

Futurism or the Future

THE IRISH
**ANARCHIST
REVIEW**

FREE!

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IAR #10

*Gustavo Esteva
Interview*

*Fighting
Back*

*Market Forces
in Ireland*

Editorial:

Welcome to the Irish Anarchist Review # 10

Five years ago, the Irish Anarchist Review replaced Red and Black Revolution as the magazine of the Workers Solidarity Movement. It's mission was to fill a vacuum in Irish radical circles, to be a publication that raised questions and provoked debate, rather than laying out blueprints for success, as had been the norm in the more theoretical work of the left. It was established at a time where a fightback was believed to be imminent, when the expectation was that as the (economic) beatings continued, morale would improve.

The intervening years produced a series of false starts. The big ICTU demonstrations in the infancy of the crisis proved to be safety valves for the expulsion of steam from the rank and file, and were tightly controlled by the bureaucracy. The Occupy phenomenon was a reaction against that type of protest, and it did release a wave of creative energy, but it's structurelessness ultimately had the same effect, and that energy escaped into the ether. There have also been strikes and occupations, the Unlock Nama campaign, the campaign against household and water taxes (CAHWT) and a massive resurgence in the campaign for abortion access.

The articles in the pages of this publication, have been the result of theorising our experiences as participants in these struggles, of trying to find a better way to resist all forms of authoritarian rule, be it that of capital, the church or the state. Now in our tenth issue, we can't say that we have found all the answers, but we can say that we have contributed to a larger debate about revolutionary praxis. The IAR has always had two symbiotic elements, ideas and action; We act on our ideas and form ideas about our actions.

Right now a fightback against the water charges is developing. On Saturday 11th October, between sixty and one hundred thousand marched in Dublin in opposition

to this draconian measure. This, at the moment is a very different type of movement to the CAHWT. Some unions are involved, and many of the actions carried out against meter installation have been spontaneous and community based, following the "networked protester" model of drawing inspiration from actions seen on social media. We will of course be following these developments and trying to draw conclusions, at the same time warning against allowing any campaign to be used as a platform for electoral opportunism, as was the case with CAHWT.

In addition to celebrating five years and ten issues of the IAR, we are also marking the thirtieth anniversary of the WSM. Over that time, the world has changed more than it had since the second world war, which has presented gargantuan challenges for the left in general and anarchism in particular. To try to meet these challenges, the WSM, not for the first time, is evolving. We remain committed to our libertarian socialist principles, to the fight for freedom and equality but we realise that our tactics can not remain the same, when facing an enemy that has shown the ability to recuperate left demands, to shift the goal posts when it looks like left wing ideas are gaining traction.

For that reason, even in the age of the "networked individual", when the political terrain we stand on can alter many times over in the space of hours, we feel publications like this, that take a step back and coolly analyse the campaigns we have been involved in, our tactics and actions and those of the other side, are essential. We hope that you have enjoyed reading our output to date and that if you are involved in activism and have a left libertarian perspective, you would consider contributing to this project in the future, with articles of your own. From all of us on the editorial committee, thanks for reading.

ABOUT THE WSM

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

Like most socialists we share a fundamental belief that capitalism is the problem. We believe that as a system it must be ended, that the wealth of society should be commonly owned and that its resources should be used to serve the needs of humanity as a whole and not those of a small greedy minority. But, just as importantly, we see this struggle against capitalism as also being a struggle for freedom.

We believe that socialism and freedom must go together, that we cannot have one without the other. Anarchism has always stood for individual freedom. But it also stands for democracy. We believe in democratising the workplace and in workers taking control of all industry. We believe that this is the only real alternative to capitalism with its ongoing reliance on hierarchy and oppression and its depletion of the world's resources.

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note:

We forgot to credit Derek Speirs Photography for providing some of the images for the previous IAR centre spread (the four on the left hand side of the centre spread).

Thanks again Derek!

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WORDS: TOM MURRAY

'Hope, Friendship and Surprise in the Zombie-Time of Capitalism': an interview with Gustavo Esteva

Gustavo Esteva is an independent writer and grassroots activist. He has been a central contributor to a wide range of Mexican, Latin American, and international nongovernmental organizations and solidarity networks, including the Universidad de la Tierra en Oaxaca and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation. The WSM's Tom Murray caught up with Gustavo at a recent public lecture at the Kimmage Development Centre to discuss hope, friendship and surprise in the zombie-time of capitalism, and how people are taking initiatives, reclaiming control of their lives and creating vibrant, autonomous alternatives here today.

What would you say is the most significant aim or contribution of your work and research?

Well, first I would say that what others call research, we are calling that 'reflection in action'. This is an attitude meaning research is always associated with action, with the social movements, with real life. I basically have a kind of delirious activism. My whole life has been the life of a practitioner. I love the books but my research is subordinated to the real processes.

My story I can express as a story of failure because I failed so many times, learning with the people. I think particularly in the last twenty years, particularly after the Zapatistas, I think that we, the people and I, found clearly our path, the path that is clearly changing everything.

In the 1960s, I was part of a guerrilla movement because it was the time of Che Guevara. That guerrilla campaign ended badly: one of our leaders killed another leader over a woman. That was a very important lesson for me. That incident happened because we were trained to be that kind of violence. The important point of military training is not how to handle a weapon – that is very simple, you can learn

in a morning – the important point is learning how to kill someone, that is not doing anything against you, in cold blood. That requires a lot of training.

I stopped being violent then. I embraced non-violence and I tried government. I was in a very high position and enjoying amazing success in the 1970s. We had a populist President and I was in cabinet meetings twice a week, organising magnificent development programmes. They were really very advanced and progressive even by today's standards. I was very happy but also discovering two things, pertinent for our discussions today.

The first, of course, was that, in spite of our success, these programmes were not what the people wanted. They were not in favour of 'development'. The second is the most important for our discussions. I discovered from inside how the logic of the system, of the government, and the logic of the people never touch each other. They belong to different places. If I am interested in the people, if that was my original commitment, my place is not the government. At that moment, on my way to the top and in the very real danger of becoming a minister, I quit and I tried to work at the grassroots.

"I discovered from inside how the logic of the system, of the government, and the logic of the people never touch each other"

In the beginning, for a few years, I said 'not development from the top down but the people may need development'. We had great success and work around twenty states in Mexico. At the umbrella NGO, 'Analysis, Development and Gestión' we thought we were bringing to the people our analytic capacities, development and 'gestión'.¹ Two years later, after listening to the people, we changed the name of the organisation. It became 'Autonomy, Decentralism, and Gestión'.

Autonomy, yes, the Zapatistas brought the idea of autonomy to the agenda in the country but it was already there. Autonomy was what the people wanted. When we listened to the people that is what the people wanted. Decentralism is the opposite to having a centre and sending a system to control the periphery. It implies that every community is the centre of the universe. What they want is to live harmoniously with the others but without any centre, ideological or political, dominating them.

It was at that moment that I took off the lens of 'development'. It was a moment of liberation and confusion but it better prepared me for the emergence of the Zapatistas.

What is Zapatismo and why is it important?

I think the most important contribution of the Zapatistas historically, their most radical statement is to say 'We are just ordinary men and women, and because of that, nonconformists, rebels and dreamers'. Traditionally, particularly in the Left, we have had a very serious problem. We have this attitude that ignores what the people want. If we ask the people here in Ireland or in Mexico or everywhere what is it they want, they may tell us that they want more T.V. than reading, some pornography, more sports, what you see in the popular journals. That is what the people seem to want.

If you bring the wants of the people to the regime of decisions you bring things that are ethically, philosophically and aesthetically unacceptable. This means that we accept the Leninist way that always some enlightened people need to lead the masses. You cannot trust the people – perhaps because they have become corrupted by capitalism. For whatever reason, you need to educate them in the right path.

The Zapatistas offer, I think for the first time, an amazing demonstration that ordinary men and women, the people themselves, take fantastic decisions. They took their lives into their own hands and they are showing that this is possible and valid. They are bringing hope, and they are bringing hope in a very difficult moment when we had stopped thinking, we were trapped thinking in the ideological debate between capitalism and socialism. We were not thinking, but they were thinking. The indigenous people took time for reflection, had many ideas and are bringing inspiration and hope to all of us. In this terrible moment for the world, they are showing that



it is possible to produce very radical changes in this planet – not in Mars, not as a plan for the future, but something to do today, everywhere.

Are there similarities then between Zapatismo and anarchism? Is anarchism an influence on your work or those wider movements in Mexico?

Of course, something called anarchism is very profound, perhaps the most profound political tradition, in Mexico. We have a long story of autonomous government. This tradition is really in our blood.

But beyond that, in the case of the Zapatistas, the first group of revolutionaries were Marxist-Leninist

"The Zapatistas gave us this important lesson, never separate means and ends. Let's live as we want to live today, not in the future"

guerrillas who affected by their interaction with the communities and accepted to change their ideology. They kept the Marxist analysis of capitalism, but not the ideology and the process of change.

Zapatismo is something new. I am sure that in a few more years, we will have in the history of political paths – Marxism, Anarchism, several others and Zapatismo. Yes it comes from traditions that are clearly not without the state and without the Leninist but have real original contributions today.

Why did Zapatismo work at that point in time? Why did it succeed?

I think that the Zapatistas selected the pertinent moment when they decided to follow the indigenous communities' inspiration. Two events in the 1990s were very important. The first was the revival of indigenous culture in 1992, responding to the five hundred year anniversary of the Columbus expedition in 1492. All over the American continent, indigenous people were affirming themselves and saying it was not the discovery of America, that they were already there and that we will not commemorate this traumatic invasion. It was a moment of affirmation of indigenous peoples, presenting themselves in a different light.

They smelled what was happening in the world; the indigenous people have a very good, profound system of perception that they need to survive as they are exposed to continual attacks of a genocidal character. They need to be aware to survive, with their

eyes well open and with their ears well open to discover what is happening. I think they smelled the crisis that we discovered twenty years later.

We also need to remember the conditions in 1992, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when you had a kind of orphan Left that did not know what to do. Many had a critique of the Soviet Union but without the Soviet Union, then what? It was this kind of catastrophic event for the Left. For the indigenous people, it was just a good opportunity, a real opportunity to do something.

You mentioned that the indigenous movements could smell the current crisis. What's specific or special about the crisis of capitalism this time around?

I would say two things. First, we are seriously exploring the hypothesis that capitalism already died because it can no longer reproduce the capitalist social relations of production. You have an amazing accumulation of money and things but they cannot invest in new relations of production. Any regime dies when it cannot reproduce itself.

I don't think that this is good news because what they have prepared is worse than capitalism. I am saying that this is a world of zombies controlled by vampires. Capitalist companies, corporations and organisations are still the dominant ways of production in the world but they don't know that they are dead. They are zombies. And there is a group of vampires, taking all the blood, all the surplus value, from all the others in a process of dispossession. For these vampires, the nation-state, democracy, all these things are obstacles. They are trying to dismantle all that and to create a regime of dispossession, brutal authoritarianism and a lot of destruction. This is a very dangerous moment for the world.

This is, at the same time, the collapse, after five thousand years, of a patriarchal mentality. What we are seeing, with both capitalism and this vampire authoritarianism, is the final expression of patriarchy, this destructive mentality that 'I will only have regard to my position regardless of the consequences'. These forms are most destructive because they are at an end. Patriarchy is also dying. And the reason capitalism and patriarchy are dying is because of us.

We are the real reason. We are killing these things. In the case of patriarchy, it is because the women are taking the lead again, seeing the kind of destruction that we men are doing and, as often in history, they are saying 'Enough! We cannot allow this! To save us, the family, the tribe, the nation, we need to do something!' And they are doing that.

I'm delighted you brought up patriarchy. Last night, you made an interesting comment as to how gender relations were completely transformed through the Zapatista movement...

It is the very centre of Zapatismo. I would even say that Zapatismo is a feminine movement. The nature of Zapatismo is feminine.

You also spoke last night of building a transformative politics on three pillars: hope, friendship and surprise. Could you elaborate on that?

With surprise, I am saying that we are back from the future. Instead of building our activity, our activism, our efforts, our energy in a kind of promised land - saying that 'Ok, we have this socialist design, this anarchist design for the future - that we work not in terms of a transition to a certain condition but try to live today in that way. The Zapatistas gave us this important lesson, never separate means and ends. This is also part of a lesson of Paul Goodman who at one point said, 'Suppose you had the Revolution that you had been dreaming about. You now have the perfect society. Now imagine what you, as a person in that society, would like to do. You are not now struggling against anyone or struggling for your money, you are in the perfect society. What is it that you want to do? Then, as Paul Goodman says, try to live that way today. Of course, you will find all kinds of obstacles but then your politics will be concrete and practical. That kind of lesson is also the Zapatista lesson. Let's live as we want to live today, not in the future. Then, of course, we are open to surprise because we don't know what will happen.

'Hope', I take from Vaclav Havel: 'Hope for us is not the conviction that something will happen but the conviction that something makes sense, whatever happens'. We are saying really that hope is the very essence of popular movements and that renovating

hope as a social force is a condition of survival for the human race. We have no place for optimism. People use the idea of the glass half full or half empty for optimism or pessimism. I am saying the glass is full of shit. There is no place for optimism but we can hope. And because of hope we can start on a different kind of way.

In the traditional indigenous communities, they are in the process of regenerating that community and transforming it. One of their best traditions, and this applies in particular to the Zapatistas, is to change the old traditions in the traditional way. They are all the time changing but still being themselves because they are following their own path for change. But more than half of the people on earth today do not have anything that they can call community. In the cities, particularly, you have the construction of individuals that do not have anything they can call a commons or a community. For that, for the creation of a new kind of commons, friendship is the secret. With friendship, you have that element of gratuity. Of course, we all have a thousand friends. But real friends, you have two or three, eight if you are really rich in friends. With real friends, with this element of gratuity, not ideology, not any kind of doctrine or revolutionary plan, you can begin the commons. And in the cities, you have the advantage that you can be in several commons. You have some commons for music, other commons to study something, some other commons to cultivate a friendship garden.

In time, all these commons can become intertwined. Then, really, we will have the celebration of friendship and friendship as the highest form of love. In a couple, you ask really for reciprocity - 'I love you but you love me!' - you require that reciprocity to continue the relationship. With a friend, the friend is in trouble or even a monster but that is not a problem. You help with joy because he or she is your friend. This element creates the stuff needed to create the new cells of society that are the commons, the family of commons. With that, we can really live a new society.

Gustavo, thank you very much.

After two days in Ireland, I will say 'no, problem!'



The WSM would like to thank Kimmage Development Centre for organising this event and, in particular, to thank Gustavo for generously taking the time to talk with us.

1. *Gestión cannot be translated to English. It is something like self-management. But gestión is not exactly that. When you are connecting, let's say, one community and an institution you create something between them that is used as a buffer. This can be used for corruption or it can be used for protection. You have a gestor, it's a person, to whom you are going to pay the bribes to get the things done with the bureaucrats. Or you can have one organization that is protecting against the impact of the bureaucracy on the people. The people need to do something with the bureaucrats but then we create these buffers between institutions and the people. See Interview with Gustavo Esteva at http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/global/gest_int_1.html#Anchor-Autonomy-3800*



WORDS: ANDREW FLOOD



Turnips, hammers & the square – why workplace occupations have faded

What if we build it and they don't come? That was the experience of the left during the crisis - decades had been spent building organisations and a model of how crisis would create revolution, but when the crisis arrived the left discovered that the masses weren't convinced. The expected pattern of crisis leading to small strikes and protests, then to mass strikes and riots and then perhaps to general strike and revolution didn't flow as expected. Under that theory the radical left would at first be marginal but then as conditions drove class militancy to new heights, the workers disappointed by reformist politicians and union leaders, would move quickly to swell its ranks.

In 2008 and 2009 that was the expectation of the revolutionary left organisations across Europe and North America, but that cycle of growth never materialised. In 2011 revolts did break out, but not in the manner expected and so the left could only speculate and criticise. Beyond that the period of struggle from 2008-2014 suggests that there is less strength in building struggles around broad 'bread & butter' issues than we imagined and a suggestion that diversity proved more useful in sustaining progressive struggle.

Failure & demoralisation along the old route in 2009 This idea that economic crisis produces revolution has been at the heart of the radical movement since 1848 when Marx & Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto. Written in the heat of the revolutionary wave that spread across Europe that year it's an extraordinarily poetical and polemical work filled with sound bites that defined the socialist movement for 150 years. The downside of such fine prose though is that it encourages attachment to ideas that are wrong or perhaps outdated. In 1848 and perhaps as late as 1978 the core concepts of the Communist Manifesto looked reasonable. Particularly attractive was the idea that capitalism was creating "its own gravediggers" by forcing larger and larger sections of the population into repetitive work in mass factories. And this gravedigger once created made "its fall and the victory of the proletariat.. equally inevitable"

Roll out of a crisis

In mid September 2007 I was on board a Greyhound from Toronto to Ottawa, Ontario. This was near the start of a speaking tour that was to run across North America until the following May and to make use of the long journeys I had subscribed to a number of podcasts. One of these was 'Behind the News' and I remember as we stopped for a break in some town on the shore of Lake Ontario that Doug Henwood opened by saying that the emerging sub prime mortgage scandal was starting to look like it might be the start of a genuine crisis.

I was used to left parties seeing and even hoping for crisis of capitalism at every turn but Doug tended to be quite level headed in his economic analysis. Over the next seven months as I travelled North America that crisis became more and more visible. When I arrived in Miami in April the construction cranes on the horizon were still and the skyline dominated by the stumps of half constructed condos.

A year to the day after I heard that podcast, Lehman Brothers filed for Bankruptcy. The dominoes of global finance began to topple and the stock market crashed with them. The left started to get excited; believing that after years of waiting its time had come. In London the newly formed Liberty & Solidarity group went so far as to call for protest on October 10th under the ill considered slogan 'Collapse Faster'.

In Ireland the government citing fear that the banking system would collapse guaranteed all the liabilities of the banks. Over the following two years the full scope of the enormous costs to be imposed on people in Ireland as a result of that decision unrolled. On November 2010 we saw the EU-IMF 'bailout' as it became impossible for the Irish state to borrow on the international bond markets.

