ORGANISE!

Leveller

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Transform The Health Service

Abolish Capitalism

With renewed restrictions imposed on our lives as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and an upsurge in the spread of the virus placing the health service under increased pressure it is worth remembering that successive Westminster governments and local administrations at Stormont have been dismembering the NHS over a period of decades.

It is not an accident that our health service cannot cope with this pandemic - rather it is the tragic result of deliberate policy directed by the demands of neo-liberal capitalism.

Braced for an inevitable second wave, health workers have warned of the immense strain they and the health service are under. Following the first wave, health care workers faced immense pressure in attempting to deal with the huge backlog of other medical treatments, which had been put on hold. The impact of suspended health care services to focus on Covid-19 infection has not yet been quantified in any meaningful way. In March A&E attendances were a third less than in March 2019. Also in March GP appointments fell by 30%. McMillan Cancer Support has warned that the traumatic impact of cancer patients lives may only get worse. Thousands fewer people were tested during the first wave - 50000 people across the UK could have undiagnosed cancer.

At the end of May, half the Covid-19 related deaths took place in care homes leading to the resignation of the entire board of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Committee. The reason given was that they had not been consulted on decisions that included halting of inspections of care homes and redeployment of key staff away from care homes. By action and omission, local government had contributed to over 400 deaths in our care homes by June. This lead Amnesty, the CAJ and Unison to demand a public inquiry.

A health service that was already stretched to breaking point has seen numerous services cancelled while huge numbers are staying away from GPs and hospitals out of fear of contracting the virus. Before the outbreak of this pandemic, waiting lists for NHS treatments across the north had already been the subject of regular criticism.

For decades, Organise!, in its various manifestations, have reported on and joined protests against the dismembering of the NHS. The prioritising of profit, private investor get rich quick schemes, privatised use of public health care facilities, bureaucratisation and centralisation had already left us with a health system which fails us as workers and as members of society.

There has been a genuine outpouring of public support for health workers but no corresponding support in real terms from government. Many health workers have complained that portraying them as superheroes or angels does them no favours. It is clear that clapping is not enough - many workers say they would prefer a proper pay rise to another round of applause.

An increase in pay is only the start - far more fundamental change is needed to reverse decades of attack. In order to control the potential for our hospitals and health centres to become hotbeds of infection we need real change - not attempts at policing the social lives of health care workers. To cope with outbreaks of disease like Covid-19 and others without cancelling other essential health services we need, deserve and demand the reversal of cuts, massive investment in free universal health care for the working class. We need this as a first step. Further we need those who work as health care workers, not just surgeons, doctors and nurses, but auxiliaries, care workers and cleaners, to take control of health care out of the hands of government and profiteers.

This demands the building of a new, revolutionary, workers movement. At this point in time it is clear that nothing short of this will work. Capitalism has been getting away with murder for too long. It's past time we put it out of our misery.

Health workers have complained that images like this do them no favours.

No Safety - No Work

Initiated by the Anarchist Communist Group, the *No Safety - No Work* campaign is by and for workers keeping each other safe during the coronavirus pandemic. The campaign is now supported by Organise!, Angry Workers of the World, Dorset IWW, Haringey Solidarity Group, Let's Get Rooted, Punks Against Sweatshops, Revolutionary Anarchist Group, and Wessex Solidarity.

While many workers are coping with being laid off as a result of employers and government action, during the pandemic, many have been working throughout. Initially lauded as essential workers, this recognition has not been worth much in reality. Many of us are desperate to return to work or to hold onto our jobs because we need them to survive. While we are being increasingly monitored and our lives become increasingly dystopian, we continue to be herded in and out of workplaces with little to no regard to our health and safety.

The No Safety? No Work! Campaign is urging workers to refuse to endanger themselves, their fellow workers and their families. It provides support and resources to help set up independent health and safety committees in the workplace, to run awareness campaigns, and ultimately support for those refusing to work in unsafe conditions. You don't have to face this alone.

Check out

https://nosafetynowork.wordpress.com/

No Work - No Security

Thousands are being flung out of work, precarious workers (essential we were told, some even called us heroes for a week or two) have saw their livelihoods and lives become even more precarious.

Statistics show that job losses due to the sacking of workers across the 'economy' has given us the biggest quarterly rise in the unemployment rate here in 18 years. The new restrictions and closures across hospitality have already seen thousands more thrown out of work.

There have been almost 2,000 confirmed redundancies in the past three months, according to official figures. However, employers with less than 20 staff have no need to report their redundancies so, particularly in much of the hospitality industry the numbers will be much higher.

Another problem with the figures is that they are approximately a month behind so we are yet to see the real scope of the problem. Lay-offs are already 90% higher than last year. The number of claimants have doubled between March and this September. The end of the initial furlough pay scheme will see those forced out of work struggling on even less money.

And this is the other thing that the figures cannot show us; each number is the struggle of an individual, a family, a group of friends and ultimately of each and every working class community impacted upon by these job loses. The hardship being faced across those communities will only get more and more intense. The only response is solidarity, supporting each other, building networks, fighting back and building resistance. The virus we most urgently need to stamp out is capitalism itself.

Derry Postal Workers Walk Out

With over a third of their fellow workers ill with Coronavirus or self-isolating workers at the Royal Mail Sorting Office in Derry walked out on Tuesday 20th October demanding a deep clean at the site.

Workers were successful in securing a deep clean but with over half the workforce forced to self-isolate and 24 out of 120 workers testing positive for Covid-19 mail deliveries were suspended in the Derry area for several days due to lack of staffing at the sorting office.

2nd SERCO Caledonian Strike

The second 48 hour strike for safe working conditions on the SERCO Caledonian Sleeper train took place on the 11th October. RMT pickets were out in force as workers struck in protest at working conditions which cause serious fatigue.

ESSENTIAL NOT DISPOSABLE

WIPE OUT CAPITALISM

Poots, Ní Chuilín and Deadly Viruses

While Poots sectarianised Covid with his Catholics spread it quicker comment we'd like to congratulate Carál Ní Chuilín on her astute observation that 'poverty kills'.

Her comment was made in late October as the BT15 area of north Belfast, in Ní Chuilín's constituency, hit the top ten table of Covid cases. Claiming her department has brought forward 'an anti-poverty strategy' the Sinn Féin Minister stated 'Poverty kills and sadly this pandemic is compounding that terrible reality.'

