

Don't vote: It only encourages them

European elections

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Contents

FORGET THE POLITICS... JUST GET THE IMAGE RIGHT 3
WHO HAS THE POWER? 3
WHO WANTS A BOSS? 4

THERE ARE so many parachutes in the sky we can no longer see the sun. They are dropping ‘personalities’ into the June Euro-election. All the major parties in the 26 counties have selected ‘names’ to run for them. Fianna Fáil got Olive Braiden from the Rape Crisis Centre; Labour got RTE’s Orla Guerin; Fine Gael got the Ranchers’ leader, Alan Gillis.

None had been members of these parties until literally days before their selection. Olive Braiden had previously been out canvassing for Mary Robinson (an ex-member of Labour) and Frances Fitzgerald of Fine Gael. Now she is going for the hat trick with Albert’s gang. Orla Guerin has had no known involvement in party politics. Alan Gillis was too busy pleading for rich farmers to be given yet more EC money to find time to join a party.

Yet they all ended up as party candidates. The only reason they were asked to run was that they are well known. Not because their politics are well known, not because they even have any known political commitment – but simply because their names are well known.

FORGET THE POLITICS... JUST GET THE IMAGE RIGHT

Braiden is supposed to give Fianna Fáil a more ‘liberal’ image in Dublin [while they run Catholic bigots like Eamonn O’Cuiv for a Galway Dáil seat]. Lane’s job is to hold on to the big farmer vote that Fine Gael has enjoyed since the 1930’s. And Guerin is helping Labour to build a new image, the ‘modern’ party that put Mary Robinson into the Phoenix Park.

Democratic Left didn’t want to be left out either. They are running Pat ‘triple mandate’ Rabbitte because their opinion polls suggested he would get a higher vote than sitting MEP Des Geraghty. With all of them it is a case of personality being a damn sight more important than policies.

All of this shows the contempt that the parties treat the voters with. There will be little time given over to discussing manifestoes or policies. There will be a lot of time given over to what are no more than personality contests. Maybe the Workers Party should try to recapture a few of their old votes by standing down Tomás McGiolla and getting Bono or Gay Byrne to run instead. Or Sinn Féin could ask one of the Wolfe Tones, and the Progressive Democrats could fly in Clint Eastwood.

Anarchists are not taking part in this charade, we are not be calling for a vote for anyone. Not this time, not ever. It is because we are democrats that we do not take part in parliamentary elections. Sounds odd? The key question is what do we mean by democracy?

WHO HAS THE POWER?

The right to the vote was part of the hard won struggles of workers (and suffragettes!) over the last couple of hundred years. Obviously it is preferable to live in a parliamentary democracy rather than a dictatorship. Even the most flawed democracies are forced to concede rights that dictatorships do not, such as relative independence for trade unions, the right to limited demonstrations, a certain amount of free speech, etc.

However the real purpose of parliament is not to ensure the country is run according to the wishes of all the people, cherishing all their views equally. Parliament instead provides a democratic facade beyond which the real business of managing capitalism goes on.

A seemingly endless series of business scandals, from BCCI to Goldman, gives us some idea how the real decisions are made in the boardrooms rather than the debating chambers. In the unlikely event of a government getting elected which goes “too far” in the eyes of the bosses they are quick to use any means necessary to remove it.

The best known example of this is perhaps the removal of the democratically elected Allende government in Chile in 1970. They had attempted to bring in a limited package of reforms and nationalise some of the larger American industries. The result was a military coup backed by the CIA in 1973.

WHO WANTS A BOSS?

Anarchists do not believe the sort of change we want can come about through the good actions of a few individuals. We have always argued that the liberation of the working class can only be achieved through the action of the working class.

This idea is obviously the complete opposite to the parliamentary idea. We do not seek a few leaders, good, bad or indifferent to sort out the mess that is capitalism. Indeed we argue constantly against any ideas that make it seem such elites are necessary. Voting for rulers (whether you do so “critically” or any other way) is supporting the idea that society should be divided into rulers and ruled. We want to end that division just as much as we want to end the division into bosses and workers.

The alternative we support is anarchism, where society is organised to benefit the many and not just the profiteering few. It is an alternative where anyone effected by a decision will be able to have a say in making that decision. Power will come from the bottom up. A system of workplace and community councils, federated nationally and eventually internationally, will ensure that this is done in an organised, efficient and truly democratic way.

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