At the time of writing in 2014 we might be seeing the beginning of the end of the crisis, or we may just be at the peak before another crash. But no one could deny that the years 2007-14 comprised a deep and thorough global economic crisis of the type Orthodox Marxists dreamed of.

These first three years were years when the left imagined its moment was approaching. The long boom had heightened expectations of workers. Easy credit had improved living standards and now not only was this hope for the future taken away, but those gains were destroyed. Workers who appeared to have considerable wealth due to the value of their property saw this wealth vanish exposing large debts that they were not going to be able to pay back. Hundreds of thousands lost their jobs. Public sector workers pay was cut, pensions attacked. They were forced to work extra-unpaid hours and with no pay increases for at least six years. Young people who had spent their teenage years expecting to be able to easily get a well-paid job were forced to emigrate in huge numbers.

Resistance and its limits

There was resistance. The media myth that 'Irish people don't protest' does not measure up to reality. The Nov 24th 2009 public sector strike saw a quarter of a million workers strike. The three Irish Congress of Trade Union (ICTU) marches saw 100,000 or so demonstrate each time. Hundreds of thousands refused to pay the household tax. And apart from these large demonstrations hundreds if not thousands of smaller protests took place. My memory of much of that period is that every week there was some sort of significant demonstration, which attracted hundreds or even thousands.

"This idea that economic crisis produces revolution has been at the heart of the radical movement since 1848"

There was resistance across Europe. From Ireland this perhaps looked militant, in particular the general strikes that took place in Spain and Greece. But these so called general strikes, which were in reality very limited one-day strikes and just represented a somewhat different tradition of protest. It can be argued that in Spain the character of the general strikes changed somewhat after the emergence of the movement of the squares but before 2010 they were not the openings of a revolutionary wave as imagined. Before 2010 particularly in Ireland but also from Portugal to Spain to Greece these protests did not instill a sense of hope, a sense that another world was possible. Instead people participated and then went home, convinced that although they had made their 'voices heard' that nothing would change. Back in Ireland the ICTU marches although huge were amongst the most demoralising protests I'd ever taken part in, the spirit of defeat walked down the quays with us.

This meant the strikes and marches remained under the control of the same trade union leaderships who had avoided meaningful struggle for years. The left spent those years arguing as to whether a 'rank and file' or 'broad left' strategy to overcome or bypass that leadership was better but despite the depth of the crisis and the clearly tokenistic nature of the resistance promoted by the union leaderships they stayed in control.

Before 2010 this happened everywhere, or at least everywhere in Europe and North America. It's impor-

tant to recognise this because in Ireland (and elsewhere) the revolutionary left has failed to recognise that they had come up against more than local conditions. What happened, or rather what didn't happen was not down to bad organisation or poor communication skills, still less the wrong slogans. The left has failed to recognise that something fundamental failed to happen. That is that the masses had not become radicalised in the way that they expected for reasons other than bad practice.

Rather than understanding that lessons the left went on the hunt for scapegoats. And in each local context there will always be plenty of examples of bad implementation. Whether this is at the organisational level of things promised not being delivered or at the level of poisonous sectarianism visibly putting people off. But when failure happens everywhere the cause of failure is unlikely to be in local problems.

This refusal to recognise that there is a general problem in our model for revolution was not helped when the left made small breakthroughs in the one area where it mattered least. That is to say they managed to get some more people elected to official office at the local and national level. The contradiction here was a deep one, on the one hand it appeared the left had convinced many people that their ideas were the best and thus deserved their precious vote. On the other when the same left parties called a demonstration the numbers they mobilised were tiny - in the Dublin context around 1,500 (on a good day) against the 100,000 ICTU pulled out. Electoral success only demonstrated the powerlessness of those left radicals elected. Court jesters that proved the wisdom of the king and his willingness to hear all complaints - most often in Ireland via the Vincent Brown TV panel show.

Taking public spaces and not workplaces

Then in 2010 something happened. Europe is bordered by the semi-Europe zone of cheap labour, one where the much vaunted 'rule of law' and procedures of parliamentary democracy rhetorically loved by EU politicians are openly secondary considerations to maintaining stability for the rule of capital. Adventurous tourists from the EU have long taken cheap package holidays in Morocco, Tunisia, Turkey & Egypt. But fences, walls & border guards make it hard for the populations of those countries to travel to Europe - over 16,000 have died trying to do so. Dictatorship & border controls are what maintained these countries as cheap labour zones for the EU. Domestically through wages that were a fraction of those in Europe and externally through providing insecure and often undocumented low wage labour in Europe.

In 2010, after the revolt of the PIIGS failed to materialise, it was this zone that started to light up with resistance. Low wages and lack of food security meant that the equivalent drops in income and employment faced by European workers translated into something life threatening. So although the costs of rebellions were much higher, thousands were killed, the need to rebel was stronger still. Look at a map, look at the edge of Europe, and follow the revolts as you move from West to East starting with Morocco in North Africa, passing through Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Turkey & the current complexity of Ukraine. The traditional sites of revolt the left looks to - the workplace, the unions - had it is true a significance in some of these revolts but what characterised them was something else. Something that seems quite new and is still not understood.

What they have in common is that the people seized not the workplaces but the city. Or more specifically the squares that lay at the heart of the cities. And while the marches and token strikes in Europe had felt like defeats, even at the moment of action, these



seizures of the squares felt like victories. In several cases they turned into victories of a limited kind as what looked like entrenched forms of dictatorial rule crumbled in front of a population that had lost its fear and was in the streets. Successful enough that quickly these methods were adopted in the very countries back in the EU where the strikes and protests were felt to have failed and as interestingly began to interact with the more traditional forms of protest. A particular example of this being the September 2012 protests in the Spanish state when tens of thousands mobilised around the demand for a referendum on austerity.

In the autumn of 2011 this went global when the square occupation returned to the place the crisis had sprung from, Wall St. Five years after the crisis, five years when the revolutionary left had failed to inspire, there was that sudden moment when it felt like every city in the world had at its core a determined group implementing a shared program of resistance. Almost three years afterwards it's easy to be cynical about Occupy, to focus in on its many problems, but at that moment, at the start of November 2011 it felt euphoric.

Is 'Bread & Butter' the secret sauce?

One reaction of much of the left to its own failure to be relevant has been a sharp turn towards lowest common denominator economism. That is a retreat to seeking to only organise around lowest common denominator economic demands that in theory almost all workers should support. Often this is accompanied by hostility towards any suggestion that complexity should be looked at. Witness the amount of articles and blog posts by mainstream radical left & feminist figures attacking what they see as 'intersectionality' over the last six months.

Elsewhere I've characterised this tendency under the label of the Nostalgic Left. What I want to emphasize in this piece though is that when you look at the events of 2007-2014 it was the focus on economism that failed to inspire people. Economism is the idea that working class movements are best built by focusing on the sort of broad economic issues that all workers can identify with. These are sometimes called 'bread & butter' issues, underlining the point that they are those issues that put food on the table.

The other side of economism is downplaying, ignoring or attacking any issue that might be seen as dividing the working class. Perhaps the clearest illustration is found in the 1970s when some economic left groups faced with the growing demand for LG-BTQ rights instead choose to define homosexuality as a bourgeois deviation that would be swept away, come the revolution. That is an extreme example but the common traditional approach of the left rubbishes any interest in talking about oppression within movements as coming from middle class academics.

A crisis is a great time to test out economism. Pretty much every aspect of workers wages and living conditions are attacked providing plenty of 'bread & butter' issues to try and build class unity around. The left tried to do that and failed, while indeed workers were mobilised the mobilisation although broad also proved to be shallow and easily limited by social democratic parties. The strikes and demonstrations about 'bread & butter' issues around pay cuts and tax hikes failed to build, never mind sustain a movement of resistance. In Ireland this proved true of the public sector strike and the ICTU marches.

The height of success of the left was in the voting down of the Croke Park II deal by public sector workers yet this was only to accept the almost as noxious Haddington road agreement. Despite displaying an initial if nervous willingness to fight on the 24th November strike we ended up swallowing a massive erosion of our pay and conditions, including a huge pay cut followed by a pay freeze that has now lasted 7 years. The added acceptability of Haddington road was largely because it sacrificed future public sector workers to preserve some conditions for existing workers.

With the left quietly accepting that resistance in the unions was not going to be significant it switched to the other traditional bread & butter battleground of community struggle around local taxation. We'd won a fight around this in the 1990's but lost another in 2003. The government was introducing a tax on home ownership. As with the union struggle the initial period of the Household Tax appeared promising with mass meetings of hundreds of people in some communities and a massive 50% of households not registering for the tax. But that broad resistance

again proved shallow and the government defeated the movement by stepping up the costs of defiance and the mass movement spluttered out without a significant fight.

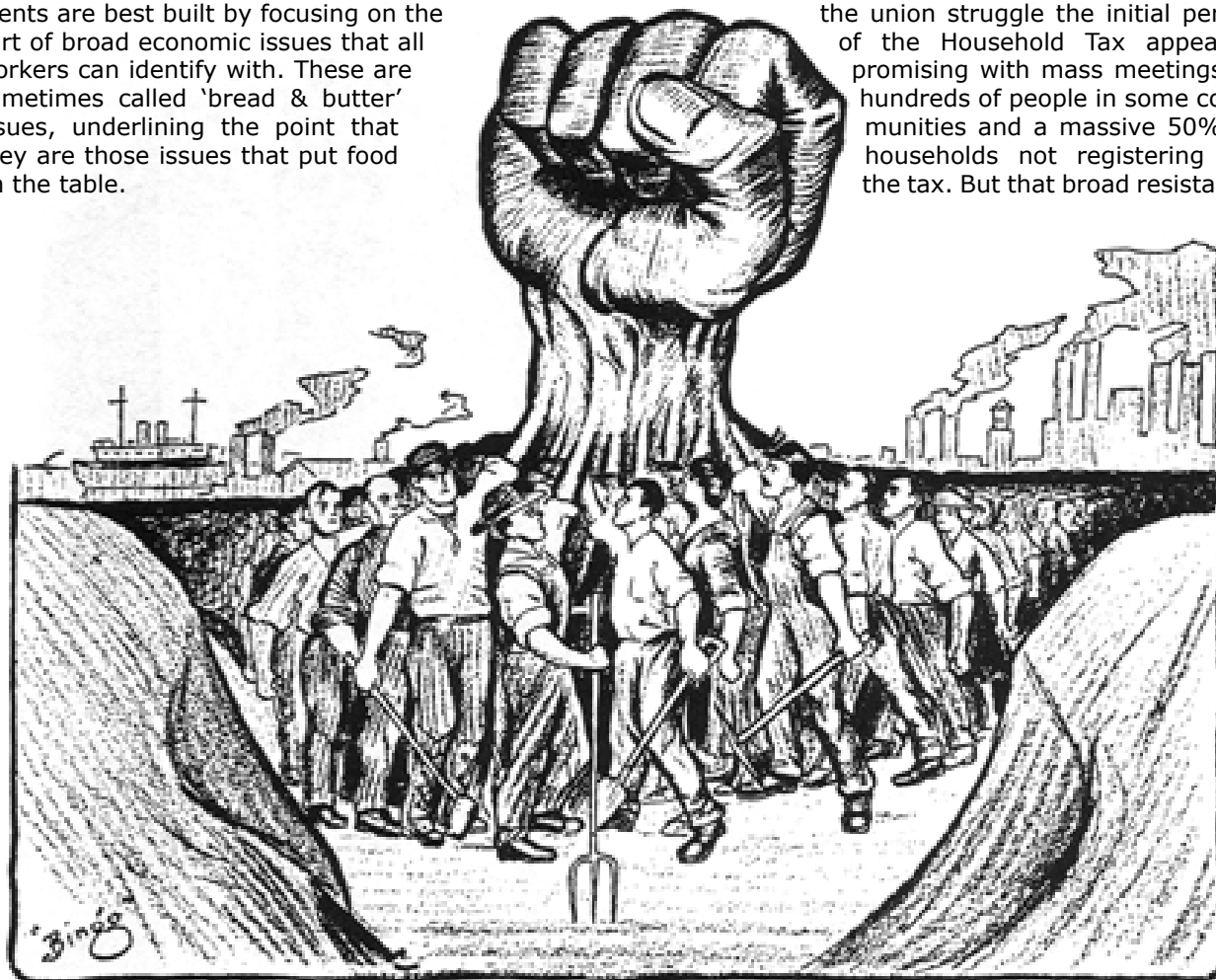
Globally in the 1% v 99% language of Occupy there is an implicit economism but Occupy as it was expressed was more about a sense of unfairness & corruption with the way things are. What did pull people out were demands that were not simply economic but at one or more remove. Rising food prices and youth unemployment were the backdrop to the North African revolts. But the actual expressions were demands for dignity, real democracy, and an end to corruption & cronyism. What kept people out once those movements had started was discovering each other's comradeship through a common resistance on the barricades to state repression.

It's a discussion for another day but as we have just seen with the protests in Ukraine that unity through resistance to the state need not result in a turn to the left, in particular if the left was too weak or abstained from the struggle. At this moment in time it appears that the far right made the gains through its willingness to engaged in militaristic confrontation with state forces. In Libya, Syria and to some significant extent Egypt Islamists made gains on a similar basis. In Gezi on the other hand the movement was defined around being open to LGBTQ, Feminist, and other movements of marginalised peoples and this gave the overall movement a character much more resistant to the influence of the right, in this case in the form of Turkish nationalists. In Gezi it appears that the strength came not from having some broad unifying bread & butter issue but rather from the diversity of the movement in the park.

Where is power?

It's easy to bemoan this impulse to occupy the Square rather than occupy the workplace. I've written about what some of the problems are in An Anarchist Critique of Horizontalism (In IAR #9). The chief problem is that there is no power in the Square to build a new society, only to demand a change in those running the existing one. In Egypt three changes were won in two years, Mubarak to the Military, the military to the Brotherhood and then the Brotherhood to the Military. It looks quite possible that this cycle may lead back to a 'Mubarak' of a modified form although those at the heart of the revolution hope they have

"strikes and marches remained under the control of the same trade union leaderships who had avoided meaningful struggle for years"



Solidarity, June 30, 1917. The Hand That Will Rule the World—One Big Union.

"In a period of upheaval today the benefit of seizing one's workplace is nothing like as obvious as it was in the 1930's"

at least constructed a culture of resistance. This is the pattern of many of the revolts; the occupation of the Square could manufacture a crisis that would bring a faction of the ruling class, often the army, to introduce change. But it could not create a society ran from the Squares.

There is no power to transform society in the Square in the way that there was in the workplace. A radical movement that seized factories and farms was a movement that could easily imagine itself building the new society from that base. Workplace occupations required that the workers meet and plan how to source raw material, how to reorganise production and where to send finished products. Such occupations spreading across a city and the surrounding countryside spontaneously created a parallel system of administration in competition with the claims of the official government, whether it was of the left or right. The Bolsheviks fought as vicious an internal civil war against the factory committees in the period from 1918 to 21 as they did against the external white armies. Left unchecked workplace occupations can literally create the new society simply by having to deal with the problems of production and distribution

Until recently it was also the case that taking over your workplace was an obvious act of rebellion for workers. Even in 1919 in Ireland, which lacked an ideological, left of any size, the national struggle saw dozens of workplaces taken over by their workers and some 80 soviets declared. Workplace occupations push movements to the left in a way Square occupations don't because repression will come not just from the state but also from the owner. They create a strong class unity but one which may also be a unity against a left party in power which is why power seeking leftists tend to distrust them. It's not that there were no workplace occupations in the crisis. In Ireland there were many but all of them on the basis not of continuing production but of demanding fair redundancy payments. Continuing production could be part of building the new world in the shell of the old, demanding redundancy is just demanding that capital behave in a fair manner. That is a legitimate demand but one entirely contained within the system.

There were workplace seizures that were about continuing production in the Argentine crisis of 2001. These were in cases where the owner had abandoned factories they could no longer extract sufficient profits from. Such workplaces are even referred to as 'ábricas recuperadas' translation - reclaimed/recovered factories'.

Turnips for Lattes

What changed between the workplace occupations of 1910's Ireland or Russia and the 2010's? Why did it appear to make more sense to radicals to set up tents on cold, hard city streets & squares as winter approached? It wasn't because the left had forgotten to advocate such occupations; all the radical left

organisations did so and enthusiastically reported on and participated in the limited 'pay our redundancy' one that did happen. Yet even WSM failed to consider street occupations seriously as they spread from North Africa to Europe. The summer before Occupy a visiting Israeli anarchist came to one of our regular Dublin meetings to advocate that we should camp in the streets as was happening in Tel Aviv. We pretty much just looked at him and moved on to our serious business - quite possibly discussing the need to propagandise more for workplace occupations.

Why despite the left advocating workplace occupations did they not materialise? The reason is perhaps in what and how we, as workers, produce. When many workers produced goods that had an obvious direct use then not only was continuing to produce those goods for our own use obvious there were also other workplaces and farms nearby with which we could imagine exchanging goods or being in mutual aid relations with. Production and economies were very much more local. In Europe of that period even raw materials like iron or coal frequently came from somewhere close enough to imagine that they could still be sourced. If you were producing hammers it was easy to imagine a relationship with the furniture factory down the road and the farmers on the edge of town as well as the woodcutters and miners over the mountains.

The sort of workplaces seized in Argentina in 2001 also illustrates this. They were involved in the production of simple goods with obvious exchange potential like textiles (Brukman), ceramics (Zanon/FaSinPat) or hotel services (Bauen). Some exchange between these was possible, the tile floor of the new cafe at Hotel Bauen came from FaSinPat. There is a tradition of factory occupations in Argentina and there were workers in these places that had an ideological attachment to such action. But the reason the occupations happened was because they were what made the most sense to the mass of the workforce that were otherwise facing unemployment.

Globalisation means that it's now common for the various components of production to travel enormous distances - even something as basic as wood is seldom locally sourced but instead shipped over great distances. Workers in distant lands with whom we have no connection and often no common language produce the raw materials and components of what we produce. A computer involves hundreds of components assembled from across the globe in thousands of widely scattered workplaces with no direct connection to each other. And these individual components often have no use outside of that complex production chain. The same is true of a passenger jet. Even interchangeable components in this process like RAM chips are of little use on their own, even for exchange purposes.

