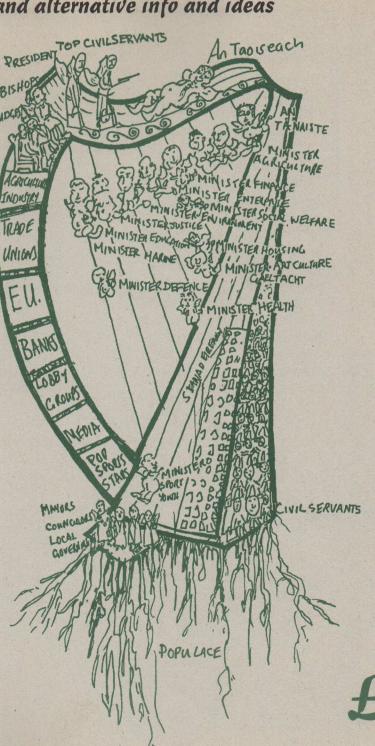


(The Rowan Tree)

Green and alternative info and ideas

The State







"I am Bregalad, that is Quickbeam in your language. But it is only a nickname, of course. They have called me that ever since I said yes to an elder Ent before he had finished his question. Also I drink very quickly, and go out while some are only wetting their beards."

Tolkien, Lord of the Rings

The caorthann is an indigenous tree which, though it may be seen wrapped in chicken wire in the suburbs of our cities, grows well in the poor soil of the mountains. It is distinguish able by its green leaves and grey bark, and in August by its bright red berries. In English it is known as the mountain ash, rowan or quickbeam. Celebrated in song and poetry, it is known to have magical powers and was associated with the druids of former times. The older name of the tree is luis, which was the second letter of the alphabet.

How do you pronounce it?

The editorial collective has no desire to limit your linguistic creativity, but it seems that the multitude of different pronunciations of *An Caorthann* is causing confusion out there on the international information trail. The experts advise the following (spelling intended to aid speakers of Hiberno-English): Kware-hun, Care-hun, or Kweer-hun. As "an" corresponds to "the", there is no need to refer to "the *An Caorthann*". 'Tis a quare one all right.

"The second tree is the quickbeam ("tree of life"), otherwise known as the quicken, rowan or mountain ash. Its round wattles, spread with newly-flaged bulls' hides, were used by the Druids as a last extremity for compelling demons to answer difficult questions"

Robert Graves, The White Goddess.

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Technology

An Caorthann in cyberspace

A selection of articles from An Caorthann is now available in electronic form. Its main locations are at the World Wide Web site < http://www.wisp.ie/ caorthann/> (thanks to Anna Mazzoldi and WISP) and the GreenNet site gpty.eur.ref (thanks to Roy Johnston). These articles are also available by e-mail from lcox@wit.ie. Pointers will be posted to the social-movements mailing list when each new electronic version is available.



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If you would like to help distribute *An Caorthann* or could sell it through your shop, centre or practice, please contact the editors.

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Full page, back cover £150
Full page, internal £100
Half page £65
Quarter page £40

Column advertisements £5 per column inch

Page base advertisements £10 per inch (across all columns).

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Participation

If you are interested in becoming involved in An Caorthann, please get in touch with the editors. We particularly need people to organise advertising and distribution, but there is always space for more editors. The only requirements are competence, tolerance and

a sense of humour; the only reward is feeling good about yourself and being able to put it on your CV.

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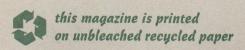
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Next issue

The next issue will deal with "sex, drugs, and hippy festivals" (see page 4 for details). Articles on these or other themes are welcome: info material should be kept within 650 words; other articles should not go over 1300 words. Please send articles on disk ("saved as" text) if possible. Contact the editors for further information.

Published with the assistance of John Gormley TD and Trevor Sargent TD, Dáil Éireann, Dublin Z.







Editorial

In theory, An Caorthann should never have had an editor, but in true Irish style someone (me) got pushed into being it. Readers with a fetish about organisation might be surprised to discover that the net effect, in a voluntary situation, has been to stall the entire effort: other participants (with honourable exceptions) slowly ceased to feel responsibility for what came to appear as my personal project, and at the same time I became more and more of a bottleneck for other people's work, culminating in the complete stalling of the entire magazine once I got fulltime work. At that point we made a decision to at least bring out what we had in the works, before deciding about the future. Inevitably, some articles have gone out of date; others are being held over for the next issue, so our apologies to all those authors who don't see their articles here.

Now we're looking around for a new way of organising ourselves that might take us beyond the "personal project". In this issue, the Trinity Greens took full responsibility for one whole section (the "grassroots" feature), from collecting articles through editing to producing a final "clean" version. One possible way forward might be to try to have the whole magazine produced by autonomous groups in this way, with the only central activities being production and distribution. So we're looking for groups of people who are confident that they can work together, who might be interested in taking over about a third each of the contents (the info, the feature or the focus) for each issue. If you're interested, please get in touch! We don't yet know whether this or any other solution will materialise, but some of us at least are willing to try, because we feel the Caorthann project's an important one that isn't being pursued anywhere else.

There's no requirement to have any particular political position - we have Greens, anarchists, DL members, liberals and Marxists involved - or to be in any particular movement - we have people interested in the ecology movement, the women's movement, Third World solidarity, human rights, green spirituality, alternative economics and more; so long as you're capable of orienting yourselves to the whole green-alternative movement, let's talk. Apart from that, all you need is a dictionary, a phone, and access to a computer!

As some readers will have spotted, An Caorthann alternates its themes between issues on "heavy" topics and "fluffy" ones. That way we make sure of getting a variety of different tones, as well as different issues. Since this issue is definitely a "heavy" one, the next one has to be a bit lighter....

Hence the working title "Sex, drugs and hippy festivals". We looked at gender issues already back in issue 2, so this time the "sex" is exactly that: we're interested in the diversity of subcultures organised around sexuality in Ireland and abroad, and how they've been held down by dominant definitions of what sex is and what it's for. So we're hoping

for articles on gay and lesbian culture, the changing nature of sexual and family relationships, the politics of sexual issues, and more. The "drugs" is about responses to the "drugs crisis", reflections on drugs subcultures, the legalisation issue, and whatever else people choose to write on. Lastly, the "hippy festivals" is about *intentional* cultures and communities: Rainbow Gatherings, New Travellers, organic farming, the Internet, urban alternatives, and all the rest of it.

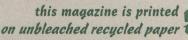
So don't just do something, sit there - and write us an article!

Laurence Cox

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Leaving the Garden

This October, the Garden of Delight in Dublin closed its doors for the last time. The Garden had kept going for a year or so as "a bookshop and café dedicated to the margin, the fringe, the unacknowledged and the suppressed", setting out to "call into question the consensus on what is proper, worthy of attention, and integral to our culture, especially now when it is upon us to think globally and historically and appreciate the validity of a wide range of political, social and sexual commitments."

It's been a fair while since there's been anything like a self-controlled alternative space in Dublin. Movements need space like people need air, not just for organising but for the culture that supports them to find a supportive and communicative environment to develop in, and the Garden was clearly conscious of this need:

"The Garden of Delight is not only a shop, but a café and a space where films, plays, readings, lectures, music, meetings, and events find place. It aspires to be the Agora of the new Dublin...."

The closure of the Garden is the end of a project, but hopefully not the end of the process of learning and struggle that went into creating it. Before the Garden, the Dublin Infoshop project (see *An Caorthann* 1) was working on some of the same issues; after the Garden, the same needs are there, but the conflicts that matter and the skills that are available have moved on.

Documents on the Garden project and the reasons for its closure are in production.

Tim Howells

New centre to link community and environment

The Centre for Research on Environment and Community, at Waterford Institute of Technology, is perhaps the first academic institution in Ireland to examine environmental issues, not from the point of view of natural science or management, but from the perspective of movement activism.

Its purpose is to bring together social actors and academic researchers within the broad field of the interaction between our natural context and our ways of living and working. Ideally, it will offer an intellectual resource for environmental and community groups and other initiatives in this area. A range of research papers are available on request.

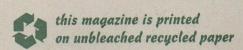
Its most ambitious current project is working towards the creation of a full course in environment and community, aimed at the grassroots level of movement activists,



people working in "green" businesses, and local government workers, aiming to offer a broad base of knowledge to help them put the everyday definition of the "local environment" on a sound and effective footing. At a more advanced level, post-

graduate researchers have started this September working on special areas of interest.

Meanwhile, work is underway to develop what it is believed would be the first archive of the Irish alternative press, which should be a resource for research and reflection as well as a record of a vibrant but sometimes ephemeral flora. The Centre is interested in networking and joint projects with other groups; it can be contacted from September to June c/o Laurence Cox, College St. campus, Waterford Institute of Technology; tel. (051-302257) or email lcox@wit.ie.







World resistance up to its knees in Mexican mud

- alternative movements meet in Chiapas -

At the end of July last summer two members of the Irish Mexico Group braved a hostile immigration service, difficult travelling conditions and a heavy troop presence to attend the Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity and against Neoliberalism in Chiapas, South Eastern Mexico. The Encounter took place in five specially constructed centres deep in the rainforest heartland of the Zapatista rebels. Over three thousand people from outside the Lacandona region attended, coming from 47 different countries.

The encounter was divided into five tables of discussions, covering many aspects of the struggle against the neoliberal economics which are setting the direction for most national governments and causing social devastation across the world. As the topics were wide-ranging and the participants coming from many political backgrounds, a single "platform" was never going to be produced, but the discussions did unite people in dialogue.

Mark Connolly

The Irish Mexico Group welcomes invitations to speak: 10 Upper Camden St., Dublin 2. Please include stamps to cover the reply.

... and Spain

The second, "intergalactic" gathering took place in the Spanish state this summer. The organisers wrote:

"We live in a period when human relations are intensely colonised. Everywhere the same social system subjects humanity to the law of money and homogenises life, generating poverty and devastation. Faced with the ruins inflicted by this relentless machine, resistances arise from other ways of life, yet these seem condemned to isolation. The time has come to break the vicious circle which prevents humanity from bringing together its unease, its struggles and the will for change."

The meeting was geared to-

wards creating a non-hierarchical "network of resistance", connecting up "all people (organised or not) who feel discontented with the life that is imposed upon us." They wrote:

"If we are unable to construct a relationship between struggles, giving to them harmony, a learning process, a system to grow together from the idea that they are connected, all the questions won't go beyond simple political discussions. The idea of the network is ... a new organisational way we have to fill up with our own utopias, values and understanding of humanity and politics."

Tim Howells

For more information contact Zapatista Action Project, 5 Merrion Row (tel. 01-6760435; email mark_c@geocities.com). Web info at http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/3849/ gatherdx.html>

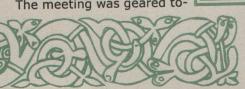
Mayor and police at loggerheads over cannabis raid

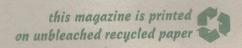
On August 6th last year, police in San Francisco raided a marijuana club, seizing 150 pounds of grass and about \$60,000 in cash. The Cannabis Buyer's Club was founded five years ago, and its founders have never hidden the fact that they sell marijuana to people suffering from AIDS, cancer and other diseases, to alleviate the side effects of treatment for these diseases. But state authorities alleged that the club was also selling the drug to people who had no medical need, and to children. Operators of the club denied the allegations.

San Francisco's mayor, Willie Brown, and sheriff, Michael Hennessey, both refused to endorse the police's action. Hennessey refused to enforce a judge's order that the club be temporarily closed, and Brown backed a proposed state of emergency that would allow marijuana to be used for medicinal purposes. (For years, San Francisco has used a state of medical emergency to enable the distribution of needles to intravenous drug users, to help prevent the spread of AIDS.)

Attorney General Michael Lungren was responsible for the order to raid the club. The club is one of ten such clubs operating across the state, and is also the statewide headquarters for the campaign to legalise marijuana foe medicinal purposes. It's been speculated that Lungren's motive for the raid could be to gain support from the far right in the Republican Party, in order to enhance his chances of being elected governor of California. Brown, however, told Lungren that "he should not have gotten involved in San Francisco's affairs".

Caroline Whyte is San Francisco correspondent for An Caorthann.







Creating Conditions for a Life with Dignity

This is part of a report from one subgroup (with 80-100 people from 15-20 countries) of the second Encounter

Creating alternative spaces for production and social life is good in itself because these spaces enable relations that are outside of and beyond the market. They also can put limits to capitalist expansion and support creation of spaces in which struggles can grow and be protected. We can learn through this how to create many visions of ways to organise our lives and production. The satisfaction of needs outside of direct control of the capitalist market enables us to fight capital on a terrain that is more favourable to us. These forms of alternatives can develop out of traditional forms of work, but some traditional forms involve exploitation and also must be abolished. Many forms of third sector work (supposedly depending neither on the market nor the state) are not true alternatives to capitalist work, but instead are a new form of lowerwaged capitalist work [....]

> transform relations between women and men

Our struggles are much stronger when they are combined so that each particular demand is not isolated or coopted. We need to create a process of building on and enriching our struggles that includes careful study and honest discussion. It is also important in this process of work to transform

the relations between women and men in both personal and political lives. This means that men, not only women, assume the responsibility of this struggle [....]

We have agreed to create networks as a fundamental form of organisation, rather than parties or other forms of organisation. We see these networks as horizontal

ways of living the future we are struggling to make

and participatory, as ways of living in part the future we are struggling to make, though we recognise that the construction of the networks as such will not solve the problems of power and democracy in the ways we organise ourselves. But we have many questions about the best ways to proceed: - how can we build upon existing networks? - should we set up our own network and undertake struggles specific to our own network so that people will take the Encuentro even more seriously? - how should we begin networks - locally, regionally, nationally, globally, or by subject or some combination? - how can we include struggles not represented by participants in the network? how can we create new ways to link struggles and networks and support each other? - how can we best use a mix of electronics and print media to reach people? - are there

limits to networks as a form of struggle, and if so, what more do we need to create? [....]

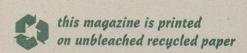
We come together to help make a world of dignity and humanity. The richness of our discussions, the warmth of our exchanges, and the humanity of our experiences and struggles have demonstrated to us that we are dignified subjects. But this dignity is taken away from us when the capitalist work machine uses us for its purposes. We have outlined the general elements that could give voice to a strong collective NO! to this inhuman way of life. But we also know that there are many YESES!, many different but compatible visions of ways to exercise power on our lives as dignified human beings. The creation for the flowering of these YESES!

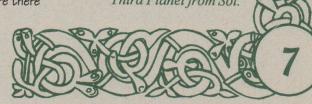


On these foundations we must now develop, discuss and debate strategies that we can use in our different circumstances to create a world of justice, direct democracy from below, and dignity. We expect that the next Encuentro will focus on the question of strategies and build on the work we do between now and then.

One NO! many YESES!

31 August 1997, Madrid, Spanish State, Third Planet from Sol.







The Greening of Cuba

The world's largest-ever transition to small-scale, organically-based farming is taking place in the Third World. Caroline Whyte reports...

One of the more unexpected effects of the fall of the Iron Curtain has been the rise of organic farming in Cuba. Dr. Fernando Funes, one of the founders of the Cuban Organic Farming Association, gave a talk on the subject to a packed hall in the Mission district of San Francisco, preceded by Jaime

a \$10,000 fine and two years in jail

Kibben's film *The Greening of Cuba*, which showed interviews with Cuban farmers and agricultural scientists (not to mention lots of wonderful salsa music between interviews!)

At the beginning of his talk, Dr. Funes asked us to put up our hands if we had been to Cuba. About a fifth of the people there had been: this would technically make them subject to a fine of \$10,000 and two years in jail, in the US. Luckily, there didn't seem to be anyone around who cared particularly about that sort of thing.

From industrial agriculture to market gardening

Until the fall of the Iron Curtain, Cuba's agriculture was strongly dependent on oil, pesticides and fertilisers, mostly provided by other Eastern Bloc countries. 75% of Cuba's trade was with these countries, and the USSR subsidised the sale of

their sugar cane by about 300%. The emphasis was on making Cuba's agriculture as "modern" as possible, and the government was very proud of the country's Green Revolution. However, this all changed drastically after the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Suddenly, oil supplies were reduced by 80%, and fertilisers and pesticides became much more expensive and difficult to obtain. In addition to this, Cuba already had to cope with the crippling effects of the US's thirty-year long trade embargo. So the largest-ever conversion to small-scale, organically-based farming began to take place in the early 1990s.

Many of the large, state-run, mechanised farms which used to be dominant in Cuba have now been replaced by much smaller, un-mechanised farms which use few chemicals. Would-be farmers are granted land by the government in exchange for growing a certain amount of a

particular crop. They are also encouraged to

grow their own gardens. Anything they grow above and beyond the amount demanded by the government can be sold at farmer's markets. Competition is intense at these markets. and the quality of the food is usually very high. Dr. Funes said that he thinks

the new small farmers in Cuba are probably among the richest people in the country (which admittedly doesn't have much of an income gap to begin with), because of the popularity of the farmers' markets. In addition, there's a movement to make the cities of Cuba as self-sufficient as possible, by



growing vegetables in larger "organoposts", intensively. 26,000 people in Havana now take part in urban gardening.

