwhile, speaking at the Garda Representative Association conference, Minister for Justice Alan Shatter accused Corrib protesters of "exploiting" the controversy "for their own political ends... with the aim of undermining trust in the Garda Síochána and of compromising the policing of the dispute."

Dublin Shell to Sea spokesperson Caoimhe Kerins said: "This is a bizarre outburst from Mr Shatter. The people who have undermined trust in An Garda Síochána are those Gardaí who have, for several years now, resorted to violence, intimidation and abuse to deter peaceful protest."

The Garda comments, seen in this context, are clearly not "just a joke", but part of the atmosphere of intimidation and violence that surround the State's policing in defence of Shell, which has led to countless people being in-

jured, some seriously. Willie Corduff, one of the Rosspoint Five jailed for his opposition to the project, was beaten up in the dead of night inside a Shell compound, while leading campaigner Pat O'Donnell had his fishing boat seized and sunk by masked and armed men at sea. Also, former security employees from the Shell compound travelled to Bolivia to take part in an attempted coup (with one of them, Michael Dwyer, being shot dead by police).

This is not the first time threats of sexual violence have been used against female activists by Gardaí, with the wife of another leading local campaigner, John Monaghan, having also been a victim. The failure of the media to treat the Garda remarks as anything other than an isolated incident of inappropriate banter, and to raise important questions regarding either the sexist attitudes which pervade Irish society (and specifically in the "canteen culture" of the Gardaí), the violent policing of the Corrib protests, or indeed the giveaway of billions of euros worth of oil and gas, is entirely consistent with their role as the servants of the wealthy and powerful, and their established pattern of ignoring or downplaying the violent actions of the Gardaí and the private security working for Shell in North Mayo.



### Ecuador

Rain forests, oil and capitalist double standards in South America.



### Mayday

The origins of the celebration of labour and working class unity.



### Anarchist Bookfair

10am- 6pm  
Saturday 14th May  
Liberty Hall, Dublin

# Why We Celebrate Mayday

The struggle against capitalism and authority is constant but each year on May Day the labour movement takes time out to celebrate its history and achievements. Rather than dwell on the hardships of struggle we take to the streets and remember what it is we are aiming for - the emancipation of our class. Climbing a mountain means paying close attention to the ground you walk but it's important to look up now and again in order to focus on exactly where it is you're headed.

May Day's association with class struggle stems from the trade union movement in the nineteenth century which fought for an eight hour working day. Their demands remained unheeded and direct action was then seen as the most effective way of creating change. Workers and unions set a date of May 1st 1886 on which workers would create the eight hour day themselves.

On this day an estimated half a million people took to the streets across America. In Chicago, where anarchists were the strongest organised force among workers, violent incidents involving police and strikers led to a crackdown on the labour movement by state forces. Eight well-known anarchists of the time were arrested and prosecuted as part of a campaign of terror aimed at crushing the strike movement.

Their subsequent trial closed with State Attorney Grinnell's speech: "Law is on trial. Anarchy is on trial. These men have been selected, picked out by the Grand Jury, and indicted because they were leaders. There are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. Gentlemen of the jury; convict these men, make examples of them, hang



"THE DAY WILL COME WHEN OUR SILENCE WILL BE MORE POWERFUL THAN THE VOICES YOU ARE THROTTLING TODAY." -A. SPIES

them and you save our institutions, our society." Four of these men, Parsons, Engel, Spies and Fischer, were hanged, while another man, Lingg, committed suicide in his cell and the three other men sentenced to lengthy jail terms.

May Day has since become a tradition of celebration of how far we have come in the struggle for democracy and freedom, a symbol of resistance, of people power and direct action. Every year, workers globally gather to celebrate the social and economic achievements our struggle has gained so far. One of the largest May Days in Ireland in recent years was in 2004, When an EU summit in Dublin clashed with our annual holiday. A week-end of activities was organised celebrating May Day and opposing the capitalist agenda of the summit.

