

Peoples' Forum 2014

'Community in a Corporate Imperium'

Inver Community Centre
Barr na Trá
Co. Mayo

Saturday
22nd Nov.
10am - 4pm

Speakers:

Dr Laurence Cox - NUIM
Dr Rory Hearne - NUIM
Leah Doherty - No Fracking Ireland
Eamon O'Brien - Croke Park Streets Committee
Maura Harrington - Shell to Sea

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Nearby Accommodation in Pullathomas:

Kilcommon Lodge: 097 84621

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<http://kilcommonlodge.ie>

"I assert, then, the divine right of the people' God's grant to Adam and his poor children for ever', to have and to hold their good green earth. And I assert the sovereignty and sanctity of the nations, which are the people embodied and organised. The nation is a natural division, as natural as the family, and as inevitable. That is one reason why a nation is holy and why an empire is not holy. A nation is knit together by natural ties, ties mystic and spiritual, and ties human and kindly; an empire is at best held together by ties of mutual interest, and at worst by brute force. The nation is the family in large; an empire is a commercial corporation in large. The nation is of God, the empire is of man – if it be not of the devil."(The Sovereign People by P.H.Pearse)

Pearse and Connolly, leaders of 1916 Rising, correctly diagnosed the imperium disease that was infecting the Irish People. The year after next we will be celebrating their centenary and the ultimate sacrifices they made to secure an Irish Nation. The last Government bankrupted the country; they were also accused of economic treason by the opposition in giving away the natural resources for a pittance. The coalition Government of the present have drawn the ire of the population on themselves by their arrogant taxation measures without any consideration for the democratic principles that should apply to a modern nation state.

The community of Kilcommon has bitter memories of how their basic human rights were trampled on the last fourteen years by successive governments. These governments succeeded in bulldozing our community in order to enforce the Shell/Corrib Gas Project on behalf of the Shell Corporation. An Bord Pleanála and the local and national government agencies failed to respond to our community's need and views. The media, both local and national, acted as cheerleaders for the government and the corporation.

We don't seem to have learned a lesson from our loss of sovereignty in 2010. Our problem erupted from the men in suits who waltzed us into recession followed by prolonged austerity. During the boom times the working class disappeared in a haze of easy money. Everyone, in general, was now middle class, except for bankers and builders and the bonus brigade who became the new aristocracy. Now, in our straightened circumstances, who is asked to carry the burden of this so called nation but the working class whose economic and social contribution are the activities that support society. "But I believe that there is really a spiritual tradition which is the soul of Ireland, the thing that makes Ireland a living Nation, and that there is really a spiritual tradition corresponding to every true nationality."(The Spiritual Nation by P.H.Pearse)

We speak here in Kilcommon of the spirit of place. The Middle Stone Age People, the first people to arrive on our shores 5000yrs. ago settled here in Kilcommon and environs. The First Farmers have left ample proof of a presence here by the ruins of their burial sites that dot the landscape. The community didn't need a Bord Pleanála inspector to inform them that building a gas refinery in their midst would be the wrong project in the wrong place. The government didn't heed their expert's advice either. The consequence of the government's intransigence was to inflict irreparable damage on this rural community

November is the month when the local community remembers Ken Saro-Wiwa. Sr. Majella McCarron, a great friend and supporter of the community of Kilcommon, worked closely with Ken on issues of justice and the environment and was compelled to campaign for the lives of the Ogoni 9, hanged on the [10th of November](#) 1995. She recognised that our struggle here in Erris with our Government and Shell had many things in common with the struggles of the Ogoni people of Nigeria. It's only right and proper that we also remember at this forum a great friend and supporter of our just cause here in Kilcommon in all the years of our struggle. Niall Harnett, an extraordinary activist and organiser, especially of the solidarity camps, did trojan work down the years that he spent in our midst. Niall's passing was a shock to one and all and I know that he is sadly missed by all who admired his indomitable spirit. I think it's appropriate to quote one of Ken Saro-Wiwa's last poems as a testament to both Ken and Niall whose lives were spent in the struggle against injustice and the political and corporate threat to the environment.

Ar dheis Dé a n- anamacha dílse.

Keep Out Of Prison

' Keep out of Prison', he wrote

'Don't get arrested anymore'.

But while the land is ravaged

And our pure air poisoned

When streams choke with pollution

Silence would be treason

Punishable by a term in prison.

Niall King November 2014

Community, history, power

Laurence Cox, MA in Community Education, Equality and Social Activism (Maynooth)

How “community” turns against us

I want to start with a paradox and a problem. Across Irish society we celebrate the importance of “the community”, but we also find that some of our worst problems come from institutions based in “the community”. Our political parties weren’t imposed from outside, but came out of national and labour struggles rooted in “the community”. We have a history of sexual abuse and violence from a church which was at the centre of “the community”. We are attacked by a police force that prides itself on its relationship to “the community”. If we live near Croke Park our lives are regularly disrupted by an organisation that talks about “community” all day long. I don’t often rate Fintan O’Toole but he puts it nicely: “It can’t be imagined that our oppressors might go to Mass, wear open-necked shirts and support the GAA.”

We know there are meanings of “community” that we do value – that express how we live with each other as equals on a daily basis, help each other out and ask for help, muck in together when there is something that needs doing, and beyond this fight to gain some real control of our own lives. But this same community is sometimes where our worst problems come from, both in the powerful institutions that start from it and in what it does to outsiders. I remember in the rural US spending some time with white Republicans and NRA supporters. They were incredibly welcoming to someone introduced by one of their own, and in many ways they were good people – they did a huge amount of voluntary work, some of it dangerous (rescuing swimmers and divers in trouble). And in defence of what they valued, they were reliable supporters of wars abroad and hostile to blacks, feminism, welfare and whatever else they saw as threatening their community.

So how do we make sense of these two faces of community?

What I want to talk about briefly is how we got here – how community came to be part of some of the best of our lives and a real source of oppression and injustice – and see if from that it is possible to get some sense of how we might find a way for community *not* to be part of the corporate imperium.

A very potted history

For most of human history we existed without states or social classes. The hunter-gatherer community is a very different thing to anything we are familiar with directly: it is nomadic, not based on land ownership. A leader in this context isn’t someone who can tell others what to do; they are someone who other people listen to (for example, in terms of when it makes sense to move camp in order to harvest particular plants or catch particular fish or animals). Conversely, when there are disagreements people tend to split up rather than fight for control. In practice the community often has several sizes: a small group to get through the worst of the winter, large seasonal gatherings for courtship and other rituals, medium-sized groups when resources are good – so it is quite a flexible thing. Lastly, there are very strong rules of supporting each other and not setting yourself apart from others. In Ireland this was the Mesolithic, the world of the first people to arrive here after the ice.

As we know this was followed by one agricultural society after another. Agricultural societies enable a surplus and hence a ruling class; because the core resource of land is fixed, this is also built into

community in various ways. As some archaeologists have observed we can see inequality and hierarchy developing through the Neolithic and Bronze Age in things like burial customs but also the physical structure of religious spaces, excluding or marginalising people to varying degrees.

At the same time, much of this was quite small scale in Ireland – Iron Age and early Christian Ireland were societies marked by sharp gender divisions, tight ethnic boundaries and steep hierarchies of class and power – but they were also very local, and this is a theme that persists through the centuries: *within* the community, our oppressors not only speak the same language, they are often neighbours and even relatives; we depend on them in very immediate and practical ways.

Colonialism and capitalism added a dimension of distance to all this – powerful and oppressive outsiders, new relationships of exploitation over long distances – but (as elsewhere) the processes of violent conquest and dispossession coexisted with processes of co-option and the repurposing of existing community structures as part of the colonial chains. Put another way, Dermot MacMurrough is as characteristic a figure as Strongbow.

Remaking the national community

I am not saying anything new by observing that Irish society remade itself in the later nineteenth century. The Famine was conveniently interpreted as being caused by multiple inheritances, and single-child inheritance spread across the country (from the richer East) in the space of about ten years. Together with the Land War this enabled a new class of farmer-proprietors to attempt to establish themselves in the capitalist market; this was always more successful for strong farmers but attempts to organise poor and subsistence farmers separately, against this logic of capitalist farming, never had any lasting success – unlike, for example, the Scandinavian countries where farmers' and workers' movements allied in powerful ways.