Unfortunately Ní Chuilín seems to forget that her own department has implemented policies that have also compounded that terrible reality. From cuts to the voluntary and community sector, shutting down libraries, cuts to benefits and the disastrous roll out of Universal Credit which has seen reliance on food banks go through the roof in the very same deprived areas with the highest number of cases of the virus. The department is also responsible for the prosecution of those of us forced to 'do the double' in order to survive! How all this matches up with claims to be 'tackling child poverty' or tackling 'inequality and poverty' we don't rightly know.

Meanwhile cuts and job losses continue and working class people continue to suffer. Those people most at risk of losing their jobs, and those who have lost their jobs, are the people who are disproportionately infected with Covid-19, disproportionately impacted upon by the counter-measures, they already suffer higher suicide rates, poorer health and higher mortality rates than their more affluent 'neighbours'.

Perhaps the virus we need to urgently rid ourselves of is capitalism?

Furlough Extended:

As we go to press it has been announced that the implementation of the Job Support Scheme and Job Retention Bonus have been put on hold with the Furlough Scheme to be extended until March 2021.

Here is some guidance on what we know so far:

Employers can claim even if they, or the relevant employees, had not previously used the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme.

The furlough will continue to be flexible, i.e. employees can continue to do some work.

Wages - those who have previously been furloughed they will continue to have their reference pay and hours based on the existing furlough calculations. For those of us who have not previously been furloughed we will have a different pay/hours reference period. Full guidance won't be available until the 10th November, and perhaps later in wee norn Ireland, but roughly what's paid is based on 80% of the wages payable in the last pay period ending on or before 30th October 2020 (for those on fixed wages), or 80% of the average payable between the start date of their employment or 6 April 2020 (whichever is later) and the day before their Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme extension furlough periods begins (for those on variable wages).

Employees can be furloughed if they are shielding in line with public health guidance (or need to stay at home with someone who is shielding). That does not, of course, mean they have to be furloughed. A wee bit of direct action may help encourage a reticent boss.

Employees that were employed and on the payroll on 23 September 2020 who were made redundant or stopped working for their employer after that date can be re-employed and claimed for. Again, a wee bit of direct action could encourage the fucker who sacked you to re-employ you and get you 80% of the pay you've lost.

Clearly this is not enough, many furloughed workers are low paid to begin with, on zero or very close to zero hours contracts. A 20% pay cut on irregular wages that we struggled to survive on already puts us in an impossible situation. Its estimated 6 million workers across the UK are paid less than the minimum wage - that is 2 million more than before government measures to 'help' us in the face of this virus.

Greater Police Powers To Suppress What Exactly?

The Assembly are in the process of implementing higher fines in order to 'suppress the virus'. Pushing for a timeframe on tougher penalties the DUP's Gary Middleton claimed increased fines were 'of upmost importance' in supressing the virus. He stated getting the 'economy back open again' meant 'enforcement and penalties are very important'.

The penalties in question of course relate to breaches in restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic. It is worth noting that between March and 23rd November a great many of the complaints received by the police had been described as 'curtain-twitching'. In this period over 12,100 complaints were lodged with the police, many comprising of 'multiple walks', daily visits by strangers, visits by or to family members, complaints about childcare and children playing outside. Touting on neighbours for visiting family, receiving visits from people wanting to ensure they are ok, for taking walks, helping out with childcare or on children playing are indicative of a panic that sees blame and punishment foisted on individuals.

Calling for more punitive powers against individuals from the police while the economy is opened up tells us a lot about the priorities of politicians. Fines are to increase from a £60 fixed penalty notice, which could increase on each detection, to a single tariff of £200. Other offences will be punishable on conviction by a fine of up to £10,000, or attract a fixed penalty notice starting at £1,000 and going up to a maximum of £10,000.

In England protections for the right to protest are being removed in the latest clampdown. From Thursday 7th November it is expected that even the limited permission for demonstrations meeting additional conditions designed to mitigate the spread of the virus is expected to be scrapped from fresh regulations. The removal of the exemption is a *de facto* ban on demonstrations rendering organising large-scale, and not so large-scale, protest almost impossible.

Buried Babies at Tuam
Buried Report at the Dáil

'A great many people are always asking what is the good of keeping these children alive? I quite agree that it would be a great deal kinder to strangle these children at birth than to put them out to nurse.' Doctor Ella Webb, June 18, 1924, speaking about illegitimate children in care in the Irish Free State at the time.

Abuse has been heaped on abuse with the Irish government's decision to seal the documents related to the five year Commission of Investigation into the Mother and Baby Homes. The Commission was set up after the discovery of 796 children's bodies, dumped in a septic tank on the grounds of Saint Mary's Mother and Babies Home in Tuam by the nuns entrusted with their care - the Sisters of Bon Secours.

The Irish government has decided to hide the truth for a further 30 years. The cover up shows the state's refusal to acknowledge its complicity in the abuses of the Catholic Church. Given a privileged position with the establishment of the new state, further cemented with the 1937 Constitution, the church had responsibility for education, health care and institutions such as the mother and baby home at Tuam.

The findings of the Commission will undoubtedly implicate successive governments and state institutions in the cruelty meted out in Mother and Baby Homes. In the selling, mistreatment and murder of illegitimate children and the abuse and slavery of their mothers. The Church and State made money from the unpaid labour of women in institutions.

The vote to seal the archive was 78-67, with the Green Party voting alongside Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael.