The technological revolution also means very much fewer of us are involved in the production of goods with a recognisable use value or even in the production of physical goods at all. If you work in a call center what exactly are you producing, in particular if you are selling or supporting some software product produced by programmers on the other side of the planet?

The material conditions of much of the world's working class are now much more complex than they were even in Western Europe in the 1930s. A working class family in Barcelona at that time did not have a large range of material goods and what they did have were mostly locally sourced. Today workers expect to have phones, TV's cars, washing machines etc. as basic essential goods. But we know that many of these are not produced in the factory down the road or over the mountain.

In a period of upheaval today the benefit of seizing

one's workplace is nothing like as obvious as it was in the 1930's. A barista looking at the computer programmers down the street and the till operators in the electronics shop across the road can't see much potential for keeping food on the table through linking up with them. This isn't to say mutual aid is now impossible; the global possibility is stronger than ever. The problem is that now it is much harder to see and understand that possibility before an ideological conversion to the idea. Local implementation is in almost all cases not possible without a radical restructuring of industry and agriculture in that region. Something that is impossible in the short term. This is not an argument for abandoning either workplace organising or the idea of a society of self managed workplaces under a communist system of exchange. Rather it's intended, as the start of a discussion as to why the form we see rebellion in has shifted, despite the attempts of the left to encourage the previous form. And how with these new movements of rebellion we can inject the still essential idea of seizing workplaces as being a literal requirement of building the new society.

That question is complicated by the changing nature of work. Today as we are herded into telesales centers, fast food outlets, PR & HR sections it seems that a lot of work is of very limited value when it comes to sustaining life. Who would choose to self manage work that produces no value? The positive side to that being that this means very much less work for all without a reduction in living standards in a free society.

The bottom line is to recognise that a lot of traditional left methodology was based around the idea that the working class would self-radicalise as a result of reaction to crisis by seizing workplaces. That was once a logical first step because it enabled those workers to continue to produce to live. Today it remains a logical goal but that is a very different thing, for many of us it only has a use in order to 'produce to live' at the level of continental and global economies. This demands a different approach to that taken by the left in the past; increasingly workplace occupations are what we need to argue for in 'the square' rather than something we expect to unfold due to their own inherent logic.



Futurism or the Future: Review of the Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics

The proliferation of computerised surveillance and security systems across workplaces has had the effect that now, in offices across the world, workers' toilet usage is continuously monitored. You swipe your ID card to get in and out, producing a data event with a time and duration, which is quietly recorded by some computer.

Upstairs, some horrendous bureaucrat ponders over all this data: How long does a shit take? How many shits is too many? Does she have a medical condition, or is she just slacking? Copropolitics: a new technology of discipline and a fresh form of indignity that was inconceivable as anything other than a cyberpunk nightmare (and a dull one at that) a couple

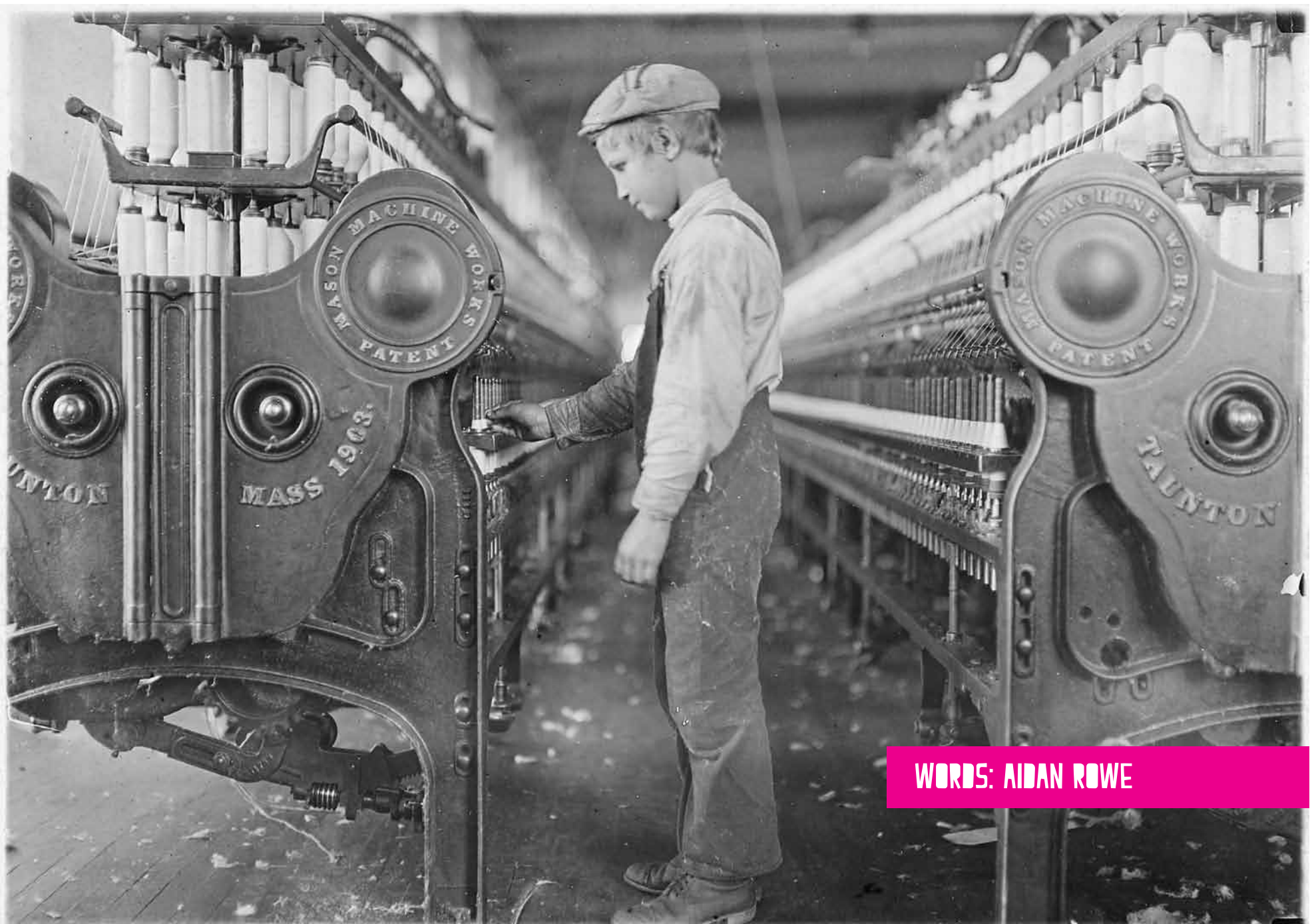
of decades ago; the kind of technological revolution that no-one wanted, and nobody is particularly excited about, but which nonetheless happens.

Of course this is easily explained entirely in terms of capitalist imperatives: remove a potential for unauthorised respite, produce a panopticon so total that it watches you shit, greater discipline, greater exploitation, more profit. If we don't design/implement these technologies someone else will, and then we'll be at a competitive disadvantage – the basic mechanism of capitalist technological development. Freud once told us that an obsession with excrement is a pathological manifestation of extreme greed. Today, at the highest stage of capitalist development, it is a mundane expression of bourgeois values, made possible by technological advances, or "progress", as it is often called.

The Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics ii (MAP from here on) appeared to considerable interest and

excitement last year (with some apparent resonance beyond the too-cool-for-school, anti-academic academics who normally consume this kind of thing) to announce an "accelerationist politics" as a programmatic remedy for a Left mired in crisis and depression.

Contextualising itself within a historical moment characterised by a set of existential threats to humanity ("the breakdown of the planetary climatic system... terminal resource depletion, especially in water and energy reserves" etc.), by the stagnation of contemporary capitalism, which has embraced a "death spiral" of austerity policies, privatisation and wage stagnation, and by the retreat of the political imaginary, which is no longer capable of conceiving of a future other than more of the same, the MAP calls for a kind of ambivalent alliance with capital, as an alternative and more realistic revolutionary path to the "neo-primitivist localism" and "folk politics" of contemporary social movements, and the doomed



WORDS: AIDAN ROWE

fantasies of a return to Keynesianism clung to by various leftist parties.

Accelerationism argues that “the only radical political response to capitalism is not to protest, disrupt or critique... but to accelerate its uprooting, alienating, decoding, abstractive tendencies”ⁱⁱⁱ, that “liberation must occur within the evolution of capital; that labour power must move against the blockage caused by capitalism; that a complete reversal of the class relation must be accomplished by the pursuit of constant economic growth and technological evolution”^{iv} in order to produce “an alternative modernity that neoliberalism is inherently unable to generate”. Explicitly presenting itself as simultaneously a “political heresy”^v and as recovering some suppressed true progressive core of leftism, accelerationism effectively asks us to stake the future of the human species on an uneasy and ultimately treacherous alliance with capital: we must navigate our way through the blockages and crises of capital, liberating its potential, but only so that, ultimately, it can be transformed into something that is not-capital.^{vi}

The thesis is certainly seductive, not least due to the rhetorical bombast (one might say machismo) of its presentation, but also in its capacity to speak to the frustrations of contemporary leftists, and its insistence on resurfacing futurist and utopian themes of space exploration and the transcendence of the limitations of the human body. But is this the seduction of a liberatory politics or of a suicidal impulse?

“If the revolutionary path is not to act within the evolution of capital, then what is it?”

My contention, for reasons that I hope to make clear, is that the MAP is the presentation of the latter as the former, and therefore is not to be taken seriously as a programmatic document. It is more useful, I think, to read it as a kind of provocation to an ecologically-minded left. The question is not “should we embrace accelerationism?” (to which I think the answer is a fairly obvious “no”) but rather “why not embrace accelerationism?”

Why not throw your lot in with the massive abstract machinery and torrential flows of capital? If the revolutionary path is not to act within the evolution of capital, then what is it? What is it that we, the non-accelerationists, think can (1) actually affect the kind of transformations necessary to confront the existential threats and political-economic formations we face, and (2) recover the idea of a communist horizon designating the possibility of a world that is not only less oppressive than this one, but which is actually exciting in the experiences and possibilities it entails?

Cyborg-Lenin against the hippies

One of the strongest points of the MAP (or in any case, one which goes a long way towards purchasing credibility for its argument) is its withering critique of the Left, which speaks readily to the frustrations of a generation of leftists who had pinned their hopes to a set of anti-austerity movements and strategies

which came, spectacularly, to nothing. The various Parties, both of the social democratic and Lenin-necromancing variety, are, rightly, castigated for their failure to think of any alternative to the neoliberal death-drive beyond an unlikely return to Keynesianism.

The social conditions that enabled Keynesian social-democracy simply no longer exist and cannot be recovered: “We cannot return to mass industrial-Fordist labour by fiat, if at all.” And in any case, who would want to, given that the system relied on “an international hierarchy of colonies, empires, and an underdeveloped periphery; a national hierarchy of racism and sexism; and a rigid family hierarchy of female subjugation” and condemned workers to “a lifetime of stultifying boredom and social repression” in return for security and a basic standard of living? I would only add that the Keynesian class-compromise didn’t work too well for us the first time round, lead-

history’s dustbin of nice ideas that don’t work, but it is certainly possible for similar movements to sharpen their understanding of the relationship between means and ends without embracing the crypto-vanguardism of the MAP’s attempted rehabilitation of “secrecy, verticality, and exclusion”.^{vii}

Indeed, the MAP’s rather troubling solution to this problem is to dispense with the consideration of means altogether and define democracy entirely in terms of its end: “collective self-mastery... which must align politics with the legacy of the Enlightenment, to the extent that it is only through harnessing our ability to understand ourselves and our world better (our social, technical, economic, psychological world) that we can come to rule ourselves... [through] a collectively controlled legitimate vertical authority in addition to distributed horizontal forms of sociality” in which “[the command of The Plan [is] married to the improvised order of The Network” – a



ing, as it did, to the destruction of the trade union movement and the advent of neoliberalism, and we are unlikely to fare better a second time round given the present balance-of-forces between organised labour and capital.

“New social movements” and, implicitly, anarchists, are also singled out for critique by the MAP. Lacking transformative political vision, these movements fetishise “internal direct-democratic process and affective self-valorisation over strategic efficacy” and cling to “a folk politics of localism, direct action, and relentless horizontalism” which is utterly insufficient against an enemy that is “intrinsically non-local, abstract, and rooted deep in our everyday infrastructure.”

No one who has been through a process like the Occupy movement could fail to recognise some truth in this characterisation, and the notion of process-as-politics (and its corollary insistence on radical openness to the point of paralyzing incoherence) certainly needs to go the way of flower power into

kind of Leninism via Facebook, in other words. Abstracted from all considerations of process, what sort of theory of sovereignty grounds this “legitimate vertical authority”?

No answer is given, but one suspects, given that for the MAP “collective self-mastery” means to align politics with the goal of understanding ourselves and the world, and given the emphasis on the decisive role of cognitive labour (which the manifesto itself acknowledges consists of “a vanishingly small cognitariat of elite intellectual workers”) in the process of acceleration, this amounts to rule by a scientific-technical elite counterbalanced by some system of cyber soviets. (The flaws with this are obvious and I have neither the desire nor space here to rehearse debates over the Russian Revolution through speculative fiction.)^{viii} Moreover, democratic concerns aside, what the MAP proposes in terms of strategy essentially amounts to a Gramscian long march through the institutions,^{ix} a process surely far more tedious and self-defeating than the worst Occupy assembly.

More interesting and important is the anti-localism of the MAP. This is a significant and serious challenge to ecologically-minded leftists, many of whom are unfortunately trapped in an idealism which “oppose[s] the abstract violence of globalised capital with the flimsy and ephemeral ‘authenticity’ of communal immediacy.” If capitalism is global so too must be our resistances and our efforts at social transformation. **x** History is not reversible, and globalisation means there is no longer any solution at the level of the nation-state, much less at the level of the locality, the “transition town”, the bioregion, or any other territorial conception of space; all localisms entail the disappearance of the complex webs of relations that constitute the spaces of a globalised world, and consequently lack a plausible path from this world to theirs.

“The central contradiction of the MAP is that their pursuit of a radical orientation to the future requires the dusting off of an extremely old set of ideas”

To take one example: modern food production and distribution relies on complex global networks, without which we would all starve within a matter of weeks. The practice of growing your own vegetables and building local distribution networks, which is commonplace in green milieus, and is often treated as if it were a radical ecological praxis, fails utterly to confront the complex logistical problems of producing enough food to feed everyone, and does not offer a scalable solution to the ecologically destructive effects of industrial food production. The accelerationists are right on this point: the material, social, biological, cultural, technological world around us is the only one we have to transform, and we either embrace the messy and contradictory task of making a livable world from it, or we perish.

Techno-Oedipalism

Perhaps the central contradiction of the MAP is that their pursuit of a radical orientation to the future requires the dusting off of an extremely old set of ideas. Marx’s historical materialism – the theory that capitalism, which begins as the great liberator of the productive forces, sooner or later becomes an impediment to further development as the relations of production become too narrow and constraining **xi** – is reproduced without any significant alteration.

Indeed, the manifesto’s basic diagnosis of the present social/political situation is precisely that capitalism, in its neoliberal form, has already become such a fetter on the forces of production:

“Capitalism has begun to constrain the productive forces of technology, or at least, direct them towards needlessly narrow ends. Patent wars and idea monopolisation are contemporary phenomena that point to both capital’s need to move beyond competition, and capital’s increasingly retrograde approach to technology... rather than a world of space travel, future shock, and revolutionary technological potential, we exist in a time where the only thing which develops is marginally better consumer gadgetry.”

In 1848, Marx made a similar diagnosis **xii**: “Modern bourgeois society... is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeois and of its rule...”

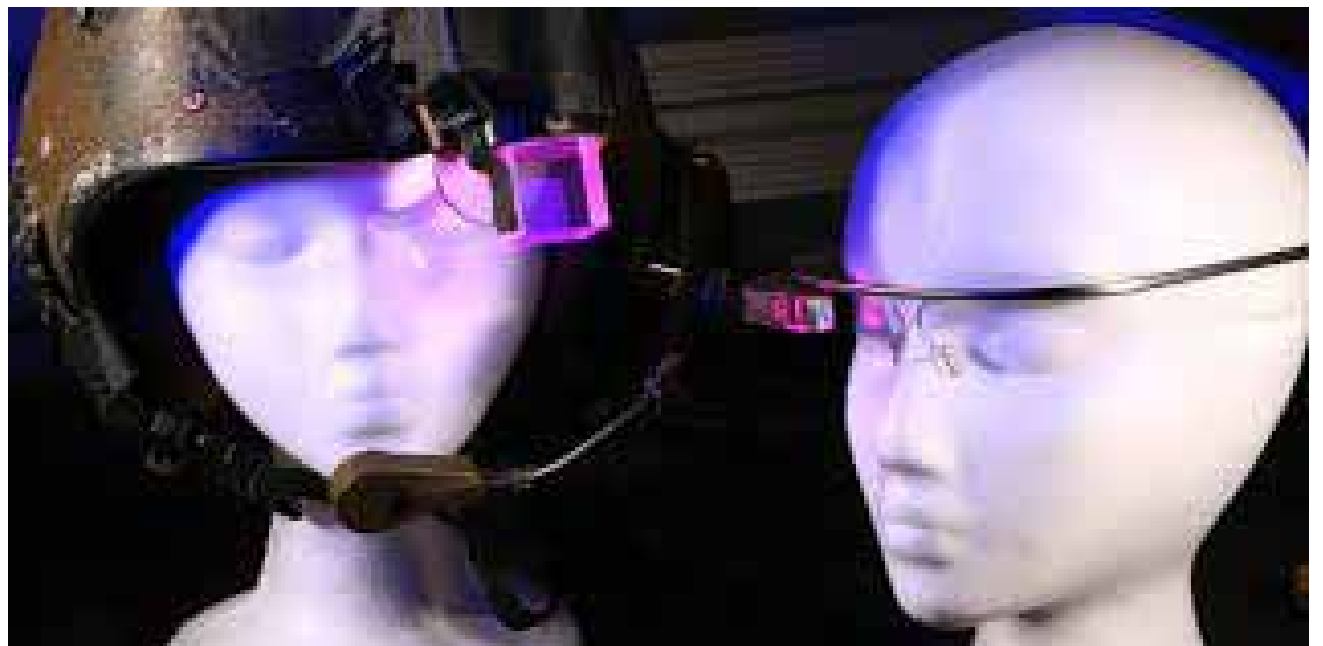
The productive forces at the disposal of society no longer tend to further the development of the conditions of bourgeois property; on the contrary, they have become too powerful for these conditions, by which they are fettered, and so soon as they overcome these fetters, they bring disorder into the whole of bourgeois society, endanger the existence of bourgeois property. The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them.”