Only one son could inherit, and in a stereotypical family then perhaps only one daughter had a chance of marrying. What were the other eight to do? Without access to land they couldn't start a family, unless they emigrated and left "the community". The others were condemned to life as "relatives assisting", lifelong spinsters and bachelors on their brother's farm – who himself might have to wait until his forties or even fifties to inherit and thus be able to marry.

No wonder that there was a flood of religious vocations, or that post-Famine Catholicism became all about sexual control: the remaining siblings wound up policing the sexuality of the losers (those who did not inherit land and so could not have families) for the benefit of the winning brothers and sisters. Along with the viciousness of many of the institutions involved, this nasty secret at the heart of family and community was often not visible even by those who are suffering it, imposing it or benefitting from it.

So the new "traditional community" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century left its winners - the farm-inheriting sons, their wives and children - in tension with their own siblings as well as in tension with the cottiers, landless labourers and travellers who gradually ceased to exist as classes; and in tension with the new movements for women's rights with the urban poor. This was also an ethno-religious remaking of community: structured around a religion which held both this central *internal* power around sex and money and in a world where religiously defined ethnicities were struggling for their own states: Catholic-Irish, or Protestant-Unionist, or Hindu-Indian, Buddhist-Burmese and so on.

The state built around this powerbase had particular implications for social movements. As in southern

Italy, the Irish rural poor tended to line up politically behind rural notables, and attempts to organise otherwise – on a class basis, for example - were not long-lasting. Women, workers and the rural poor were all subordinated to the new alliance of rural wealth wrapped up in the green flag and waving the cross. Put another way, a strong sense of “community” was achieved but at a high cost.

Where are we now?

From the 1960s and 1970s on, this more traditional sense of “community” started to shift its position rather than simply fall apart. National capital allied with multinationals, newly-educated service classes came to identify with global capitalism and in a series of battles the power of religion as sexual control has been massively displaced by women’s and LGBTQ movements.

But the double-edged nature of “community” hasn’t ended – our managerial elites still boast of their community links and yak about sports, while others still defer to doctors and teachers, hope for jobs from the local wealthy or resent the feeling that other towns and countries are being given more. In life history exercises many students from the Midlands in particular say that “in my community everyone is the same”, and believe it. In many, many institutions people prefer to turn a blind eye to abuse and bullying rather than step out of their comfort zones; and a surprising number of people *do* still vote for the same parties that impose the austerity they are suffering under, even today.

We see the effects in movement struggles too. On the one hand community-based struggles are the most powerful in Ireland, from Carnsore to Rosspoint and now fracking and water charges. At the same time there is a massive fear of being different, standing out - and so checking out what way everyone else is going to jump before saying or doing anything, meaning that on rare occasions we get massive, collective protests and the rest of the time it is left to the usual suspects.

The fear of being different is partly rooted in our long history of violence and trauma inflicted *within* the community, and partly on our fear that other people’s support in our daily lives is conditional on our not saying anything that might give offence. Something similar lies behind the fear of confrontation, the tendency to try and avoid situations where we might have to articulate disagreement. Seamus Heaney was talking about the North, but he could equally have been talking about much everyday life in the Republic: “Whatever you say, say nothing”.

Where to from here?

For many people in Ireland – not everyone by a long shot – community represents at a very immediate and practical level much of what makes life worth living, as well as much of what makes it possible: place, family, friends, mutual support and a sense of meaning. At the same time it can easily become exclusionary to outsiders, oppressive to insiders and a source of support for powerful and destructive institutions – the corporate imperium as expressed by your friendly neighbourhood Guard, county councillor, local journalist, man-of-the-people businessman, your brother-in-law, and all the rest of them.

How do we get out of this? How can communities remake themselves in struggle? Erris has a lot to teach the rest of Ireland in this respect, and it is hugely important that the effort is being made to share what has been learnt with communities facing fracking in particular. I know about this from other times and places, but at the simplest it is that under tension we come to see more clearly who people really are. Sometimes we lament how “divisive” this is – meaning that it is better to go through our lives knowing just what certain people are like but not being able to say it openly. In struggle we get to see who jumps

which way and it is often fairly clear why. At the same time we have to look at ourselves and see which of the things we do are really expressions of the good community that we want, and which are not.

In other places and spaces we make new communities, starting from a commitment to a different kind of society: communities of activists, lesbian communities, communities growing around alternative education or food politics, and so on. Many of these turn out to have the same inner tensions and the same struggles to go through – do we want “community” at the cost of everything else, or are we going to challenge the people who want to use community as a cover for their own careers, abusive relationships, exclusionary behaviour and all the rest of it?

I want to finish with a note of hope and confidence. *Human beings make community*: it is what we do, how we are, literally part of our DNA. This means too that we *remake* community, when things change. After the Land War and the Congested Districts Commission, people on Clare Island went from being highly mobile (shifting between the island and the mainland, getting evicted here or squatting there) to settling down in one place and making a new kind of fixed community. After inner-city families were moved out to Ballyfermot, Ballymun or Darndale, they had to remake communities in these new places; and it didn't take them long. Even under the kinds of pressures those people were under, they did it. I think we need to lose some of our fear that if we step out of line, try to change things, challenge the corporate imperium, we will lose our community. The community-making part of us is pretty resilient.

On the other side, the corporate imperium only works because it can be parasitic on community. Capitalism cannot pay for all the care work that is needed; that is why it likes to keep women caring for children, sick people and the old. In our jobs, we do far more than is written on the contract (this is what we make clear when we work-to-rule and withdraw goodwill). We don't do it for our bosses: we do it for the people we work with and for our own self-respect. We look after each other, we live together and we do what needs to be done. Capitalism, Marx said, is a vampire: it lives on the blood of others. There is life without it; and that is why, once in a while, the peasants get together and burn down the castle.

Democracy usurped: corporate takeover, community resistance and the movement for a New Republic

Paper for the People's Forum 2014 '*Community in A Corporate Imperium*'

Dr Rory Hearne, Department of Geography, Maynooth University, November 2014

"After Ireland is free, says the patriot who won't touch Socialism, we will protect all classes, and if you won't pay your rent you will be evicted same as now. But the evicting party, under command of the sheriff, will wear green uniforms and the Harp without the Crown, and the warrant turning you out on the roadside will be stamped with the arms of the Irish Republic.

...And when you cannot find employment, and, giving up the struggle of life in despair, enter the Poorhouse, the band of the nearest regiment of the Irish army will escort you to the Poorhouse door to the tune of St. Patrick's Day....

Therefore, I say, let us organise as a class to meet our masters and destroy their mastership; organise to drive them from their hold upon public life through their political power; organise to wrench from their robber clutch the land and workshops on and in which they enslave us; organise to cleanse our social life from the stain of social cannibalism, from the preying of man upon his fellow man."

The words above from Irish revolutionary James Connolly echo loudly in the 21st Century Irish Republic where its people and her communities have been re-colonised and enslaved by corporate capitalism, austerity, debt, unemployment, poverty, political corruption and the European financial system. This paper uses Connolly's framework and ideas for community struggle today attempting to achieve the aims of an Ireland of democracy, social justice, equality, where people's needs and rights are met. The paper outlines how Ireland's political establishment and managerial class have enabled the re-colonisation, through financial capitalism, of Ireland. It also points to new forms of community and political resistance that characterise the current moment in Irish political, economic and social life as one of a shattering of the social contract that has held the Republic together since Independence. It suggests that the emerging resistance of Irish communities to austerity and corruption carries in its heart the unfinished social and political revolution of Connolly and others in the early decades of twentieth century Ireland. Overall then, this paper argues that a New Republic can be achieved through a combination of community struggle and new 'Left' political movements based on the values of democracy, respect for diversity, and coherent alternative policies to corporate rule, austerity and financial capitalism.

Democracy, Communities and Neoliberal Austerity in Ireland

There is no meaningful democracy in Ireland for communities. That is, if we mean by democracy rule by the people. Ireland, a century after freeing itself from hundreds of years of colonization, has once again become a captured state. It has been re-colonised by multinational corporations. And once again its sovereignty, resources, its people - were handed over to a foreign power by the Irish political establishment and management classes. Our gas in Mayo, our wind, our fish, our motorways, our housing - have all been handed over to the control and ownership of private corporations. They tried to sell off the national forests but were stopped by protests. Government and its cheerleading elite are currently in the process of trying to commodify -that is, turn into a monetized asset that will someday be privatized - our most precious natural resource and the fundamental human right, water. But here they have come unstuck and face the most significant popular resistance in the history of the Irish state. Here the people have risen and screamed a collective 'no' - no more.