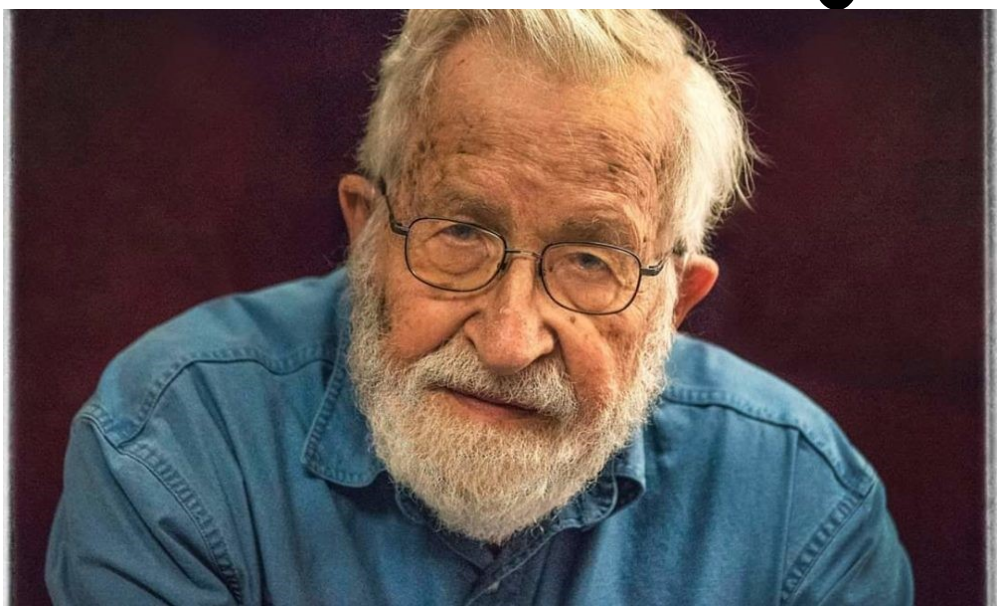
The decision to seal the Mother and Baby Homes archives has been met with a huge backlash from working-class communities. A petition has been signed by 170,000 people while protests have been ongoing. As the government tries to bury the truth for another 30 years widespread outrage has been expressed in demonstrations organised by survivors and campaigners.

The state has yet again attempted to hide the truth about decades of abuse perpetrated by the Church as it carried out functions it demanded and had granted by that state. To this day the Church still controls schools and hospitals. Some have put forward the rather timorous demand to separate Church and state. The governments willingness to seal the evidence of abuse of working class women and their children for another 30 year is surely a stark indication, if one is needed, that this falls far short of what is needed.

In the face of reality our only reasonable demand can be to Smash the Church and Smash the State!

From the Associated Press March 2017: *A mass grave containing the remains of babies and young children has been discovered at a former Catholic orphanage in Ireland, government-appointed investigators announced Friday in a finding that offered the first conclusive proof following a historian's efforts to trace the fates of nearly 800 children who perished there.*

Chomsky on the current danger



In a recent interview with the *New Statesman* Noam Chomsky painted a grim picture of a world at 'the most dangerous moment in human history' due to 'climate crisis, the threat of nuclear war and rising authoritarianism.'

Chomsky's criticism of US imperialism and the capitalist media is consistent and impressive, he has openly identified himself with anarcho-syndicalism and libertarian socialism. The 91 year old professor of linguistics, who is one of the most respected intellectuals of the U.S. Left now believes we are facing 'the end of organised human life on Earth.'

Describing Donald Trump as the figurehead of 'a new "reactionary international" consisting of Brazil, India, the UK, Egypt, Israel and Hungary.' Chomsky referred to the Doomsday Clock to illustrate the extent of the crisis:

'It's been set every year since the atom bombing, the minute hand has moved forward and back. But last January, they abandoned minutes and moved to seconds to midnight, which means termination. And that was before the scale of the pandemic.'

Chomsky is correct in his grim assertion that the current crisis facing humanity is of a magnitude greater than that posed by the rise of fascism in the 1930s. However, while claiming an ongoing if aspirational attachment to anarchism, the alternative he is suggesting mis-diagnoses the problem and dangerously reaffirms support for a system that fails the vast majority of the humanity that it threatens. While his earlier analysis correctly identified the workings of devastating neo-liberal policies behind the distracting bluster and persona of Trump he called on 'US leftists' to vote for Biden. Stating that it was 'overwhelmingly obvious' that the left should vote against Trump he argued:

'What the left should do is what it always should do: it should recognise that real politics is constant activism, in one form or another. Every couple of years something comes along called an election, you should take off a few minutes to decide if it's worth voting against somebody, rarely for somebody.'

Chomsky also condemned those on the left who refused to vote for Biden in an interview in *The Intercept*. In emotive and damning terms he stated it 'brings up some memories': memories of the Communist Party in Germany deciding 'not to join' the social democrats in opposing the Nazis. He has presented a quite ahistorical argument that this led to the success of fascism and that by extension not voting for Biden is the same as voting for Trump — a 'vote for the destruction of organized human life on earth.'

Trump's administration has certainly increased the intensity of neo-liberal capitalist barbarism. He has encouraged racist attacks against Asians during the pandemic, hate crimes against Muslims, and called increasingly organised and increasingly confident US fascists 'very fine people.' But the horrific U.S. government arrests of parents, bombings of civilians, caging of children, under his administration use the deportation machinery, the drone fleets, and the cages put in place by Obama and Biden. The murder of poor black people by cops has been a grim reality in the United States since long before Trump's presidency. Is this really the 'humanity' Chomsky wants us to vote for? Because this is what a vote for Biden is a vote for.

Fighting against neo-liberalism, against fascism, against hierarchy and oppression cannot involve giving credence or support to capitalist 'democracy.' We should not support a system that safeguards the riches and privileges of a tiny minority and the exploitation of the vast majority.

Humanity is indeed facing into the abyss of an unprecedented crisis. A crisis that has been brought about by capitalism, a crisis that has seen the almost complete and seemingly unquestionable hegemony of neo-liberalism established on a global scale, a crisis that has thrown creatures like Trump into positions of power. However, stripped of the ranting and the vile racist, patriarchal populist theatrics of Trump, Biden's policies are fundamentally the same. Capitalism will continue to destroy the foundations of human life in its insatiable quest for profit and power.

We are not concerned with who feels the 'obligation' to vote against Trump. What we are concerned with is the distraction of blaming those who will not vote for another representative of capitalism on the state that a system, not an individual (no matter how loathsome), has brought upon humanity. What we should be concerned about is rebuilding the working-class organisations, networks, the solidarity and the culture of resistance needed to rid ourselves of the parasite of capitalism once and for all.

Lessons can and must be learned from the history of working class struggles and self-organisation. Struggles for a better world, free of oppression and exploitation. Struggles for a humanity unshackled from capital and state. In picking the side of the German social democrats, who facilitated Hitler's consolidation of power by supporting the man who would declare him chancellor and citing the actions of a communist party with a line dictated by the same Joseph Stalin who signed up to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Chomsky fails to present us with any alternative. Instead he joins the deluge of liberal propaganda urging people to vote, sticking well within those manufactured acceptable parameters of debate and action he identified so long ago. In calling out those who refuse to vote for Biden he sows disunity and division in the face of a task much greater than placing an 'x' on a ballot paper.

