

# the Leveller

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# Victory!

## Wildcat Traffic Wardens Reinstated

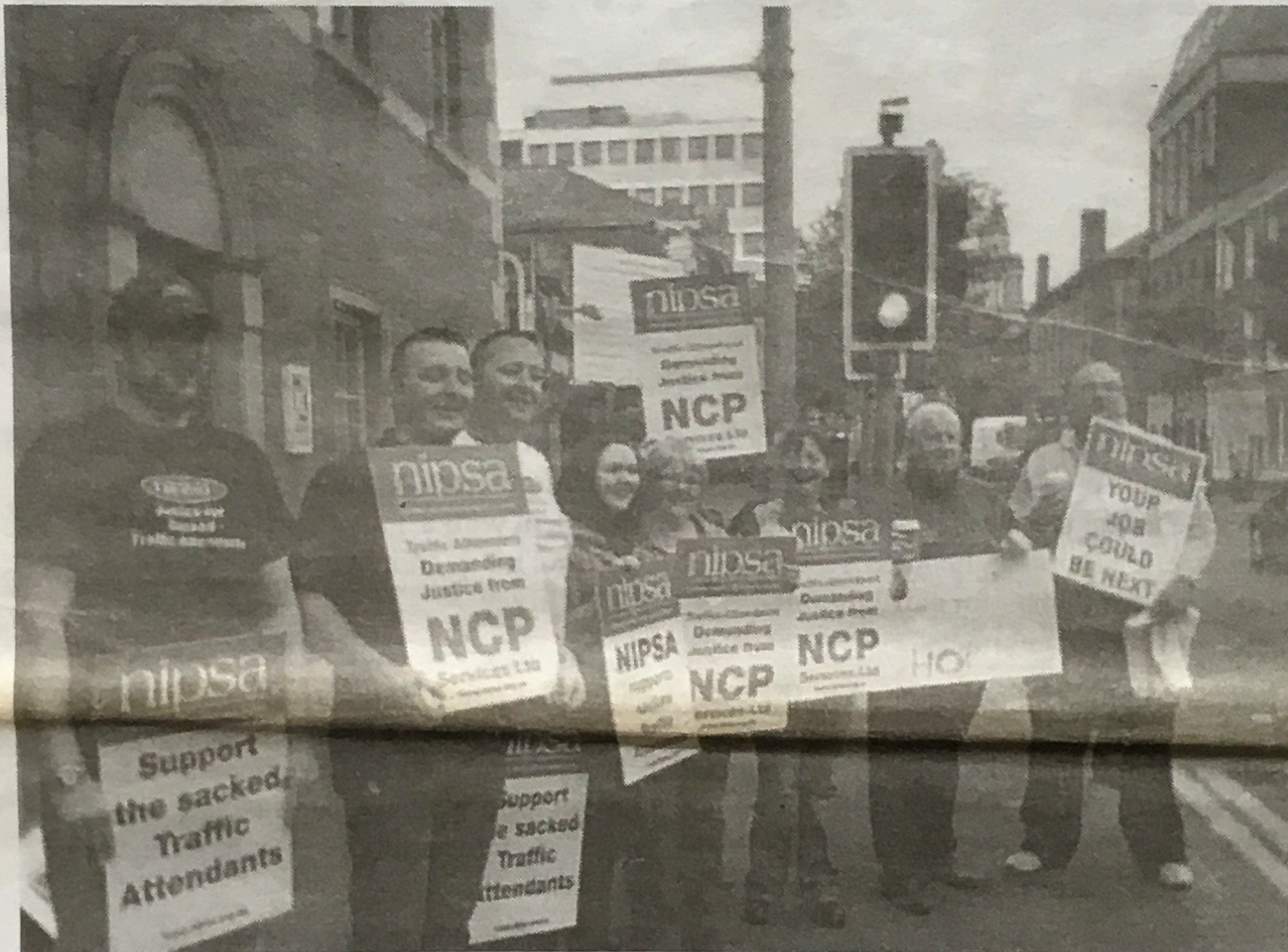
After a four month battle against bosses over their sacking for wildcat action, 28 traffic wardens in Belfast have won their fight against the bosses. In an interview with *The Leveller*, an NCP worker involved in the dispute elaborated on the deal they had won, and how they fought their bosses.

Traffic wardens this week expressed joy at finally winning their demands in their struggle against their employer NCP. The workers were engaged in an almost daily protest from April after 28 were sacked for taking part in wildcat industrial action over working conditions and sick-pay. On Friday, after a four-month battle, they were informed that they would all have the option of reinstatement or a substantial redundancy package.

The wardens had taken the wildcat action at the start of April over pay and conditions, including their rotas and sick-pay. They were initially suspended by bosses, but on 20th April were sacked. Those involved made up one-third of Belfast's traffic wardens.

One of the sacked workers (who wished to remain nameless) who had been involved in the protests spoke to *The Leveller* shortly after telling people the news about the deal, and gave some background to the dispute.

*"On the 4<sup>th</sup> April after umpteen times going to management about severe working conditions, i.e. one urinal between 50-odd workers... being harassed by management,*



*we decided to have a half-day protest. Four hours, walkin' out and then coming back to your shift the next day. When we returned for our shift the next day we were met by management who then gave us a letter of suspension. We were suspended initially for two weeks, and then brought into a 'kangaroo court' type situation and ALL sacked."*

When news of the sackings emerged, the employer NCP responded to the press and at the time said they *"have a very good relationship with Trades Unions in Northern Ireland and will continue to work with unions representing their members - but we cannot support illegal action of this kind."*

The NCP worker we spoke to described the initial reaction of the sacked workers, *"in the beginning we were shocked, it went from shock to anger, and from anger*

*then, to action."*

The traffic attendants began protesting everyday, with their chief aim now being reinstatement. Initially they picketed the NCP offices in May Street, and then Calendar Street when the offices moved. The sacked workers received support from their fellow traffic wardens, members of Organise!, the Socialist Party and various other political groups in Belfast. Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance (Nipsa) was giving the sacked workers strike-pay during the dispute.

In the intervening months, NCP had replaced the sacked staff with full-time replacements, but it was clear that the new staff were very much in support of their sacked colleagues, *"the new workers supported us wholeheartedly... we asked them for their support in*

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# Combating Racism and Fascism Means Combating Capitalism



The flight of the vast majority of the 116 Roma from Belfast in June following sustained and co-ordinated racist attacks emphasises the need for effective action against racists in our society. The recent return of 12 of the Roma men in the first week of August with families to follow does not take away from this. While the attackers are unlikely to have been members of any of the British far right organisations seeking to recruit in working class protestant areas of Northern Ireland these actions will be seen as a boost to the fascists and give encouragement to racists.

Reactions to the events have been varied but some have chosen to view the attacks through the prism of sectarianism. While there is undoubtedly widespread and genuine opposition to racism in West

Belfast the mural painted on the International Wall on the Falls Road in response to the attacks betrays a smug complacency that is at heart as sectarian as those it condemns for carrying out racist and sectarian attacks.

There is a danger of being blind to the levels of racism right across the sectarian divide, particularly when it comes to anti-Traveller racism. Travellers still find it impossible to get appointments at hair dressers, are barred from pubs and shops and are subject to almost constant racist abuse. That these things, along with last years attacks on Lithuanians, also happen in West Belfast needs to be acknowledged and challenged. The recently published Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey for 2008 found that Travellers faced more prejudice than

migrant workers with 51% of those questioned saying they would have a problem with a Traveller living beside them. This is an increase of 10% since the last survey.

While much is made of links between Loyalist paramilitaries and the British far right, many who claim to be opposed to fascism in principle have been silent about reports that Italian fascists took part, alongside nationalists, in recent riots in Ardoyne.

The notion that it is the 'Prods' who are racist and sectarian may serve some sort of Republican self-image of its imagined community but it does nothing to challenge or confront bigotry. It is people from within working class protestant communities who are key to taking on and challenging the racists and fascists within those communities and who are carrying out attacks and spreading hate.

## Increasing Intolerance: A Shift to the Right?

There is a fear that the current recession is driving large sections of society further to the right. Problems created by slum landlords, cut backs in social housing stock, and seemingly unending announcements of job losses leave migrant workers more vulnerable to scapegoating. Unemployment is rising so rapidly that dole offices have been forced to move from fortnightly to monthly signing, while this may be good news for those of us who are unemployed and sick of the petty harassment that is associated with signing on it is a worrying development. Across the UK unemployment has jumped to a staggering (and under estimated!) 2.38 million - the highest level since 1995. Unemployment in Northern Ireland had

increased to 6.1% this May from 4.6% the year before. There was a 159% increase in confirmed redundancies over the previous year. While the Northern Ireland unemployment rate is lower than the average for the rest of the UK it does not take into consideration the staggering 28.6% figure for the number of working age adults who are economically inactive.

The Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey 2008 also found that homophobia and racism are on the increase in Northern Ireland. Anti-gay prejudice has almost doubled in three years, from 14% of people surveyed admitting they would have a problem with a gay, lesbian or bisexual person to 23% in the 2008 poll.

The labour movement in the UK appears to be infected with reactionary nationalist ideas about 'British Jobs for British Workers', taking the lead from the media and Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

It should come as no great shock that there will be those who want to deflect from the misery that capital has caused to so many by stirring up bigotry and hatred. The far right could undoubtedly benefit from the current recession and seek to promote its anti-working class agenda by scapegoating 'easy' targets.

The BNP have now got two MEPs and are actively trying to build a base in Northern Ireland and have opened a call centre in East Belfast. "B N P" was heard among the chants directed at those who were involved in the recent defence of the Roma in South Belfast.

Governments have also been busy strengthening repressive legislation and clamping down on dissent. The UK government are still trying to force ID cards on us, and have entered into worse than dubious extradition arrangements with the US while Shami Chakrabarti, Director of Liberty, has warned that the UK has become a surveillance society. Locally the PSNI are piloting the wearing, as a matter of course, of video cameras by the police while public displays of dissent were publically clamped down upon by the police at the G20 demonstrations earlier this year.

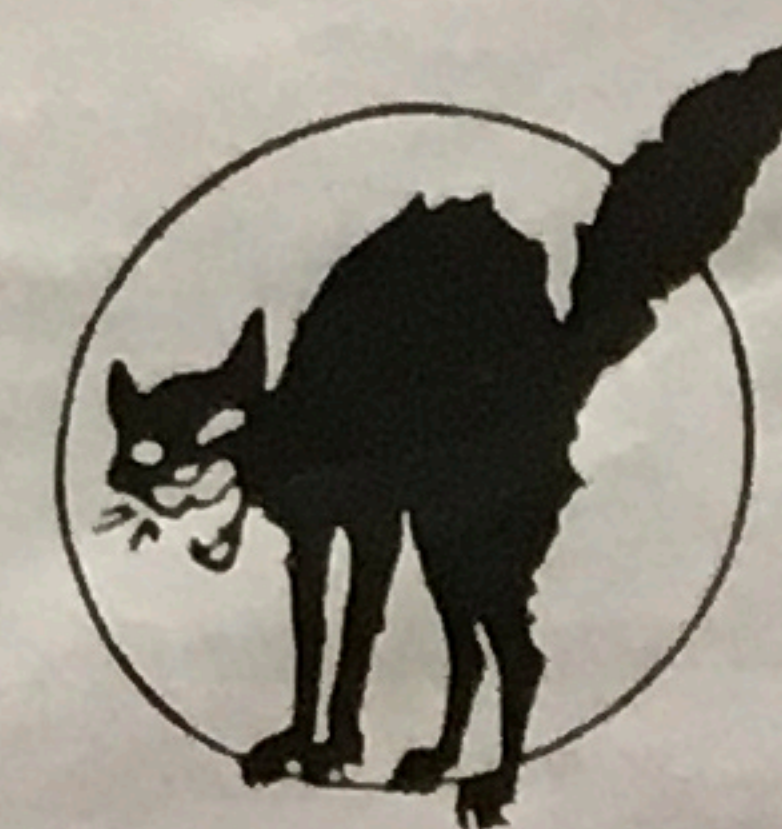
In the south the state has moved to clamp down on workers trying to protect themselves from the worst blows of the recession and has engaged in heavy-handed raids on workers occupying the Thomas Cook outlet in Dublin. Anti-Shell activists have also been jailed.

## The Alternative?

Of course the conditions described above are the very same conditions that give rise to resistance that is aimed straight at the cause of the social problems we are currently experiencing as a result of capitalism and the state. This issue of the Leveller is full of inspiring examples of workers fighting back and winning! Working class self organisation and solidarity are what are called for in the struggle against racism and fascism and in the struggle against capital and state.



While local artist Martin Carter made an alternative bonfire out of effigies of major banks on the 20th of June others seem intent on scapegoating minorities for the crisis of capitalism that is the current recession.





# No Gods, No Masters:

## how the churches and politicians failed to help the Roma in Belfast

When the attacks on Roma homes in South Belfast finally ceased after a week, it wasn't because of the actions of eager politicians or earnest church representatives. However when the Roma made the final decision, 6 days after the first attack, to leave their homes, politicians were in for the photo ops, and the churches weren't far behind in using the crisis to promote themselves. News broadcasters worldwide took an interest in a sanitised humanitarian 'flight' story, but had been pretty reluctant in the previous days to cover the racist attacks.

Supporters and anti-racist activists were scapegoated by the media, either for provoking an attack on the anti-racist protest on Monday 16 June, apparently 'bringing it on ourselves', or for allegedly sealing the fate of the Roma by standing side by side with them, at their request. But these charges levelled at anti-racist protestors only serve to deflect blame for the abject failure that was the response of the police, statutory bodies and churches to respond when it mattered.

While it was several days before anti-racists were aware of the situation, it was only when anti-racist activists drew attention to the attacks on the Roma, that politicians, the media and churches 'intervened'. Once statutory agencies became involved, rather than providing practical solidarity in defence of the Roma's homes, the intervention in reality became the start of a repatriation process. The politicians and media then had on their hands a palatable 'humanitarian crisis', which allowed them to 'help' the Roma, without getting their hands dirty tackling racism or the social/economic problems that have fuelled it.

Belfast Mayor Naomi Long only took an interest on the day the Roma finally vacated their homes. Had the situation not been so grave, it would have been amusing that when she arrived, she hung around for an hour looking concerned, only to miss a BBC News crew, and a juicy PR opportunity, by minutes, as she was chauffeur-driven off in her mayoral car. Other politicians were 'quick' to join Naomi in seeking photo opportunities. The Romanian ambassador posed for the cameras with First and Deputy First Ministers Robinson & McGuinness, and paid lip-service to anti-racist sentiment, however, at the makeshift 'refugee camp' in the Odyssey Leisure Centre, he accused the Roma of bringing these attacks on themselves, and told

them that they had made him 'ashamed to be Romanian'.

In the case of the Roma, the churches involved, and as far as individual members may have been sincere, also exploited the situation to attempt to bring people 'back to the church'. The pastor at the church where the Roma were temporarily housed seized the moment to indulge in some self-aggrandizement, talking up the church, "my office now is like the stable at Bethlehem". Self-satisfaction oozed from every word, and barely a thought was given to what actually happened to the Roma people, less than 10 minutes from his church. When interviewed on BBC Radio 5 Live on the night of Tuesday 17 June, the pastor didn't even know what had happened, he didn't know there been an impromptu assembly of over 200 people against racism only minutes from his church the previous night, nor that attacks had been going on nightly for the best part of a week. But boy could he talk about how great it was what he was doing, and how pleased God was.

This complete detachment from what was really happening in 'their community' was exemplified by another church member, who characterised the generally patronising and self-congratulatory tone of the church, while saying: "I believe God's hand was in the timing of this event." This Christian do-gooder, like the pastor, remained blissfully unaware of what had actually occurred. "our pastor, received an emergency phone call from his wife who relayed a message that racial riots against Romanians had escalated to the point that about 130 Romanians were attempting to pack themselves into one home to achieve safety in numbers in response to threats from their neighbors. A member of our church who works with a relief organization asked if we could take these families in for the night at our church building... [the pastor] agreed without hesitation" These attacks had happened less than ten minutes from the church and had been all over the national news, yet an ill-informed do-gooder was calling this 'racial riots', completely oblivious to the fact that these were not riots, but a series of orchestrated and consistent cowardly racist attacks on one of the most vulnerable minorities in Belfast. She continued:

"This evening illustrated tremendous human compassion and a battle against racial tension, but for the Christian community, it signified much more. The relief and care provided to the Romanians depended

## Pumped Up Vigilantes?

Derek Hanway's article in the July/August issue of Fortnight magazine, among other inaccuracies and distortions, accused anti-racist activists of being pumped up vigilantes who's actions were counter-productive. He isn't alone in that attitude, it is a position which has been whispered by many, from the voluntary and community 'sector', church 'leaders', bureaucrats and politicians and more publicly by the police.

Hanway betrays his lack of knowledge about the situation when he says anti-racist activists' presence outside Roma homes, which had been attacked, attracted unwelcome attention.

"Anyone with a knowledge of Roma people would have known about a general reluctance by Roma to attract attention," the director of An Munia Tober Travellers Centre said.

"While the Roma families were still in their damaged homes, they were being 'protected' by anti-racist activists. I witnessed many acting like pumped up vigilantes, some bringing cider carry-outs to the garden of one home. This response strengthened the Roma families' sense of fear and attracted more unwelcome attention to their homes."

