

printflare

The print project of Éire Independent Media Centre – <http://www.indymedia.ie> – Mayday special edition

Mayday rolls around again. Around this time of year there's usually a spike in the interest of Indymedia so Printflare is making a brief Lazarus-like appearance. Don't know what Indymedia is? Well, here's the blurb taken from our website (the address of which is above): "The Independent Media Centre is a network of collectively run media outlets for the creation of radical, accurate, and passionate tellings of the truth. We work out of a love and inspiration for people who continue to work for a better world, despite corporate media's distortions and unwillingness to cover the efforts to free humanity."

Indymedia is the collective effort of hundreds of independent media makers from around the world who are dedicated to providing a forum for independent reporting about important social and political issues. Several

hundred media activists, many of whom have been working for years to develop an active independent media through their own organizations, came together in late November, 1999 in Seattle to create an Independent Media Center to cover protests against the World Trade Organization. The Seattle IMC provided coverage of the WTO through both a printed publication called "The Blind Spot" and the first IMC web site. The web site received almost 1.5 million hits during the WTO protests. In February of 2000 a small IMC formed in Boston to cover the Biodeviation Convergence, and a larger one came together in Washington D.C. to cover the A16 protests against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. After that, requests from local groups interested in forming their own IMCs started to pour in. There are now over 150 local Independent Media Centers around the world and more are on the way.

The site, which uses a democratic open-publishing system, has since then logged more than 2 million hits, and was featured on America Online, Yahoo, CNN, BBC Online, and numerous other sites. Through a decentralized and autonomous network, hundreds of media activists have since setup independent media centres in London, Canada, Mexico City, Prague, Belgium, France, and Italy, with more to come. For more information visit the global IMC site - www.indymedia.org

Indymedia endeavors to empower people to become the media by present honest, accurate, powerful independent reports. One vague long-term goal would be to foster and facilitate the development of as much independent media as possible around the world. Some come to their Indymedia organizing with a deeper goal, to enable people, while they're "becoming the media," to realize they can take control of other aspects of their lives that they previously left up to 'experts' or 'professionals.' On a practical level, some who are involved with Indymedia are working toward the development of national and/or international television or radio networks, and others are working toward the establishment of an international independent regular newspaper and

others projects that will assure the public has access to independent news reports."

A regular question that is asked about Indymedia is how is it associated with the "anti-globalisation" movement. This is taken from the Indymedia FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions site): "While Indymedia is not a conscious mouthpiece of any particular point of view, many Indymedia organizers and people who post to the Indymedia newswires are supporters of the "anti-globalisation" (alternative globalisation, anti-corporatisation) movement. Corporate media often



describe those who protest so-called "free trade" conferences and agreements as being "anti-globalisation," ostensibly against the process of breaking down national borders to create what pro-globalisation economists claim will be a more profitable world. This misrepresents the reality of the international movement for social justice, which advocates

not the "free trade" of powerful governments (trade that allows goods and services to flow across national borders, often in a way that allows producers to move their manufacturing plants to countries where they can pay workers a pittance), but "fair trade" that opens borders to goods and people as a way of sharing the earth's natural and manufactured resources in a way that will benefit all.

Today's social justice activists are not against globalisation of community, justice and resources, they protest the economic globalisation coordinated by the powerful few that results in their profiting from the work of the majority of the world's population. They sometimes prefer to call themselves "alternative globalisation" activists, or those who are against the increasing corporatisation of society and culture. What draws many of these activists to Indymedia? Perhaps people who protest the power multinational corporations, faceless international financial institutions and inaccessible governments have over their lives found encouragement in Indymedia's news wire, which encourages them to present their own account of what is happening in the world. People participating in protests that question the very tenets of corporate domination of their lives understand why their issues are unlikely to receive honest consideration in the corporate-owned media. Activists planning an event can assure a safe space for presenting non-corporate news by forming a local IMC to provide coverage of the event, or posting news to the site of a local IMC that currently exists."

www.indymedia.ie is the address for the Éire "chapter" of the global Indymedia network. The distinct website has been in full operation now for over three years, although several volunteers had been involved in smaller projects beforehand using the Indymedia name. Indymedia Éire was set up after

articles written by people in Dublin started to appear on the UK site, in the absence of any Irish newswire. A large public meeting was held in the St. Andrews Resource Centre on Pearse Street towards the end of summer 2001, and eventually after some false starts and hard grind work the Éire website was born.