D.B

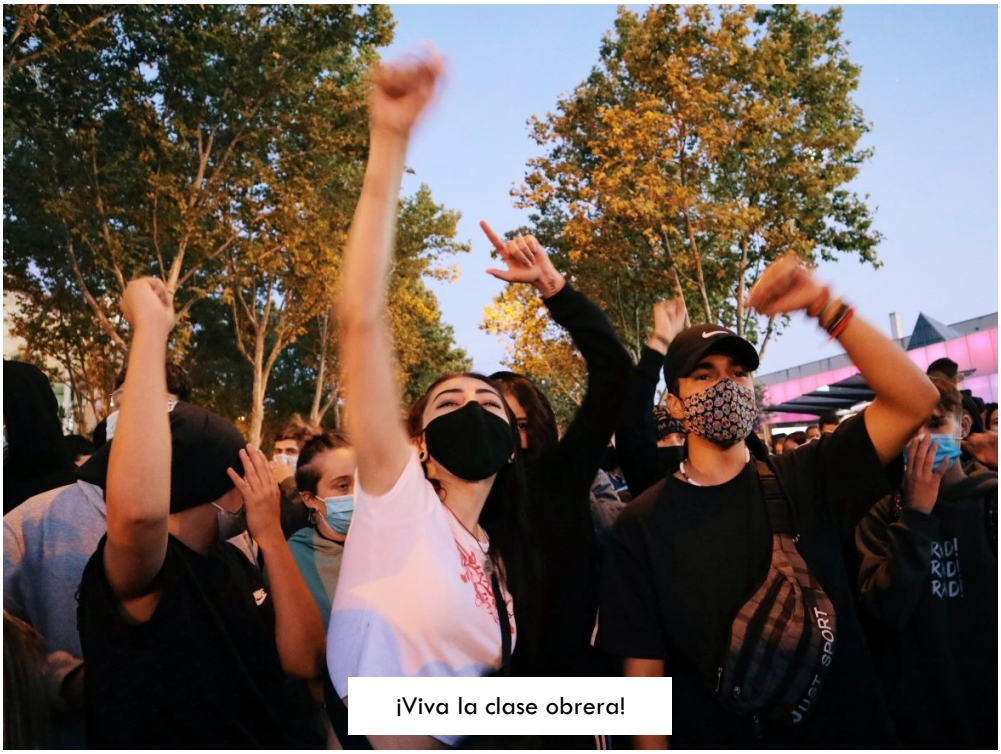
Madrid ¡Viva la clase obrera!

Protests Against Selective Lockdowns

Crowds outside the Madrid regional government's health office protesting localised lockdowns targeting poor working class areas of the city. September 20, 2020.

Before the implementation of more general restrictions across the city the class bias of the Madrid administration's coronavirus measures was brutally exposed - and increasingly resisted by the working class communities bearing the brunt. Unlike the protests against lockdown measures the first time around, organised without a hint of irony by members of the city's elite alongside it's most authoritarian political formations, a wave of working class protest shook Madrid at the end of September.

President of the Comunidad de Madrid, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, imposed new restrictions to lock down the poorest working class areas of Madrid and to patrol the borders of these areas. Selective lockdowns were imposed on 37 areas on the 21st of September, another 8 working class areas were locked down the following week. Permission was given to travel in and out of these zones with special permits - for work, school or caring for dependents. 850,000 residents of Madrid's poorer working class areas were locked down. While in the non-restricted areas, where many of the poor work, people around them were free to travel and continue with life as normal. Many justifiably resented the absurdity of a system in which people left locked down working class neighbourhoods every day, get on crowded public transport and go to work in neighbourhoods that were not confined.



¡Viva la clase obrera!

Isabel Diaz Ayuso publicly blamed the 'way of life' of migrants for higher rates of infection among the city's working class and used it as an excuse to target these neighbourhoods.

In response the chant of *¡Viva la clase obrera!* echoed through the city's working class districts as thousands took to the streets. In neighbourhoods like Vallecas people hung out their windows banging pots and making as much noise as possible from the confinement of their homes. Like many of the city's historic working class areas Vallecas is known for resistance. Its inhabitants survived some of the most brutal attacks from fascism during the Civil War of 1936-39. Subsequent decades witnessed it fight for basic amenities. In September it was one district among many which rose up to fight against blatant discrimination in the implementation of selective lockdowns.

As one protestor explained '...lately things have felt quite surreal. I carry my safe passage letter every day when I go to work just in case I get stopped and asked why I'm travelling outside my neighbourhood. I can go to work, but then I must come directly back to my neighbourhood and not stop off on the way - not even to pick up bread.'

On the evening of Thursday 24th September protests took place outside many of the city's health centres against what some referred to as 'double segregation, double discrimination.' Not only were working class people in Madrid being discriminated against because of their low incomes now they were also the victims of selective segregation. Negative representations of the working class in the city has, along with these selective lockdowns, led to further discrimination and layoffs. Ramon, a protestor from Vallecas was quoted on *Madrid No Frills* as saying:

> *Now discrimination, I tell you, is twofold. Not only do they point to Vallekas as what we were before, which is a neighbourhood with many vulnerabilities and low incomes, but*

also now, they point us out for contagion rather than reinforcing the public health system.

Throughout the course of the pandemic working class inhabitants have been abandoned but they have organised to support each other and to resist. That evening a protest of around 300 people outside the Asamblea de Madrid was charged by the police. Many received batons to the head in the attack and the police arrested 4 people including 2 minors.

In protest at the police violence over 2000 gathered in front of the Asamblea de Madrid the following night. As they made their way through the streets protestors were cheered on from the balconies with shouts of '¡Viva la clase obrera!'

At noon on Sunday 27th September amid the din of banging pots from the balconies of the working class protestors gathered at the Puente de Vallecas motorway exit under the M30 motorway - a now officially a hard border between Madrid's rich and poor. Placards and banners demanded no more cuts, investment in health care, better public transport and protested against repression and selective confinement of working class areas. Bus drivers supported the protests by beeping their horns.

Across the city chants of 'It's not lockdown, it's segregation!' have rang out and banners with slogans like 'They don't confine the rich,' have been unfurled. Protestors have taken to the streets in massive numbers, often fighting with the police who have attempted to drive them back into segregation and silence.

Around the world, the working class and poor bear the brunt of oppressive and discriminatory state responses to coronavirus, while, at the same time, being expected to continue work or being flung out of work not because of their so-called 'way of life' but because of the inherent economic inequality imposed by capitalism.