May Day today poses the question - why should we continue to celebrate? Well, we should never forget our history or the potential we have to take control back of our lives. Here in Ireland, the labour movement has forced the bosses and the state to give many concessions around workplace conditions and basic social needs. We are well capable of defending these gains and of going on to win much more.

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PO BOX 10785, Dublin 1.  
<http://ragdublin.blogspot.com/>

**Indymedia Ireland**  
*Alternative user-generated Irish news.*  
<http://www.indymedia.ie>

**Seomra Spraoi**  
*Dublin Social Centre*  
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<http://www.seomraspraoi.org>

**Solidarity Books**  
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**Just Books**  
*Belfast Radical Bookshop*  
13-15 Clarence Street, Belfast.  
[justbooks@rocketmail.com](mailto:justbooks@rocketmail.com)

**Shell to Sea**  
*Campaign to move Shell's gas pipeline offshore from Co. Mayo.*  
<http://www.shelltosea.com>

**Hands Off the People of Iran**  
*Anti-imperialist network for solidarity with Iranian trade unionists & the women's rights movement.*  
<http://www.hopoi.org>

**Choice Ireland**  
*Abortion rights action group*  
[choiceireland@gmail.com](mailto:choiceireland@gmail.com)  
<http://www.choiceireland.org>

**Residents Against Racism**  
*Opposing racism and deportations.*  
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**Cork Palestine Link**  
*Part of the Free Gaza Movement that is sending a convoy of aid to Gaza.*  
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# A Day Out of the Ordinary The Dublin Anarchist Bookfair



**It's the time of year again that the Workers' Solidarity Movement is busy finalising the last minute details for our annual Anarchist Bookfair. Much has changed since we first began the venture back in 2006, not least the scale of the event, but also the implosion of the Celtic Tiger and its catastrophic effect on Irish society.**

## Ciaran O'Muireadhaigh

The Bookfair has grown in size each year, starting out with numbers in the hundreds at the first event in the St. Nicholas of Myra Hall in the Liberties, then moving on to the Teachers Club for a couple of years, where numbers attending swelled so much we were forced to switch to Liberty Hall. In our first year there (2009), we brought you ex- Black Panther turned Anarchist Ashanti Alson and author of "Free Women of Spain" Martha Ecklesberg. The following year we heard from the authors of "The Lost Revolution", Scott Millar and Brian Hanley, along with an exclusive screening of "Meeting Room," a documentary about the Concerned

Parents Against Drugs movement of the 1980's in Dublin, introduced by one of its producers, Brian Gray.

This year, for the most part, the meetings reflect the current state of world affairs. In a meeting entitled "Peripheral Visions," a range of speakers from the countries of the EU that are being targeted for IMF/ECB intervention speak out on direct rule from the those institutions and the struggle against austerity. Confirmed at the time of writing are anarchists from Portugal (Manuel Baptista) and Spain (Manu Garcia) as well as anarchist speakers from Greece and Ireland.

Wayne Price (of the North Eastern Federation of Anarcho-Communists) from New York will speak on "Anarchism & Socialism: Reformism or Revolution?" and Gariel Kuhn (author of Soccer versus The State) speaks on the subversive side of sport, while Conor McCabe of Dublin Opinion and Irish Left Review looks at matters closer to home, with a session based around his new book (out in June) called "Sins of the Father: Tracing the Decisions That Shaped the Irish Economy." There will also be a meeting on the current events

unfolding across North Africa and the Middle East entitled "Arab Spring," with speakers to be announced, other sessions by Irish based Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group (RAG), Choice Ireland and Shell to Sea.

Alongside all of the above will be the Bookfair itself, with a host of stalls from home and abroad; AK Press, Rebel County Books, the Irish Labour History Society, the Anarchist Federation, Shell to Sea, RAG, the IPSC, the WSM book service stall and many more.

A WSM leaflet for the Bookfair a couple of years ago stated that it "is really a day out of the ordinary; a day away from the mundane, where the best thing to leave with is not the book, or pamphlet, or badge you've just spent your hard earned money on, but the experience of the day itself." The Anarchist Bookfair is a great opportunity to mingle, meet, and talk to not only anarchists, but activists from all walks of life, as well as the large contingent of passers-by and interested onlookers that it always attracts. Come along, drop by the WSM stall and say hello!

