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Dec 2003: Print Project of Éire Independent Media Centre – <http://www.indymedia.ie>

Cork Anti-war Activist is Jailed for 60 Days



Jailed as a Result of His Refusing to Pay Fine for Shannon Trespass.

Speaking shortly before his arrest, Fintan Lane said: “The mass trespass in which I was involved was an act of protest and resistance against the integration of an Irish civilian airport into the US war machine. What we did was an act of conscience and I have no

regrets. I couldn't pay this fine because that would be to plead guilty retrospectively and I will not do that. I feel no guilt over my actions.”

He continued: “Innocent people are being killed in Iraq and Afghanistan by the war machine that is being facilitated at Shannon airport. What is happening is an outrage, and it is no exaggeration to say that Fianna Fail and the PDs have blood on their hands.”

“I don't want to be in jail, but as an Irish citizen I refuse to be implicated in the immoral actions of this government. It is important that people stand up and say no to the refuelling of US warplanes at Shannon.”

Fintan Lane called on all those opposed to Irish complicity with the US occupation of Iraq to attend the demonstration at Shannon airport on December 6th: “It is important that there is a large turnout to demonstrate to Fianna Fail and the PDs that we will not put up with the refuelling of US warplanes at Shannon. Enough is enough.”

In an extended interview with Indymedia's Red Jade just before he went to prison, Fintan told of how he became involved with the anti war movement in Ireland, and his hopes for the future.

“I became involved in the Irish anti-war movement during 2000, I attended demonstrations at Shannon and on October 12, 2002 there was an Irish anti war movement demonstration march out at the airport. A number of us felt that previous marches have been ignored and there was a need to engage in some sort of action that would force attention on the issue.

We met as the demonstration was progressing to decide on the format of that action. What we planned basically was to

create an opportunity for a mass trespass. We decided to do this by shaking the fence in the hope that it would come down. Once it was down we hoped that people would instinctively cross the line into the field and stage a mass sit-down within the airport grounds. We were presently surprised when we shook the fence to discover that it was actually very weakly structured and it came down almost immediately. In fact, it came down on top on some of the people involved in pulling at it - and on top of some Garda who tried to intervene.

Once the fence was down a number of people crossed immediately and I crossed quite soon after. But, I don't think we would have gone any great distance unless we saw that there was an interest in it, unless we saw that people were intent on participating in a mass trespass. A large number of the protesters did cross the line and there was a mass-trespass involving approximately a hundred people.

Essentially, I was arrested when I refused to leave. I was given a number of warnings I explained what we were engaged in was an act of conscience to protect the lives of people in Iraq. We were opposed to the facilitation of the U.S. war machine and that we believed that Civil Disobedience was acceptable and justified in that context.

We were arrested and brought to the Shannon Garda station, subsequently charged and brought to court and found guilty of trespass.

My personal penalty was a fine of 750 euros plus I was banned from County Claire for two years. I couldn't in my own conscience pay the fine. For me, it would be the equivalent of paying an entrance fee to protest. I will not pay 750 euros for the right to protest against the use of a civilian airport to kill people.”



Reflecting on his impending jail term, Fintan said “I will be restricted in many ways, obviously it is a prison. Visits will not be possible, I will have one visit a week and that will be restricted to people that I know. But I can receive mail and mail will certainly be welcome. In fact, it will be a useful diversion because apparently I will not be able to watch television or listen to the radio or do any of these things I am used to do on a daily basis. It will really be quite nice.

While I'll like to receive messages of solidarity, the most important message of solidarity that people can send me, or

anyone in jail for any offense in regard to Shannon airport, is to continue the protest and to turn up at Shannon on Dec 6th.

I am one individual and I don't think people should focus on me as a 'martyr for the cause' - I think it is up to everyone protest in a way they feel comfortable and everyone has a role to play. This is the route that I have chosen but that doesn't mean everybody will necessarily want to be arrested and go to jail. In the some situations that may not be the best option and for others it will be their individual choice.