Spot the difference! Needless to say, bourgeois society has spent the intervening 166 years continually revolutionising the forces of production without too much difficulty. One might assume that the boy has cried terminal crisis too many times at this stage for anyone to seriously make such pronouncements

anymore (particularly in a context that’s many orders of magnitude less revolutionary than that of 1848), but here we are.

The MAP translates the argument from the language of Marxist dialectics to that of Deleuze & Guattari’s anti-dialectical focus on potentials, assemblages and multiplicities – we no longer have the forces of production straining at their fetters, but rather the latent potential of technosocial bodies that is blocked by neoliberalism – but the argument remains substantially the same. There’s a distinction between “acceleration” and “speed” – acceleration includes the concept of direction, and so accelerationism entails navigation and experimentation rather than blindly pursuing an already-determined direction – but this is simply a fudge to pre-empt obvious critiques.

The physical concept of acceleration can have either a positive or negative value (i.e. can be an increase or decrease in speed), but this possibility is explicitly discounted as reactionary by the MAP – there is to be no slowing down of capitalist acceleration – the argument is every bit as teleological (i.e. the idea that history has an inbuilt tendency towards a goal, that of liberation through development of the productive forces) as the worst Hegelian moments of Marx.



Worse, this translation into trendy Deleuzo-Guattarian terms totally ignores one of the major insights of their thought: that crises, far from sounding the death knell of the capitalist mode of production, are part of the dynamism of capital that allows it to continually revolutionise production, without any natural (i.e. inbuilt or automatic) terminal point: the more the machine breaks down, the better it works.^{xiii}

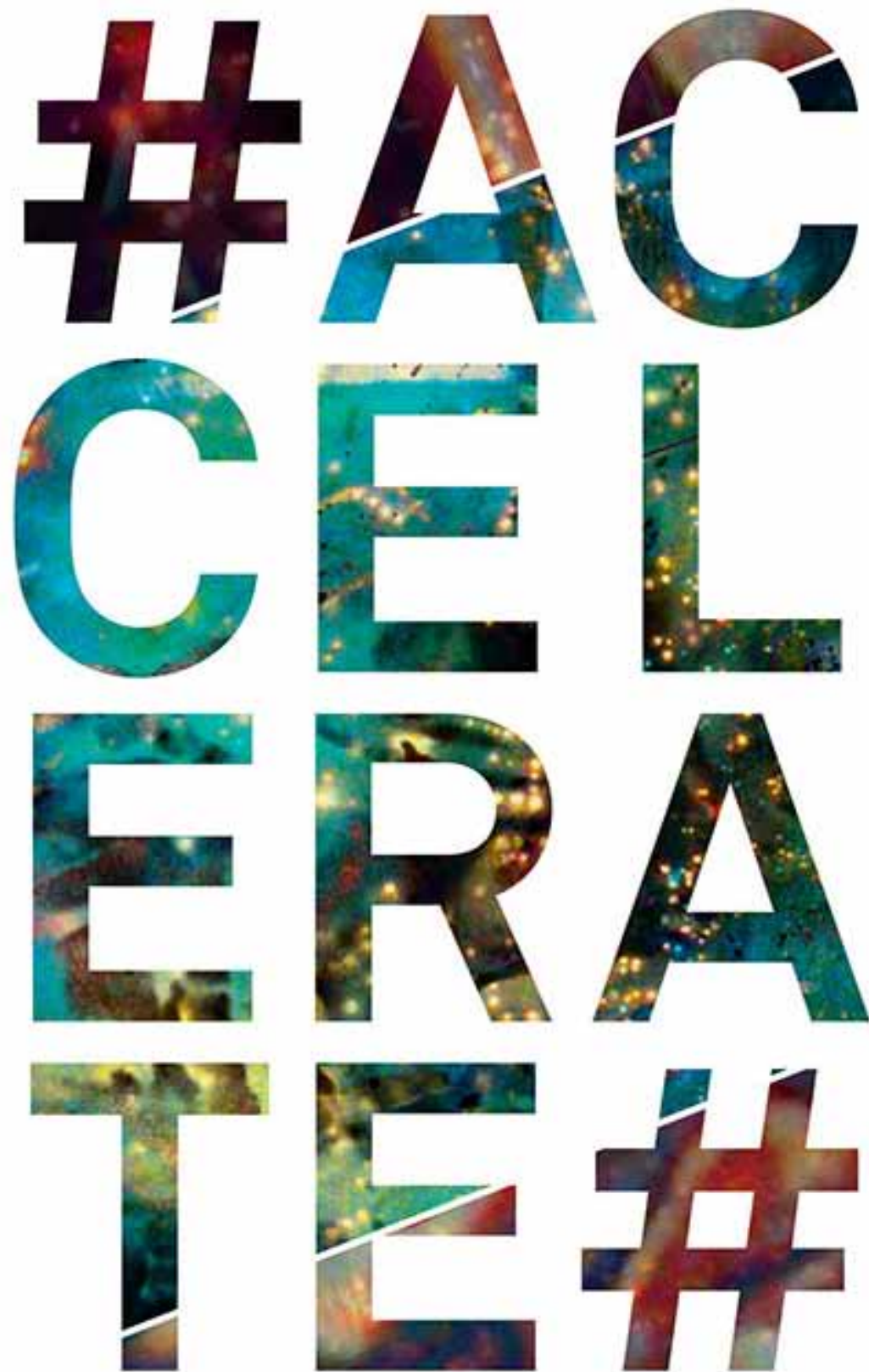
Central to the MAP's enterprise is the reconnection of the Left "to its roots in the Enlightenment, in a rationalist and universal vision of collective human self-construction".^{xiv} To this end, 19th and early 20th Century modernist themes of Man's mastery over nature are uncritically regurgitated, as if an entire century of critique had never happened.^{xv} The MAP insists "that only a Promethean politics of maximal mastery over society and its environment is capable of either dealing with global problems or achieving victory over capital."

"Even a thoroughly bourgeois thinker like Keynes believed that one day automation would liberate the masses from drudgery"

This Prometheanism is to be distinguished from classic Enlightenment chauvinism only in the sophistication of its science: "[the clockwork universe of Laplace" is replaced by complex systems theory, but the basic conception of the Man-nature relationship remains utterly unchanged. Nature is a stage for Man's triumphs, a problem to be overcome, and a thing to be dominated by Man's will. Such arguments made a degree of sense in the 19th Century when capitalism still retained a vast outside waiting to be incorporated (although this incorporation involved rather a lot of genocide, and required the invention of race and racism as its ideological complement) and the resources of the Earth were still for all practical purposes infinite, but become rather more problematic in the context of a society whose very existence is called into question by the unsustainability of its relationship with the world it inhabits.

One might expect, at a minimum, some argumentation as to how the accelerated pursuit of economic growth and technological development is compatible with an ecologically sustainable civilisation. The MAP has nothing to say on this point. Instead, the various imminent ecological crises are raised at the beginning, only to be immediately brushed aside to talk about technology. The implication, made explicit in Negri's "reflections" on the manifesto, is that the question of ecology can be "wholly subordinated to industrial politics",^{xvi} or really to the politics of technology, since it is technology which is the central concern of the MAP, and not class struggle.

This has two immediate implications, both disastrous. The first is the splitting of the human-nature relation from the relations of production, which ignores the "fundamental identity [of industry] with nature as production of man and by man."^{xvii} There can be no industrial politics that is not immediately also a politics of nature, since all production presupposes and produces a particular way of relating to nature. All forms of capitalism necessarily require the ob-



the accelerationist reader



jectification of nature – its production as commodity and as property – which produces its unchecked exploitation as a necessary feature. The metabolic relationship **xviii** of humans to nature is fractured through the subordination of both humans and nature to capital. It is with this process that the MAP insists we ally ourselves.

Second, in subordinating the question of ecology to that of technology, ecology is transformed from a political to a scientific-technical question. Rather than being a question of how to transform society to allow for a sustainable relationship with nature, we are asked simply to trust that liberating the productive forces can produce a technological fix. This is, at best, a massive gamble in the short to medium-term, in which the stake is the survival of human civilisation, and in any case, it fails to resolve the crises produced by our antagonistic relationship to nature, but merely displaces them in time, while deepening our entanglement with destructive forms of production in the meantime.

Moreover, the manifesto fundamentally misunderstands the nature of the relationship of technology to society. Technology is neither to be rejected nor embraced as such: it is neither a route to liberation (as the accelerationists contend) nor a bringer of doom (as the primitivists contend), but must be understood in a way that fully subordinates it to social relations (i.e. what kind of society produces and utilises it). This is not the same thing as arguing that technology is neutral and can merely slot unproblematically into whatever social relations it encounters. Technology is produced under particular social conditions and is designed for those social conditions. As an objectification of the intellect of a particular form of society, its tendency is to objectify the social relations of that society as the facticity of the non-human environment, and thus to reproduce those social relations. This means that any communist movement is inevitably confronted with the problem of repurposing a technological infrastructure built for a capitalist world to communist ends – a task with no simple solution. The accelerationist response to this challenge, for all their out-of-context appropriation of Anti-Oedipus, is decidedly oedipal in form: the major work of producing a communist and ecologically sustainable future is displaced onto “the tendency” – capital-daddy and techno-mommy.

Back to the Future

Ultimately, all this talk of politics is simply a means to an end from the point of view of the MAP’s central concern: the recovery of the vector of the Future, and the sense of hope and excitement that entails. For the MAP, this entails the resurfacing of modernist dreams of extraterrestrial travel, and the transcendence of the biological limitations of the human body (and specifically of the contingency and vulnerability of the human condition as a species within nature), and of sci-fi and cyberpunk concerns with cybernetics, artificial intelligence, and with the production of new alien terrains of virtual and post-human experience. It is easy to mock dreams – this is probably the ugliest and most hollow of all intellectual activities – and there will be none of that here. In the context of a planetary deficit of imagination and hope that is the corollary of the contemplation of coming disasters that threaten our annihilation, and of a pervasive sneering postmodern sensibility that retains always a protective ironic distance from all belief, we urgently need to recover the capacity and courage to dream.

The accelerationist reminder that within living memory generations of humans really believed that a better tomorrow awaited them (whether through the social democratic state, the inventive powers of the free market, or the coming communist revolution) is hugely important. Even a thoroughly bourgeois

thinker like Keynes believed that one day automation would liberate the masses from drudgery. Now, after decades being bludgeoned with neoliberal ideology, There Is No Alternative is the new common sense, and our dreams have been quietly smothered one-by-one. To dream today is a radical act, and one crucial to our hopes of survival. But what are we to make of the particular dreams of the accelerationists?

Throughout the MAP, there is an unstable tension between the future as open and experimental space of as-yet-unrealised potential and the Future as a particular and historically-specific set of dreams to which we must return, that is, basically, between a future that is yet to be imagined and constructed, and futurism as a particular aesthetic and cultural mode of imagining the future, which by now amounts to a set of warmed-up Hollywood sci-fi clichés. “Remembering the future”**xix** is the unfortunate theme of accelerationism, and, through its conflation of futurism with futurity, it ends up producing an imaginary that, rhetorical packaging aside, is much too narrow and conservative. Other futures are possible beyond the endless accumulation of new technologies. Even the primitivist milieu (or “post-civ” as they now call themselves, having realised that a bunch of trendy white kids fetishising the ways of life of indigenous peoples is rather colonialist), for all their nihilism, have an idea of a future: instead of the safe and controlled virtuality of cyber-alterity, what about the actuality of wilderness as a space of excitement, exploration and danger?**xx** I’m not endorsing this – certainly better dreams are possible – my point, merely, is that technological acceleration is not the only vector to the future, that techno-utopians do not have a monopoly on libido, and that constraining our imaginings in advance to what is achievable through technological development does humanity a disservice.

In any case, there is something strikingly hollow in all this technological speculation. All this brushed aluminum cyborg novelty is all well and good, but it’s a rather mono-dimensional image of the future. What happens to the ordinary – that dimension of mundane everyday experience that, no matter how far we push the horizons of technology, persists, reconfigures itself, and insinuates itself constantly into our lived-experience?**xxi** In its rush to escape the ordinary and pursue the alien, the MAP neglects this vital dimension of human experience, and de facto abandons a crucial concern of the Left (particularly the post-68 Left): the liberation of everyday life.

There is little discussion of, or concern with human relationships, in the manifesto; social relations are understood as essentially a problem to be overcome, a blockage to technological potential, and the task of their re-arrangement is basically subordinated to the project of neo-Enlightenment mastery. Never are social relations considered in themselves, in their meaning or importance for the human subjects that enter into them. This is crucial. One of the most commonly occurring themes in science fiction is that of a technological utopia that, on the surface, offers all sorts of fascinating and novel experiences, but whose obscene underbelly is that, in the sphere of everyday human relations, the same old repressions, the same violence and exploitation, the same misery, remains. (Indeed, from a certain historical point of view, that is precisely the world we already live in.)

What the MAP misses, above all else, is that what is oppressive and experientially miserable about capitalism is not its frustration of technological progress (that all that develops “is marginally better consumer gadgetry”, say), but that, because we are determined to relate to one-another always through the abstract machinery of capital, we have

so little real experience of one-another. We spend our entire lives living and working together in utterly alienated ways and even the new communications technologies which supposedly bring the world together only function to trap us more totally in the prisons of our selves. What unexplored potential lies blocked by the alienated ways of working together that capital requires for its reproduction? What might we experience and achieve together if we were free to explore new ways of relating? These questions are left unexplored by the MAP, but, to paraphrase the manifesto’s rather cringey nod to Deleuze, surely we don’t yet know what a social body can do?



REFERENCES:

i Some of the arguments in this review were developed through a discussion with WSM members and supporters. The audio of that discussion is available at: <http://www.mixcloud.com/workerssolidarity/a-chat-about-the-manifesto-for-for-an-accelerationist-politics-wsm-dublin/listeners/>

ii Alex Williams and Nick Srnicek, #ACCELERATE: Manifesto for an Accelerationist Politics, available at: <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/05/14/accelerate-manifesto-for-an-accelerationist-politics/> (All quotations are from the Manifesto unless otherwise stated.)

iii Robin Mackay and Armen Avanessian, 'Introduction' in #Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader, p.4
iv Antonio Negri, Some Reflections on the #ACCELERATE MANIFESTO, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/02/26/reflections-accelerate-manifesto/>

iv Antonio Negri, Some Reflections on the #ACCELERATE MANIFESTO, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/02/26/reflections-accelerate-manifesto/>

v Mackay & Avanessian, op. cit.

vi The authors noticeably shun the word 'communism' in favour of 'post-capitalism'. This is hardly incidental, given that MAP is concerned with the transformation of social relations for the purpose of unleashing suppressed productive and technological potential, rather than instrumentalising technology to the production of an egalitarian society. This distinction is significant.

vii The main problem with vanguards, from the point of view of social movements – and this is hardly a moralising critique – is that their tendency is to fuck things up far more often than they steer their troops with uncanny insight and prescience, and to leave a wasteland of bitterness and division in their wake. "Relentless horizontalism", exhausting though it may be, is generally preferable to being steered or manipulated by the blunderings of some tinpot Lenin.

viii One of the recurring ironies of the MAP is that amidst all its supposed novelty, some very old and

worn-out ideas keep popping up. They even manage to reproduce the absurd practice of sticking in a tenuously relevant Lenin quote to authorise their argument.

ix Patricia Reed, 'Seven Prescriptions for Accelerationism' in #Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader, p.523

x Of course, everything remains localised to the extent that it happens somewhere and not elsewhere – even cyberspace is still a space, albeit one with a weird rhizomatic geometry – it is not a question of producing One Big Movement that unites the whole world, but of building linkages between geographical localities based on an understanding of the increasingly non-geographical nature of social space. This, I think, is the only useful interpretation of the slogan "think global, act local".

xi "At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters." Karl Marx, Preface to 'A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', 1859
xii Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party

xiii "The death of a social machine has never been heralded by a disharmony or a dysfunction; on the contrary, social machines make a habit of feeding on the contradictions they give rise to, on the crises they provoke, on the anxieties they engender, and on the infernal operations they regenerate. Capitalism has learned this, and has ceased doubting itself, while even socialists have abandoned belief in the possibility of capitalism's natural death by attrition. No one has ever died from contradictions. And the more it breaks down, the more it schizophrenizes, the better it works, the American way." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, p.181

xiv Nick Srnicek, Alex Williams and Armen Avanessian, #Accelerationism: Remembering the

Future, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/02/10/accelerationism-remembering-future/>

xv There is a truly vast body of critique on this theme, spanning the Frankfurt School, ecofeminism, postcolonial theory, virtually all ecological thought, postmodernism, post-structuralism, and doubtless many more radical critical traditions. I've used the term "Man" deliberately to emphasise the strongly gendered nature of the opposition between humans and nature, and of the notion of mastery over nature.

xvi Negri, op. cit.