The return of the ox

In the early nineties, the conversion to modernity had been so "successful" that there were over 75,000 tractors in Cuba, and a half million tonnes of fertiliser were used every year. However, (as a farmer explained in the film), Cubans are now beginning to re-learn traditional methods of farming. Tractors have some limitations anyway, as they can't be used on soil which is not dry, whereas oxen will work in all conditions. Oxen

pletely died out in Cuba; they were still being used on private farms. But their numbers had dwindled considerably; from around 400,000 pairs in the fifties, to 1,000 in the late eighties. However, now their numbers are up to over 300,000 pairs again. This achieve-

hadn't com-

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ment was the result of a campaign to stop farmers from slaughtering cattle for food.

In order to provide grain for the cattle, however, some mechanisation will still be necessary in Cuba for the foreseeable future. As 80% of the people now live in cities, mechanisation is also still necessary to provide them with rice. But Dr Funes is hopeful that even if the US lifts their embargo, Cuba will remain dedicated, on the whole, to organic farming. There are no exact statistics for the degree of conversion to organic farming in Cuba, but Dr. Funes estimated that 90% of farming there is now mainly, though not entirely organic (with about 5% entirely organic).

Research for change

The government is now funding research on biofertilisers (it's been funding research on biological pest control since the 70s). Farmers are encouraged to use legumes to "fix" nitrogen in the soil, to practise crop association (e.g.



growing corn with beans, so that each crop "controls" the other's pests), and to "plant" worms in the soil. Farmers are encouraged to improvise in other ways, too; the film showed a farmer who had made an electric fence to protect his crop from his cows, by using a small wind generator attached to an old windscreen wiper motor. The government also provides money for

research on homeopathic medicines, in order to compensate as much as possible for the US's ban on the sale of medicines to Cuba.

The drastic nature of these changes made some of them very difficult. Under the old system, 50% of Cuba's agricultural produce was exported, with sugar cane as the main source of income. With the change, the market for the cane collapsed, and fertiliser supplies were cut by 80%. Some crops (particularly rice, potatoes, and some types of sugar cane) were difficult to change over to organic production. Moreover, the farmers and researchers had been educated on "Green Revolution" procedures, and so had to re-learn a lot of theory.

In order to help with the changeover, the Cuban Association of Organic Farmers was formed in the early nineties, with the aim of educating people in organic farming methods. The association is a non-governmental organisation (a rarity in Cuba) which advises the government and also has a growing number of foreign members, including many US citizens and Latin American people. Among the findings of the Association are that while a cow in Cuba, grazing on 1 hectare of land, can produce 2,000 litres of milk in a year, the same hectare of land can produce 7 tonnes of food when it's used to grow mixed crops, organically. Research is now being done into producing organic sugar, and into developing new machinery for oxen teams which is efficient but doesn't damage the soil.

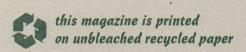
Despite the changes brought about by some degree of exposure to the West, the level of income in Cuba is still comparatively even. Dr. Funes told us that he earns around \$28 a month ... but he pays \$1.30 a month rent for a large family house, and he didn't pay anything for his children's college education. After an economic depression brought about

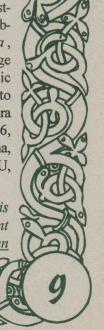


by the collapse of the Iron Curtain, the Cuban economy is beginning to become healthy again, partly as a result of the shift to small-scale, organic farming. Life expectancy is 78 there.

Anyone interested in more information could contact Food First (who hosted Dr. Funes' talk) at 398 60th Street, Oakland, CA 94618, USA. Food First has also published a book by Peter Rosset and Medea Benjamin, called The Greening of the Revolution; Cuba's experience with Organic Agriculture, which can be ordered from them for \$11.95 (presumably plus postage costs). It's also possible to subscribe to Agricultura Organica, the quarterly Spanish-language magazine of the Cuban Organic Farming Association; write to Associación Cubana de Agricultura Organica, Apdo. Postal 6236, Codigo Postal 10600, La Habana, Cuba (email ICA@CENIAI.CU, fax (53-7) 333295).

Caroline Whyte is San Francisco correspondent for An Caorthann







A gathering of the tribes?

Twenty years ago, in 1976, the Mustard Seed gathering brought together people interested in developing an alternative way of living. As Michael Walsh wrote at the time:

"The seeds of an alternative society <u>are</u> germinating in Ireland – seeds creating small sustainable communities, self-sufficiency experiments, human-scale technology and industry, decentralisation of power and economic structures, ecologically aware organic farm-

ing and husbandry, rediscovery of spiritual and mystical realities – and many more."

Two decades later, we can look back on the flowering of some of these seeds – massive popular campaigns like Carnsore Point, Wood Quay or Irish CND in the eighties, a flourishing alternative press, the organic farming networks, a broad base of groups and activities in fields as diverse

(and interconnected!) as Third World solidarity, community development, the women's movement, ecological activism, "green spirituality", new links with alternative cultures abroad through Rainbow Gatherings, New Travellers, Internet and musical subcultures, vibrant gay, lesbian and psychedelic scenes – the list goes on.

The value of the Mustard Seed gathering, as Mark Crosbie, Brian Rogers and Des Gunning write,

"was that it represented the first broad-based coming together of separate and distinct non-mainstream initiatives which were then accurately known as 'alternative society'.... It was a process of mutual, multilateral recognition, affirmation and alignment. At Mustard Seed, that process was brought quite deliberately 'into consciousness' and thereby hangs the significance of the event."

Sensing that the time was right for a follow-up to bring together the different alternative initiatives that now exist, they sent

out a public call for anyone interested to join an gathering to explore

Twenty-odd people – organic farmers, Green activists, community organisers, alternative journalists, local economy thinkers, artists, Rain-

bow people and more met in Glencree for two days to talk it over. The challenge was a vast one: as the organisers wrote,

"A successor to the Mustard Seed gathering would want to establish, in short, that there is a civil society that is self-aware, self-conscious and active, and to what degree there are elements of common purpose shared by seemingly discrete groupings within that. A successor to Mustard Seed would have the task of drawing together those who have been formulating and implementing that vision into a 'safe space', allowing each to bathe in the energy of the other, moving the whole process onwards and maybe even shifting it up a gear or two."

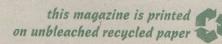
What the Glencree gathering brought out was that if this is the goal, there is still a long way to go. Twenty years ago, "Think global – act local" was a call to start to make world-scale ideas real and bring them forward in the small scale of everyday life. Now, with so many of us working away at our own small corner, it means trying to locate activities which have acquired their own logic and

become a central part of our lives within a much wider perspective. For some, this is a challenge in itself. For others, the challenge is that our own global thinking has been developed in relative isolation from each other—we need to move to a perspective which is broader because it actually engages with each other's views. This itself can only happen in the context of a movement that is

large enough to shake society to its foundations and help us free ourselves from abstract statements and open up to genuine communication with each other.

This takes time, but Glencree has given it a push. We have exchanged ideas with each other over two days, and even started to communicate where differences exist. As a second step, some participants wrote 100 words on where we go from here; An Caorthann is happy to print these as a very minimal contribution to starting the slow and difficult process of dialogue.

Laurence Cox was at the Glencree meeting.





"100 words"

Michael Brennan

I feel as if MS#2 has already happened, or is beginning; many subjects haven't changed much from the original MS#1. Matters noted were: nature, hue-mans, jargon, government, de-university, big business, public polysee, youth, de-church (not mentioned much - redundant to earth religions?), science & society, rural, urban, inner city, unemployment, peace, lifeskills, cultural pathology, individual v. group effectiveness, progress since MS#1, Rainbow-ism, overcoming fragmentation to attain integration, action steps are necessary (not just "talk the talk, but walk the walk"). Questions remaining: who am I, where am I, what do I want & very importantly when do I plan to get there - if we don't know where we are going we won't know if we get there! Does that mean a strategic goal instead of tactical goals?

Laurence Cox

Each single mycelium burrows underground, spreading out, feeling its way. When it meets another one, mushrooms burst through the surface. So too with the alternative movement: individual projects are limited in what they can do, but when they meet, they can transform society. We need an "open space" where all these different projects can break out of isolation, start a two-way learning process, and blossom into something new.

Each of us is only part of the answer – a genuinely holistic

alternative still has to be built: with organic projects, eco-activism, the alternative press, youth culture, green spirituality, third world solidarity, community development, women's groups, alternative economics, libertarian politics, Rainbow Gatherings and all the rest, sharing skills, ideas, enthusiasm, support.

We need to start not just to act locally - limited area, limited range of issues - but also to think globally - not just the whole world, but the whole range of themes and the whole spectum of alternative projects.

John Dolan

In the years since the first mustardseed many projects have been started, some have withered and died, some have taken root and flourished. The need for "alternative" examples is as urgent as 20 years ago. For me mustardseed II should facilitate the growth of "Green" lifestyles by

- 1. Recognising that each project currently in existence is not a solution in its own right. They are only separate pieces of the jigsaw.
- 2. Providing an environment where groups can come together to expand their ideas and develop secondary projects (shades of *mycelium*).
- 3. Exposing as many people as possible, who are interested but not committed to the current projects, to the root cause and thought patterns which have brought other people in.

Richard and Mary Douthwaite

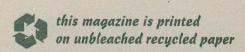
If community-scale economies emerge to balance the global one anywhere in the industrialised world in the foreseeable future, Ireland will probably be the place where they do because its social capital is so much more intact. We went to Glencree to meet some of the people who might bring such local economies about.

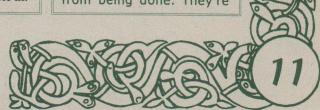
We intend to spend the next few months promoting the community-economy ideas in Short Circuit and are arranging a conference on them. A quarterly magazine is also planned so that people can keep up with a rapidly-developing area and contribute their ideas to the debate. In the longer term, we want to help build a strong local economy in the Westport area, and are particularly interested in a community farm.

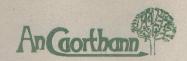
Des Gunning

If Mustard Seed I identified a shortage of primary organisations linking individuals of like mind, Mustard Seed II comes up against the lack of secondary organisations linking the plethora of primary groups that have emerged.

Such a "secondary organisation" might be a co-operative of co-ops or a council of "environmental NGOs". All our primary organisations have things they'd really like to do, but the presence of the everyday prevents them from being done. They're







secondary aims which could be delegated to a common "secondary" organisation.

Locally, we need to build "area based coalitions of NGOs". I dealt with this in a paper to the first National Landscape Forum (proceedings available from Landscape Alliance Ireland, 021-871 460). For example, it could be made easier and cheaper for day care centres for the elderly to serve locally organically grown food. That's the kind of shockingly mundane objective we have to strive for.

Pádraig Ó Donoghue

In exploring our sense of place we can find a common vision.

We all know where we're from a street in a small town, a terrace in a city or a rural parish - we are who we are and we're proud of it. To see these places in their natural setting is a challenge facing us all. When I turn on the tap each morning to fill the kettle, I am linking in to a whole cycle of life that includes oceans, clouds, mountains, rain, streams and rivers, that's a reality we all share in wherever we are.

We live within an amazing community of life, each place with its own character. Community building will need to include the air, the water, the plants, the soil, all of life; listening to people's needs only will not be enough. For too long we have lived in a place apart and we are lost; there is a path of sustainability, in economics, agriculture and energy production. The way of the corporation has failed and we can again control our lives through rediscovering our dúiche bheatha.

Emer Ó Siochrú

The first Mustard Seed sparked a whole range of experiments in alternative living and working. But while many succeeded, they carried a heavy cost: the social isolation and enormous energy investment of the pioneers. The territory of a sustainable human-centred future has been well staked out but it seems an inhospitable wilderness to many. What vision can bring us forward knowing what we know now but without the optimism of those years? How can the "alternative" become "mainstream" when so few possess the grit and independent-mindedness that seem necessary for the properly organic lifestyle?

Part of the answer may lie in the idea of permacultures: environmental design that recreates natural plant and animal relationships to deliver abundant food with minimum effort. The seeds planted at the first Gathering have grown into isolated shrubs and trees or in monocultural fields. We need to bring them together to shelter and sustain each other within a robust eco-system. We must find the right symbiotic partnerships; develop secondary organisations to support new initiatives; link urban and rural enterprises to close energy and waste loops; and learn to channel and re-use money just as water is circulated within the permaculture habitat. This requires thought but not much extra effort.

I will try to bring people from the largely rural-oriented, middle class green movement into closer partnership with the largely urban, working class development movement. One way to do this is serendipitously provided by "Local Agenda 21". We are now into a second phase of radical action which requires a different focus: networking, capac-

ity building and communication between the many existing organisational expressions of the "alternative" way of living.

Brian Rogers

A Partial Map of the Unconsci[enti]ous Societal Mind

Democracy, responsibility, VI-SION, Ego, WHOLE, Elders, greed, ecology, PROPERTY, altruism, Evolve, DEPRESSION, change, passive, Viable, DUAL-ISM, Agenda, Stress, confidence, Vision, Truth, Conceit, Genocide, Inspire, Affirmation, Evasion, CULTURAL PATHOLOGY, Autism, Graibheach, Sustainable, BIOMASS, Knowledge, challenge, Inclusiveness, Wide-focus thinking, COOPERATION, Sustained and planned communication, Holistic, Effective, RESO-NANCE, PARADOX, Integrative thought, Exclusion, REFORM, COURAGE, ANIMATURE, NURTURE, SELFISHNESS, conceptualisation, superego, Common Unconscious. Morphogenetic Field, LOCE, Balance, Lies, Healing, Manipulation, Ignorance, Nurture, BAM-BOOZLE, Subculture, DIA-LOGUE, TRIBAL, Systems, Transcendence, ALTERING, research and development, civil society, CIVICS, CREATIVE, Permaculture, Opaquacity, belief, denial, Ugly, Innovative, Tolerance, Contradiction, Bravery, DEATH, Review, Adversarial, Align, Wisdom, CONSUME v COMMUNE, Codology, Discernment, challenge, Exploration, Hope, Fear, Community, Strategy, interdisciplinary teams, static communication, Share, Abuse.





Dear Editor,

in issue 4 of An Caorthann there is an article entitled 'Foreign' People in Germany, and I would disagree very much with the tone of it.

It is easy to slate the Germans for it has been open season on them for 50 years. I would draw attention to their part in starting the Green movement. The horrific Copex trade fair of police and military special operations equipment was halted in Germany although it was allowed to go on in the UK. There must be some credit in that.

The Germans have admitted to many crimes for which they have paid heavy reparations and apologised all round.

As a country they have taken in a disproportionate number of outsiders within their borders attracted by high wages and excellent social services which they built up through good management for their own people and must feel un-

easy at being swamped by outsiders many of these from badly run countries that are corrupt and don't cater for their own people and export them to Germany. We in Ireland hardly shine at taking in people.

Down the years many Germans have expressed great friendship for Ireland and contributed both genius and large sums of money which we haven't refused.

There is much serious discrimination in the UK: ask any coloured person living there.

Though Ireland has been heavily traumatised by Britain their attitude can be summed up in one of their jokes: "There was no famine in Ireland they only forgot where they planted the potatoes."

What does that say about us? Is it discrimination?

Yours sincerely,

J. Arthur.

whose members will have been as "German" as Helmut Kohl and the rest of the governing Christian Democratic Union, who are in favour of this export orientated division of light manufacturing industry (which offers a good return on investment: just the sort of arguments you get from "Irish" arms manufacturers). Which is not to say that all "Irish" people are in favour of the arms trade, as J. Arthur might conclude.

Reparations? Is J. Arthur aware that the "German" government is now seeking reparations from the Czech Republic on behalf of those "Germans" forced to leave the "Sudetenland" after the Second World War despite the level of support for the Nazi party in this region before and during the annexation. Meanwhile, the "German" Foreign Ministry created a scandal by issuing invitations to a function celebrating one hundred years of representing "Germany" abroad. Many "Germans", deeply aware of the turbulent past, were very upset.

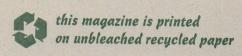
To close, let me reassure you that I am not "anti-German", unlike some "Germans" I know. I have lived with and loved people with "German" passports. I have faced "German" police on "German" streets, side by side with "German" greens, anarchists, autonomists, socialists, punks ... people. One of the reasons I am interested in what is happening in "Germany" is that I have a lot of friends there. Some are even "Germans".

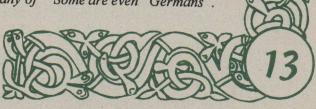
Simon Jones, who wrote the article, replies:

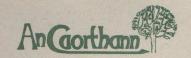
J. Arthur seems to feel it is right to lump all citizens of the UK together under the word "Britain" and accuse them of traumatising "Ireland" (presumably those of us possessing pasanna issued by an tAire J. O'Donoghue), telling racist jokes, discriminating against people of colour and being in favour of torture. I think my friends who hold British citizenship (even if they don't wear union jack pyjamas) would find this attitude an insulting generalisation.

Likewise, I find it sad that J. Arthur is so entrenched in this rut that they presumed I would produce similar generalisations about citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany. Although it is true that public policy there, as defined and practised by national and local government, (still) reflects the thinking of a large slice of the citizens and is accepted by a good many of them, to criticise it is not to damn all Germans.

The Copex torture equipment trade fair did not go ahead in Bonn because a small number of people, some or all of them probably "Germans", broke windows in the exhibition hall. This followed protests against the fair by other local groups, many of







Surprise as Green Party Wins Majority in Dáil

William Campbell on dreams and courage

Commentators last night expressed surprise at the size of the Green vote as Trevor Sargent and the party's 86 newly-elected TDs were preparing to take their seats in the Dáil. The first task for the leaderless party will be to select a candidate for Taoiseach. A strong favourite will be Jane Bloggs, one of the party's four TDs in the Dún Laoghaire constituency... (Irish Times, 24 September, 1997.)