**The 6th Anarchist Bookfair will take place in Dublin the weekend of 14th May 2011 at Liberty Hall, Eden Quay.**

**anarkismo.net**  
International Anarchist website  
with news & discussion from all  
five continents.

**Find out more - Check out [www.wsm.ie](http://www.wsm.ie)**

# Ecuador: Oil, Rainforests & the challenge of climate change

In previous issues, we examined aspects of the challenge of climate change. We have argued that carbon trading is merely an enclosure of the atmospheric commons, while carbon offsets are a form of neo-colonialism whereby the “developed north” continues to pollute while the “global south” are paid not to (please see: [wsm.ie/content/high-price-lot-hot-air](http://wsm.ie/content/high-price-lot-hot-air) and [wsm.ie/content/offsetting-democracy](http://wsm.ie/content/offsetting-democracy)). Another, more radical, proposal is one based on prevention, that is, the non-extraction of fossil fuels. The argument is that once extracted, the use of fossil fuels is inevitable, and that any mechanisms to mitigate the increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will be unworkable.

Mark Nolan

In this light, it is useful to consider the example of Ecuador. Ecuador boasts some of the highest levels of biodiversity in the world. It also boasts large deposits of oil. Unfortunately, the two coincide - the oil being mainly under the rain forests in the east of the country. Having been controlled by right-wing governments for much of the time since oil was first discovered in the 1960s, the petrochemical industry has enjoyed doing what it does best - making massive profits while destroying the environment and polluting the local water supply.

After these decades of neo-liberal pillage, Ecuador elected a leftist, Rafael Correa, in late 2006. A constitution that guaranteed the “rights of nature” soon followed. This is the context in which Correa announced that Ecuador had decided not to extract the crude oil discovered in the ITT field located in the Yasuni National Park.

The Yasuni National Park is one of the most biodiverse sites on Earth, covering 982,000 hectares. The ITT field is about 20% of the total park area with 846 million barrels of recoverable oil reserves which are estimated to be worth \$7.25 billion (at present value). Non-extraction would also avoid an estimated 407 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Under the Yasuni-ITT initiative, Ecuador proposed that the international community contributes \$3.6 billion over 13 years. However, very quickly, negotiations for the project almost collapsed. International support was slow to appear, and Ecuador went through three different foreign ministers and three negotiating teams. So far, there have been limited contributions. Chile was the first to contribute with \$100,000. Spain has



since added \$1.4 million and the regional Walloon government of Belgium \$415,000. Italy has offered a ‘debt swap’, to the tune of \$35 million. Germany, one of the earliest to voice support, pulled out after Angela Merkel assumed power. Contributions from private business and social institutions have brought the fund up to \$38 million by February 2011.

Ecuador says it hopes to obtain \$100 million in contributions by the end of 2011. If the \$100 million is not forthcoming, the Correa government will, it is expected, decide to proceed with oil drilling in the rain forest.

As can be easily seen, \$38 million after 2 years is a long way off the target of \$100 million by the end of 2011. Moreover, \$100 million is a long way off \$3.5 billion over 13 years. So unless there is some kind of revolution in the thinking of the international community, these targets will not be met and the oil will be extracted and the rain forest destroyed. But could it have been any different?

The global recession that began in 2008 was, in part, caused by high oil prices, which created uncertainty as to economic forecasts. Now, again, with the intervention in Libya, it can be argued that part of the rationale was to prevent a protracted civil war which would limit access to Libya’s oil and continue to drive up prices. So why would the capitalist powers be willing to pay Ecuador to leave the oil in the ground, inevitably pushing up oil prices to a greater or lesser degree?

Furthermore, what kind of precedent would this set? If Ecuador’s offer was met with hard cash, it would be a green light to countries such as Venezuela, Morocco, Uganda and even Ireland to propose similar projects. In general, the challenge for capitalism, is to transition to a post-fossil fuel world, as cheaply as possible, while maintaining profits and economic growth - quite a feat of juggling. So how could Ecuador’s project of non-extraction fit in with this transition?