At the moment Indymedia Éire is primarily directed towards the internet. The site is currently averaging about 60,000+ hits a day, which is good in a relatively small country. Any story which appears on the newswire is read by a lot of people. But recently, Indymedia has been branching out its empire into other media channels, including print (what you are holding in your hands right now), radio (regular appearances for commentary on NEAR FM – and if you have any contact with local radio stations and would be keen to do a show, please get in touch), internet audio, and video.

Indymedia Éire is run in an open and free atmosphere. We welcome participation and contributions from everyone who feels they have something constructive to add. You don't have to be a member of the Indymedia collective to post to the newswire or to contribute articles. We collaborate on the mailing lists and have face to face meetings every couple of months or as the need arises.

Indymedia is based on an "open publishing" platform. This means that basically anyone with a story can go to our site, type up an article (and also contribute photos, audio, and video!), hit publish, and it will appear on our newswire. Indymedia is a democratic newswire. We want to see and hear the real stories, news, and opinions from around the country. While we struggle to maintain the newswire as a completely open forum we do monitor it and remove posts. Posts are removed or hidden when they are in breach of our editorial guidelines. You can see the full list of these at the website when you go to publish an article.

We think that all content published on this site should be free for non-commercial reuse, reprint, and



rebroadcast, on the internet and elsewhere, and we think that Copyleft is an idea which should be central to Indymedia. Because of this, all content published on this site is done so under these terms by default. What exactly is Copyleft? Copyleft is part of the ideology of Creative Commons, which is a system of publishing which offers a flexible range of protections and freedoms for authors and artists. It has built upon the "all rights reserved" of traditional copyright to create a voluntary "some rights reserved" copyright. There are different licenses and conditions you can attach to your work (for example, you could publish an article or a photograph which could be

freely reproduced by anyone else – on the condition that it does not appear in a for-profit publication). For much more information about Copyleft, you should visit the website www.creativecommons.org.

This article, entitled "Heritage of Disobedience", first appeared in a Belfast publication called "Scrawl" a couple of years ago. It merited inclusion as a background history to current Mayday events.

"The 1st of May is now recognised as a 'workers' holiday and the connections with labour movements and the working class are widely accepted. Yet amidst all the talk of "reclaiming Mayday", one comes to wonder what it is exactly we are reclaiming. The date today is often associated with a number of elements, most notably that of trade unions and the right to protest. Where as it is quite easy to chronicle the recent history of Mayday in this context, there are other aspects to it which are seemingly lost to antiquity, half remembered in strange and seemingly quaint customs.

Yet on closer examination, these traditions seem strangely familiar. Maydays' origins stem from pre-Christian times when this day was a widely celebrated pagan event. The word "pagan" literally means "of the countryside", and those who dwelt in it saw Mayday as an opportunity to welcome the coming of Spring and celebrate the planting of new crops. In a time when the successful planting and growing of your own produce literally determined your own survival, the nature worship associated with paganism is easy to understand.

Mayday, or "Beltaine" was seen as an important rite of passage within the yearly calendar. The overriding theme was one of fertility and earthly abundance with an undeniably sexual theme at the forefront of the activities surrounding it. The portrayal of "divine union", the union of male & female can be seen in the presence of the maypole (the phallic symbolism should be obvious) plunged into "mother earth". On the night before Mayday it was traditional for young people to venture into the woods to find birch-boughs and trees for the following days decorations. This was accompanied by a relaxed and unrestrained approach to sexual activity that led one disapproving commentator of the time to note "scarcely a third of maidens going to the woods returned home undefiled".

At the centre of festivities was a Mayday parade, led by a "Lord of Misrule", "King of Unreason" and "Abbot of Disobedience", accompanied by a "Queen of the May" who would be newly elected from among the common people. The Queens' counterpart would be represented by the "Green Man", often associated with Herne the Hunter or other male fertility gods. It was seen as a celebration of the people, by the people, for the people. It was the continuation of a tradition that predated the arrival of the Christian church and embodied a spirit of freedom & excess which those in power found anathema to their own agenda. It was a blatant display of autonomy & freedom by common folk, and thus was perceived as a threat.