It's nice to dream, isn't it?

But is the Green Party in danger of sacrificing the possibility of real gains on the Altar of Impossible Dreams?

We have no hope of seeing headlines like this in the next 20 years, so why are we acting as though this was our aim?

It seems that we are afraid to offend anyone. Have we forgotten

that all Green gains have been won by our courage and our willingness to offend people?

A case in point is the drugs issue. Spokespeople have run away from this issue for months, if not years. A survey by the new Evening News showed that 61% of people support legalising marijuana. This survey was of 500 people, which gives a margin of error of about 12%, and

> It seems that we are afraid

a few scare stories could probably reduce that figure even further.

But even if the true figure was just half that, 30%, does that mean we should stay silent on this issue? There is no electoral advantage in being coy. The people against us on this issue, be they 40% or 70%,

aren't going to vote Green anyway.

We don't need 51% of the vote. Ten per cent would be a triumph.

The middle ground is getting very crowded. Why should we waste our energy trying to convince voters that we are just another bland, centrist, middle-of-the-road party? The other parties seem willing to give up acres of radical ground without a fight.

"Legalise Marijuana!" "Ban Hunting!" "Imprison Arms Company Bosses!" "Default on the National Debt!" "Ban all Pesticides!" Say it loud and say it proud. We won't win a majority, but if we don't get noticed, we won't win anything.

The Young PDs have already endorsed a policy of legalising marijuana. Has the Green Party been so neutered that we are afraid to be as radical as the PDs?

William Campbell

Stop flooding of Native American sites

Activists in the Red Road Native American spiritual programme are working on opposing a reservoir in Lander County, Nevada, which would inundate a sacred ceremonial area and burial ground of the Newa (Western Shoshone). The County has been very impressed with international attention (several letters from Germany). It would be great to get six or a dozen letters sent to them.

Letters do not have to be long:

- a) They should oppose the proposal to dam Rock Creek in Lander County, Nevada. It would have a detrimental impact on Western Shoshone spiritual heritage.
- b) Many Irish people visit and/or have relatives in the US.
- c) A boycott of Nevada recreation, including casinos, might be called if the project proceeds.

Letters to: Jerry LaMiaux, Chairman

Rock Creek Committee 315 S. Humboldt Street Battle Mountain, NV 89801

Copies to: Governor Bob Miller Capitol Complex

Carson City, NV 89710

The Red Road activists write:

Thanks for your prompt response. Needless to say, the Shoshone will be grateful. Their reservations are in the most remote areas you can imagine. Nevada is huge. The leader of this cause is named Corbin Harney. He has been a big protester against nuclear testing and has the traditional gift of eloquence.

One Water One Earth One Air

(Corbin Harney)

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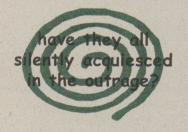
Liquidating the liquidators

One question about Chernobyl is both disturbing and puzzling. Perhaps someone can clear it up in the next issue: who determined the fate of the liquidators – the 600,000 men conscripted to clean up in the aftermath of Chernobyl – who are now dying in their thousands?

Their treatment, described in Adi Roche's *The Children of Chernobyl*, was horrific. In many incidents their lives were deliberately thrown away by those in charge of the clean-up.

The examples include:

* Lethal and pointless clean-ups. Liquidators would clean up an area by dousing it with deadly chemicals. Because of inadequate clothing they would be contaminated by both the chemicals and the radioactivity in



the area. Worse, in many case the radiation would drift back into the area after a matter of days.

Bio-robots. The mechanical robots bought in to put out the fire in the core broke down due to the intensity of the radiation.

Thus the liquidators were used as bio-robot firemen in the immediate vicinity of the nuclear core, again without proper protection.



* Human Geiger counters.
The liquidators would be sent into fields where radioactivity was too high for Geiger counters to measure. Later their clothing was analysed for information.

It is difficult to choke back the anger when you realise that these people were deliberately done to death in incident after incident. Deliberately – not due to ignorance nor accident, and presumably by people acting on scientific advice. Those who were responsible for the operation, for subjecting these people to these massive radiation doses, were obviously content to let them die.

The question I want to ask is: who was responsible? It is easy and probably partly correct to lay blame on corrupt apparatchiks – but surely it was not they who had immediate responsibility for directing and formulat-

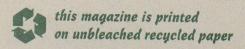
ing operations.

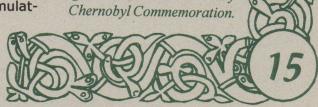
In the aftermath of the explosion many Western scientists were flown in to assist the cleanup. Does anyone know what role they had? Did they help formulate the operation and what responsibility do they bear? Have any of them objected to the treatment of the liquidators then or now; or have they all silently acquiesced in the outrage?

Readers can understand what I'm aiming at. If there are answers (I truly don't know) and they show that scientists are culpable for creating "bio-robots" and "human Geiger counters", they should be bought to justice for their crimes. Also, if they bear responsibility for the scandal then so do those governments which sent them, and they must also try and make amends.

It also raises questions about what our scientists and governments intend to do in the event of another Chernobyl. Any volunteers for bio-robots?

David Landy helped organise the 10th Anniversary Chernobyl Commemoration







feature editorial: Grassroots – From the bottom down

The grassroots is the level of organisation just above our heads, just beyond our personal space, appearing in the form of residents' associations, LETS, local football teams, all manner of NGOs, minority pressure groups - the list is endless. The defining features are that they are locally based, self motivated and controlled from within.

Within a grassroots organisation you will find individuals who have varying reasons for being there but who all share the want to be there. It is a characteristic of grassroot organisations within Ireland that the entirety of the members will be operating on a voluntary basis with regards to the organisation. While there has been a shift from this position due to the influx of European funding for local initiatives, the mindset is still grow your own, DIY and bring and buy.

Higher or lower?

The source of energy in a community is its grassroots. It is from here that its higher organs are nourished and made legitimate. The grassroots define the community - who is within and who is without - and are the first to colonise the newly ploughed soil. So why on earth is it so difficult to get anything done at this level?

A facet of the problem is expressed above: the grassroots defined as the lowest level, the seething masses that require direction from above. To see further, individuals from the community are selected to act as explorers, navigators of the great unknown, leaders of the community. Opinion and emotion flow upward through a hidecision makers and the distilled conventional wisdom rains back down. The community ceases looking at itself and its surroundings to gaze to heaven looking for a sign.

Is it the case that many a grassroot organisation becomes yet another layer in the social hierarchy? Instead of being a vehicle

The community ceases looking at itself and its surroundings to gaze to heaven looking for a sign

for local communication and action, the organisation can become the representative mouthpiece for its members. However, this in no way challenges people's reliance on the powers that be as the providers of solutions and resources to tackle local problems.

Talking with each other

The majority of communication in our society takes the form of people talking at one another. The media talks at us, advertisers fire messages at us, friends and family talk at us about their problems, joys and pet projects. There is not a minute to think about or resolve the conflicting information flows. only time for a quick breather of escapism in our private little worlds. Yet this space that we create within ourselves for reflection and contemplation is where we should be talking to other people from. Talking with each other, not taking turns talking without listening.

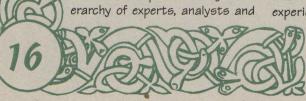
Within the grassroots context this may mean that all the ideas, experiences and preconceptions may have to be left at the door for fear of cluttering the collective thinking space. This is often seen in the form of late night conversations that occur after the official meeting - there is no agenda or chairperson, everybody with a bee under their bonnet has floaged it to death. An informal conversation takes its natural course through the issues, whose participants are those who believe in the content rather than the form of the organisation.

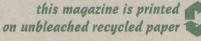
Honeycombs and mushrooms

A broader issue is the communication between grassroots organisations, information flowing within the areater Grassroots, the Bia Field if you like. The problem here is not about links between groups, there is no need for a super-organisation, as many of the individuals will be members of multiple local organisations. So is the Big Field a collection of compartmentalised units that occasionally swap members or is it a vast, tangled mycelium that bears fruit at the intersections of enlightened self interest?

If there is dispute about the form the sector of our society that we call the grassroots, about how many individuals are involved, about what they are up to and where they are going, communication must be needed. For such communication the space that is in all of our heads must be opened up to each other. Rather than searching upwards for the lowest common denominator, looking within each other for the highest common factor. Realising that we have within each other the resources and authority to take collective action to move toward the society we wish to live in.

This issue's feature section was edited by Isolde Carmody, Sharon Jackson, Leonora McConville, Emilie Pine and Gary Thompson









Q.E.D... for demonstration?

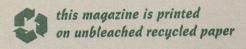
T. Dunne on the Streets.

We have a fine diversity of street politics in Ireland, from the Orange Order to the riots, from Mad Mary on Grafton St. in Dublin to the River Parade of Innocence, from Lesbian and Gay Pride marches to the occupation of dumps and derelict houses. And in between we have a mess as exciting as a bag of wet turf, made up of boring demonstrations and the handing out of thousands of dead trees in the guise of badly written leaflets and manifestos. Taking your cause onto the streets can be demoralising and inefficient, a total waste of time and energy, as most of us probably know. But it can be fun, and it can be as effective and more so than any other form of political action.

Wit and Wisdom

Wit is meant not only in the sense of humour, but also that old idea of thinking on your feet, reacting immediately to what meets you – often with humour. I remember seeing a cardinal and a monk giving out abortion information leaflets in Dublin years ago, explaining that the Pope had decided it was alright to have an abortion provided everyone knew about it but nobody let on. They had gathered a fair crowd by the time they had to run when the heavies turned up! The element of wit (humour) gained them an attentive audience, and wit (quick thinking) got them out of a potentially nasty closing scene.

What you say might not be funny, but it ought to be well said and worth saying. Your wisdom has to be accessible. Public speaking as learnt and practised here and elsewhere is a disgrace. Most "orators" either shout cliches at their audience or tie themselves up in strings of gibberish that are supposed to sound well-informed. Neither style helps to deliver information, which is the point of a speech. The same applies to leaflets. It really pays to say something original, and to make it short and sweet, and say it once. Six speakers all saying the same thing are five pains in the head.



Emotion and Disrespect

Perhaps the best protests are those expressing strong *emotion*, such as anger or pride, where these are channelled in a productive way. Lesbian and Gay Pride marches can be very provocative indeed, but I have seen some (not in Ireland) which were just commercialised and didn't challenge the status quo at all, a bit like a Paddy's Day Parade. Anger is something a lot of people pretend is always destructive and obscures the issues in the political process. Letting anger be seen is often a lever which moves great weights. But very often it loses direction and is misunderstood by the

general public. Burning down an embassy in a riot is easy to understand, but burning cars and breaking windows just confuses people, even if it is an escape route for legitimate anger. And there is always the danger that people will suffer as well as prop-

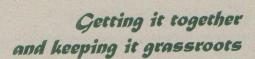
erty. While disrespect is the final ingredient, it must never be disrespect for human life.

Disrespect for traffic is obviously necessary for any good demonstration, but the disrespect must go into a good few other areas too. There are a lot of rules, both self-imposed and externally imposed, about what may and may not be done by way of protest. Breaking these is not just a way of liberating yourself from conservative manners, it can improve the efficiency of a protest no end. Greenpeace are a good example on a grand scale, but the idea is applicable on a smaller level as well. Experience shows that the rules are rarely imposed on people who are determined to ignore or break them.

The fifth element, which I have not mentioned so far, is *organisation*. Perhaps someone will address this issue, as well as those I have raised, in subsequent numbers of *An Caorthann*.

T. Dunne is a civil liberties activist





Laurence Cox on democracy and effectiveness

Among human activities, political action is one of the most intentional and explicitly organised. Most thinking about activism thus focuses on its stated aims and formal organisation, discussed in terms of a "value-rational" ethic of means or a "goal-rational" ethic of ends. Among Greens, this usually means identifying with a specific set of rules on paper – whether they are intended to realise "consensus" within the organisation (means) or "efficiency" (ends).

Diffusion of skills and knowledge

A rather different perspective on political organisation sees it not as formal rules but in terms of skills and knowledge. Activist intervention is not just intention and effort; it is above all a *skilled* problem-solving activity, informed by a practical *knowledge* of the

skilled problem-soloing and practical knowledge

social environment. At the same time, political action is internally structured by the distribution of these external skills, and by the skills and knowledge that are brought to bear on activists' interaction with each other. Skills and knowledge, however, are not static resources with a "naturally" uneven distribution; they can be learnt from experience, taught and transmitted, or appropriated and hoarded.

This is particularly important when most activists are volunteers, rather than paid professionals. Resources such as time and energy are scarce; there is then a natural tendency to leave specific tasks to the people who find them easiest, who already have the necessary skills and knowledge. Because there is a close link between the

amount of visible work done and influence on decision-making, these people tend to dominate the group.

This leads to an activist "élite", who wind up doing the work of several people, never transmitting their knowledge

workable and sustainable forms of grassroots democracy

and skills. They eventually burn out, leaving very little behind them but an excluded "membership", who haven't learnt how to organise action, find it difficult to contribute, and eventually leave. In this way, grassroots organisations tend to generate an informal hierarchy, which is likely to undercut formal rules, whether they are based on an ideal of participation and equality or one of election and responsibility. At the same time keeping the membership happy and élite infighting draws off energies from practical activism. And if too many people burn out at the same time, the group either disappears or starts again from scratch.

Grassroots democracy

This is not a law of the universe, but a reflection of the dominant society, which makes up most of our practical experience, from which our own activism only distances us slightly, and to which we look for ideas and models. Here too a small élite make political and economic decisions, while the majority are excluded from real participation and often actively avoid any other contact with "them" or "the system". The shift from grassroots intentions to hierarchical practice is only inevitable if we do not notice where it comes from and think seriously about how to avoid it.



However, many people confuse "grassroots democracy" with a set of formal rules. When these rules cease to describe how things actually happen, people split between defending the existing rules and concluding that the idea of grassroots democracy was unworkable. The alternative to this false polarisation is to start thinking again about finding workable and sustainable forms of grassroots democracy. This involves reconsidering the question of skills.

Learning by doing

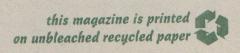
The kinds of knowledge and skills I am talking about vary enormously from one situation to another. They include all the practical details of mobilising people, finding information, organising events, running meetings, producing and distributing posters, flyers and magazines, press releases, cooperation with other groups, organising follow-up, getting resources, and so on. In some contexts they might include the skills of direct action and nonviolence, knowing your rights and organising camps - or the skills of media presentation, canvassing, keeping tallies, and so on. Ideally, they include the conversational skills that encourage participation and enable everyone to have their say, the support skills that hold disparate groups together and motivate action under pressure, the ability to deal with the different needs that people bring to political action, and so

It is clear that these skills do not just arrive from nowhere. They have to be learnt, whether from experience or from other activists. If a group starts from a



diversity of skills – a few veterans, a few total newcomers, a few people with varying levels of political and other experience – democratising the group means resisting the pressure for those who "know" what needs doing and how to do it either to do it all them-









selves or at least to direct operations and make the decisions.

This means looking for strategies to enable a learning experience on the part of all concerned – where newcomers can learn from veterans, where the élite can learn to listen to other people, and where by keeping the process open we can also continue learning practically from our attempts at political and social intervention. This implies a model of the group as workshop, solving problems together in such a way that everyone understands what is being done, and everyone is capable of organising whatever needs doing.



This is also a process of empowerment: the skills that are created, learnt or transmitted in political action are spread far and wide, so that the ability to take an active part in politics goes beyond the small élite of political veterans. Dialogue and participation are thus likely to be more *efficient* in the long run than monologue and exclusion. From the point of view of the longerterm activists, one of the hardest things is learning to let people make their own mistakes. This doesn't mean that they shouldn't offer advice or arguments. It does mean that they shouldn't simply step in with a "we know what needs doing here" and take over – even if that

the road to burnout and a semiconscious membership

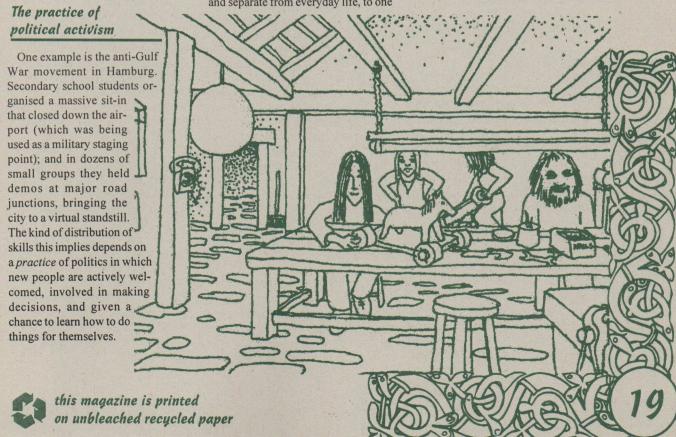
would be more effective in the short term. In the long term it blocks the development of large numbers of people knowing how to do things.

The "psychological economy" of activism also needs reorganising. The division between an élite on the road to burnout and a semiconscious membership is propped up by a moral pressure that amounts to an agreement between activists to pressurise each other into doing more than can be sustained in the long term. Sharing work and decision-making so that everybody is involved in a manageable level of activity means moving from a model of politics as work, opposed to and separate from everyday life, to one

of politics as one of the ways in which we live alternative possibilities: a rewarding experience that is not parasitic on the rest of our lives but instead makes them fuller and more complete. Realising democracy in practice is all about awareness of other people, openness to new information, friendliness, a refusal to accept the dominant culture, and a practical, problem-oriented intelligence: none of this is out of place in everyday life.