There are other other complications, too. How do you put a price on the “non-extraction of oil”? It may be valued at \$3.6 billion now, but what if oil jumps ten-fold in price? Is there not a financial pressure then to extract the oil and pay back the original donors?

Despite these complications, this is not to argue that the Ecuadorean proposal is not a nice idea. It is, in principle - and one of the few proposals on the table that might avert runaway climate change. But we live under capitalism. In a system based on competition and the profit motive, the idea of an solitary, small state such as Ecuador, being able to propose and benefit from such a project is, unfortunately, absurd. Climate change is a global problem, one caused by the capitalist powers and suffered disproportionately by the global south. A global solution is required. But a global solution is effectively impossible under capitalism. If it is to be solved, it will be done so from the bottom up.



# Thinking About Anarchism: The State

**Anarchists are those socialists who are anti-authoritarian, who place great stress on liberty and workers’ control. For this reason, we want to abolish the state at the same time as we abolish the division of society into a boss class and a working class.**

Alan MacSimoin

When a minority class rules, it needs its own institutions to enforce its rule. It needs a legal system to put the stamp of approval on its ownership of the means of production. It needs a standing army to protect its interests from both external and internal challenges. It needs a way of convincing the working majority that all is fair. The state is put forward as the ‘impartial’ guarantor of their rights.

Whatever the exact system of government, the point is that the majority have relatively little power over their own lives. Whether they have their power taken away or they actually give it away to politicians in the polling station does not alter the fact that the majority are left without real control over society. The State only serves a purpose when a small class of bosses rules. It is a means of keeping a minority in charge. It has no other use.

Socialism is about the working class taking control of industry and doing away with exploitation. It is about production to meet needs, co-operation and workers’ direct control.

Can this new society be ruled by a small grouping organised in a state structure? Of course not. How could anyone seriously propose that a minority rule a society where there would be no rule by minorities!

But there will always be a need for administration, planning, defence and so on. We don’t need the old structures for this. The way we will tackle these tasks will have to reflect the new society. Certainly specialists will work at their jobs but they will be under the supervision of delegates elected from the workers’ councils. Power will come from below with everyone able to have their say about decisions that affect them.

Delegates will carry the decisions to local, national and eventually international level. If the delegates don’t

do their job they will be stood down and new ones elected. In this structure there is no way that any gang of power-seekers could take over, yet the affairs of society can be organised in a most efficient manner.

Defence of the revolution against its enemies would not fall to a standing army but to the whole people trained and armed in militias. This makes impossible any chance of the army becoming divorced from the people and led into a coup by power-hungry officers.


Any attempt to create a ‘socialist state’ will only lead to a new ruling class. It can never lead to economic and human liberty. Either the working class has a direct hold on power or someone else does, there is no middle ground.



The state of Wisconsin has become the site of a very high profile showdown; the conservative governor there has been trying to introduce harsh new laws which would seriously harm public sector unions, laws which amount to an outright attack on workers’ rights. Under these proposals state employees would lose the right to bargain collectively, union dues would become voluntary and wouldn’t be deducted from pay cheques and unions would face a recertification vote every year with the union needing to win the votes of a majority of employees and not just of those voting.

The ICTU’s “Union Post” reported that a survey has found that 42% of American millionaires claim they DON’T feel rich despite having at least a million dollars in investable assets in the bank.

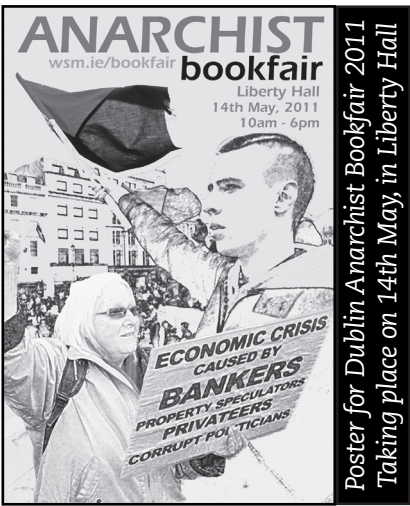
According to Fidelity Investment, many of the 1,000 respondents felt they would need at least \$7.5m to make them feel really wealthy.