Jason

Abortion Struggle in Poland: Protestors tell the Government to Fuck Off!

Protests have taken place across Poland against attempts by the far right government make abortion illegal. On Friday 30th October the biggest ever demonstration against the government took place in Warsaw with over 100,000 people on the streets.

On the 22nd October the country's Constitutional Tribunal, stacked with justices appointed by the ruling right-wing Law and Justice party ruled that termination of pregnancies was unconstitutional even when there was a large likelihood of severe and irreversible foetal impairment or an incurable life-threatening disease in any 'future child'.

Abortion rights have already been attacked in Poland to the extent that it is only legally available in cases of rape or where the pregnancy is a threat to the life of the pregnant woman. This creates the situation where those who can afford it travel to Czechia or Germany for legal abortions while those who cannot are forced to turn to the 'underground' abortions. Abortion under this legislation is basically illegal, almost all of the 1,100 abortions carried out last year were due to foetal abnormalities. Stigma and victim blaming are still extreme in cases of rape.

As soon as the ruling was declared thousands of women and their allies protested on the streets. Mass demonstrations have grown in numbers day by day. Churches have been stormed, there have been standoffs with police and many towns have been blockaded by protestors. The main slogans adopted are simply 'Wypierdalać!' which translates as 'Fuck off!' and 'Abort the Government'. Graffiti that simply states 'Womens' Hell' has appeared on walls all over the country. On the 28th of October a massive women's strike began in opposition to the government.

Deputy Prime Minister Jaroslaw Kaczynski has called the ongoing protests an attempt to 'destroy' Poland, urging people to defend the nation and the Catholic Church. The response? Wypierdalać!

Aunty Rząd

Belfast Anarchism: The Early Days (1908-1912)

Crowds thronged in front of the Custom House steps in early 20th century Belfast, often to hear speakers like wee John McAra.

It was the winter of 1908 and as he was led along the dreary tunnel connecting the courthouse to the Crumlin Road jail, to begin a sentence of three months for breach of the peace, the Scottish anarchist John McAra (1858-1916), must have wondered if anarchism would ever catch on in Belfast.

Remarking on the assassination of the King of Portugal, Dom Carlos (by republicans actually rather than anarchists), he had declared it was the ultimate conclusion to the arbitrary and tyrannical rule of a despot and if King George himself ruled in such a manner, he too would've been in the firing line. This was obviously deliberately reported by an undercover policeman as evidence of encouraging the assassination of the serving monarch and McAra was promptly arrested. His arrest and imprisonment in the Crum did not however bring anarchist propaganda in Belfast to an end but led instead to its resurgence, support for McAra and the beginnings of the first anarchist group in the city.

McAra was the son of a shoemaker originally from Glasgow who had re-settled in Dalkeith just to the south-east of Edinburgh, and it was here John was born in 1858. Apprenticed at 13 to a cork cutter, McAra later married a Dundee woman and moved to the city to pursue his trade. It appears this was where he first came into contact with the anarchist movement, which had a base in the famous local bookshop, the Poet's Box on Overgate in the city which stocked anarchist publications. There had been an anarchist-communist group in the city in the 1890s and remnants of it continued into the early twentieth century. By around 1904, McAra was selling anarchist literature and proving himself to be a sought-after public speaker, establishing himself locally as well as in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The 1907 dock strike in Belfast, one of the first big demonstrations of early industrial unionism and a high point in the growth of working-class militancy in the city, may have been the catalyst for McAra coming though other accounts indicate he initially came to Belfast for work as a cork cutter. He arrived in February 1908 and immediately took up a speaking pitch at the Custom House steps where a wide variety of activists and orators attracted large crowds and sold all kinds of political and religious papers, books and pamphlets. McAra had only been present for a couple of weeks when he was arrested but had in that time drawn to himself a number of interested workers who then arranged a fund to support his wife and three children back in Dundee. This was advertised in the pages of Freedom and quickly drew support from across Britain raising over £10 (about £1200 today), within a month or so. Besides this, it was recorded by McAra himself that in spite of perjured police accounts that they arrested the diminutive Scots anarchist to prevent the crowd throwing him in the Lagan,

'this crowd that you say wanted to drown me bought 11s. 7d. worth of penny papers and pamphlets, and on two previous Sundays they assisted me with collections to lift me out of monetary difficulties caused by eight months out of work'.

As a result, McAra walked straight out of Crumlin Road jail and back onto the Custom House steps to renew his activism. In just three weeks he sold 150 copies of Freedom and £2 worth of books and pamphlets. Clearly an appetite for anarchism and anarchist ideas was growing in Belfast and within a year a Belfast anarchist group appears to have been formed. The contact given in Freedom for Belfast comrades to aid in building the movement was Joseph Webb, a 23-year old shipyard labourer who lived at 69 Excise Street off the Grosvenor Road. It's unclear if McAra was still in Belfast at this point but he turns up in Liverpool in 1910 before returning to Belfast and his old speaking pitch in May that year where Freedom reports:

'He had a good reception. He got a job the day he arrived, but when he went to start on Monday morning, he was told he could not do so. It appears that the police warned all the cork shops against starting him. That night (Monday), he had to leave Belfast, and he travelled to Glasgow where he is now holding meetings with our comrade Barrett'.

That was George Barrett or Ballard born in Hertfordshire in 1888, who'd been active in Bristol socialist circles in the 1890s before coming to Glasgow in 1910 and whose anarchist writings were recently re-published by Iain McKay as

Our Masters Are Helpless (2019). As McAra's father was a Glaswegian, he may have had relatives in the city and some familiarity with it already. A re-birth of the old Glasgow Anarchist Group from the 1890s came about soon after. Meanwhile back in Belfast, an English anarchist, Richard Stubbs, from Horwich, near Bolton in Lancashire, who was working as a tinsmith in the city and living with his wife and son at 45 Killowen Street, off the Woodstock Road addressed a letter to local comrades in the pages of Freedom at the end of 1911. Writing from a perspective supportive of anarchist-communism, Stubbs questioned the revolutionary potential of industrial unionism, singling out the IWW in particular and asking:

