Working Class Resistance

Issue 10
August 2005
£2.00
€3.00

HOW NOT TO CHANGE THE WORLD

The End of The War

London Bombings - Why Didn't They Bomb Sweden?

Anarchists In Britain & Ireland Condemn London Bombing

Tesco Temps Defence Committee

G8 - Protesting the Protest

Class Struggle vs Summit Protests

Liberating Iraq & Other Lies

Go - Move - Shift Anti-Traveller Racism in Ireland

Confronting NIHE Anti-Traveller Racism

Water Charges Update

Bad Language

Poverty Made History

Solidarity Appeal From Tehran

Belfast Pride 2005

Direct Action Gets The Goods

Welcome to WCR

Welcome to the latest edition of Working Class Resistance. This is the second edition in magazine format, now with more pages, and we aim to produce WCR on a quarterly basis - coming out in November, February, May and August. We apologise for the increase in price but once the distributors and retailers cut of the cover price is taken out we found we really had little choice.

Since the last issue of WCR members of Organise! have continued to be active in a variety of campaigns, from recent anti–traveller racism protest (see p13), Fascists Out Campaign activity, solidarity actions with the Rossport 5 and Tesco Temp Defence Committee (see p8), as well as ongoing work in opposition to water charges in the north (see p16).

In Erris, County Mayo things are hotting up in the campaign to stop the Shell pipeline with the arrests of the Rossport 5. Organise! and Street Scene picketed the Norwegian consulate in Belfast in solidarity with the Rossport 5 on Friday 29th of July.

This issue of WCR takes a critical look at much of the activity that has been engaged in in recent months by people who assure us they are trying to change the world and do battle with injustice. From marches that are little more than walking petitions, to pleading with world leaders to 'Make Poverty History', to Black Block battling and Circus Army tickling cops in Scotland, to rock concerts proclaiming that 8 men can change the world, to the devastation of the bomb attacks in London - we see little prospect of increasing working class militancy and confidence in any of these forms of 'struggle'.

We also include, in order to correct some misconceptions, an article on direct action, explaining what it is and how it can be used.

While we do not have all the answers many of the articles point to possible alternatives and methods of organising that can be engaged in by working class people. As ever we remain committed to confronting capital and state, building working class solidarity and to the struggle for world–wide libertarian communism.

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The End of the War

Guns on the table?

The statement issued by the leadership of the PIRA on Thursday 28th of July, instructing an end to their armed campaign is significant beyond its declaration that the war is over. Ordering all volunteers to dump arms the statement included the wording: "All Volunteers have been instructed to assist the development of purely political and democratic programmes through exclusively peaceful means."

This is clearly aimed at satisfying the British and Irish governments and unionism that the war is over, and it sets the stage for a return of Sinn Fein to the Stormont Assembly and the possibility of coalition in the south. The timing of a return for the Assembly itself depends largely on there being some sort of change in the attitude of the majority unionist party, the DUP. The DUP line on the Provos has been disbandment although a significant act of decommissioning, of "deeds not words", may make such a hard line less tenable. And its hard to imagine why the PIRA wouldn't proceed to a significant act of decommissioning, they can present it as calling Paisley's bluff while the truth is that their war against the British state has been over for at least 11 years.

So, should we welcome this as creating peace in our time? Predictions like that have been made before only to become disastrously unstuck. The basis of the Good Friday Agreement and the Assembly set up in its wake is such that, even if it was re–established, it could collapse over policing, parades or any number of contentious issues - particularly given the political near domination that would be enjoyed by Sinn Fein and the DUP.

It is also the case that none of this is likely to see a reduction in sectarianism in our society. Back when the GFA, or Belfast Agreement, was brokered one of the predecessors of this organisation, Organise! – IWA stated:

"...sectarianism is far from eradicated from our society. The 'Agreement' isn't really about that however, in fact it institutionalises sectarianism with members of the northern Assembly being required to identify themselves as Unionist, Nationalist or Other."

Other was then and is now a non–option as far as the sectarian and communal political carve up is concerned. Since then sectarianism on the ground has actually worsened.

The PIRA statement views the armed struggle as having been completely legitimate, and while the PIRA are not the sole combatants in the conflict, as libertarian communists we take issue with that assertion and we are mindful of the fact that the overwhelming majority of people who were bereaved, suffered injury, incarceration and death throughout this conflict were working class.

Paramilitarism and gangsterism continue to blight working class communities. State military institutions, troops and a paramilitary police force all need to go. Demilitarisation is a short term objective, removing nationalism from politics and building on class unity and solidarity are essential to achieving meaningful change for working class people in the north. As the Belfast Libertarian Group, who experienced the slide from civil rights campaigning into sectarian conflict, said back in 1973:

"Nothing is new or radical in Irish politics... Northern Irish politics are the politics of the dead. No organisation offers real hope to the working class in Ireland. No organisation can until nationalism is taken right out of politics."[1]

We all lose out as a result of sectarianism and nationalism (of the Irish, Ulster and British varieties) while Sinn Fein are happy to get back to the business of administering British rule - British rule that's bent on completing implementation of its neo–liberal agenda. Government from Westminster, Stormont nor Dublin offers us anything - north, south, east or west. Working class prods are not going to be won to a battle to get rid of partition and create a united Irish republic - and in all seriousness why should they? No–one seriously believes that such an extended Irish state will have anything socialist about it. Beyond some young, naïve and deluded members of Ogra Shinn Fein no–one believes Sinn Fein's (increasingly rare) talk of socialism anymore surely?

In reality there can be no satisfactory statist or capitalist solutions, the situation demands that working class people take matters into their own hands. In the short term we must increase working class resistance to attacks in our workplaces and communities. We must work to overcome segregation and to smash the grip of the churches on our education system. In the long–term we must strive towards a society based on working peoples direct control of their workplaces and communities, federating with others to ensure our needs are met. In this way we can abolish all borders and create a federal commonwealth of labour uniting the people's of these islands and the globe in the pursuit of a world based on need and ability not greed and violence.

It may prove difficult after over 35 years of armed conflict but working class people must take this opportunity to bury the politics of the dead and develop a politics of the living.

Notes:

[1] Belfast Libertarian Group, 1973, Ireland, Dead or Alive, pp23–24.

LONDON BOMBING

The planting of bombs on tubes and buses in London amounts to nothing more than an attack on working class people going about their daily lives. In the immediate wake of the July 7th bombings Organise! joined with other 'social anarchists and libertarian communists' in expressing "deepest sympathy to anyone affected by the blasts" and in condemning "the use of violence against ordinary people and the perpetrators of the bombings".

While it was pretty obviously planned to 'embarrass' the British government at a time when the G8 heads of state were meeting in Gleneagles it was working class people who paid with their lives.

With the government denying any connection to the occupation of Iraq, instead insisting that these attacks are part of an assault on our way of life, Al from the Armagh/Down Local of Organise! repeats the question:

Why Didn't They Bomb Sweden?

It might seem strange on the face of it but really it is a good question. Sweden is a 'democracy' too, after all. With Britain, and other states in the elite West, it shares, Blair would agree, certain fundamental 'values' which it too 'holds dear', which it too wishes to protect from the jealous terrorist. And what are these values? A cricketing sense of decency and fair–play; freedom of speech (and trade of course!), democracy and obedience to the rule of law, progress, development... and so it goes on. Everything, in fact, which the terrorist loathes, envies and wishes to replace with a version of an Islamic state more oppressive and dangerous than the religion itself (this is not to say that the other monotheistic codes are any less ridiculous or oppressive). If only life were as simple as a Rupert Murdoch headline!

Deception

Nearly three thousand people were killed in the attacks in the United States on the 11th of September 2001. This devastating attack which resulted in the deaths and injury of so many has since provided Bush and Blair with a 'year zero' in their war against terror.

But let me be clear. Of course, the bomb attacks were barbaric - any loss of innocent life is. But for Tony Blair to have the audacity to deny the rather patent link between the war in Iraq (military and economic warfare that has been ongoing since 1991 and which has led to hundreds of thousands of deaths - sorry, 'collateral damage' - and in which no Swedish military involvement occurred!) and the

July 7th, as on so many other occasions it's a case of 'their wars - our deaths'

London attacks of July 7th, and those since, is one of the most astonishing pieces of double–think recorded beyond the pages of Orwell. On June 10th, he said:

"September 11 happened before Iraq, before Afghanistan, before any of these issues and that was the worst terrorist atrocity of all." (Robert Winnett and David Leppard, The Sunday Times, op. cit.)

And how about this? A 2004 joint Home Office and Foreign Office dossier prepared for Tony Blair (!)– 'Young Muslims and Extremism' – identified the Iraq war as a key cause of young Britons turning to terrorism. The analysis stated:

"It seems that a particularly strong cause of disillusionment among Muslims, including young Muslims, is a perceived 'double standard' in the foreign policy of western governments, in particular Britain and the US."

The very possibility that Al Qaeda are trying to get public opinion to force Blair to withdraw from Iraq, from his alliance with the United States, and from his adherence to Bush's policies in the Middle East seems too risible to be given serious merit, apparently.

But, two and two makes five, and the 1991 Iraqi war and subsequent sanctions have been casually wiped off the slate of history. September 11th marked the beginning of the War on Terror which the US and its trusted lackey, Britain, were coerced into declaring irrespective, it seems, of anything that had happened before. So much for Eric Hoskins, a Canadian doctor and co–ordinator of a Harvard study team, who reported in January 1992 that the allied bombardment "effectively terminated everything vital to human survival in Iraq – electricity, water, sewage systems, agriculture, industry and health care". (Hoskins, 'Killing is killing – not kindness,' New Statesman, January 17, 1992)

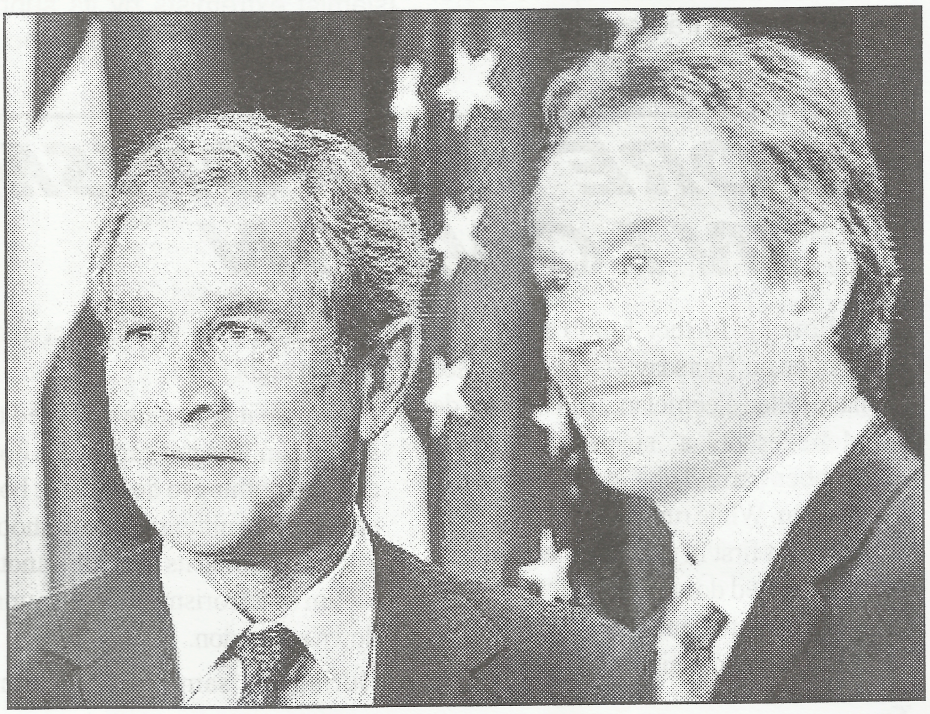
None of this was 'terror', obviously. Genocide is not terror, if the maniacs are on the side of "freedom".