### Irish Anarchist Review

The Workers Solidarity Movement is very pleased to announce the second issue of *The Irish Anarchist Review*. This magazine is dedicated to understanding the contemporary political, economic and social situation that confronts us, and finding ways to advance alternatives.

Contact us with your postal address if you would like to receive a copy or download a PDF from <http://www.wsm.ie/c/irish-anarchist-review-2>



# Anarchism & the WSM

After a quiet start to the year, political activity for the WSM picked up on a number of fronts in March and April. We were involved (as part of the 1% Network) in organising street theatre at the Central Bank in Dublin, aiming to highlight the fact that, no matter who is government, the same wealthy elite is still in power (see [www.wsm.ie/c/kenny-gilmore-puppets-string-wealthy](http://www.wsm.ie/c/kenny-gilmore-puppets-string-wealthy)). Also in Dublin, we supported pickets at the “Courts of Justice” in support of Gerard McDonnell, who is facing charges in relation to a “floating picket” carried out during the protracted strike at MTL in Dublin docks in 2009 (see <http://www.wsm.ie/c/protest-courts-justice-mtl-striker>). Our members attended the Feminist Walking Tour, organised by Choice Ireland, on International Womens Day (<http://www.wsm.ie/c/dub-feminist-walking-tour-2011>). We were also present at the Dail protest following the garda rape threat to female Shell to Sea activists in Mayo.

Down South, our Cork branch remains busy running a series of activities in our “Solidarity Books” venue. As well as film nights, board game evenings and

## Spring Talks

Solidarity Books 43 Douglas Street // Cork

**Tuesday, 5th April**

**Child Welfare and Class in Ireland: An Historical Overview**

Dr. Sarah-Anne Buckley

Dr Sarah-Anne Buckley lectures in History at UCC. She is the author of a number of articles and is currently preparing her book on the history of child welfare in Ireland for publication, titled *Child Welfare, the NSPCC and the State in Ireland: 1889-1956*. She recently completed a history of the Haematology Association of Ireland (HAI), and her next project is a comparative history of child welfare in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Britain. She will be speaking on child welfare and class in Ireland, in particular the discrimination against poor and working-class children by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the continued use of institutionalisation by the Irish State to deal with poverty in families.

**Tuesday, 19th April**

**Invisible Farmers: the role of Women in the NFAs Farmer's Rights Campaign**

Mary Gibbons

Mary Gibbons is a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin where she read Modern Languages. Having worked in industry for ten years, she then concentrated her energy on parenting her six children. Since completing an MA in Women's Studies at University College, Cork in 2008, Mary has won the WHA's MacCurtain/Cullen Prize for Irish Women's history in 2010. The prizewinning article is entitled: 'Invisible Farmers: the role of Women in the NFAs Farmer's Rights Campaign of the 1960s'.

**Tuesday, 17th May**

**Cork Labour and the Irish Revolution, 1916-1922**

Dr. John Borgonovo

Public consciousness of Rebel Cork during the War of Independence conjures images of the martyred lord mayors, the burning of the city centre, and flying column ambushes at Kinsale and elsewhere. However, less obvious and less violent activities were equally important to the success of the independence movement. This lecture will consider the role of Cork labour during the 1916 to 1922 period. The left/right divide in Irish Revolutionary politics will be considered, as will the mass mobilization that led some trade unionists and Republicans to believe they were on the cusp of securing a true workers' Republic.

**Tuesday, 3rd May**

**Abortion in Ireland - Where To From Here?**

Dr. Mary Favier

Dr Mary Favier is a Cork based GP and a founder member of Doctors For Choice (Ireland). Active in health politics generally she was recently involved in the provision of a supporting brief in the European Court of Human Rights ruling (The ABC Case) that condemned the Irish Government's record on the provision of abortion in Ireland.