Undemocratic organisations represent an agreement between the élite and the membership to avoid and if necessary prevent people from learning by doing. At the end of the day, this is where the problems have to be tackled. Are we genuinely interested in creating a world where everybody has an equal say in making decisions about what they do together? Are "ordinary members" prepared to make the mental leap to locate their local work within a global context, and to draw practical conclusions? And are the "élite" prepared to take on board the possibility that they too have things to learn?

Laurence Cox is the elder lemon that got away





Reforming the Green Party

John Gormley TD on Green approaches to power

I think I should take up where Ray Ryan left off in his interesting and, for many I suspect, provocative article in the last edition of *An Caorthann*. Ray approached the topic of Party reform from the perspective of a political pragmatist and relative newcomer to the party. While I too

pragmatists and idealists, realos and fundis

would count myself a pragmatist, my approach is not one which precludes idealism. The problem with idealism is that there is too little of it in contemporary politics. It would be a mistake therefore to divide Greens into pragmatists and idealists, realos and fundis, dark Greens and light Greens or as Ray puts it in his article the "Gormley camp" versus the "David Healy camp".

Differences but not divisions

This is a false division, the type of categorisation the media love and one which we ourselves should not help to promote. I may be wrong, but I reckon I could agree with David Healy on 99% of Green policy. If an objective observer were to examine our lifestyles they would find more similarities than dissimilarities. Neither of us drive, preferring instead to use the bicycle. Neither of us eats meat and we do our weekly shopping in the Dublin Food Co-op. To continue the comparisons would be tedious but suffice it to say

that we both lead what we hope are ecologically sustainable lifestyles. We probably both belong to that section of the party - the majority, according to Ray Ryan - who joined not because of an interest in politics but because of our concern about the environment. I didn't even vote before joining the Greens - that's how interested I was in politics! The point I'm making - and it needs to be made repeatedly - is that there are few if any differences among party members on policy. The essential difference lies in our approach to political power.

Not seeing the wood for the trees

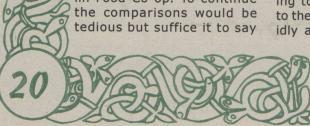
I believe we can and must attain political power not by eschewing ecological principles but by abiding by them. Green politics offers the electorate a radical alternative. By radical I don't mean extreme, I mean, as the Latin word "radix" implies, going back to the "root" causes of our contemporary ills. Our critique of consumerist values is one with which many people can identify. Indeed, it has been my experience that when the philosophy underpinning green politics is explained to people at seminars etc. they respond very positively. Reform of the Green Party means going back to ecological first principles and not getting caught up in trivialities and abstractions. Is it really "green" not to wear a tie? I couldn't give a toss if someone wears one or not. It's certainly not going to make much difference to the Planet. I remember vividly a prominent member of

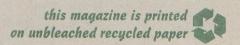
the party who always insisted that the chairs at conventions be arranged in a circle, because this was a green approach. The same person always used a car as his form of transport even for relatively short distances.

Though few will admit it now, such absurdities were common in the party prior to 1989. Who remembers those interminable debates about whether we should have pictures of candidates on leaflets, and if photographs did appear whether the male candidates should wear ties? I committed the ultimate heresy in 1989 by suggesting we put some posters up for the election. Discussion followed discussion and it was agreed that a poster would be

Ecological Tax Reform will lead to a sustainable society

allowed without a photograph personality politics you see. Finally, it was agreed that a small photograph could appear but a picture of the planet of equal size had to appear along side it. For those of you who think I'm kidding I still have the poster as proof. It should be preserved to serve as a reminder of the monumental stupidity of which Greens are capable when we lose sight of our goal. That goal is an ecologically sustainable society. Anything that contributes to that goal should be prioritised. Anything that is incidental or a hindrance to that goal should be eliminated. All our policies and procedures need to be examined in this light.







The Great Economics Debate

Let's look at one of our policies to highlight what I mean. The central plank of our economic policy has been Guaranteed Basic Income. How does this lead to a ecologically balanced society? Its advocates claim that people on basic income will not be forced into ecologically unsound work, while at the same time claiming that GBI will encourage more people to work. If more people are working the chances are that not all work will be sustainable. There are obvious contradictions there but I don't wish to labour them. Don't get me wrong, if GBI could be phased in then I'm all for it. The problem is that the emphasis placed on GBI is a lost opportunity.

ETR or Ecological Tax Reform will lead to a sustainable society. By moving taxes from labour onto energy and resources and by introducing green taxes on pesticides, packaging etc., we not only create more work we also create a more sustainable society. This is self evident and it belongs totally to our radical vision. Surely then ETR and not GBI should be the focus of our economic policy.



Similarly, the impression often given of our economic policy is that we are anti-growth. While we certainly dismiss GNP as an accurate measurement of quality of life, it has to be said that some forms

of growth i.e. growth in alternative energy, recycling industries, environmental technology are vital if we are to attain a sustainable future. Indeed, the biggest growth in a stagnant German economy has been in the area of environmental technology.

Decision making and the constitution

Let's move quickly on to reform of Green Party procedures and structures. Again our goal should be to provide structures



which enable us to carry out our tasks more efficiently. For many years we laboured under an unwieldy decision-making system known as "consensus". The problem was we confused consensus with unanimity. I take full responsibility for getting rid of this fundamentally undemocratic clause from the constitution. I did so because I failed to see how the tyranny of the minority could lead to a green society.

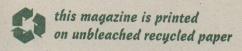
We have I'm glad to say made considerable progress since those wasteful days. The constitution and structures are being revised. I welcome this, but in our reforming zeal we should never lose sight of the fact that decision-making at the lowest effective level is the cornerstone of a green society. Party members should always be involved in decisionmaking. After the next election

the party will be faced with some of its toughest decisions. Should we enter coalition or stay in opposition? What sort of demands should we make during the crucial negotiations with other parties? Many of these questions have already been discussed by party members at a special election seminar in Kilkenny, but in a pressurised post-election situation will the voice of party members be heard? I hope so. I have called again and again for structures which would help us to avoid the situation where the parliamentary party becomes removed from the membership. It is only by involving the party membership fully that party reform can remain true to green principles.

John Gormley has been there, done that and got the T-shirt (and tie?!)

(This article was written before the June election)







Circles and Rainbows

Gary Thompson on Rainbow Gatherings and organisation

A circle of people is a beautiful thing. There is neither bottom or top, no chairperson or head of the table. Each individual has an equal view of those gathered. It keeps its form as people come and go, for a circle is a circle.

circles are magic

However, a circle of people is not just geometrically pretty, you can do all sorts of important things within it. Everybody can jump up, hold hands, sing and dance around. Or you can have a fire in the middle, cook a meal and wander around serving food. Or maybe just sit around, hang out and have a chat.

Circles help you get it together. Circles are magic.

Organisational Ovals

During the summer of 1995 I found myself in Fintown, Co. Donegal. I was there to join the annual Rainbow Gathering in Ireland. What expectations I had came from a handful of encounters and conversations. I had expected to find a circle but not a CIRCLE!

I do not know how many were at the gathering, but I would guess at about 200 at any given time. That is quite a few people when everybody has to be fed, watered, told where to crap, given information about the site and what is going on etc. etc. A lot of getting it together.

When faced with such a task the obvious action is to form a com-

which it aims to control must be structured. A hierarchy of middle-men, middle-managers or whatever, acts as the means of communication from the committee to the masses below and in theory via versa. But information and ideas are constricted in their flow, get sidelined or muddled in Chinese-whispers style.

From what I can gather a Rainbow Gathering starts in a similar manner to many committees, a few people with an idea. This group of dedicated individuals find a site, get the word out and plenty of other things I am not aware of. Then a week or so before the main gathering they set up a seed camp and wait for people to arrive.

As seed camp grows to gathering more and more people are included. One morning at breakfast there are two hundred people sitting in a great big circle with nothing in its centre but a fire. The seed has grown to gathering with no core group remaining. Those who got it together in the beginning are dispersed about the circle and with them their knowledge and skills to which are added those of the new arrivals.

Conversational Circles

I was at the gathering for five days and every morning a few clumps of reeds had to be cut in the field to accommodate the blossoming circle. But not only could I see who had come and gone from the faces around the circle, I could hear what those faces had to say, for every morning after breakfast the circle turned into the talking circle.

The talking circle is the whirlpool of information at the gathering. It brings in all together and spits it out after a good chew. The ultimate power breakfast. What allows the talking circle to function so well is the talking stick. The stick facilitates by empowering its holder to speak and compels everyone else to shut up and wait their turn.

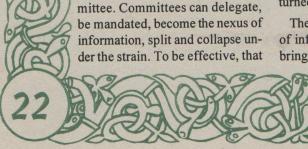
What you say is up to you. A simple "Hello everybody, I'm having a great time. Thank you !" might be all you have to say. You might want to announce that you know of a great anti-midge salve and could make it up if you had a few things and does anyone have them? Or maybe that you were talking to a few people

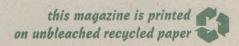
the ultimate power breakfast

last night about going to a stone circle nearby and if anyone else is interested maybe they could get together after the circle.

And so the stick goes around and around, issues are found and sorted out until no-one has anything to say. I think this is one of the factors that makes the talking circle work – everyone present wishes to add something even if only in being a recipient of information. This is complemented by the patience and contemplation that the stick brings about if you are bursting with ideas and enthusiasm.

While the circle allows people to get it together this does not necessarily mean that anything will get done. That summer in Donegal, as in the rest of the country, was beautiful and sunny. On more than one occasion the talking circle broke up due to fear of sunburn rather than







lack of words. It was apparent that shelter was needed to provide shade from the mid-day sun. The problem had come up in passing at the circle along with the implications of the heat upon drinking and washing water etc. Then a few hours later a large tarpaulin had been erected with a couple of poles and some ropes. Problem solved! The magic part is that somebody solved the

pick up a drum and make some music!

problem without needing the authority or know-how of a higher managerial group. The flipside of this empowerment is the confidence and enthusiasm required of the individual to carry out whatever actions they deem necessary.

People Parabolas

The acceleration of the spread of information brought about by the circle allowed for a myriad of workshops and the bits and pieces such as collecting wood, water etc. People flowed naturally to the tasks and activities that interested them. However when it came to what I can only describe as the big picture, there did seem to be a few individuals who were keeping things together.

This did not occur by an authority invested in individuals but by the structure of the Gathering. As I have pointed out, the circle structure dissipates the influence of would be charismatic or technical

leaders. Instead those people who could be called "natural" managers just got on with it.

So who cooks the dinner? Why don't you go down to the food tent and see what is happening! And if there are enough vegetable choppers, vegan chefs and wood collectors pick up a drum and make some music!

This exchange of information would be representative of my encounters with "natural" management. I was not told what to do. Just where I might find the answer to my query and a few suggestions of what I could do if I felt like it. The knowledge and experience of those people who knew how things worked were not elevated to positions of authority, instead they made sure anybody who

wanted

heard a view expressed in Donegal that that particular Gathering worked well. There were enough people to breed variety and novelty, yet not too many to cause environmental or logistical problems.

With reference to the circle as a means of organising, larger gatherings have a tendency to form a 'vision circle' within the main circle that dealt with the larger issues and tasks that the Gathering encountered. What ills or benefits this would bring on I do not know.

Culinary curves

Finally there is one aspect of the Gathering that I would love to hear more about. After every

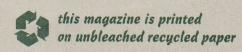
> culinary logistics and magic hats

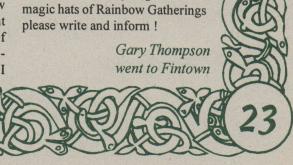
meal the magic hat went round. The magic hat provides what you eat - you put cash in and food is bought. The hat allows for all the economies of scale of collective purchase while allowing those who have to give as much as the want and those who don't have so much, as much as they can. It also must act as a great feedback mechanism to control how much food is required. If anybody reading this article knows about the culinary logistics and



learn from them and so do whatever had to be done.

What I saw at the Rainbow Gathering blew my mind. I learnt many insights from all kinds of people that have become invaluable to my life and studies. I







Focus editorial: The green movement and the state

(This editorial was written in summer 1996. I leave it to readers to judge whether events have confirmed what I wrote at the time. - LC)

This is a good time for an Irish green/alternative magazine to be thinking about the state. With Labour and Democratic Left in government, and increased EU intervention and subsidy, many activists in the different social movements, "nongovernmental organisations" and local initiatives find that they have more funds available and greater access to the corridors of power than ever before. The question, of course, is if this is a double-edged sword: if the price that is paid for funding is a loss of radicalism, and if the price for involvement in decision-making is a new role as implementer of state decisions. The professionalisation of activism is not a bad thing in itself (we need skilled people who can devote themselves fulltime to movement activities), but not at the cost of demobilising other activists and ordinary participants, as grassroots movements

many activists are turning to enlightened despotism

disappear and only the high-flyers who have mastered the language of NGO-speak, know how to lobby civil servants or how to organise a conference remain.

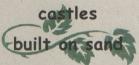
Enlightened despotism

One deciding factor will be whether movement activists are fixated only on scoring goals for their own issue, or whether they are also committed to democratising the process of decision-making itself (which means some-

thing other than a few professional activists being allowed to join the power elite!) Without knowing it, many activists are turning to the strategy known in the eighteenth century as enlightened despotism. The theory in this case was that it was sufficient for absolute

monarchs (Frederick II of Prussia, Maria Theresa of Austria, Catherine of Russia) to acquire a coterie of Enlightenment philosophers for social progress to happen: "knowledge" and "reason" – according to the theory – could be imported from on top.

Something similar is visible in today's Ireland. Tired of grassroots organising, of trying to convince ordinary people, and of the democratic road to transformation, many activists have found that it is simply easier, and more in keeping with the way they live and work, to target decision-making élites (civil servants, ministers, "the



media", "Europe") and try to bring about change from on top. So we take the road to the courts rather than standing on doorsteps, we try to change the language of the media or the content of the curriculum rather than bringing our arguments onto the street, we see the way forward in clever little tactical exercises in lobbying and contacts rather than in working from the bottom up. Hence the emphasis on "information" and "education": we assume that all we have to do is to use the "existing channels" to tell people how to think.

This strategy has already failed in other countries: it failed in the States, where an emphasis on high-powered lobbying and top-down arguments about language and literature completely failed to stop the New Right from mobilising a frightening backlash at grassroots level that is now seen in their control of many school boards and of course in the Gingrich Congress. It failed in Britain, where Labour's top-down

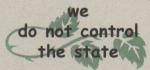


focus
The state

approach to social change meant that real gains like the NHS, the extension of mass education or the development of welfare state simultaneously symbolised for many people a form of disempowerment and authoritarianism that made them fall for the pseudo-libertarian rhetoric of Thatcherism (legal, police and military power has of course increased massively since 1979). It will fail in Ireland as well: unless legal gains in terms of women's rights, environmental protection, or whatever else are backed up by large-scale popular movements, they are castles built on sand, just waiting for the next New Right populism to come and wash them away.

The legal mode of domination

One area where this is already happening is in the "debate" (in inverted commas because only one side is speaking) over crime: the moral panic over drugs, the use of the Guerin assassination to justify yet more encroachments on civil liberties (on top of the Public Order Act see issue 1), the "porn on the Internet" stories (similar material is regularly available in computer games shops without exciting the same shock-horror reactions), and so on. The environmental and women's movements have played a particular part in translating demands for social change into demands for legal intervention. The initial difficulty with this strategy, as with all strategies that depend on the state, is that we do not control the state: the Public Order Act is used against animal rights activ-



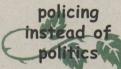
ists as much as against Youth Defence, for example. In West Germany, legislation against political "extremists" has been used far more against the left (in particular, banning leftists from holding any state or public employment) than against the far right (the *Republikaner* remain legal, for example).

The more fundamental problem is that this strategy reinforces the "legal mode of domination" – the idea that whatever is *right* must be *enforced* by law. The trouble is that for other people – and if we do not set out to do some serious convincing they will be the majority – what is right includes preventing gay and lesbian couples from adopting children, copperfastening religious control of schools, driving heroin users into poverty, criminalising youth culture... the list goes on.

Short sight and wish-projection

This is the same kind of short sightedness that leads us to support military intervention whenever it can be justified by the evilness of the opponent (and there is no doubt, for example, that Milosevic or Hussein are not nice people): we want to believe, against all experience, that wars might be fought to restore good in the world rather than to further the political and economic interests of the powers in question (the same people who recognised the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, helping to set off the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, or who sold arms to Iraq in the knowledge that they would be used on the Iranians and the Kurds).

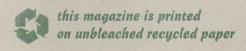
This makes our articles on the European process, especially on its military components, particularly relevant. Increasingly, the EU is acquiring state functions (although it will not be a simple remake of the nation-state on a larger



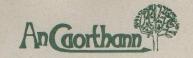
scale). It is becoming an increasing focus of wish-projection by those who want someone else to step in and take over from tired movement activists. For some, it is a site of negotiation where a few concessions on "their own issue" can be extracted in return for support for the EU process as a whole; for others, it represents an easy alternative to convincing and organising majorities at home. In a word, it is the continuation of clientelism by other means.