Through six vicious years of austerity the establishment political parties and managerial classes sacrificed and destroyed our community services, health services, special needs assistants, disability services, careers, lone parents - they destroyed our society so that the European banking system would remain intact. They destroyed our society so that the billionaire bondholders would get their gambling debts repaid. They destroyed our society so that the German and French banks would get their speculative losses repaid. But they did make an enormous effort to save, protect and defend - not the most vulnerable in our society - but

the most powerful, the most wealthy, – the multinationals. They went to Europe and stood firm – to defend our low corporation tax rate. They did not care that they were in the process of forcing an extra child in every five children in the Irish state into poverty (the child poverty rate in Ireland went from 18% in 2008 to 28% in 2013). They would ensure that the wealth could keep flowing out of Ireland.

But this goes back further. Ireland's model of development has primarily focused on achieving employment through Foreign Direct Investment and multinational investment in Ireland. So government policy has since, the 1970s, focused on making Ireland as attractive as possible for corporate investment. It has wanted to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to make a profit by corporate investors. What that has meant is that anything which gets in the way of this is removed – be that citizen's rights or democracy. And the issue with creating this positive environment for FDI, as can be seen in developing countries all over the world, is that it is all about making the entire economic, political and social system in the country a 'positive environment' for business. And so the planning system and local democracy is oriented and captured for the needs of business. Communities are excluded.

The delivery and planning of public services or infrastructure is planned according to the priority of business needs - not local communities. The law is used to defend the interests of corporations - not communities. The most stark example of this has been the actions of successive governments in bulldozing the community of North West Mayo in order to enforce the Corrib Gas Project on behalf of the Shell corporation. Our planning processes and local government have failed to respond to community needs and views while the media, supposedly a cornerstone of democracy, has, in the main, played a cheerleading role to government and the corporations. But this is not unique to Ireland.

Neoliberalism means commodification and privatization of everything

The mainstream political and economic explanations of the causes of community destruction, the decline in democracy, poverty, rising inequality, and environmental degradation include 'backward' communities stopping 'progress', the failure to allow corporate and entrepreneurial freedom, restrictive planning laws, labour and environmental laws, too high taxes on capital and wealth, poor government decision making, mismanagement and overspending. However, neo-Marxist geographers like David Harvey (2013) and sociologists Hardt & Negri (2004) make the case that it is the neoliberal, financialised, capitalist globalization system that is the root cause of these social and environmental catastrophes. This extreme form of capitalism – neoliberalism and financialisation – started in Pinochet's Chile and then Reagan and Thatcher implemented it in the US and the UK. In the face of declining profitability and the crisis of capitalism in the 1970s the aim of the wealthy and elite was to reduce the share of income (wealth) that went to workers and to increase that returning to capital and the elite. They also sought to reduce the power and influence of trade unions and the working class socialist organisations in society, politics and the economy. At the heart of the neoliberal ideology and policy was the aim to find new ways for corporations and capital to amass wealth. And one key aspect was to convert public goods or assets like public services (health, housing, transport and education) and natural resources (gas, water and seeds) into financialised commodities that could be bought, traded and sold by corporations. Indeed at the heart of this project of neoliberal capitalism is the commodification of everything. Everything is to be turned into something that can be bought and sold, traded on markets, profited from, commercialized by private corporations.

Neoliberalism is about the utopia of individualized consumerism whereby everything is controlled and sold by corporations. Your existence is commodified through corporate takeover. You must pay for everything – from the air you breathe to the water you drink, your health services, your housing – and increasingly it will be paid to private corporations. The natural resources in our communities no longer belong to the communities or people of a nation. They are transferred to corporate ownership. Values of solidarity, public good, and co-operation are replaced with competition, individualism, commercialism and materialism.

Disaster Capitalism in Ireland

Naomi Klein in her 2007 book *Shock Doctrine* has used an interesting term 'disaster capitalism' to describe the way in which the elites use crises to further intensify exploitation and the commodification of everything by private corporations. We can see this clearly in Ireland where the government elite, International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European core governments of Germany and others enforced an extreme version of neoliberal austerity on to the Irish people in order to protect the bondholders and large European financial banks. Irish Governments imposed on its people one of the most

severe economic and social adjustments in the current European crisis. A series of austerity Budgets implemented from 2008 to 2013 entailed cumulative cuts to public spending, social welfare and raising of taxes, predominantly on middle and low income households, of over €30bn. The bailout of the private banking sector has cost the Irish state €64bn - the highest in Europe.

The overriding government policy objective was to show the international markets and foreign investors that the Irish state will enforce on its people whatever is needed and will ensure the corporate profit making system can continue uninterrupted by democracy or citizens' welfare. And so democracy in Ireland is dead as the Irish state enacts its primary role to ensure international multinationals, financial markets and bondholders and the domestic privileged elite remain in control and continue to grow in prosperity while working people and poor are dispossessed of their natural resources, public services, wages and community services.

The truth is the Irish did protest the crisis

Ireland has been held up as an example by the international political and financial elite as a successful neoliberal and austerity model that maintained social order and acceptance of the necessity of austerity and financial sector bailouts. Enda Kenny proudly boasted in Time Magazine how he managed to keep social peace during a massive economic adjustment. And so the dominant narrative is that the Irish did not protest at any scale during the neoliberalism of the Celtic Tiger or the crisis and austerity. The truth is that the Irish did not passively accept austerity. Over 100,000 people attended ICTU marches in 2009 and 2010. In 2011 the people decimated Fianna Fail and elected Labour and Fine Gael on the promise of "mending the pieces of a fractured society, a broken economy and to provide a sense of collective hope in our shared future". While the promises were subsequently reneged upon, the large trade unions (who supported Labour in government) remained quiet. And in the absence of leadership from the established opposition a new citizen action emerged that was determined to protest. From the Ballyhea Says No to Bondholder Bailout weekly march in Cork, disadvantaged communities who were being decimated disproportionately from the cuts in Dublin, Occupy, the on-going Shell to Sea protests, anti-fracking protests, and local hospital protests in Waterford and Galway. There were disability groups, youth groups such as *We're Not Leaving*, lone parents, Special Needs Assistants and the successful protests against plans to sell off the national forests. April 2012 saw the largest protest, and the foundations for the water charges campaign, when half the population refused to pay the household charge. The socialists, independents and community groups led the campaign despite huge media vilification. Indeed, by September 2012 there was still a 40 per cent non-payment rate nationally. However, the transfer of power to the Revenue Commissioners to collect the charge meant the campaign was defeated as people had no choice but to pay it. And then the popular revolt took place in the anti-water charges campaign. I will now provide a more in-depth investigation of two community movements in that offer interesting reflections for communities and struggles for democracy and survival.

Ripping the Hearts Out of Our Communities

The struggles by some of Dublin's most disadvantaged populations against harsh regimes of neoliberalism and austerity are interesting to explore as part of a growing global movement of a 'cry and demand' for a *right to the city*. In September 2009 austerity began its destruction of community development in Ireland. The Government announced the closure of the Community Development Projects (CDPs) and their merger with Local Partnership companies. Funding for community development was reduced from €84.7 million in 2008 to €75million in 2009. The merger would entail a significant diminution of the autonomy of local communities to decide the nature of the work of the CDPs, as it gave local authorities, who played a key role in Partnership companies, greater decision making. This placed the entire community development infrastructure under threat as local authorities had shown themselves to be dismissive and often openly hostile to community development activism. In order to receive any state funding in 2010 the CDPs had to agree to the merger process. Faced with this assault on their communities some community development workers and local projects took up the leadership of opposition to these proposals by organising a campaign at local and national level in an alliance with other community groups and the trade union SIPTU. The injustice and significance of the proposals was outlined by the inspiring community worker Rita Fagan:

"These are community driven projects that continually work to weave and strengthen the social fabric of disadvantaged communities in the face of huge threats by the withdrawal and abandonment of both public and private services. Community based organisations have become the final line of defence for many vulnerable residents. These organisations help maintain some semblance of dignity for residents in face of

acute poverty. Many community based projects are delivering services at a fraction of the cost it would take the state to deliver them. What kind of society would withdraw services that offer a vital form of social protection to vulnerable families while investing billions of the tax payers' money to prop up the bankers and developers who have failed this society and brought it to economic collapse?"