Media consent

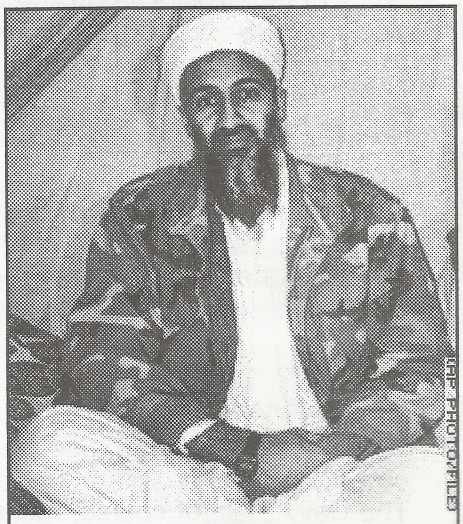
The Daily Blair, of course, rushed to fulminate on the horrors of July 7th and rightly so, but what of the past ten years? What of the recent past? What actually is happening in Iraq now? (see also *Liberating Iraq and Other Lies*, pg. 12) For a rare piece of clarity:

"The American army's use of its massive fire–power is so unrestrained that all US military operations are in reality the collective punishment of whole districts, towns and cities. Mass arrests of young men may eliminate a few insurgent fighters, but they ensure that plenty of recruits will take their places." (Cockburn, 'We must avoid the terrorist trap,' The Independent, July 11, 2005)

Hospital staff have been attacked



George, out of the side of his mouth;
"Just tell them we're defending our way of life Tony"



US and British foreign policy is winning Osama new recruits

by US marines, doctors have been shot, emergency medicines blocked. Children have been murdered in front of their families. Atrocities less worse that events in London?

But this was Britain's first taste of suicide bombers, hooted the tabloids. This kind of thing is surely the preserve of those countries affected by the never–ending saga of Middle Eastern politics. Lest we forget, however, before March 2003 there had also never been a suicide bomb attack in Iraq. Now the roll–call of dead is reaching alarming proportions. Consider these five days in July: on July 11, a suicide bomber blew himself up in a line of recruits at an Iraqi army recruitment centre in western Baghdad, killing 25 people and wounding 47. On July 12, four civilians died in Kirkuk when a suicide car bomb exploded near the city's hospital and municipal headquarters. Several of the wounded were hospital employees. On July 13, 26 Iraqi children were killed by a suicide bombing in Baghdad. On July 14, two suicide bombs in Baghdad killed two policemen. On July 15, 10 suicide bombs exploded across Baghdad. On July 16, a bomb killed at least 98 people in Musayyib, south of Baghdad. The Associated Press estimates close to 2,000 Iraqis have died since the Iraqi 'government' was formed on April 28.

Naturally enough, the British media dances to its own tune. The Madrid attacks of March 12, 2004, where 191 people were killed and 1,800 injured by ten bombs placed on trains at the height of rush hour were wildly condemned. The link between the attacks and the presence of Spanish troops in Iraq was eventually made (after some Spanish government mind games with ETA) and a Guardian editorial commented:

"Many voters expressed anger against the ruling Popular party: first for making Spain a target for Islamist extremists by its support for the Iraq war; and second for rushing too quickly to accuse the armed Basque separatist group ETA of the bombing." (Leader, 'Europe responds,' The Guardian, March 15, 2004)

Unlike now, of course, where any voice rationalising on the reasons for the London attacks is roundly chastised as unpatriotic, 'vile' (the Sun), "shameful apologetics" for terror. As for Christopher Hitchens (author of that not very complimentary work on Henry Kissinger) writing in the Mirror:

"How can anyone bear to be so wicked and stupid? How can anyone bear to act as a megaphone for psychotic killers?" (Hitchens, '07/07: War on Britain: we cannot surrender,' The Mirror, July 8, 2005)

A dead Iraqi Child - another victim of the 'War on Terror'

MORE TERRORISM IN LONDON

Following further bomb attacks in London on Thursday 21st of July police have killed electrician, Jean Charles de Menezes, 27 a 'suspected suicide bomber' at a Tube station in south London. While running for a train Jean was shot first in the shoulder and was then pinned down and had 'five shots pumped into him' according to eye witness Mark Whitby. An inquest later heard that Jean was in fact shot a total of eight times.

Of course it has since emerged that the victim was not carrying a bomb and had nothing to do with the bomb attacks. Permitting police to shoot to kill has claimed its first life - another victim of terrorism has been gunned down in London.

During the same incident armed police gave chase to a train driver fleeing the scene and the gun fire and put a gun to his head. Other drivers who initially refused to work as a result were branded "Cowards" and falsely accused of striking following the second attempt to carry out suicide bombings on the London transport network.

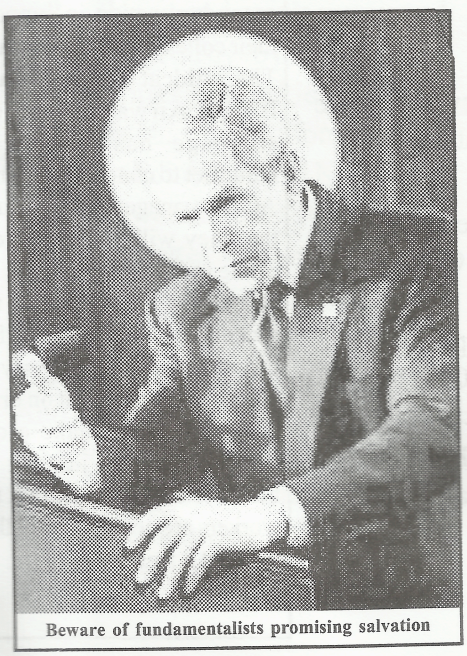
With a shoot to kill policy remaining in force for suspected suicide bombers and the Met chief Sir Ian Blair's statement that his officers may well kill more innocent people it seems to us that there are more than just one set of 'terrorists' at large in London.

Warnings

What remains remarkable is the complete unwillingness of Blair and co. to appreciate the fact that perhaps, just perhaps, the enemy in their great Jihad against Terror (though how you fight an abstract is beyond me) may just be willing to strike back. He was warned by the Joint Intelligence Committee that "by far the greatest terrorist threat" to this country would be "heightened by military action against Iraq". He ignored 79 per cent of Londoners who, according to a YouGov survey in February 2003, believed that a British attack on Iraq "would make a terrorist attack on London more likely". A month ago, a leaked, classified CIA report revealed that the invasion had turned Iraq into a focal point of terrorism. Before the invasion, said the CIA, Iraq "exported no terrorist threat to its neighbours" because Saddam Hussein was "implacably hostile to al–Qaeda".

So, obviously, Blair is very stupid, or doesn't care about the dangers of his foreign policy for domestic life? Either way, stiff upper lips everyone, or else move to Sweden!

Al



Beware of fundamentalists promising salvation

Anarchists in Britain & Ireland Condemn the London Bombing

The following statement was issued and endorsed by Anarchist/Libertarian Communist groups and organisations from Ireland and Britain in the immediate wake of the London Bomb attacks of Thursday 7th of July 2005.

As social anarchists and libertarian communists, we at libcom.org deplore the horrific attacks on innocent people this morning in London. We express our deepest sympathy to anyone affected by the blasts. We condemn the use of violence against ordinary people and the perpetrators of the bombings whether they be Islamists or anyone else.

Terrorist actions are completely at odds with any struggle for a freer, fairer society and never help oppressed people in any part of the globe. Instead violence against civilians is a tool of states and proto–states every bit as brutal as the ones they profess to oppose.

The British Government, by sending British soldiers to kill and die in Iraq and Afghanistan has made all of us a target for terrorists in their pursuit of increase profit and power at the expense of ordinary working people.

We stand for a world in which human solidarity and co–operation replace the quest for profit as society's driving force, and stand in solidarity with all people fighting exploitation and oppression in all its form, from opponents to the occupation of Iraq here to those in Iraq who are opposing both the occupying forces and the ultra–reactionary Islamists the Occupation helps strengthen.

Our thoughts today are with the victims of this atrocity, and their loved ones.

Written by libcom.org group

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« Preston Solidarity Federation
« South London Solidarity Federation
« Red Party
« Organise! Ireland
« Just Books Collective, Belfast

Solidarity With Tesco Temps Defence Committee

On Thursday 4th of August solidarity actions with the Tesco Temp Defence Committee took place across Britain and Ireland.

After the scandals with GAMA and Irish Ferries, Tesco are the latest employers to be reported to be exploiting foreign workers in Ireland, at their distribution centre in Greenhills in Dublin

Two Polish workers who literally refused to break their backs for the boss in Tesco distribution were fired. "Usually we pick 750 (boxes), but after three months of the normal rate our manager wants more, more, more... it's not possible picking 900. You must look after your back, and health and safety processes. If you pick 1,000 you'll break your back, you can not work like that."

Along with the demand that productivity targets be reduced to a manageable level the workers are demanding that their sacked co–workers are reinstated and that agency temps who work for longer than 3 months get a permanent contract from Tesco with all the associated benefits.

Pickets took place in Dublin, Belfast, Liverpool, Glasgow, Nottingham, Leeds, Oxford and London.

Despite the rain half a dozen supporters turned out for the Belfast solidarity action with Tesco temp workers called by the Belfast Local of Organise!

All the staff on duty where informed of the dispute in Greenhill. There was genuine concern from the workers and support for the Tesco Temp Defence Committee's three demands. One member of staff took leaflets from us and left his till to help distribute them to his fellow workers.

Polish workers and members of the WSM also picketed Tesco in Dublin handing out leaflets to the staff and customers.

Five Polish, former agency workers, organised a picket of Tesco in Liverpool town centre in solidarity with the demands of the Tesco Temp Defence Committee while approximately 20 people picketed the Argyle Street Tesco in Glasgow. Organisers of the Glasgow picket - acting under the banner of the Industrial Workers of the World - said the protest was a great success and great fun.

In Nottingham, in the true spirit of Robin Hood, half a dozen trade unionists and community activists lobbied for a bit of wealth re–distribution on behalf of the migrant workers being exploited by Grafton and Tesco.

In Leeds pickets found Tesco customers to be very supportive while some Tesco staff waved their support from the store and Tesco delivery drivers took information on their way out. In Oxford Tesco workers defied their boss to come and talk to pickets. In London around 20 people turned out to leaflet shoppers and staff at the Tesco store on Morning Lane in Hackney.

In Poland solidarity protests at Tesco supermarkets took place on Friday 12th of August in Poznan, Warsaw and Gdynia.