Whereas the Christian church had incorporated many other pagan events, such as Christmas and Easter into its own calendar, Mayday proved problematic. The very nature of the festivities practiced were precisely the activities which the church was keen to discourage-sexual freedom & nature worship are not core elements of the Christian faith! It is England that was the most widely affected by state intervention, and is thus best documented. In 1583, the puritan social reformer Philip Stubbes published a book entitled "The Anatomie of Abuses", regarded by

historians as one of the most authoritative texts from the Shakespearean period. Stubbes included a section entitled "Against May" in which he described in detail the Mayday festivities and called for their abolition. This was a popular text of the time, passing through four editions in three years, and serves as to tell us something of the attitudes of wealthy, literate and predominately puritan town dwellers who bought it.

Aside from the sexual nature of the event there were other, more political aspects that worried the government. The church and state were intertwined to an extent that they were virtually the same. The worship of intangible and abstract deities such as Mother Earth and The Green Man were alien to the Christian mindset. What's more, this worship was practiced by common people on their own land with no need to attend or support the state endorsed church. This highlighted the divisions between the beliefs of the people and the hierarchical character of the state. Also, the practice of going into the woods to fetch the maypole raised issues concerning the rights of the people to take wood freely for fuel, timber and repairs...a concept that contradicted the notion of land "ownership".

The puritans eventually had their way. Parliament passed acts which enabled the enclosure of common land, prohibiting people of their rights to assemble and celebrate Mayday-similar to the recent introduction of the Criminal Justice Bill and its effect upon the "free festival" scene. This was met with widespread rioting which would involve the destruction of fences around land which was once theirs. Effigies of these land owners were often burned- another relic of paganism which we still find traces of today in the "burning of the Guy" (check out 1970's cinematic classic, "The Wicker Man" for another interpretation!). In 1644 the government introduced measures which outlawed the celebration of Mayday. The maypole ("this stinking idol"), the annual ride of a naked Queen of the May through town and the "greenwood marriages" of young men and women were all declared illegal. Despite this, Mayday was still celebrated clandestinely by common folk in many rural areas.

It wasn't until 1660 that the ban on Mayday was lifted, with the restoration of Charles II and the resulting backlash against the puritan regime. However, the former threat of punishment to this revelry had affected the tradition, driving the elements of sexuality and role reversal underground. As a result, Mayday re-emerged in a somewhat sanitised form with a more sedate identity. It was over the next one hundred years or so that the seeds of Maydays' connections with the labour movements of today were sown. The various trade guilds that existed during the middle ages began to celebrate feast days, represented by the patron saints of their respective crafts. Yet despite this tenuous link with the church, the two most important days in the trade calendar were the Summer Solstice and Mayday, two notable pagan festivals. You obviously can't keep a Green Man down!

Mayday parades were again celebrated in conjunction with these trade festivals, albeit on land "owned" by the state. Once again we have the election of a May Queen, though the ceremony now resembles a modern day beauty pageant as opposed to an invitation to an orgy!

What is interesting is the transformation of the characters within the mayday festival around this time. "The Green Man" often metamorphosed into "Robin Goodfellow" another name for "Robin Hood", accompanied by a new incarnation of "The Lord of Misrule", now a man dressed as a woman referred to as "Maid Marian". Given the well known characteristics of the Robin Hood legend, the anti-authoritarian undertones are quite evident. In turn these characters were accompanied by "mummers" who would tell jokes and mock local authority figures of the state & church. Echoes of this activity can be seen in demonstrations such as recent years "Reclaim the Streets".

Further cleaning up of Mayday took place during the 19th century with the advent of the sexually-repressed, god-fearing Victorian era. They reinvented the festival as a celebration of "Merry England", rewriting history via a depiction of a god-fearing country, populated by virginal maidens. A spirit of merriment was actively discouraged by the Victorian middle classes, who were appalled by the notion of commoners running amok in public on a diet of pie and beer! Still, Mayday continued to be celebrated in many different regional forms, with varying degrees of state acceptance. However, the industrial revolution was in full swing and factory owners sought to increase the number of working hours whilst reducing the number of holidays...a fact which did not rest easy with the common man, ultimately leading to massive campaigns to reduce working hours, culminating in the establishment of May 1st as an "International Workers Day" in 1889.

So why do we need to reclaim Mayday? What is so important about what was once an agricultural festival celebrated by farmers or a parade attended by trade guilds?

