

The Rebel Worker

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Don't Cross This Line!

Since the Crash in 2008, nearly four years ago now, Irish workers have been repeatedly punched in the face. We didn't cause this crisis but we have been made to pay for it. Pay cuts and wages freezes are being imposed at a time when prices are on the rise. The Universal Social Charge is being levied. Attacks on social welfare, disability payments, children's allowance, fuel allowances are all ongoing. Alongside this the Government has been pushing through so-called 'reforms' that favour the very class that got us into this mess in the first place – employers – as with the scrapping of many of the Joint Labour Agreement.

Many of us have been put on the back foot by all of this. There has been a lot of fear and a lot of scare-mongering – to force us into accepting our lot. On top of that our union 'leaders' have blustered on about defending our interests and those of Irish workers. There have been marches and lots and lots of talk, but precious little else.

But in the last while we have seen changes and important ones too. Firstly the Occupy Movement took to the streets in the US, in the UK and here too in Cork as well. Occupy, to their great credit, reminded us all of the gross injustices that are at the heart of this crisis. But there is more. Workers at La Senza and then at Vita Cortex said 'NO'. These



workers signalled that there comes a time when you have stand your ground and fight back.

Now the Household and the Water Tax is coming down the track. But here in Cork and throughout the country a massive campaign of resistance has emerged. In less than three weeks, 21 public meetings took place across the county and city, leading to active groups in most areas. As much as anything this indicates that a key battleground is now opening out. It is vital we win this next battle if only to put a brake on the austerity measures being dreamed up by the bean counters in Europe. Olly Rehn, EU's own poster boy for austerity, has indicated already that Ireland must make deeper cuts! And the IMF are signalling the same. And it is plain to see that a government that was voted in on the promise of change is only too willing to be resigned to applying these measures. It is time for us all to say NO WAY.

Good News

Great times if you're Tony O'Reilly Jnr. His oil and gas exploration company Providence Resources expects "at least 59 million barrels of recoverable oil" from its Barryroe well just off the West Cork coast. It's a long time since oil prices fell below \$100 a barrel so you'll need an industrial size calculator to work out the profits they're expecting. Good news for the Department of Finance as O'Reilly is unlikely to have a problem coming up with any new home taxes. The bad news is that it's unlikely we'll see much more in tax paid from the multi-billion oilfield profits. As the state hounds people to cough up for a new household tax we can't afford, terms for oil and gas companies remain not just generous but giveaway. Beating the household tax is only the first step in turning this situation around.

Resist! Act! Organise! Boycott the Household And Water Tax

We need to find a way out of the current crisis we are in. This is to state the obvious and is not in question. What is in question, is finding a way which will bring about real and lasting change. The power to do this, as always, is in the hands of ordinary people, yet this depends upon us acting and participating locally here in Cork in a common cause. The imposition of the extremely unpopular household tax means this is now that time to resist, and to act.



We should keep in mind that along with the water tax, these two taxes together will soon rise to approx €1200. This is being imposed on us by the government in order to pay the costs of bailing out the bankers and developers. Only a mass non-payment campaign will defeat this unfair and regressive tax. The Cork Campaign Against the Household Tax provides us the means to engage in such a campaign and to win a vital victory against the austerity cuts. The campaign's aim has been to facilitate the setting up of local neighbourhood groups organising for non-payment and to co-ordinate all of these groups nationally on a democratic, participatory basis. By now, this goal is becoming a reality.

The most important focus in the campaign is the power of your local neighbourhood group. In three weeks more than 1500 people attended 21 local meetings in Cork city and county, with an average attendance of more than 70. Rebel

Cork is clearly living up to its name in this campaign! This is local people power in action. We have seen this power of local direct action in the La Senza workers, in the extraordinary resilience of the Vita Cortex workers, or even from fans and supporters* with Cork City FORAS Co-op. In the same way there is this power in your local household tax group. If we stand together in our communities, we ensure that individuals cannot be targeted by the government.

When we look at other successful examples of direct action – such as the anti-water tax campaign of the early 90s here, or the anti-poll tax campaign in Britain in the 80s – then it is clear that this issue is eminently winnable. A broad based campaign with an active participation level will counter the spin and fear tactics put forth by the government and their allies in the mainstream media.

But the time to act is now – we cannot wait for politicians to act for us. In the longer-term scheme of things, focusing upon electoralism changes nothing. Even if Sinn Fein and/or the ULA were elected in four years from now, by then we would be like Greece. We need only look at the last election, at the promises of FG/Labour leading to the reality of just more of the same brutal austerity measures. Voting once every five years for a government, which in reality will simply repress your views and preferences on a whole host of issues – that's just not democracy.

A real alternative strategy means using the tactics of direct action, local organisation and linking up nationally on a federated scale that makes these taxes absolutely unworkable for the government. However, the campaign can, and must, be democratic and participatory and prefigure how society should be organised. National and regional meetings need to be delegate based, while all delegates should be subject to democratic election and instant recall. Only then can we resist any ongoing future attempts to make ordinary people pay for the mistakes of a wealthy elite.

So attend your local meeting and participate in the Cork Campaign against the Household And Water Tax.

Anarchism & the WSM

Anarchism, despite what you may have read in the mainstream press, has nothing to do with disorder and chaos. Rather, it is a form of socialism which believes that a free and equal society can only be brought about by the actions of the working class themselves, not by political parties acting in their name. It rejects the false democracy of parliaments in favour of direct democracy; this means that people have a real say in the decisions that effect their lives. The capitalist society we live in is based on class inequality; a world of bosses and workers, of order givers and order takers. Anarchists believe a new world is possible, one with freedom and equality for all.

The Workers Solidarity Movement is an anarchist organisation with branches in Cork, Dublin and Galway. We are active in the struggles that affect our class, in our workplaces and communities. In these struggles, we argue that neither ourselves nor any other political group can provide all the answers; these battles can only be won by mass participation and grassroots democracy. If you like the sound of these ideas, find out more about the WSM at www.wsm.ie or call into our bookshop, Solidarity Books, on Douglas street.