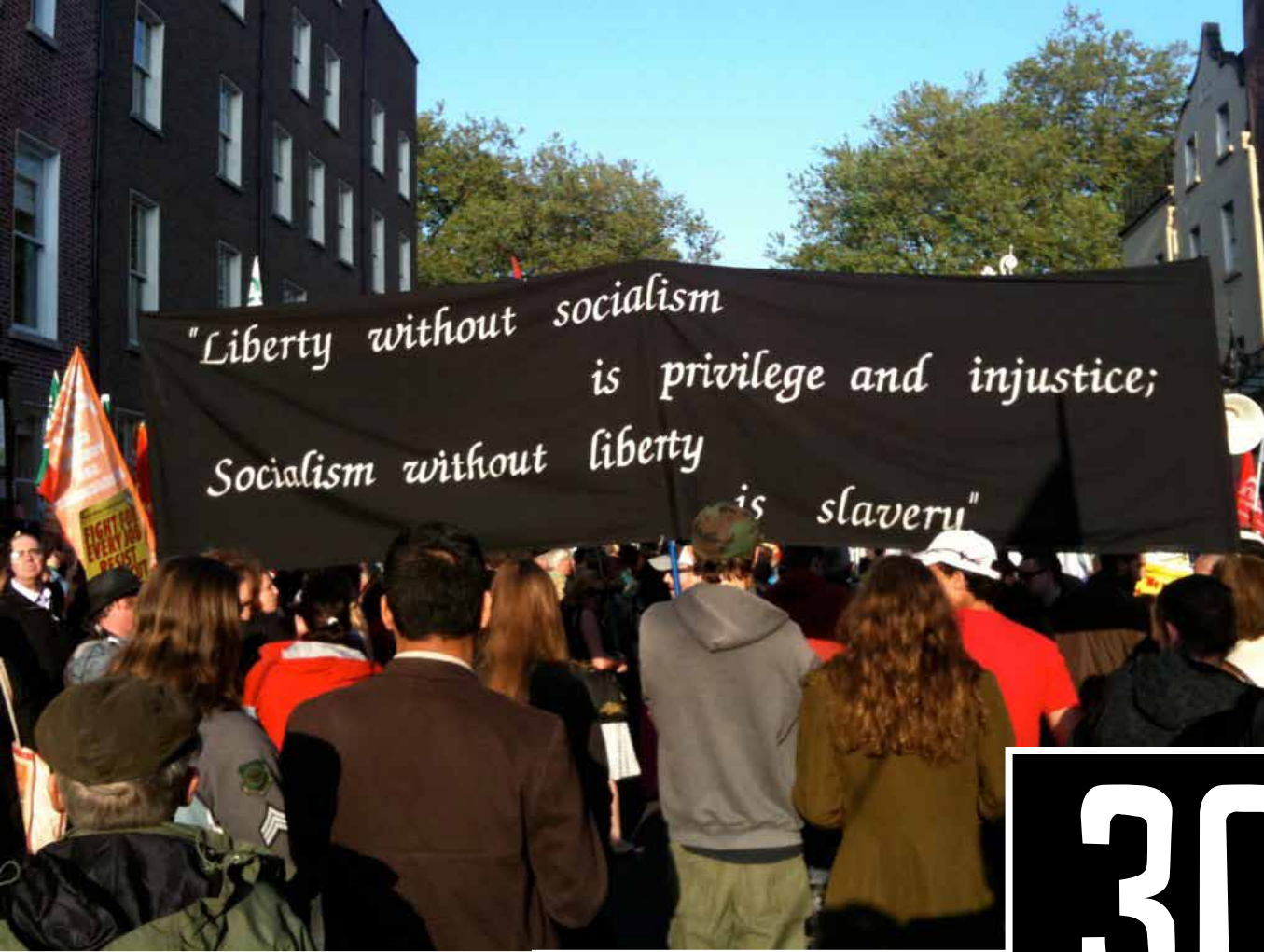
xvii Deleuze & Guattari, op. cit., p.4

xviii "Man [sic] lives from nature, i.e. nature is his body, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature." Karl Marx, Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts. See John Holloway, Crack Capitalism, pp.125-9 for more depth on this point.

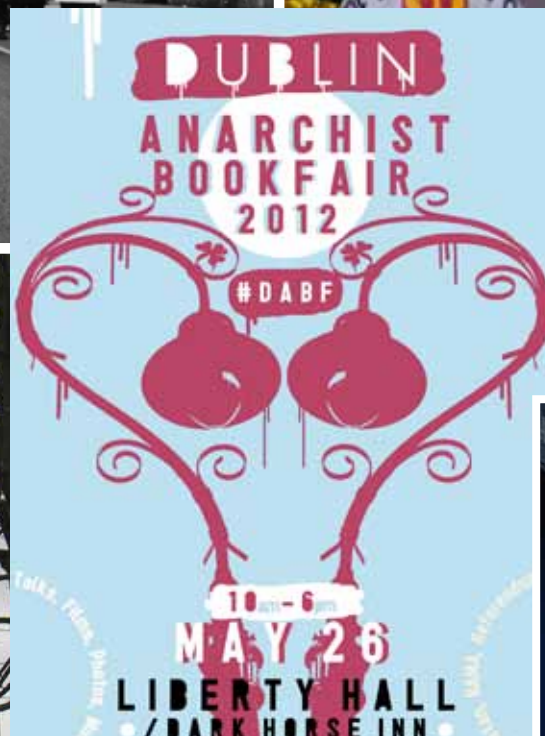
xix Srnicek, Williams & Avanessian, op. cit.

xx This point on danger could do with further elaboration, if space permitted. For now, let me simply ask: what if the end result of mastery over the conditions of human existence, and the transcendence of all contingency and vulnerability, is not liberation, but a new and intolerable kind of boredom that comes from being the kept pet of a benevolent and omnipotent machine intelligence? What if the abolition of all that keeps us weak is also the abolition of the danger and uncertainty that makes life interesting?

xxi Robert Jackson's Ordinaryism: An Alternative to Accelerationism is an inspiration for this point, albeit a rather dull and turgid kind of inspiration. Available at: <http://furtherfield.org/features/articles/ordinaryism-alternative-accelerationism-part-1-thanks-nothing>



30 YEARS





F THE WSM



History: The First Three Years Of The Workers Solidarity Movement

A statement issued in 1988 after internal disagreements within the WSM had led to its partial collapse. Those whom remained and rebuilt the organisation in the following years offered this analysis of what had been achieved and what had gone wrong.

ANARCHISM has no real history or tradition in Ireland. A few Irish emigrants such as Jack White or Matt Kavanagh did become anarchists but that had no effect on things at home. In the early 1970s there was a small group of ex-republicans who associated with the Anarchist Black Cross and got involved in small-scale illegal activities until the arrest and conviction of Marie and Noel Murray. In the late 1970s the first local anarchist groups appeared (Belfast, Dublin and Limerick). Generally these were short lived as no amount of idealism could make up for the fact that they stood for nothing in particular this side of the creation of an anarchist society. They were incapable of sustaining any public activity and were a mash-mash of people who had nothing in common other than a self-description of "anarchist". Out of this came a few anarchists who saw the need for a national organisation, rooted in the working class and holding agreed policies and tactics. After much discussion comrades in Cork and Dublin launched the WSM in September 1984.

In the three years that followed we built branches in Cork and Dublin, gained new members and undertook activities including:

- + publishing 27 issues of WORKERS SOLIDARITY,
- + organising a speaking tour with a Spanish Civil

War veteran of the CNT which saw him address several hundred people in Dublin, Cork, Wexford and Belfast,

- + engaged in strike support work with many groups of workers including the UCD cleaners, Cork ESB, Pat Grace Fried Chicken and others,
- + were involved in building support for the Dunnes Stores strikers, and set up the official support group in Cork,
- + produced pamphlets on anarchism, the family and the Spanish Civil War, all of which sold very well,
- + established a mail order bookservice for anarchist literature,
- + involvement in ad-hoc campaigns such as those against the Herzog visit and Self-Aid.

This is but a brief selection of what the organisation was doing. It was very much an activist organisation. It is important to state that all this took place within a context where we had written policies on the major areas of struggle, a written constitution and participatory decision making.

By the beginning of 1987 we felt we had established ourselves. We were holding regular branch meetings and producing a monthly paper. We had generated a small degree of interest and respect for the WSM as an anarchist organisation. However, this was achieved in a worsening social and economic climate. It was only achieved through a high level of personal commitment from the small numbers involved. There was considerable pressure within the organisation to recruit new members, which inevitably led to people joining who in practice had little real idea of what our politics were. Problems were exacerbated, not only by the seriousness of the 'downturn', which increasingly left the organisation unable to test its ideas and politics, but also by the lack of clarity in the WSM about its own role as an organisation. Informally, though particularly in Cork, some members saw the main purpose

of the WSM as building a leadership for the working class. They emphasized ideological "purity" and zealous activity. Not coincidentally they sanctioned authoritarian methods to "weed" out comrades they considered to be unsuitable, as they became increasingly more introverted in their concerns. Some of these people have since followed the logic of their position and declared themselves Trotskyists.

Emerging from all this:

- + We presumed that because someone joined an anarchist organisation that they understood and accepted anarchist ideas and values. This was wrong. We need continual internal education on anarchism, its tradition, theory and values. We especially need to be sure that new members have a good understanding of our theoretical basis.
- + We had people joining "a WSM" and not "the WSM". It is not good enough for a potential member to accept our end goal or our strategy and tactics. They must understand and agree with both. This does not mean that we want everyone to agree on everything, we do not want to be an organisation of clones. But neither do we want one that is divided on important questions of orientation and direction. Seemingly small differences should be discussed in a comradely way as they come up. They should not be let slip as "minor" and allowed to fester. We can never have too much friendly discussion and debate.
- + We have to insist that once a decision is made it must be taken seriously. Otherwise there is no pint in making decisions in the first place.
- + Libertarian values have to be upheld. Any manifestation of authoritarian or uncomradely behaviour within the organisation should be challenged.
- + Our essential anarchism was not as visible as our specific tactics. In future our anarchism should be a lot more upfront.
- + Should anything happen that is felt to be inhibiting free discussion it needs to be tackled without delay.
- + Some comrades overestimated the role of the WSM at the expense of seeing the vital role of working class self-activity. We need a clear policy on this question.
- + All our activities and developments have to be continually monitored and discussed at both branch and national levels.

The clear break came over the matter of our libertarian principles. Though other matters were related it was around this that no further ground could be given. In retrospect we can see that the WSM, because there had never before been an organised movement in Ireland, put too much stress on organisational matters and not nearly enough on the essential libertarian content of our ideas. In accepting that we made mistakes we admit to no major demoralization. We accept that anarchists struggle for as long as it takes to build the type of organisation that is not afraid to constantly test its ideas, the sort of organisation that can see the anarchist idea become a mass revolutionary influence capable of creating a better world.



If you hoist the green flag -

Middlemen and the rule of market forces in Ireland.

An interview with Conor McCabe

The following is an edited transcript of an interview cum dialogue with Conor McCabe, author of the 2011 book "Sins of the Father" on the economy of Ireland since independence and researcher on financial shenanigans and corporate misdeeds in the Republic. I keep-ing with the theme of this issue of IAR on the institutions of power in Ireland, we wanted to explore how money and market forces operate through the specific structures and class composition of Irish society.

Paul Bowman: When we're talking about how market forces rule here in Ireland, presumably they have to do that via a local capitalist class or people who are the interface between market forces and so on.

"Foreign direct investment, means that the funds or the company is owned by a foreign party. It's not that its an investment in the country"

What would you say were the main things that were different in Ireland about how that class works with both local capital markets and international capital markets, as opposed to how it works with our neighbours next door in the UK.

Conor McCabe: Yeah. The main thesis I put forward is that if you see it in the global chain/system, there's kind of a middle-man class in Ireland whose job is not at the receiving end, it's not at the production end. It's the class that gets sent away in the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy. You seen that?

PB: [laughs] yeah - the phone sanitisers...

CM: There's those that own everything and there's those that do everything, and then there's those in the middle who just seem to do stuff. That's kinda who runs Ireland at the moment. One of the problems in talking about Ireland in terms of structure is that, you can talk about Ireland in terms of the economic structure of the country, and then there's the economic power in the country and there's an



WORDS: PAUL BOWMAN

assumption that they're both the same. And I would question that.

A lot of what happens in Ireland is in spite of the economic policy decisions that are being made, not because of it. If you look at what's actually keeping Ireland going now, it's not the IFSC. It's not tax from that, it pays only about half a billion in tax anyway. It's the 1.9 million people who are working day in, day out. That's your backbone. It's your 300,000 public sector workers, that's your backbone that's what stops us falling into the Atlantic.

The narrative is that it's exports and it's Intel and it's Google. No it's not. That's what makes a certain class in Ireland very, very rich. That doesn't actually mean because they're the ones that's setting economic policy, that's what's actually ticking over the country itself. Ireland's agricultural exports are in value around 12 billion a year. But the sector employs about 140,000 people, including secondary services.

If you take the half [by value] of Ireland's exports, which are pharmaceuticals, it employs 38,000 people that's less than 1.8% of the workforce. It's absolutely huge because it's pharmaceuticals, intellectual property, etc. And also if you start looking at the imports of physicals in Ireland, there seems to be a lot of creative accounting going on there as well because they've been able to do more with less. Because Ireland imports all these chemicals and the imports have been dropping but the exports have been rising. Which is a little suspect. Unless they've done a "Scotty" and broken the laws of physics. I don't know how they're doing this. This goes back to creative accounting which is at the heart of it.

So one of the problems of dealing with the structure of the Irish economy is that there's an assumption that when we talk about the power in Ireland, that that's what keeps Ireland going and it's not. I would say that no, it's actually different things. I would say that Ireland keeps going in spite of this class, not because of it. Even down to the latest OECD report that said that Ireland was a victim, which is really funny, of tax avoidance - which has been national policy since 1952, or 49 even. But even they said, if you were to tighten up all this tax avoidance rules you wouldn't really lose any jobs, because there aren't any jobs here anyway. Companies like Matheson, Goodbody, Arthur Cox, McCann Fitzgerald, KPMG, they're the ones who would lose out, Davy Stockbrokers. Because they're the ones who have all the contracts. And they're the ones who have the ear, or the pocket (maybe) of the political class.

So I would see that disconnect with where decisions are made on a national level. Of how this class uses the state to protect itself from the state - which is quite interesting - uses the very structures of the state to protect itself from the actual citizens. And yet what actually keeps all this shit going, there's a Venn diagram, a cross-over, but it's not as big as they make out. So if we are to talk of the economic structure of the country that would be a different narrative, quite boring as well, I'd say, that would start with jobs, at a local level...

PB: I guess a lot of that is the kinda social reproduction stuff that has to go on everywhere?

CM: That has to go on anyway. What's keeping Ireland going is not exports it's the internal dynamics. 85% of jobs in Ireland are in the non-export sector, and that's being generous giving 15% to the export sector. It's about 7.5% in indigenous Irish exports and then 7.5% in foreign-owned exports, roughly the same. The difference in volume is enormous. The Irish-owned is certainly less than 20 bn but the foreign exports maybe 65-70 bn per year

"Ireland never had that 'Spirit of 45', what it had in place was this corporatist, neo-corporatist, Catholic social teaching view of things"

PB: Are some of those figures distorted by the flow of intellectual property revenue, like the Googles and Apples etc, shift through Ireland on the way to Bermuda or wherever?

CM: Yeah. The CSO in its Mapping Irish Progress, 2012, talked about this and said if you looked at Ireland's GDP and GNI, there's a real disconnect. The only other country where there's a gap of more than 7% between these two figures is, for some reason, Luxemburg [PB: that makes sense - laughs]. So they talk about all these flows and then they say: that shows the importance of foreign direct investment into Ireland. Now I find that really funny. It's quite Orwellian how you set up a statement that these flows don't seem to have any real impact on national income... and that's why it's important... to national income. That's Orwellian language, that's just crazy.

Now the central bank is a lot more forthcoming. In their Quarterly report in 2011. Donagh Brennan has done some really good work on this in Irish Left Review. They just call it. Under OECD definitions, investment does not really mean investment as such. Investment means ownership. So it's foreign ownership - foreign direct investment under the way the OECD sets up what is investment, means that the funds or the company is owned by a foreign party. It's not that it's an investment in the country. So it's ownership not investment, but it's called investment. So you have a situation where the single largest source of foreign direct investment into the Irish state is Bermuda. But Ireland exports... it's also a contributor to investment outside its borders. The largest single recipient, in 2011, of investment from Ireland was Bermuda. The money comes in, the money comes out again.

PB: The popular understanding of investment would be that people were putting money into some kind of physical capital, some kind of plant in order to do something...

CM: OECD hasn't had that definition for 25-30 years, maybe more. [PB: so it's a pure monetary flow?] Well it's about ownership. As the nature of profit seeking in capital has shifted into monetary flows, rather than production... it hasn't replaced it, but there certainly has been a shift in profit-seeking then maybe that investment ownership... Maybe that would have made sense 30 years ago. But ownership of a plant, ownership of an investment fund in some lawyers filing cabinet, is not the same thing as far as investment. But no, it hasn't been that way now for decades. But that's the narrative. But that's how you get into the whole thing of dancing on the edges of Gramsci here - hegemonic language and how the language then is used.

So, if you look at what's traded now. I make the argument that this middle-man class has its origins really in... it's there from the 1700s onwards. But it really takes off after the Famine clearances and the move into grazing. Whereas 50-60 years ago, what Ireland exported, Ireland's selling point then, was cattle. A raw material for value creation in the UK. What that class sells now is the ability of the sovereign state to sell its own tax laws and have those tax laws then recognised internationally. That's highly

profitable if you're part of that.

Now what I don't go into in any of my work, and its something that I have to address, is that I tend to treat that business class in Ireland as one homogenous block. There's a danger in that as well. In 1978/79 there was a push, I think from elements within the department of finance, to open Ireland up as a proper tax haven. It had been used for hot money in the UK for decades. But to actually go full haven. I think the Central Bank shot it down, saying "this smacks of being a banana republic". Now I may have gotten my two blocs mixed up. It may have been the Central Bank who were arguing for it and Finance shot it down. But one of them said "this smacks of being a banana republic". But in less than 10 years it was national state policy.

There's a tension going on in that class that I don't really delve into. But see, in their spats I don't think we should confuse an intra-class spat from inter-class spat. Its like in Julius Caesar, nobody, none of the senators are arguing for the plebs to be part of this decision-making process, once we've killed Caesar. None of them are saying that. They're saying, no, we kill Caesar but - there's no debate about this - we'll still be in charge. So they're having their fights, and it's all drama, but it's in their class. That's kinda how I see it. We're still outside, the menders of bad soles. That's all of us on the edge.

So if that is the selling point now for this class. That's where you get into the myths of what around what actually generates activity in this country. Now we know from other tax havens or financial city states, that a city is pretty much the size of what can benefit from this activity. Look at Ireland you see that all over again. In the UK of course that's London.

PB: I've just written about this recently in relation to the Scottish referendum and Paul Mason did a piece a few weeks back on how increasingly the UK economy is dividing into London and "the rest". Something about financialisation seems to be focusing activity onto the city where the money and credit flows are traded and then just the hinterland.