First and foremost, Mayday is a secular festival. It is the one festival in our calendar that does not have a significant church service in recognition of it, mainly due to its suppressed yet still present qualities of rebellion. In this light, it is easy to see the connections drawn by the early labour & socialist movements of the 20th century. It has been celebrated in some form or another for a very long time, before the establishment of any particular government or church and is by the people for the people. It is a constantly evolving tradition that has seen much change and will undoubtedly do so in the future. Perhaps to understand any "true" meaning of Mayday, or best see what lessons it



has to teach us, we should try to see the world with the same eyes as our ancestors. The puritans desire to "conquer" nature by suppressing it, and ultimately transcend it by achieving entrance to an unearthly heaven can be seen reflected in the actions of governments and corporations today. In their never ending quest for profit (a businessmen "heaven") they "conquer" nature with their pollutant spewing structures and suppress the voices of those who would be its champions. The protesters of today, whose concerns include that of the environment and "ownership" of property and land echo the revelry of commoners past.

And like our ancestors, we would do well to observe the cycles within nature to which we are all subject to. Despite the fact that most of us now live in towns & cities as opposed to tilling the land does not make the struggles of our "pagan" forbearers any less relevant. If anything, the increased mechanisation following the industrial revolution means that mankind is not only subject to these cycles, but is now responsible for their regulation as well."

MAYDAY 2005: A new theme that is emerging around this year's Mayday protests in major European cities is that of "precarity". After several years of frivolous-style/"lifestyle" actions, such as street parties, urban gardening, etc, collectives around Europe did much soul searching and examination of declining interest in Mayday events, and are now attempting to re-focus the day back around the traditional concept of workers rights. The changing, globalised world means that the old notion of a job for life is almost redundant, especially in the private sector – which is expanding as the public sector decreases with the sell-off of public utilities and resources.

The Wikipedia defines precarity as "a term used to refer to either intermittent work or, more generally, a confluence of intermittent work and precarious existence. In this latter sense, precarity is a condition of existence without predictability or security, affecting material or psychological welfare. The term 'precarity' (or precarité) -- linking a condition of work to a social condition -- emerged in France in 2000, around what was officially titled the 'Marches Against Unemployment, Job Insecurity, and Social Exclusion'. (At the time and since, debates have occurred around the themes of inclusion/refusal of work/Social Europe/migration/and the equation of different kinds of work within discussions on precarity.

According to some perspectives, precarity is a condition of late-capitalism, as nations shift from manufactory to service and information based economies. For others, precarity has been a feature of most forms of work in capitalism for most of the world's population. It is only by comparison with the exceptional period of Fordism and the welfare state, and from the perspective of particular kinds of (paid) work in some countries, that precarity appears to be a new phenomenon.

Milan-based organizer Alex Foti, formerly of the Italian flexiwork syndicate ChainWorkers, identifies two types of workers afflicted by precarity, "chainworkers (being workers in malls, shopping centres, hypermarkets, and in the myriad of jobs in logistics and selling in the metropolis) and what we call brainworkers (cognitive labourers, programmers, freelancers who possess individual value on the labour market but do not yet have a collective force or subjectivity with social rights - that is, they might make above-standard wages but if they lose their job they are thrown into poverty)."

According to another perspective, "The idea of transversal social unity in shared precariousness is closely linked to the insight that 'all life is work', in the sense that value is transformed from labour into capital right across the social field, not just in jobs. But 'all life is work' doesn't mean all work is the same. Far more value can be squeezed out of some kinds of labour than from others: hence the war on 'economic inactivity' waged by governments and employers, a desperate mobilisation to get as many people working (in the traditional sense) as many hours as possible. Pious identification between violently stratified social subjects does nothing whatsoever to undermine this war effort."

A call for collective action this year went out on the euromayday.org site: "Precarity is the most widespread condition of labour and life in Europe today. It affects everyone, everyday, in every part of life: whether chosen or imposed, precarity is a generalised condition experienced by the majority of people. Precarious people are now the cornerstone of the wealth production process. Notwithstanding this, we are invisible and count for nothing in the traditional forms of social and political representation or in the European agenda.

As the precarious of Europe -- flex, temp and contortionist workers, migrants, students, researchers, unmotivated wage slaves, pissed off and

happy part-timers, insecure temps, willingly or unwillingly unemployed -- we are acting so as to grasp the moment/our time and struggle for new collective rights and our individual and collective possibility to choose our future. This is why we are building a public space on a European level to catalyse new forms of social cooperation, and maximize the sharing of skills, experiences and resources: to construct and bring to life a new social imagination. We call on everyone in Helsinki, Barcelona, Hamburg, Liege, Ljubjana, Seville, Milan, Copenhagen, Maribor, Paris, Amsterdam, L'Aquila, Marseille, Vienna, London, Stockholm, Napoli and Palermo to participate in the Euromayday process.