Every Tuesday :: 8pm ::

08341174935 • [solidaritybooks@gmail.com](mailto:solidaritybooks@gmail.com)

Poster for the Spring Talks being held in Cork.

the weekly vegan café, they are hosting “Spring Talks” fortnightly through April and May covering topics such as child welfare and class, the role of women in farmers rights, abortion in Ireland and Cork Labour in the 1916 – 1922 period. Check out the Solidarity Books facebook page for more details. Elsewhere, our members

were involved in organising activities for International Womens Day, including a meal, films and talks held in Douglas St. The branch continues its involvement in Cork United Against the Cuts’ and Social Welfare Defenders’ attempts to resist austerity measures.

Outside the urban centres, protests continued in Mayo against Shells recommencement of work following the signing of the foreshore licences required by Pat Carey in the dying days of the last government. The WSM has had a presence there during two weekends of Shell to Sea (<http://www.shelltosea.com/>) actions carried out against Shell during April. There is a comprehensive resource of articles at <http://www.wsm.ie/rossport> examining all aspects of the struggle.

As per the article elsewhere in this issue, we are now busy preparing for the 2011 Anarchist Bookfair. Hopefully, the range of talks and the sharing of experiences of anarchists from outside Ireland will prove the catalyst for renewed efforts by us to both promote the anarchist message and get involved in the struggles that lie ahead. If you would like to share in this, please get in touch!

## solidaritybooks



### 43 Douglas St., Cork

Solidarity Books is a radical bookshop in Cork open for the past year. It has a wide selection of books on anarchism, socialism and Irish history. It also holds regular radical film nights and is a meeting space for progressive groups in the city. It is run by WSM.

[www.anarchistblackcat.org](http://www.anarchistblackcat.org)



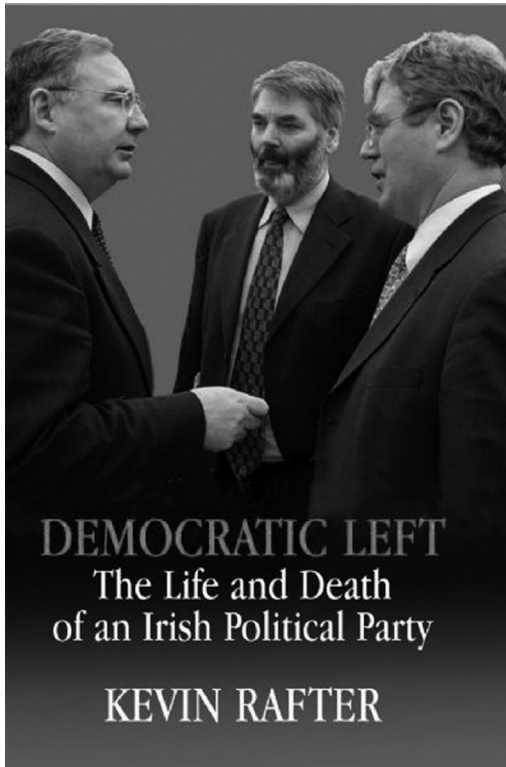
A friendly and respectful online discussion board for anarchists of all stripes and those just interested in seeing what anarchists think.



# Review: *Democratic Left - The Life and Death of an Irish Political Party*

Kevin Rafter's "Democratic Left: The Life and Death of a Political Party" is a study of its short lifespan from 1992, when it split from the Workers Party (WP), to 1999, when it merged with the Labour Party. As such, it can be seen as a companion piece to Scott Miller and Brian Hanley's "The Lost Revolution", a history of the Workers Party. Rafter's work, however, is somewhat different as it has an academic style, being his PhD thesis, which some may find off-putting. Nevertheless, it is an entertaining read for those with an interest in the dynamics of political organisations. All of the main protagonists were interviewed as part of Rafter's research and internal party documents are widely referenced, so his version of events is reasonably accurate, one would suspect.