Democratisation, participation in decisionmaking, grassroots organising, non-hierarchical organisations, freedom and diversity: these represent the attractive face of the new social movements for many of those who are not directly concerned by their specific themes. The women's movement in Ireland was able to mobilise massive support because it was seen as challenging power and authority in the name of autonomy and freedom to choose how to live; the environmental movement has been successful in many places where it has represented community control and the reassertion of local priorities against those imposed by capital and the state. If movement activists sell this heritage for a "mess of pottage", they can hardly be surprised if we get anti-welfare populism, a new religious right, a rising tide of local racism and yet more policing instead of politics.

Laurence Cox







Anarchism & the state

Andrew Flood on state power and social change

The fundamental idea of anarchism is that as long as a minority make decisions on our behalf then we cannot be free. The decision making and enforcing apparatus this minority uses is the state; in Ireland it is the Dáil, local councils, the judiciary, the police force and a hundred other bodies, some visible, some invisible. While every other political current seeks to become part of the apparatus of decision making, the anarchists suggest something quite different. We want to smash the whole apparatus.

The state apparatus is not separate from the ruling economic class. In fact, most of the time its function is carrying out a crude expression of the wishes of the ruling class.

During the industrial revolution in Britain more people died every year than were born

It represents the limited ability of this class to control and plan the economic life of a country. This involvement may be complete, as in the old Soviet Union, or it can be restricted to key sectors like the arms industry, as in the United States. In most countries the level of involvement fluctuates from decade to decade according to the needs of

the ruling class and the latest trends in economic academia.

What about the positive features of the state, things like social welfare, healthcare and education? During the industrial revolution in Britain, if you exclude migration, the cities had

The state seeks
to limit what music
we can listen to,
what plants we can
grow what history
we can earn

a negative growth rate; that is, more people died every year than were born. This was due to the incredibly harsh working conditions and extreme poverty of the city workers. The population of the cities was increased by a series of state backed legal changes which drove people off the land and into the cities. At the outbreak of World War I, Britain found that a huge percentage of the working class had been so exploited that they were unfit for military service. Although this almost unhindered exploitation had been good for individual bosses up to that time, when it came to using the workers to win colonies and markets in the war it turned out to be against the bosses' collective interests. At the end of the war, revolutions and army mutinies swept across Europe.

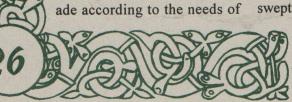
To defuse the level of class struggle and prepare for the next war, the bosses used the state apparatus to impose collective limitations on themselves and the level of exploitation they could impose. So in advanced capitalism the state is used to regulate the level of exploitation of the workforce through various labour laws.

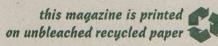
They also started to use the state to divert part of every worker's wage to form a new social wage which would be used for the education of workers and limited social security. It's worth remembering that to this day what pays for social welfare is primarily PAYE taxes.

Today the state's judiciary and police force serve to protect each boss from their own workers,

funding
unemployed centres
achieves a political
veto on their
activities

intervening where necessary to smash strikes, criminalise activists and censor critics. This is its most direct and obvious intervention, but through its control of the education system and its ability to criminalise social behaviour which goes against the bosses' interests it intervenes into every aspect of our lives. So the state not only prevents us taking







control of our workplaces, it also seeks to limit what music we can listen to, what plants we can grow, what history we can learn; it tries to control every aspect of our lives.

Scapegoats

and safe channels
Another function of the state
is to divide any potential resistance to the rule of the bosses. By

obtaining
state power at
the national or local
level cannot be used
to fundamentally
change society

scapegoating single mothers, immigrants or travellers it directs the anger of workers away from the real causes of their poverty. It is hostile to relationships outside its licence (marriage), or non-standard family relations which might challenge the prevalent ones and thus pose an indirect threat. This ensures that much of the care for the sick and the raising of new generations of workers is kept cheap by keeping it in the home. This is why the state is so opposed to single parent families or families where both parents are of the same sex.

The state in modern capitalism also finds ways of limiting dissent. By funding unemployed centres it achieves a political veto on their activities, effectively ensuring concentration on services like the production of CVs—with campaigning limited to minor tinkering with the system. Through the use of elections it creates a veneer of ordinary people being in control while the decisions are being made elsewhere. By pretending neutrality it can set up and arbitrate on disputes between workers and bosses through the use of bodies like the Labour Court. All these are methods to defuse and control social unrest.

One thing that follows from all of the above is that obtaining state power at the national or local level cannot be used to fundamentally change society. Even the most radical scheme of completely destroying the old state and replacing it with a better or fairer apparatus means the new state becomes the organ of crea-

Power corrupts the best and attracts the worst of people. This would apply to a Green government as much as it did to the Red one

tion of a new ruling class. This essentially is what happened in the years 1917 – 21 in Russia. This is because with positions in the new state hierarchy come powers over both people and goods. Exercising this power corrupts the best and attracts the worst of people. This would

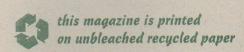
apply to a Green government as much as it did to the Red (Bolshevik) one.

Every step towards state power is actually a defeat, every local election won is actually a step back (and not a little step forward) in creating a new society. But do the anarchists have an alternative? Against the statists we propose decision making at

a society based on mass democracy

the lowest possible level: election of recallable, mandated delegates for decisions that cannot be made by mass assemblies, and for all delegates to remain part of the workforce where possible. Where this takes them away from their workplaces their positions should be held for short periods only, and without any special privileges. This, a society based on mass democracy, is our alternative to the state. It's not just our aim to achieve such a society in the long term but also to use such methods now in our struggle for such a society. We argue for these methods in our unions, community and campaigning groups.

Andrew Flood is a member of the Workers Solidarity
Movement:





An Gorthann

Why do Greens love the state - so much?

David Landy on why the Green Party has turned towards the state

This is a strange thing to say about Greens, surely. Greens stand proud in our belief in decentralisation. In the dismantling and withering away of the state. In locally based democracy; in workplace based democracy; in voluntary and free associations. Surely?

Unfortunately, while our party's sentiments and feelings do indeed tend towards that noble end, the body of our policies is swayed by more carnal desires. Examples of our party rejecting its own aims and opting instead to strengthen the coercive functions and economic power of the state occur with depressing regularity. Equally worrying is when we don't bother saying what the instrument for change will be – because the overall thrust of

one of the most absurd examples of cap in hand politics this side of an Intergovernmental Conference

our policies leads us to believe that it will be the state.

The state in all its glory

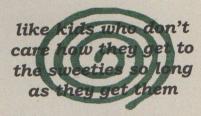
For a classic example, look at our animal rights policy. We know what we want – that animals be treated with respect. Unfortunately, we haven't bothered working out by what route we get there. Instead we are content to use the state in all its glory as the means to our ends. Through fines the

state shall reduce cruelty and pollution, through marketing the state shall promote alternatives to animal products, through the European Parliament the state shall ban blood sports and through the rule of law factory farming shall be ended.

And then there is our women's policy, which negates its own radicalism by constant appeals to the state for help. I'll just skim over the lowlights: the massive regulation of ads to ensure gender balance including the demands for more authoritative female voice-overs, that women be portrayed as less passive, that older women be used more in ads, and that in general advertising (which I always assumed we weren't in favour of) be under diktat to be more sympathetic to women. Worse still is the over-regulation of education - this includes re-education of teachers so as to eliminate gender prejudice and that boys be forced into domestic studies so as to eliminate gender prejudice. Naturally, it asks for a few bob from the state.

The process becomes even more ridiculous in the case of our Irish policy. Or, more accurately, our Irish policies, for we seem to have two. In the first case, we have an excellent and cogent analysis of the importance of organic growth for the language to establish itself and of the pernicious effect the state has on our language. Really, you should read it.

The second part, however, is one of the most absurd examples of cap-in-hand politics this side of an Intergovernmental Conference. It calls for a Language Advisory Service, and an Irish Language Academy (I kid you not – an Irish Académie Française!) to regulate grammar and coin new terminology, a state funded Irish-speaking university, a state funded Irish television, and finally a Language Act to regulate the



amount of Irish used in broadcasting. And of course the few bob from the state, for sure it'll come in handy.

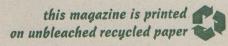
Signs of failure

At this point we should stop mocking and ask ourselves why.

Why does a broad variety of Green Party policies promote the shallow environmentalist line that we can somehow legislate for a green society? Why? – especially when most Greens do not believe this, for it is obvious to us that the state is precisely not the instrument through which a green world can be built.

In part, our approach can be blamed on the fact that those who draft policy are enthusiasts in their particular area, who don't give a damn how their ideals are to be achieved, like kids who don't care how they get to the sweeties so long as they get them. This is the classic drawback to single

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issue groups. And it is a problem which, quite frankly, a party with a coherent ideology should not have.

So can we solve the problem through a "statist audit", where every positive reference to the state is found and eradicated? I think the rot goes deeper. The real problem is not that the state is seen as the panacea, it is that the alternative mechanisms through which we could achieve our aims are not being sought.

Part of the reluctance to find alternatives can be put down to laziness. There is a general lack of confidence in our ability to source and create and imagine engines for change other than the state. It is typical left-liberal sloppiness to demand this, to ban that, to make something compulsory, to beg for state money or whatever – and it is simply not good enough.

For it shows a huge lack of confidence in our worth and the worth of others. If the Green Revolution is truly an educational one, why do we

There is a general lack of confidence in our ability to source and create and imagine engines for change other than the state

show so little interest in trying to persuade, and so much in trying to legislate? And why do we show so little interest in using non-state groups for our ends – are we afraid we won't be able to control them, or is it just another social democrat hangup that we haven't even noticed?

In reality our willingness to use the state, or any other coercive instrument, to achieve our ends is nothing but a sign of failure, for we are giving up any faith in people's autonomy and in the possibility

why do we show so little interest in using non-state groups for our ends?

of organic change, in favour of control from above. This fundamental lack of faith in humanity and people's ability to govern themselves needs to be thrown out the window, for it stands in direct opposition to our beliefs in decentralisation and in freedom.

Of course, statists can claim in defence that they are victims of society. Our thoughts are moulded in a country where the state is ubiquitous, and appears to be benign. It is a combination of the concentration of power, and of the fact that in Ireland, almost uniquely, the powers concentrated in the state are seen as being possibly positive.

The latter feeling is in part due to our electoral system, which makes it virtually impossible not to be able to appear to be influencing somebody. It is in part due to the proliferation of Euro-money, FAS money and Lotto money, which makes it virtually impossible not to be eligible for some type of grant. And, let's face it, it is also due to the belief that a corrupt state is always susceptible to "influence".

But let's not fool ourselves: those forces which maintain the state and which are main-

tained by the state know their own interests. They are the interests of the factory farmers, of the large corporations, of the property developers, of their political friends, and of the corrupt network of appointees which is now our de facto government. And they stand directly opposed to green interests and to green ideals.

And when — I mean if — we get into government, what parts of our policy will we be promoting? Those demanding an end to growth, to central power and to the industrial system? Or the "nicer" ones, those which approach the state

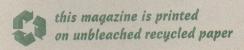
we are
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from above

for handouts and demand the state gets tough on "anti-green deviants" – the two sides of the eco-fascist programme?

I hope it's not the latter, for if so we can expect to be in Democratic Left's position in a few years' time – where for the price of our souls a few of the Party hierarchy find a nice comfortable position, in-andout of government, and where our ideas become either irrelevancies or appendages to the normative state.

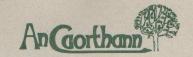
Let's make sure this doesn't happen: our ideas are too important to sell them cut-price to any enemy.

David Landy used to work for the Green Party









The policing of the state - in whose interest?

Jocelyne Rigal on crime and punishment

In April 1995, I was the victim of an "aggravated burglary". Two young men broke into my house on a Saturday night when I was alone. They asked for money and jewellery, which I did not have. They ransacked my bedroom, took my bank card, got me to tell them the PIN number, and took my car and my housekeys. They left me tied up with computer cables, a handkerchief forced into my mouth and a pillow case over my head, after threatening me to set me on fire, to set my house on fire, and to come back and beat me up if I had given them a false number for the card.

This event left me in a state of shock. In the weeks that followed, I struggled through extra errands and endeavours, while poor sleep left me exhausted. The endless ensuing tasks seemed to be an attempt to dress a wound: one I could not see, but one that has left me with scars. For months, I felt afraid at night in my



house, sometimes petrified. I still feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the event. This emotional shock led to a new awareness of the precariousness of life, of what being a victim, and a survivor, means; I grew more reflective upon the political meanings of crime.

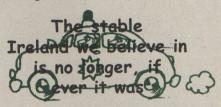
Crime and ideals

One is that crime is a revenge of the poor against the wealthy, but this is a myth of politicians and the media: the main victims of

crime are the poor. I recognised my attackers' accent as working-class, but I am not "wealthy". Neither am I politically conservative; I have always been a "leftist". In the night after my attack, I wondered how I could stick to my ideals, whether people were born vicious or became like that, and whether we could improve our existences through a "better" society. I also felt that this

attack was incongruous, considering my lifestyle and values; I now live with bolts and locks over all my doors and windows, when there are no valuables in my house and when I believe in an open door policy.

Still, my values were paradoxically strengthened by my ordeal. I became even more convinced that violence is wrong, whatever its context or reasons. My ordeal also taught me of the danger of drug addiction,



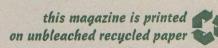
of unemployment, of poverty, if nothing is done. I was further convinced of the value I give to friendship, to sharing, to communal living, because my friends and neighbours gave me something money cannot buy: caring. It is in this spirit that in the weeks after the attack I joined the Green Party, in the hope of overcoming my powerlessness, and in the belief that society, and the way we live, could definitely be improved.

As I hear people discussing crime, I am aware that they can be manipulated by the fear oozing from crime statistics, and by whatever they are told of the "crime problem" in Dublin. The stable Ireland we believe in is no longer, if ever it was. I learnt from the Gardaí that my attackers had been arrested. They were recidivists, and heroin addicts: an explanation, but not an excuse. When I told people my attackers had been arrested, some said, "you must feel relieved". Why should I? Another "crop" is bound to come up, and my attackers will probably keep

on doing what they have done already for the rest of their lives. We all know that prison does not curb crime. The basic question remains for me: what should be done with criminals?

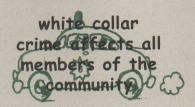
All equal before the law?

In the summer of 1995, challenged by my ordeal, I joined the cam-



focus
The state

paign to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Black American well known for his radical political views. Mumia had been condemned to death for killing a white policeman. There is, however, little evidence that he committed this crime. Rather, it emerged that his presence on the scene allowed authorities to accuse him of the murder and get rid of a man they considered a trouble maker. Given the lack of evidence against Mumia, his powerful personality as an articulate journalist, and that the death penalty is a "rather problematic" remedy to crime, a



world wide campaign was organised to save this man's life; this was seen as the first "political" use of the death penalty since the Rosenbergs.

The campaign was dominated by people much further on the left than I let myself stand. For them, this case highlighted the role of policing in industrialised society, and the brutality of police forces, the partial nature of justice when facing a Black radical. Yet my personal experience is that the role of the police is more ambivalent. Although it was my neighbours who actually called the Gardaí after I escaped, I would have done so anyway. Maybe we have been conditioned to report wrongdoings. But the Gardaí helped to locate my car, and to get the bank to reimburse me the stolen money. In other words, the police and the legal system can be used also as a resource.

Ciarán McCullagh's controversial reading of criminality argues that criminals are stereotyped as young, male, unemployed and drug-addicted, and that white collar criminality such as tax evasion receives much less attention and punishment. In other words, our approach to crime and criminals is biased. This makes me feel uneasy. How can crimes against property be compared crimes against individuals? The answer might be that the distinction is very artificial. Further, white collar criminality affects all members of the community, maybe particularly the most vulnerable ones.

Crime and responsibility

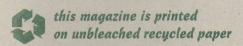
However, the contrast between the role of policing in my case and in Mumia's reminded me of some very basic political and ethical issues. As simple as it might sound, I realised once again that it is fine to stand for the most radical ideas, or to adopt the most unconventional lifestyle imaginable, but hurting others especially on purpose - is not. Holding to one's beliefs and conventions should not be seen as a privilege - it is a right one should not have to fight for. I also became convinced that people hurting others ought to face their responsibilities. In the most tangible cases of hurting, people are punishable by the law, which is one form of redress. However, the law does not make wrongdoers face their responsibilities, which is why legal forms of punishment fail to reform people. We should challenge those who have hurt us, either on purpose or not, for no one should be able "to get away with it". One is responsible for one's actions, no matter how troubled one's personal and social history. The legal system operates out of this premise, and I think it is fair. Recounting my ordeal to an older Green, I told him that my aggressors were the victims of unemployment, drug addiction, poverty and powerlessness. He agreed, but added "but you were not victims in the same way. They should challenge governments, not attack people like you". I felt he was right. Still, policing plays a very ambivalent role, for it has been given the power by the wealthy and by tradition to protect the social order in a way which confuses criminals and radicals.

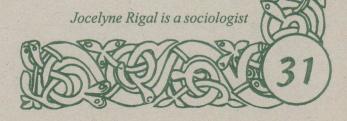


In conclusion, one might ponder upon a society free of policing: a classic dream for social activists. In the immediate future, given our massive social problems, the chances for a stateless, policing-free, society look scarce. Still, I feel that if every-one was "reasonable" and "decent" enough, we would not need laws and police. Maybe not all evil and harm perpetrated by people are the consequences of social problems, and a stateless, policing-free society, might still have its own evils.

