

For starters (WS43)

10 years of the WSM

Workers Solidarity Movement

1994

IN LATE September 1984 five anarchists, three from Dublin and two from Cork decided to launch the Workers Solidarity Movement. This was certainly a major undertaking for such a small number of people. Workers Solidarity began publication five weeks later. The first editorial introduced the new organisation: “Are there not enough organisations trying to change society? What makes the Workers Solidarity Society so different?”

“We are different, very different. Unlike so many others we do not believe the end justifies the means. We say the means you use will shape the society you create. We want a free and socialist society, and we have to organise in a like manner.

“We are anarchists. We are socialists. You can’t have one without the other because they are one and the same thing. Socialism is not a collection of reforms and minor changes. It means a lot more than that. It means building something completely new. And you build everything from the bottom up – socialism is no exception.

“We won’t be trying to take over the state structures. Government, the existing civil service, police, army and so on are there to meet the needs of a capitalist society. They cannot be turned round to serve socialism, they were not designed for that. The state is only necessary when a minority wants to rule.

“Workers will create their own structures to bring a new society into being. Structures that are efficient and geared towards mass involvement and democratic decision making. All of this is not just around the corner. But unless we know what we want and how to get it we will be stuck with the chaos and inequality of the present system with its continual series of crises.”

Over the last decade the WSM has grown and developed policies based on its anti-authoritarian and socialist views. A lot of time went into discussing and debating the sort of society we want and how to achieve it. We certainly did not want to copy the “shepherd & sheep” model used by so many Leninist groups. We were determined that there would be no reliance of one or two leaders for ideas, that every member would be genuinely able to influence the course of the

WSM. Our goal was to to popularise anarchism and fight for the creation of a society based on its principles: individual freedom, collective management of society by its workers, participatory democracy.

Those aims remains the same. Producing Workers Solidarity, publishing pamphlets and hosting public meetings is part of our activity. But we are not mere advocates of a better world, we are involved in the struggles to make things better right now. That is why WSM members have supported strikers at Pat the Baker, UCD, Dunnes Stores, the ESB and many others. That is why we helped to form the Dublin Abortion Information Campaign which brought enough people onto the streets in 1992 to defeat the government's injunction against "X" and led to the successful referenda against restrictions on abortion information and womens right to travel. We have been involved in many struggles, many more than there is space to list here.

Anarchism is the only realistic alternative to capitalism. What passed for alternatives in the past have lost most of their appeal. Stalinism is terminally ill, only hanging on by its finger nails in North Korea and Cuba. It is finished as a movement. Leninism and Trotskyism are being swept along with it into the dustbin of history. Social democracy and its Labour Parties are disgraced throughout much of the world. Within Ireland republicanism has retreated from the verbal 'socialism' it adopted in the 1980s.

While opposing the presence of the British Army and the continuing partition of the country, we have always said that the politics and methods of nationalism are wrong. We have to oppose imperialism and, at the same time, oppose the clerical nationalist laws in the South which ban divorce and abortion. We have to oppose Orange bigotry while at the same time campaigning for the complete separation of Church and State.

We do not fight for a united capitalist Ireland, neither as a 'step in the right direction' or as an end in itself. Joining the six to the twenty six counties offers nothing to working class people in either state. We have no interest in re-dividing poverty on a more 'equitable' basis. The only Ireland worth fighting for is a Workers Republic where every working class person stands to gain. The way towards such a new Ireland is the way of class struggle and mass action, taking control of our own struggles and doing it in our own class interests. This is the road to freedom. Liberty, workers control, anti-authoritarianism... if these are the sort of aims you have, then you should find out more about anarchism and the Workers Solidarity Movement.

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Retrieved on 18th November 2021 from struggle.ws
Published in *Workers Solidarity* No. 43 – Autumn 1994.

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