

Dissident Nationalists Offer Nothing to the Working Class

Dissident republicans in the Real IRA killed two British soldiers on 7th March and injured two pizza delivery men - two days later the Continuity IRA shot dead PSNI Constable Stephen Carroll.

We have since witnessed the dissidents plunging 'their' own communities into chaos with bomb scares and hijackings that have had no popular support in those areas. This years Easter Parades in Belfast and Derry saw the ever increasing array of Irish nationalist groups and grouplets lay competing claims to be the true heirs of the Rising. And then of course there was the tragic farce of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement's claiming, or not claiming, responsibility for the killing of Denis Donaldson.

These 'dissident' republicans are in reality dissident nationalists. Lets be clear they have split with Sinn Fein and the Provos because these organisations are not nationalist enough for them. This has nothing to do with any abandonment of the Provisional movements dubious

'socialism'. The politics of Irish nationalism and Unionism/Loyalism (which represent a type of British or, sometimes, Ulster nationalism) only offer us continued sectarian division. While we do not doubt that for the Provos and Sinn Fein the war is over they can offer workers no way forward either.

The actions of dissident republicans offer us a worse still future. If they were to succeed in provoking significant state repression or a loyalist backlash we could well see a return to outright sectarian conflict. The raw materials for such a conflict remain in place in many poor interface areas, and in Northern Irish society as a whole. The Good Friday Agreement and the Stormont Assembly copper-fastened sectarianism. It was all about 'managing' sectarianism - not trying to undermine it. To do so would be to undermine the power bases of the main parties, particularly the DUP and Sinn Fein.

The vast majority of working class people, protestant, catholic and those

who fit into neither category, do not want to see a return to a war counted in their deaths. The conflict in Northern Ireland was one that predominantly effected the working class. On both sides we suffered death, maiming, incarceration, bereavement while the middle and upper classes remained largely unaffected.

The dissidents hide behind the claim that it was the 'British' that started it. And as long as they remain so will the "right of the Irish people" to use what the RSF's Richard Walsh has called "controlled and disciplined force". The question however is who will end it? The answer, of course, is that working class people have done much to bring the conflict to an end and it is working class people who must make the peace process their own. The fact of the matter is these people are not the "Irish people" nor do they have any meaningful level of support. They are a bunch of fanatics clinging to a past that belongs, well, in the past. Organise! are opposed to nationalism of all hues, Orange or Green, just as we are opposed to capitalism and any state that seeks to control us on behalf of capital. Whether that is the government of the Republic of Ireland, the British government or our little local government on the hill.

Wildcat Traffic Wardens Sacked

Almost 30 traffic wardens in Belfast were sacked towards the end of April after taking unofficial strike action earlier in the month.

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

According to the employer, NCP, until new staff are recruited, existing staff will cover the shifts. NCP are contracted to enforce parking restrictions across Northern Ireland, and have 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 company also said the unofficial strike action disrupted the delivery of a 'public service'. The sacked workers join the increasing numbers of unemployed across the north.



"I am a wage slave" - MMA fighter Jeff Monson after his Sport and Politics Meeting in the Unemployed Resource Centre in Belfast.

Monson in Belfast

From the back page

Monson went on to discuss the misplaced euphoria in the US over Obama's recent election as the first black President.

"People were actually crying ... tears of joy...like 'We're saved! The world is a better place'". While conceding that it's marginally better than McCain or Bush, he stressed that it's ultimately meaningless, and that 'representative democracy' is no democracy at all. "You atrophy yourself when you give people power over you. Voting for someone [means] you're expecting someone else, the police, Obama, a governor, or the legislator, to come in and make your life better". This ultimately means we don't make decisions for ourselves - "you're giving them *your* freedom, you're giving

it up, in order that you don't have to make decisions for yourself". But Monson's view isn't so bleak; he's confident that we can and should make decisions for ourselves, and don't need politicians or bosses to tell us how to run our lives - "If the people need a hospital, we know how to build a hospital. If we need a road, we can build a road", indeed, we DO as workers already create and build these things, we just don't have control of them. "We don't need a governor or a president to say, 'well ok, we're gonna do this' or 'we're gonna put up this much money for this' or maybe decide not to do it".

Staying with the point of making decisions about our own lives, but shifting from social living to more individual issues, Jeff spoke briefly about gay marriage, something that gets much

exposure in the US and differs in treatment from state to state - "it's unfathomable to me that people have that decision over our lives; who we can marry, who we can be with or not be with... It comes down to one person or a group of elites that decide our future for us". He goes on to problematise this view, "we're giving them permission to do it, we're giving them permission to rule over us".

Jeff closed his talk by asserting that we need to fight back to take control of our own lives, "all we have to do is stand up for ourselves as a group - they sleep at night because we let them."

As the discussion opened up to those in attendance Jeff talked about the nature of earning a living as a fighter, Monson made clear that the fighters don't see much of a cut of the millions made at MMA promotions year on year. "I'm a wage slave", says Jeff, before describing the inequalities in the wage-structure of fight promotions. Despite grossing 19.4mil US dollars, the UFC where Jeff fought for the heavyweight title, as main event, resulted in him being paid a paltry \$13,000. To put this in perspective, say a fighter trains 6-10 weeks for a fight, which is usual, this is less than \$7,000 per month, criminally low for an industry that generates so much income. As a result, fighters have to get involved in sponsorship deals, many teach seminars or train other fighters, others coach in gyms - all to put food on the table while also trying to train seriously for a fight.

This could be changing, Jeff described some moves by fighters towards organising a union. Key demands, aside from the obvious raising of fight wages for those at the bottom end of the 'ladder'

in the industry, include more stable contracts, and medical coverage for fighters. Astonishingly in a profession where the bosses make so much off people taking such high risks, fighters do not get any support from medical care from MMA promoters - so if a fighter sustains a serious injury and is unable to fight for 6 months, tough luck, them's the break. Even in sports like football, players are usually supported a lot better by their clubs, though many other sports have relatively strong unions.

Closing the discussion, Jeff explained that his politics have never been a hindrance in terms of his fight career, and asserted that, some promoters may even see them as a bonus, because it makes him a controversial character, and thus a crowd-puller. It has affected sponsorship deals, explaining how a nutrition company, intrigued by his image, huge and tattooed, went sour when they found out he was an anarchist. Regardless, Jeff didn't dilute his opinions, and from what he said in Belfast, it doesn't look like he will any time soon - he's a sincere anarchist, and a genuine, approachable guy. It was a pleasure to have had him chat to us.

At Cage Wars, the day after the talk, Jeff won his heavyweight title fight easily, with a trademark north-south choke. A week later, he also won his fight in Japan at the 'Dream' promotion against Sergei Kharitonov, and is now on a six-fight winning streak. Organise! congratulate Jeff on his current excellent form and would like to thank him for taking the time out to chat with us and meet local anarchists.