From an anarchist perspective, the book is primarily a lesson in the problems faced by small political organisations with limited resources dependent on a small number of people carrying the workload. Given that Democratic Left (DL) were in power as part of the "Rainbow Coalition"



with Fine Gael and Labour from 1994 to 1997, and arguably punched above their weight in that arrangement, it may seem surprising that Des Geraghty, a leading figure in DL, wrote in 1993 that the party was "suffering from uncertainty, inse-

curity and self-recrimination (when we are not exchanging recriminations)". In March 1998, an activist in Dublin North Central wrote, "DL is internally dysfunctional and incapable of coherent activity." Whether in government or not, throughout their existence, DL were characterised by high levels of disorganisation, low member participation, confusion over their ideological allegiance, and financial difficulties. Meetings frequently involved long discussions about names and logos, whether the party was democratic socialist or social democratic and long strategic debates that presumably went nowhere given that it was eventually suggested to curtail meetings rather than address the problems faced. Indicative of the malaise, only 192 of the putative 900 members attended their final conference when it was decided to wind up the party.

Rafter identifies a number of reasons for the failure of DL to survive as a political entity. Their position on Northern Ireland (being close to that of unionism) no longer differentiated them from other parties as the "peace process" gained momentum. Many of the social issues that the party had campaigned on, such as divorce and abortion, were resolved (to a point) during the 90s. The party was also unable to outline a coherent economic programme, being unable to distinguish itself from any other brand of social democracy amidst the post-Berlin Wall ideological collapse of state socialism. While a lack of a clear political identity is not necessarily a problem (as evidenced by Fianna Fáil), for a small party it was critical, and the votes DL secured were largely for high-profile

individuals rather than the party itself. Given all of the above, and ongoing financial difficulties (which were only resolved when Labour took over the DL's debts post-merger, DL had been moving towards revoking their ban on corporate donations in 1998 to deal with the problem), some form of alignment with the Labour party became inevitable.

There are some problems with the book, including poor editing with some repetition of content. Rafter also puts a lot of store in an "expert" study on various policies of the political parties in the state in trying to demonstrate the problems DL faced in differentiating themselves from the pack. This study seemed to involve little more than reading party manifestos and the author's liberal usage of its conclusions seems somewhat at odds with his own in-depth research. Also, his interviews are all with those who were either in the upper echelons of the party or government with no real attempt to get a DL grassroots view of events. So, for example, the decision to curtail meetings mentioned above could conceivably have been an effort by the leadership to restrict membership participation in policy formation.

There is still another story to be told in the history of the WP/DL as conflict between these new Labour Party members and the old guard did not go away after 1999 but, given the current cabinet positions of former WP/DL members Eamon Gilmore and Pat Rabbitte, it will be some time yet before that gets an airing.

# Review: *Springtime, the New Student Rebellions*

The autumn and winter of 2010 saw the sudden and dramatic re-emergence of radical student movements, with mass student uprisings taking place across Europe and the United States in opposition to both the austerity measures being levelled against ordinary people as a result of the crisis in capitalism, and the neoliberal restructuring of education according to the needs of capital. Across the Western world, governments are introducing measures to transform universities into "factories of precarious workers" - institutions devoted to the production of graduates equipped with the skills and ideas desired by industries increasingly reliant on immaterial and mental labour, turning ideas into profits. These employees must be willing to work in increasingly precarious situations, either entirely unpaid, or for increasingly low wages on increasingly short-terms contracts - a transformation that is increasingly meeting resistance from both students and academic staff, and which has only accelerated since the present crisis began. Meanwhile, in the Arab world, students have played a key role in the mass uprisings to topple Western-backed thugs such as Zine Ben Ali and Hosni Mubarak.