In terms of how people could act in solidarity with me and other people that end up in prison for anti-war activities, the best act of solidarity is to continue with the protests at Shannon and to turn up at the blockades and just carry on."

For more on this story please read story 62431 at the website. You can find out more information about Fintan's case at the Support Fintan Lane Website: <http://www.freewebs.com/fintanlane>. Alternatively you can subscribe to Fintan Lane Solidarity News at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FintanLaneNews>

Lone Parents Group Claims Government is Targeting Poor Families Through CE Cutbacks

OPEN, the national network of lone parent groups has expressed its anger and dismay at the latest reported changes to the Community Employment (CE) programme. "During its first incarnation, the FF/PD coalition altered the CE programme so that lone parents under 25 years of age were excluded from participation" said Frances Byrne, spokesperson for the group. "The latest leaked report proposes increasing CE hours from 19.5 to 30 hours per week. This change would discriminate against lone parents with school-going children, who will simply not be available to work the extended hours. To add insult to injury, CE participants would not be paid for the additional hours. Every report, including those commissioned by the government, has shown that lone parents rely on this scheme to overcome poverty and welfare dependency", continued Ms. Byrne, "How then can this government justify punishing some of the most excluded families in the state?"

OPEN has already surveyed their groups in Dublin in order to monitor the local effects of ongoing government cutbacks in CE and other programmes. The results show widespread reductions in staff and services in communities such as Finglas and Tallaght. A group in N.E. Dublin reported that its already relying exclusively on donations in order to continue to provide education and training programmes to lone parents and others in their community. Lone parent groups in Tipperary, Limerick and Mayo have also had to drastically curtail their activities. This means that in many rural areas lone parents and their children are losing vital services.

"According to the 2002 Census, there are just under 160,000 lone parents in the state. Half of these families 79,254 rely on social welfare payments to survive", said Byrne. "This government has continued to ignore these families and their needs. The national agreement, Sustaining Progress, contains one loose reference to lone parents. A major report on lone parents produced by the social partners and others on the National Economic and Social Forum and examined by the

government has gathered dust on the shelves of senior civil servants and politicians since 2001, with none of its 47 recommendations yet implemented."

"The proposed changes to Community Employment and the axing of other labour market programmes are further damning evidence of a lack of government commitment to poor families, in spite of rhetoric about child poverty," added OPEN's spokesperson, "Our members are asking why the government is going out of its way to re-design an already severely restricted programme in a way that targets lone parents more than other participants? Is this a reflection of an underlying attitude at the cabinet table, which previously reared its head during the 1997 general election?"

"These proposals must be stopped", said Byrne. "OPEN will be meeting with community groups, trade unions and Opposition parties to curb this attack on vulnerable families and the communities they live in."

For more on this story please read story 62431 at the website.

The fight against the Bin Charges in the Rebel County continues!

Threatening letters continue to issue forth from Cork City Hall as the City Council looks set to begin a policy of non-collection of domestic rubbish in the city – for the second time in as

many years. Readers may remember that Cork City Council attempted the same thing two years ago but very forced into an embarrassing retreat after a campaign of direct action organised by Householders Against Service Charges (HASC). HASC organised a public disposal of domestic rubbish on the steps of the City Hall in a year long campaign that saw the City Council use the Litter Act and other legal means to attempt to force city wide compliance. They failed, even after jailing a host of HASC activists in both Cork and Limerick jails. At the time CCC came to an agreement with HASC to desist from its non-collection of domestic waste policy. But this agreement has now been torn up.

Cork City Council's new hard-line policy is weak at the seams however. Waivers are being handed out all over the place to lure payers, as are the usual threats directed in particular at the elderly and less physically able who are very reliant on council collection of their domestic waste. The CCC claims massive public compliance but the evidence on the streets of Cork indicates otherwise – be prepared for a massive increase in uncollected waste, sadly.