True, 3 or 4 punks brought a couple of tins of beer while they sat-down outside the home, but they were very much a minority of those at the home, and were told that doing so was inappropriate. That said, they were among the few people who did bother to stay with the families all night on the Monday. Hanway can say what he likes, but he was not there helping these people defend themselves, and his ill-informed comments read like he did nothing more than drive by in a car. He clearly did not speak to the Roma families, who overwhelmingly welcomed the support from local residents, anti-racists and anti-fascists. They brought cups of coffee out to supporters and made

on a community of believers working diligently as one body with many parts. I saw each member find his or her own way to serve, a glorious example of individual gifts knit together to offer compassion of Christ... What unified us all to press on through exhaustion and hunger was the knowledge that together we were sharing the love of Christ and hopefully bringing glory to Him... I remember the sacrifice that Jesus made for me and that no matter how much I do, I can never truly pay Him back. The beauty of that is that He doesn't expect me to!!!! Therefore, as Christians, we serve out of love, not obligation. I am also mindful that it shouldn't take a crisis to jolt me into action. I was bought with a price, I am His. Victory over death has been won, and until I am with Him, each

abundantly clear that they very much welcomed the showing of solidarity demonstrated by locals and activists. Hanway ignores the fact that there had been no publicity surrounding the attacks before Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June. The only unwelcome attention being visited upon the Romanian families was that of the racists who had persistently carried out attacks in the absence of any protests, defence or publicity.

The Socialist Party were right when interviewed by the BBC, that "The Roma families were extremely supportive of the stance that we took and if Mr Hanway was there he would have seen the hospitality we received from the families." The supporters only stayed with the Roma families as long as they were asked. When some supporters thought about leaving after repeated hassle from the police about the crowd outside the house, the families politely asked us to stay, and help them defend their homes. It should come as no surprise that the only nights the houses were not attacked were those when a physical presence was visible. Hanway also bemoans the fact that the police did not realise the "damage" anti-racists were doing, wishing that they had acted to remove those acting in defence of the Roma families. Gary Mulcahy of the Socialist Party, who were central to the organisation of support for the families points out in their response to Hanway's article that:

*On Channel 4 News a representative from the PSNI was unable to defend their inaction and admitted that the PSNI did not respond appropriately. The most effective defence of the homes was not to rely on the police; it was by organising local residents to be present outside of the homes. This approach, combined with the protest and publicity, succeeded in stopping the attacks.*

It was the intervention of the authorities, church groups, liberal 'do-gooders', the political establishment and the Northern Ireland Executive who began a process of 'repatriation', encouraging the families to return to Romania. In doing so they are guilty of handing a victory to the racists.

*A 'Vigilante'*

*day of my life should be a sacrificial tribute to God's glory. We are His ambassadors, the aroma of Christ... may the world open their hearts and breathe us in.*

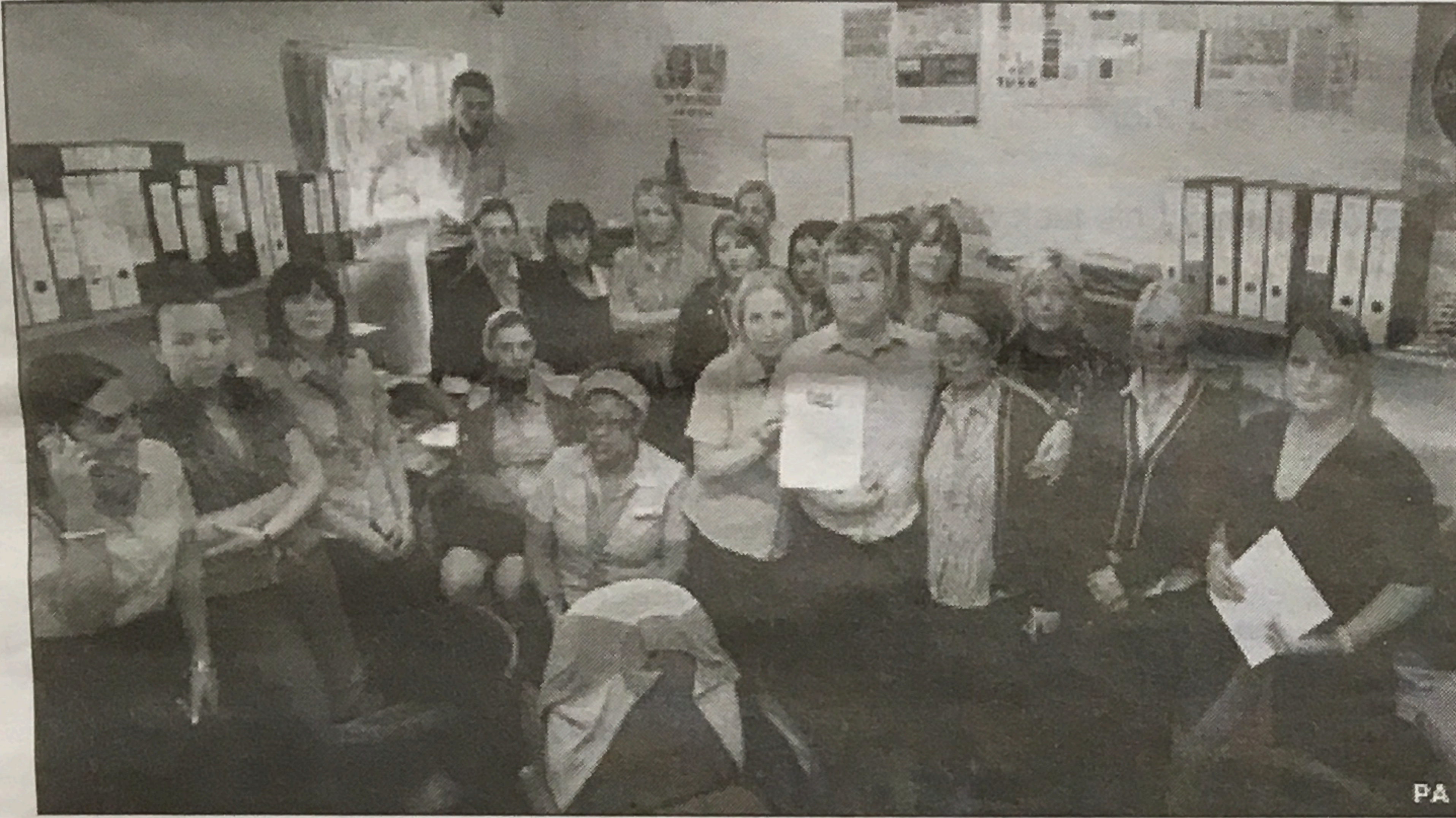
We don't need guidance from religious headcases, nor can we appeal to them to tackle issues related to the existence of racism or the inequalities of class-society. Under capitalism, racist divisions will always be used to divide the working class, and particularly during a recession, tensions are pushed, so anyone conveniently perceived as 'different enough' can be blamed for the deficiencies in our lives, be they lack of housing, lack of jobs, or generally poor living conditions.

*Choccy and Deezer*

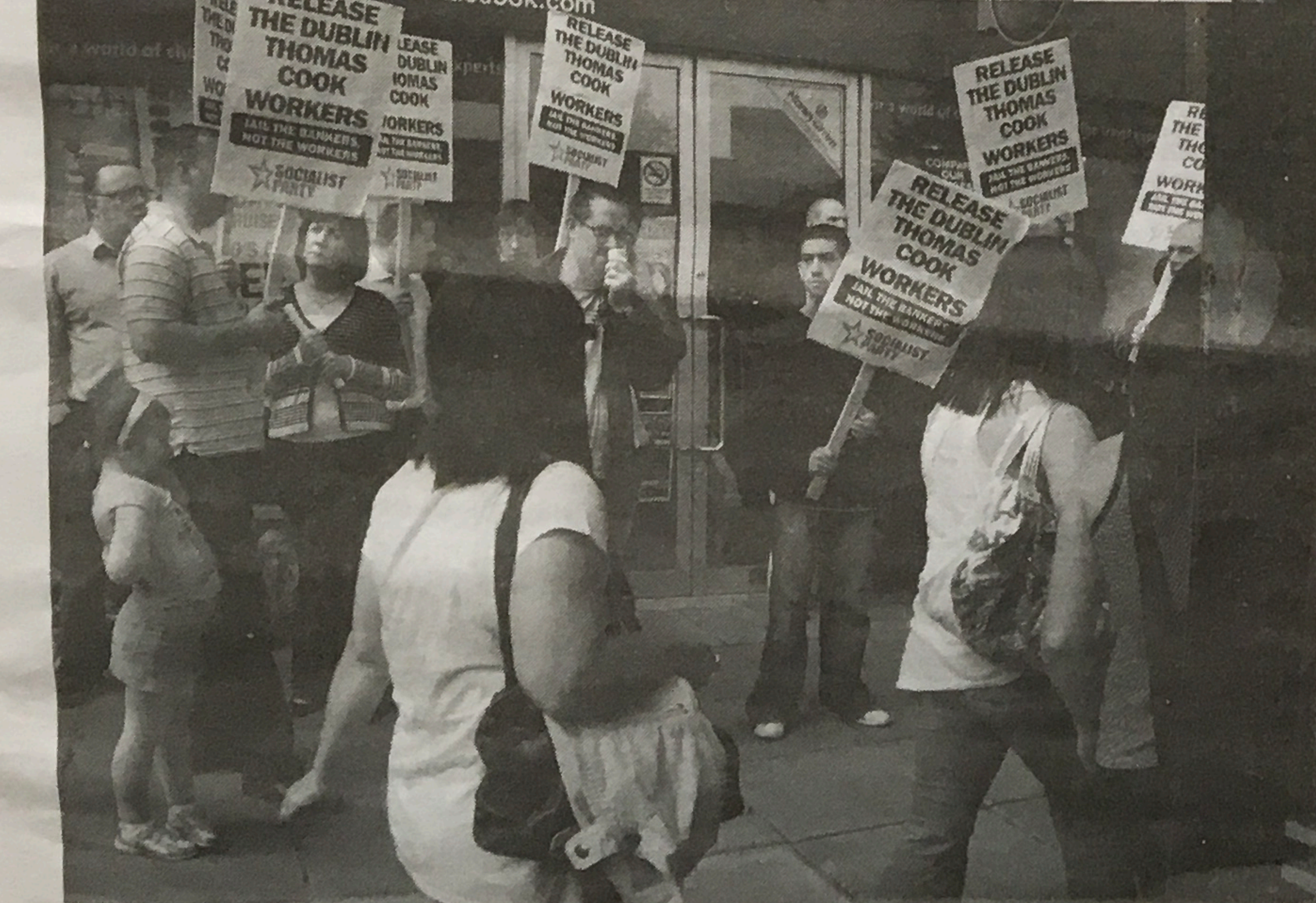


# Thomas Cook Dublin

## Sacked Workers Arrested



Some of the 40 workers, including two pregnant women, who occupied Thomas Cook in Grafton Street until the Garda broke down the doors and arrested 28 of them at 5am Tuesday 4th August



Images from the Belfast Solidarity Picket of Thomas Cook Tuesday 4th August

On Friday 31 July Thomas Cook managers and security went to close down shops in Dublin at 10 a.m. Over 70 staff were sacked and offered an appalling 5 weeks redundancy pay with the threat that it would be dropped to two weeks if the workers did not accept it. Staff in two of the outlets then occupied their workplaces in response. The workers, some of whom are members of the Transport and Salaried Staff Association (TSSA), had been served a court order to leave the premises but had refused to leave until their demands for an improved redundancy package were met.

Then in a dawn raid, that you'd be forgiven for associating more with a dictatorship, over 150 police stormed the building and arrested 28 of the workers. In a move that is a clear indication of the Irish states hardening attitude to workers in struggle the Judge had instructed the cops to have all those breaking the injunction brought before him by 2pm on Tuesday 4th of August.

A protest was organised at short notice at the Four Courts in Dublin that saw around 200 people come out in support of the workers and in Belfast around 40 people turned out to picket the Thomas Cook outlet in Donegal Square West (at short

notice). The Belfast protest was called by the Socialist party and attended by members of Organise! and other anarchists. Other protests were also organised internationally.

Releasing the workers after they agreed to an undertaking not to trespass or interfere with the property of Thomas Cook Justice Michael Peart said he fully understood the distress and anger of the sacked workers. However, he said that he could not permit the law to be broken, as that would be a recipe for anarchy! The context to this dispute is a company that seeks to consolidate and increase profits through the closure of more than 100 shops. The closures in Dublin fly in the face of these shops making more than £400 million profit during 2008.

Manny Fontenla-Novoa, CEO of Thomas Cook, recently received a 34% pay rise and a 7 million Euro bonus. This was his reward for boosting profits by making over 2,000 low paid workers redundant across the UK. Now he wants to do the same to his loyal Irish staff.

Thomas Cook staff in Dublin remain determined in their struggle to improve their redundancies despite having had the full weight of the Irish state brought down on them on behalf of Manny Fontenla-Novoa.

Supporters of the workers are urged to:

1. Hand write a message and run it through the fax: fax number: 00 35316 771258 and 00 35318 783965
2. Send emails to wendy@thomascook.ie and fennj@TSSA.org.uk
3. Join the Facebook group: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=117888623383&ref=mf>
4. Sign the online petition <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/savethomascookjobsinireland>

## Anti-Shell Campaigners Jailed



Shell to Sea campaigners Maura Harrington and Niall Harnett were sentenced to four and eight months in jail respectively at Bellmullet district court at the start of August. Both protesters have been convicted for taking action as part of a campaign of peaceful civil disobedience against the ill-fated Corrib Gas Project. Maura was given her four month sentence under Section 8 of the Public Order Act; 'failing to comply with the directions of a Garda'. The sentence was handed down in relation to an incident that occurred during a protest at Shell's 'landfall' compound gate on 30th August 2008. Niall was sentenced to eight months in relation to two separate incidents. He was given a four month sentence under Section 8 of the Public order act, and another four months under Section 2, for the supposed assault of a Garda. For more information check [www.indymedia.ie](http://www.indymedia.ie).



# Belfast Fascist Neil House Exposed



Neil House (centre) unknowingly stares down the lens of an antifascists camera while smoking outside a Dublin "white power" meeting.

A BELFAST man, who previously ran for election as a "socialist" has become an unlikely new high profile member of the far right in Ireland.

Neil House (31), from south Belfast, was exposed for his part in hosting a meeting of members of the Stormfront "White Pride" website in Dublin earlier this summer.

A motley crew of skinheads, right wing republicans, and even a wealthy Lebanese anti-semite, packed into a small Dublin pub where House led them in planning to create "The Legion of Saint Ailbhe".

The boneheads, who met on a weekday afternoon to avoid

detection, were unaware that a large group of antifascists were monitoring their every move, secretly listening to, and photographing, the meeting.

Unfortunately for House the rest of his Aryan warriors bolted shortly after the meeting and their plans to attack synagogues were exposed by an undercover reporter they allowed into their ranks.

He is now attempting to rebuild his network, which has been heavily infiltrated from the start by journalists and anti-fascists, by uniting the disparate strands of fascists across the island.

Speaking about the disturbing attacks earlier this summer against Roma families in Belfast, House swore that he was not involved but

was in contact with the people behind the violence.

"It is a few locals I know of and the good thing is that this is something they have done themselves, with no encouragement from me," he bragged to fellow "white nationalists".

"The potential is there, I just need to harness it...they are Protestant youths but that is neither here nor there at this particular moment in time."

He was later spotted monitoring an anti-racist march at City Hall in Belfast, pictures of which ended up on the "Redwatch" website of his close contact Wigan Mike.

The Redwatch site hopes to name

and shame anyone opposed to the rise of the far right and Wigan Mike has been making regular trips to Belfast, aiming to recruit to his hopelessly small new nazi group the "British Freedom Fighters".

Bizarrely, in the mid-90s House ran for election to the Northern Ireland Forum as part of a Labour Coalition of socialist candidates and was the youngest candidate to ever run for election in Northern Ireland.

However following a disappointing 333 votes he rejected left wing politics and went on to serve in the Eastern Brigade of the Irish Army, where he claims to have reached the rank of sergeant before joining the British Army reserves. House currently also claims to be one of few Ulster members of the BNP.

Speaking to the BFF, who now claim to have an Ulster branch, about the attacks on immigrants at the start of the summer House swore that there would be more to come. "I can tell you there will be more over the next while, we just need to get them together and a bit organised," he stated.

"I have a few friends in the South (of Ireland) that are keen to link up and fight the good fight."

The few southern fascists who remain loyal to Houses plans include a fantasist skinhead chef from Castlebar called Kevin and a 16 year old girl from Wexford.

Reforming under the name Priority14 the group are currently under heavy surveillance and building links with the BPP, agreeing to put aside differences over the national question until a later date.

A Dublin based antifascist stated that they would be sharing information on House and his gang with antifascists across the island in the coming months and warned that any further attempts by the group to organise would be swiftly dealt with.

Tony Wheeler





# Victory for Wildcat Traffic Wardens from front page

regard to a ballot, we balloted their members and it was a 100% response, and I think that was the tipping scale, for the company, when they realised that traffic attendants were going to come out on all-out strike if we weren't reinstated. They realised their profit margins would then be lowered, it was then a one-way ticket at that stage."

After four-months of putting pressure on NCP bosses, which included travelling to other cities to drum-up support, the workers were finally getting somewhere – "we had representation to Conor Murphy, the Department for Regional Development... he then challenged the company on their rules and regulations, their harassment, and the company then decided to meet us."

During these meetings, it became clear that the bosses would consider reinstating some of the 28 staff, but not all, 'troublemakers' wouldn't be welcomed – "when they met us initially they said there was two people they didn't want back, and on the second occasion they said there was SEVEN people they didn't want back... on the third occasion when we met them, they basically surrendered." The sacked workers, all 28, were then offered full reinstatement, or a significant financial package, which the traffic attendant were all delighted with.