Walka Trwa! (The Struggle Continues!)

To contact the Tesco Temp Defence Committee please call:

Tesco Temps Defence Committee 00353 857 308 598 (Polish Language)

For English language information call 00353 845 142 5053

GAMA WORKERS VICTORY

The GAMA workers dispute reported in the last issue of WCR has ended in victory for the workers.

While 200 workers returned to Turkey in May having won back E40 million in stolen wages 80 stayed on to carry on the strike and fight to get their overtime pay.

They secured E8,000 for each year worked and severance pay of E2,500.

A worker with three years service went home with over 65,000 Euro - a lot of money in Ireland and a huge amount in Turkey.

The action taken by these workers provides an example of what we can do with a bit of determination, mutual support, solidarity and direct action.

BA WILDCAT

As we go to press wildcat action has hit British Airways. Following the summary dismissal of 800 workers by Gate Gourmet, the provider of 80,000 in–flight meals a day for BA at Heathrow, members of the Transport and General Workers Union began unofficial secondary action in support of their colleagues at Gate Gourmet The wildcat action grounded British Airways. While the stoppage has forced Gate Gourmet to conciliation through ACAS management are adamant that they will not reinstate any of the sacked workers.

For Gate Gourmet staff, those sacked and those facing being drove further into poverty by a company that's intent on driving down wages to make a quick profit, the future just got a lot bleaker. But its clear that these workers are not about to roll over without a fight.

The G8
Protesting the Protest

One of the problems that charities have experienced in the last twenty years or so has been what is referred to as 'compassion fatigue'.

Images of the pot–bellied, malnourished kids of sub–Saharan Africa, it was found, did not play well in communities where male unemployment often ran at 80%, single mothers fed their wains a diet of fish fingers and cornflakes, and pensioners froze to death in the winter trying to shave a few extra pounds off their heating bills. Diseases such as TB and even rickets reappeared and hospitals began to admit people from working class communities diagnosed as suffering from malnutrition. As the working class traditionally contributed more to 'famine relief' at the behest of wealthy charities and wealthier pop stars than the middle and upper classes put together, the charities sat up and took notice. They began to harp on about tackling poverty 'at home' as well as abroad, and people were urged to give generously to provide after–care facilities for the kids of single parents in inner city Salford or rehab centres in Edinburgh and Newcastle. Basically, working class communities were asked yet again to self–medicate without the fuckin' price of the medicine and put their hand into their own pockets to come up with the cash. And those asking them to do so are the self–same people, celebrities and nonebrities alike who asked us all to the G8 summit in Scotland. Thankfully, and unsurprisingly, many people have told them to go fuck themselves.

Like 'compassion fatigue' many of us are now suffering from 'demo fatigue', especially in relation to the anti–globalisation 'protests' where anarchists generally get the 'rioter' bit part thrown in. For a while it was nice to turn up just to piss off the liberals and challenge the stereotype of what an anarchist is but it has long since ceased to be anything more than a distraction (and a theatrical wan at that) from real struggles.

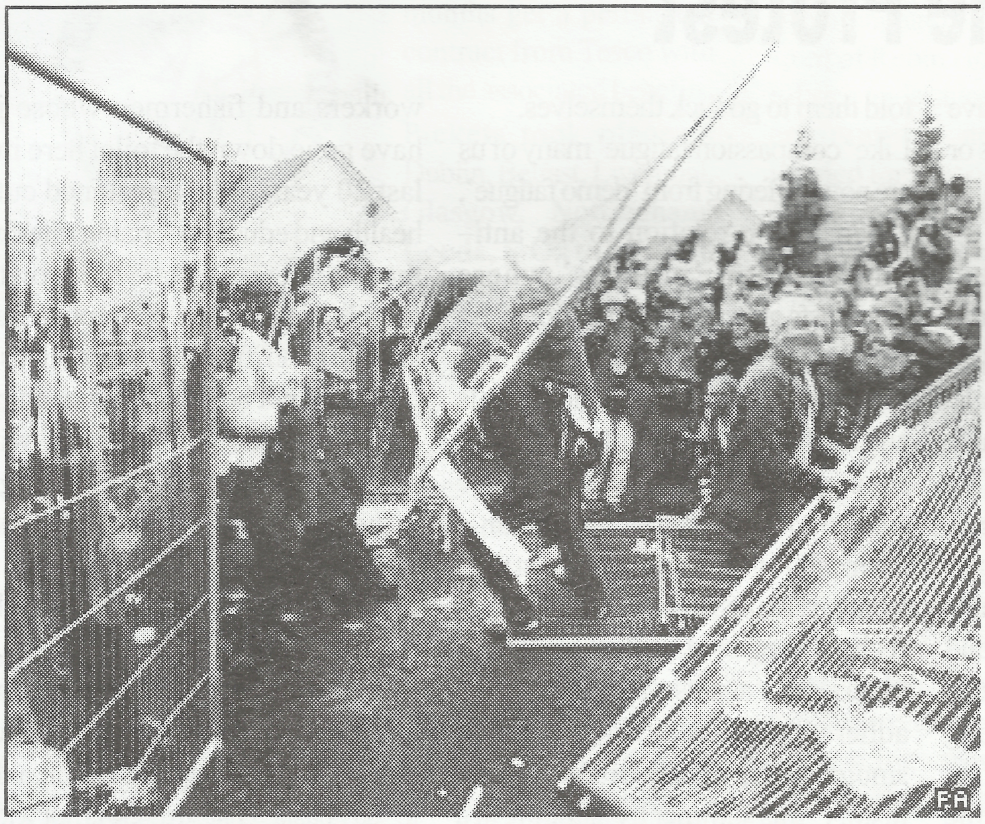
If charity begins at home then so does the class war against capitalism and its adherents. Those who joined the smugfest jamboree to 'make poverty history' this summer by standing at a security cordon shouting at the cops or singing along with Sting, Bono and Geldof were only part of one of the most carefully staged and choreographed non–events of modern times. Whether you followed the yellow brick road to Edinburgh or Gleneagles, the Wizard of Geldof will still fuck you over in the end, and declare hand–in–hand with Bush, Blair and co. (I'll leave it up to the reader to decide who's missing the brain, heart and courage bits), that in the end we should just leave it all up to the baby Jesus and the World Bank.

The Longbridge Rover workers weren't at Gleneagles, neither were the Arntz Belting Company workers up here in the north–west who've lost their jobs, nor the hundreds of textile workers, shipyard employees, engineering operatives, farming workers and fishermen whose jobs have gone down the toilet here in the last 20 years. The threatened cuts in health and education, rising rates bills, the looming water tax, the growth in casualisation, out–sourcing, privatisation and the gentrification of our towns and cities will not be tackled by standing in a field outside Auchterarder with a placard in one hand and a sleeping bag in the other. It might seem obvious but it's worth saying nonetheless.

Only a struggle to 'make capitalism history' at the coalface will succeed, and it is to local workplaces and communities that we should look to unravel the bonds of poverty and oppression on a day–to–day basis. That struggle is not without reverberations, because those of us who fight against the water tax here, for example, are fighting against the same agenda and interest groups who've imposed it elsewhere in the world. Given the nature of global capitalism the struggle against job cuts in Strabane or Cork or Belfast also means opposition to shit wages and the general exploitation of third world workers who usually 'benefit' from those job cuts here. If the slogan 'global is local' is to mean anything then hopefully some of those who went to Scotland in July will think, 'if that's the case, what the fuck was I doing in Perthshire?'

Mairtin O'Cathain

Class Struggle versus Summit Protests



Tearing down fences and taking on the filth at the G8 protests - revolutionary activity or futile protest?

In the wake of the anti–G8 protests in Gleneagles and Edinburgh Matti from the libcom.org group takes a critical look at the protests. Far from contributing to militant tendencies within the working class such protests are disconnected from the lives of working class people and that they cannot as a result provide the basis for a movement capable of challenging capitalism.

Well, there it was then. After almost two years of planning and approximately £200,000 spent by the 'anti–authoritarian' movement, the protests at the G8 summit came and went in the space of a week. 200,000 attended the Make Poverty History march, 5,000 took part in marches on Gleneagles and hundreds took part in blockades. But (and don't pretend you didn't know it was coming!), was it all worth it?

One thing that everyone accepts is that summit protests are symbolic. No matter how well they go, they are always symbolic and this is for one simple reason: the summits themselves are symbolic. The summits themselves are just pomp and ceremony for the world leaders to show off their democratic and diplomatic credentials. Even if you did manage to shut down the meetings, the decisions will get made anyway. They'll just do it another day. So all the rhetoric of activists calling to "Shut Down the G8!" is, to put it bluntly, absolute nonsense not to mention dishonest. Add to this the amount of well–intentioned activists who have been arrested (354 at Gleneagles) and those who'll get sent down, all for a symbolic protest.

As its accepted that the protests themselves were symbolic, we come to the other argument in favour of summit protests: that some of those who hear about 'anarchism' on these protests will eventually come around to a more coherent, working class based analysis. This can't be denied. Many libertarian communists got involved in politics after watching past summit protests on TV. I certainly did.

But does this justify almost two years of organising meetings and the £200,000 spent? No, of course not. The reason that those of us who did get involved in radical politics through summit protests did so was because there was no other point of entry into radical politics. Simply because some of us got involved through that kind of protest, doesn't mean that new people necessarily should if we can develop more effective political alternatives on their doorstep. Perhaps, instead of getting people involved in solid class politics by first sucking them in through dead–end activism, we should just try and create better entry points for solid class politics!

The fact is that summit protests are yet more disconnecting of politics from the lives of working class people. They are totally symbolic and for all their radical talk, couldn't even begin to build a movement capable of challenging capitalism. Our politics are only relevant if we ground them solidly in our everyday lives and orientate ourselves towards our workmates and neighbours to solve the problems faced by our class. Through collective struggle to improve our daily conditions, we (as a class) grow in strength and confidence and it is here, in the daily struggles of normal working class people, that libertarian communism is found. This isn't to say we reject a global analysis in favour of some kind of 'localism'. It just means that while we have a global political analysis, we realise that the only way we can fight all the problems of capitalism is by fighting it where it effects us: in our workplaces and our communities. As the old cliché goes, "think globally, act locally".

Who's threatening who – are summit protests a threat to capitalism?

One thing we can't forget when we are engaging with people is that libertarian communism is not simply an ideology, it is a living, breathing tendency within the working class that needs to be encouraged. We are not trying to recruit people to some rigid ideology of 'Libertarian Communism'; we are trying to promote a fighting spirit within our class. And we can't do this through a series of annual symbolic protests with no real substance to them. We can only do it through day–to–day organising where we live and work because it's only through collective workplace and community action that we can encourage that spirit.

Things like the Turkish Workers' Action Group fighting for better conditions in the south (as covered in WCR #9) or the Communities Against the Water Tax network are where we can fight capitalism directly, not symbolically, and where we can build a strong, independent working class movement fighting for its own desires and not those dictated by trade union bureaucrats or slimy politicians (left or right, orange or green).

Whenever we take part in any form of political action we must always ask this one simple question: "How will this contribute to encouraging the militant tendencies within the working class?" So, how do summit protests contribute to increasing the sense of solidarity, strength and confidence within working class communities? The simple answer is; they don't. Their effect is at best, insignificant and at worst damaging as it associates radical working class politics with protests taking place outside the daily struggles of our class, reinforcing the ever–growing walls of the activist ghetto.