Reference

McCullagh, Ciarán (1995) "Getting the Criminals We Want: The Social Production of the Criminal Population" in Patrick Clancy et al. (eds), <u>Irish Society: Sociological Perspectives</u>. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.





An Gorthann

The case for gender balance

Sadhbh O Neill on bringing women into politics

In the recent election, the Green Party felt it had a reasonable chance of winning up to five or six seats in the Dáil, and increasing its vote nationally to about 8%, with concentrations in Dublin and Cork. Yet the four top constituencies – Dublin North, Dublin South East, Dublin South and Cork North Central – selected male candidates.

Many women in the Party feel that we wasted an opportunity to foster a gender balance in a way which

we have wasted an opportunity to foster gender balance

would have encouraged and supported women in their local constituencies. Others feel that gender balance will not occur unless explicitly enforced or regulated by the Party as a whole, with instruments such as quotas or separate panels for women. However, there is no doubt that both our electoral success and our longterm commitment to gender equality depends on our having (say) a minimum of two women elected out of five TDs elected. If the gender balance was significantly weighted in favour of men in an election where we won

no seats, and where we were not expected to win seats, the issue would not be so serious. However, the real seriousness of the matter has to do with both electoral credibility and the need to have balance amongst those whom we can reasonably expect to be elected.

The changing face of Irish politics

Changes in Irish society over the last ten years have resulted in a significant urban, young, well-educated vote which has traditionally been the target of the Labour Party, Democratic Left, and some elements of Fine Gael. A significant group within this constituency is composed of women, who may vote for other women simply because they are women, or because they are supportive in general of those social changes brought about by the Left generally which are favourable to women. There is increased recognition of the voluntary sector and the parenting, caring, unpaid professions, coupled with a profound disbelief that political parties will ever be able to eliminate unemployment.

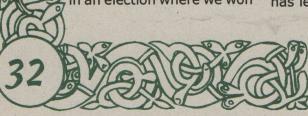
The success of many prominent women in politics, especially Mary Robinson, has led to a surge of confi-

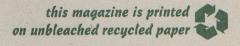
dence in the political voice of women. Even Fianna Fáil, during the European Parliament elections in 1994, felt it was incumbent on them to "produce" a feminist-friendly candidate – although she was not elected. Patricia was, and Nuala. Other parties genuinely committed to some version of feminism have put up women candidates in the recognition that only they could win the seat. Ever

80% of Green voters support the "liberal agenda" - divorce, gay rights, etc.

since the election of Mary Robinson, women have been used to drive political engines at election time. At the same time, women have gained immeasurably from seeing other women elected, and benefitted from their impact.

For the Green Party, which has the support of approximately 5% of the population, 80% of whom support the "liberal agenda" (e.g. divorce, gay rights, etc.) to turn its back on the simple facts of politics in Ireland during the nineties would be electoral disaster. We are seen as the party which had an excellent gender balance when it was not fashionable. To slide into territorial and de facto men-only politics







now would be turning back a clock which we helped to wind in the first place.

Gender balance and local groups

Let's just assume that someone is in favour of gender balance in principle, but fails to see how we can implement such a policy retrospectively. After all, those selected have complied with all constitutional guidelines and have the support of the majority in the local group in whose area they are to stand. Perhaps they have been devoting themselves to this task over many years, and according to their supporters, have themselves "created" the opportunity to win the seat. The seat, if it is to be won at all, belongs to them.

Non-discrimination and equal opportunities are immutable core values of green politics

They have rights over and above the Party, for the Party would not exist without them.

This is an extreme example, and by and large, nobody would wish to interfere with a candidate's genuine mandate. However, it exposes the problem that we have in empowering local groups to select candidates independently of our over-

all objectives. It has arisen before in connection with so-called "lifestyle imperatives", such as vegetarianism and not driving a car. Though not controversial to

The Green Party is not a franchise operation

the extent that it could have prevented someone from standing, we did resolve the issue in a roundabout way via the pledge candidates sign.

Gender balance, however, is an entirely different matter. Non-discrimination and equal opportunities are immutable core values of green politics. Getting women elected, green women, is one of the reasons many of us joined the Green Party. Anybody, if you asked them, would be in favour of gender equity. How many, though, would make it a tangible political prerogative to deliberately and consciously elect them? Even amongst women, it is easy to fall into the trap of believing that the principle is more important than the practice.

Time for a challenge

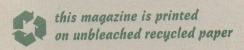
We have to challenge – fundamentally – the idea that candidates own their (potential) seats, as though by getting the mere handful of votes it takes to se-

lect them, they have the right to practically walk into Dáil Éireann and represent one hundred thousand people. The Green Party is not a franchise operation: it is an organisation whose "whole" is more than the sum of its candidates. The voter has the right to be represented equitably in each constituency, and the right to stand in an election is a right we collectively confer on only our best members.

They deserve a voice, and we deserve their voice

Many of these are women, many of whom again have already demonstrated political abilities and have contributed to the Party's development internally. They deserve a voice, and we deserve their voice. A way to demonstrate our commitment to gender balance would be to draw up a list of the female candidates we wish to see selected in prominent constituencies and campaign for them in any selections. We will seek to do this without necessarily contesting every selection, and in a way which respects the views of men and of the local groups. This way we will be putting our principles into practice.

> Sadhbh O Neill was Green Party councillor for Donaghmede



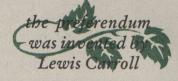




Book review:Peter Emerson, The Politics of Consensus

Peter Emerson has done political thinking a service by producing this book, which includes a guide to consensus voting systems, in particular the preferendum and the matrix vote.

Most political scientists could not identify either. The preferendum is basically a vote where voters indicate their first, second, etc., preference, as in the Irish form of proportional representation (PR-STV), but votes are counted by scoring each preference so that voters' lower preferences have an influence on the result as well as their first preference (which has the most influence): instead of eliminating the lowest choice and redistributing votes, all scores are added together and the most popular option wins. If there is only a narrow first-preference majority for a particular option, it may not win, as other preferences will be taken into account. In this way, the opinions of minorities will count towards the final result. While Peter Emerson has re-invented and popularised the idea in modern times, it was previously invented by the mathematicians Charles Dodgson (better known as Lewis Carroll) and Jean Charles de Borda, whose system was used in elections to the French Academy of Sciences from 1784 to 1800.



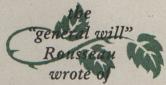
The matrix vote is a type of preference voting to choose members of a small group such as a committee or cabinet, and simultaneously allocate particular positions of responsibility to them.

The need for consensus

The need for the formation of a consensus through offering more than two choices is apparent in many situations. It is now widely recognised that a consensus solution needs to be sought in Northern Ireland. Criticising either / or decisions, Peter asks "should a 6- or 9-county Northern Ireland be administered by, devolved within, federated with, independent of, or integrated into (the nations of) Britain and / or (the Provinces of) Ireland? That's at least ten proposals already." He points out the failings of majority-takesall politics in the former Yugoslavia. Here in the Republic, the possibility of voting on different forms of

divorce and looking for a consensus might have taken some of the divisiveness out of the recent referendum.

The result of a preferendum is not exactly the consensus which can emerge from a meeting without a vote; it is what Peter calls a "high level of consensual support", an "average opinion", the "general will" Rousseau wrote of. Because the winning formula is built up on the basis of lower preferences as well as higher, it is in the interest of all to ensure that they receive a lot of preferences, and this in itself tends towards consensus.



The book gives full details on the mechanics of counting. It shows the importance of having a discussion so that the final ballot-paper can reflect possible compromises that the debate shows up. But it sometimes lacks some of the necessary background. For example, the importance of having a balanced ballot-paper is mentioned, but not what this balance should consist of. A recent Green Party internal preferendum on divorce raised the question: should there be equal numbers of pro-divorce and anti-divorce options or, since it was already established that the majority of members were in favour of some form of divorce, should the balance be tilted towards divorce options? Having tried a little experiment, it seems to me that it would make no difference to the result; but it would be useful to have clear guidance.

Another problem attaches to the matrix vote and, indeed, to other forms of representing all opinions in a cabinet. Who decides the duties of the positions to be filled? It is easy to elect a person whom the majority doesn't like to a position which has lost most of its functions.

Consensus and goodwill

One problem in implementing consensus politics more widely is that a lot depends on having people of good will to start with. For example, Peter suggests that all proposals may be considered except those which infringe the United Nations declaration on human rights. But who decides which proposals are to be ruled out on this score? The three elected and independent "consensors" who draw up the ballot paper. So the voters must start with sufficient agreement to



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decide on three people; though the suggestion is made that they be drawn from the judiciary.

In insisting that a preferendum is invalidated unless one choice receives a "level of consensus" of 75% (that is, the average voter puts it in the top quarter of their preferences), we approach the realm of the impractical. What organisation can always postpone a decision until a new compromise can be formulated and a new ballot-paper organised, if the first one produces no clear winner? A winner with less than 75% is likely to be fairly close to the voters' unformulated ideal.

Peter is wrong to suggest that a preferendum will always elect a committee which represents minorities proportionately: a preferendum to choose people will elect candidates who tend towards the centre, the consensus. This may be desirable in many circumstances; but small minorities which would be represented under proportional representation will get left out. He does put forward a modification of PR-STV called the "Quota Preference Score" which ensures the representation of minorities while including some features of the preferendum.

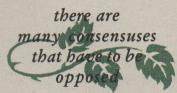
Minorities and green politics

In broader perspective, the book lacks some necessary arguments. The assumption is that consensus is always best: all parliaments in the world should elect their government by a proportional or preference system so that all parties are represented. But while clearly valuable in

it is fear of
vested interests that
prevents the adoption
of green policies

situations where a specific minority is liable to get left out (Northern Ireland, Belgium, Yugoslavia), it is not so obvious that this is always the best form of government. Where parties can be expected to take turns in office, it is at least arguable that there are advantages in having an executive which agrees a programme and tries to implement it, and an opposition which points out the executive's errors in an organised way.

"A majoritarian form of democracy may actually be a threat to the survival of the planet," Peter says, because governments like to be popular. The implication is that ecologically sound policies are not adopted because of fear of electoral defeat. This is a misreading of the basic political situation: it is fear of vested interests more than fear of the voters that prevents the adoption of green policies. (And one cannot promote democracy by saying that the politicians should gang up to agree on things the voters would not approve of.)



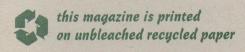
In this book parties are the enemy: but this assumes that a parliament of small unwhipped groups would be an improvement, and ignores the fact that parties can be a structure by which voters know to some extent what they are voting for. Certainly, there must be greater use of consensual methods in parliaments, and more direct decision-making through referendums (or preferendums). But how democratic would a parliament be whose members simply took their own decisions on each issue? Possibly more open to ego-trippers and well-financed pressure groups: look at the US.

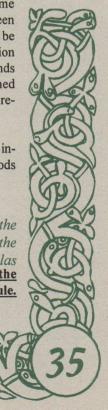
These are questions which would have required a longer book and a more considered discussion of the merits of consensus. For it is one thing to achieve consensus within a clearly-focussed body which has come together around a common struggle, such as a Green Party. But there are many consensuses that have to be opposed: that economic growth and industrialisation are good things, for example. And if green demands achieve 51% support, do we allow them to be toned down by the process of seeking consensus with unrepentant anti-green forces?

None of this detracts from the fact that anyone interested in implementing consensual voting methods cannot be without this book.

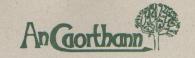
John Goodwillie was the principal drafter of the rules for holding preferendums within the Green Party/Comhaontas Glas

PJ Emerson, <u>The Politics of Consensus: for the resolution of conflict and reform of majority rule.</u>
2nd edition, Belfast, the author, 1994. £12.50









White Papers and WEUs

Colm O Caomhánaigh on the neutrality aspects of the White Paper and the IGC

The recent White Paper on Foreign Policy contained no surprises. In fact, it contained no proposals of any significance on the central controversial issues, simply saying that the Government was still examining the options.

It was dishonest of the *Irish Times* editor to complain that pro-neutrality groups were too quick to shoot down suggestions that Ireland might join NATO's so-called Partnership for Peace (PfP) or forge greater links with the Western European Union (WEU). These proposals had been mooted for months – we had plenty of time to consider them.

Hopefully, the fact that the Government is still putting off these decisions is an indication that they know that they will be very unpopular.

So why should we not join these security organisations? Are we being isolationist? Do we not agree with collective security?

WEU and PfP

PfP was originally invented by NATO to create links with eastern European countries without admitting them as full members – which Russia would oppose. As further reassurance to Russia it was allowed join PfP itself.

Since then PfP has become a handy vehicle for European neutrals — whose governments do not really want to remain neutral — to get involved with a military alliance while reassuring their own people that they were staying neutral (sound familiar?)

NATO must be delighted with these developments, which put it at the centre of security developments in Europe. There are only a few countries that have not joined – former Yugoslav states, Tajikistan and Ireland. For Ireland to join would give further political support to the nuclear-armed NATO.

Ireland already has observer status at the WEU which the Maastricht Treaty described as an "integral part" of the development of the EU. The WEU is specifically committed to the maintenance of nuclear weapons.

The Government has been telling us that we have three options: we can become full members, we can participate in WEU peace-keeping operations or we can retain our observer status. By presenting these limited options, the Government is attempting to narrow the debate.

The GP/CG reminds people that there is a fourth option. Ireland could and should revoke its observership at the WEU and revert to a strongly independent positive neutrality.

A referendum on neutrality

We have constantly called for a referendum to define such neutrality in the Constitution so that we can have a clear debate. Past referendums on European treaties have combined a myriad of issues and the implications for neutrality have always been overshadowed by economic issues.

The White Paper proposes that any decision to join PfP would require only a vote of the Oireachtas rather than a referendum. It also seems to suggest that discussions with the WEU may take place separately from the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC).

These developments may well be an attempt to bypass the commitment made during the Maastricht referendum that there would be a referendum if the outcome of the IGC had any implications for Irish neutrality.

Greens will not allow further surrender of our neutrality without a referendum. The authorities should realise by now that any such attempt is likely to land them in the courts!

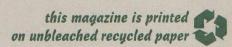
The White Paper states that WEU missions may be set up at the request of the UN, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE – effectively a European UN) or the European Union. So we could be participating in missions which are not approved by the UN or OSCE.

The bottom line is that by joining the PfP or the WEU we would be strengthening the hand of the United States and the main western European powers in their desire to control European security. We would also be seen to be accepting the presence of nuclear weapons.

On the other hand, by seeking to develop the role of the OSCE, which comprised all European states from the start, we would be encouraging a more equitable approach.

> Colm Ó Caomhánaigh is Green Party spokesperson on Foreign Affairs







The greening of Europe?

Facing the "European process", Greens and other radicals are in a similar position to socialists and trade unionists between 1870 and 1930. At that time, with the "organisation" of the state at a national level - directly, with nationalism, empire-building and aggressive foreign policies, and indirectly, with the development of mass education systems, social welfare and an increasingly national cultural sphere - they were presented with a choice between allegiance to the new national states in return for acceptance "within the system", participation in power, and economic and social concessions on the one hand, and their traditions of international solidarity and organisation as a radical alternative to the established order on the other.

In the summer of 1914, the socialist parties of Europe agreed to call an international

Five years and fifty million deaths

general strike if war broke out, and to refuse to march against each other for the sake of their national governments. But when push came to shove, they all decided that they had more to gain from the victory of "their own" armies, and supported the declarations of war. Five years, and nearly fifty million deaths, later, the socialist movement split between the communists, who supported the new internationalist leadership of Lenin, and the social democrats, who supported their own nation states. The socialist movement never recovered from this polarisation between two equally authoritarian leaderships.

The European state formation process is a similar dilemma for Greens. Do we accept "the European system", in return for what can be gained through the courts, the Commission and the Parliament? Or do we reject a system built upon economic growth, the exploitation of the rest of the planet, and the centralisation of power?

a lightly greened Europe built on exploiting the Third World

These are particular dilemmas for Irish green activists: we know how much we have gained from "Europe", on environmental and women's issues, in rising education – always good news for us – and in funding and employment schemes that many of our organisations are dependent on. But could we live with a lightly greened Europe, built on exploiting the Third World and the military power of NATO?

Democracy and the grass-roots

The EU structure reinforces the position of national and supra-national élites in the state and the economy. It excludes the challenges posed by the green and alternative movements of Europe – the ecological, women's, gay / lesbian, peace, human rights, Third World solidarity and other movements; and silences the already marginalised – the unemployed, refugees, immigrants, nomads and others.

Political processes which are only accessible to those with massive financial, information, communication and organisa-

Laurence Cox on European Union tional resources are democratic in name only; they contravene the central democratic ideals of equal participation, involvement in decision-making by all those subject to those decisions, openness and transparency. The EU treaties are imposed on people with little or no information about what is being decided and no effective chance to make their own views known. A Europe in which only supranational political actors can make their voice heard cannot be a citizens' Europe, let alone a green Europe.

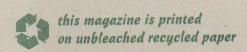
Decision-making and decentralisation

Moves towards increasing concentration of power by governmental élites and majoritarian decision-making threaten to marginalise green and alternative movements across Europe. Most European governments are committed to industrialism and militarism, and opposed to the objectives of the green, peace, women's and other alternative movements. Short-term gains for these movements that depend on the goodwill of politi-

a very practical form of disempowering people

cal and judicial élites risk unleashing populist and far-right backlashes.