PRECARIOUSNESS is what we live. We demand security and universality of income, social and vacation benefits, increased overtime and limitations on night and Sunday work, subsidized education, housing, health, free access to media and knowledge, a Eurowide minimum wage, right to union-organizing for temps and flexi-timers, an end of wage and union discrimination by employers between temp and non-temp labour, such as the fact that a part-timer's hour is paid less than a full-timer's, an end to xenophobic laws and mass deportations that are suppressing the free circulation of people of all hues, religions, and cultures across NEUROPA.

It's clear to everybody we are living in a WAR SOCIETY where all of us have become bomb-fodder for fundamentalist and neo-liberal franchises alike. We live constantly under risk, under an imminent threat of destruction. It is not only basic social services, our incomes and jobs that are under fierce attack everywhere, but our very bodies could be annihilated in an instant at any instant, in a train, a building, a subway, a mall. Aznar's cynical attempt to manipulate the sorrow of Spaniards, Catalans, Basques and Europeans, has backfired and undermined one of the three neo-liberal pillars on which euro-Bushism rests.

We are also living in a WAR ECONOMY set in motion by an ongoing act of imperial aggression to establish the world hegemony of a neoliberal model that has proved incapable of either spreading wealth or preventing crisis. In the name of neoliberalism, the political élites of the West, reinforced by coercive social norms, such as drug prohibitionism or the return to family values, constant remote monitoring and close surveillance of unrest and disarray, have sold souls and assets to transnational financial markets and corporations, by privatizing utilities, housing, health, schooling, the ether, thus reinforcing the neoliberal bias in favour of stronger inequality.

Rumsfeld's flexible war had WAL-MART as logistics model, thanks to its information-rich labour-intensive efficient flow of goods and services. Wal-Mart is the biggest corporation and largest supermarket chain on earth. It's also a firm that pays on average SUBPOVERTY WAGES and imports huge quantities of textiles and other goods from Chinese non-union factories and sweatshops. Global chain store brands like Wal-Mart, Ikea, Carrefour, Adecco, Auchan/Alcampo, Manpower, Metro, Yum! Brands, Esselunga, Autogrill are the essence of how neoliberal corporations look at people: pliant, obedient, subservient, manipulable, available on call and on demand, exploitable at will, fireable at whim.

We are convinced that at the core of the process of neoliberal accumulation lies flexible and contingent labour

by the young, women, migrants and casualised employees, in crucial reproductive and distribution services, and in the knowledge, culture, and media industries that provide the raw material on which the system functions: information. We call ourselves PRECOG because we embody the PRECARIAT working in retail and services and the COGNITARIAT of media and education industries. We are the producers of neoliberal wealth, we are the creators of knowledge, style and culture enclosed and appropriated by monopoly power."

Precarity is not just limited to continental Europe. In Ireland, in the last few years, there are notable examples of long established production and primary industry businesses closing down to migrate to the far east where wages are much lower. A company can be making profits in a modern Western country, but the opportunity to make more is often hard for any business directors to pass over. Such a case is that of the Fruit of The Loom sewing plant in Buncrana, which was closed down with the loss of 150 full-time jobs in an area that has a history of economic depression. The operation was moved to Morocco. Over a thousand workers lost their jobs in other plants in Dungloe, Malin, Milford and Raphoe.

The consequences of this are two-fold. Firstly, the local communities that rely on the industry for employment are decimated. Secondly, the new workers that are taken on in the developing world do not have the same safeguards that European workers have. They work longer hours for much lower pay, their conditions are unsanitary, and in most cases the companies do not have to comply with any environmental legislation. Many of the urban textile workers in sweatshops come from rural farming backgrounds, and come to the cities with the false promise of increased living standards. While this is happening other multinational companies snap up small farms and family lands for mass production.