The British libertarian socialist group, Solidarity, had it right when they described meaningful and harmful action in their pamphlet 'As We See It':

"Meaningful action, for revolutionaries, is whatever increases the confidence, the autonomy, the initiative, the participation, the solidarity, the equalitarian tendencies and the self – activity of the masses and whatever assists in their demystification. Sterile and harmful action is whatever reinforces the passivity of the masses, their apathy, their cynicism, their differentiation through hierarchy, their alienation, their reliance on others to do things for them and the degree to which they can therefore be manipulated by others – even by those allegedly acting on their behalf."

The protests may indicate that a significant number of people are opposed to the policies of the G8, but it in no way demonstrates any alternatives. The protests were little more than a very expensive, human petition. Capitalism is not about powerful men sitting round tables running the world. Capitalism is not something we can gather together from all corners of the globe to protest against. Capitalism is a social relationship played out in our daily lives and that is where it must be fought.

Matti

Summit Protests provide little more than an effectively contained distraction from our real struggles

Liberating Iraq and Other Lies

-whether it's a democracy, a fascist dictatorship, a parliament, or a communist dictatorship - the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism, and exposing the country to greater danger.

—— **Hermann Goering** at the Nuremberg Trials

For centuries, pillage by invading armies was a normal part of warfare & Nowadays, at least in more civilised countries, we do not let armies rampage for booty. We leave the pillaging to the men in suits, and we don't call it pillaging anymore. We call it economic development.

—— **Brian Whitaker**, the Guardian

Those who don't remember the past are condemned to repeat it.

—— **George Santayana**, 'Life of Reason'

Our 'elected' leaders are liars and hypocrites. We rolled our eyes in superior disbelief last year when George Bush jr. was 'legitimately' elected emperor of the world for the first time (Gore won in 2000). Last May only 27% of the British electorate (apparently possessing goldfish–like memories) elected an insidious liar and war criminal to be prime minister for another five years.

Despite the desperate myths spread recently from the bowels of the neo–Labour party machine, Tony Blair and his morally degenerate cabal have the blood of many innocents on their hands. Last October the highly–regarded *Lancet* medical journal published its comprehensive survey of Iraqi households to put a figure on civilian casualties since the invasion began of 100, 000, a shocking and disgusting total, immediately dismissed by the government as flawed research (can't trust those damn towel–heads, eh?), and a toothless and consent–manufacturing mass media generally ignored or quickly buried the story.

The last few weeks have seen momentous events threaten to unravel the Blair administration's neatly packaged web of deceit. Covered properly elsewhere in this publication, the London bombings on 7 July brought the oxymoronical 'war on terror' and its consequences starkly and brutally home. These particular evil–doers were British citizens, so with no foreign country to carpet bomb into oblivion the only response the government can come up with is to lurch ever more to the Right, murdering innocent people and eroding civil liberties as they go.

An increasingly ridiculous Blair denies that the illegal invasion of Iraq and its turbulent aftermath has anything to do with the attacks on Britain, despite the Royal Institute of International Affairs warning to the contrary. And the small matter, again relatively suppressed by the media, of Al–Qaida's second in command appearing on television to state explicitly that the prime minister's "policies brought you destruction in central London and will bring you more destruction."

It is a blindingly obvious fact that the terror wrought on the Iraqi people by the British/US war machine has enraged many potential Islamist militants and has engendered terror (on a much smaller scale) in return. The authoritative report published 20 July by Iraq Body Count and Oxford Research Group details non–combatant civilian casualties since the invasion began, with a grand total of almost 25, 000 dead. A far cry from liberation – the authors warn the country is descending into chaos with an average of 34 Iraqi civilians dying each day.

This study should be more embarrassing to Blair and more difficult to ignore, since the analysis is based on media reports, and official figures from the Iraqi ministry of health and mortuaries (the coalition, of course, "don't do body counts").

The coalition invaded Iraq allegedly to advance freedom and democracy (and conveniently forgotten lies about non–existent WMDs) but we now know the real truth behind the propaganda machine – the occupation (and the US and UK foreign policy that underscores and predates it) is the root cause of the 'terror' problem. It has bred more violence, resistance and instability, replacing one formerly compliant dictatorship with a fresh new puppet administration ensuring US and British economic, political and military interests are served.

Though vehemently denouncing the ordinary working class Iraqis who raided banks and businesses in the initial chaos after Baghdad's 'liberation', September 2003 saw the large scale looting of Iraq become official Bush administration policy. Juicy $500 billion Iraq reconstruction contracts were handed out to American firms without being put to tender, like awards for loyalty, amongst Bush and Cheney's favourite campaign–contributing cronies such as the Halliburton and Bechtel corporations.

Whilst Iraqi oil is the most prized asset and the first thing they secured, it is only part of the spoils of war and the neo–conservatives' occupation agenda. Iraqi public services devastated during a decade of war and sanctions have been privatised by colonial decree. Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) pro–consul Paul Bremer immediately permitted 100% ownership of businesses by foreign companies, who then expatriate the profits.

It is worth noting 'Defence' secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Bremer made sure the reconstruction of Iraq is paid for by the 'liberated' country themselves. A UN Security Council Resolution passed on the eve of invasion declared all confiscated Iraqi assets, leftover Oil for Food Programme billions, and resumed Iraq oil export

revenues, were to be used "in a transparent manner, for the benefit of the Iraqi people." But the CPA promptly began its US crony cash–out, and are now under investigation for disgraceful 'financial impropriety' (false accounting - remember Enron?) and 'misappropriating' tens of billions of dollars.

Around the same time, the CPA lowered the wage base for Iraqi public sector employees (the majority of the Iraqi workforce) from rates set when the US troops first arrived in Iraq. Since then housing and food subsidies have also been abolished, and numerous anti–Trade Union laws have been retained. In December 2003 the occupiers and their lackeys attacked and closed down the headquarters of the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions in Baghdad, which has remained non–operational ever since. Current unemployment is as high as 70%, which condemns the majority to a life of misery, hunger and isolation, especially since there are no welfare benefits.

The poor wages and safety conditions have led to an upsurge in class struggle labour activity such as strikes and occupations. In Nassiriyah last year, the workers of the aluminium factory saw off the Mahdi Army which had attempted to occupy and turn it into a military base, not to mention numerous wildcat strikes in cities across Iraq, mainly in electricity generating stations. The CPA was forced to back down in their insistence on wage reductions. In Um Qasr and other ports workers' committees have been set up. Women have joined the Organisation for the Freedom of Women in Iraq in their thousands, raising the slogan 'No to Occupation and the veil'. These groups, especially the militant and vibrant unemployed movement, were often the first to confront the occupation utilising all forms of collective direct action. This is consistent with an Iraqi tradition of class struggle, from the widespread popular unrest of 1958 to the mass rebellion to overthrow Saddam in 1991 in which conscripted soldiers, Kurdish rebels and Iraqi civilians participated (whom the US deserted). Rebels seized Basra, Kabala, Najaf, Kurkuk and other major cities. Mosques and symbols of the Ba'athist regime were destroyed as riots, insurrection and demonstrations rocked the Iraqi elite. In some areas self–organised workers councils (shoras) were set up to run things.

In calling for the end of the occupation of Iraq, we must not hide our principled opposition to tactics such as indiscriminate car bombings carried out by groups within the so–called Iraqi resistance, including all Islamist groups who despite their differences over tactics have the same basic aims: to establish a regime founded on Sharai law, with strict sexual apartheid. They hate atheists, secularists, other religious groups, feminists, organised workers, socialists and communists and they devote columns to denouncing them in their papers. In Basra, Islamist parties have set up an "emirate" where women are rarely seen in the street and where alcohol and nightclubs and even picnics are forbidden. Where local Islamic groups such as the al–Sadr army have gained power the offices of the Unemployed Union of Iraq, the Workers Communist Party and Women's Movement have frequently been targeted and attacked.

In the short term, we must provide what solidarity and assistance we can to those who are struggling for a genuinely free and equal Iraq. The best solution to the crisis is for the Iraqi working class to destroy the power structures that have oppressed them for so long, to resist not just the military occupation but the local fundamentalists, nationalists, Ba'athists and demagogues who wish to carve up Iraq for their own ends. We have watched and participated in the mass demonstrations across the world against this war to no avail and yet the war rages on with devastating consequences for all of us.

Instead of grovelling to unresponsive politicians and Trade Union bureaucrats, we need to build an aggressive campaign based on self–managed collective direct action, civil–disobedience and international solidarity. One that brings the campaign to the doorsteps of those gangsters and profiteers that have benefited from the plunder of Iraq's resources, and an incompetent or compliant media that has helped legitimise the war. In the Republic, Shannon War port has actively assisted the US death machine with the re–fuelling of war–planes carrying weapons of mass destruction and transporting troops and arms. We need to engage in general anti–militarist agitation to encourage those serving in the occupation forces to resist and disobey orders. Fundamentally, we need to learn from history that marching from A to B (or wearing wristbands and listening to pop concerts) never causes meaningful change and that the State never concedes anything without some form of collective struggle.

Most importantly, a movement which does not seek to abolish the existing power structures which create war is a sham! In struggling for the end of the occupation of Iraq we must eradicate the very global structures of capitalism and its protector the state which ensures the dominance and exploitation of the majority by a privileged minority. US General Smedley Butler who served in the US army was all too familiar with this:

I spent 33 years and four months in active military service as a member of this country's most agile military force, the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from Second Lieutenant to Major General; I spent most of my time being a high class muscle–man for Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism. During those years, I had, as the boys in the back room would say, a swell racket. Looking back on it, I feel that I could have given Al Capone a few hints. The best he could do was to operate his racket in three districts. I operated on three continents.

The trumpeted 'handover of power', and the coalition and its puppet media–lauded elections, rather than marking a shift towards democracy, replaced a formerly compliant regime with a representative body too afraid or impotent to deny the new rulers of the world their plundered authority. And Baghdad is burning.

paul michael

Go - Move - Shift

Anti-Traveller Racism in Ireland

Its par for the course for the mainstream media, politicians and their lackeys to make a career out of criminalisation and scapegoating of minorities. In Ireland if a scapegoat is needed all too often Travellers are made to fit the bill.

One of the most deprived and discriminated against ethnic groups in our society, to such an extent that Travellers are regularly barred from shops and pubs. Even people who believe that they are not racist, and some who see themselves as anti–racist, seem struck blind when it comes to attitudes to, discrimination against and attacks on the way of life of Travellers.

As stated by the Irish Traveller Movement,
Travellers are an indigenous minority who, historical sources confirm, have been part of Irish society for centuries. Travellers long shared history, cultural values, language, customs and traditions make them a self–defined group, and one which is recognisable and distinct. Their culture and way of life, of which nomadism is an important factor, distinguishes them from the sedentary (settled) population.

To this day Travellers only account for about around 0.5% of the national population (25,000). The mortality rate for Traveller children up to the age of 10 is 10 times that for the population as a whole. Overall the life expectancy of Travellers is around 20% lower than the general population. Only 10% of the Traveller population are over 40 years of age and only 1% are aged over 65.