Speaking about the future, the NCP worker said, "most people haven't made up their minds yet, but at this point, I believe most of us hopefully will go back, re-organise, and make the branch stronger, through our

experiences."

Not only had the workers won their demand, but they had grown substantially in confidence, with valuable lessons learned that will impact on future workplace organisation, "If any situations like this arise again, we'll be better placed to take action against the company"

Some of the hardships they experienced during the four-month protest period, including living on strike-pay were discussed, "we were given strike-pay by the union, wasn't very much but we were thankful for it, and we rallied round each other, done fundraisers, all sorts to try and help each other financially, and succeeded for the four months. It wasn't easy, I think when workers get together in a solidarity campaign...I think the

morale is usually kept quite high when you've got focus, and you really wanna go for something against bad employers".

The direct action taken by the traffic wardens won them their jobs back. "If we had of walked-away the day we were sacked, we would have got nothing."

This example of solidarity, and determined, sustained direct action by workers, against their bosses, is an example to all workers in struggle. The NCP worker concluded with a message of encouragement for Vestas and Thomas Cook workers, and all workers in struggle, "They will succeed, people will come-out and support them...you will succeed if you stick together, that's the message I would send to anyone."

## Visteon: Some Reflections

On the 18th May the Belfast Visteon occupation ended, at the time a member of Organise! said:

*The Belfast workers ended their occupation today and walked out of the factory in order of years served. For those waiting outside the gates to see them out, it was as one person commented, more like waiting for a funeral to pass than a celebration.*

*At a buffet at a nearby hotel, speakers vowed that action will continue for their pensions, and support was urged for Rob Williams.*

Hundreds of workers at Visteon plants across the UK were made redundant. In response, workers occupied the plants and, in doing so, demonstrated that any protection we might have from the ravages of this recession will come not from the generosity of employers, politicians or trade union bosses but from the action we take as the rank and file.

The 1st issue of the Leveller has reports on the background of this dispute and the manner in which Ford reneged on commitments to maintaining the workers original terms and conditions.

When the company called in the administrators and closed the factories in Belfast, Basildon (Essex) and Enfield (north London), 610 workers were sacked with only minutes notice. The company declared insolvency and was put in receivership without word about where pensions and redundancy payments would come from. Workers who had been employed for 20, 30 and even 40 years were within minutes out of a job and told they would get nothing.

The Belfast workers acted that same day, immediately occupying their factory with hundreds of local supporters soon arriving at the factory gates. When news travelled the next day, the Basildon and Enfield workers followed suit. Though the

Basildon occupation was extremely brief, the Enfield occupation lasted nine days while the Belfast workers held on for well over a month.

Union officials tried to work out a settlement without keeping the workers involved but eventually, the workers' resolve forced Ford to the table – a table they had initially claimed had nothing to do with them. After workers agreed to call off a 30-strong picket at Ford's Bridgend plant in Wales, Ford managed to put together a new, much improved deal, which the workers voted to accept. This deal represented a significant improvement on the sweet fa workers were told to fuck off with at the end of March. In that respect it is a significant victory won by the workers themselves. The action of Belfast workers in particular, and their ability to hold onto the plant for the duration of the dispute was essential to forcing an improved offer on redundancy from Ford.

Unite failed to even mention the strike on their website or make any effort to rally it's membership's support for the dispute. This unwillingness to support the strike also manifested itself through the culture of secrecy which Unite maintained around the details of any negotiations. For instance, after the negotiations in New York City, the union announced that a deal had been negotiated and that the occupation in Enfield should end by noon the next day. No details of the deal would be released until the following Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup>, however, and this then turned out to be the insulting 16 weeks pay offer. Similarly, with the final deal, the union did not give people a printed document of the settlement nor time enough to consider the deal and discuss what it meant for different groups of workers.

The result of this was that some sections of the workforce got a significantly worse

deal than others. Rushing through acceptance was deliberate on the union's part, as was the arrangement whereby the more militant Belfast workers voted on whether to accept after their counterparts in Enfield and Basildon. Many in Belfast felt they should be allowed time to read the deal first; many more voted against the deal than in Enfield or Basildon and it would have been a lot more had the two factories not already accepted. On both counts, the actions of the union were not with the intention of securing the best deal for its members, but of ending the dispute quickly.

Slamming the deal as stinking of inequality, Fra Gillen, a Belfast Visteon occupier said:

*Personally, I feel betrayed by my national officials. Why did they not fight to get us parity? I feel we are being treated like third class citizens under this deal.*

This is not a problem of 'poor leadership' or of the union not doing its job properly but the union doing it too well. Official unions are supposed to mediate between workers and bosses and our highly paid trade union leaders do not share our interests. There comes a point in all struggles where workers will find ourselves fighting our union in order to effectively fight our employer.

The only way to resolve this problem is for the rank and file to take direct control of their struggles and trust in the power of collective direct action. In Belfast, their militancy meant that employers had to relinquish control of the plant for the entirety of the dispute while attempting to attack the less militant workers in Enfield and Basildon.

It's important to understand that the deal which the workers secured was won by the strength of their actions alone and despite – not because of – their union's intervention. Furthermore, their struggle showed us, yet again, that when we fight back effectively it poses not only a threat to our employers but also to those who would claim to represent us.

### Strike Threat Wins Reinstatement for Shop Steward Rob Williams

Rob Williams was sacked from his position as Union Convenor at Swansea Linamar (formerly Visteon) in April after consistently defending the workers' terms of employment and their wages, and he also played a part in the Visteon plant occupations and protests after many of them were laid off without pay. Support for his case was growing all around the UK and Ireland (also in the USA were Linamars suppliers backed industrial action) and workers were due to begin an indefinite strike in the plant just as Rob was reinstated by company bosses on the 11<sup>th</sup> of June.

A strike ballot was held and there was an 88% turnout with workers voting 139 to 19 in favour of all out strike action in solidarity with their workmate Rob. These workers have shown the power behind the threat of an all out strike. This is yet again another example of how solidarity is strength and how workers taking militant action can triumph in the face of intimidation from bosses. At a time were the labour movement in the UK has been tainted by moronic national pride this is indeed a reminder of the need for workers to unite internationally to fight a global enemy.



# Education Worker News

Four Page Education workers supplement produced by the Organise! Education Workers Branch

## Queens University Belfast plans hundreds of compulsory redundancies



News emerged in June of plans by Queens University in Belfast to make 150 members of academic staff redundant. This comes a year after the university attempted to pursue compulsory redundancies for the first time in its history, and now plans are afoot to axe at least 150 academic jobs at the university.

The university is blaming a funding shortfall and the 'poor performance' of some staff. However, local press contacted the Department of Employment and Learning who said funding for this financial year had actually

been increased, and were unaware of the plans:

*"To date, Queen's University Belfast has not informed, or consulted, us on changes in the number of staff, or the provision of degree subjects, for the coming year"*

Many of those expected to be targeted with compulsory redundancies are those who concentrate on teaching rather than research. Queens is currently in the Russell Group, a group of the top 20 research-intensive universities in the UK that is often

called the 'Ivy League' of the UK. Russell Group members account for the majority of government funding for universities, despite making up less than one-fifth of UK universities.

### German department to go

The BBC reported that the first department to go under the new redundancy plans is the German department, with all of its courses to be dropped, and staff to lose their jobs. Paul Hudson, a spokesperson for the University and Colleges Union (UCU) said the planned cuts will be detrimental to education offered at Queens: *"Because all the people who concentrate on teaching are in the group who are being invited to leave, it gives the message that teaching is unimportant."*

UCU had warned staff to be vigilant in the past year and their projections look to have been correct given these newly-revealed plans. Jimmy Donaghey, of the UCU at Queens has stated that the projected number of academic job cuts is "up to 333".

In addition to German, the

Nanotechnology research centre in Electrical Engineering is set to close, along with the Belfast E-Science centre in Computer Science. A projected 10 academic jobs will be cut in the School of Maths and Physics, 4 in Politics and 6 in Geography, with many more spread across the University.

When asked whether he was puzzled by the fact that that QUB management was blaming a funding shortfall as a reason for job cuts, when, in fact, DEL government funding has increased this year, he said: *"Yes, that is puzzling. But even more puzzling is the fact that, in the 2007-08 accounts, Queen's surplus rose to £12.6m. The projected surplus for this year is £15m and reserves rose from £75m to £78m, so it is clearly not an issue over finance."*

He also stated that the University was using the current financial crisis as a "smokescreen" to allow them "to get rid of people who don't fit into their vision" of the future.

Workers are viewing the plans as another example of the recession being used to implement attacks on jobs, wages, and working conditions that they suspect bosses have wanted to implement all-along. In the last decade Queens has already 'streamlined' and closed many departments that aren't money-spinners: geology and classics both closed years back history of science is closing this year, and many others have amalgamated. Now that the German department is to go, many staff are asking 'who will be next?'

## Organise! Education Workers Branch

This Education Workers News supplement of the Leveller is produced by the Organise! Education Workers Branch. Set up in August last year the Education Workers Branch is made up of Organise! members who work in education - from admin and support to research, teaching, lecturing and community education.

While the branch is specifically for education workers who are members of

Organise! we want to promote militancy and solidarity across the education industry. We are seeking to build a network of militant education workers that can begin to take effective action in defence of workers and students across the industry and in defence of education itself. If you are interested in getting involved in such a network, one that aims at active involvement in the day to day struggles of education workers while promoting solidarity with others in struggle then get in touch.

We believe that in order to successfully counter the attacks being carried out against workers that we need to organise industrially - such an industrial strategy is not simply for education workers though, such a strategy can and must be applied to every industry.



## EDUCATION NEWS IN BRIEF

**Unions express anger at the installation CCTV surveillance in schools.**

Following the news that a south London school has over 60 CCTV cameras on-site, workers and unions have continued to criticise schools adopting such measures. It has been claimed the surveillance system at Stockwell Park High School is to help avoid teacher and pupil disputes and prevent theft according to school managers, who intend to have over 100 in the school when refurbishment is complete.

Staff and unions have expressed concern that the technology will be used to covertly monitor staff and pupils and have described it as "Big Brother-ish", with almost 30 of the cameras being inside classrooms.

The NUT, NASUWT and ATL unions have all spoken out against the use of CCTV in schools as heavy-handed, unnecessary, surveillance and a waste of school resources.

### Money for student teachers slashed

In another prediction from Issue 1 of The Leveller, bursaries for trainee-teachers in England are to come into line with other non-teaching students. Prior to the recession, student-teachers received between £6-9,000 as income during the intense PGCE year. For the first time in over a decade, recruitment for many shortage subjects was met last year, partly attributed to the many bankers and financiers, those implicated in the current 'credit crisis', jumping ship for the 'safer' teaching profession. The significant projected decrease in income for student teachers is likely to make teaching even more inaccessible to many working class graduates.

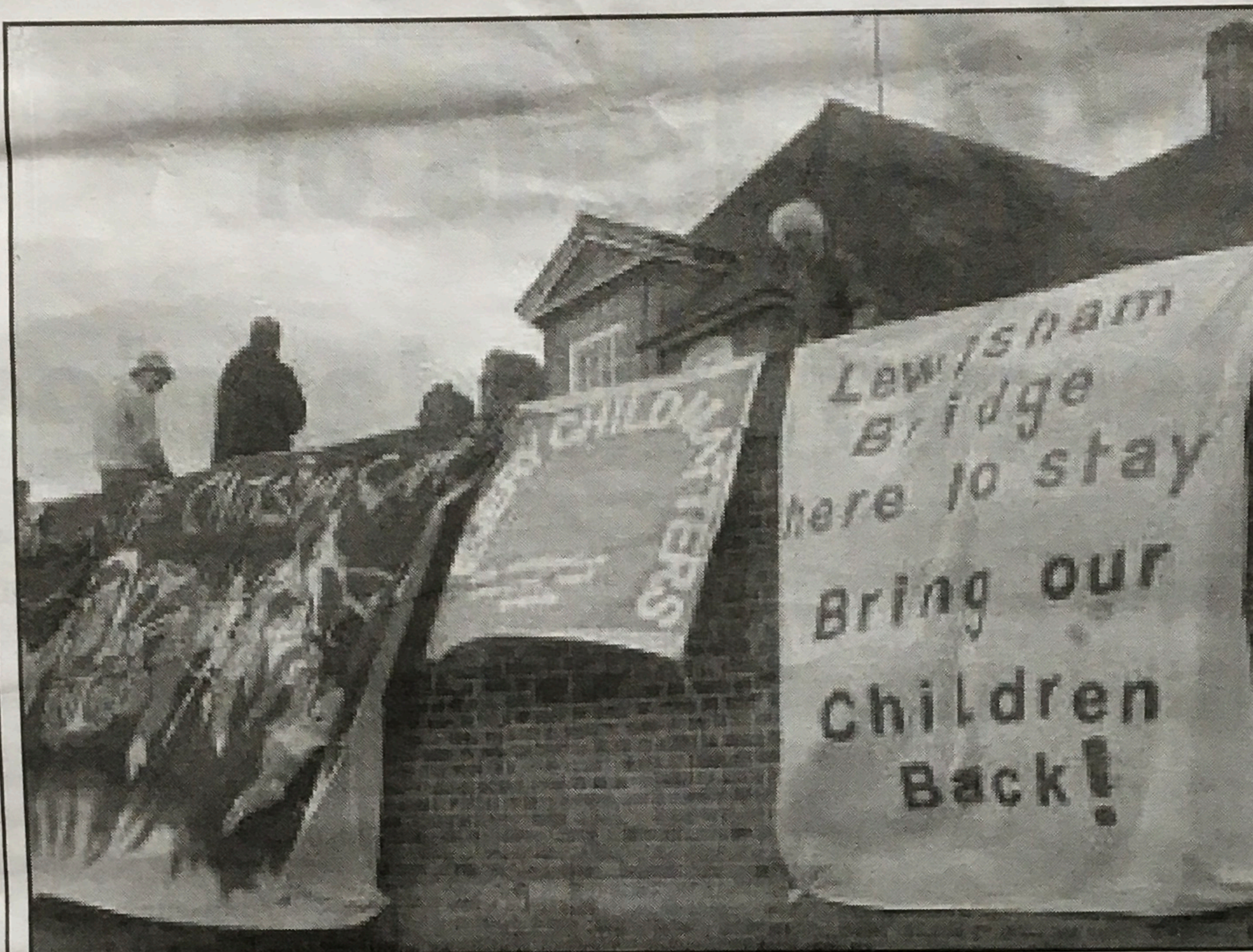
### Student fees rise as bursaries and grants are frozen.

Bursaries for the poorest students will be capped at 10% of annual fees despite this not covering the gap between grants and fees. This means the poorest students will have to make up the remainder of their fees out of their own pocket. UCU's general secretary Sally Hunt said, "I cannot understand why a government that is looking so hard at social mobility has taken the decision to charge the poorest students more money to attend university."

Currently, bursaries for the poorest students cover the gap between grants and tuition fees but by 2010-11 fees will be £3,290 and grants still £2,906, leaving a gap of £384. With bursaries capped at 10% this will leave a £55 remainder for students to pay. While the amount seems insignificant, it is indicative of the cuts being made across the education sector during the 'economic downturn'. Grants will also be frozen at 2009-10 levels despite the rise in fees.

The government is discussing dropping fees for students who choose to live at home during their studies, furthering the pressure on working class students to stay at home and limiting their choice of university. Under such a scenario, top universities will remain as economically stratified as they always have been, with only the rich being able to move away for university, and that is before taking into account tuition fees.

# Hands Off Lewisham Bridge



Parents occupying Lewisham Bridge Primary School in south-east London are a step closer to keeping the school open after the English Heritage Grade 2 status of the school was upheld.

Supporters and parents of children have been encouraged by the news that Lewisham Bridge Primary School's status as a Grade 2 English Heritage site has been upheld. This means that the school cannot be knocked down and replaced, as had been intended.

Parents had originally occupied the school roof on April 23rd after Lewisham Council's decision to demolish the school and replace it with a new school run by a private company. As the protest went on, more parents and local supporters joined the occupation and solidarity was built with workers occupying the Visteon plants in Belfast, Basildon and Enfield. Links were also forged with parents occupying four primary schools in Glasgow in April that were being closed.

In a communication with supporters on the Visteon support list, which has become a source of information for a variety of struggles, including school

occupations and the ongoing Vestas dispute, Eleanor, a parent at the school stated:

*Thursday 30th July Ben Bradshaw (Secretary of State at the Department of Culture Media and Sport) secretary called Hands Off Lewisham Bridge with a very important message; that the English Heritage Grade II listing awarded to Lewisham Bridge Primary School remains in place.*

Some supporters and parents view this is a significant victory, while others are being cautious in their optimism, given the premature enthusiasm during the Visteon dispute - workers in Basildon and Enfield overwhelmingly voted for a deal that meant they would lose out on their pensions, while 2 days later, Belfast workers followed them in accepting the deal, but were considerably split over the vote. Many later expressed dismay at the deal they had voted for and felt betrayed by their union, Unite, which had declared it a great victory. Visteon workers have had to re-engage in a battle for their pensions, but had already abandoned their occupations.

In the Lewisham case, while the upholding of the heritage status is a significant step toward parents getting what they wanted, many will not be content until their pupils are back being educated in their normal school. Currently, pupils are being bussed to the Mornington Centre in New Cross, which is a significant inconvenience for most Lewisham parents, and a number of safety concerns have been raised concerning this busing of coach-loads of children every morning, including the fact that the buses had been involved in two accidents.