HASC is calling on people to continue their resistance to the new hard-line policy. In a late development, CCC has withdrawn unreservedly from the proposed prosecution of two long-standing members of HASC for non-payment of their service charges. CCC withdrew from the scheduled court cases after it became clear the hard-line City Manager 'Thatcher' Gavin would be forced to appear in court to defend his disgraceful behaviour to date. A prospect many were looking forward!

Coca-Cola boycott in UCD survives a second referendum – and the students stance is attracting world attention



Students at University College Dublin voted on November 19th to uphold the ban on Coke products from the student union and student union stores on the campus in support of a boycott advocated by SINALTRAINAL, the national food and beverage union in Colombia that represents workers in Coke's Colombian bottling plants.

The union accuses The Coca-Cola Co. and its bottlers in Colombia of using paramilitary groups to break the union by assassinating union leaders. Nine SINALTRAINAL union leaders have been killed since 1990. A federal lawsuit filed in Miami two years ago related to the allegations is pending against two of the Colombian bottlers.

Coca-Cola sent Rafael Fernandez Quiros, its director of communications for Latin America, to Ireland to meet with members of the university's students' union in November and ask them to reconsider their decision. Coke officials declined to discuss the details or results of the meeting beyond a prepared statement.

"They were productive meetings held with interested parties to present the proper facts and address any concerns about the allegations," Lori Billingsley, issues director for Coke, said in the statement.

However, Aidan Regan, deputy president of the 21,000-member students' union who attended the meeting, described it as "an arrogance" that insulted the students. "It was more propaganda," Regan said. "He made a speech and basically ran out the back door without answering questions."

Some of the franchises on the campus, which operate independently of the students' union, continue to sell Coke products, but the students' union is considering revoking their licenses to operate on the campus, Regan said.

The boycott has found other support in Ireland. John Hewitt Bar and Restaurant, one of the most popular pubs in Belfast, removed all Coke products Oct. 11. The largest Irish language cultural and tourist center in Belfast and the Belfast

Unemployed Resource Centre also have removed Coke products.

Other restaurants and bars near University College Dublin are removing Coke products, Regan said, and at least four other colleges in Ireland are considering joining the boycott.

A Northern Ireland branch of UNISON, the largest trade union in Britain with almost 1.3 million members, announced Nov. 12 that it supported an international boycott of Coke. Patricia McKeown, a union spokesperson, said the union would urge its members to stop buying Coke products and ask them to lobby their employers to remove Coke's vending machines and products from their workplaces.

"It's moving forward," Regan said. "These boycotts do work."

However, members of the Dublin Drinks, Tobacco and Warehouse Distribution branch of the SIPTU union, the largest trade union in Ireland, are opposed to the boycott. The union argues that the boycott could endanger the jobs of more than 1,000 workers in Ireland who are involved in the manufacture and distribution of Coke products.

"We respect the interest shown by students in human rights and injustice around the world," the union said in an Oct. 15 statement.

"Trade union and human rights in Colombia have to be strengthened and protected. We know that over 4,000 trade unionists have been assassinated there in the past decade and that Colombia has the worst human rights record in the world. Our union, SIPTU, has consistently supported solidarity actions with workers in Colombia and will continue to do so. However, we do not believe a boycott of Coca-Cola products is the most effective way of expressing this concern at the present time. We would urge all other student union bodies and organisations which are approached to consider this issue to first acquaint themselves with the views of the workers employed in the bottling companies as to the likely consequences of their actions for the livelihoods of Irish workers."



The boycott efforts in the United States are being encouraged by Luis Adolfo Cardona, a former Coke worker in Colombia who has been in the United States for the past 19 months under a protection plan sponsored by the AFL-CIO. Cardona has been speaking at college campuses nationwide asking them to support the boycott.

