

Protest at Derry Shooting

A crowd of about 100 people gathered on 29 January outside the 'Red Star' shop of Ray Coyle in Derry's Waterloo Street to protest at his recent shooting by the paramilitary right-wing militia known as 'Republican Action Against Drugs' (RAAD).

The protest was called by the Derry Anti-War Coalition after Ray Coyle was shot allegedly for selling so-called 'legal highs', and was attended in a completely irony-free manner not only by former Provos but also one or two members of the Real IRA. The rally came after 12 incidents in Derry where teenagers, one as young as 16 years of age, have been shot and maimed for allegedly selling cannabis and amphetamines.

The RAAD, like all their predecessors are only interested in social control, and their frequent statements about 'morality' and 'decency' mask a barely concealed extreme right-wing agenda to

enforce their narrow-minded, creeping Catholic, super-Tory, masochistic politics on working class communities. These ex-Provos operating mainly out of Creggan have declared themselves to have no political ambitions 'at present' other than policing recreational drug users and their suppliers, often of the lowest tier.

Meanwhile, the 32 County Sovereignty Movement have just mounted a campaign, which they say will include protest pickets of shops and schools that admit the PSNI. They claim this is not a threat, but city centre workers, school teachers and others will very definitely be put under threat by this bullying tactic from Real IRA groupies. As yet, there has been nothing but silence from the trade unions who will probably get their act together after the paramilitaries have done something.

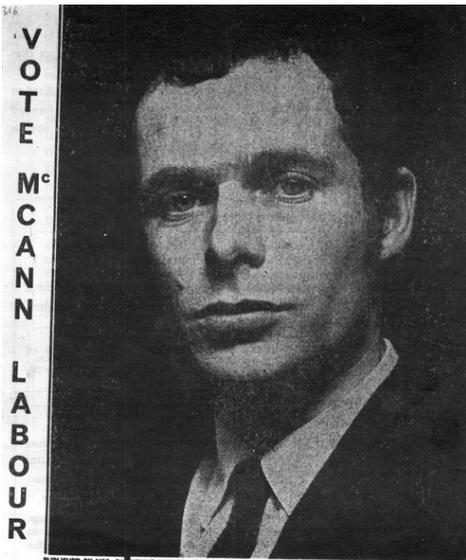
Votes Before Profit Alliance



On Valentine's Day in Derry, the 'People Before Profit Alliance' (the people who brought you the Socialist Environmental Alliance and the SWP/SWM, which haven't gone away you know), met to discuss whether to stand in the forthcoming Westminster election on a 'radical alternative' agenda. Now, even given that a 'radical alternative' here is pretty much anything other than what is offered by the established parties, this stretches credibility. At a time when the majority of the working class in western Europe are increasingly waking up to the reality of bourgeois representative

'democracy' and the fallacy that politicians are basically idealistic philanthropists, the mood amongst leftists should be very much with that majority and not against it.

Be that as it may, People Before Profit duly decided to run Eamonn McCann in the May Westminster elections. Once again the 'McCann's Your Man' electoral foray will issue forth from the bar taps of Sandino's and utilise the election merely, as is tediously repeated by their supporters, to raise the issues on the ground, oh, and asking people for their vote as well.



Old habits die hard

No Vote Here!



It's described as representative democracy – but who is actually represented? The farcical merry-go-round of manifesto pledges, sloganeering, spin and lies is set to culminate in a UK-wide general election on Thursday 6th May. Once again we are being handed down an opportunity to hold (a minute) influence on who runs 'the nation'. However! The systemic problem of representative democracy is that no-one is *really* represented.

For a start, we are uniformly given a terrible choice of candidates from which to choose – particularly in the case of Norn Irn! There is so little variety in the empty content of manifesto promises, it really is a case of vote for tweedle-dum or tweedle-dee. In our parochial context the choice generally comes down to what religious background the candidate comes from, (which is subsequently reinforced in the institutionally sectarian Stormont assembly). There is no possibility that any candidate can effectively represent the interests of their constituents, especially where playing politics and the party-line are concerned. Even those few politicians who enter the arena with the best intentions and interests of their constituents in mind cannot fail to be corrupted, drawn into power struggles, bogged down with bureaucracy, bribed by 'financial backers'. These people are given a mandate and undeserved power through the mechanism of 'free and democratic elections.' But is this democracy? Are we free? NO! The system doesn't work.

To ensure freedom for everyone in the community we require *direct* democracy. This means people representing themselves rather than electing a political boss. It also opens

up the opportunity for decisions to be made by consensus, rather than 'tyranny of the majority'. Many philosophers and political theorists have surmised methods and structures that would accommodate a bottom-up democratic approach, (rotating roles as 'speaker', 'secretary' etc.) but this is a decision that should be made by the individuals, groups, and communities themselves.

How do we get from representative democracy to direct democracy? We can begin by applying the principles of direct democracy in a practical sense – in the groups and communities that we form. This is described as a 'prefigurative' politics and obviously entails a refusal to participate in representative or parliamentary democracy. Don't vote. Don't register to vote. A huge proportion of people already stay away from the ballot box. Turn-outs of 59% and 61% in 2001 and 2005 respectively across the UK illustrate this starkly. (Note that Labour only won 35% of the vote in '05 – most people do *not* vote for the government). Take this into consideration with the vote being withheld from convicts and under-18s, and the scale of non-participation is huge. Politicians write this off as voter apathy, but more accurately this is a symptom of deep dissatisfaction with 'political betters' across the populace as a whole.

If you put an 'x' into a ballot box this May, you will be adding weight to the politicians' false claims of legitimacy and a popular mandate. Don't be fooled by sham democracy – organise to resist soapbox oppression. Let's sack the politicians!!