A further demand reiterated in the communication to supporters of the 'Hands Off Lewisham Bridge!' campaign is:

*the Council should not allow Leathersellers, a private unaccountable body to run our school and that instead it should remain a local community primary school open to all.*

The Hands Off Lewisham Bridge campaign also sent out an encouraging message to workers and communities engaged in struggle:

*The Lewisham Bridge victory sends a message to those in struggle from the campaign against the Goldsmiths Trust in Lewisham, parents fighting academies in Barrow in Furness, and the workers at Vestas who have occupied their factory to save 600 jobs, that direct action works. By taking such bold steps, we along with many others have shown that if we stand up and fight we can win. What we must do now is build on this victory and stand up together. This is a fight against privatisation and the selling off of public services; it's a fight against redundancies and the selling off of our jobs. It's a national fight and with our victory we send a message of solidarity to the workers in the Vestas occupation. Stand up and fight - do it together and we can win!*

Choccy



# University Workers Fear Over Jobs and Pay While Bosses get Huge Pay Rises

*"I hope that the employers' put as much effort into seeking a negotiated solution to the unions' claims for a new national job-security agreement and for a fair approach on pay, as they have on seeking to undermine our internal processes. We will continue to work closely with our colleagues to pressure the employers to agree national principles to treat staff fairly; and to settle this year's pay award."*

## EDUCATION NEWS IN BRIEF London Met Occupation

In May, London Metropolitan University (LMU) was occupied for 3 days as students from the university took over the institution's Commercial Road building in a protest against job cuts. LMU is London's biggest university and has a track record of providing higher education to many 'non-traditional' students.

The protests were sparked after LMU announced plans to sack 550 staff and possibly put more at risk. LMU was motivated by a massive bill of £35million incurred for misreporting student degree-completion numbers to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The occupation ended after 3 days, when LMU successfully obtained a court-order to evict the occupying protestors. Prior to the student occupation, staff had gone on strike over job-security.

## New Education Workers Group in London

Education workers from around London have been meeting recently to discuss forming an education workers group to address issues facing workers across the sector. The preliminary meetings contained members of Solidarity Federation, Organise!, Anarchist Federation, IWW and Liberty & Solidarity. The intention however is to build a group for all education workers, regardless of group/union membership, or lack thereof, provided they agree with basic principles such as non-hierarchical collective decision-making, direct action, and collective solutions to individual problems. So far the group contains teachers, lab-technicians, librarians, and teaching assistants and will be open to worker in education including admin staff, catering, security and cleaning staff, but is obviously not managers.

The group aims to provide a forum for workers to discuss issues affecting them in the education sector, and to produce literature to distribute to workers across the industry to inform them of relevant issues and how we might organise to fight back, and also to criticise the nature of education under capitalism. The group also aims to carry out solidarity work with workers who are taking action to improve their lives in the education sector and beyond.

A survey by the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) has reported that 6,000 lecturing jobs are expected to be cut in universities, with employers citing the recession as the reason. A staggering 4,593 jobs cuts are expected in universities and 1,298 in colleges. One-third of those axed could be in London alone. In the first issue of The Leveller we reported that two-thirds of the UK's 150 Higher Education (HE) institutions were planning job cuts this year.

These job cuts are compounded by the announcement that university teaching is to have £65m slashed from its budget despite the governments plans for 10,000 new students a year to be recruited – more students, less money to teach them, and less staff.

However the UCU have suspended the ballot for industrial action over pay and job security until autumn.

Following notification that 78 higher

education (HE) employers intend to use anti-trade union laws against UCU, the union has announced that it is suspending the ballot for industrial action that had be due this month. The union had sent ballot papers to members in May for strike action, after a failure of the University and College Employers Association (UCEA) to assure the unions that jobs in HE would be secured and over demands for a 8% pay-rise for all staff in HE.

The UCU and other unions in HE had already rejected a 'derisory' 0.3% pay offer, and later described a final offer of 0.5% as 'miserly'. This was all the more insulting given university senior managers and vice-chancellors had received average 5.5% and 9% pay rises in the last year respectively.

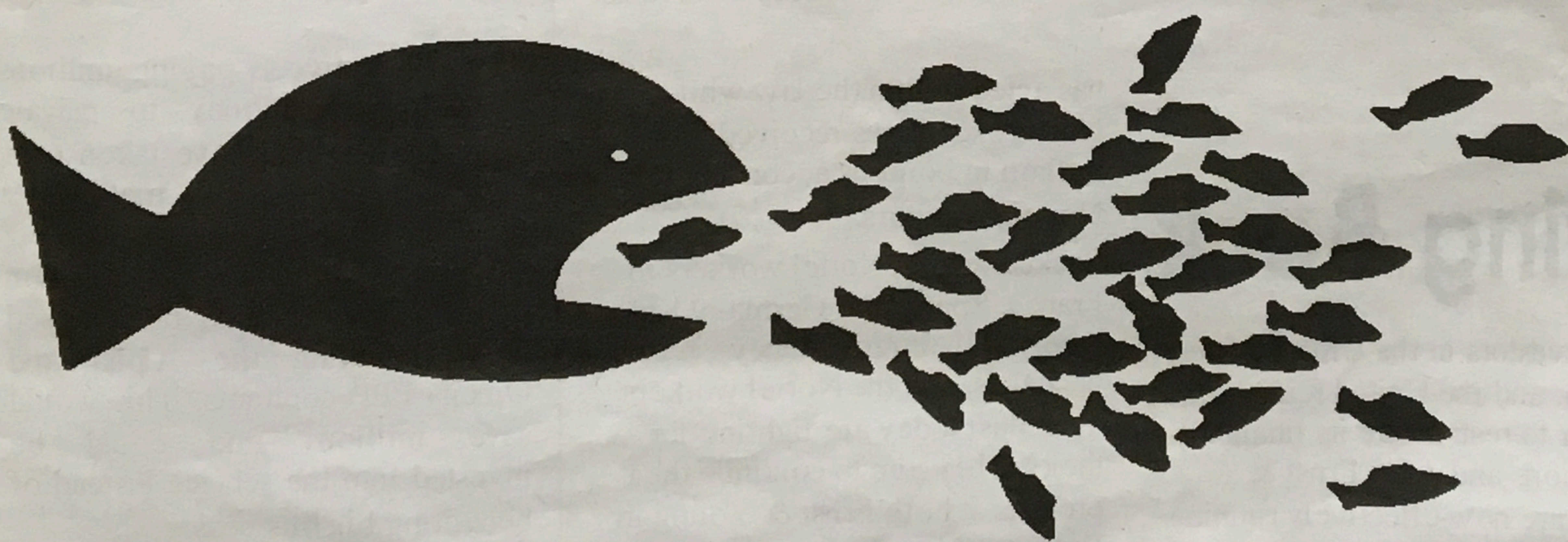
UCU are looking for a national agreement on the security of jobs in HE and in a communication to members, general secretary Sally Hunt said:

In the communication, Hunt also cited a software problem with the UCU member list which may have resulted in some members not receiving ballot papers.

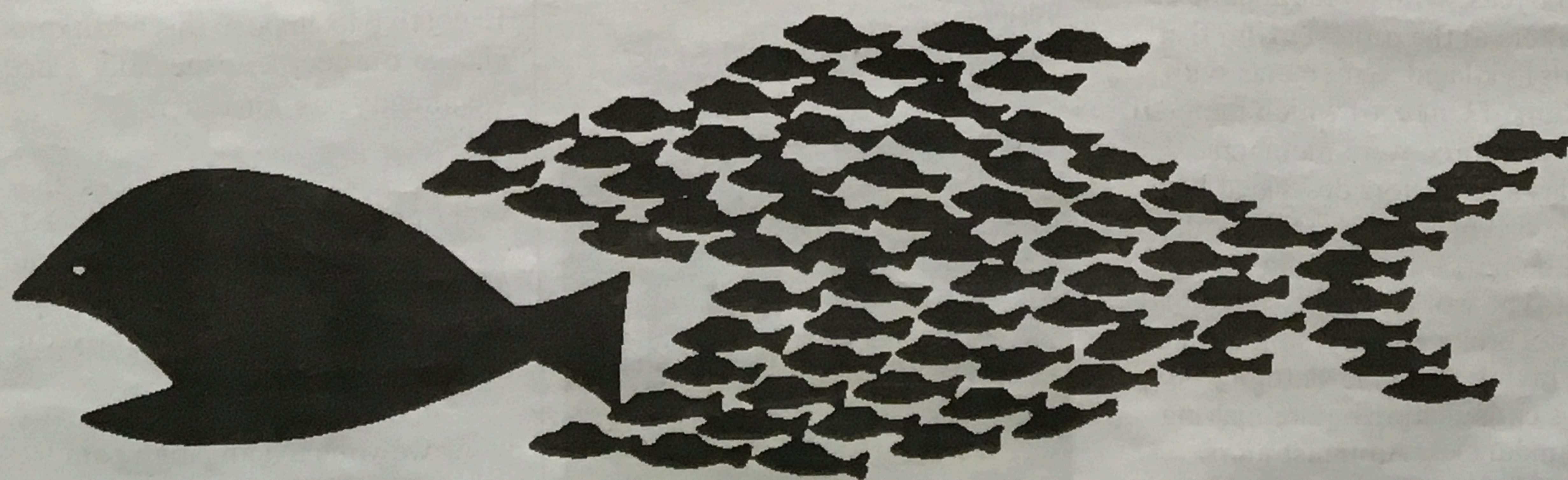
Five HE unions have joined forces to launch a 'Defend Higher Education' campaign, and are expected to be distributing materials to university workers over the summer.

In the mean-time vice-chancellors, many earning more than the UK Prime-Minister, will continue with life on the pigs back. University and College Union (UCU) general secretary, Sally Hunt, said, "when staff are being warned pay increases may lead to job redundancies, it is quite incredible and rather distasteful that vice-chancellors have enjoyed such exorbitant pay rises."

## Against our bosses, landlords, politicians...



### Solidarity is strength!





## Profit before People: Medical Madoff exposed

In March 2009, investigations run by the state medical institute in Springfield, Massachusetts (USA), revealed that during the last 12 years an anaesthesiologist from the centre, Scott Reuben, totally fabricated results of over 21 clinical trials without getting caught!

Reuben was working on a new postoperative painkiller as an alternative to the use of addictive drugs such as morphine, and results of the studies he published were all in favour of the use of those new drugs made by Pfizer and Merck (a company known for attempting to discredit or 'neutralise' doctors who were critical of their practices). Having presented positive conclusions in those studies, Reuben pushed for the use of those drugs on patients, and informed the sale of billions of dollars worth of those drugs, putting patients at risk. When examining the release and the use of new drugs, control bodies look at the balance between positive and negative outcomes to see if the positive effect of the drug is worth the drug side effects. In this case, Reuben, by presenting fake results demonstrating the drug is beneficial, pushed in favour of the drug's use.

It could have been just one of those examples of academics frauds that are raised time to time and exist thanks to the lack of control by

publishers and universities if Scott Reuben was not getting money from Pfizer!! Reuben alongside his job in the Baystate Medical Center was getting a salary from Pfizer as a member the company speaker's bureau as well as received 5 research grants from the same company...

This is not to say that this Reuben, nicknamed 'Medical Madoff' (in reference to Bernie Madoff, the billionaire fraudster), was the only person implicated in this falsification of data, or that blame should be individualised, but why did no one ever challenge his results?

It has been shown that research published on the effect of a drug and sponsored by the drug manufacturer tend to be statistically more in favour of the drug than public/independent founded research. So how someone that has never published any clinical work with negative conclusions, and is getting paid by one of the drug manufacturers can published works for ten years without his results being investigated is astonishing! This may have led to the prescription of potentially dangerous drugs to millions!

As well it emerged this year that Elsevier, a big-name academic publisher, has SIX industry-sponsored medical journals, all essentially long adverts, in the form of reprints of positive articles that flatter the

pharmaceutical companies that pay for the journals. Essentially, these are fake journals, claiming to be objective and interested only in the evidence-base of the research contained, but in actuality, controlled directly by pharmaceutical companies, and containing nothing more than glorified drug adverts.

Even in the legit mainstream journals, industry-funded studies are much more likely to get into the biggest, most influential journals than public/independent research studies – such journals have higher 'impact-factors', which means they are cited more often thus influence their fields more.

Bosses and governments regularly manipulate the results of research, or hide results when it doesn't suit their drive for profit or ideological motivations. Last month it emerged that Bush's government had hidden satellite images of polar ice sheets from July 2006 and July 2007 showing the retreating ice during the summer, due to human-influenced climate change.

Science and medicine, as with any other industries, under capitalism can never meet the needs of the working class. Whether it's governments manipulating climate change data to protect oil interests, or pharmaceuticals pimping their own brand of drugs without regard to the potential risks to people, the working class have to pay one way or another. While workers are not in control of these industries, they will always be subject to the interests of bosses who put profit before people.

Choccy and Frankie

## Nortel: Workers Fighting Back

Protests are ongoing in support of the 87 workers sacked with no redundancies at the Nortel plant in Newtownabbey last March.

Workers and protestors gathered outside the Bedford Street offices of Nortel's administrators, Ernst & Young, in Belfast on the 6th of August. Members of Organise! joined the sacked workers as they unfurled banners and handed out leaflets to shoppers and workers in central Belfast.

The mood of the protest was upbeat, with foghorns booming, but there anger at the way the have been treated by their former Nortel bosses was palpable. Nortel, is a multinational telecommunications equipment manufacturer and has its international headquarters in Toronto, Canada. In January 2009, the company filed for protection

from creditors in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, in order to restructure its financial obligations and debt. Ernst & Young are now effectively running Nortel's UK operation.

On 30 March, bosses at the Monkstown plant assembled at short notice and sacked 87 employees, with no redundancies. Workers at the protest claim that Nortel violated agreements with the union Unite, of which many of the workforce were members. Today's protestors described how there had been no consultation, and no notice concerning the job cuts. The workers have stated that Nortel broke employment laws by not giving them the statutory 90 days consultation before making redundancies. Administrators Ernst & Young, claim that Nortel

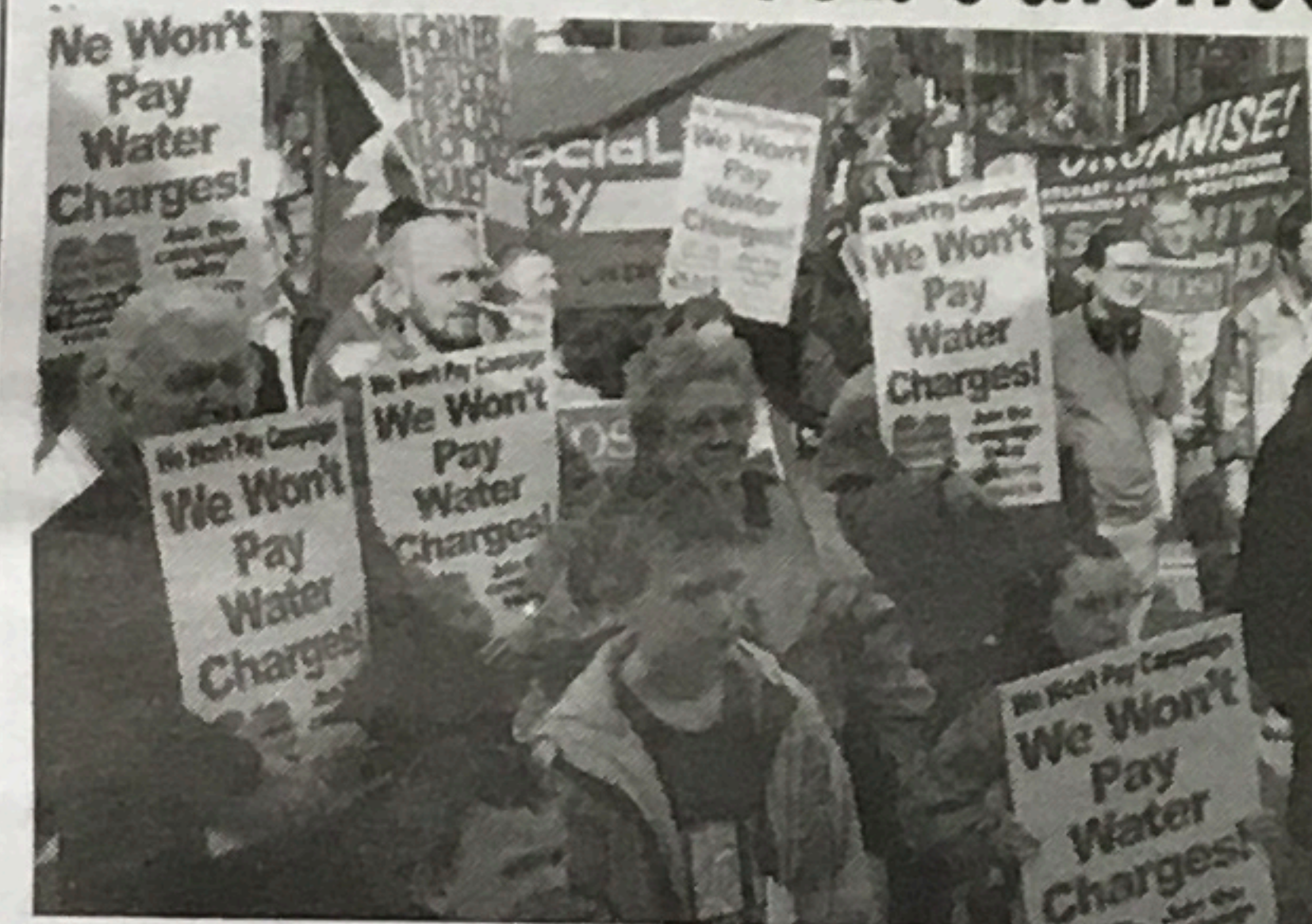
has acted within the law while Nortel executives received \$43 million in bonuses according to the Nortel protestors.