The campaign against the proposals included the largest public demonstration held by these communities in decades, with over 12,000 attending a protest in Dublin City Centre, and weekly protests at the constituency office of the Minister for Community Affairs. In December 2009, however, the funding for community development 2010 was cut to €67.5million. This resulted in local projects having to reduce workers' hours, make workers redundant, and reduce spending on community initiatives and maintenance of community buildings. The government implemented the merger proposals in January 2010 but granted some concessions including the flexibility of local arrangements that would allow communities retain some influence on the work of the projects. Through 2010 the communities fought to retain the maximum autonomy within the merger process, particularly retaining the emphasis on community development work. However, by 2014 funding for community development had been reduced to 47.7m – a 43% reduction on the 2008 figure. Communities continue to resist through the *Spectacle of Defiance* and the *Housing Action Now* campaigns.

Faced with these challenges a small number of Dublin's communities tried to experiment with new ways of struggle. One inspiring and effective example is the Human Rights Based approach taken by the disadvantaged community of Dolphin House in Dublin's South West Inner city. They successfully challenged aspects of poor housing conditions and achieved urban regeneration planning based on community rights. The universalism of the concept of human dignity associated with human rights meant that the Dolphin House community was able to garner significant public and media support for their campaign by mobilising a public outrage at the indignity of their substandard housing conditions. It also drew on the public belief in the necessity of social rights such as housing being available to people. The international rights frameworks also played a central role in empowering these marginalised tenants to believe that they were justified in taking political action that demanded improvements to their situation. It inspired and motivated them. It gave them the courage to speak publicly and engage in public action beyond what they were willing to do previously. The HRBA enabled them to believe that they had a right to their city, and through public action they could achieve that right (Hearne & Kenna, 2014).

But the evidence also shows that the rights framework on its own could not have achieved the gains made. It was the way in which the HRBA was implemented through community development and critical, public, political action that empowered the community to use rights in a transformative manner. The Dolphin community did not rely on institutional human rights frameworks but instead developed their own political agency to directly challenge state neoliberalism.

The concepts of human rights and the right to the city are deeply contested. They contain a potential for radical development but also for cooptation. Oppressed and marginalized communities have defined the right to the city as a struggle for human dignity and social justice. This includes the right to adequate standards of living, housing, community facilities, participation in decision making, health, education, employment, safety, and a decent income. These radical formulations of rights challenge the liberal, juridical rights discourse that protects the wealthy and powerful. Their campaign supports the contention while such rights might exist in institutional frameworks they will be achieved in practice only to the extent that the excluded fight to create them through social and political action (Harvey, 2013; Marcuse, 2012).

Poolbeg/Dublin Incinerator Campaign

In 2004 when it became clear that a massive incinerator was planned by Dublin City Council for the Poolbeg peninsula (which is located in Dublin Bay right beside the communities of Ringsend, Irishtown and Sandymount in Dublin's south inner city) the community began to get organized to oppose it. Community consultations were held but in reality were just tokenistic information sharing and the project proceeded to the planning stage despite community objections. As part of the planning process the community collected a record 3,000 signatures of objections and submitted them to An Bord Pleanála. An Oral Hearing was held but the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and An Bord Pleanála went ahead and granted the incinerator, which will be the largest in Europe, licenses and permission. An Bord Pleanála made it clear that any concerns regarding air and water pollution were unfounded and that the size of the plant was suitable. This was despite the fact that no research was carried out into the potential health implications of the incinerator. The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the assessment upon which An Bord Pleanála granted their license, did not contain a proper assessment anywhere of the possible health impacts on those who live in the vicinity. One recommendation made by the board's inspector that the plant should be reduced in capacity by one sixth to 500,000 tonnes was overruled. The incinerator is now being developed as a Public Private

Partnership between Dublin City Council and private US energy multinational, Covanta. The community complained to the European Commission in 2010 in relation to financial and contract award irregularities and the construction of the incinerator was delayed. But, unsurprisingly, the Commission granted it approval and a new contract was signed between DCC and Covanta this year. The incinerator operator, US company Covanta, regularly breaches dioxins levels in its incinerators in the US. For example, the US Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) fined Covanta \$355,000 "as the result of a violation of permit limits for dioxin emissions at the Wallingford (Covanta) facility" and for "violations of permit limits for ammonia emissions at this facility. The DEP Commissioner said, "in these two cases, there were clear violations of air pollution control requirements that were established to protect the quality of our air and the health of our residents." The new contract signed for the incinerator breaches its original planning permission in two areas. It is now taking waste from all over Ireland - not just from the Dublin region, and the contract with Covanta has been extended from 25 to 40 years. Significantly also, the Irish government is now contributing €44m to the PPP project of public funding from the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund. This combined with 97million from Dublin City Council provides a total of 150million of public money into a project that is anti community, anti-democratic and will simply serve the profits of Covanta.

The mass-burn toxic incinerator is illogical in this period of Climate change as it is anti-recycling of waste and will destroy sustainable waste management in Ireland by reducing the amount of waste going to recycling, composting and waste recovery. This is also another clear example of the destruction of democracy at a community level. The elected representatives of the Dublin people - the Dublin city councillors - recently voted 50 to 2 against the decision of City Council Manager to go ahead with the contract with Covanta. But they were overruled and ignored. So much for local democracy! But the community is again campaigning and resisting. They are using a multi-pronged strategy of trying to stop the project through the courts, applying political pressure to elected representatives and protesting. Recently the protests blocked the Point Depot roundabout for two hours and stopped traffic in Dublin City. There is a long struggle ahead and much this community could learn from the Shell to Sea campaign in Mayo.

Ireland, the Republic and transition

In Ireland we are in a time of transition. The fundamental foundation of our politics, society and economy are in question. The elite are desperate to get us back on the Celtic Tiger track – bowing to the multinational and ECB masters. But more and more people are not just opposing austerity but questioning more fundamentally. What type of Ireland, indeed world is this? Do we want this? Does it work? As we approach the anniversary of the 1916 rising and the Proclamation of the Irish Republic it is an opportune time for community groups, Left political activists, academics, intellectuals and general society to engage in these debates and, hopefully, create a radically different country. The fundamental question is whether or not this current Republic based on corporate dictatorship, community destruction, austerity, debt slavery, neoliberalism, privatization, low wages, emigration, unemployment, discrimination - is what those involved in the 1916 revolution were aiming for?

We need to analyse what happened to the social aspect of that revolution. Connolly, the Irish Citizen Army and others fought to create a Republic of equality. But the voice of workers and the poor was lost in the Civil War and the subsequent Free State. The reality is that it remains an unfinished revolution. We have never had the social, economic or political revolution that Connolly alongside the poor and workers of Ireland fought for. We remain a colonized and oppressed people. We are a neo-colony of neoliberal capitalism, US multinationals and the EU. We are colonized most of all in our minds and our actions. We never got true independence or freedom from oppression. We replaced one colonizer by another. The British oppressor was replaced by the church and conservative elite, the civil service, the EU, the ECB, international markets and now bondholders and international property and finance speculators. There was always an elite class in Ireland – catholic and protestant - that supported and benefited from the colonial master; the large land owners, the civil servants, the bankers and judiciary. There remains an elite class in Ireland that is willing to be the local colonial masters for the corporations, the EU, ECB and international bondholders. They impose the policies of the colonizers in return for holding on to their privileges. Connolly's words again are insightful in this regard. Writing in *Shan Van Vocht* (socialist newspaper) in January, 1897 he said;

"If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with

the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs”.

Ireland: crisis and opportunity

Politics and the existing system is in crisis in Ireland. It faces a crisis of legitimacy not seen since independence. The current model of the Republic faces serious cracks that have been growing for well over a decade in the communities, at the grassroots. The radical left, Left independents, Sinn Féin, the water charges protest, the household charge protest, the pro-choice movement, Occupy, We're Not Leaving, the Community development projects, Shell to Sea in Mayo, the Ballyhea says No to Bondholders – these all represent diverse forms of a growing 'no' and demand for a 'community' or 'social justice, democracy, solidarity and equality' alternative. The significant thing is that while the crisis in other countries has turned people towards far right and anti-immigrant political parties, in Ireland the crisis has moved a much greater proportion of people to what can be described as a broad anti-austerity and 'Left' perspectives. It is also deeply anti-establishment and some of it is deeply anti-any politics. It is, I believe, accurate to describe it as a movement for a New Republic.