Travellers are eight times more likely to live in overcrowded conditions in comparison with the general population in Northern Ireland. Many still have extremely limited access to basic amenities such as running water, electricity and sanitation, including some of those living on serviced sites. Only 11% are in paid employment of one form or another, whilst 70% of those who are economically active have had no paid work in the last ten years.

In the south, legislation has been passed to protect the rights and freedoms of travellers in terms of the Equal Status Act meanwhile the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 only requires local authorities (councils) to set targets for providing accommodation and the criminalisation of Travellers has intensified. Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2002, which criminalises trespass on public and private land, has caused great hardship to many Travellers. This Act allows for the Garda to move Travellers with no notice on foot of a complaint by the local authority. This has lead to local authorities evading their responsibilities and calling in the cops to evict Travellers as a result. According to the Irish Traveller Movement, "Between 1995 and 2002 only 129 new halting site bays were provided out of the 2,200 units needed. In 2003, 1,000 families still live on the roadside without access to basic services such as water and toilets."

In 2000 approximately 500 families in the south were served with eviction notices without being offered alternative accommodation. The evictions of families can be described as,
"The removal of families against their will from land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection."

Before serving an ASBO on two members of the Travelling community the Mayor of Larne said its purpose was to "get these people moving and keep them moving".

The treatment of Travellers is just another example the role of government in ensuring uniformity and conformity while actively engaging in and promoting discrimination and criminalisation.

The Irish Traveller Movement website can be accessed at:
www.itmtrav.com/frame1.html

Sean

Confronting NIHE Anti-Traveller Racism

On 17th of June members of Organise! joined a protest at the Northern Ireland Housing Executive against Traveller discrimination. The protest, called by the Anti–Racism Network due to the NIHE's role in having an ASBO served on two members of the Traveller community, was attended by around 40 people with banners, placards and flags.

The NIHE had advised Larne council to apply an ASBO on two Travellers barring them from entering Larne town as well as a number of other places outside the town where they had previously parked. On the day of their court appearance the Magistrate stipulated that they must park outside Larne and make their way to the courthouse on foot.

Effectively the two Travellers and their families were being criminalised as a result of the NIHE's dereliction of its responsibility to provide temporary halting sites in order to ensure Travellers are not forced to camp "illegally", to ensure children have access to schools, health care, sanitation, electricity etc. Six years after taking on this role the NIHE have yet to provide any halting sites.

The protest on June 17th was an embarrassment to the NIHE who are in the process of setting up a Race Equality Unit and the management have been forced to state they do not favour ASBOs and that a site will be provided for the family in this case.

Bad Language

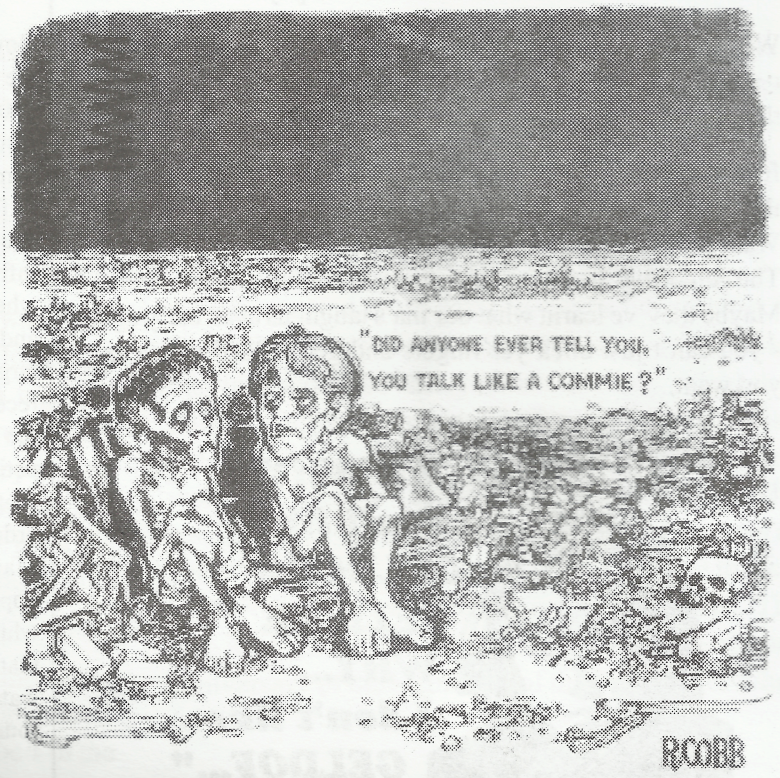
Mairtin O'Cathain reflects on uncritical use of the word terrorist by many on the left, including anarchists and libertarian communists (and Organise! for that matter) and examines the meaning of the words Terror and Terrorism. From a term applied to the exercise of violence by the state to one that is used to identify the enemies of the state these are now among the most politically loaded words in the English language.

The coverage of the recent attacks on London has led to resounding denunciations of 'terrorism' and 'terror' from almost every quarter, including all sections of the left, anarchists included. The harrowing and random nature of the attacks naturally led most people to condemn those involved and outline their opposition to their methods and politics.

While this is, of course, a legitimate and understandable expression it falls into the trap of mouthing the same line as those whose actions have led to the attacks in the first place. The uncritical parroting of the terms 'terrorism' and 'terrorist' in particular have been sickening in their repetition. These words are among the most politically loaded in the English language, and although used by greater and greater numbers of people, they originated with governments and their allies in the security services and mass media, who have continued to push for their definition of 'terrorism' to be accepted by all sections of society since the nebulous 'war on terror' began. It's interesting to note that the United Nations refuse to accept as authoritative the term 'terrorism', and their own expert on the subject, Alexander Schmidt, has been researching globally to try and find a suitably palatable definition.

Naturally, no group accused of 'terrorism' actually admits to the title and it should be particularly important to anarchists that not only is it forwarded by states but also originates with them. It was first used by the French Republican state during the 'Reign of Terror' against its enemies of the left and right, and re–employed by various Marxist regimes, including the Soviet Union. It was only in the later twentieth century that the term was used more widely and pejoratively to define the state's enemies. At all times its use has been opposed by many anarchists, reminding people that it began with the state and lies with the state today. When we speak of terrorism we are speaking of the state, there should be no need to qualify it by talk of 'state terrorism' as if it were somehow just an aspect of regular terrorism. Only states can bring the full power of unbridled physical violence to bear in all its barbarous variety from nuclear and biological weapons of mass destruction to machine–gun and night–stick. They have the monopoly on violence, and armies of brainwashed individuals to enforce their will.

This is not to excuse or dismiss religious fundamentalists and their violence. The nexus of Islam, Orientalism, post–Colonial hysteria and oil wealth has created a small but vicious array of Muslim fundamentalist groupings scattered across the globe, gathering up grudges and causes like stones, and representing myriad religious and political demands. Of course, it's easier for states to define them all as one big group of 'baddies' - like the pirates of the 17th century, the republicans of the 18th, anarchists of the 19th century and communists of the 20th. This is done by the simple application of the word 'terrorist' to those who challenge the state's monopoly of violence, and condemns society to further violence and repression, generates untold wealth for those who profit by war, and puts aside all notion of political solution and compromise until thousands are dead.



Its Official:

POVERTY MADE HISTORY!

...um, well, sorry, no not really

Before the Live 8 concerts and Geldof's Long Walk to Justice in Edinburgh a person died due to poverty in Africa every 3 seconds.

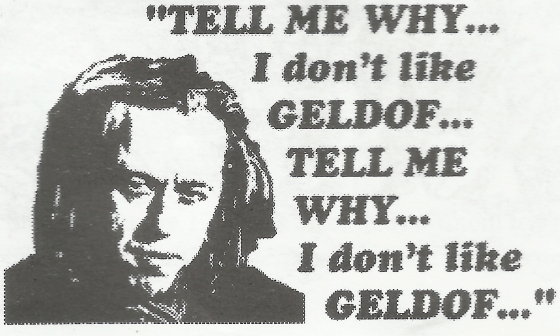
And hidden behind the headlines that followed the London bombings have Bobs 8 men done anything to change the world by making poverty history? The short answer is no of course.

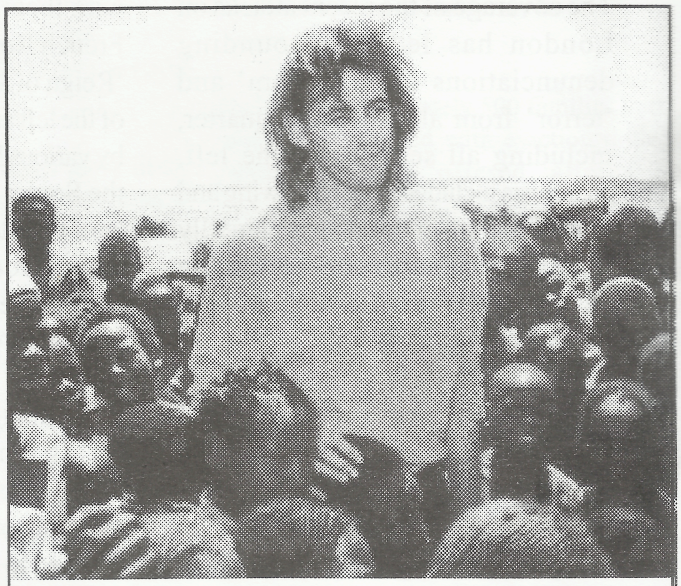
As journalist John Pilger put it: "The truth is that the debt relief the G8 is offering is lethal because its ruthless 'conditionalities' of captive economies far outweigh any tenuous benefit. This was taboo during the G8 week, whose theme was not so much making poverty history as the silencing and pacifying and co–opting dissent and truth."

So after the Make Poverty History campaign welcoming the G8 leaders to Scotland "asking them to deliver trade justice, debt cancellation and increased aid to developing countries" (and yes Bruce Whitehead of MPH actually did say that) the only countries eligible for 'debt relief' are the 16 who have adhered to the principles of privatisation of services and deregulation of business. And 'debt relief' only applies to relief on the interest payments over ten years, leaving these countries with 70% of their 'debt' still to pay.

While Geldof has declared his world–wide jamboree a resounding success even Tony Blair has been forced to concede that the G8 have not eradicated poverty in Africa.

In Africa, after the Make Poverty History Campaign, after the ONE campaign, after the Live 8 concerts and the Long Walk to Justice, a person dies every 3 seconds due to poverty. The celebrities however have stopped clicking their fingers. Maybe they've learnt what our ma's taught us at an early age - you can't just click yer fingers and get handed whatever you want.





Salvation?

Water Charges and Privatisation Delayed Until April 2007

Government plans to implement Water Charges and privatise the Water Service has been put back again, this time to April 2007. Ineptitude, opposition and a desire to dissipate growing resistance may all play their part in the further delay. The most damaging aspect of this announcement is that it becomes harder to focus attention on the issue and build effective resistance. We have however been handed the time to build the infrastructure needed for an effective non–payment campaign when the legislation is finalised, the billing systems put in place and the first bills printed. Significantly members of the north's largest union NIPSA, voted to endorse non–payment at their recent annual conference in Newcastle County Down. While the trades union led coalition are collecting signatures for a petition against water reform and charges we believe that a more pro–active and imaginative approach is also needed in order to help build opposition.