Another facet of the new precarious economy is manifested right now in the ongoing GAMA construction workers scandal. Unionised building companies in Ireland, whose workers have basic rights and conditions guaranteed, could not match GAMA's offers for tenders, often for large public sector projects, including council housing. It has now emerged that the reason that GAMA were able to offer such low rates was because they were paying their workers a third of the minimum wage – and this is well below the average wage for a builder. Most if not all of the GAMA workers are from Turkey, and because of the precariousness of their situation they felt they could not speak out about their continued exploitation. It is only now in recent weeks after years of their wages being pilfered into bank accounts in Holland, they managed to find their collective voice and shout it out in the streets for people to hear.

Another example of immigrants being exploited for cheap labour in this country is that of Salvacion Orge, the Filipino beautician who was working on the Isle Of Inishmore ferry for just over one euro an hour. When she eventually built up the courage to complain about her situation, Irish Ferries cancelled her contract. Rather than accept this though, she fought back and stayed on the ferry, with the support of the rest of the crew. Irish Ferries eventually paid her a lump sum of €25,000 as compensation and also organised her flight home. These are just two recent situations in which immigrant workers in precarious situations had the tenacity to fight for their basic rights. There are probably many who are being exploited right now, but who do not want to speak out for fear of being deported.

The theme of "precarity" this year is an attempt to give those workers on the fringes of the economy, or the "precariat", a space to have their stories heard. For more information, you can check out the websites below:

- <http://www.precarity.info/>
- <http://www.chainworkers.org>
- <http://www.euromarches.org/>
- <http://www.metamute.com/>
- <http://noborder.org/>
- <http://euromayday.org/>



stories from the www.indymedia.ie newswire

All of these stories have been taken from the Indymedia Ireland newswire. It is an open source newswire – this means that anyone can come along and publish a story. You do not have to be a professional journalist to write a piece for the newswire! If you have a story in mind that you think other people might be interested in, it could be about your workplace, community, school, an opinion on current affairs, pretty much anything; you can visit the website and click on the “publish” link, where you’ll find instructions on how to publish your article, and the editorial guidelines which you can publish under. If you have photos, audio, or even video, you can publish this too on the internet (although admittedly things get *slightly* more complicated – but if you have any questions don’t hesitate to contact us, we’ll be happy to help you out with all technical questions and problems.

Re-Emergence of Discredited Ilisu Dam Project



Plans for large dams in southeast Turkey including the discredited Ilisu dam project may yet go ahead in spite of adverse impacts on cultural and environmental rights, according to a new report by the National University of Ireland, Galway and the Kurdish Human Rights Project. The report provides new evidence from hydroelectric dam projects planned for the Munzur, Tigris and Greater Zap rivers.

The study, a report of a fact-finding mission to the region carried out by Maggie Ronayne, Lecturer in Archaeology at the National University of Ireland, Galway, demonstrates how archaeology in particular supports the case of thousands of villagers adversely affected by these projects, most of whom do not appear to have been consulted at all about the dams and many of whom want to return to reservoir areas, having already been displaced by the recent conflict in the region....

The overwhelming response in particular from women and their organisations is one of opposition to the negative impact on them and those in their care; yet women have been the least consulted sector. The reservoirs would submerge evidence for hundreds and potentially thousands of ancient sites of international importance, including evidence of our earliest origins as a species, the beginnings of agriculture, and the remains of empires including those of Rome and Assyria.

The heritage of Kurds, Armenians, Assyrians and others from the last few hundred years and holy places from several traditions within the Muslim and Christian faiths, many still used in religious practices today and some dating from over 1000 years ago, will go under the reservoir waters.

According to report author Maggie Ronayne: 'The GAP development project of which these dams are part is destroying a heritage which belongs to the whole of humanity and contravenes the most basic professional standards. Governments and companies involved with these projects are ignoring its serious implications: the destruction of such diverse cultural and religious heritage in a State with a history of severe cultural repression. Turkey's progress on cultural rights for the Kurds and others has been an object of scrutiny in recent years; the EU must consider cultural destruction on this scale in that context.'

IRMA To Sue Filesharers For Clawing Back Profits From Greedy Exploitative Corporations

The Irish Recorded Music Association is to start legal action against 17 Irish people whom they accuse of sharing copyrighted music. IRMA announced the decision today, claiming they 'were forced' into the move and are 'unhappy' about it. They cite figures that the 'Irish

Music Industry' is 'losing' €3.8m annually because of illegal downloading. Since 2002 they have seen profits fall from €146m annually to €118m, which is a 19% drop over 3 years. The put this drop in sales down to what they call 'serial filesharers'.