This is the flowering of the potential of an alternative Ireland, of a New Republic. But this flower is merely beginning to open. Will it be crushed? Will it rot itself? Will it flower and be beautiful for a short period and then, unwatered, die prematurely? Or will it grow and turn into a fruit and that will produce seeds that are planted and create thousands more flowers and trees? That depends on what we do. We have a role to play. We can change Ireland. We have no alternative but to do so. But it requires struggle and challenges. It requires challenging the status quo within our communities, within our groups, our campaigns, our Left political parties, our families and within ourselves. But remember - we the majority of people. And they are whom we are struggling with and for.

Overall there has been a failure of all of us - community activists, left activists and dreamers of a better Ireland – to develop an inclusive alternative vision for Ireland that can offer pathways towards an empowering, participative, politics that involves large groups of Irish society. But the emergence of Podemos in Spain, of the new Left governments in Latin America, of Syriza in Greece shows that an alternative form of democracy and political representation is possible. It shows that these political movements can be with and for communities. It shows that community struggles and this new form of political representation can be mutually supportive and based on solidarity. There is in Ireland an emerging potential for such a diverse, plural and radical democratic Left politics. But it must be based on a politics of respect of all participants input and voice. It has to be participative. Too often radical Left politics is dominated by hierarchy and dogma.

The Shell to Sea campaign provides the most important lesson to the new movements and politics. And it is lesson that Connolly also teaches us. It is that the Irish state is not some neutral arbitrary. It is not a democratic state. It will not embrace protest and radical alternatives and respond with radical change. In Mayo we saw that the Irish state responds to resistance and struggle through a combination of repression, ignoring and co-option. The strongest and most effective weapon the Irish state has used against critical alternatives has been co-option. Come inside and we will give you just enough to justify an end to your struggle. It says to us: 'come inside our offices, our parliament, our council buildings and we will give you a nice office, a nice salary and you can see that the world is not so bad'. It has co-opted and captured the majority of Irish community NGOs and unions who are dominated by corporatist and partnership political strategies. They have been disciplined by government austerity and funding reductions targeted at the more vocal civil society groups. The best example of this is the attempted silencing by government of community critique through its targeting of Community Development Projects for severe retrenchment. This builds upon the various forms of conditionality that has forbidden social justice advocacy. Social researcher Brian Harvey has repeatedly highlighted the profoundly undemocratic nature of conditions such as the stipulation in HSE grants to community organisations that: '*You must not use the grant to change law or government policies, or persuade people to adopt a view on law or public policy (SLA 2.8)*'

Noam Chomsky describes how popular consent (passivity) is manufactured – in key part through control of the media and an absence of systemic questioning and critical thinking in wider civil society. This is also in the vein of the thinking of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci who explained in regard to getting social resistance and transformation that civil society plays a key role in maintaining support for existing capitalist hegemony and thus in maintaining consent.

In Ireland the largest civil society organisations, the trade unions have since the mid 1980s, rather than engaged in social conflict and resistance against the Irish state, decided to concentrate on partnership negotiations, for fear of the implementation of Thatcherism with the rise of the PDs. The majority of these organisations that were supposed to represent the excluded and oppressed poor, workers, and communities, that is, the Labour party, most large NGOs and the largest trade unions. These organisations that claim Connolly's legacy and were supposed to tirelessly and fearlessly defend their rights and advocate and articulate radical alternatives. These organisations have clearly not done this.

They argued that it would be better to support 'national economic development' whereby by delivering 'social peace' trade unions and workers could contribute to showing Ireland was a safe place for foreign direct investment. However, the Irish experience of 20 years or so of holding back on protest and strikes – of civil society organizations ensuring, or 'self-policing' the delivery of social peace – as part of partnership with the state and political parties in government, shows that this approach results in few gains for working and poor people and the cooption and silencing of potential forces of dissent and a destruction of solidarity. For example, during austerity the leadership of the public sector unions and ICTU made agreements with the government not to engage in industrial action in return for maintaining wages of existing public sector workers and no compulsory redundancies. From November 2009 until February 2013, during which Ireland was forced into a Troika Bailout Programme and the government imposed savage austerity budgets, ICTU organised only one demonstration. While millions of people took part in a trade's union coordinated day of strikes and protests against austerity in November 2012 across Europe – here in Ireland ICTU did not organize anything.

This analysis indicates how enmeshed they are in dependency and the ideology of the elite system. Within this space of 'responsibility' and 'pragmatism' there is no room for radical critique and opposition. Having being involved for a number years in advocacy to the system I experienced how it narrows your horizons of what's possible, of what should be demanded, of how radical or critical your action should be. The radical potential of moments are held back and with strained. For example, the potential of the Claiming Our Future 2010 RDS event to turn into a more radical social movement was lost by a civil society leadership that, for the reasons outlined above, did not want to engage or unleash the popular protest and resistance that radical change requires.

A new politics in Ireland

Two things have emerged that signal a new politics in Ireland. The emergence of popular community struggle and self-empowerment and a new Left politics in the form of Sinn Féin, the radical Left and independents. Major questions lie ahead as to whether these forces, together, can shape and create a new Ireland, a New Republic. If they are to develop into an alternative form of real democracy and real equality there is an urgent need for those who believe in a pluralist, community politics, who advocate for people's need to come before those of corporations – to link together and mutually strengthen struggles and develop an alternative political, economic and social vision for Ireland.

The crisis in 2008 changed everything. Our political, economic system and assumptions are all blown apart. We are in a profound crisis the outcome of which is yet to be determined. For those who want and desire a radical alternative now is the time to engage. To put aside prejudices and work with those you haven't worked with before. To link with those you mistrust. The people have organized and the state is responding. In Latin America it took many forms of resistance, where many people were killed, until alternatives emerged. The Shell to Sea movement can teach a lot to the Irish water movement and the people. It tells us to have no illusion in democracy – it stands for the wealthy and corporations. It tells us that if you want change you have to be prepared to fight for it. But we can see in Latin America and here in Europe that resistance and opposition and struggle by itself is not enough. We cannot leave the political system to the elite. We need to develop alternatives that can achieve changes here and now to alleviate people's suffering and give hope in the possibility of a radical alternative. The difficulty lies in the balance between trying to obtain a majority support and engagement and undertaking action that can be meaningful and impactful.

Where to Start

Sometimes it's hard to know where to start. All around us we see and feel inequality and injustice. Yet we know inside that it doesn't have to be like this. It shouldn't be like this. We imagine another world – we hear of other ways of doing things from around the world – we want to do something so that it is not like this. I think this is our common starting point and this is what joins us and guides us forward.

We must start with what connects us. We believe that it is unjust that communities are destroyed to meet the

needs of corporations, that our natural resources are commodified and commercialized, that families are homeless and face huge costs for housing while some elected TDs have 18 properties and international capital investors are buying up housing that we need. We believe that our country should be run according to the needs of our people not the interests of bondholders or the European Central Bank. We believe that we are a society first - above all else. We believe our people should have access to adequate standards of food, housing, water, education, health, employment and a clean environment, be free from discrimination and have a real democracy. We want to live in a world governed according to peace, democracy, equality and sustainability. This seems somehow basic, simple but we just have to look around us and see that the current form of neoliberal, financial, capitalism will not provide this. In fact it does the opposite.

We must do something

And so we know we must do something. So we start with what we think the world should be. We envision a world, an Ireland, based on community rights, equality, sustainability, social justice, public services for all, free from debt, democracy, at peace. Now we need to go further and define what that means in practice for people in Ireland. It includes being free from overbearing mortgage debt, having access to quality health services, having real democracy, having access to education at all levels, having a job – not having to emigrate, having a home in a safe community, being free from stress about not being able to afford bills, being free from corporate and environmental destruction, for women's right to have control over their own bodies, having disability services, being part of a community. There is much more we can do to define this further. But can say broadly we are clear about what we are against and what we are for.

We are for the dignity and rights of all human beings –for a society based on cooperation, solidarity, meeting social needs - for our families, friends, communities and the world we live in. This is what unites us and can unite many more.

A 21st Century Revolution

We need to discuss the values on which we want society to be organized. How alternatives based on cooperation, solidarity, and social justice can operate. Why there is a necessity to remove the profit, commercial, market motive and method of organizing society and economy. Why under capitalism meeting the housing, education, health, environmental, employment, needs of population are never prioritized and how alternative societies work that do prioritise these issues. How real participatory and deliberative democracy would lead to social justice- and how the elite should not have monopoly rule and power. Co-operatives are an interesting model that could have particular resonance for Ireland. We need to ask critical questions that challenge prevailing common sense of the system. Why does anyone need a salary over 60,000? Why do we have housing and health provided on a for-profit basis? Why should corporations have more rights than communities? There is clear evidence that more equal societies do better on a range of indicators. Solidarity and cooperation rather than competition and individualism are driving values we aspire to in our family and personal lives. Why do we think the system should operate differently?