Many are placing faith in persuading our local politicians to oppose the charge, something that is pretty easy for them to do while they aren't actually sitting at Stormont but we can't forget that all the Assembly executive parties were involved in putting water reform and charges on the political agenda the last time round.

Solidarity Appeal

From Tehran Transport Workers Sacked for Union Organising

Organising efforts by the Syndicate of Workers Of Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company in the Vahed Bus Company have resulted in the dismissal of 17 union activists.

The union is calling for solidarity in the face of the company's extremely harsh reaction to the workers organising efforts. As well as the dismissals many have been harassed and have undergone interrogations at the hands of the Company's security forces.

The union is under extreme pressure from the employer and the government–sponsored Workers House and the Islamic Labour Council to back down on its demand for recognition.

The sacked workers are also facing great financial difficulties and as a result, the union has launched a broad and public fundraising campaign.

The Syndicate is urging all concerned individuals and labour and progressive organisations around the world to pressure the Iranian government and the Tehran and Suburbs Public Transportation Company, demanding the immediate reinstatement of all fired labour activists. The Syndicate has also called for financial donations in order to support the sacked workers and their families, many of whom are tenants without any other source of income. In particular, the Company, which is one of the largest employers in Iran with over 17,000 employees, must be pressured to:

1. Immediately reinstate all fired workers.
2. End the intimidation and harassment of workers and labour activists in the company.
3. Recognise the newly elected independent union, and remove the company–selected, government–sponsored Islamic Labour Council.
4. Negotiate a collective bargaining agreement with the workers' union and recognise the right to strike.

PLEASE DONATE TO THE FIRED WORKERS FUND

Donations can be sent to:

International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran
P.O. Box 1164, Station Q
Toronto, Ontario
M4T 2P4
Canada

Please indicate that the money is intended for the "Tehran Transportation Workers' Fund".

JUST BOOKS BENEFIT

A Night To Remember

22nd June Fundraiser for Just Books

The Just Books Collective put on a fundraising gig in Kelly's Cellars in Belfast on 22nd June. Excellent performances were put in by local musicians Pol MacAdaim, Tony Maguire and, from the USA, members of the Riot Folk musicians collective.

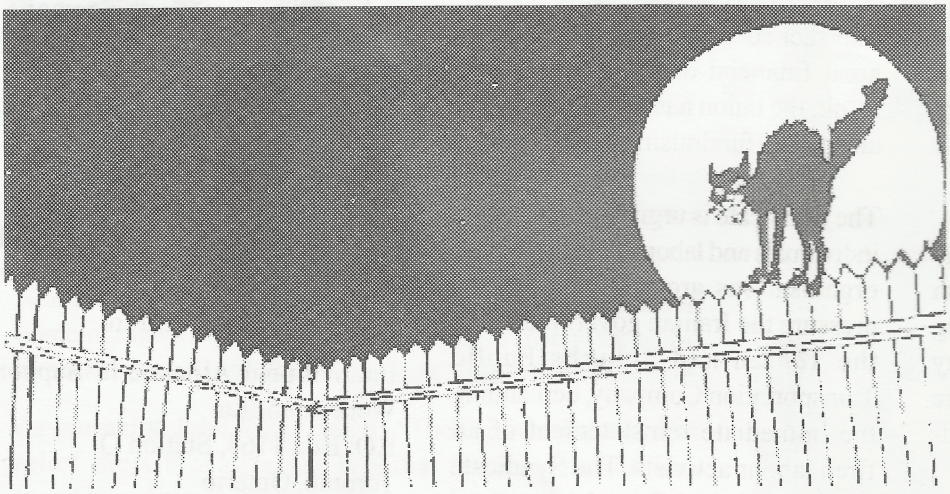
The evening got off to a slow start, the unusually warm and sunny weather keeping people outside of the bars for longer than usual, but picked up and proved to be a night to remember. We were treated to song after song of resistance, solidarity and working class struggle. Among my personal favourites were Pol's renditions of Sacco and Vanzetti (sticking to the original 'anarchist bastards' line) and the Internationale, Tony's fire–fighters song written during the FBU strike and Riot Folk's 'Picket line song'.

The gig was supported by a broad range of folk including anarchists, socialists, fire–fighters, trade unionists, grassroots activists, feminists, and former and current members of the Just Books Collective. Old friends and new faces came from Belfast, Derry, Dublin and Kildare to support the event and raise just under £300 – bringing the total raised so far to around £1,200 towards the effort to secure a new premises for Just Books in Belfast.

Towards a New Premises

As we reported in the last issue of WCR the Just Books Collective are working towards opening a centre in Belfast that is much more than just a bookshop. What they are building towards is a solidarity centre in Belfast that incorporates accessible resources and information for workers in struggle – in a premises providing a multi–lingual resource library, a bookshop, meeting space, internet access and a coffee shop. Ideally they would also like to include a print workshop and a projector for showing films. The aim is to have things up and running in time to mark the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Revolution – July 2006.

Direct Action Gets The Goods



From the black block havin' a go, to the clown army tickling cops and putting flowers in their hair, from marches to smashing McDonalds, gluing locks to throwing bricks and even it seems going to rock concerts– all of these activities have had the term direct action applied to them incorrectly.

Direct action is being confused with actions that are probably best regarded as symbolic and more often than not ineffective. A lot of the confusion is down to media reports of anything they regard as outside the parameters of acceptable protest as direct action, but a significant amount of it is down to the desire on the part of many activists to do 'direct action'. This leads to claims by those involved that actions, such as the recent Making Poverty History event on Derry's walls, are 'direct action' – such events may sometimes be worthy and may raise awareness but direct action they certainly aren't. Many activists regard summit protests, such as those held in Gleneagles against the G8 meeting, as direct action – but such protests, even if they are successful in shutting down a summit remain as symbolic as the summits they are protesting [see Class Struggle Versus Summit Protests pg. 8].

Direct action has also become a by-word for violence, to the extent that much of the anti-war and anti-globalisation movement talk specifically of NVDA – Non Violent Direct Action. That's not to say people engaged in direct action shouldn't defend themselves or that violence is never acceptable, simply that this view of direct action is partial and misrepresentative.

So what is direct action? Put simply it:

...refers to action undertaken directly between two individuals or groups, without the interference of a third party. Specifically to Anarcho-Syndicalists (and other libertarian communists) this means: The rejection of participation in parliamentary or statist politics and the adoption of tactics and strategies which place responsibility for action firmly in the hands of the workers themselves. (Anarcho-Syndicalist FAQ, http://anarchosyndicalism.net/faq/1d.htm#1d2)

Cliched though it may sound direct action really is about empowering ourselves and breaking the dependency on others to do things for us.

Rather than pleading, through official intermediaries, with our bosses or electing politicians to sort it:

Fundamental to direct action is the reality that we can only rely on ourselves to achieve our goals (SolFed, About Solidarity Federation).

Direct Action in Our Workplaces

Direct action can be applied in as many different areas as there are forms of direct action. Of course for libertarian communists the main areas of application are in our workplaces and communities. In their leaflet *A Workers Guide to Direct Action* the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) sets out what they mean by direct action in a workplace context:

> *Direct action is any form of guerrilla warfare that cripples the bosses ability to make a profit and makes him/her cave into the workers demands. The best known form of direct action is the strike, in which workers simply walk off their jobs and refuse to produce profits for the boss until they get what they want.*

Strike action is at times more limited than this implies, particularly given the constraints of Trade Union bureaucracies, the impact and fear of anti-union legislation and a prevalent ideology of social partnership.

Wildcat strikes, "unofficial" strikes, where this stranglehold is removed have become increasingly used by workers in recent years and such action certainly returns some of the impact to the strike weapon.

In June up to 300 postal workers took immediate wildcat action due to the suspension of 30 of their fellow workers. The action took place at the Tomb Street sorting depot following workers refusal to accept un-agreed working practices, and the action taken ensured the dispute was resolved within two days. Compare that to the debilitating and drawn out process that accompanies the balloting process for official industrial action and there can be little doubt that a short sharp shock is often a better option.

However if a wildcat drags on large amounts of financial solidarity are needed to support the strikers, even in the case of official action the bosses ability to sit out a strike for longer than many of us could survive on strike pay (if our 'leadership', who are still after all drawing their fat salaries from our membership dues, deign to provide us with any) means that other methods of direct action may be more appropriate and effective.

In my own experience, several years ago as a result of mounting grievances, fellow railway workers decided to inform the company that they were unavailable to work an upcoming bank holiday. Management panicked – one manager was sent by car towards Bangor getting out along the way in order to board a train worked by one of the workers' shop stewards. Faced with the prospect of having next to no trains running and with no time to do anything about it a meeting between workers representatives and management was set up immediately. The upshot of this was the addressing of many of the workers grievances and a small but significant improvement in working conditions. And no one lost out on overtime for working the bank holiday either, due to the swift resolution of the dispute. In this case it was enough to threaten wildcat action in order to get results.

There are other methods of direct action available in the workplace, Rudolf Rocker, a German Anarcho-Syndicalist wrote in his book *Anarcho-Syndicalism* in 1938:

By direct action the Anarcho-Syndicalists mean every method of immediate warfare by the workers against their economic and political oppressors. Among these the outstanding are the strike, in all its graduations from the simple wage struggle to the general strike; the boycott; sabotage in its countless forms; anti-militarist propaganda; and in particularly critical cases... armed resistance of the people for the protection of life and liberty[1].

Direct action is about workers acting to defend or improve their conditions using work to rules, strikes and occupations rather than trusting the Labour Relations Agency or Industrial Tribunals to sort things out for them.

Direct Action Against the War

Before the war on Iraq millions of people marched in opposition on February 15th 2003, including around 15,000 in Belfast and 100,000 in Dublin, but they were ignored by politicians.

Direct action is harder for them to ignore, and while workers and anti-war activists were unable to carry out much in the way of it there were nevertheless some small but significant examples of direct action that give us a glimpse of the potential and strength of it as a method of resistance. In particular the action taken by grassroots activists and anarchists at Shannon airport forced three of the four commercial airlines that had been transporting Gulf bound US troops to pull out. Action ranged from breaches of the perimeter fence to physical attacks on US planes. This had an impact and provided a glimpse of what could be achieved but one of the problems was the lack of interaction with workers at Shannon. One of the forerunners of Organise!, the Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation did attempt to build bridges and a bulletin aimed at the workers was distributed during one of the protests, but this was isolated and unsustainable for such a small group with no local base.

More potential had been glimpsed on the 7th of January 2003 when two train drivers blacked a train carrying ammunition to Glen Douglas on Scotland's west coast. The ammunition was believed to have been destined for the war on Iraq – in the end it had to be transported by road.

Direct Action in Our Communities

In communities in the south direct action has meant organising to defeat the water charge and fighting the bin tax. Socialist Party TD Joe O'Higgins may have got elected on the back of the anti-water charges campaign but it was not his election that defeated the Irish government.

Mass opposition and direct action

WORK RATE TOO FAST
(APPLY RESISTANCE)

defeated the charge and anti-water charges campaigners in the north should learn valuable lessons from this victory of working class people.