Cardona said he has advocated the boycott on "many, many" campuses around the nation. He is asking the universities to revoke their exclusive marketing contracts with Coke. He said that about 20 universities have student groups that are "working against Coca-Cola" and five of the universities have vowed to support the boycott.

"Above all, we are working with students," he said through an interpreter. "Students have a lot of power in this country."

John Faucher, an analyst with J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. who follows Coke, said he wasn't aware of the boycotts, but didn't think they would make much difference to the company.

"I find it hard to believe this could turn into anything that would have a significant impact on the company," he said. "I don't see it as a major issue."

Cardona currently lives in Chicago with his family and has been granted political asylum to remain in the United States. He had been in hiding in Colombia for six years after an attempt on his life in 1996 by paramilitary groups before coming to the United States on April 27, 2002. He worked for the United Steelworkers of America union under an internship program until the end of October 2003.

For further info please read story no. 62472 on the newswire.

Other News from Indymedia Centres around the world



Indymedia UK: Thessaloniki 7 out of Prison

On November 26th, the "Thessaloniki 7" won a five months struggle against the Greek prison system and various Greek authorities. Souleiman "Kastro" Dakduk from Syria, Simon Chapman from the UK, Fernando Perez Gorraiz and Carlos Martin Martinez from Spain and Spyros Tsitsas were on hungerstrike between 49 and 66 days in protest against the conditions of their arrest and imprisonment.

The Saloniki 7 were amongst 29 protesters arrested during the protests against the EU summit in Thessaloniki. While the others have been released, the seven were held on remand on charges of rioting, possession of explosives and resisting authorities. All 7 say that these charges are false, as say their friends, family and supporters. In Simon Chapman's case, video and photographic evidence confirm that he was framed.

The 7 are not allowed to leave Greece until their trial takes place. The Council of Judges ruled their release after the district attorney in Athens ordered doctors to force feed the hunger strikers. Pressure on the Greek authorities had increased since the hunger strikers' health deteriorated. Solidarity groups formed all over the world, 28 European parliament members called for the prisoners' release, Amnesty International called for an independent inquiry.

Portland IMC: Oregon Department of Corrections punishes those who challenge it

A PRISONER OF THE Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC), Brian McCarvill recently filed suit against the ODOC because they continually denied Brian reading materials of a radical/anarchist nature. Brian contended that free speech rights were being stifled and the ODOC was mistakenly labeling those with radical politics as "gang related". After settling the lawsuit, the ODOC chose to punish Brian for his challenge by transferring him out of the Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem to the Twin Rivers Correctional Facility in Umatilla.



Due to this retaliatory transfer, Brian has lost his job, many of his belongings, access to dental care he was about to receive, and, as he has no money or way of making any now, he can't afford Advil to help control his back pain. Brian has for years suffered serious back pain (from two slipped disks, and calcium build-ups over fracture trauma). He has been sent to a prison where there are no chairs in the dayroom with back-supports. ODOC has, in Brian's words, "full knowledge" of this situation. Brian is also attempting to get dentures - he hasn't had any teeth at all since November 2002. Work was scheduled begin on these dentures late May at Oregon State Penitentiary. No work on dentures is done at TRCI, so it is possible that the authorities will move him yet again. It is imperative that Brian is transferred back to Oregon State Penitentiary.

Prisoners have very few rights, and when Brian stood up to defend his, the ODOC seemed to work with him, and then slapped him down. We're asking people to write to the ODOC and demand that Brian be moved back to the Oregon State Penitentiary and that the ODOC cease its harassment of him.

Write to: Ben de Haan, ODOC Interim Director, Oregon Department of Corrections, Central Administration Office, 2575 Center Street NE, Salem, Oregon 97301-4667, USA or else email: Info@doc.state.or.us. Also, please write to Brian to find out how you can help him: Brian McCarvill, #11037967, TRCI, 82911 Beach Access Rd., Umatilla, OR 97882, USA.