Sacked former Nortel workers in France, Spain, and Germany had received their redundancy packages, and the Nortel workers in Belfast today are fighting for theirs. They aim to continue their protests at both Ernst & Young in Belfast, and at the Nortel plant outside Belfast. The sacked UK workers have set up an information site about their fight against Nortel

<http://www.shameonyounortel.co.uk/>



## Water Charges Will Be Met With Mass Civil Disobedience



The anti-water charges We Won't Pay Campaign has responded to speculation that water charges may be introduced next year by warning the Northern Ireland Executive that they "will be met with mass civil disobedience if water charges are imposed on people."

Gary Mulcahy, spokesperson for the anti-water charges campaign added "There is no mandate to introduce water charges. It would be totally undemocratic to impose this tap tax on households. At the last Assembly elections the politicians were left in no doubt that people are strongly opposed to water charges.

"The Executive is paying millions of taxpayers money to private companies which have taken over important parts of the water service. This supply should be cut off and the creeping privatisation of the service should be reversed by terminating the Alpha and Omega PPP contracts. This would save millions and could be invested into the service instead of benefiting big business.

"People are already struggling to pay existing bills without having to worry about a new water bill. It is completely unacceptable for the Executive to impose this additional charge on people, especially since we already pay for water.

"If the Executive announces that water charges are to be introduced, we will determinedly campaign in the communities to build an organised 'We Won't Pay' boycott of these charges."

[www.wewontpaycampaign.com](http://www.wewontpaycampaign.com)



# Vestas Occupation Isle of Wight

The Vestas occupation ended on Saturday 8th of August when workers left the building after an eight day protest.

Back on Monday 20th July workers at the Vestas factory on the Isle of Wight, which manufactures wind turbines for the production of renewable energy occupied the plant in protest at threatened job losses. About 25 workers entered the administration block of the Vestas Wind Systems factory at around 7.30pm and vowed to remain there until the government discussed their proposal to save it from closure.

In April this year, Vestas, a Danish company which is the largest manufacturer of wind-turbines in the world, announced that it planned to axe 1900 jobs internationally, despite a profit increase of €23mil between the first-quarters of 2008 and 2009. The same week that the job axes were reported, Vestas reported issuing 18.5 million shares, which apparently generated €800 million for the company.

The company claimed the job-cuts were necessary due to the recession, because demand for wind turbines is lower. It was announced initially that around 600 of the job cuts would be in the UK, mainly at the Isle of Wight plants in Newport and Cowes, which employ around 500 people, while the rest would mostly be in Denmark. Vestas stated that it would close the Isle of Wight plants completely by the end of July while 100 workers in Southampton will also suffer. While this has clear echoes of the Visteon dispute, one major difference seems to be the attitude and tactics employed by the police to attempt to bring an end to the occupation. In the case of Visteon the police took a seemingly 'hands-off' approach, their response to the Vestas occupation was much more direct. A statement issued by the workers said:

*"Acting without an injunction, on private property, the police have repeatedly tried to break into the office where the protesting workers have barricaded themselves, and have threatened the workers with arrest for*

*aggravated trespass, despite the fact that no damage has been done to the property where the protest is taking place. Police have also forcibly removed people from private property, another action that is of very questionable legality in the absence of a formal injunction".*

The police also moved swiftly to heroically stop in his tracks one dangerous individual who was attempting to smuggle a package of foodstuffs to the occupiers. Ben Leamy, 38, was held for several hours but released without charge (22nd July).

His custody sheet accused him of being "armed with supplies of food". The arresting officer wrote: "Believed that the DP [detained person] was going to supply the food. In doing so, fear that that the protest would be prolonged and therefore possibility of breach of the peace. Arrested to prevent same."

Mr Leamy said: "I made it all the way to the rope with a huge bag of sausage rolls, scotch eggs and fruit and in another three seconds it would have been on its way up. Then they just piled on and grabbed me."

The workers occupying the plant unsurprisingly accused the police and employers of trying to starve them out. Later, a mass walk-in by protesters on the outside succeeded in getting supplies through, but the employer's response was the building of a fence around the site and the deployment of private security guards, along with the arrests of two more protesters. Vestas was understood to be applying for a court injunction, having already threatened the protesters with automatic sacking, a week shy of when they were scheduled to be axed anyway.

The workers have pointed out how the closure of the factory makes a mockery of government pledges on environmental issues:

*"We find this hard to stomach as the government are getting away with claiming they are investing heavily in these types of industry. Only last week they said they would create 400,000 green jobs. How can the process start with 600 of us losing our jobs?"*

An RMT press release on July 24th stated that:  
*"RMT and other trade unionists today managed to get some supplies of food and drink into the occupation. RMT have been working on contingency plans to drop food in by helicopter if necessary to ensure that the Vestas workers are not starved into submission and have called upon the wider trade union movement to ensure that supplies are maintained. ..."*

Over time, more sophisticated methods of getting things in and out of the plant were devised, such as a memory stick inside a tennis ball, which occupiers were able to use to send out footage from inside the factory.

Gallingly, on 27th July the BBC reported:

*"More than £6m is to be awarded to a wind turbine firm's research centre on the Isle of Wight, despite its plans to cut 625 jobs and shut its factory. The government grant allocated to Vestas Technology UK Ltd comes as 25 workers continue a sit-in at its plant.*

*Vestas Windsystems is making the redundancies at its Newport site at the end of July despite rising profits".*

On July 28th, Vestas delivered letters of dismissal to 11 employees it had identified as being inside the plant, along with their evening pizza.

On 29th, Vestas failed to have the occupiers removed by a court after a judge ruled that removal papers had not been served in accordance with legal rules. The case was adjourned until August 4th.

Again, as in other occupations the role of trade unions was a double edged sword. One report from the occupation:

*"The RMT offered to support all workers regardless of their membership status and have offered practical support. Whatever their limitations, the RMT have played an important role in this dispute, not least by giving confidence to the workers. This has definitely paid off for them with more workers joining the union every day... There is a stewards committee which is coordinating the support of the occupiers and demos etc, this is small but dynamic and dedicated group of workers but seem to showing signs of being overwhelmed with demands being*

*placed on them, unsurprisingly they in turn are turning to the RMT fulltimers and the activists for support and direction, but as yet are not really delegating much power to the other workers, which ultimately be the only way of dealing with this. The workforce is comprised of mainly young 20-mid 30s and predominately male, at present a small but significant section of the workforce is active in support of the occupation, but this does seem to be growing. The workers have mass meetings of those present (when I was there usually about sixty) which only open to workers and the RMT officials, whilst this prevents activists having too much direct influence it also excludes the main supporters the families and partners from participation and completely devalues that this is their lives too".*

The situation escalated overnight 3rd /4th August when workers climbed on to the roof of a second factory owned by the company at Cowes

As the occupiers left the plant on Saturday 8th they were met by cheers from hundreds of supporters.

.More info and updates at: <http://libcom.org/tags/vestas-occupation>

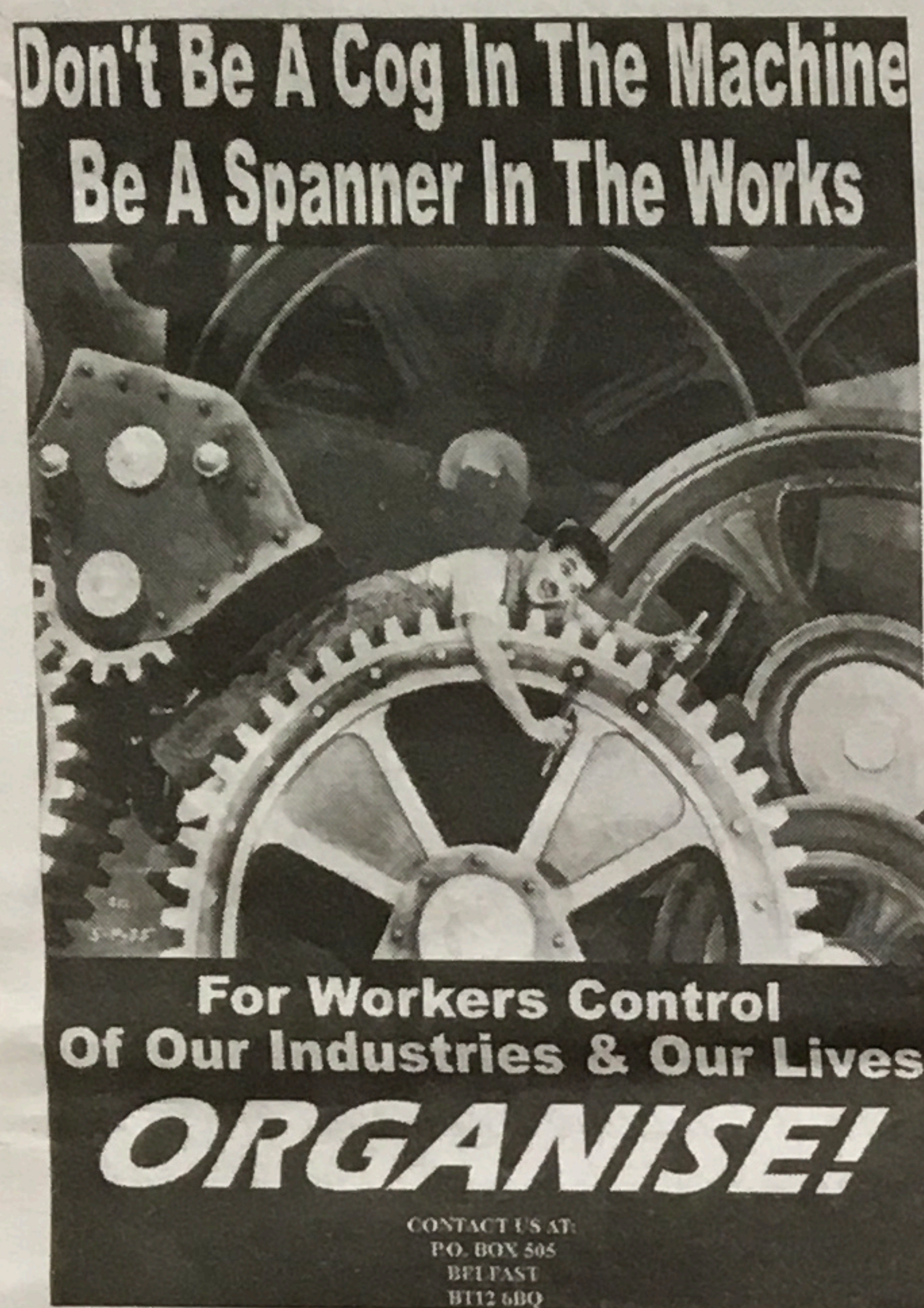
A support website for the workers has been set up at <http://savevestas.wordpress.com/> and messages of support can be sent to [savevestas@googlemail.com](mailto:savevestas@googlemail.com)

This has been far from the only occupation that has occurred since the last issue of *The Leveller*. French workers won massively improved redundancy payments after first occupying, then threatening to blow up, their workplace. Workers at Thomas Cook in Dublin were forcibly removed by police after occupying the branch in response to an announcement of its imminent closure. And in Ssangyong, South Korea, at the time of writing, factory occupiers are engaged in hand to hand combat with 2500 riot police and 3 helicopters. How this will have ended by the time this article appears is unclear, but up to date information should be available at <http://libcom.org/tags/ssangyong-occupation>

*Transport Worker*



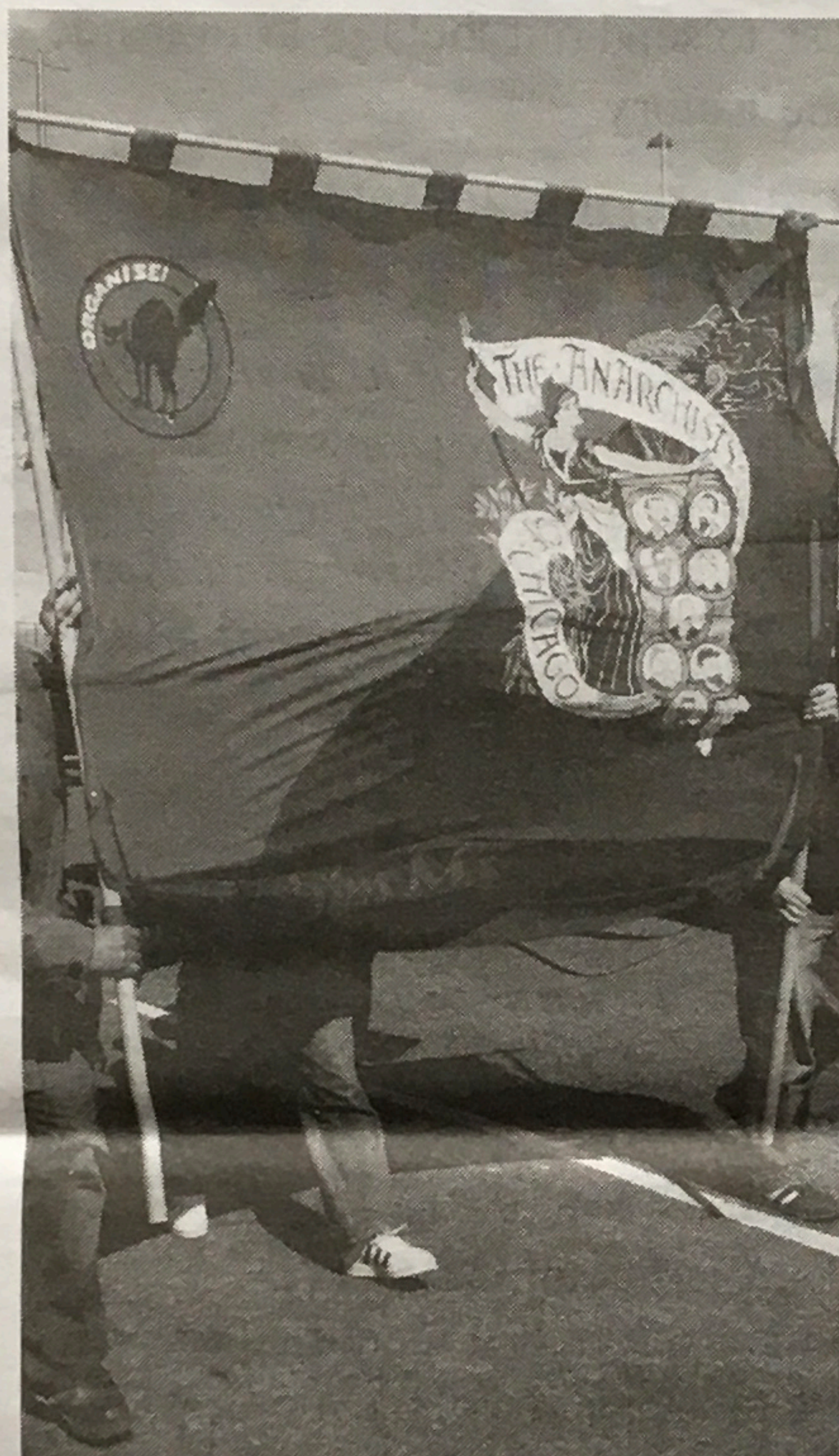
# Art as a Form Of Protest: Anarchism in the Arts



Organise! Poster utilising an image from Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times

As part of the month long Trans Festival the Community Arts Forum have been hosting discussions on Arts as a Form of Protest including a discussion which took place on the 15th of July in the Black Box Cafe. This discussion was about anarchism and protest politics in Punk rock, specifically Belfast Anarcho-Punk. There were a number of guests including local musicians (from the Punk community and elsewhere), a representative of the Trans Festival, workers from the Community Arts Forum, a representative from a local independent Television Station, Northern Visions,, members of the Warzone and Just Books Collectives, local anarchist activists including members of Organise! and a few others.

During the course of an hour, which is a miniscule amount of time to be discussing such a minefield of a topic, we managed to cover a range of issues. The new Warzone and Just Books Collectives joint project was talked about along with the ins and outs of running a (hopefully!) self-sufficient autonomous social centre. The importance of a space like this was stressed and the point made that it would be more than just an entertainment venue and a



Organise! Reclaim May Day banner on its annual outing

place for social gatherings, that it would provide a base for new forms of organising and provide a space for solidarity, radical thought and activism to thrive. At this time we discussed the "ghettoisation" of the punk subculture, within the Belfast punk scene in particular, and it was conceded that sometimes punk movements become stale cartoons of themselves and offer no real vehicle of social change. That said, we then took into consideration the amount of people in the room who would never have gotten involved in anarchism or left-wing politics had it not been for punk rock or the exposure at an early age to the punk community!

It was of course mentioned that punk rock is not the only genre to incorporate protest politics and music but since anarcho-blues

bands are a bit short on the ground in Belfast discussing punk seems a little more relevant.

I think speaking as musician in a political hardcore/Punk band that I realise that "anarcho-punk" or "political-punk" aren't movements that will achieve social change. Punk rock does not have the ability to end social injustices or emancipate humanity from the shackles of global capitalism but political music can help to educate the listener. It can be used as a tool to inform the mis-informed and if nothing else provides a gateway into a community (however "ghettoised") where anarchism and activism are evident.

Kev



Anarchist Art—A poster from the Spanish Revolution

## 3rd Belfast Anarchist Bookfair



might have some floor space available to travelling comrades. For further information email [organiseireland@yahoo.ie](mailto:organiseireland@yahoo.ie)

There are also stalls confirmed by the Anarchist Federation, Antifa Belfast, Aufheben, Back to Front magazine, Organise!, Just Books Collective, RAG, Solidarity Federation and the Workers Solidarity Movement.