Civil disobedience and mass non-payment also toppled Thatcher and defeated the Poll Tax in Britain.

Direct Action in Spain

In 2003 striking CNT (the Spanish Anarcho-Syndicalist Union) members took on Ferrovial Servicos, a street cleaning and bin collecting company, due to breaching of agreements made following action taken the previous year. After 134 days of struggle, protest and mounting pressure on the company – which saw 6 workers going on hunger strike, the use of scab labour by the company, daily demonstrations, a noisy wake-up call every morning outside the City Council and a blockade every afternoon, picketing at the company gates, weekly protest marches to Seville and performances of the Full Monty by striking workers – the dispute ended in victory for the workers.

A Rejection of Powerlessness

Direct action is a rejection of the notion that working class people are powerless. Improvements to our lives are not handed down benevolently from above – they must be fought for. For libertarian communists direct action is more than an effective means of defence or even of going on the offensive and changing something for the better, it is, for the working class:

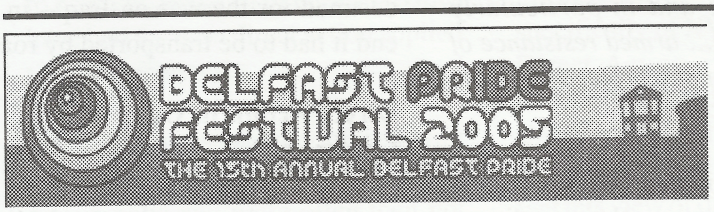
A continuous schooling for their powers of resistance, showing them every day that every least right has to be won by unceasing struggle against the system (Rudolf Rocker).

Direct action is an essential preparation for the free socialist society that we are striving to create. Through engaging in direct action, even when we make mistakes, we have the opportunity to learn from experience that there is no need to leave things to 'experts' or professional politicians. We should have learnt by now that that course offers us nothing but disempowerment, betrayal and broken promises and results in a pervading sense of powerlessness. And yet we are far from powerless. Direct action teaches us to control our own struggles, while building a culture of resistance that links with other workers in struggle. Solidarity and mutual aid find real expression and as our confidence grows so to does our ability to change the world.

Direct action, like they say, gets the goods.

J. Brannigan

[1] Rockers example of armed resistance in 'particularly critical cases' was written in reference to the revolutionary struggle against Fascism that had been ongoing in Spain since 1936.



It was the biggest I've ever seen - it was massive. Belfast's Gay Pride on Saturday the 6th of August had about 5,000 people, gay, lesbian, bi–sexual, transgender and straight out celebrating sexual diversity and gay pride.

Despite opposition and attempts to get the parades commission to ban us by religious fundamentalists and far right crackpots the march went ahead. From Writers Square up Royal Avenue, around City Hall and up Great Victoria Street, into Bruce Street and then onto Bedford Street and back around City Hall returning to Royal Avenue and the party at Writers Square.

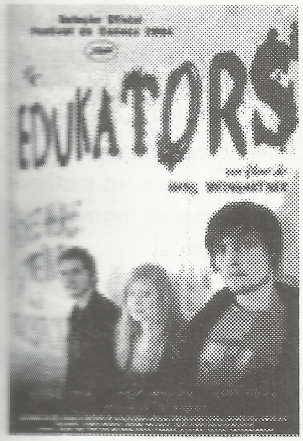
While there appeared to be more fundamentalist protestors than last year out at the City Hall they were overwhelmed by the sheer size of the Pride parade and hemmed in by supportive onlookers. The far right crack pots of the Ulster Nationalist Alliance (previously known as the WNP) only managed to get two people out to hand out their hate filled propaganda leaflets. Both fled when they noticed people turning cameras on them.

The day was a far cry from the early days I remember with a couple of dozen people and a double–decker bus making its way through the city centre. Respect is due to the people who stuck their necks out in those early days to make Belfast Pride a regular, vibrant and growing celebration on the streets of Belfast.

Fascists Out Campaign banner on last years Gay Pride in Belfast

Your Days Of Plenty Are Numbered

REVIEW



Film review: *The Edukators* (2005)

Given the vast scale, and dynamic importance to real–world affairs of that multi–faceted phenomenon of global solidarity loosely defined as the anti–capitalist movement, it is disappointing that feature film–makers (and more pertinently, their producers/ financial backers) have blatantly ignored the rich narrative possibilities within it. Until now, that is.

There has been an encouraging upsurge in production and distribution of commendable left–leaning documentary films in recent years (*the Corporation*, *the Take*, *Super Size Me*, *Control Room*, *the Yes Men* among the best), but ironically this status–quo–critical material seems aided by businesses responsive to the hugely profitable success and notoriety of Michael Moore's film–essays *Bowling for Columbine* and *Fahrenheit 911*. As Bill Hicks once angrily parodied marketing goon's response to his acerbic stand–up: "ah, I see he's going for the rebellious dollar, very smart, that's a very profitable angle".

But getting a system–questioning message heard is most important, and in these remains intact - despite a public lapping up anti–capitalist documentaries, this year's release of writer–director Hans Weingartner's excellent *The Educators* heralds the first sensitive and intelligent fictional exploration of the ideas behind our movement's passionate protagonists.

The main characters are three Berlin youths, frustrated by the inequalities and predatory destruction wrecked by global 'free–market' capitalism. Daniel Bruhl, star of last year's touching *Goodbye, Lenin!*, gives another intelligent and absorbing performance as Jan, a spirited and subversive anarchist and revolutionary. Together with his friend Peter, 'the Edukators' conduct nocturnal Situationist direct–actions, breaking into ostentatious suburban mansions not to steal, but to rearrange furniture and valuables and leave cryptic messages designed to unsettle these wealthy oppressors of the proletariat.

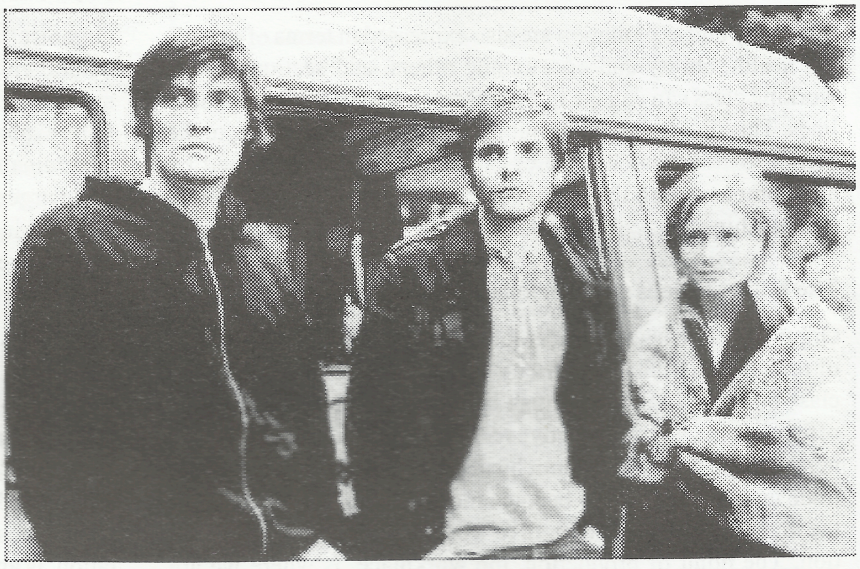
What begins as well executed (if a tad ineffective) agitation soon leads to trouble when Jan falls in love with Peter's girlfriend Jule and a break–in turns into a sloppy and panicked kidnapping. All three have to flee from their cosy city commune to a remote hut in the mountains, where their savvy millionaire hostage Hardenberg antagonises their desperate situation further, putting their theories about anarchy and the system to the test before the trios seemingly inevitable self–implosion or capture by the state.

This tense, evocative and emotional thriller is also an excellent character piece, with all four discussing and reassessing ethics and politics in scenes most critics, predictably, dismissed as "overly preachy", "intellectually confused" or even "hectoring socialist lecture". But of course these bourgeois apologists refuse to see the point, and perfectly illustrate the film's main strength as an affecting work of artistic power: why does anarchic idealism and honest talk of revolution make society uncomfortable? With "The Edukators," Weingartner successfully and sensitively dramatises questions that aren't supposed to be asked out loud in a turgid, apathetic culture where irony is king and belief in anything but money is dead. This dialectic sequence offers arguments from both sides, and forces viewers to get off the fucking fence.

The Edukators is available from all 'good' capitalist DVD retailers on 26 September.

www3.ifcfilms.com/theedukators/

paul michael



ORGANISE! - WHO WE ARE

A Statement of Aims and Principles

Who We Are

Organise! is a working class organisation. We seek to secure for all workers a full and equal share of the wealth and social benefits created by the combined labour of our class. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world–wide classless society: libertarian communism.

Against Capitalism, Exploitation and Oppression

We are fighting to abolish the state, capitalism and wage slavery and to replace them with workers' control of our industries and communities, ensuring production and distribution for need not profit. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

We are opposed to capitalism; a system based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. By working class we mean the vast majority of humanity who are forced to sell their labour or survive on the pittance offered them by the welfare state.

Organise! is opposed to patriarchal and gender oppression, recognising that hierarchical notions of male domination in the family and beyond have imposed the oppression of females as well as males. This domination has been reinforced by organised religion hand in hand with bourgeois democracy and capitalism. Capitalism uses the "traditional" oppression of women to divide the working class.

We believe that fighting racism must be part and parcel of the class struggle. Libertarian–Communism cannot be achieved while racism still exists. In order to be effective in their struggle against their oppression both within society and within the working class people of various ethnic backgrounds may at times need to organise independently. However, this should be as working class people, cross–class movements attempt to hide real differences and achieve little for the working class.

Inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of sexuality, health, ability and age, among others, and sections of the working class can engage in the oppression of others along these lines. This divides us, undermining class unity in struggle, to the benefit of the bosses. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action that challenges social and economic power relationships.

The Trades Unions and Workplace and Community Resistance

Organise! believes that trade unions cannot be used as vehicles of revolutionary change. After year upon year of attacks on our class both the Irish and British based trade unions continue to offer no strategies for effective resistance. Based on 'social partnership' and top down hierarchical control of their membership trade unions have clearly become more and more divorced from the immense potential strength of workers at the point of production. The point of production, the workplace, is where we are exploited as labourers - it is also where we can, collectively as workers, strike back against the employers.

We reject social partnership between union leaders, bosses and government. In these 'partnerships' it is always the working classes that suffer. While rejecting the trade unions as beyond reform we will continue to be active in them at a 'shop–floor' level to fight for working class interests at work. We will however be promoting workplace resistance not standing in union elections on so–called 'radical' platforms. As such we promote the formation of workplace and community based resistance groups that will act as hotbeds of militancy, promoting resistance and direct action, while building and strengthening links between the workplace and community based struggles. We believe such groups should, as they develop, federate both at local/regional level and throughout industry. Such groups must promote methods of working class activity, which enable us to use all the means at our disposal in the struggle against the bosses.

Nationalism

We are opposed to the ideology of nationalism and national liberation movements which claim that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination.