It is clear that we need a new approach to revolution. We must theorise and think through how will such an alternative society come about? We do not want more authoritarian dystopias. We cannot wait for capitalism to combust from its own contradictions. Indeed, capitalism has proved its ability to survive, mould, transform and sustain itself. We have to create new mechanisms for transformation and it is most likely to come from a combination of various diverse approaches. From community struggles, new struggles in trade unionism, to New left political movements, local co-operatives, Transition Towns and Ecovillages. What is clear from new social and political movements is that it cannot not be one singular act, one singular organization and one ideology. We have seen the multiple failures that that leads to.

Radical inequality and injustice legitimizes and necessitates radical popular mobilization with the aim of transformation. We must ask ourselves. What are we afraid of? Social upheaval? What would be wrong with people waking up and taking control through mass protest and community action? Why did civil society organizations not organize mass resistance when we were bailing out banks by the billions, when we entered the Troika bailout programme, when the ECB told us we couldn't burn bondholders, when the population wanted to resist the household charge? They were moments which could have fractured Irish politics and society permanently. Senior trade union officials have described that had they did not want to do that for fear of collapsing the system, for fear of frightening foreign investors, for fear of losing, for fear of worse alternatives. This highlights that the approach of civil society leadership has not been about radically changing the system but about mitigation. And the question has to be asked is this what radicalism is about? Does this serve the interests of the poor, workers, the discriminated and marginalized? If we think

this system is fundamentally wrong- then why not radically transforming it and developing alternatives? There is also a great need for cross community networking and solidarity. Just as with Shell to Sea, the Spectacle of Defiance, Anti-Fracking, local hospital campaigns and many others is the defense of community. The belief that local people have in the rights of communities to determine their development. Their belief in the integrity and dignity of their area, the importance of their local connections and importantly the health of their people and the beauty and safety of their natural surroundings. Much depends on the ability of the local community to organize collectively and sustain itself in the face of state repression and cooption.

This current period has echoes of moments in history across the world when ordinary people have stepped on to the political stage and forced an end to corrupt and failing orders that each establishment believed would never change. We could be witnessing the Irish Occupy, the Irish 'Spring', the emergence of an Irish 'Podemos' or Bolivarian Revolution or a moment equivalent to the crumbling of the Berlin Wall in Irish terms. This citizen's revolt could be the most significant (and possibly most genuine and appropriate) commemoration of the 1916 Proclamation that *envisioned a Republic which "guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens"*. Perhaps its time to complete Connolly's and the 1916 revolution and bring about a radical transformation that will create a New Republic of Equality, Social justice, democracy and sustainability. Perhaps it could just happen.

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Advice for communities based on my experience with Shell to Sea

- The ability of Pobal Chill Chomáin and Pobal le Chéile, as representatives of that community, to deliver community consent.

Note of meeting held on 20th March 2009 in Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Mespil Road. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Shell in Ireland. Francis O'Donnell. 2011*

I became involved in what is now known as the Shell to Sea campaign in January 2000. I was, as it turned out, a very naive 46 year old who, while aware that all was not perfect in the State in which I lived, still honestly thought that if one participated in good faith with 'official Ireland' then one's hard work would be acknowledged. How little I knew – but what a lot I've learned since then! For the historical record, Shell to Sea acquired its name in January 2005 following a meeting in Castlebar with Burren campaigners Leila Doolin and the late John O'Donoghue together with other interested people. Up until then the group researching and engaging in due process didn't have a name but, while it is true to say that the jailing of five men in July 2005 brought the Shell/Corrib issue to national and international attention, Shell to Sea was not formed as a result of the jailing; it led the campaign of nationwide support for the Rossport Five. Shell to Sea existed since 2000 albeit only christened in January '05. I hope my experience gained from Shell to Sea involvement in opposition to the Shell/Corrib project will be of some value to people facing the multitude of challenges posed by fracking, pylons, windfarms, etc, etc. At time of writing it is hoped that the right2water campaign will become the movement and vehicle for change which is so badly needed.

It is increasingly apparent that the question of what constitutes 'community' is becoming more complex and 'community' itself – whatever that may now be – is also in danger of being, and in some instances has become, commodified. In Ireland heretofore, the 'tuath' model, based on kinship, land and survival was subsumed into the parish system when Christianity became dominant; the parish then became the unit of organisation for such as the GAA in the late 19th century and, in the 20th century, the civil war parties of FF and FG based their cumainn on the parish model. I believe that, in the 21st century, the parish model no longer works. If one accepts McLuhan's concept of a 'global village', then community is global and would appear to be a logical – dare one say reasonable – response to corporate threat. That said, I note that even 'global village' has become commodified – globalvillage.ae/en/ is Dubai's 'first cultural, entertainment, family and shopping destination'! At a time when people are deemed by dictat to live in an economy rather than a society which attempts to turn citizens into consumers it is vital that the concept of community in the 21st century is critically analysed. The fact that 'community' has become a buzzword in the state/corporate lexicon is enough to raise deep distrust. Within their preferred context, it is useful to corporate dictat to keep the definition of community localised. I believe the parochial construct has been hijacked as a conduit for this purpose by a state/corporate nexus that exists through 'selling the message' and getting it 'delivered'. It allows for a convenient definition of 'local' and, by extension, the exclusion of all others as dreaded 'outsiders'. It also allows for, and actively encourages, 'community leadership' – a disingenuity designed to deliver as far as I am concerned. It should be borne in mind that the local authority deals only with community groups (with Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer) registered with it – individuals or groups not registered are *persona non grata*! There is no limit to the number of these groups that can be set up having common membership as happened when Shell decided to buy their way into the 'community'. A couple of individuals were common to many groups and were ready, willing and able to accept

largesse. This was the formula used by the two Eamons, Ó Cuiv and Ryan when, in 2008 they set up a forum to supposedly deal with Shell/Corrib and make all the little difficulties go away. Every dog and devil of a 'community group' was invited to send two or three in their name to meet all the nice people from Shell, MCC, DCENR, DCRGA, etc. The intention was that lots of 'representatives' from make-up groups would out-vote Shell to Sea's two or three 'representatives' at the forum and delightful democracy would prevail! Didn't happen – Shell to Sea refused to play games, we called it the 'Funny Forum' and an alternative Peoples' Forum was called to run concurrently; the Funny Forum died a death, the Peoples' Forum lives on... (The unintended irony in all of this of course is that the executive and shareholders of Royal Dutch Shell, Statoil and Vermillion are hardly seed, breed and generation 'locals')!

The first hard lesson learned by me was that the planning process is a major fault line in what calls itself 'democracy' in this State. It became apparent that the terms of planning legislation were effectively dictated in the FF tent at the Galway Races and in gilded halls where the 'little people' are not allowed; nothing changed with FG, Labour, PD's or Greens. There is an indefinite lead-in time allowed to the 'developer' prior to the 'little people' being allowed out to play – but the 'little people' MUST operate within very strict, rigid statutory time limits. This lead-in time allows for so-called consultation which takes the form of an all-day exercise wherein people are invited to attend to 'hear all about it' and, of course their views 'will be taken on board going forward'; the actual effect of this nonsense is that nobody hears the same thing at the same time which creates confusion rather than clarity. Where this did happen at oral hearings we comprehensively demolished spin masquerading as fact. When one is allowed 'out to play' and after freely giving ones time and energy to research and write submissions, one gradually comes to the realisation that all your good faith effort may, at best, be glanced at casually, at worst and in essence, binned. The first local authority rubber stamp for Shell was announced at 4.55pm on the Friday prior to the August bank holiday weekend 2001. There was one month to appeal that decision and August is when most professionals are on holiday... That said, we lodged an appeal to An Bord Pleanála (ABP) and, following two oral hearings – February/March and November/December 2002 we effectively presented our collective expertise and our appeal was upheld in April 2003. I wish to put on record that, out of all the individuals in whatever consenting/regulatory/monitoring role they held, only one person stands out for professionalism and integrity – Mr Kevin Moore, Senior Inspector ABP. That encompasses for me the degradation and subversion of the myriad agencies of the state with whom I've come into contact for the past 14 years. Moore's forensic report appears to give equal validity to expertise based on local knowledge *vis a vis* that of thick CV-bearing 'expert' witnesses of whom it may be said of many (not all) that they simply prostitute their parchments. Kevin Moore's 377 page report is available at <file:///C:/Users/Owner/Downloads/R126073.pdf> and will forever remain an indictment on the mess that is Shell/Corrib. Over the years, the Shell/Corrib project has involved Mayo Co Council (MCC), ABP, EPA, MLVC (Marine Licensing Vetting Committee), CER and various departments that have changed name and shape – but not their attitude of servility to corporate power and disdain/arrogance for citizens – over the past 14 years.