It is an illusion to think that European élites are "on our side" in the long run. Green, feminist or socialist strategies that point to the potential for good of European decision-making miss the point: we are not now, nor likely to be, in a position to make those deci-





Focus

The state

sions. "If I was king I'd do great things" is no argument for monarchy. Rather, it is a sign that we are not prepared to put in the work needed to build a solid democratic consensus for the kind of world we want – and that we do not believe ordinary people can ever come round to our "enlightened" way of thought.

Yet, while so many of our new professional and intellectual élites have been hoping for crumbs of progress from "Europe", Irish society has moved in ways that we would have thought incredible back in the dark days of the 1983 refer-

mone will flow to where environmental requirements are least stringent

endum. We should be holding the greatest possible space open for grass-roots advances at local, regional and national levels. Majority-based European decision-making, and the growth of EU competencies, are a very practical form of disempowering people, starting with ourselves.

EMU and local economies

European Monetary Union means a further erosion of small and peripheral economies for the sake of core economies and multinational corporations. It is a direct threat to all environmental or social gains at national level, and will be used to create a "lowest common denominator" approach, by exploiting all crossnational divergences: if environmental protection costs money or is seen as a disadvantage for investment, money will flow to where environmental requirements are least stringent or applied least effectively.



Instead, we should be rethinking our economic relationship with the Third World, in particular in relation to developing fair trade policies and practices, reducing tariff barriers against Third World goods, and reforming loan conditions.

Foreign policy and neutrality

The foreign policy independence of small states, and of neutral and non-aligned states, should not be subordinated to the foreign policy interests of the main EU powers by a single European 'line' on foreign policy. Instead, the tradition of co-operation and support between neutral European states and Third World countries and movements should be defended and developed. Whether "in" or "out" of CFSP, we will have little effect on the interests driving NATO and EU foreign policy, but as outsiders we at least have the chance to work with other neutral and non-aligned states, particularly in the Third World.

As it stands, EU expansion is a major threat to the neutrality or non-aligned status of new members, a threat already becoming reality for current neutral members. It also points towards a drawing of new boundaries between "Europe" and its neighbours, such as Russia or the Arab world, borders which will pose a severe threat to peaceful co-operation.

EU expansion

The enlargement of the Union extends an ecologically and socially disastrous economic and political system. Greens from the present and future EU states find themselves in opposition to the dominant policies of the EU. However, many states feel that they now have no choice but to join. The Union should be open to all democratic European states that wish

to join; equally importantly, the right of member states to with-draw from the Union should be recognised in the Treaty. While Greens want to overcome the continuing division of Europe, and reject a "Fortress Europe" or a two-speed Europe, existing EU structures cannot provide the desired European in-

a drawing of new boundaries between "Europe" and its neighbours

tegration; only their radical transformation and the greening of Europe can make ecologically and socially acceptable integration possible.

As small states and weak economies are subjected to the interests of the major European powers and core economic interests, their marginalisation is likely to increase, with a division between a small elite, tied to EU interests, and a large body of women, unemployed people, the elderly and people in rural areas who are relegated to the social, economic and political periphery. And freedom of movement for goods and services goes hand in hand with the restriction of freedom of movement for people, particularly the unemployed and "third country nationals".

The "European process" is simultaneously a process of exclusion: the European economic project is founded on the continued exploitation of the Third World, both beyond and – increasingly – within its borders: there, cheap raw materials and convenient dumping grounds for chemical waste; here, cheap labour and convenient dumping grounds for trashy products. We should have no part of it.

Laurence Cox was Irish delegate to the European Federation of Green Parties

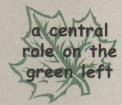




It will be hard enough, with allies

Heinz Dessau on Green Left Convergence in Britain.

In the last five years, the Green Party of England and Wales has been shaped by the poor leadership of Sara Parkin's ecocentric "Green 2000" group which left the party deeply in debt. This was followed by her walk-out and that of a few lieutenants. John Norris, then party chair and Dr John Morrissey, then policy group chair, skilfully re-enthused the shocked membership and avoided a split into two green parties. They now lead "The Way Ahead" (TWA) group and are building bridges to outside the GP. TWA "stems from



the radical tendency within the GP. Its aim is a principled and distinctive GP with a central role on the green left. The ...Party and its allies must seek to occupy the political territory abandoned by New Labour as it moves to the right." Membership is growing from the former 50%-of-1989 level and there is steady progress in the only sensible but essential starting-place under the current "first past the post" system, that is in local wards and councils. If the new government introduces proportional representation as hoped, the party's electoral prospects would improve: it took 15% of the vote in the 1989 European elections.

Outside the party

Jonathan Porritt, Sara Parkin and Paul Ekins have grouped together the 1.5m non-political "Real World" network. This includes the World Wildlife Fund, FoE, Oxfam, Charter 88 (constitutional reform) New Economics Foundation, Church Action on Poverty, the Women's Environmental Network, Save The Children, Population Concern, The Catholic Institute for International Relations, Christian Aid, the SAFE Alliance and the Black Environmental Network. CND is absent and one of the current Principal GP Speakers,

David Taylor, conscious of allies and perhaps thinking of what needs to be confronted, adds: "'Real World' paints a depressing picture but suggests few solutions....The GP is working hard to build coalitions with NGOs and with homeless socialists on the libertarian left. The challenge to 'Real World' and especially to Porritt and Parkin, is to engage in the real world!"

Progress

Things have progressed since then. The "Green Left Convergence" is at present supported by the "Green Socialist Network" (Democratic Left), the "Red Green Network", the "Red Green Study Group", the "Socialist Movement" and "The Way Ahead" (GP).4

The last large Convergence event in March was attended by French and Danish speakers, Jean-Marc Brule of the French "Convention for a Progressive Alternative" (CAP) and Inger Johansen of the Danish Red Green Alliance (Enhedlisten). The French have 660 councillors and mayors and Enhedlisten have six MPs in a parliament of 179. The event though proved that achieving consensus over an agreed statement of principles was the prickliest



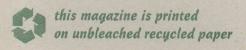
problem in the convergence process. Deliberations are continuing and a short accessible interim statement is being prepared.

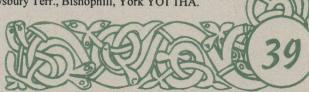
In February, 140 people from 19 countries formed a European Red Green Network at a *Enhedlisten* Conference.

Heinz Dessau can be contacted through the Green Party office

(For all Convergence info & for "Green Left", the Red Green Network's newsletter, contact Mark Hill, Red Green Network, 14 Holly Terr., York, YO1 4DS.)

- "The Way Ahead" (Green Party radical tendency group, & newsletter), 13 Shetland Dr, Nuneaton, Warwicks, CV10 7LA. Ph. (0044) 1203 325890 (Dr. John Morrissey.)
- 2) "The Way Ahead" No 25 (Feb 96), p.10.
- "Red Pepper" No 23 (Apr 96), p.21. David Taylor, "A pale green manifesto" (3 Gunthorpe St, London E1 7RP. Ph. (0044) 171 247 1702)
- 4) "Convergence update", Spring 96. Ed: Andy White, 7 Dewsbury Terr., Bishophill, York YO1 1HA.







Review of Red-Green Study Group, What on earth is to be done?

The number of books on the ecology-society question often seems to be in inverse proportion to its importance. Only a few contemporary authors (eg Gorz, Bahro, Bookchin) have really addressed the matter (which sits uneasily beside the traditional categories of publishers and academia). On the political front, electoral rival-



ries consign issues such as the red-green debate to the back-burner, helping to maintain the image of "single-issue" Greens on the one hand and "interest-driven" leftists on the other.

Reconciling ecology and the left

That's why this small, collectively written book (playing on the title of Lenin's What is to be done?) fulfils an important task in engaging with the red-green issue (and thereby going a small way towards rescuing "utopian" discourse). Drafted by individuals with varying backgrounds in ecology, feminism and socialism, the book acknowledges the traditional tensions between ecologists and leftists, while attempting to outline a possible basis for a green socialism, shifting "the logic of production ... away from its present capitalist, waste generating, forms of commodity production and international trade towards a more consciously, socially planned system of production and international exchange."

While both Greens and leftists share an antipathy to the profit-maximising society, historically there have been important divergences. Greens have tended to see Reds as centralist, productivist, instrumentalist, reductionist, "anthropocentric" (situating value in humanity rather than in nature) and consumerist, and as putting jobs before the environment. Reds on the other hand have tended to see Greens as utopian, "ecocentric" (situating value in nature rather than in humanity), authoritarian, culturally conservative and middle-class, and wrongly targetting industrialism rather than capitalism.



The book attempts to reconcile ecocentrism and anthropocentrism: "to be fully human we need an aesthetic and spiritual relationship with the non-human world which is both challenging and rewarding." It also, however, defends the "anti-capitalist" critique against the critique of industrialism, both because environmental destruction preceded industrialism and because, in its terms, the main global problem is "the unregulated, expansionary and profit-oriented character of modern international capitalism". Both equality and sustainability are in the book's terms desirable goals. The authors endorse the appropriate use of science and technology, the ending of North-South exploitation, and increased self-sufficiency (though not autarky). New

forms of international interdependence are needed to replace domination, rivalry and "growthism" by reciprocity, cooperation and sustainability.

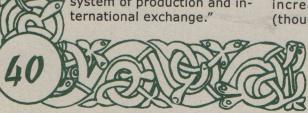
Decentralisation and democracy

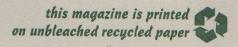
The book notes the process by which both economy and the state have grown at the expense of civil society during the last hundred and fifty years, calling for a reversal of this, with the reduction in importance of the "formal" and the growth of the "informal" economy. But it acknowledges the tension between the Green ideal of a "stateless, self-regulating world order, a loose federation of decentralised communities" and a Red perspective which would argue the need for the retention of the state as constraining in relation to capital and ecological policy, and enabling in regard to society as a whole.

This dialogue attempts to reconcile the arguments of Greens about the need for de-



centralised structures with the argument for broader structures of decision-making, coordination and rule-enforcement as well: in contrast to some socialist and anarchist visions, collective decision-making institutions will still be required to regulate our impact on the environment, and also to ensure the fair distribution of goods. A balance is needed







between universal principles and appropriate planning on the one hand, and respect for diversity on the other. Rejecting a mere ecological "survivalism", the authors (rightly) argue for the importance of the fulfilment of "higher" human needs, in particular the development of hu-

a balance between universal principles and respect for diversity

man aesthetic, moral, intellectual and practical capacities.

The inherently expansionist nature of modern capitalism is to be combatted by the following:

- "anti-capitalist and antiproductivist struggles linking producers, consumers and communities at local, regional, national and global levels;
- the thorough-going expansion of the scope and depth of democracy in both state and civil society; and
- the continued creation and extension of non-capitalist economic, social and cultural forms."

The authors endorse citizens' income (Guaranteed Basic Income in our terms) as well as the notion of "stakeholding" as a bridge towards social ownership which would eventually replace private capital ownership, in a model of democratic planning with a maximum of decentralisation. In such a system, market forces would no longer dominate in the field of market exchange, but would be replaced by "negotiated coordination". However, the au-

thors reject the traditional, (failed) political notion of seizing the power of the state, in favour of the transformation of society from the bottom up, a process which however can succeed only if it is facilitated by the democratisation of the institutions of state and civil society. Finally, they tentatively flag the possibility of a new "red-green" political party.

Capitalism and the command economy

For those Greens sympathetic to some socialist ideas. the book is a valuable basis for discussion. Its faults are: (1) a rather narrowly UK perspective with a consequently pessimistic view of the progress of radical (both Green and Red) politics to date; (2) an inexplicable lack of discussion of animal rights; (3) a failure to engage with or even mention the crucial issue of human population and its limitation; (4) the familiar socialist reification of "capitalism" which sees this as a quasi-demonic force to be vigorously combatted, rather than a system of economic relations susceptible to transformation (to some extent) through various processes. (Some of these are mentioned favourably by the authors, but are not seen as capable of transforming "capitalism" in any fundamental ways.)

Whether capitalism/industrialism can be tamed sufficiently to change its "growthist" element into something more environmentally benign is the crucial issue. The authors clearly believe not, and support an inescapable element of planning in the economic sphere. To this extent the book is biased towards the "red" rather than the "green" end of the spectrum.

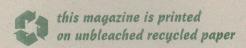
The main theoretical argument against such "planning" does not in fact come from the expected sources at all, since the most dynamic capitalist economies are in fact the ones with a heavy state involvement (Japan and the "tiger" econo-

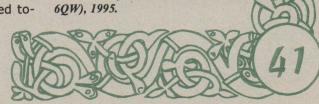
transformation of society from the bottom up

mies of the Far East). And in social terms, of course, the "statist" Nordic countries where sociology rather than economics dictates state policy - are widely agreed to have desirable forms of social organisation. Even many Greens might support a quite heavyhanded centralism in certain extreme, emergency cases. The main argument against central planning is in fact liberal / libertarian and is not addressed in the book: with a "command" economy, how do you stop the development of a power-maximising, self-interested bureaucracy? The authors don't tell us. Given the statist nightmares of the twentieth century, this is a question which Reds will have to address in detail if they are to go any way towards convincing the rest of us.

Paul O'Brien was Green Party spokesperson on economics

Red-Green Study Group, What on earth is to be done? A red-green dialogue. Manchester: Red-Green Study Group (c/o Pat Devine, 2 Hamilton Road, Whitefield, Manchester M45 60W). 1995.





An Gorthann

Against animal experiments

Peter Mansfield replies to Ray Ryan's article

Raymond Ryan (An Caorthann 4, page 22) subscribes to a number of false axioms surrounding medical research and its consequences, and I feel he and Green Party members should be aware of the truth. Here it is, so far as I have been able to work it out as an independent scientist and a GP for 28 years.

The treatments available to doctors in Europe and America are nowhere near as safe or effective as they are cracked up to be. Quite important side effects are overlooked or misattributed. Huge numbers of people end up, after a long and painful quest for "cure", worse off than they started. Many more are told "you just have to live with it".

The reason is the legal structure of medical research. Under current law, the competitive edge provided by a patent lasts about 16 years. Companies file a patent long before they know how they can use a substance, but try for pharmaceutical use as a priority because of its



huge profitability. A product license would, if properly done, take longer than the life of the patent, so the industry itself proposed the use of animal experimental evidence to abbreviate the process; this is now enshrined in law. Currently this results in a licence about 11 years after the patent, giving the company about 5 years to exploit their advantage.

Humans and animals

Animal experimentation has never successfully predicted a human outcome: Most is deliberately designed as a retro-fit, to substantiate a pre-existing hunch. For that one chooses the animal which gives the answer you want. Any attempt to predict a human result the researcher has not already guessed cannot succeed, because they cannot know which animal to rely on!

It is true that much cellular biochemistry is held in common with related species. So what accounts for the differences? Certainly not isolated genes – which can only code individual cell behaviour – but some sort of scalar field mapping



whole-body information. Cells must be able to read and copy the information relevant to their local function within the whole body. That would be fertile ground for research, but may not win patents or profits!

Science is only a method, not the truth. It is only as useful as the questions it is set to answer. Ask a stupid question and we get a stupid answer!

Profits and patents

The consequences are calamitous. Almost all our scientific research is used to make a career or a profit, not to make life better. We ignore opportunities to prevent disease and enhance health – immunisation, currently a bonanza industry, is a questionable approach to the former and actually detracts from the latter. Eating well, appropriate exercise and right occupations using green technologies militate against corporate profit, though they enormously enhance human-

ity and our living environment. By now we could have been preventing new cases of heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, breast and cervical cancer – to name just a few – if we had been asking the right questions.

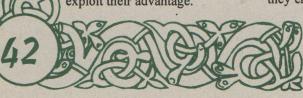


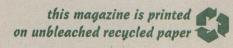
Basing the entire industry on an inappropriate patent law makes natural remedies, and remedies already in use, very unattractive to the corporate mind because they cannot be patented. So we run increasingly on virtually unknown new substances and approaches, that are often less effective, more hazardous and more expensive than the old ones. Established medicines are dropped because, once they go "generic", they are nowhere near as profitable.

The answer is to modify patent law on medicines internationally. This would meet huge resistance from the global industry. At the very least, patents should start after a licence has been granted so that all necessary care can be re-introduced into the licensing process. This would not reinstate cheap or natural medicines, but would stop the pressure for animal research overnight.

Stopping that would in itself trigger an immediate improvement in health by stopping the headlong introduction of "iffy" new substances for mere profit's sake. It would also enforce a major rethink amongst policy-makers and scientists about what all this research effort is for—a challenge to which they will rise brilliantly once we have given them the starting signal.

Dr Peter Mansfield was chair of Doctors and Lawyers for Responsible Medicine and is director of the Templegarth Trust







Busy dying ... and busy being born

Since the last issue of <u>An Caorthann</u>, a lot of the ground we thought we were standing on has shifted under our feet. Several new magazines have come into existence (see back page), and many new networking projects have seen the light of day: InterErin, Flux, Mustard Seed (see p. 10) to name a few. Direct action has come back with a bang in the shape of the Gaelic Earth Liberation Front and the Glen of the Downs protest camp. From the Green Party to the organic farming movement, important elements of the alternative movement have become more institutionalised (see pp. 24-25). And many things have died: Common Ground (see back page), the Garden of Delights (see p. 5), EcoLink and more.

This process isn't happening in a vacuum. Within the official state, the effective political spectrum has become organisationally wider (as DL and PDs participate in government), more publicly divided between left and right, but at the same time narrower in substance. For DL and Labour, being junior partners to Fine Gael has again neutralised any challenge to the two-party system, while Militant (now Socialist Party) is busy turning protest into parliamentary participation. More variety, less choice.