The Book fair itself will take place at the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre from 12 noon to 6pm on Saturday 29th August 2009.

**"En el que sabe la grandeza de nuestro mañana no cabe el pesimismo"**

Friday 28th and Sunday 30th August "En el que sabe la grandeza de nuestro mañana no cabe el pesimismo - In one who knows the greatness of our tomorrows there is no room for pessimism" will see video showings and an exhibition of photo's from the late Abel Paz's 'The Spanish Civil War' at 9-11 Lombard Street, Belfast.

Friday 28th 5.00 - 7.30 pm plus showing of the documentary by Lisa Berber and Carol Mazer "...de toda la vida" and Ken Loaches 'Land and Freedom' Sunday 30th 1.00 - 4.00 pm plus showing of Vicente Aranda's 'Libertarias'

Belfast's third Anarchist Bookfair will take place over the 28th to 30th of August. The Leveller hopes that this years event will build on the success of previous bookfairs.

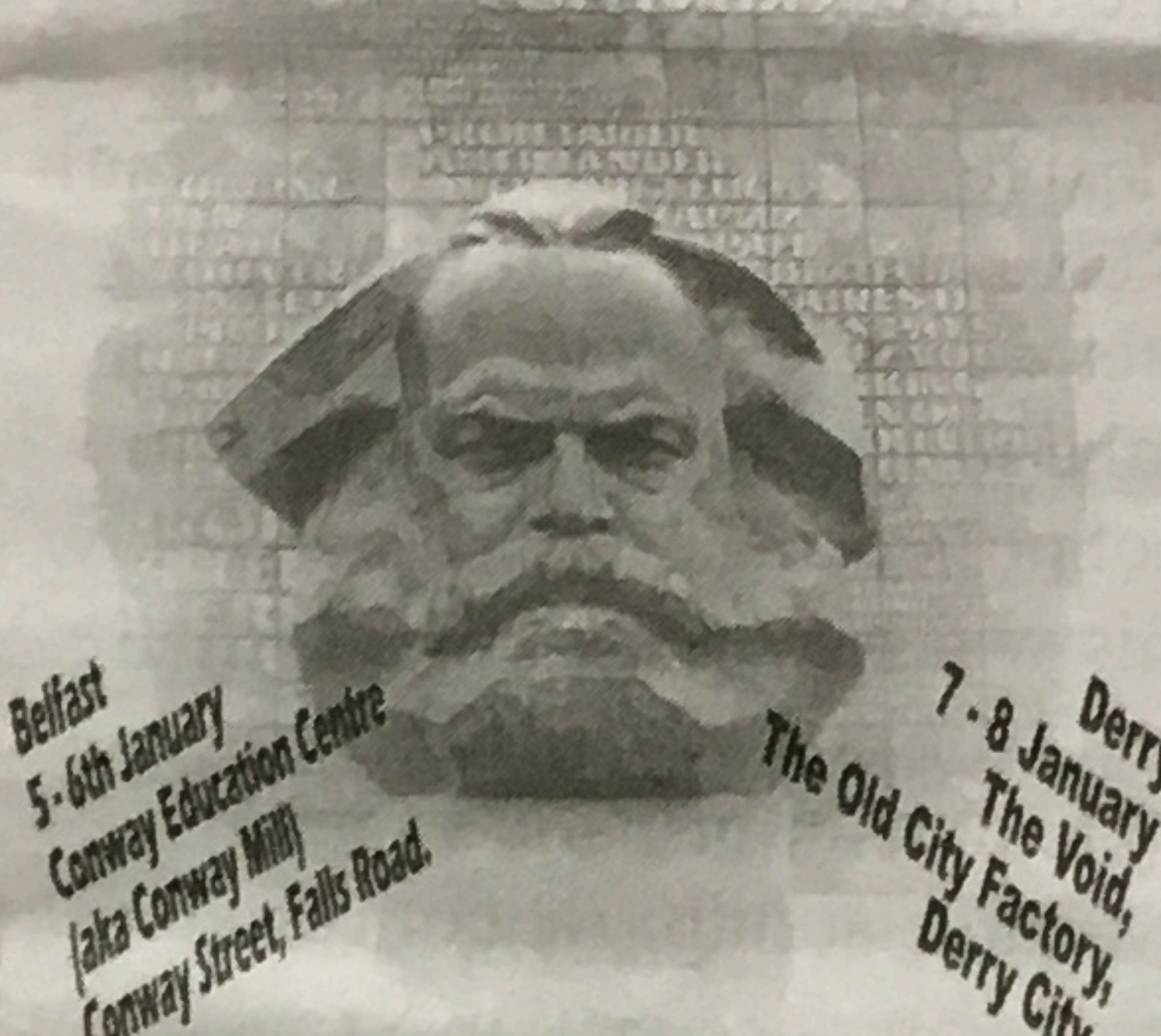
The theme of the talks at this years bookfair is 'Equality', and talks confirmed so far are:  
Equality and Northern Ireland  
Equality and Anarchism  
Fighting Racism and Fascism  
Equality and Education  
Taking on the Bosses

We hope that this years discussions will prove informative, enjoyable and be of some use for ongoing and future organising.

With people coming from near and far we are a bit pushed in terms of what we can offer by way of accommodation. Obviously we will be putting up people involved in giving talks as a priority but we

### THE JUST BOOKS COLLECTIVE PRESENTS MARX IN SOHO

A Play By Howard Zinn - Author of A Peoples History of the United States  
With Jerry Levy as Karl Marx



Starts 8.00pm Tickets £5.00  
Pay on the door or contact [jst\\_books@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jst_books@yahoo.co.uk)

Just Books poster advertising the Howard Zinn play 'Marx in Soho' that the Belfast based anarchist collective put on in Belfast and Derry

Belfast  
5-6th January  
Conway Education Centre  
(aka Conway Mini)  
Conway Street, Falls Road.  
Derry  
7-8 January  
The Void,  
The Old City Factory,  
Derry City.



## Guest Article:

# The Fight for Lieden's Freespace



Squatting is an excellent example of direct action in the community context, tackling the problems of lack of affordable housing/homelessness, and creating autonomous social spaces. The Netherlands has been a hot-bed of squatting activity over the last several decades – with its peak in the mid-80s, when activists were able to win some ‘rights’ for squatters – despite brutal government reaction and repression. Leiden, a beautiful city to the west of the Netherlands (featuring a giant windmill, of course), has been the location of dozens of squats. Places like Multipleks 1 & 2 (named after the plywood building material and housed in a 9 storey office block!), Sub071, as well as the plethora of different activities housed along Vrijplaats Koppenhinksteeg for the last forty years, have provided housing for dozens and a social space for the entire community of Leiden, the Netherlands, and beyond.

Of course, squatting by its very nature frequently comes into conflict with the authorities who seek to defend the sacrosanct right to private property so viciously reified by the pervasive liberal ideology. In recent cases the trend has been that squats are ‘cracked’ (hence the European term ‘kraak’) in dilapidated areas of the suburbs or inner city. These squats become well established social centres and loci of anarchist activity, which brings them into conflict with local government and councils, the police, and other forms of ‘authority’. Then, these areas become the trendy ‘bohemian’ parts of town, rents go up, demand for swish flats increases. This gentrification means that the land the squats are located on becomes very valuable to property developers and speculators. Now the squats are overtly in conflict with bourgeois business and capitalism. There are also the new neighbours. The

communities for which social centres provided free space are replaced by aspirational, status-symbol wielding yuppies. It seems most yuppies would rather not have a squat-shaped eyesore spoiling their view. These three areas of pressure – state, capital, and class, which are of course inextricably linked, means a great deal of effort is brought to bear to evict squats. This usually involves backhanded dirty tricks of behalf of officials and governments – with the support of the new up-and-coming yuppies and their speculator buddies, police brutality in the case of evictions, and attempted criminalisation of squatters – ably assisted by the mainstream media.

The latest focus of this conflict has been Vrijplaats (‘free place’) Koppenhinksteeg. This street, near to some postcard picturesque canals, is home to several groups and activities. These include De Fabel van de Illegaal, who help immigrants in a variety of ways, as well as combating racism; Bar En Boos, a great wee gig venue with a vibrant DIY atmosphere; a Chinese martial arts group; a free shop; a café; and the Eurodusnie and Plan B collectives. This range of activities helps Vrijplaats attract 1,500-2,000 visitors a week! I spoke to Marco, on a recent visit to Belfast, about Koppenhinksteeg (where he has been involved for twenty years) and the recent developments there.

First of all Marco was keen to point out that Vrijplaats is ‘not a ghetto where people just hide from the outside world. As a centre, it’s really in the middle of Leiden society, it chooses to be in the middle, and chooses to be visible, and chooses to be open.’ Vrijplaats provides services and space for grassroots initiatives, but this has meant hostility from the local council. ‘They have an ideological problem with us. We’re self-organised, we don’t take any money from the State, we don’t have

any formal connections with any political parties. We’re very keen on expressing to the outside world the importance of acting yourself, acting outside of the parliamentary structures and because we think... the instruments of parliamentary democracy are not there to give people power, but to take power away from people’ he continued ‘having a social centre means having space to start talking about these issues and also to organise yourself, and space to organise your debates, to plan your actions. It’s incredibly important.’

When I visited Vrijplaats in January 2008, they were in the final stages of a process of legalisation. This was argued to be necessary because half of the 1,300 sq. metre listed building was (and is) in serious disrepair. Marcos admits that legalisation is a ‘compromise’ but ‘a compromise I have already found peace with’. ‘We’re quite pragmatic because we want to stay there. We’ve invested a lot of time and it’s a very valuable place, and there’s a lot of energy in it and it’s worth fighting for.’ The, then, ‘so-called left-wing’ local government agreed a contract which would mean the repairs could be carried out. Since then however, a right-wing government has taken power in the council and reversed this decision, with some very flimsy justifications. In the days before our interview, Marcos had been informed that Vrijplaats Koppenhinksteeg had been sold by the government for just €150,000. ‘That’s almost giving it away. And we suspect that the city council really actually haven’t got any money for it. We’re almost sure they’re gonna provide the new owner... [with] all sorts of subsidies, for sure.’ With elections coming up in 6 months or so, Vrijplaats has become a political football. ‘The right-wing wants to use us, closing us down as one of their stunts for their election campaign.’ Marcos also feels that the ‘so-called left-wing’ government (the Green Left and the Social Democrats) have already betrayed them, and knows those opposition parties who do support them are merely out to gain cynical political capital.

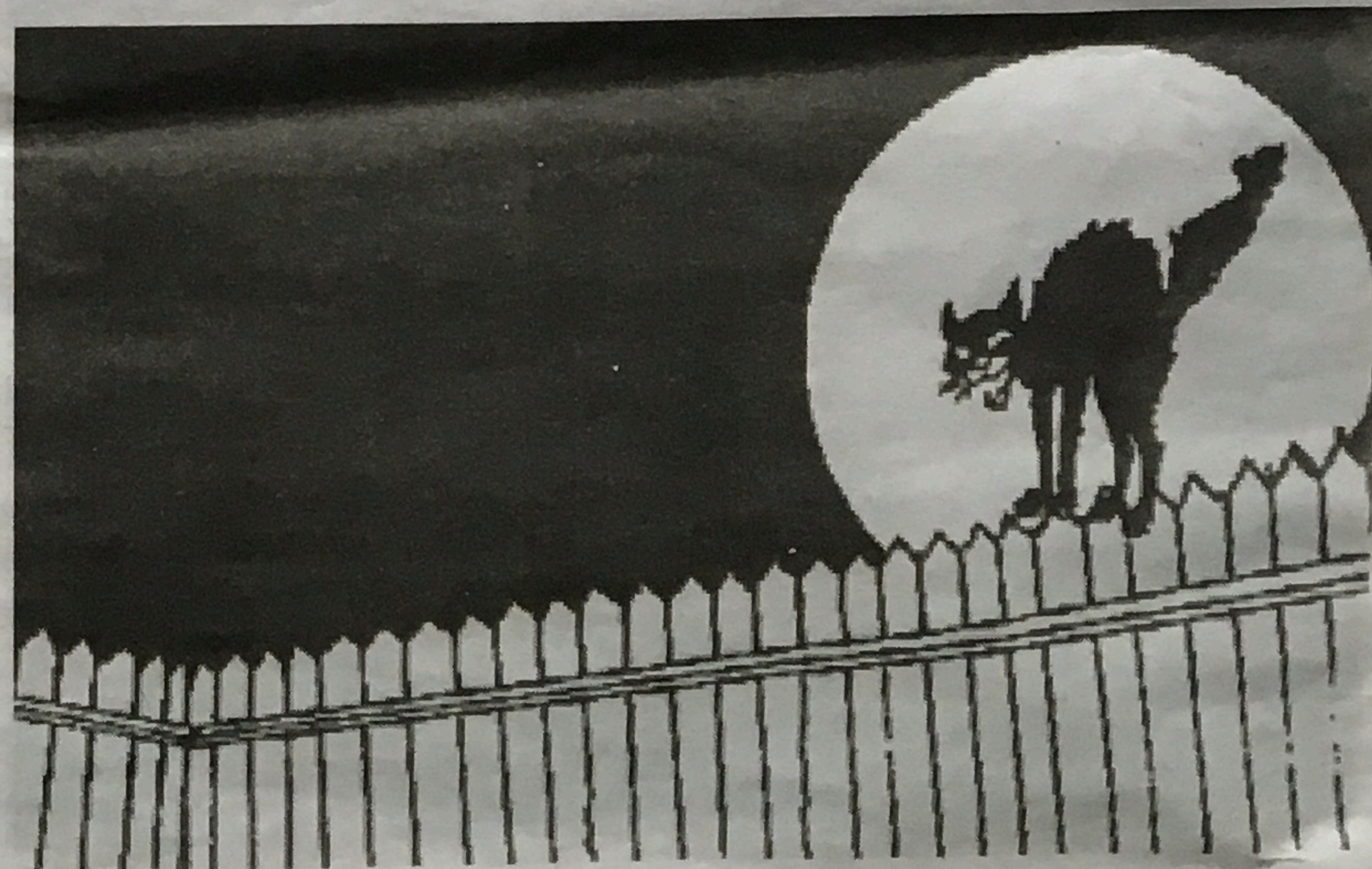
Vrijplaats Koppenhinksteeg is currently engaged in eight different legal battles against the local council. Marcos, however, is optimistic. ‘I’ve seen several times that the situation was very bleak. [The council] tried all the dirty tricks that they could think of, they lied about everything – but we haven’t been closed for one day. And that’s thanks to huge popular support. I think most of us see it as part of a wider struggle which also includes occupations and you can fight in a lot of different ways against the system of oppression. And this is just one of them.’

Marcos could ‘hardly imagine’ that Belfast did not have a similar social space. When pressed, however, he was keen to avoid any prescription. ‘I’ve been in a lot of different countries... but in every country they have a different format. I think there’s just one general thing which comes back in all these different countries, and that’s that you have to be very persistent. You have to know what you want, be a bit pragmatic because otherwise you won’t get anywhere. And just go for it! I do think it’s necessary to have these spaces and actually all of Belfast should be one big free place.’

The longevity, resilience, and determination of Vrijplaats is inspiring to say the least – and Marcos’ confidence of success for the future is positively contagious. The Warzone Collective in Belfast are currently trying to resurrect a social centre for Belfast (following the closure of *Giros* in 2003). Anyone who wants to get involved in developing an autonomous centre in Belfast is warmly encouraged to participate. More details on Vrijplaats Koppenhinksteeg, the Eurodusnie Collective, and the Warzone Collective can be found at the internet addresses below:

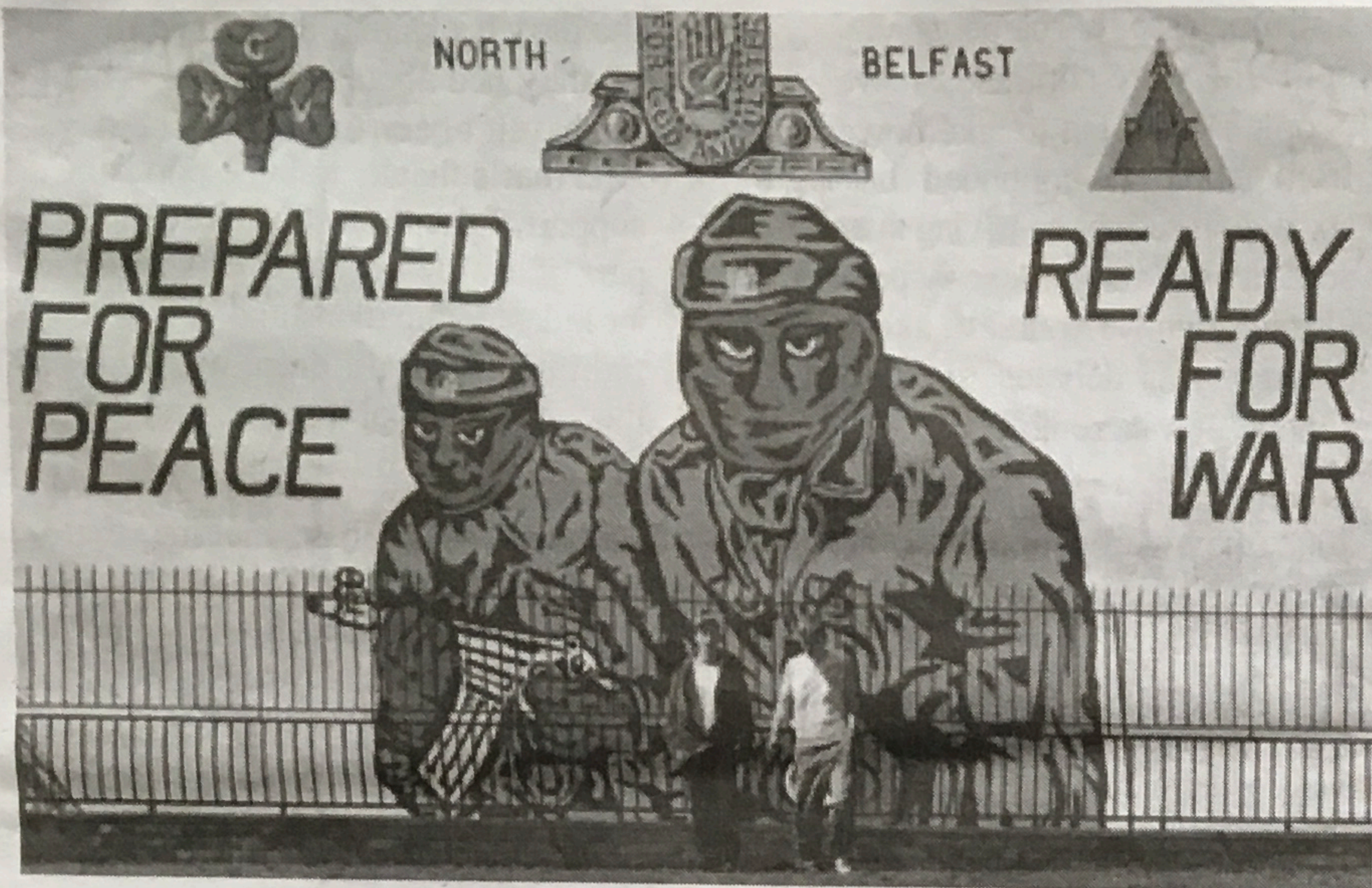
[www.koppenhinksteeg.nl](http://www.koppenhinksteeg.nl)  
[www.eurodusnie.nl](http://www.eurodusnie.nl)  
[www.warzonecollective.wetpaint.com](http://www.warzonecollective.wetpaint.com)  
 or [warzonecollective@riseup.net](mailto:warzonecollective@riseup.net)

Jim Nasium





# Loyalist Decommissioning



Fifteen years after the announcement of the CLMC none too secure ceasefires and four years after PIRA decommissioning Loyalist paramilitaries have also decommissioned. Well the UVF and RHC have while the UDA has made a faltering and internally acrimonious start.