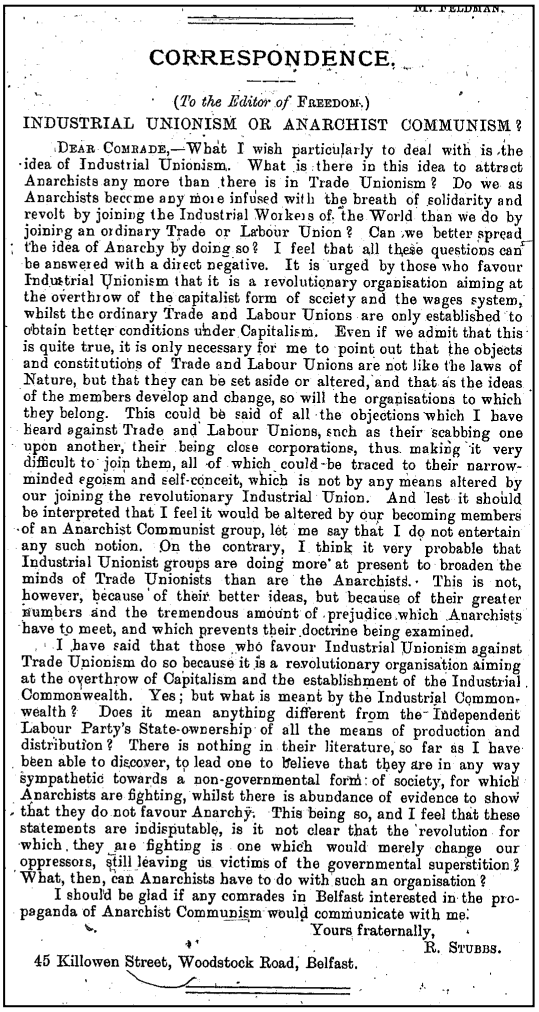
'Do we as anarchists become any more infused with the breath of solidarity by joining the Industrial Workers of the World than we do by joining an ordinary trade or labour union?...There is nothing in their literature so far as I have been able to discover, to lead one to believe that they are in any way sympathetic towards a non-governmental form of society, for which anarchists are fighting, whilst there is an abundance of evidence to suggest that they do not favour anarchy'.

Stubbs' letter quickly drew a response in Freedom from 'Industrialist' who wrote that there was in fact an abundance of evidence that industrial unionists favour anarchism, from Freedom advertising the IWW's paper and the American Wobblies containing hundreds of anarchists, through to the fact that many of the Mexican revolutionaries were members and supporters of the IWW. He concludes by appealing to anarchists to

'use their influence to make it anti-parliamentary (the Industrialist League, the British section of the IWW is already anti-parliamentary); they can point out to industrial unionists the fallacies and dangers of centralisation, and they can help the movement to reach its logical aim: anarchy. At the very least, anarchists like comrade Stubbs, can refrain from criticising a movement which they do not understand.'

This letter was joined by another from J.W. Sanderson in Hulme, Manchester which also took Stubbs to task for not stating which specific branch of industrial unionism he was referring to 'and having studied both, I claim for them that they are rebels and in the van of progress'.

Stubbs came back in the next edition of the anarchist newspaper beginning, 'it would seem judging by the criticism which my letter…received, that there is really no necessity for anarchist communists to group themselves together with a view to spreading their ideas; all that is necessary is that they should join a group of industrialists of either brand'. He added:



M. FELDMAN.

CORRESPONDENCE.

(*To the Editor of* FREEDOM.)

INDUSTRIAL UNIONISM OR ANARCHIST COMMUNISM?

DEAR COMRADE,—What I wish particularly to deal with is the idea of Industrial Unionism. What is there in this idea to attract Anarchists any more than there is in Trade Unionism? Do we as Anarchists become any more infused with the breath of solidarity and revolt by joining the Industrial Workers of the World than we do by joining an ordinary Trade or Labour Union? Can we better spread the idea of Anarchy by doing so? I feel that all these questions can be answered with a direct negative. It is urged by those who favour Industrial Unionism that it is a revolutionary organisation aiming at the overthrow of the capitalist form of society and the wages system, whilst the ordinary Trade and Labour Unions are only established to obtain better conditions under Capitalism. Even if we admit that this is quite true, it is only necessary for me to point out that the objects and constitutions of Trade and Labour Unions are not like the laws of Nature, but that they can be set aside or altered, and that as the ideas of the members develop and change, so will the organisations to which they belong. This could be said of all the objections which I have heard against Trade and Labour Unions, such as their scabbing one upon another, their being close corporations, thus making it very difficult to join them, all of which could be traced to their narrow-minded egoism and self-conceit, which is not by any means altered by our joining the revolutionary Industrial Union. And lest it should be interpreted that I feel it would be altered by our becoming members of an Anarchist Communist group, let me say that I do not entertain any such notion. On the contrary, I think it very probable that Industrial Unionist groups are doing more at present to broaden the minds of Trade Unionists than are the Anarchists. This is not, however, because of their better ideas, but because of their greater numbers and the tremendous amount of prejudice which Anarchists have to meet, and which prevents their doctrine being examined.

I have said that those who favour Industrial Unionism against Trade Unionism do so because it is a revolutionary organisation aiming at the overthrow of Capitalism and the establishment of the Industrial Commonwealth. Yes; but what is meant by the Industrial Commonwealth? Does it mean anything different from the Independent Labour Party's State-ownership of all the means of production and distribution? There is nothing in their literature, so far as I have been able to discover, to lead one to believe that they are in any way sympathetic towards a non-governmental form of society, for which Anarchists are fighting, whilst there is abundance of evidence to show that they do not favour Anarchy. This being so, and I feel that these statements are indisputable, is it not clear that the revolution for which they are fighting is one which would merely change our oppressors, still leaving us victims of the governmental superstition? What, then, can Anarchists have to do with such an organisation?

I should be glad if any comrades in Belfast interested in the propaganda of Anarchist Communism would communicate with me.

Yours fraternally,

R. STUBBS.

45 Killowen Street, Woodstock Road, Belfast.

'It is perhaps for this reason that I received no response to my appeal to the Belfast comrades, which was the chief object of my letter; or it may be because of my personality. If anyone in Belfast should hold the latter opinion, I sincerely trust that such a one will make an effort where I have failed…With regard to the abundance of evidence. It would be a waste of time for me to quote passages from industrial unionist literature showing that they are not anarchists, for I do not doubt that 'Industrialist' could pick out passages to show me the contrary'.