In the rest of the world, at least two tendencies are relevant. One is the increasing contact between green-alternative forces and the more traditional left (see pp. 39-41): on the streets and in illegal parties against the Criminal Justice Act in Britain, in red-green coalitions in Italy and France (perhaps, next year, Germany), and as people and ideas in the Zapatista-inspired Encuentros (see pp. 6-7). The other, as "established" left-alternative forces gain strength, is the springing up of new forms of radical protest outside the organisations that are moving towards holding official power.

What all of this expresses, in Ireland and abroad, is certainly the growth of positive forces from below: in voting trends, in social movements, and in the self-confidence that enables alliances across the alternative – left divide. But at the same time,

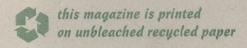
these forces are finding their scope for action increasingly limited: by the constraints of EMU criteria and the interests of multinational investors, by the structures of EU and other interstate arrangements, in short by the tightening grip of global power and money against the voices of local needs. The net effect is that we can gain some recognition - state and EU funding for community and environmental organisations, parliamentary facilities and even ministries - but only on the terms set by an increasingly global capitalism and an increasingly interlinked system of state power (symbolised by the proposed European police force). We can, if we focus our efforts, administer their world; but we cannot make more than cosmetic changes.

It is this new situation, I think, that the current rapid changes of the alternative movement are responding to: here are people thinking on their feet, with growing skill, self-confidence and popular resonance, but unable as yet to find a way of directing those energies where they can make a difference. Meanwhile, ecological destruction continues. The quality of life on our council estates gets no better. Racism increases as security measures pile up. Something, somewhere, has got to give.

Two years ago, when we brought out the last issue, each new organisation seemed a step forward and each collapse a defeat. Now it's becoming clearer that a new organisation may simply duplicate efforts or pile more work on the few committed activists, while an ending may be the recognition that a particular project is no longer a useful investment of energy and that new ways have to be found. So the focus shifts slowly away from institutions to the movement as a whole, and to the people whose needs, ideas, skills and energies are embodied, frustrated, developed, diverted or amplified in organisations. In other words, it's time to ask ourselves strategic questions.



Laurence Cox







Celebrating counter culture

In the invitation to the Glencree meeting [see article on page 10], the authors write of the first Mustard Seed gathering, in 1976, that it was one source for those who "have breathed life into a radical reworking of what is now an experience of pluralism and diversity contained within a fairly coherent worldview." They write of the Anti-Nuclear Roadshows and Carnsore Point that they formed part of "an important process of people in sympathy with a common, barely articu-

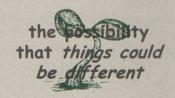
squatters and Californian goat

lated thinking, identifiable only at that stage as being not of, and very likely anti, the mainstream, 'the establishment'." A successor to Mustard Seed, they feel, "would want to establish ... that there is a civil society that is self-aware, self-conscious and active, and to what degree there are elements of common purpose shared by seemingly discrete groupings within that." I want to explore that last question here.

For seven years I have been researching around the idea of a counter culture - the notion of an alternative culture within Western societies, with its own ways of thinking and doing things, its own networks and organisations, its own histories and biographies, or more exactly "our own". One of the places I have

taken this idea from is simply my own experience of finding recognisably similar "structures of feeling" in so many apparently separate places - in the 80s peace movement and on the Dunnes Stores picket line, with Hamburg squatters and Californian goat farmers, with Dublin hippies and British crusties, in human rights groups and alternative magazines, among western Buddhists and Norwegian leftists.

One of the places this research points to is the much-abused Sixties: the challenge to the established *culture* (particularly in Britain and the States), the challenge to the established *power structure* (particularly in France, Germany, Italy). One way of making sense of what happened subsequently is to say that, for all the mistakes made by people who were pushing the limits in every possible sense, there was a real challenge, and a real movement, and a real sense that

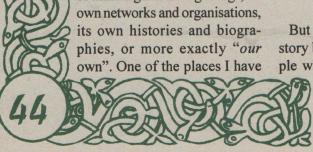


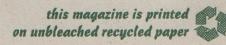
things could be completely transformed. As we know, that didn't happen: there was a massive backlash from the state and from mainstream culture, and the dream died, painfully.

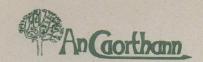
But that wasn't the end of the story by a long chalk. The people who had been pushing the limits, and the people who were too young or in the wrong place to get involved at the time, remained energised by the possibility that things could be different: and between '69 and '79 a hundred flowers bloomed: the environmental, peace and women's movements were transformed, one new subculture after another developed, there was a movement into the countryside at the same time as towns started to grow their own alternative quarters, bookshops, co-ops and all the rest.

In a country like West Germany, where the 60s had mainly been about power and the state, there was a shared political identity of being "the Left" or "the movements" that made it easier to hold all these various initiatives together - through the alternative press, networking the alternative economy, and even the Green Party, whose core values of ecology, grassroots democracy, nonviolence, social justice and feminism covered the spectrum from green to red to purple. In a country like Britain, where the real 60s upset was to mainstream culture, there has always been more of a tendency for even political organisation to be about "identity" - not just as women, gays or blacks but also as ecologists, socialists or Wiccans.

In Ireland things were obviously very different: if the Sixties in the North led to Civil Rights and the "Troubles", noth-







ing much was threatened in the South. Clearly we had our own alternative movements in the 70s - many of the people and the institutions are still there - but much of this history has been submerged. Until recently, if you organised anything strange in Dublin you could still be asked if you were a student, or a Protestant (!) - the implication being that noone "normal" ever made waves in public. Below the surface, little networks exist, but are rarely accessible to outsiders. In my own experience, while there are of course overlaps between different movements and organisations, and many shared interests and feelings, there is a sort of organisational patriotism which makes it extraordinarily difficult to convince people of the value of talking to people in other movements. Rather than look to each other, we look to mainstream culture and the state.

> the last refuge of the "local eccentric"

And yet there are links: more than that, there is a (very loose) "shared way of struggle" that I do find across these different areas: from hippies to socialists, from pagans to feminists, from Greens to human rights. Some part of this, in Ireland, is that we are the last refuge of the "local eccentric", the self-taught person with a bee or two in their bonnet but well capable of upsetting the Powers that Be (and fair play to them!) But it goes deeper than this.

I don't want to talk about the personal, organisational or political links - that would be another day's work altogether. What I do want to ask questions about is the elements of *counter culture* that we share - almost in the ethnographic sense, if you can imagine this strange counter culture existing in the spaces left by the corporations and the state, by the church and the family, by RTÉ and the pub.

One thing that really marks it out is the importance of autonomy, meaning things like individual freedom, self-development, finding or creating free spaces, independence from hierarchies, making everything as democratic as possible, freedom to go your own way, freedom to define your own identity (which obviously makes it harder to build bridges....)

Another thing that comes up frequently is a fascination with forms and ideas, meaning things like the willingness to change the way you live because of what you think, organising not so much on the basis of what you want to achieve as of how you want to achieve it, all kinds of "techie trips" from computers to permaculture, a fascination with "information", a sense of being able to stand back from everyday life and see it as strange and possibly in need of some adjustments, and so on.

Both of these suggest something about the kind of directions that this movement is going in: one of *democratisation* of the way we live - from the political system right down to relationships within the family; one of self-created free spaces - a thousand different initiatives within which people meet each other on different terms from the usual workplace or dole queue; and one of skills-based self-empowerment - where people start slowly to take control

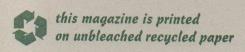
a spiter's web
of little networks
and groups

of their own lives by acquiring whatever skills (technical, psychological, organising, communicating or whatever) that they need to do so.

This is obviously far too little to say about all of this, but it may be enough to give an idea of what appears to hold together things as different as Rainbow Gatherings, organic farming, Green politics, urban co-ops, environmental activists, hippies and crusties, meditation and magic, anarchists and feminists, Third World solidarity groups and the alternative press - a spider's web of little networks and groups, projects and initiatives, onceoff events and gatherings that represent, insofar as anything does, the hope that the next century will be an improvement on this one.

The next issue of An Caorthann will explore some of these areas better (see page 4); sharpen your typewriters!

Laurence Cox is lecturer in sociology at WIT







The reader strikes back

Responses to last issue's questionnaire

One of the difficulties of supposedly participatory organisations is that often people don't want to participate. We know people are interested in An Caorthann, by the fact that we've got rid of all remaining copies of the first four issues if nothing else. But a meagre seven people answered back. Should we draw the conclusion that we're keeping everyone else happy? (Interestingly, there was some willingness in the replies to consider writing for or distributing An Caorthann; the reasons given for not having become involved already varied from shyness to lack of time to "Don't tempt me" (!)) Whatever the cause of the rela-



tive silence, though, it's interesting to have a look at what did come back.

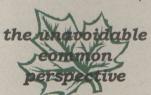
The numbers aren't statistically significant, but they still offered some surprises: almost all were men, only one was from Dublin (Tallaght), and only half were Green Party members. If these figures mean anything, they suggest that we are reaching some at least of the wider green-alternative movement (but why so few women?)

Which way? Which way?

The favoured reads were the news, feature and focus sections, and Greenbelt; the least read is the networking section (maybe it's old news to the people who wrote?) Views on news / information varied, from a desire for more news to suggestions for investigative

reporting and regional contacts to a recognition that the nature of the magazine made this unlikely. Some people wanted more local news, others felt we were still too parochial. Most (not all) found *An Caorthann* readable (which at least suggests we're not going over people's heads), and there were a variety of suggestions on physical layout.

But the biggest divergences (as might be expected) covered the kinds of themes and directions people wanted for An Caorthann. The most interesting is the disagreement as to whether its role should be external ("seeking common ground with exploited groups of people", attracting nonmembers to the Green Party, or even "to educate the general public") or internal ("to promote non-mainstream thinking and action on political and Political issues", "to stimulate thought & debate", down to "training in effective communication techniques"). There were also, of course, some replies that suggested a reaction against what a more perceptive reader described as "the unavoidable common per-



spective" - being a magazine for a movement, An Caorthann is unavoidably coming from a point of view (like any other medium) and selecting themes of interest to the movement. As one reader put it, our role should be "to point out that the emperor's new clothes are well

worn, clearly and unequivocally, and to call a spade a spade, particularly if it is to be used for turning over stones."

More depth! More issues!

On the whole, the negative comments were ones we can live with, failings that are down to the fact that, in the realistic words of one reply, "with only 4 publications per year and voluntary labour, there's not a lot you can do

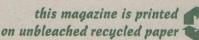


about that." It was heartening to see calls for "longer, more in-depth" articles, that "infrequent appearances" were cited as one of the negative features, and that An Caorthann was liked by some at least for its "alternativeness". Perhaps most importantly for us, though, is people listing among the things they liked most "the fact that it exists" and the comment "Reduces my isolation". At the end of the day, that's what we're here for

Obviously there was a lot more material in the replies than fits into one page here, but we'll be looking at all the responses when we meet to decide what happens to *An Caorthann* now and where it goes next. At the end of the day, of course, the magazine is only as good as the people who write for it, so if you want to push it in a particular direction, the best way to do that is to pick up your pen....

Laurence Cox









L'ast word

Over the years, An Caorthann has had something of a policy of not accepting creative writing - not because we have anything against it, but simply because Ireland is coming down with it and with places to publish it, while the space for thought on the direction of the green and alternative movement is at a premium (even most other alternative magazines have little interest). But when John Seymour sent us the following poem, with the suggestion that we might "care to break new ground", we could hardly refuse.

For the uninitiated, John Seymour is one of the founders of the alternative movement, having started, with his wife and four children, to practice self-sufficiency on five acres in the Britain of the mid-1950s. Later, his books were a tremendous practical resource for the intentional communities and "dropouts" of the 1960s and 1970s who, as he wrote, "would like to be self-supporting, but haven't the faintest idea how to set about it".

I was startled and delighted last year to find that he was still at it only a few miles from where I work, in the "School for Self-sufficiency" (Killowen, New Ross, Co. Wexford; tel. 051-388156), which runs courses teaching these fundamental skills. Delighted particularly to make that generational connection: having met, over the past few years, many left, alternative or green activists from the 60s and 70s generations, and seeing a new generation coming up after my own to surprise us with their own creativity, it's a "wonderful fact" (as Tom Wolfe said of finding Neal Cassady) to find the person who wrote the books my parents used for their gardening and preserving still at it around the corner. A living movement needs to be able to make this kind of contact and to see itself existing in time as well as space.

So here's another kind of contact: John writes "I have been entrusted with transcribing verses by various animals of late years (animals cannot write you see), but the other day all the animals asked me to transcribe the enclosed verses. Maybe there is something in what they say!"

The animals talk back to mankind

When you have poisoned the air
And when you have swept the seas bare
When the woods where we roam
And have long made our home
You've destroyed so they're no longer there ...

And when you've eroded the soil
And the last whale has been turned into oil
By the bold Japanese
And the tireless Chinese
Have put the last tiger to boil

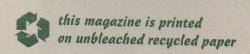
For the soup which they think makes 'em randy
When at loving they're not very handy,
And rhinoceros horn
They find better than porn
More effective than whisky or brandy

When the last duck has been shot from the sky
And the last goose has been sentenced to die
The last swamp has been drained
Where the waterfowl reigned
The last pigeon been turned into pie

The last elephant driven to death
The last hippo has drawn her last breath
The last free-flying fowl,
The last hawk, the last owl,
The last lizard or snake of the heath

When you've ransacked the Earth in your greed
And smothered us all with your seed
So of Life we're bereft
You're the only ones left
To whom will you turn in your need?

When the Angel of Death beats his drum And an Archangel reads out the sum Of all your misdeeds You'll soon find where it leads You'll discover that your turn has come!





An Gorthann

Projects & papers

Zines received: Common Ground

Like the fire at Cranagh Castle, it seemed the end of an era to many people when they picked up the May 96 issue of <u>Common Ground</u> only to find that it was to be the last. In its various incarnations, <u>Common Ground</u> has been the flagship of the Irish alternative press for nearly twenty years, and a mainstay of the organic farming movement in particular.

A victim of its own success In some ways the <u>Common Ground</u> project has been undermined by its own success: other initiatives that it gave birth to drew off energies and readers, and the themes it raised spread across the alternative and mainstream media. Even in its last issue, it planted a final "seed" with the call for a successor to the Mustard Seed gathering [see p. 10].

The editors write that the greater presence of its themes "would be a fact of life for anyone offering to take over <u>Common Ground</u>, or begin a similar magazine to fill that niche in the market, such as it is", and this is certainly true. There is still some space for "catch-all" magazines that help people to move out of isolation and find their own voice, such as the excellent new <u>Catalyst</u>, but it is hard to see any such

magazine filling the role <u>Common Ground</u> played when there was nowhere else. Other new magazines, like the equally exciting <u>Sheela-na-Gig</u>, are more focussed in scope, reflecting the deepening of interest in particular areas. For ourselves, we have always set out to be a "second-order" magazine that tries to move beyond self-expression to real exchange between the different parts of the movement.

The right to die

An institution like <u>Common Ground</u>, or any other, can become unsustainable for many reasons: financial, psychological, political, historical. The editors have the right to demand "the right to die", as they put it: a movement cannot run on the basis of people doing things they no longer want or are able to do, just because of our expectations. Instead of dependence on other people to do things for us, we have to keep asking ourselves: "Do I want this enough to do it myself?" Or, to quote another set of "famous last words",

"All conditioned things are impermanent: with mindfulness, strive on!"

Laurence Cox

New magazines

Since our last issue, Common Ground has folded [see article above]. At the same time, four (count them) new magazines have seen the light. Something is happening....

Catalyst: Empowerment – Ecology – Evolution: Dance, Campaigns, Rainbow, Politics, Health, Spirit. A medium for expression and information exchange in relation to empowerment and evolutionary activities happening in contemporary Ireland.

15 Butterfield Close, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14. Tel.: (01) 8333618 "Worth £1.5"!

Gaia: The ecology magazine. The Ecology Society, University College Galway.

E-mail: ecosoc@ucg.ie

Pobal an Dúlra: Weekly environment and social justice news. Impressively well-informed, up-to-date and radical. 10 Upper Camden Street, Dublin 2.

Tel.: (01) 855 0965; Fax: (01) 855 6798; E-mail: allenr@bluewin.ch

"Free or donation": they need donations or subs to keep going. Also available in Dublin in Down to Earth (S. George's St.), and the Dublin Food Coop, and maybe by email.

Sheela-na-Gig: A new magazine published in Ireland encompassing the various aspects of Earth-based spirituality in the magical Celtic isles.

Rath Grain, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim.

Subs #3.00 (Bealtaine + Samhain); single issue #1.50 + SAE (38p)

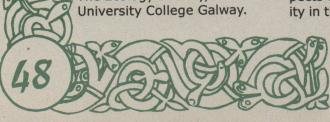
And IOFGA would like you all to know that *Organic Matters'* phone number is (01) 830-7996, and that the wholesale cost is 45p.

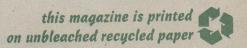
Sinestra: A new Dublin left magazine, expected to see the light of day on 21 December. From what we've heard it should be innovative, libertarian and alternative.

9 Belgrave Road, Rathmines, Dublin 6.

E-mail: izpunk@hotmail.com

Price £1 per issue, or £3.50 subscription for four issues.





Title: An Caorthann, No. 5

Organisation: Green Party

Date: 1998

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