On Thursday 18th of June the Belfast Telegraph broke the news that the UVF and the UDA had began the process while by Friday 19th it was confirmed that the UVF and RHC had "handed up all weapons under their control". It was also reported that the UDA had carried out its first act of decommissioning, witnessed by the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, on 16th June.

These organisations were key protagonists in what are know as Northern Ireland's 'troubles' and seldom lived up to their own self-image of taking the 'war' to the enemy, ie armed Republican groups. Both organisations have carried out numerous sectarian murders that were simply about terrorising the entire

Catholic population of the north into 'withdrawing support' for armed force Republicanism.

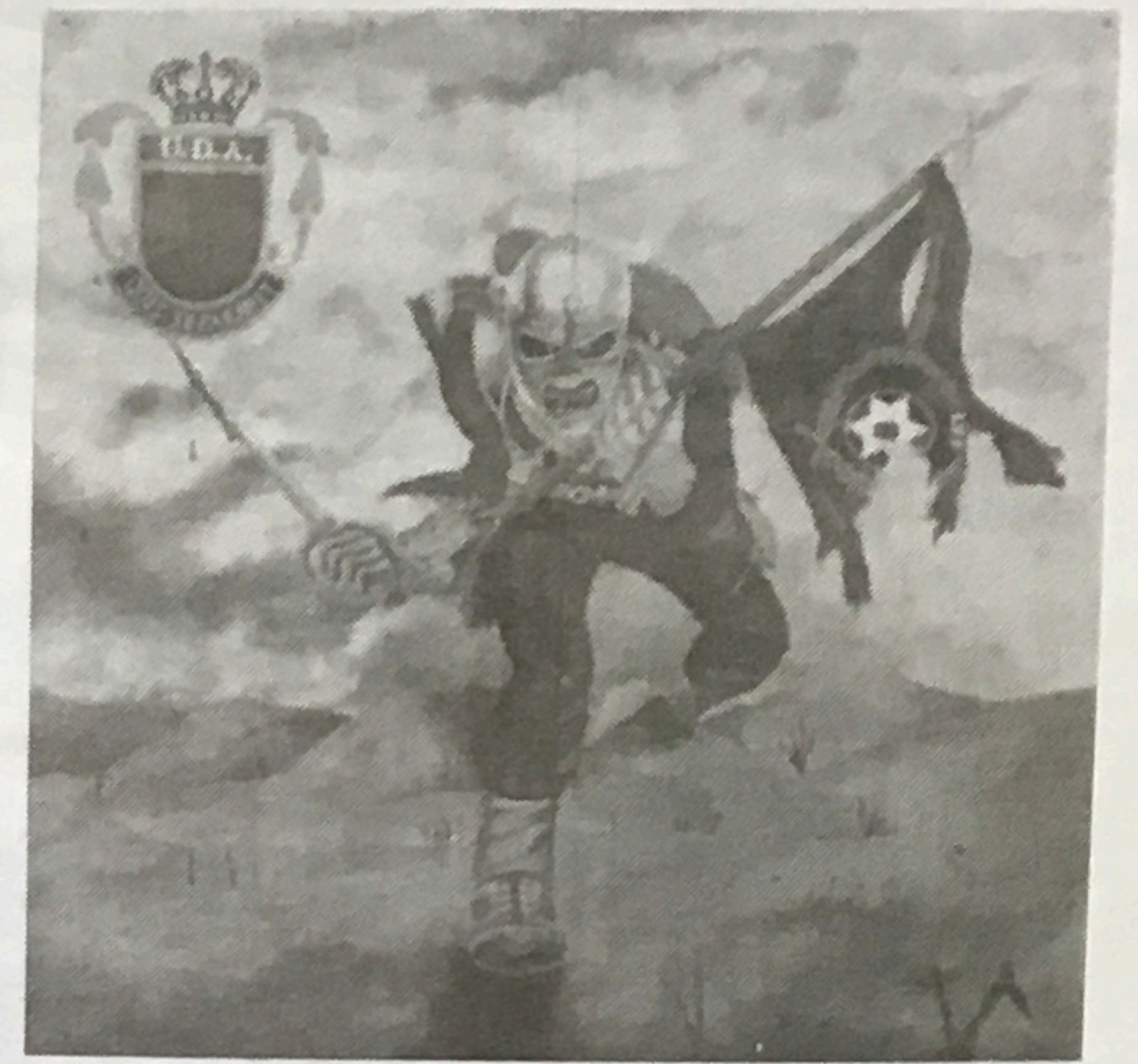
While many of those who went on to take active roles in these organisations cited the IRAs bombing campaign in the early seventies, that included attacks on Protestant bars and the economic centre of Belfast, as motivation for their involvement it must be remembered that the opening acts of violence of the recent troubles occurred back in 1966.

It was the newly formed UVF who carried them out. The group was forged amid much scaremongering about a heightened national threat that grew up around the 50th anniversary of the 1916 Rising. Their first victim was a 77 year old Protestant widow, Matilda Gould, burnt to death after a petrol bomb was thrown through the window of her house. The murder took place on 7th May 1966. The UVF had mistakenly identified Matilda as a Catholic. On the evening of the 27th of May a 28 year old Catholic engineering worker was shot by the UVF. He as a result of his wounds 15 days later. On the

morning of Sunday 26th June three young barmen, whom the UVF had falsely claimed were IRA men, were shot leaving a pub off the Lower Shankill.

The UDA emerged in September 1971 as an umbrella organisation, from various vigilante groups formed in response to, and to engage in and co-ordinate, the communal violence that erupted between working class communities in the north. At its peak of strength it held around forty thousand members and its was not proscribed until 1992 even though it had long been acknowledged that it was using the name Ulster Freedom Fighters as a cover for its paramilitary and sectarian campaign.

While the PIRA killed more people than any other groups involved in the troubles the UVF killed 550, the UDA killed 431 and the RHC 19 people. The UVF carried out the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in 1974 which caused the largest single loss of life in the conflict, killing 33 people.



On Friday 19th June Brian Rowan, writing in the Belfast Telegraph lauded the leadership of the Loyalist paramilitary groups for behaving "as a leadership should" there is a real danger that without consultation some rank and file members may not be on board. This has already proved problematic for the UDA with their Londonderry and North Antrim area attacking other Brigades, particularly in Belfast and claiming the 'Loyalist' working class in their areas have withdrawn support for government and the PSNI.

While the Leveller welcomes the decommissioning carried out by these groups and hopes that in the case of the UDA it will indeed be ongoing we look forward to the complete demilitarisation of all armed groups



Loyalist paramilitaries were responsible for some of the worst sectarian atrocities, from the Shankill Butchers to Greysteel, the Miami Showband massacre to Loughin Island.

While collusion with state security forces undoubtedly occurred but not on the levels imagined by Republicans. Loyalists were capable of pursuing their campaign without explicit direction from the 'Brits'. The truth that various security and intelligence agencies ran high level informants and agents in both Republican and Loyalist organisations is the more uncomfortable truth.

and the state. Although in relation to the latter we won't be holding our breath.

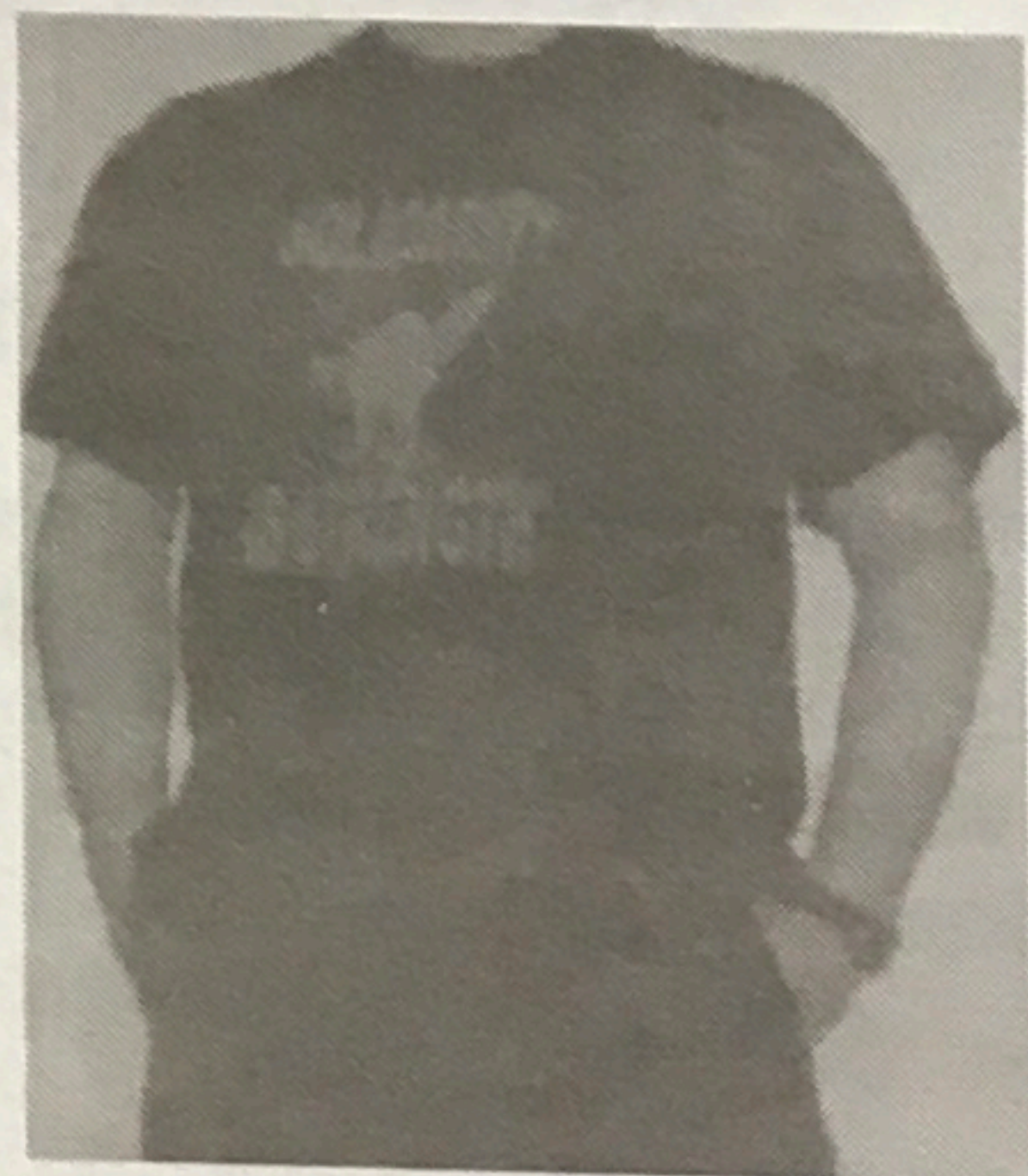
Hopefully, as more and more workers are coming together to fight in their common interests, we can create a movement that decommissions the dead-end ideologies of Loyalism and Republicanism. A movement that instead seeks to create a new society based on freedom, equality, solidarity and the principle of from each according to ability, to each according to need.

Deezer





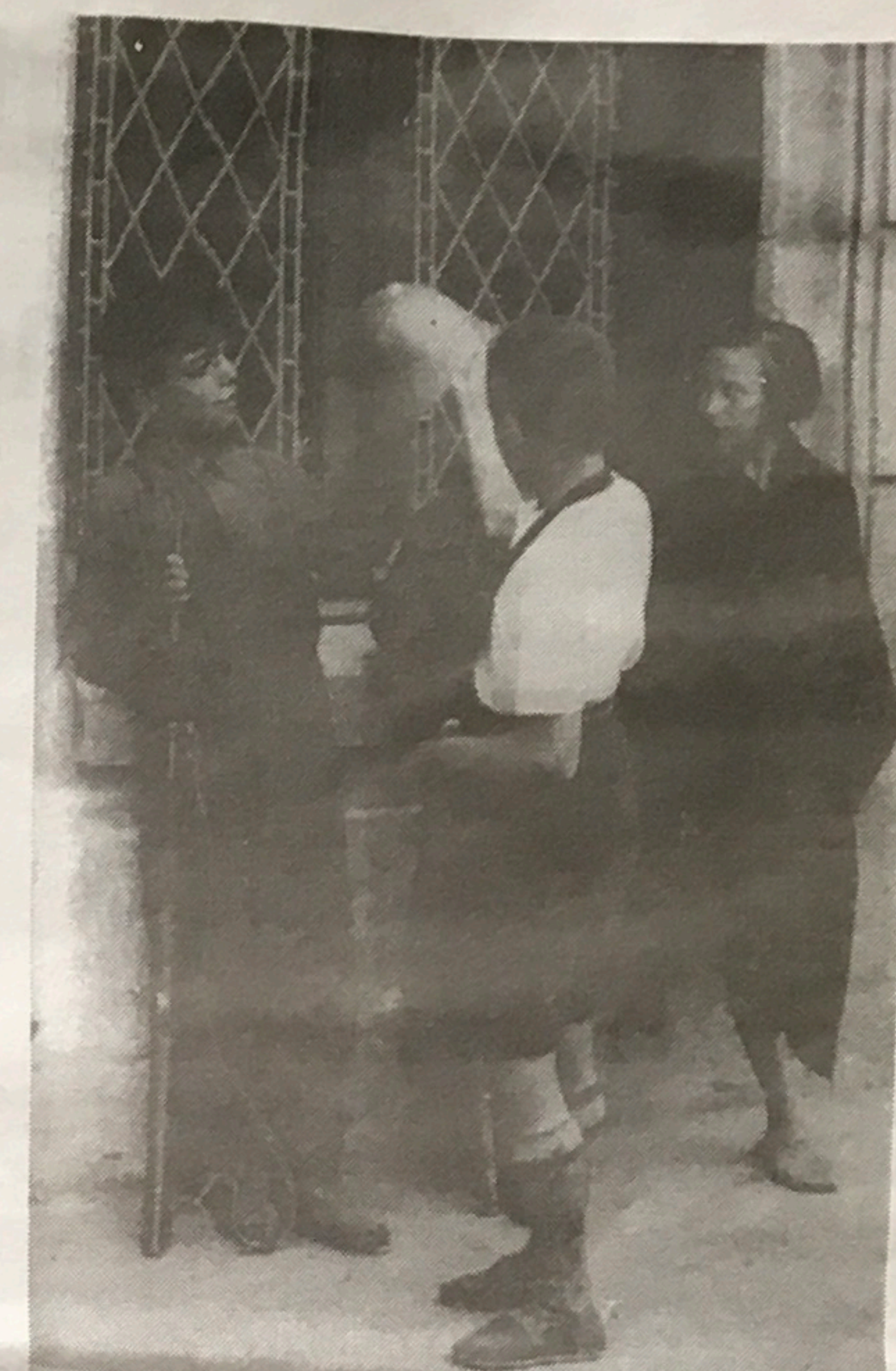
# The Leveller Merchandise



Solidarity is Strength T-Shirts are available in black ink on a red shirt or red ink on black, and are available in small, medium, large and extra large.

The Leveller also have red and black flags, measuring 3 ft by 2 ft and hemmed for pole available while there are still sets of 16

commemorative postcards produced by Just Books in 2006 to mark the 75th anniversary of the start of the Spanish Revolution and civil war. Regrettably we only have room to show a couple of the images. The set contains 8 black and white images from photos and 8 full colour reproductions of



revolutionary posters from the period.