He was supported this time by another correspondent, signing themselves 'White Slave' who wrote that 'Industrialist' seemed so confident that industrial unionists were anarchists that he presumably welcomed evidence to the contrary. That, they said, would be drawn from personal experience of the industrial unionist movement in the British Isles:

'If my memory serves me right, the first party to preach industrial unionism in the British Isles was the Socialist Labour Party. This party, up to date, is not anti-parliamentary. Further remarks are not necessary to make it obvious that this quality of industrial unionist does not favour anarchy. Owing to a difference of opinion on the parliamentary question, a split was effected within the ranks of the SLP, which produced the Industrial League, now known as the British section of the IWW. Although the League embraced the doctrine of anti-parliamentarianism, it was careful enough to constitute itself that it is impossible for a member thereof to comply with the two doctrines – that of the Industrial League and that of anarchy. What could be more antagonistic to anarchy than that part of the League's preamble which reads "and recognising the absolute necessity of the industrial union, etc? If, however, you join the League for the purposes mentioned by 'Industrialist' – making it anti-parliamentary, showing the fallacies of centralisation, etc. – the moment you commence your propaganda you will be convicted of either working by underhand methods or of being desirous of leading humanity back to the realms of the protozos.'

At the root of all this, there seems to have been an argument about syndicalism versus anarchist communism before anarcho-syndicalism had emerged as a specific variant. However, Stubbs had been accused by Sanderson in the earlier letter of being an egoist and supporter of 'GB Shawism', something which seems unlikely given the size and character of anarchism that had emerged in Belfast.

Before tiring of this debate, Freedom allowed 'Industrialist' to come back once more. Accusing Stubbs of going off on a tangent, Industrialist remarked that the idea he was arguing that all IWW members are anarchist would be as absurd as saying all IWW members opposed anarchism.

'Let me state in a few words my position with regard to industrial unionism. I find that many industrial unionists are avowed anarchists, and that many others are virtually anarchists without knowing it: the balance is vast becoming a negligible quality, as it is being absorbed by the other sections. I hold, therefore, that all working-class anarchists should join the IWW. It is the most advanced section of the organised workers, and affords a splendid

Workers leaving the docks 1911

field for propaganda…I do not agree with "White Slave" that the Industrialist League's preamble is necessarily antagonistic to anarchy… It may interest "White Slave" to know that I have been a member of the Industrialist League for a considerable time. The other members with whom I happen to be acquainted are also anarchist communists… It is not my aim to advocate industrial unionism in preference to anarchist communism'.

The letter ends fraternally and seems to indicate a thawing in the debate between the two sides or at least a change in the tone. Who 'Industrialist' was is unclear, perhaps Guy Bowman, who was one of the most prominent of the syndicalists at this time, but it's unlikely we'll ever know for sure. For his part, Stubbs appears to have remained in Belfast and a subscriber for Freedom into the early 1920s and soon after these exchanges, George Barrett spoke at two meetings in Belfast about recent strikes, and anarchism and science respectively under the auspices of the Belfast branch of the ILP. How large or small the anarchist presence was in Belfast at this time was is difficult to know but it was clearly sustained by regular contacts with comrades in Glasgow and certainly interested if it did not involve many on the left. This was, of course, the high point of the enveloping sectarian conflict over home rule as the Liberal government cleared the way for the passage of the Third Home Rule Bill and both British and Irish nationalists began to gear up for civil war. Belfast's socialist presence was often drowned out by the louder divisive voices of these nationalisms and we can only assume that anarchism was even more marginalised as a result at the time. McAra or 'Mac' as he was known to his comrades died in 1916 and was followed by Barrett in 1917 and it would be many more generations before anarchists began to successfully organise in Belfast once more.

M O'C

Covid: Crazies and Class Struggle

Sit down protest in Grafton Street by Yellow Vests Ireland protestors Saturday 3rd October.

About 1,000 people gathered in Dublin's Grafton Street at the start of October to protest not against the city's chronic housing and homelessness crisis, widespread unemployment or rising racist attacks on immigrants but in opposition to a virus.

Citing anti-authoritarianism, some of the most authoritarian right-wing scumbags and a much bigger herd of the bemused and bewildered, gathered again in opposition to wearing masks as they'd done at the start of September in their thousands. Meanwhile, similar protests in Belfast and Derry last month drew much smaller crowds in spite of enjoying the apparent support and dubious talents of Van Morrison and prominent Derry dissident republican and anti-choice Councillor, Dr Anne McCloskey. That is not to claim some sort of sense of superiority for the North, as the collective emergence of opportunities for the far right to mobilise, manipulate and recruit is a serious issue for everyone. There does, however, seem to be a particular problem with fascism allied to general nutjobism in the twenty-six counties in recent years. Moreover, it is a problem that seems to be on the rise, out from behind the keyboard, chatrooms and taxi ranks and onto the streets. Again, it's important not to be sanguine about either the far right or the tinfoil anti-vaxxers on this side of the border, but there's clearly something awry in the Free State.

It is possible that the liberal advances of recent years were always likely to be the ground on which the far right would hope to build support and that, when allied to the continuing impact of 'austerity' is always fertile soil for fascism. The bourgeois middle-class consensus politics that has dominated governments down there for decades and characterised social partnership and almost every other facet of life has delivered one of the most neo-liberal economies in Europe. Its combination of facile bureaucracy and ruthless brutality towards the working-class instils fatalism and misplaced hope in various 'socialist' parties in equal measure. At one time in the not-too-distant past, it also offered moral strictures, guided by the precepts of Catholicism and a deeply cynical view of the Irish electorate as a bunch of culchie rednecks. The withering away of these conceits and the co-option of social liberalism long a feature of many western European centre-right parties, and latterly the Tories, created a vacuum into which actual moralists could step. Thankfully

though, there weren't many of them (even Dana fucked off eventually), but an assortment of anti-choice 'pro-lifers', aberrant Shinners, Irexters, ultra Catholic nationalists, neo-Nazis, climate change deniers and right-wing crusties have somehow fused together to take up the mantle. Add to that a few fascist commentators and independents, along with (and this is really giving the state more credit than is probably due), the work of Garda agents provocateur, then the contemporary conglomeration of bastards hoves into view.