Indymedia NYC: Local Activists March in Newark for Detained Palestinian



Led by a battery of drummers and chanting "Free Farouk," about 80 New York and New Jersey activists marched through downtown Newark in the early afternoon of Nov. 29 to protest the US Department of Homeland Security's continued detention of a man they had often collaborated with over the years, Palestinian immigrant Farouk Abdel-Muhti.

Abdel-Muhti has been held for more than a year and a half by US immigration authorities, who claim they need to keep him in detention while they attempt to carry out a 1995 deportation order. His attorneys argue that the government must release him since he is stateless and no country has accepted him.

"They destroyed his village, they drove him from his land: How can he go home?" Samia Halaby, a prominent Palestinian artist and member of Al-Awda, the Palestine Right to Return Coalition, asked the protesters during a brief rally in front of the Peter W. Rodino Jr. Federal Building at the conclusion of the march. "Where can they send him?" "Back to Queens," someone in the crowd shouted. "Back to us," others yelled. Abdel-Muhti has lived in the New York area since the early 1970s; he was arrested in Corona, Queens in April 2002, just one month after he began helping set up interviews with Palestinians on New York community radio station WBAI-FM.

Since his arrest, Abdel-Muhti has been held in several county jails in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. His most recent transfer was from York, Pennsylvania on Oct. 30 to the Bergen County Jail in Hackensack, New Jersey. Local activists have responded angrily to a Nov. 19 incident at the Bergen jail in which prison guards allegedly assaulted the 56-year old Abdel-Muhti during a routine search of his cell. The guards claimed he had been "stockpiling" his medication for high blood pressure.

So far prison authorities have apparently not investigated the assault. Instead, they placed Abdel-Muhti in solitary confinement from Nov. 26 through Nov. 29, supposedly as a punishment for retaining the medicine.

Aotearoa (New Zealand) IMC: Kerry Prendergastly: Sauron of the South Seas

The Lord of the Rings premiere happened in Wellington on December 1st and the City Council was busy tidying up for the superstars and estimated 100,000 spectators. But beneath this glossy surface, Mayor Kerry Prendergast and the WCC are up to some very dirty tricks. The Mayor, along with a complicit coterie of councillors, have passed a range of bylaws and initiatives intended to rid the city of anything that doesn't fit with their narrow view of what Wellington should be. In other words, they want to create a city for wealthy elites and overseas visitors, not local communities.



The bylaws have received quite a bit of coverage in the past year. Most disturbing is a move to sweep all of the homeless off of the streets. Ben Hana, otherwise known as 'Blanket man,' is in jail and the handful of other 'locals' have simply disappeared. Complementing the homeless bylaw is a ban on drinking or carrying alcohol in the central city. While this might sound like a good idea, consider who will be stopped and searched under this bylaw - a pakeha man in a business suit or a young Maori guy with dreadlocks? This is a tool for racial profiling.

The WCC is also conducting Closed Circuit Television surveillance of the Cuba/Manners Street area in what they call a public safety initiative. The WCC is not regularly monitoring these cameras so it would be very difficult to respond if a person was in trouble. However, as the cameras do record, they provide good evidence of property damage for the Mayor's husband, property developer Rex Nicholls who owns businesses directly in the gaze of the cameras.

Finally, the Mayor has signalled an intention to remove the 'Welcome to Wellington - A Nuclear-Free city' sign from the Airport. This sign was not funded nor is it maintained by the Council, although it is on Council land. Mayor Prendergast doesn't think the sign fits her 'strategic vision' for the city and she would prefer to brand this as a 'Council gateway'. The deputy mayor, Alick Shaw, was presented with more than a 1,000 signatures last week on a petition calling on the WCC to keep the sign. Although Councillor Shaw refused to take the issue to a Council meeting, members of the community will certainly all of the members of Council to account.

Local body elections are next year and already groups are mobilising to change the face of the WCC. Wellington must first and foremost be a city for the people who live here.

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