

A taste of 1960's Mississippi in 1990's Ireland

Workers Solidarity Movement

1994

THE ATTACK on Travellers in Glenamaddy, Co Galway last October was a shocking exposure of the extent of the racist attitudes that Irish people have towards Travellers. In Glenamaddy, a small town in east Galway, the Four Winds pub has a policy of serving Travellers. This is such an unusual policy, especially in Galway, that large numbers of Travellers regularly travelled long distances to drink there.

This infuriated the local bigots, who own the other pubs and the shops in Glenamaddy. They got together with the local cops, of course, and opposed the renewal of the Four Winds licence in early October. However to everyone's surprise, the Judge overruled the objections and renewed the licence.

The reaction of the bigots to this turn of events was fast and furious. Travellers drinking in the Four Winds following a family event were attacked in a vicious and orchestrated way reminiscent of a Klu Klux Klan attack. On the pretext of looking for two Traveller girls who had supposedly held up a local garage with a knife, the Gardai barged into the pub, lined up all the Travellers, took their names and then threw them out one by one to a lynch mob of waiting locals.

The Travellers were attacked with clubs and hurley sticks and several of them were injured. Their vans were overturned and wrecked. Needless to say, no-one was charged with assault or damage to property. Far from it, these racist bigots were on the TV, justifying their attack. On 'Questions and Answers', Fianna Fáil's Charlie McCreevy said that Travellers should not be allowed to drink in large numbers because they posed a threat to the community. Clearly, the bigots of Glenamaddy are not alone in their racist views.

In November, Dublin County Council dumped several tons of foul smelling fertiliser within feet of a large camp of Travellers in Clondalkin. These were the same Travellers who had been evicted last June with a huge show of Gardai force and a great deal of gratuitous violence. They had since refused to move from the roadside where they been evicted to until the Council provided them with a proper site. Clearly the fertiliser was the Council's way of trying to move them again.

This racism against Travellers is so widespread that many people do not even recognise it as such. The Workers Solidarity Movement are totally opposed to the racism Travellers are routinely subjected to, and fully support Travellers right to organise against it. It is an issue that requires a great deal of support from the left and all progressive forces because on their own Travellers are too small a minority and too isolated to win.

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Retrieved on 15th November 2021 from struggle.ws
Published in *Workers Solidarity* No. 41 – Summer 1994.

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