CM: Yeah, I need to do some more work on them myself. I'm sure geographers have done some really good work on it. There's definitely something about that. You have a single port. There's something about city states or island states that really seems to work for this. Ireland seems to be the very same. Anyone who drives past the M50 [Dublin's M25] you get a sense of the so-called boom.

PB: Bearing in mind our international audience - I heard a figure around the region of, nearly half the working population of the Republic are working either in Dublin or in some environment connected to Dublin.

CM: That rings true to me. If you take the Dublin catchment area which goes, up North, not quite as far as Dundalk, just shy of it, as far West as Mullingar, talking 50 miles. So you're talking 50 miles, 80 km, circle all around. You've got about half the jobs. [PB: which makes it one of the most centralised countries in Western Europe] Yeah and it's a highly centralised state anyway and that's a legacy of Dublin Castle. When the pro-Treaty side took over, they had the state apparatus that was all set up to coerce a hostile population. For the pro-Treatyites they said "this is brilliant, this is absolutely perfect" and when Fianna Fail came along they said we'll just keep on using it then. The whole kinda city managers system, the county managers system. There's no local government in Ireland. It all goes through this highly centralised state. For the size of it, its incredible.

PB: While there seems to be this tension we've al-

"There was around 190,000 active enterprises in the Irish state. Less than 20% of them were paying corporation tax at any level"

ready talked about, between sections of the ruling class on occasion, there still seems to be much more consensus on a number of issues. Particularly the relationship with Europe. There's no UKIP in Ireland and there's not about to be. It appears from the outside that the ruling class here, is completely agreed that we don't want to piss off Frankfurt or in some way endanger the relationship to those capital markets. Is that a fair comment?

CM: I don't know if I'd see it purely in economic terms. I'd see it very much in cultural/ideological terms as well. If you look - again this an argument I put forward in the book briefly, it's up for discussion - how I make sense of it in my own head is that, Ireland never had that post-war, welfare, "spirit of '45" contract. But it still had something there, in place. What it had in place was this corporatist, neo-corporatist, Catholic social teaching view of things. However weak that may have been as a social contract, that is our social contract. That didn't start breaking down at the same time as neoliberalism. It's actually breaking down now. This is what I'm putting forward. So it didn't break down in 1987, its actually breaking down since 1997, so its a bit slower. But because it was already a right-wing compromise, we didn't quite notice it as being a compromise until probably quite recently. And that's what's under attack right

now. And I think that's where there's a lot of confusion among the Irish middle class. Because their frame of what this country is, is being changed at the moment. Britain went through this in the 1980s, they're going through it in the last ten years.

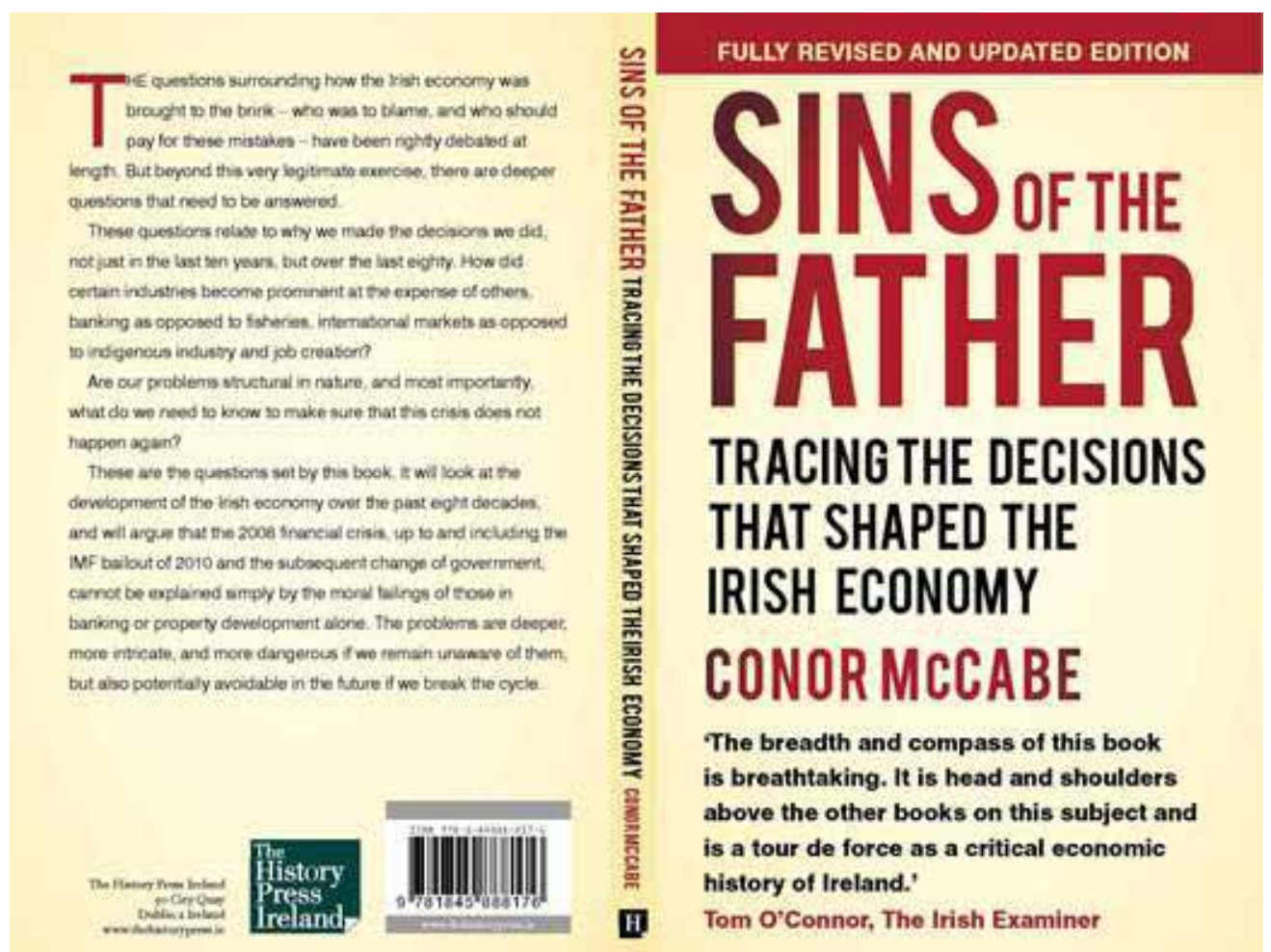
And they're rabbits caught in the headlight. However weak of a compromise that may have been, it was still one. It involves the whole social partnership model. That doesn't start in 1987, that goes back to 1946 with the Labour Courts being set up and the first wage agreements already in the 1950s and then there's ones in the 1960s. So this kind of corporatist or neo-corporatist spirit, a very Catholic way of dealing with class conflict.

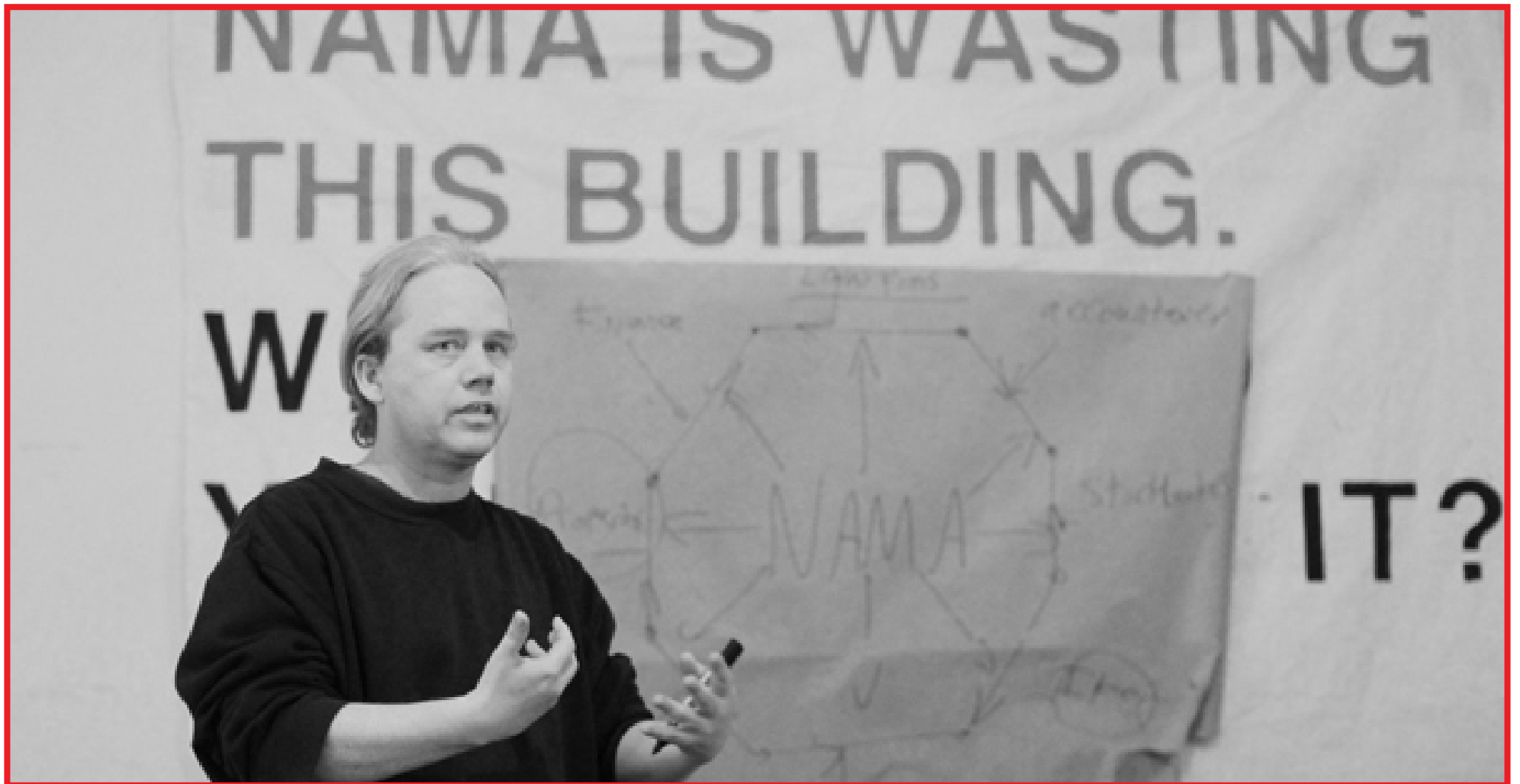
That's what passes for liberalism in this country. A great example of is Fintan O'Toole. I always think that Fintan O'Toole's hands must be porcelain at this stage, you know? He's always wringing them. It's that thing about fairness and justice, and blah, blah, blah. Its never about power, and its never about rights. It's always about justice and fairness and that. I see Rerum Novarum in that. I see that going back to 1880s. So that also goes through the right wing in Ireland and it has a strange mutative effect on them. So you'll still get, even in the right wing in Ireland, you'll still have struggles of that kind of Catholic social teaching running through them.

PB: How does this relate to attitude towards Europe?

CM: I think - and this is the more advanced elements - what they see is a transnational capitalist class in formation in Europe, and they want to make sure that they have the same role in that transnational capitalist class as they have now in terms of finance and what was once the British Empire. That they'll be there bidding for them, that they'll look after all the books for them, they'll be back-room boys for this transnational European capitalist class, that is in formation.

PB: There's always this mentality that we exist, economically, always in relation to something larger than ourselves





CM: Yes. And we have to. Because our job is to administer these things rather than actually run them.

PB: To be the middle-man, you actually need things to be in the middle of...

CM: Yeah. But it's also what our education system was set up for. At pre-independence it was to be civil servants for the Empire. After 1922 it was to be civil servants for Rome. They were teaching Latin in the primary schools in Ireland up until the 1960s. There's a deep culture in there of having that position. It's not as homogenised as I'm making out. I do think they have more punch than the other elements, the Dermot Desmond's maybe, who would be genuine capitalist class. He wouldn't be a middle man anywhere. And also a lot of Northern indigenous capitalist class after partition as well. They kinda died out in the North. But in 1922 there was the like, where was the capitalist class in Ireland? Well, that's where it was.

PB: To come back to financial flows and last week's OECD report promising to cut down on the "double Irish sandwich" and all the rest. Is there any chance of that actually happening? Are all the blazing headlines on the Irish Independent that this is going to be the end of the world, and so on, does any of that matter?

CM: It's a strange thing because I'm still trying to work out where the pressure for this is actually coming from because it's not coming from the social movements. There has to be something happening at that level that they say that we have to sort this out.

PB: I guess from the USA the Obama administration has expressed frustration about not being able to collect taxes from their companies?

CM: The reason why Ireland had to end its special status from 1987 up to 2003, [was] because Germa-

ny and France were going crazy because the amount of tax that they were losing because their companies were using Ireland as a tax haven. Since the crash or crisis of 2008 those countries have been suffering in terms of income. The pressure is definitely coming from the top rather than the bottom. Which means that we have no say over its direction. It also shows that what will happen in Ireland as was pointed out by the OECD, it's never about 12.5%, it's always about the secondary benefits. If they start going after them, there's always a chance that the Irish state will start to get more income. Because since 2003, you do not have anymore special zones for foreign companies. [PB: so like the IFSC no longer...]

There was a controller and auditor report done for 2011 and buried in, like, chapter 8, paragraph 31, there's this gem saying that most Irish companies don't pay corporation tax. There's like 38,000 companies paid any level of corporation tax and 2/3rds of it came from the 200 most profitable companies in the country anyway. Which means that that year there was around 190,000 active enterprises in the Irish state, employing over 1.3 million people. Less than 20% of them were paying corporation tax at any level. So instead of having a special tax zone up until 2003, it was told to either close it down or lower the tax level for everyone, and Ireland lowered the tax rate for every single company in this state. So the entire state now is a tax haven. Which means if they have to close down some of those tax loopholes that would apply to foreign as well.

If you take your man Gallagher who ran for president a couple of years ago, like the Fianna Fáiler who wasn't a Fianna Fáiler. He was doing exactly what Google were doing. He had two companies. One was based in Bermuda, had a patent on some device he had, he'd created. It charged one company he had in Ireland for the use of that. It was then used as a cash write-off. This is exactly what Google does with its search engine. And that was entirely legal.

So what's killing us is not the multinationals. Where-

ever corporation tax is paid in Ireland, they're the ones that actually pay it. Its the Irish companies out there that are getting away with paying absolutely nothing in corporation tax. The Marian Finucane's of this world who are set up as a company. The Joe Duffys - Joe Duffy's company is named after the Dublin Corporation street he was brought up on in Ballyfermot. He actually names his tax avoidance... [PB: that's cause he's a man of the people...] Claddagh Green its called, right? He actually named his tax avoidance structure, right, - because it's called a company, but give me a break, it's a tax avoidance structure - after the very social housing that put a roof over his head [PB: remembering his roots!] you know what I mean? I mean talk about two fingers, you know? But that's what we're talking about. And they know it!

There's that element to it as well. It's never mentioned in any kind of debate around tax in Ireland that any of the benefits of the multinationals applies, even this place [Irish Film Institute, where this interview was held] applies for every single company in Ireland if they have enough revenue coming in to justify the avoidance - you know to hire all the... There was a great clip from Tony O'Reilly about the oil company that he runs, and he talks about how they had gotten in some big investors to come in and look for oil off the coast of Cork. And he's asked, he said "and what do you bring to the table?" he says, "youse don't drill, youse don't look for any oil. What do you bring?" and he goes "we bring all the local expertise. We know how to get through all the labyrinth of the Irish rules and all the loopholes and that's what these companies like. They like to bring on somebody who's local who knows how to hold their hand and walk them through all Ireland's tax laws" that's where we get into why...

PB: And you'd find people in China saying that's what we do for companies here.

CM: And that's what the name comprador comes from, it comes from China. It comes from the local people who'd work for the Portuguese who would manage the companies and who know how to get things done. And how to deal with all the locals. Because you are one of the locals and you know how to sell this shit to them. So that's what it sells.

PB: OK, I'm going to move on the final area which is really to ask you what your areas of research have been since the publication of Sins of the Father. What you're looking at, at the moment.

CM: I've just gotten more and more into finance and Ireland. And its really about Ireland and its position in the global financial system. That's basically what I look at now.

PB: People have vaguely heard of the "Dutch Sandwich" and the "Double Irish" and so on. But is there other stuff out there that people haven't become aware of yet? Or are you looking at the mechanics of how that all actually works?

CM: Yeah, it isn't quite drilling down into it at that level, its more looking into who are the players in all of this. When you see certain names keep popping up again and again. Certain law firms keep on popping up. Certain accountancy firms keep on popping up. [PB: Davy...]. Davy? Yeah. I mean they walk between the raindrops. Absolutely. They're ensconced on Dawson Street there [i.e. next door to the Dail]. Arthur Cox, Matheson - huge one, they have a lot of that directorship market as well.

There's new aspects of it happening. I'm still trying to catch it. Aubrey Robinson has been doing a lot of work on it. It's more looking at it from a power point of view. The finance is interesting, but its more about

the power relations, is really what I'm interested in. And how they play out in an Irish context.

One of the things about doing a kinda systems analysis is that... If you start drilling down, you're fucked basically. My strength is, its a big weakness as well, my job is to know a little about a lot. And then see how the mechanism works. Then hopefully that will paint enough of a picture for then other people to... to actually find out what the hell is going on. So it's one of the problems is that, if I start getting into... like I have Ireland's tax law on my shelf and I have the guides of how to avoid tax in Ireland. How I dip into that is if I need to find out stuff that doesn't make sense to me, then I dip into it. But its only in part of painting that whole picture.

So hopefully that will bring something to the table in terms of the Irish activist movement. But that's all that it can do. Then hopefully that's enough to say, listen this is worthwhile and then they'll find out more and more and more. The other thing is that the work I do, it can only be at best a sketch. Did you ever do chemical engineering at school or technical drawing? [PB: No]. If you're doing any kind of technical drawing, there's your guidelines you draw in very light pen, and then you rub out afterwards. That's what I do. All of my research, if I do it right, it should be out of date in a few years time. Because other people have done more and more work with it. I don't think its there at the moment, but if you get that bit done, then that might bring a bit more clarity into how power works in Ireland. And hopefully it'll be out of date in ten years time because more and more research will have been done. So in terms of actually drilling down into the actual every single tax avoidance one. I can't do that, because I'm trying to get a sense of the whole thing.