In spite of the much-vaunted growth of the Left down Mexico way, there doesn't appear to have been much in the way of opposition, organised or otherwise, against the rise of the right. To be fair, Covid has clearly had an impact here and whilst the far right have been focusing their ire on the government and 'science' rather than travellers, families in direct provision, feminists, LGBTQ+ people and the Left, there's perhaps been a degree of complacency about them. We will, however, see the continued appeal to 'freedom' and so-called libertarianism as part of the sloganising on the far right and it's therefore incumbent on anarchists as the only genuine libertarians to challenge that narrative. This is especially the case as government restrictions are likely to continue and possibly intensify as frustration with the measures spreads beyond the flat-earthers, primitivists and the patently unwell.

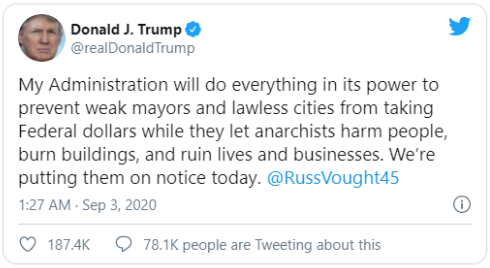
The usual statist urge, supported by all parties and their reactionary followers, to turn towards punitive measures in order to make salutary examples of people by employing the cops to caution, fine and arrest is naturally something to be opposed not only from a position of principle but equally from one of common sense and pragmatism. Ever growing numbers of unemployed workers and rising poverty make the pursuit of financial penalties cruel and abusive as well useless and ridiculous. The debate around mask 'compliance' comes from a cliched authoritarian perspective that sees society organised around the state's various missives about the protection of life when in fact, it is a completely voluntary process entered into by people to protect their families, friends and communities. Both states' complete inability, not to mention unwillingness, to protect anyone from the virus and the thousands of deaths under their watch should be example enough of the fiction of their licenced protection racket. As always, another front has opened in the class war against working-class communities in particular, who have been disproportionately affected by state responses to 'tackling' the virus. Aided by a thoroughly compliant media whose focus never shifts from the impact on business, the state has acted to shore up wages with the furlough scheme solely to protect markets and not workers. The likely decimation of thousands of jobs as the economic precipice nears is exactly the outcome that many have predicted for months and as usual it is likely that the public sector will be hardest hit, though perhaps only because the community and voluntary sector has already been laid waste to for over a decade. The neo-liberal fixation with 'trimming' public services, especially in Northern Ireland, which Labour, Conservative and practically all of the Stormont parties have long argued are costly and employ too many people, is likely to extend even into the NHS in spite of Covid. The long-awaited Bengoa recommendations for hospital closures and job losses under the guise of changing demographics, new specialisms and 'modernisation' are ones that have only slowed marginally in momentum because of the need to meet capacity during the pandemic. The proposals however, remain a priority for central and regional government which Covid, along with the 'rationalisations' planned for other parts of the public service, appears to have actually offered opportunities, or at least excuses, for.

The focus, nevertheless, is elsewhere – on masks and social distancing, the hospitality sector being shut down, sport called off and theatres out of reach. Out of this varied tapestry and with the addition of manufactured hysteria over phone masts and vaccination, the far right are attempting to weld together some sort of coalition. Whether though they will ultimately prove successful in persuading people that basically immigrants, Muslims and Jews, liberals, the Left, China, aliens, science and/or fake news are responsible remains to be seen. Previously, we could have assumed that a perfectly legitimate concern, for example, with the MMR vaccination based on some critical questions raised over its costs, safety and effectiveness, would have developed into a wider leftist critique of the ways in which 'Big Pharma' tries to maximise its profit margins at the regular expense of human life.

Instead, however, we increasingly see it connected to and exploited by a right-wing conspiracy theory about population control organised by a varied selection of demonic forces. Moreover, whilst some might be susceptible to being convinced that the provision of abortion facilities and the 'roll-out of 5G' are also somehow connected to this nefarious scheme, that does not exactly mean they will equally feel that fascism has the answers. Many on the Left might think it's therefore best to avoid counter-protests where the majority of the 'fascists' are in fact, made up of people who are just mixed up, misled and easily convinced rather than the fucking mentally deranged or neo-Nazis. Maybe standing by will ensure it will eventually all unravel, quite apart from the fact that it's hard to convince the unwell and the unstable of anything. Perhaps ridicule might be the answer and we could consider upping the ante and attending one of these rallies with a placard announcing 'It's the lizard people!' or 'I blame the Martians, etc.'

M O'C

Trump: Attempts to Defund 'Anarchist' Cities



At the start of September, in a move that can only be described as bizarre, US president (perhaps by the time you read this ex-president) Donald Trump issued a Presidential Memorandum aimed at denying federal funds to 'anarchist jurisdictions'!

Seattle, Portland, New York city and the United States capital, Washington D.C. were all named specifically along with guidance on 'identifying anarchist jurisdictions'. On September 3rd, another doubtless sleepless night fuelled by his fevered imagination, Trump tweeted 'My administration will do everything in its power to prevent weak majors and lawless cities from taking Federal dollars while they let anarchists harm people, burn buildings, and ruin lives and businesses. We're putting them on notice today.'

The memo itself claimed:

> *For the past few months, several State and local governments have contributed to the violence and destruction in their jurisdictions by failing to enforce the law, disempowering and significantly defunding their police departments, and refusing to accept offers of Federal law enforcement assistance.*

Claims that several U.S. states and jurisdictions have fallen to 'anarchy' are, unfortunately, grossly overstated.

International Week Against Unpaid Wages

During the third week of October (12th-18th) the first International Week Against Unpaid Wages took place. It was established by the International Workers' Association (IWA/AIT) to highlight the scale of wages theft across and how anarcho-syndicalists we can successfully fight it.

Statements, protests and struggles for the return of unpaid wages took place in 14 countries throughout the week. Struggles to get back stolen and unpaid wages were won by the ZSP in Poland. The CNT-AIT organised pickets Albacete, Granada, Tarragona, Barcelona and other towns and cities, a talk in Albacete on successful struggles to win back stolen wages using direct action. In Austria the Wiener ArbeiterInnen-Syndikat began a struggle for payment of €5800 to an ex-employee of Seamox GmbH. Actions also took place in Britain, Slovakia, Norway, Russia, Sweden, the USA, Australia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Germany, and the Czech Republic.

Organise! New Website

Over the past few months Organise! have been working on our new website. As well as the latest issue of the Leveller it includes an archive of previous issues, pamphlets we have produced, campaigns we are involved in, a description of who we are and reviews from the Just Books Review. This is all of course a work in progress.

Check it out at: https://organiseanarchistsireland.com/