There is an inherent Catch-22 in the planning process – if one makes submissions one is considered to be 'submitting' to the process and must, in the name of almighty democracy, accept the outcome (which is already pre-ordained); if one doesn't participate/submit, then it is taken to mean tacit approval and one is used as a statistic in the 'silent majority'. The only recourse through law (not justice!) in planning is to take a Judicial Review (JR) of a consenting body decision. For the

uninitiated or unconnected, this involves getting together a sum of €80-100K, doing all the work to brief the solicitor who in turn briefs Counsel and, after that, sit silently while legal argument drones on. It is indisputable that only those who are immersed in a complex issue from the beginning are capable of thinking on their feet and drawing all sorts of connections together yet these people are precluded from doing so by the adversarial system set in place. When this was attempted by a couple who made a successful application to the High Court for leave to apply for a JR on the November 2007 EPA rubber-stamp of Shell's IPPC licence the following happened – having being granted leave to appeal, an application was then made for a protective costs order which would protect the couple from the threat of losing the family home should the case go against them; this was refused and leave to appeal this refusal to the Supreme Court was effectively scuppered by legal threat to enforce the High Court costs incurred to date should the refusal be appealed. Even with more recent ECJ rulings intended to preclude such obstacles to access to justice at reasonable cost, it remains difficult to pursue legal remedy. It should be noted that sheer effort and tenacity did produce an upholding of an appeal to ABP in April 2003 and a successful JR of an EPA decision in October 2013. But they don't go away you know! Following the ABP decision, the immediate corporate response was to call for special planning provision – the peasants were getting above themselves – and in due course the Strategic Infrastructure Bill came to pass. Tom Botts, then head of Shell E&P Europe, came back to kick ass and Ahern duly arranged for the oil companies' lobby group the IOOA to 'make a presentation' to the ABP Board. Needless to say, the next time round they got it right. At the moment Shell is back again with the EPA for another 'revision' of the '07 original grant of IPPC licence and both parties are currently performing prodigies of retrospectivity where, according to EU/ECJ law, none can exist. The information submitted by Shell for the original IPPC licence, duly rubber-stamped by the EPA, is at such variance with what is now actually built – following 14 applications by Shell to MCC for 'amendments to the parent permission' (some of which were appealed to ABP), that in legal-speak, any 'reasonable person' would consider them totally different entities. The previous sentence is exhausting both to write and to read but encapsulates what the planning process is all about – a system designed to exhaust those who follow it through and vilify those who don't (or those who, having exhausted due process, then don woolly hats and high vis jackets and put their bodies on the line) as anarchists/tree-huggers/scroungers/luddites or, the epithet of the moment, a 'sinister fringe'!

When the woolly hat and high vis is donned, there is another inherent tension which, if it remains either unrecognised or unaddressed will inevitably lead to problems. I call this 'hard edge' v 'soft and fluffy'. From the jailing in 2005 this tension existed within Shell to Sea and very nearly finished it many times. The interests of the jailed men were represented at regular Shell to Sea meetings by Jerry Cowley TD and there were equally regular differences of opinion expressed; when Cowley prefaced any remarks/suggestions with 'I'm just doing Devil's advocate here Maura', sparks often flew! It is also noteworthy that, while Mark Garavan was a Shell to Sea spokesperson in '05 he described himself in his 2007 Seanad election literature as a 'spokesperson for the Rossport Five during their imprisonment in 2005' <http://irishelectionliterature.files.wordpress.com/2010/08/markgarvan07a.jpg?w=800&h=352>. The detention for contempt by the five men ended on September 30, the day before a major Dublin rally in their support which changed the tenor of that rally from potential 'hard edge' to 'soft and fluffy' celebration. The request that I speak at the rally, made by Dr Owens Wiwa (brother of Ken Saro-Wiwa) who had travelled from Canada to show his solidarity, was refused by MC Jerry Cowley. Between July '05 and end September 2006 there was a continuous peaceful blockade of the Shell/Corrib construction site at Ballinaboy. From October '05

omward, Shell changed tactics and decided that it was necessary to go to another page of their global hymnsheet – to go from hard edge to soft and fluffy; in Shell's case of course the soft and fluffy was merely spin while the hard edge remained. This involved the recruitment of Johnny Carey not-long-retired chief cop in Mayo (retain the use of term 'garda' for those who are true to their oath such as retired Garda John Wilson and serving Garda Sergeant Maurice McCabe), the Western People journalist Christy Loftus and the affable Mr John Egan, scion of a Castlebar family steeped in law whose practice at one time included acting as agent for Lord Lucan. Ten years before his recruitment by Shell, Mr Egan (now a director of Shell E&P Ireland) worked as a journalist with the BBC and was the first foreign reporter to speak with members of the Wiwa family following the judicial hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight comrades which many believe happened at the behest of Shell. By September '06 it would appear that Shell clicked its corporate fingers and the full apparatus of the state was put at their disposal to dispose of some pesky peasants. The state moved against its own people on 02/03 October 2006 to enforce corporate dictat and that remains the situation since then. It is now clear that the corporate policing template designed to deal with pesky peasants was, to a degree, successful in its operation on Shell/Corrib in so far as it worked to frighten some of those of whom more was expected. I, personally, am pleased to note that it didn't appear to work quite so well in Jobstown last week.

At this time in the campaign, the hairline cracks already there became fissures in terms of response to state/corporate aggression. One view (which I subsequently referred to as the 'respectable wing') was concerned with what was being said in the media, a wish to appeal to 'middle Ireland', 'someone might get hurt/killed' – underlain by a strong strain of victim-hood. The other view was, in activist terms, to do what could be done – sit-downs, lock-ons, tripods... in other words, NVDA (Non Violent Direct Action). Following the baton charge by the cops under Joe Gannon on November 10 '06, the respectable wing won out and the next scheduled Day of Action was cancelled. This, in my view, nearly cost us the campaign and, but for the dogged persistence of others, would have done. However, it didn't and Shell to Sea is still in it when others have faded away. The acknowledgement of opposing views ('personalities' really had little to do with it) finally came about with the breakaway of the 'respectable wing' from Shell to Sea in April 2008 to form the parochial group Pobal Chill Chomáin (PCC). The quote at the beginning of this piece follows a meeting attended by PCC with those who were part of the Funny Forum and, to my mind, shows the danger of undue reliance on respectability and the wish to appear 'reasonable' when there is nothing reasonable about what is proposed. I append a copy of email correspondence with PCC chairperson Vincent McGrath in relation to this forum and further note that, in IT 20 November article 'Shell begins testing at Ballinaboy terminal in north Mayo', Mary Corduff is described as a Rossport resident, with no mention of PCC. It is now, to all intents and purposes, defunct.

One doesn't unfortunately have the luxury of hindsight in the middle of a campaign but, as a result of the longevity of this campaign, it is becoming possible to now assess the consequences of original decisions made and it becomes moot, to a degree, what the original intention behind those decisions may have been. In that regard I stand over the following – it was wrong for four of the Rossport Five (Brendan Philbin dissented) to agree to meet with Peter Cassells; it was wrong for Micheál Ó Seighin to unreservedly – and unilaterally – accept the 'apology' of Andy Pyle; it was wrong to call off the day of action in November 2006; it was wrong to suggest that Shell go to Glinsk; it was wrong for PCC spokesperson John Monaghan to state in an interview with RTE on the day of the Shell to Sea press conference following the Rape Tape incident that there was

'indiscipline' on both sides. Earlier this year, Vincent McGrath and Micheal Ó Seighin (two of the Rossport 5) attended the opening of a Shell-funded playground in Glenamoy. The site of the playground was donated by the community and funded by the Community Gain Investment Fund (CGIF). The CGIF is a result of a planning condition of ABP which directed that Shell would 'contribute' a sum of €8.5 million – over a period of 5 years, said sum to be administered by MCC – for the 'benefit of the community'. It is interesting to note that hitherto opponents of Shell/Corrib are keen to call the CGIF a 'tax' on Shell. It's no such thing! I have spoken with a senior Tax Inspector in Michael Davitt House who confirmed that the €8.5 million is a legitimate tax-deductible expense for Shell who can then use it, together with certain of their apologists, to dispense the modern equivalent of Victorian alms to the deserving poor!