PB: No, well, the whole notion of the machine is to make something complex enough that you need armies of specialists to guide you through this system that allows you to create loopholes. So its not something that as an individual researcher you can afford the time to get ensnared in too much.

CM: No. However I do know enough now that, as a fundraiser we should...

PB: Set up a company [laughs]

CM: Hire a room in the Shelbourne Hotel. Get someone from Asia and from either Austria or Germany over. Have them launch some kind of investment fund, saying that its for a new business park outside of Hong Kong. There's a new train line being built to it. You'd make a mint from it. Because as you can see now, its almost back to... they've hit the restart. We should get in now at the bottom [PB: laughs] and make some real money for the WSM, you know? No more fucking garages up in Mountjoy Square. And its taking money from upper class idiots. It's a victimless crime....[both: laughter]

PB: I like that. I guess that's a good enough place to finish. Thanks again Conor.



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www.womenonweb.org

Abortion Support Network



Abortion Support Network provides financial assistance and accommodation to women* travelling from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Funding is available on a case by case basis depending on financial need and availability of funding.

They also provide confidential, non-judgmental information to anyone who contacts us via phone or email who is seeking information about travelling to England for an abortion.

www.abortionsupport.org.uk



WORDS: PAUL MCANDREW

A PRISON BY ANY OTHER NAME - FIGHTING BACK AGAINST DIRECT PROVISION.

Here in Ireland over the past eighteen months asylum seekers have been organising protests against the conditions they are compelled to live in, including blockading the 'hostels' (effectively for-profit open prisons) where they are forced to live in appalling conditions, which some have been made to endure for over a decade.

For the past several years, Anti-Deportation Ireland, a political campaign run by both asylum seekers themselves and by their supporters has been pushing for three demands:

- 1/ An immediate end to deportations.
- 2/The immediate abolition of direct provision
- 3/The rights to work and to access 3rd-level education

In June 2013 a group of African women, residents at Drishane Castle direct provision centre in County Cork took control of the hostel. The unpopular manager locked herself in her office, the rest of the staff left, and the protestors were able to allow the na-

tional media in to see and film conditions (Access to hostels is usually strictly controlled). Five of the women entered negotiations with the owner and won improvements in the food provided, a safe play area for children and the removal of the unpopular manager.

The fightback begins

On Sept 2nd, Asylum seekers in Athlone Accommodation Centre, a mobile home park which is one of the biggest direct provision centres in the State stopped accepting food from management in protest at conditions at the facility. On Sept 12th 2014 Some of the 160 residents at the former Montague Hotel, outside Portlaoise, Co Laois staged a sit-in demonstration and refused to allow staff into the centre.

At 5am on Sept 14th at Kinsale Road accommodation Centre in Cork City, a committee of residents (called KRAC) began an occupation of their hostel, blockading the entrance and excluding the staff. The blockade lasted 10 days and 10 nights and ended in a negotiated settlement which saw significant improvement of their conditions. Blockading staff out of the hostel meant they had no access even to the shit food they are usually given, but Cork people including the left-wing organisations dropped over with food and financial donations.

After ten days concessions were won including 2 rather than 3 single people sharing a room, extra buses into town, more say over the menu and no more signing in every night. The day after the blockade ended KRAC and their supporters held a march in Cork City Centre calling for abolition of direct provision, an immediate end to deportations and the rights to work and 3rd-level education. A 2nd asylum centre in County Cork held a one day protest during the KRAC blockade

At 6am on October 8th, Some 160 asylum seekers at Birchwood House direct provision centre in Waterford began a protest against conditions at the centre and the whole direct provision system. They locked out staff and prevented deliveries.

The background

Before the millenium, asylum-seekers were allowed to rent their own homes, and get financial help from the state to do so, on the same basis as other people. They were entitled to the equivalent of unemployment assistance, and to child benefit, and some asylum seekers were allowed to do some work

In the year 2000 this situation was replaced with a system called "direct provision". Under direct provision, people are effectively forced to live in one of 34 "hostels" run for profit by private companies (A

"Migration-related NGOs in Ireland are largely state-funded and provide a compassionate face to brutal state racism"

few are owned by the state but all are run privately and receive funding from the state). These hostels are distributed throughout the Irish Republic and are usually located well away from local communities. People are provided with food not of their own choosing, and are unable to cook their own food. They are given only 19 euros to live on and are subject to many petty regulations. Some people have lived in those conditions for over a decade, including some children who were born in those hostels. Several single adults are often forced to share one room and families with children are only allocated one room.

Before direct provision was introduced in 2000, the state was often confronted by solidarity from neighbours and friends when it attempted to deport someone. Direct provision hostels are usually situated in very geographically isolated places, with very limited access to transport and that deliberate policy of preventing peoples integration in to local communities makes deportations easier.

The racist referendum

In 2004, a racist amendment was made to the Irish constitution, having been passed by referendum. It means that a child born in Ireland no longer has the automatic right to Irish citizenship and may be deported unless one of its parents is an Irish or UK citizen.

Before the 2004 racist referendum was passed, Article 2 of the Irish Constitution, (which had been enacted by referendum in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 with a vote of more than 94 percent), determined the citizenship of all children born in Ireland.

'It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish Nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland.'

The referendum inserted the following racist obscenity into the Irish constitution:

'Notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, a person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, who does not have, at the time of his or her birth, at least one parent who is an Irish citizen or entitled to be an Irish citizen is not entitled to Irish citizenship or nationality, unless otherwise provided for by law.'

NGO's no solution

The underlying reason why direct provision exists is to make it easier to deport people. Deportations are the fundamental way in which state racism operates. Deportations and other restrictions on migration are important to capitalism as tools to maintain global inequalities of wealth which themselves are a major source of profit.

Migration-related NGOs in Ireland are largely state-funded and provide a "compassionate" face to brutal state racism. They have historically called for reform form of, rather than the abolition of direct provision and never criticize the policy of deportations.

They are the first to try and bring an end to direct action by asylum seekers by a process of mediation. In recent months NGOs have called for faster streamlined process of deportations called "the Single Application Process"

The government response to the 2014 wave of direct actions by asylum seekers has consistently been that people should wait for the report of a working group which it has set up. The "working group" consists of government politicians and around 20 NGOS. It is not yet public knowledge exactly which NGOs are what the terms of reference are, but the government and several of the NGOS have been arguing for a Single Application Process.

It is likely that the NGOs will be the same ones who have been part of the NGO Forum on Direct Provision, established in 2010. AkiDWA, Barnardos, BeLonG To LGBT Youth Services, Crosscare Migrant Project, Cultúr, Doras Luimní, FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centres), Galway Refugee Support Group, Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference Refugee & Migrant Project, The Integration Centre, The Irish Refugee Council, The Jesuit Refugee Service, Mayo Intercultural Action, SPIRASI, and Tralee International Resource Centre.)

Asylum seekers themselves will be unrepresented on the working group. Instead the NGOs claim to speak on their behalf (One asylum seeker is likely to be part of the working group, but only because he works for one of the NGOs, not because he has been chosen by asylum seekers as a delegate or representative).

Closing the door

The Single Application Process will mean that legal processes of resistance to being deported will be dealt with at one time. At the moment if you are unable successfully to argue that you should be granted refugee status because of your circumstances as an individual, you can then apply for subsidiary protection because a community you belong to is collectively subject to persecution. If you are unable to prove your case for either of those types of protection, it is possible to apply for compassionate leave to remain based on the extent to which you have contributed to and integrated into the community in Ireland.

With the SAP you'll only have one chance to argue for all three and can be deported more quickly if you aren't successful. Nasc advocates the replacement of the current protection system with a 'single procedures mechanism'. Under this, the three forms of international protection (refugee status, subsidiary protection and leave to remain on humanitarian grounds) would be reviewed concurrently. As all challenges to decisions must currently be made through judicial review to the High Court, this would significantly reduce the burden on the State, the courts and also shorten the length of time spent living under the Direct Provision system."

"Recent occupations of direct provision centres by their residents also fit well into something anarchists advocate: taking direct action to bring about political change"

The NGOs also often argue that a time-limit of either 6 or 18 months should be placed on the length of time someone spends in direct provision. Anti-deportation Ireland argues that direct provision should be abolished, not kept in a slightly reformed state.

The government has also been careful to damp down even the modest expectation that people who have already spent long periods in direct provision should receive residency as part of an "amnesty"

There are several things which are problematic about the involvement of NGOs in campaigning about direct provision:

1/ Some of their funding comes from the state which limits their ability to challenge government policy. None of the NGOs oppose the policy of deporting people. Most of them call for a time-limit of 6 or 18 months in direct provision rather than its abolition. (Often this approach is in the smallprint of their "End Direct Provision" campaign literature) They campaign for a streamlined faster system of deportations ("the Single Applications Process")

2/ Their approach of claiming speaking on behalf of asylum seekers (as on the government working group is something that has a disempowering effect. It would be great if just one of those charities relinquished their place to someone living in direct provision.

3/ When protests are organised by asylum seekers themselves, NGOs immediately attempt to mediate and defuse the situation. During the protest at Drishane Castle a worker for the leading NGOs tried to persuade the protesters to negotiate with the Resettlement and Integration Agency as individuals, rather than collectively. Luckily the protesters chose not to take that particular advice.

4/ The presence of NGOs on the current government



working group renders them compromised by their involvement in the State's racist control strategies, in a similar way to the role played by trade union leaders during Social Partnership in Ireland. If the working group does end up recommending the continued existence of direct provision (with reforms) and streamlined deportations (the Single Applications Process), then the government will be able to say that their policies have been endorsed by all the relevant charities.

5/Until the recent wave of direct action by asylum seekers, the media almost always turned to one of the Migration-related NGOs for their perspective on direct provision, rather than to asylum-seekers themselves or to Anti-Deportation Ireland.

6/ Another problem with the NGOs is that most of them are signed-up members of the Turn-Off the Red Light campaign which wants to criminalise the customers of sex-workers. That would have the effect of driving sex work further underground and rendering it more unsafe for sex-workers.

"Eventually—on a smaller scale, but more insidiously—the capital available to NGOs plays the same role in alternative politics as the speculative capital that flows in and out of the economies of poor countries. It begins to dictate the agenda. It turns confrontation into negotiation. It depoliticises resistance. It interferes with local peoples' movements that have traditionally been self-reliant. NGOs have funds that can employ local people who might otherwise be activists in resistance movements, but now can feel they are doing some immediate, creative good (and earning a living while they're at it)." - Arundhati Roy in "The NGO-ization of resistance"

An anarchist approach to solidarity

A fundamental principle of anarchism is internationalism. We oppose nationalism and the existence of nation states and we argue for solidarity with ordinary people all over the world..with unpaid workers , paid workers, with the unemployed and with those who are unable to work. We see the important conflict as the one between the rich and the rest of us, not one between ordinary people from one part of the planet with ordinary people from another.

Another anarchist principle is that decisions should be taken by the people directly affected by them, that people subjected to a particular form of oppression should be supported in organising themselves to combat it. Recent occupations of direct provision centres by their residents also fit well into something anarchists advocate: taking direct action to bring about political change.

Because anarchists neither seek election nor accept state funding for our political organisations we are in a position to clearly criticize both the state and charities for the policies they advocate. We are one of the only voices which is able to do so.

And we can offer our unconditional support to asylum-seekers fighting to live and work wherever they choose since we acknowledge no legitimacy in states or their borders

"Patriotism assumes that our globe is divided into little spots, each one surrounded by an iron gate. Those who have had the fortune of being born on some particular spot, consider themselves better, nobler, grander, more intelligent than the living beings inhabiting any other spot. It is, therefore, the duty of everyone living on that chosen spot to fight, kill, and die in the attempt to impose his superiority upon all the others."

Emma Goldman: from "Patriotism: A Menace

to Liberty" in the 1917 edition of Emma Goldman's Anarchism and Other Essays

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FIGHTING BACK. PARIS BAKERY AND E.F. LANGUAGE SCHOOL WORKERS SPEAK OUT

WORDS: GREGOR KERR

One of the key principles underpinning anarchist politics and philosophy is that of self-organisation. And one of the key principles underpinning self-organisation is the belief that it is by doing that people learn.

Very few people come to radical politics through what they read or through 'education' in the traditional sense. It is usually through becoming involved in a struggle that directly affects themselves and their neighbours/work colleagues that most people come to see the power structures of society and begin a process of analysis of how society operates and how it needs to change if the needs of ordinary people are to be met.

It is for this reason that anarchists put a great deal of our time into supporting and encouraging people who get involved in what often appear to the wider world as rather small struggles. But sometimes 'small' struggles have a much wider impact – not just on those involved but on wider political trends and moves towards change. Indeed for those directly involved, there is really no such thing as a 'small' struggle. Any conflict in which someone stands up to a boss has deep implications for one's stress levels and one's bank balance. And any conflict which ends in even a partial victory has a deep and lasting effect on the morale and political views of those directly

involved. The corollary, of course, is also true. Any conflict which ends in defeat can have a negative impact on both the morale and political views of the protagonists.

We decided to chat to some of the participants in two of these 'smaller' struggles that took place in Dublin in the late spring/early summer of 2014. One of these both lasted longer and is better known than the other. The Paris Bakery occupation involved 25 migrant workers who occupied their former workplace for nearly 3 weeks when it was closed down suddenly owing the workers €158,000 in wages and entitlements between them.

Through the direct action of occupying the premises, through effective use of social media and through innovative tactics such as picketing the home of one of the owners, these workers and their supporters managed to highlight what has long been a glaring inequality in the law – the fact that if a company closes but is not wound up the staff have no access to the state's Insolvency Fund. Their case struck a chord with many people because the sight of young migrant workers being exploited and left unpaid is nothing new in the restaurant and catering industry. But the sight of those workers uniting and fighting back is one that has almost disappeared from our view in recent times.

By standing together these workers forced the state (in the form of the Revenue Commissioners) to take a court action to put the company into liquidation,

thus allowing them access to the state's Insolvency Fund. They also once again highlighted the loophole in the law (previously highlighted in the Vita Cortex occupation) that has left previous groups of workers high and dry in similar circumstances. And hopefully brought the closing of that loophole closer.

The second case involved a number of English language teachers at EF Language school who were threatened with pay cuts, organised themselves, threatened a strike, organised a lunchtime picket (which was cancelled because management had conceded before it) and managed to extract a reversal of the pay cut within the short period of a couple of days.

What these two campaigns/issues had in common was the fact that the workers were mostly young and in sectors that are for the most part unorganised and experience a lot of precarious employment. What they also had in common was the fact that both sets of workers were lucky in the contacts they made very early in their struggles – in the lessons those contacts brought with them from previous struggles and the advice they were therefore able to give.

As is increasingly common, especially in private sector employments based mainly on precarious labour, most of the workers in both these struggles were not unionised. In the case of the Paris Bakery, one worker was a member of a union, and they approached the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland for advice and support. The EF Language teachers joined the In-

dependent Workers Union en masse at the onset of their dispute.

So what about the theory that it is from small acorns that large oak trees grow – that involvement in ‘small’ struggles has profound impacts on those involved, changes people’s perspectives and ultimately has the potential to change the world!! We interviewed two people directly involved in each of the struggles, and we’ll let them speak for themselves.

Paris Bakery

IAR: Please give a brief background to the way in which the occupation began – how the decision was made to occupy etc.

Eduard: Well the decision to occupy this place came up as the owner tried to get the equipment out of the premises and close the restaurant without paying the workers for the job they have done for over two months

“We could see that lots of people were supporting us, through our Facebook group and by organising the protest.”

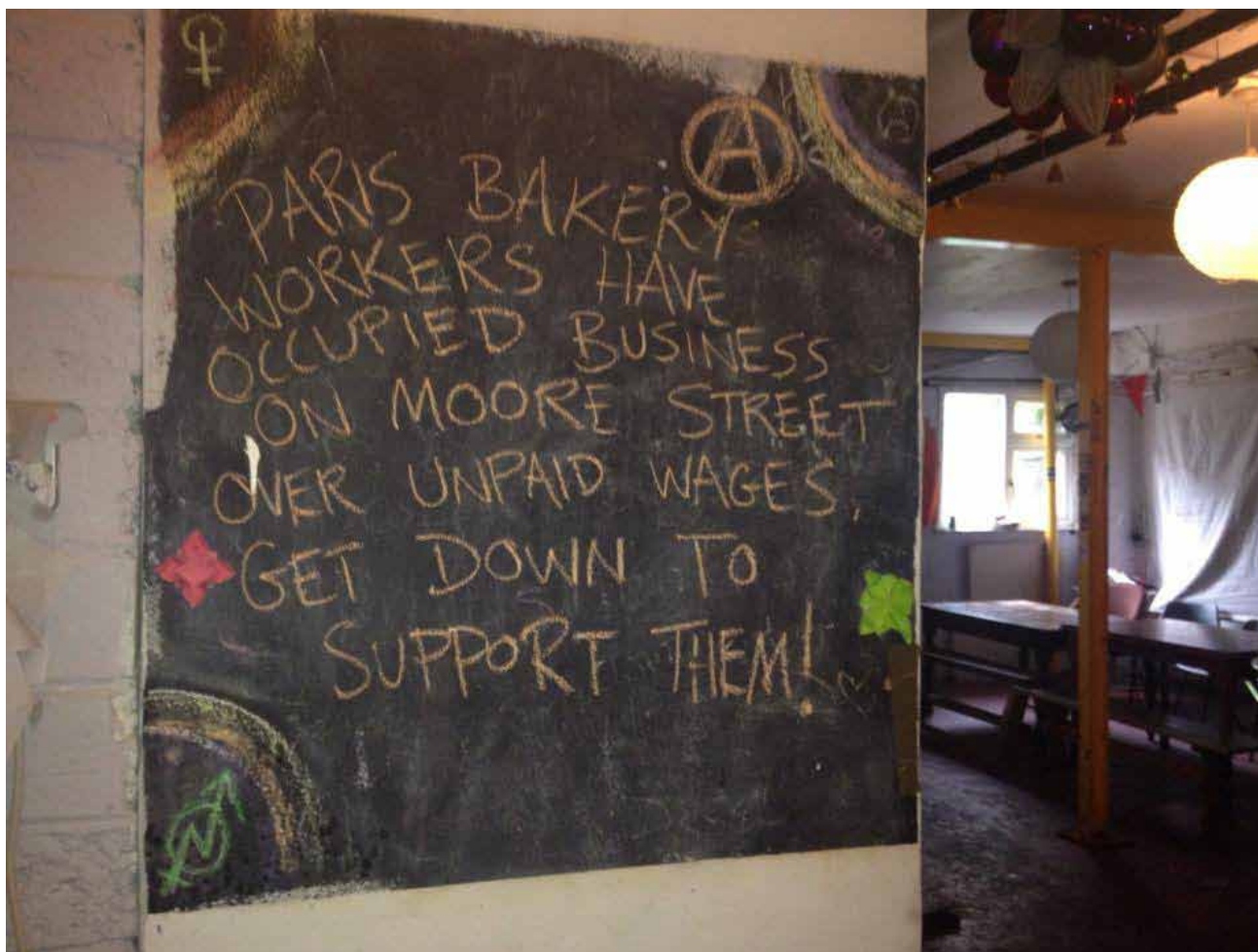
Anissa: A few of us hadn’t been paid for 2-3 months. The reason it was so long was because we were paid on a monthly basis and the wages had been accumulating from January on. We were promised money on Monday 19th May and when we didn’t get the amount promised we decided that we should all stand up together and ask for the money we were owed. We talked about it on Tuesday for the next day. On Wednesday we were all in front of the bakery at 9 am. We were told that morning that there was an electricity problem and at around 9:45, when the problem was fixed, Steven Cunningham the operations manager opened the shutter. But he straight away locked us out when he saw all of us gathered with Billy Wall (general secretary of OPATSI – Operative Plasterers and Allied Trades Society of Ireland). On Friday 21st May we learned that the owner, Yannick Forel, was removing assets from the premises. Immediately we went to the bakery accompanied by representatives of the MRCI (Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland) and some trade union reps and we decided that we were not going to move till we got paid.