T-Shirts cost £8.00

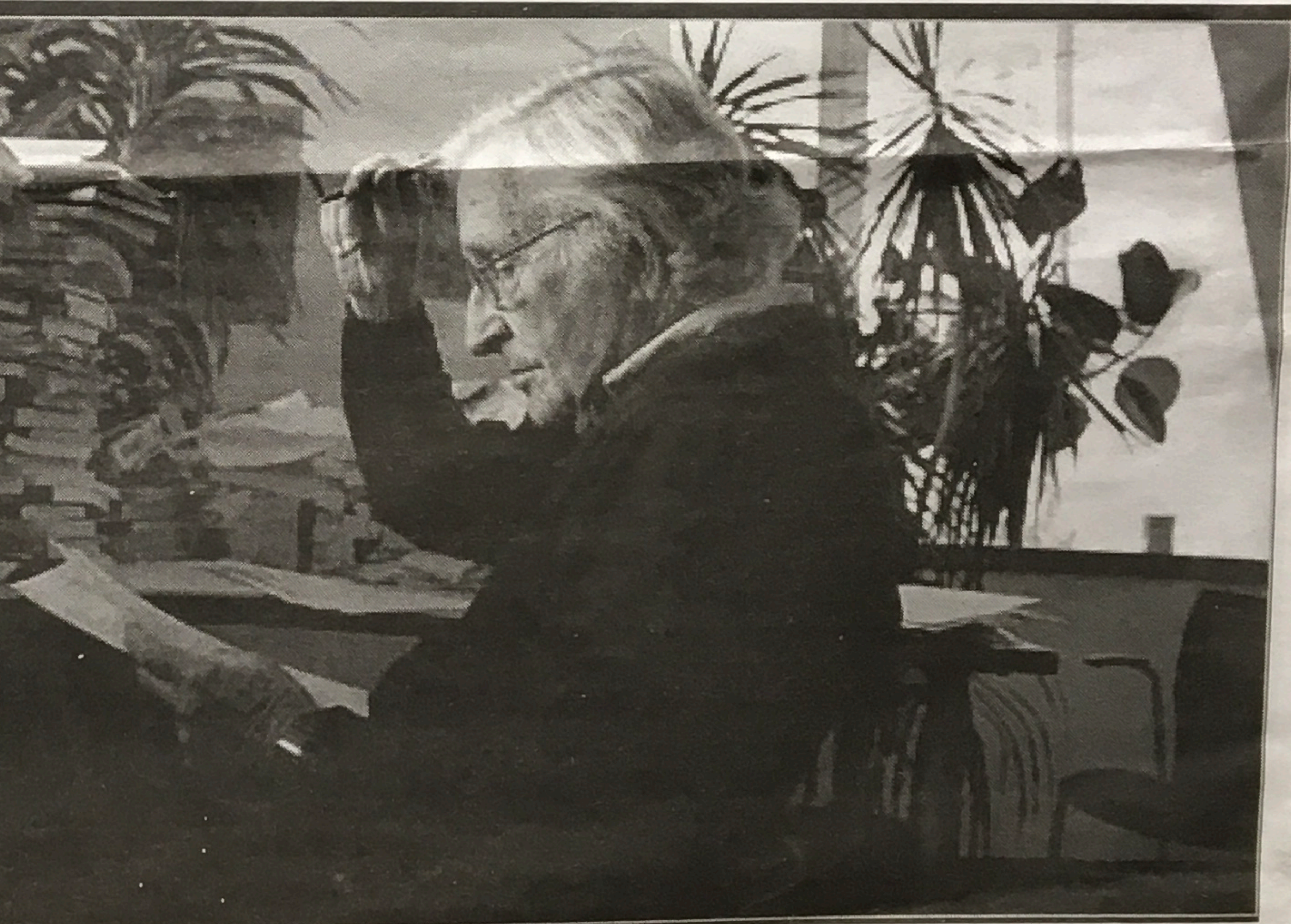
Flags are £10.00

Postcard sets £6.00.



Payment can be made by cheque/postal order/IMO made out to 'Just Books Collective' in sterling.. Send your order and payment to: The Leveller, 9-11 Lombard Street, Belfast, BT1 1RB

## Chomsky To Speak At Belfast Festival At Queens



This years Belfast Festival at Queen's is set to be one of the more interesting festivals in recent memory. It is especially exciting with the recent addition of noted linguist and political commentator Noam Chomsky.

He is speaking on behalf of the Amnesty International Annual Lecture and is set to deliver a talk covering a varying range of topics, from American foreign policy to the current economic climate.

For those unfamiliar with the name, Chomsky made his name

initially in the field of linguistics offering dynamic and original ideas. He came to prominence in the area when he developed a theory of 'generative grammar'. The theory supposed that humans have an innate capacity for generating systems of language.

Today Chomsky is more famously known for his commentaries on international affairs and his harsh, yet succinct, critiques of American foreign policy and the international economic system that is dominated by Western capitalism. His first foray into the regime of political

critiques came through the opposition to the Vietnam war. As a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology he was able to use his position to bring attention to the protests against the war.

Chomsky is also a self confessed Anarchist. He is both revered and seen as a controversial figure in the Anarchist movement. His first essay on Anarchism originally appeared in Daniel Guerin's 'Anarchism' but was also published in Chomsky's own collection of essays 'For Reasons

of State'. Chomsky has drawn his critics in Anarchism for his views that the state can partly be used in reaching an Anarchist society, but nevertheless he is still an important figure in the Anarchist movement.

His talk takes place on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October in Whitla Hall, Queens University, Belfast at 7:30pm.

Tickets for the talk are available from the website <http://www.belfastfestival.com>

Dee



# Belfast Marathon Anarcho-Relay Team Contacts

## Raise Money For Sacked Worker

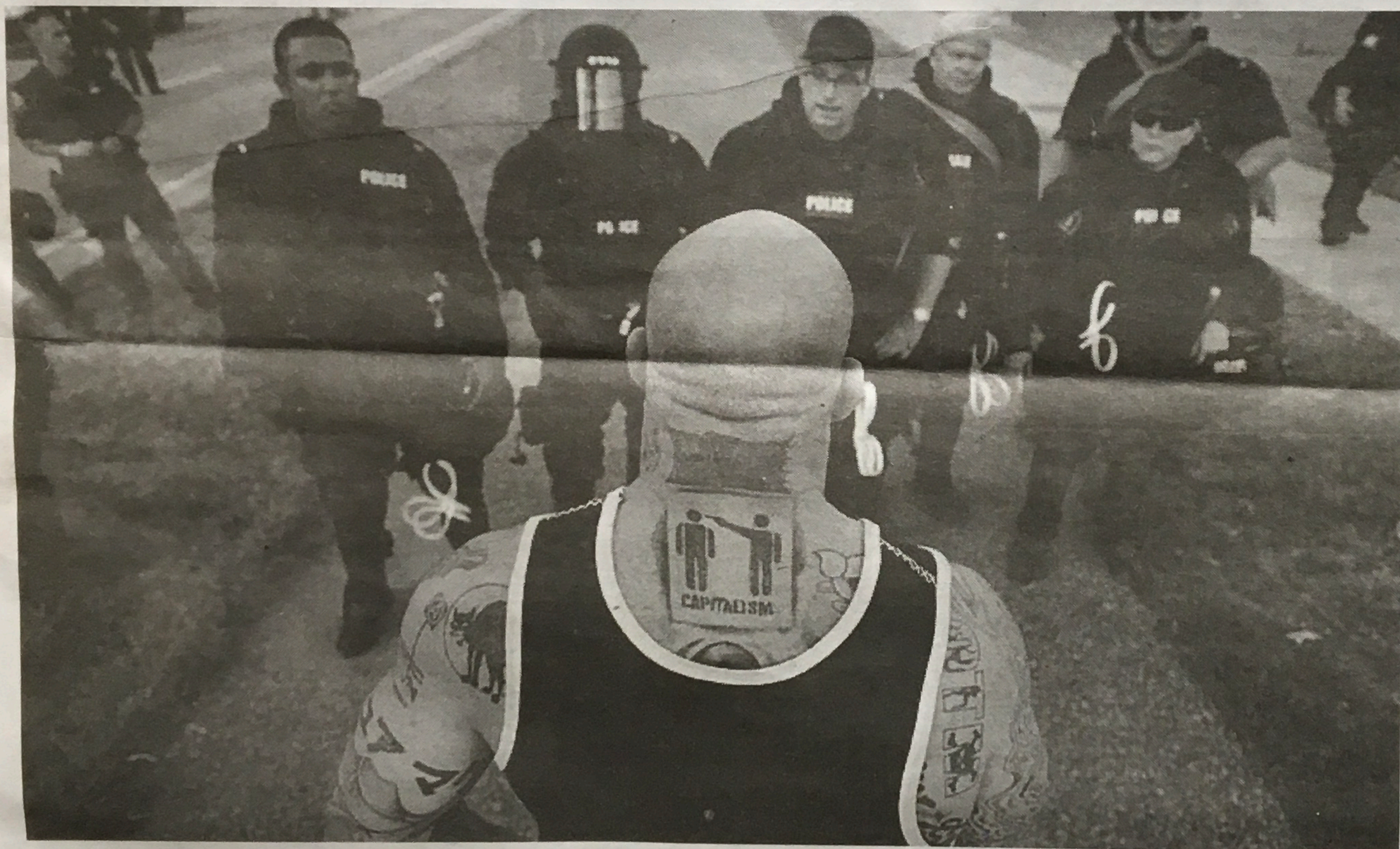
On a wet and blustery Monday 4th May 2009, finely tuned athletes representing Organise!, Brighton Solidarity Federation and the Libcom Collective braved the conditions to run the Belfast marathon, raising £100 for the support fund for Polish worker Natalia Szymanska.

Natalia was sacked from a Belfast Subway franchise on spurious grounds, coincidentally not long after she had informed her employer that she had become pregnant, and who's case was reported in issue one of *The Leveller*,

along with the franchise owners attempts to silence the protests through court injunctions. Well done to the anarcho-relay team, who finished the 26 mile course in under four and a half hours, and thanks to everyone who donated / sponsored. Sadly though, we appear to have been one-upped by a bunch of Maoists, as the New York branch of the Revolutionary Communist Party claim to have raised \$1500 by running the last New York marathon. Well, there is always next year.



# Monson could face jail sentence



Monson faces off against riot cops at a blockade of US arms shipments to Iraq.

Anarchist grappler and MMA fighter Jeff Monson could face jail time over a graffiti incident on the Capitol Building and an army recruitment centre in Olympia, Washington, USA., in November 2008. Monson who has used his high-profile to discuss anarchist politics, was arrested initially in January. Authorities claim that the graffiti, which included circle-As, a peace symbol and phrases such as "no poverty" and "no war", cost a ridiculous \$19,000 to clean-up.

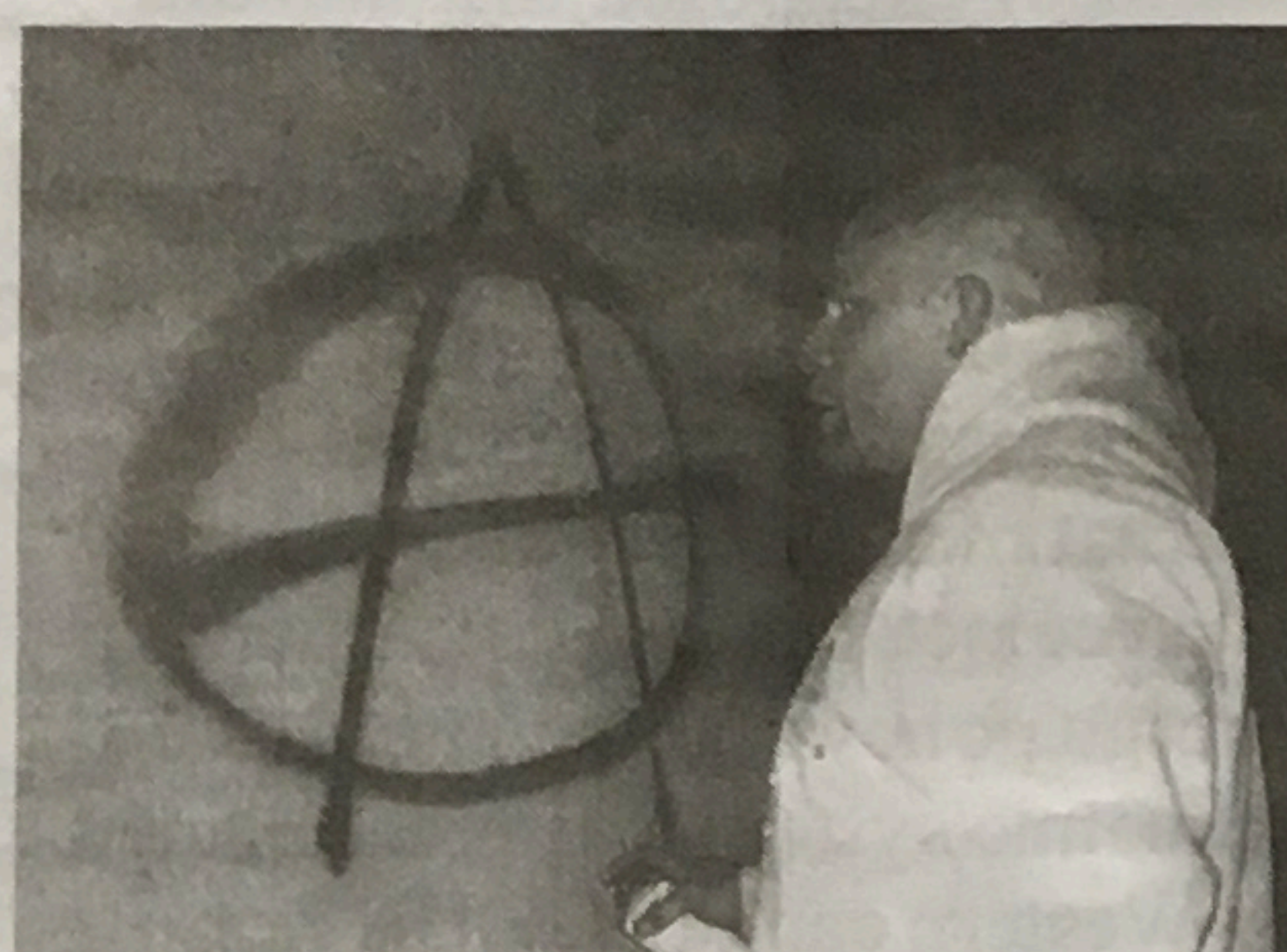
Monson has criticised the US military presence in Iraq, and has been vocal about his wish to see the state and class society abolished. Earlier this year he took time out before his fight at Cage Wars in Belfast to talk to

local anarchists and fight fans about sport and politics.

In court on July 29, Monson, currently on a seven-fight winning streak after defeating Jimmy Arbriz last month, pleaded guilty to malicious mischief in the Capitol Building case (which itself carries a maximum penalty of a \$20,000 fine and 10 years jail) and entered an 'Alford plea' for graffiti at the Lacey armed services recruitment centre. An Alford plea means he maintains he did not commit the graffiti act but acknowledges that enough evidence exists that would convince a jury. Prosecutors are recommending Monson pay a fine of \$21,894 in restitution as part of the plea deal, and serve a 90-day jail sentence.

Organise! extend their solidarity to Jeff in his struggle against the authorities and good luck in his next fight against Anthony Sylvester in late-August. Sentencing is scheduled for October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Choccy



### Anarchist and Anarcho-Syndicalist Organisations

**International Workers Association**  
International Secretariat  
CLS (AIT-IWA), Postanski prefinac 6,  
11077 Beograd,  
Serbia  
+381 63263775  
Secretariado@iwa-ait.org

**Organise!**  
9 - 11 Lombard Street, Belfast, BT1 1RB  
organiseireland@yahoo.ie

**Revolutionary Anarcha-Feminist Group (RAG)**  
PO Box 10785, Dublin 1.  
<http://ragdublin.blogspot.com>

**Solidarity Federation**  
British section of the anarcho-syndicalist IWA  
PO Box 17773, London, SE8 4WX  
Intsec@solfed.org.uk

**Workers Solidarity Movement (Irish Platformist Group)**  
PO Box 1528, Dublin 8.  
wsm\_ireland@yahoo.com  
[www.wsm.ie](http://www.wsm.ie)

**Queens University Belfast Anarchist Society**  
qubanarchist@googlemail.com

### Other groups, networks, campaigns and resources

**Alliance for Choice**  
Abortion Rights Group in Northern Ireland  
<http://allianceforchoiceni.org>

**Antifa Belfast**  
anffabelfast@googlemail.com

**Choice Ireland**  
Abortion rights action group in the Republic of Ireland  
Choiceireland@gmail.com  
<http://choiceireland.org>

**Galway Social Space**  
24 Middle Street, Galway.

**Just Books Collective**  
Distributing Anarchist and radical books since 1978  
9 - 11 Lombard Street, Belfast, BT1 1RB

**Libcom**  
Libertarian communist online resource with forums, library and global news  
<http://libcom.org>

**Revolt Video**  
Radical Video Collective  
<http://revoltvideo.blogspot.com>

**Seomra Spraoi**  
Dublin Social Centre  
10 Belvedere Court, Dublin 1.  
<http://www.seomraspraoi.org>

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

**Warzone Collective**  
[www.warzonecollective.wetpaint.com](http://www.warzonecollective.wetpaint.com) or  
warzonecollective@riseup.net

SW