

Fighting Back: Organising for an Alternative Future

While the calling of the rally on Friday 17th April by ICTU in support of jobs and workers rights in the north must be applauded, we need much more action by working class people ourselves and less appeals to politicians to do things for us. Nor can we rely on the current Trades Unions, they are not democratic or under the control of their members in any meaningful way, but more importantly they are not opposed to capitalism – the system that has plunged us into this recession.

Organise! believes that a new, militant, revolutionary and successful labour movement can and must be created. We believe in fostering solidarity and militancy amongst the largest possible number of workers, unionised and not.

Decisions should be made collectively by mass meetings of the workers involved – like Visteon workers have done throughout their occupation. Such meetings should be open to everyone effected by the struggle whether they are a union member or not, barring scabs and management of course!

Anyone elected to negotiate with management should be given a clear mandate from the workforce and should act as recallable delegates of the shop floor.

Such a movement should also rely on direct action. Direct action is about empowering ourselves and breaking the dependency on others to do things for us. Rather than pleading with the bosses, or for that matter politicians, through official intermediaries, we need to realise that we can only rely on ourselves. Ourselves and other workers acting in solidarity with each others struggles.

Direct action at work means strikes, go-slows, work-to-rule, occupations and boycotts. As the

Industrial Workers of the World put it:

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

The strike is such a powerful weapon that it has been severely curtailed by a pervasive ideology of social partnership in our unions and successive anti-working class labour legislation. On 3rd April in Belfast activists from the Belfast and District Trades Union Council acting in support of Natalia Szymanska were effectively gagged by the courts. Clearly the law and the judicial system are not there to serve the interests of workers.

Solidarity with other workers in struggle is the key to victory. Workers’ must support each other’s struggles despite anti-trade union laws. We must approach other workers directly for their support making our watchword “Don’t Cross Picket Lines!”

Strike funds need to be controlled by the workers themselves. Officials fear to use union funds to fund unlawful (and sometimes even lawful) industrial action. While strike pay for official action is often paltry or non-existent, unions use their funds to sponsor the Labour Party at Westminster, effectively helping them bail out bankers and bosses. The interests of the working class ultimately lies in the destruction of capitalist society. The entire wealth of this society is produced by workers and yet it is stolen from us every day of our lives.

This theft goes by the name of profit. When workers take action for higher wages or improved

conditions, we are simply trying to win a bigger share of what is rightfully ours. Our ultimate aim must be for a self-managed, stateless society based on the principle of from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.

To realise this society we need to organise ourselves at the point were we have the potential to challenge the capitalist system – on the shop-floor. While Organise! do not see the reformist Trades Union movement of ICTU as a vehicle for revolutionary change we encourage the formation of a strong rank and file solidarity movement of workers in both unionised and non-unionised workplaces. We do not seek to ‘democratise’ or take control of the existing unions executives. In the longer term the aim of any such movement should be to dump the current unions and create new ones – unions controlled by the membership, unions that recognise that the only way to win once and for all comes with the overthrow of capitalism. Only a strong, politically revolutionary and economically organised working class will be fully aware of its power to do this.

Until we start to act for ourselves, as some have began to, we will continue to experience disempowerment, betrayal and broken promises which combine to hold us in the grip of an all pervading sense of powerlessness.

We must begin to control our own struggles while building a culture of resistance that links with other workers in struggle. We can start small but start we must – and other workers have already began to take matters into their own hands. Solidarity and mutual aid find real expression in direct action and as our confidence and organisation grows so to will our ability to change the world.

Contacts

Anarchist and Anarcho-Syndicalist Organisations

International Workers Association
International Secretariat
CLS (AIT-IWA), Postanski pre tinac 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

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>

Belfast Visteon Workers Support
Contact the Belfast Visteon workers to offer solidarity and practical support to their occupation and struggle against Ford/Visteon
belfastvisteonworkers@yahoo.co.uk

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>