IRMA is the trade organisation representing 47 members, including major and independent record companies. IRMA say that file sharing is “effectively stealing the livelihood of the creators of music”. But who is really 'stealing the livelihoods' of musicians? Take an average new CD that costs between €15 and €20. According to Patrick Norager, who runs an Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) net-radio station: “Artists only get 10 percent of (the money from) their sales before they pay managers and absorb breakage fees and other expenses... The fact is unless you can sell 250,000 copies on a major label you will probably get dropped. The way they do it, it's like they're selling toasters instead of music.”

So the artist (unless they are huge sellers like U2 or Metallica) will only get between somewhere between €1.50 to €2 or less for every CD sold, before additional expenses and record company 'recouperation'. The 'record industry' (the labels, the stores, the middlemen) and taxman get the rest. Steve Albini, a longtime rock producer (perhaps most famous for working on Nirvana's final studio album) lays out a typical example of a new band signing to a major label, from an Indie label.

After signing for a £250,000 advance with a 13% cut of record sale profits (-10% of that 13% for 'packaging') - this band will find themselves having made a paltry \$4000 each. And the really strange thing is that NONE of this comes from the record royalties - the band actually owes the record industry \$14,000 for the album. The small amount of money made actually comes from touring and merchandise. As Dougie Thompspon, former Supertramp bassist, says: "make sure that you book as may shows as you can, as far in advance as possible, for as much money as you can get while the fire is hot." It's surplus value gone mad - imagine a worker who ends up owing their boss money after they've carried out their work they were contracted to do!

GAMA Workers Seek Immediate Government Intervention on bank account scandal

At a major protest at the Dáil at lunchtime on Tuesday 12th April, the Turkish workforce of the GAMA construction company, joined and supported by Irish construction and other workers, called upon the Government to intervene immediately to secure the necessary information for the workers in relation to the secret bank accounts that GAMA opened in their names in Finasbank, Holland. A call was made that the Government, through the Dutch Government or directly with Finasbank, ensure that by this weekend each worker has a full statement of his account since it was first opened. This means an account of each transaction and the total funds in each worker's name.

Once they have this information, the workers are then seeking a commitment from the Government that it will oblige Finasbank, Holland to accept instructions from each worker on what they wish to do with their funds. In

this way, the issue of information on the secret bank accounts could be resolved within days and the issue of workers' access to the funds could be resolved within two weeks.

The GAMA workers are also calling for the publication of the report by the Labour Inspectorate, which Minister Michéal Martin has now received. GAMA has an injunction prohibiting the report being published and that has been continued until next Monday. This begs the question what GAMA is trying to hide by preventing the publication of the report.

GAMA workers have been subjected to a regime of massive exploitation since the firm came to Ireland in 2000. They are obliged to work for more than 80 hours per week on a basic wage rate of €2.20 an hour plus food and lodging in barrack accommodation. It is not just an issue of justice for these workers, but also a question of protecting trade union rates of pay and proper working conditions for all workers.



Independent Republican Candidates Take A Stand

The emergence of a number of independent republican candidates in this years northern council elections has highlighted a growing discontent within the traditional republican base vote which Sinn Fein could previously have taken for granted.

Although small in number, the fact that these independent candidates have emerged from within working class republican communities across the entire 6 counties, indicates that a growing number of republicans no longer feel that Sinn Fein articulate or represent their ideological beliefs, whether republican or socialist, and that this dissent exists across the entire occupied area.

It also appears that their decision to contest the elections and oppose Sinn Fein's stranglehold within the republican base has been spontaneous and not part of any organised electoral effort by any political grouping. A number of republicans who recently left Sinn Fein on ideological grounds are prominent among those standing for the council seats.



What is most important about these candidates standing is not whether they are successful in being elected, but the fact that they are highlighting republican and socialist issues within the republican base that Sinn Fein are either ignoring completely or to which they are simply paying lip service. They represent the forgotten constituency: the republicans and radicals who have decided that the Sinn Fein leadership has gone down a path which is contrary to their convictions and for whatever reason no longer represents them. It now seems that this constituency is larger and more widespread than many had assumed, simply due to the fact it had been successfully kept out of sight. Whether it continues to grow and to organise itself remains to be seen, but how well these candidates perform will be an interesting diversion from the tug of war within the constitutional nationalist establishment of Sinn Fein and the SDLP.