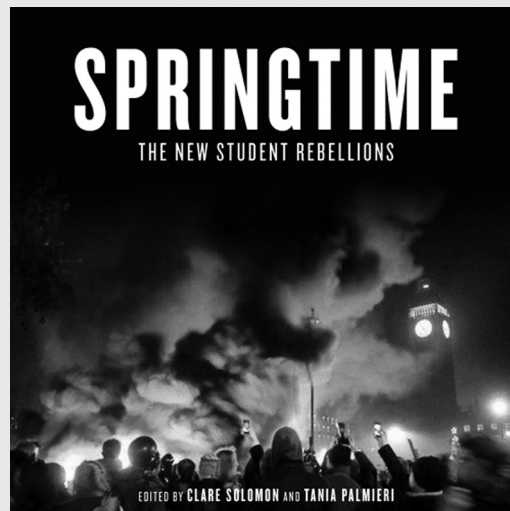
Aidan Rowe

Springtime is a collection of writings from those at the forefront of the student resistance in the UK, Italy, France, California, Greece, and Tunisia (with brief mentions of Algeria and Egypt) - a kind of scrapbook of resistance, from a diversity of perspectives and political backgrounds - featuring

both first-hand accounts of the student protests, and more theoretical writings on the changing character of education, labour and student politics, as well as some historical flashbacks, in which, unsurprisingly, May 68 features heavily.

In each section we get a flavour of the peculiarities of the student movements in various countries. In the UK, we encounter the raw anger of a generation of young people betrayed by the political system - first by Labour and then by the Liberal Democrats - who suddenly find themselves faced with the trebling of tuition fees, the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance, and future of indebtedness and precarious work, if they're lucky, and unemployment if they're not. In France, on the other hand, the youth are well aware of their power as political actors, having defeated right-wing government reforms on several occasions; but we also encounter a working-class divided along racial lines, with occasional clashes between the immigrant population of the banlieues and the proportionately more white/middle-class student movement. In the US, unlike most of Europe, student occupations of their campuses are met almost immediately with swift and brutal police repression: with beatings and mass arrests. In North Africa, then, we encounter student resistance against the crude and brutal face of capitalist imperialism: the Western-backed thugs and their repressive authoritarian regimes whose role is to maintain Western influence over some of the largest energy reserves in the world.

The Italian section, in particular, merits careful reading. In one particularly excellent piece, we are given quite an in-depth discussion of the Bologna process, which



is changing the character of higher education across Europe: directing universities towards the production and normalisation of precarious labour (a process in which students are simultaneously treated as consumers of a product, and raw materials being transformed into commodities), devaluing degrees, turning universities into pseudo-corporations run by business elites, and pushing a greater and greater debt burden onto students and their families. In order to fulfil the dual tasks of producing more graduates for industry and maintaining the university's role in sustaining class privilege, "diversified inclusion" mechanisms are employed to create a two-tier system, with the best opportunities being made available to the children of the wealthy.

The thread of Counterfire (a UK Trotskyist group that broke away from the Socialist Workers' Party in 2010) politics runs throughout the book, which brings an unfortunate element of sectarianism into the mix. In the introduction, for example, "fashionable sections of the left" (i.e. anarchists

and autonomists) are decried for denouncing the state, while a substantial part of the UK section is devoted to arguing that the successes of the spontaneous, leaderless and decentralised student movement will come to nothing if they fail to adopt Leninist forms of leadership and organisation. Additionally, too much space is devoted to historical contextualisations, which often amount to little more than nostalgia for May 68, Students for a Democratic Society et al., with very tenuous links to the modern day student rebellions, which are beautiful and inspiring entirely in their own right, and not as re-enactments of uprisings from over forty years ago.

But these are minor criticisms of what is ultimately a fascinating, stimulating and inspiring collection of texts. Where Springtime is most powerful is not in the complex theoretical and ideological discussions which the Left so loves to preoccupy itself with, nor in the rhetorical flourishes and analysis-poetry of some of the book's more stylistically accomplished sections, but in the simple stuff: the individual experiences of betrayal, abandonment, despair, anger, radicalisation, and hope - of a generation abandoned by their supposed leaders both in mainstream politics and the supposed counter-power of the trade and student unions and the official left, learning to stand up for themselves together. As one young British Further Education student put it:

"I used to moan at people who said politicians were all liars and were all as bad as each other. I realise now how naive I was. Protesting against tuition fees has not only allowed me to express my opinion, it has allowed me to grow up."