We are opposed to all forms of nationalism, be that the British nationalism of Loyalism and Unionism, Irish nationalism or the Ulster nationalist current evident within Loyalism. All have as central to their ideology the nationalist myth that people in an arbitrarily drawn up nation (be it based on an island, region, language, 'culture', or religion, or any combination of these or other elements), have common interests which can be represented by the nation state. The nation state is in effect the government over the majority, the working class, by the wealthy few. The working class and those who hold power, the bosses and their lackeys, have no common interests.

We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as they only serve to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated.

Capitalism and the Environment

Organise! recognises the appalling effects of capitalism on the natural environment, and believes this is the natural result of a system which treats both workers, and the planet, as something to be exploited and disposed of at will. We believe that access to a sustainable lifestyle is not a luxury for the wealthy, but something urgent and important that must be extended to the mass of the working people. Sustainable communities cannot arise as a result of reforming capitalism, nor can they be imposed by the state. With this in mind, we demand rational and sustainable practices.

The State

Organise! rejects the notions of various 'left–wing' parties, the would–be 'vanguards' of the working class, that the state can be 'conquered' and used against the bosses. Government, no matter on whose behalf, has always rested on domination and exploitation, is an inherently repressive institution and as such beyond

reform. The basic function of the state - that is the courts and prisons, the army and police, civil service and other state institutions - is to defend the interests of the bosses. Government is a top–down institution which puts power into the hands of a few.

All efforts at creating a 'worker's state' have only led to further oppression of the workers as those in power consolidated and strengthened their positions. Government, no matter in whose name, no matter what jurisdictional boundaries it acts within, for instance UK, Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland, offers no alternative for our class.

We believe that the criminal justice system is a product of capitalist society and is an instrumental weapon in the subjugation of the working class. We recognise that this system is only interested in the defence of the state, private property and the interests of the bosses. We must organise to defend ourselves against it (and all kinds of anti–social behaviour, domestic and sexual violence etc) supporting its victims until such a time that it is no longer a threat to our class.

Direct Action and Revolution

We advocate the use of direct action both in and out of the workplace. Direct Action empowers and develops the confidence we need in our continuing struggle against the bosses. It is exactly what it says, any form of action taken directly to effect an outcome – carried out directly by those involved without recourse to professional intermediaries, politicians or managers of conflict. Direct Action demands decentralised control and should be participated in on an equal and direct democratic basis.

Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self–activity of the working class on a mass scale. A libertarian communist society means not only co–operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society before, during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These organisations must be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self–activity.

Libertarian Communism

Organise! believes that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class themselves. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe strong organisations are necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so–called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation.

We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. Libertarian Communism is the only road to real liberty and equality; setting mutual aid, direct democracy, workers control, federalism and solidarity against all forms of oppression, totalitarianism and centralising tendency.

The class struggle is being waged more and more aggressively by the bosses while the official labour movement sells us short, or sells us out, at every turn. We participate in the class struggle as libertarian communists and organise on a decentralised federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work towards a united libertarian and working class revolutionary movement.

Anarchist Groups, Collectives, Campaigns

Organise!

http://www.organiseireland.org
Email: organiseireland@yahoo.ie

Secretary & Armagh/Down Local:
P.O. Box 547, Craigavon, BT63 5WZ.
organise_armaghdown@yahoo.ie
Phone: 07732954843

International Secretary & Belfast Local:
P.O. Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ.

Dublin & Kildare Local:
dkorganise@yahoo.ie

For contacts in Galway, Derry, and other areas contact the Secretary at the Armagh/Down Local address.

Workers Solidarity Movement

Publish Workers Solidarity and "Red and Black Revolution" magazine. A platformist Anarchist organisation active in a wide range of campaigns.
P.O. Box 1528, Dublin 8, Republic of Ireland.
http://www.struggle.ws/wsm.html
wsm_ireland@yahoo.com cork_wsm@yahoo.com

Communities Against The Water Tax

Building a non–party political campaign of non–payment in our communities to stop the governments proposed water tax in its tracks.
CAWT
185 Cliftonpark Avenue, Belfast, BT14 6DT

Fascists Out Campaign

C/O P.O. Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ
Email: fascistsout@hotmail.com
Militant working class anti–fascist organisation based in the north.

Grassroots Gathering

Campaigns such as Grassroots Against War have developed out of these non-hierarchical gatherings.
http://grassrootsgathering.freeservers.com

Indymedia Ireland

Independent news and media website where everyone has a voice. The place to find news about campaigns and activism across Ireland.
http://www.indymedia.ie
imc–ireland@lists.indymedia.org

Just Books Collective

Anarchist books & more. @ distribution collective with a history stretching back to 1978. Drop us line for a catalogue or to request a stall at your event.
P.O. Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ, N. Ireland.

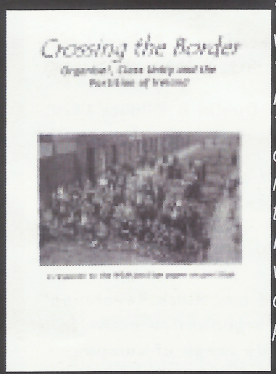
Residents Against Racism

Residents Against Racism support and defend victims of racist harassment from the state. Fighting against all forms of racism, and welcoming asylum–seekers and refugees to Ireland.
24–hour helplines: 086 6662060 – 087 7974622
Residents Against Racism, c/o 12a. Brunswick Place, Dublin 2.
www.residentsagainstracism.org
noracism@dublin.ie
residents_against_racism@ireland.com

Shell To Sea

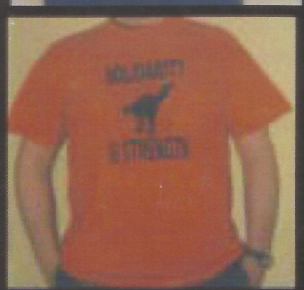
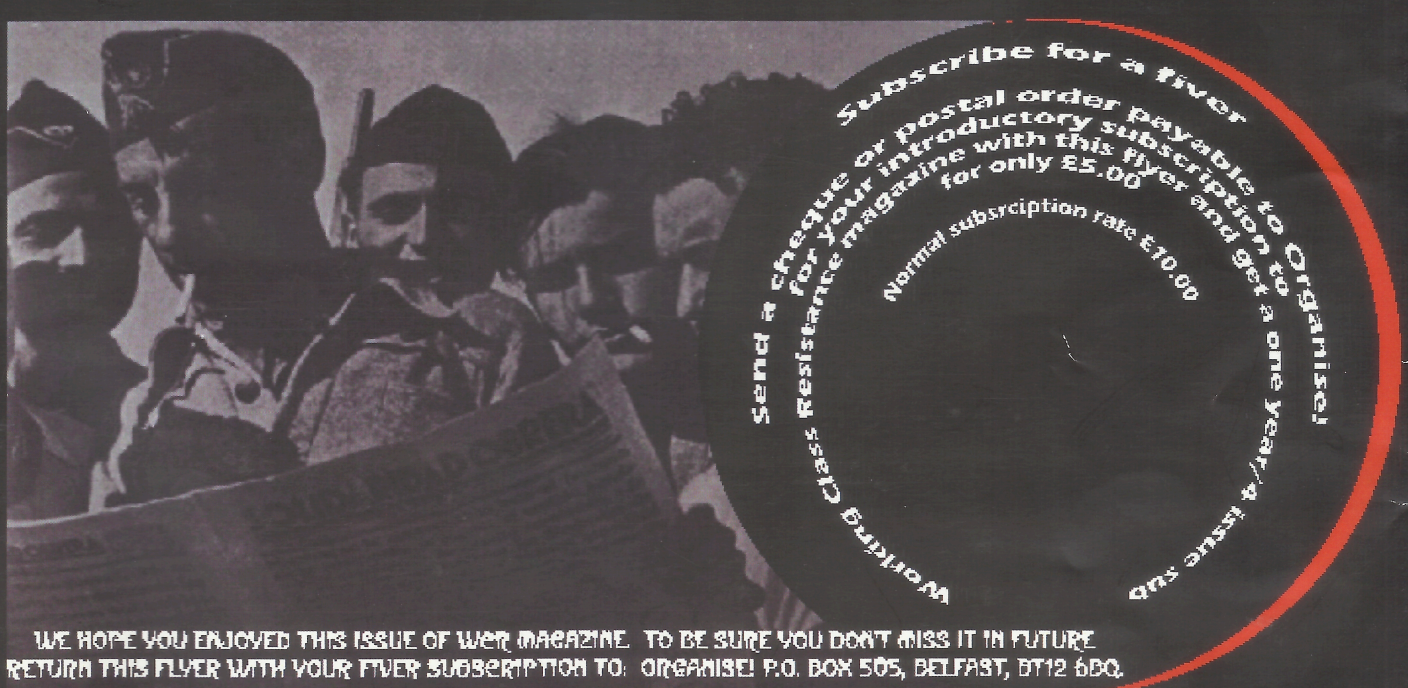
Visit the website of the campaign against Shell's attempt to plough a pipeline through communities in Co. Mayo.
www.shelltosea.com

PAMPHLETS FROM ORGANISE!



'Crossing the Border' (£1.95/E2.95) *was published in November 2004 as, 'a response to the Workers Solidarity Movement position paper on partition'. The WSM are an Irish anarchist organisation who place themselves in a 'Platformist' tradition who updated their position paper 'The Partition of Ireland' in July 2004. In the pamphlet we reflect 'the broad range of concerns of members of Organise! with the WSM position paper'.*

'A Wee Black Booke of Belfast Anarchism (1867 - 1973)' (£2.50/E3.75)*, Máirtín Ó Catháin. Money raised from the sale of this pamphlet will go to the Just Books collective (see page 17). In the words of the author: "Few writers and historians have given acknowledgement of the existence of anarchists and anarchist movements in Belfast though perfunctory references to small anarchist groups and publications such as the Belfast Anarchist Collective and Black Star have sometimes escaped into mainstream publications over the years. This short introduction does not claim a popular but suppressed mass appeal nor even a historical continuum for anarchism here... nevertheless [anarchism] has attracted a number of extraordinary people over the years from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century, and the message, method and spirit of anarchism has rang out in the streets and halls of Belfast at times of great social radicalism and in periods of inveterate reaction."*
This booklet concentrates on the lives of five individuals, only two of whom have achieved any measure of 'fame' on the island of Ireland: Captain Jack White and John McGuffin.
These pamphlets are available from the Belfast Local of Organise! For Trade Orders in Britain contact:
AK DISTRIBUTION, PO BOX 12766, EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND. EH8 9YE
For trade enquiries in Ireland contact the Belfast Local of Organise! at P.O. Box 505, Belfast, BT12 6BQ.

SOLIDARITY IS STRENGTH

Support Just Books, support the project to re–open Belfast's radical bookshop and resource centre. Buy a t–shirt to help raise funds for the Just Books collective.
T–shirts are available in black ink on a red shirt or red ink on black as pictured, and are available in medium (sorry medium sold out), large and extra large.
Shirts cost £8.00 or E12.00. Please add 10% for postage and packaging, minimum £1.00/ E1.50 for Republic of Ireland, UK and Europe. Payment can be made by cheque/postal order/ IMO made out to 'Just Books Collective' in sterling. Overseas & ROI customers are advised to pay by overseas transfer (our bank details are – account no. 22475186, sort code 98 01 55. Our bank is the Ulster Bank), or by Bankers Draft or travellers cheques (both in Sterling only please).