IAR: What was your knowledge of trade unions in Ireland and/or Irish labour law before the occupation began?

Eduard: I had no knowledge whatsoever about trade unions or the Migrant Rights Centre. I guess we got lucky as one of my co-workers was a member of a trade union. That was how I started to realise the advantage and the power they can bring to fight for the right cause.

Anissa: I have to say that I had no knowledge whatsoever about trade unions and even less about the loophole in the Irish law. I didn’t know in the 6 years that I have worked in Ireland that there were no laws to protect taxpayers like me.

IAR: Have you ever been involved in anything similar to this before? Were you involved in any political campaign either here in Ireland or in your home country?



Eduard: No, I have not. This was the first time I have ever been involved in such a campaign, which until today it is hard to believe that we actually won the fight (well, half of it).

Anissa: NO. Politics and I are like water and oil.

IAR: How did the occupation work in practice? How did the workers make decisions as to how to proceed? What role did supporters have in relation to your decision making?

Eduard: The supporters were great, that’s how we were motivated to work through all the difficulties and move ahead, to find solutions to get to our goal. We were getting a lot of advice from the supporters which we analysed along with trade union and MRCI members.

Anissa: We mainly made decisions in groups. In the beginning it was like nobody knew how to proceed to the next step. None of us had any experience in that sort of thing. Of course sometimes there were tensions on certain matters, but I think respect for each other was the fact that kept us going and made us stay united.

IAR: How did the cultural and language diversity of the group of workers impact on how you were all able to work together in the occupation and make decisions?

Eduard: I believe that the cultural and language diversity that we have had nothing to do with our common problem, and that’s why everyone forgot about their diversity and focused on one thing - get the wages we have earned. As long as we all have the same interest, the background does not matter.

Anissa: Well the language and cultural diversity didn’t really matter a lot here because we all had a particular goal which was getting the money and staying strong. I think this kind of answers the question about how we worked together and made decisions. We had a lot of respect for each other.

IAR: What impact do you think being involved in this occupation has had on your views of trade unions/ political campaigning? Would you be more inclined to get involved in future campaigns or lend your support to workers in similar circumstances?

Eduard: It had a direct impact on my views and I will certainly be willing to join further similar campaigns to help others.

Anissa: The impact was huge. I just happen to see things from such a different point of view. Now I want to be an active supporter to people in need and people fighting for the right cause. You don’t know it but anybody can be hit someday. I know for a fact that I will be involved again because I want to give my support back to other people. Last Friday I was in front of a construction site in Abbey Street supporting some of the workers to get better working conditions.

IAR: What impact did the supporters have on your ability to keep the occupation going?

Eduard: Our supporters kept us confident that we were actually doing the right thing, that we were on the right track.

Anissa: We wouldn’t have reached that far without our supporters. Food, money, toiletries, sleeping over, ideas etc.. Without them we wouldn’t have made it. Thinking about the supporters still and what they did for us was just amazing. There’s so much to say about them and a very special thanks goes to Deirdre O’Shea and Con.

IAR: Anything else you’d like to say?

Eduard: I would like to say my favourite quote – “BEING A MEMBER OF TRADE UNION, IT’S LIKE HAVING A WEAPON IN YOUR POCKET”.

Anissa: Well, first thing Believe in yourself. Never give up no matter what, you have to stand up for yourself and for your rights. Don’t be scared of doing so because trust me you will be amazed to know

"Being a member of a trade union, it's like having a weapon in your pocket".

how many people will come and support you in a bad situation. Never let people treat you unfairly and it's very important for all workers out there to join a Union and know your rights and entitlements. And the most important thing - remain united even when morale is low. "United we stand, Divided we Fall".

EF Language School

IAR: Please give a brief background to the way in which the dispute began

B: The dispute began after the management conducted individual meetings with all the teaching staff on temporary contracts to inform us of wage cuts coming in in a couple of weeks. We had also received an email the previous week to inform us that there would be fewer working hours as student numbers were down. After everyone had been informed, we spoke amongst ourselves and, along with a letter expressing our feelings of unhappiness, requested a group meeting with the management. We also joined the Independent Workers Union. After our request was denied, we took further action, issued strike notice and planned a lunchtime protest.

A: All of the teachers were sent an email to invite us to meetings with our bosses. We were called in one by one to be told our pay was going to be cut by 10% or 15% depending on our current rate. We were told that this was because of a fall in business from Venezuela. We all decided not to accept the pay cut and then the process of resisting it began.

IAR: What was your knowledge of trade unions in Ireland and/or Irish labour law before the dispute began?

B: I didn't have much knowledge before the dispute so it was very much a learning experience for me. Thankfully, some of the other teachers had better knowledge and we also got a lot of useful help and information from our union.

A: I didn't have much knowledge of trade unions in Ireland. Most of what I knew about Irish labour law was from friends advising me when I'd had a previous dispute with this company over bank holiday pay.

IAR: Were you ever involved in anything similar to this before? Were you involved in any political campaign either here in Ireland or in any other country?

B: No, I've never been involved in anything like this before.

A: I've been involved in a number of political campaigns. Last year I was active in the 'Justice for Cleaners' campaign in University of London where I was a student.

IAR: How did the struggle develop in practice? How did the workers make decisions as to how to proceed? What role did union officials or supporters have in relation to your decision making?

B: All the teachers kept in constant contact during the dispute. We had a text group, emails and we also had daily meetings at lunch and break times. We made decisions as a group and made sure that

everyone was happy with whatever decisions we made before proceeding with them. Our union representative helped a lot too and attended one of the group meetings (after management agreed to meet us as a group) in an advisory capacity. As the school refused to recognise our union he was not allowed to take an active role in the meeting.

A: Every action was done collectively. Every communication from us to management was in the form of a letter signed by all of us. Our first act was to refuse to do any more meetings alone and to call for a meeting between management and all of the teachers. Management continued to respond to our (numerous) letters with individual emails and asked us to communicate by sending an email from one person. We responded with a jointly signed letter to say that would not be possible. The union officials made it very clear from the beginning and throughout the process that decision making was in our hands and that they were there to help us to carry out our own decisions. They emphasised the importance of all of us being on the same page.

IAR: What impact do you think being involved in this struggle has had on your views of trade unions/political campaigning?

B: I would definitely have more knowledge about trade unions and how to go about organising people and meetings now than before. I would also be more inclined to support people who are in trade disputes and pay more attention to them in the news as I understand more about them now. As for my political views, they haven't changed much. A group was set up to help with people in similar situation, like the students whose schools closed down but I am not sure that a whole lot was done to help them.

A: This struggle made me believe more in the power of trade unions and realise how essential it is to be a member of a union.

IAR: Would you be more inclined to get involved in future campaigns or lend your support to workers in similar circumstances?

B: Yes, I would.

A: Yes.

IAR: What impact did support from outside your own workforce have on your ability to keep the struggle going?

B: We could see that lots of people were supporting us, through our Facebook group and by organis-

ing the protest. Although the protest was cancelled, many people had planned to support us. It was good to know we had support.

A: I don't know about for other staff, but for me the support from outside helped keep me going and believe in us when it was getting tough. It was also important to us to feel like we could mobilise a big enough crowd to protest if we needed to.

IAR: Anything else you'd like to say?

B: Hope that's ok!

A: I had hoped that we would build on our success and unionise more teachers and maybe even start a campaign against zero hours contracts - which would be a campaign very grounded in the experiences of workers. At the time of our struggle my colleagues were all saying they were well up for that. Since then I've tried a number of times to get people to meet and talk about it, and eventually just set a time for a meeting but no one came. This has been bothering me for a while because I really felt a responsibility to build on the momentum we had and thought it was a perfect situation to build a workers' struggle, so I really think I've failed there.

Also during the struggle I really tried to make the organising horizontal and make it a team effort that was democratic and transparent and empowering people through involvement. But that wasn't really what transpired.

When I lived in London last year most of my activism was in the Justice for Cleaners / 3 cosas campaigns at my university. That was my only experience organising in a workers' struggle. I think that one of the things that made that successful was that all of the cleaners were from Latin American countries that had had left wing leadership that they all felt they benefited from, and most of them were activists outside of this campaign, and before they'd arrived in the UK.

So basically I don't feel that what I learned was that, if capital pushes labour to a critical point then the workers have the capacity to self organise and respond and win, and will be politicised and want to build on that (which had been my previous view). But I did learn about the real power of collective organising and that's a message I'd like to spread.



Book review: Caliban and the Witch - Women, the body and 'Primitive Accumulation'

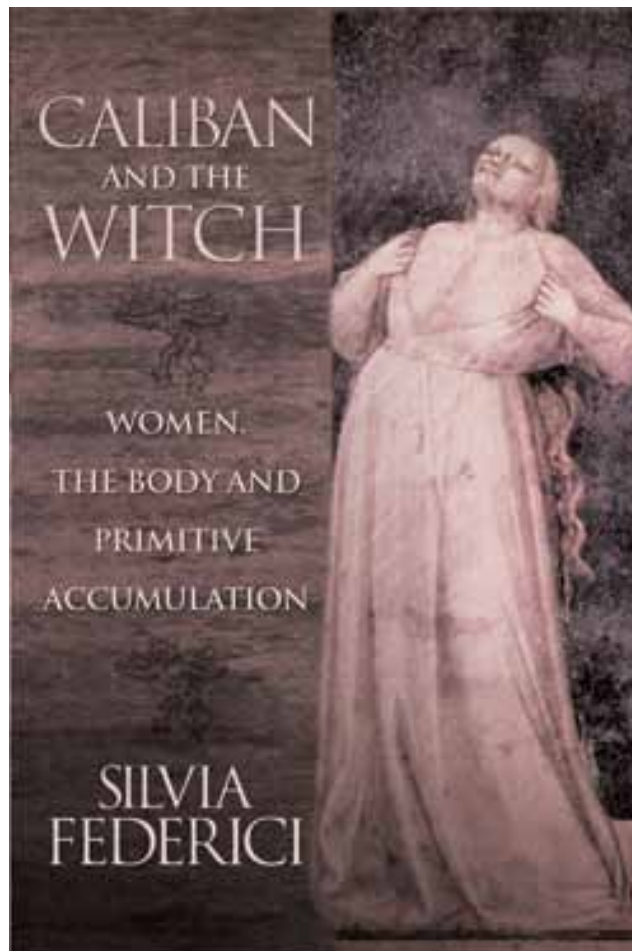
This piece of work is undertaken from the viewpoint of the seemingly invisible struggles of women against authoritarian rule, the historical erasing of women as being part of the wider social struggles for liberation against oppression, and indeed, providing a different type of revolutionary struggle in their own right instead of examining the effects of social reproduction and labour of women.

Struggle against feudalism

Federici begins by discussing the revolutionary nature of the social struggles of the Middle Ages, which even in their defeat, paved a newer way for social liberation built upon egalitarian principles - the sharing of wealth, and refusal of hierarchies and authoritarian rule. This had put the feudal system 'into crisis' and could 'not have succeeded without a radical reshaping of the social order', and during this period of transition, the anti-feudal struggle, was, largely, a revolutionary struggle comprising of social mobility, contracts for paid work (the birth of capitalism), which Federici argues is the worst thing to have happened (Although many Marxists and others argue it was a necessary step in progress) as this move from working the land to contract work divided the peasant class into wealthier and poorer peasants who were then exploited further. The exploitation and subjugation of women to men within the newly defined capitalist class and the different degrees divided the working peasant social class further, into a gender based rights hierarchy.

"This work is of fundamental importance to our understanding of how the witch hunts against women heretics were a key factor in contributing to the separation of labour and exploitation between the sexes"

Collective relations prevailed over familial relations prior to the move to Capitalism, so the sexual division of labour was dangerous to lords because it gave women power and protection from men. Women were increasingly seen as sinful beings; Many were critical of the churches teachings and after the



crusades there was a massive increase in women 'heretics' preaching themselves, openly defying the church when it demanded payment for alms and baptisms. This was the beginning of a social revolution that needed to be quashed before it grew in power. Women who, faced with the removal of control of their bodily autonomy as people - workers, social labour reproducers, abortion providers (in feudal times abortive remedies taken by women were not seen as 'bad' by the church until later, as there was a degree of population control with remedies and infanticide which meant the church did not have to provide any sort of charitable assistance to those born of unwanted pregnancies) existed as much as possible outside the confines of the church.

Heresy and witch hunts

The execution of hundreds of thousands of 'witches' via the witch hunts, was a movement which became the tool of the ruling classes and landowners to split up the resistance movement against the increasingly oppressive economic, moral and labour sanctions placed on people by the church against communitarian ways of life. Heresy, a sin punishable by heavy fines by the church, became increasingly defined as the worst thing a person could be accused of - and many of the anti-church and anti-authoritarian heretics were women, so the witch hunts began to eradicate these forms of social autonomy by burning, life imprisonment, casting out, and torture. Witch hunts were solely directed at breaking the power of women in groups as part of the wider revolutionary struggle, and are under represented in the enormity of the damage they did - not only to the working class as a whole, but in terms of the power relations between men and women themselves. The exploitation of this difference was used as a 'bargaining chip' with the brotherhood of working class men and a compromise to becoming more like their wealthier peasant social,

political and economic superiors.

In its main content, this work is of fundamental importance to our understanding of how the witch hunts against women heretics were a key factor in contributing to the separation of labour and exploitation between the sexes, the sexual division of labour itself, subjugating women's labour to that of reproduction of the workforce and the exclusion of women from waged work and their subsequent subordination to men. All of this contributed to the advent of capitalism based on the removal of power from women.

Lessons for today

Federici holds a lens up to the all but invisible structures that removed women's labour, social reproduction and communitary powers, while taking us through the reasons why this was necessary for Capitalism to flourish, and brings us to the conclusion that resistance against established powers, whether hierarchical, patriarchal, societal/political is not new. It holds many lessons for today in outlining various types of resistance that can be employed against state and church oppression. She is critical of the lack of analysis of the inclusion in poststructural theorists of how gendered genocidal tactics are critical to understanding power relations, and is critical of Marxist theory in that there is no recognition for the different types of agency required by the different sexes to obtain certain freedoms from oppressors.

This accounts for how a historical look at major revolutionary events in terms of power relations from a feminist perspective, gives us a broader understanding of the challenging of the political status quo, of elites, the landowners and the Church's increasingly hideous 'moral' codes to retain control over the poorer peasants who railed against the hypocrisy, poverty, and contractual ownership of labour, and the patriarchal nature of Capitalism itself, and reveals an extremely undermined, under discussed and underused historical account of how the exploitation of women as part of the revolutionary social class lead to their demotion in status as secondary to men, being more aggressively dealt with in terms of forcible widespread execution because of their sex via the witch hunts, and the 'invention of tradition' and proves for fascinating reading.

WORDS: MARIA CADDELL

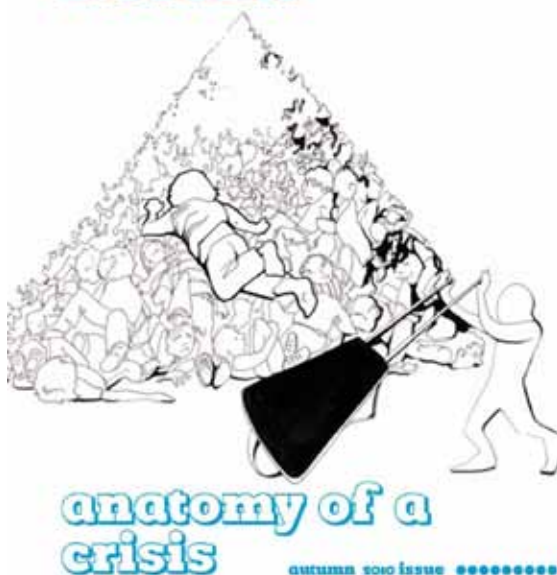
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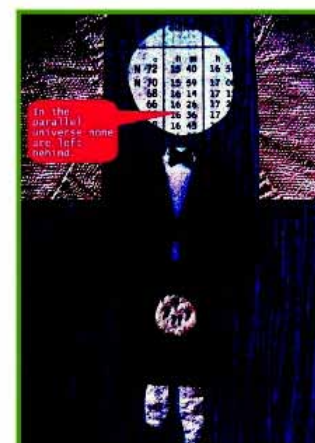
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