I have not until now mentioned Rossport Solidarity Camp (RSC) and cannot do it justice within this piece – it would, in fact, make for an interesting forum topic in itself. It is clear though that the Camp, as befits a solidarity camp, mirrored the two types of approach within the campaign – the 'hard edge' was more to the fore at the beginning but this became more 'soft and fluffy' towards the end of the Camp's physical presence here last year. The paucity of reference to RSC must not be construed as dismissive – the calibre of the people who came to the Camp (most but not all of them young) was a taste of what the 21st century can become if their views are heeded.

There is yet another group within this whole saga which comprises those who pursue the long and winding road of recourse to legal remedy. Those who choose that route are precluded by their choice from engaging in anything whatsoever that could – and most certainly would – be used against them in court. Brendan Philbin and Bríd McGarry continued their legal battle for as long as possible, Monica Muller and Peter Sweetman continue to do so up to and including getting case law stated at the ECJ (European Court of Justice). Martin Harrington has, to date, taken three JR proceedings in relation to Shell/Corrib.

I have few regrets regarding my involvement with this campaign but two spring to mind – the first is the amount of time I spent listening to people going on and on about stuff when they subsequently either folded their tent or accepted the Shell shilling; the second, and most heartfelt regret, is that I didn't listen in time to Brendan Philbin and Bríd McGarry and pay heed to their warnings.

However, wallowing in regret is no good – one learns another hard lesson and keeps going. To those who might like to detect a valedictory hint in this article, I say don't get your hopes up! This proposed project is now 11 years behind schedule and 4 times its original budget. While most of the work is done and the inevitable lay-off of those who are past their use-by date is underway, the fact remains that Point A, the well-head, is still not connected to Point B, the refinery and Corrib gas remains, for now, *in situ*. I have listened to the hypocritical mewling of Eamon Ryan about holding a referendum on the ownership and control of our water reserves and can only think with disgust of his and his party's capitulation to corporate dictat while they had their bums on government seats. There isn't a hope of such a referendum because then the pesky peasants might look for a referendum on ownership and control of our fossil fuel and fishing resources and a state which is currently no more than a vassal of corporate power couldn't allow that to happen.

At each forum, we remember Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight comrades; we remember Niall Harnett whose untimely death meant the loss of a stalwart as we remember all those who stood with us and

are now at peace.

I salute all those who are still standing after 14 years and take heart that this campaign has fed into what is now happening on a national scale. To borrow Bertie's dictum – 'a lot done, more to do'!

I finish with a quote from Lord of the Rings and the hope that 'many paths and errands' will come together in Dublin on December 10.

"The Road goes ever on and on down from the door where it began. Now far ahead the Road has gone, and I must follow, if I can, pursuing it with eager feet, until it joins some larger way where many paths and errands meet. And whither then? I cannot say'. *JRR Tolkien*

Maura Harrington November 2014

Appendix

From: "maurah ias" To: "vincentmcgrath"

Sent: Saturday, 13 September, 2014 6:08:32 PM Subject: FAO Chairperson Pobal Chill Chomain

Re: Peoples' Forum 2014, Inver Community Centre, Saturday 22 November 2014 Community in a Corporate Imperium

Dear Vincent,

As can be seen above, the theme of this year's Peoples' Forum is community. It is hoped to consider how community/communities fare in today's global world which many now believe is verging on, if not actually, an imperium of corporate power.

To date, Dr Laurence Cox and Dr Rory Hearne, both of NUIM have confirmed their availability and willingness to participate in the forum. It is sincerely hoped that it will be possible for Pobal Chill Chomáin, as the local parochial group in the long-running Shell/Corrib saga to also participate.

As you know from previous fora, the format is 10-15 minute oral presentations by the participants in the morning session followed by general discussion and conclusions in the afternoon/early evening. A 3-5,000 word article is also requested prior to the forum and is made available on the day to form a valuable record of proceedings. I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely, Maura Harrington

From: "maurah.ias" To: "vincentmcgrath "

Sent: Friday, September 19, 2014 2:43 PM Subject: Fwd: FAO Chairperson Pobal Chill Chomain

Dear Vincent,

Would it be possible to acknowledge that you have received this email and to please indicate when a response to whether or not Pobal Chill Chomáin will participate in this year's Peoples' Forum may be forthcoming?

Yours sincerely, Maura Harrington

From: "Vincent McGrath" To: "maurah ias"

Sent: Sunday, 21 September, 2014 8:39:13 PM Subject: Re: FAO Chairperson Pobal Chill Chomain

Dear Maura,

Apologies for not responding sooner to your invitation to participate in this year's People's Forum. The fact that I will personally not be addressing the People's Forum should not be interpreted as a snub as this would be my response at present to a similar request from any conference. However I asked Micheál Ó Seighin if he would be prepared to make a contribution to the People's Forum. I had expected a reply by the weekend but I will contact him again tomorrow and let you know. This explains the delay in responding to your email.

Yours sincerely, Vincent McGrath

From: "maurah ias" To: "Vincent McGrath"

Sent: Tuesday, 23 September, 2014 11:03:00 AM Subject: Re: FAO Chairperson Pobal Chill Chomain

Dear Vincent,

Thank you for getting back to me.

I accept that you personally will not be in a position to participate in the forum but note that the invitation to participate is addressed to Pobal Chill Chomáin through your good self as Chairperson of the group.

I look forward to the response of Pobal Chill Chomáin to the invitation to participate at your convenience.

Yours sincerely, Maura Harrington

From: "maurah ias" To: "Vincent McGrath"

Sent: Monday, 29 September, 2014 12:22:03 PM Subject: Fwd: FAO Chairperson Pobal Chill Chomain

Dear Vincent,

I met with Micheál Ó Seighin in Áras Inis Glauire on Saturday night last and asked him if there was any further progress on the Pobal Chill Chomáin participation or otherwise in the Peoples' Forum; he stated that you had been in touch with him but gave no further indication other than mentioning having a Pobal Chill Chomáin meeting, adding that there hadn't been a meeting held for some time.

The confirmed speakers this year are Laurence Cox NUIM, Rory Hearne, NUIM; Leah Doherty, No Fracking Ireland; Eamon O'Brien, Croke Park Residents Association and myself, Shell to Sea - hopefully, this panel will include a speaker from Pobal Chill Chomáin.

Although the forum date is late November you will appreciate that details need to be circulated well in advance for those who will travel to the forum and who will need to arrange local accommodation.

Could you, as Chairperson of, and contact person for, Pobal Chill Chomáin, please get back to me by Friday next (03 October) with a definite answer one way or the other.

Yours sincerely, Maura Harrington

From: "maurah ias" To: "Vincent McGrath" Cc: joe

Sent: Saturday, 4 October, 2014 12:20:09 PM Subject: Fwd: FAO Chairperson Pobal Chill Chomain

Dear Vincent,

Below record of correspondence from initial email sent to your good self on 13 September to date.

It would not appear unreasonable to have expected a definitive reply from yourself, as Chairperson of Pobal Chill Chomain by yesterday, 03 October.

Can the non response by Pobal Chill Chomáin be taken to mean a refusal to participate in a forum - the theme of which is community - which is being held in the Parish of Kilcommon?

Yours sincerely, Maura Harrington.

Croke Park Streets Committees Limited

*(A single-issue group set up to protect the Community's rights in our Handball,
Community & Social Centre and to adress stadium issues)*

Email: crokeparksca@gmail.com Phone: 087 - 6183024

Community in a Corporate Imperium

By: Eamon O'Brien, Croke Park Streets Committees Ltd, Dublin.

As: Contribution to 'Peoples' Forum 2014'.

Date: 22nd November 2014.

Introduction

Having lived my early years in a little village, Ballyporeen in County Tipperary between the Knockmealdown and Galtee mountains, it was far from corporate imperia I was reared. Farmers' queueing up at the Creamery with churns of milk on their horses and carts and the very well off ones on tractors was about as corporate as it got. Indeed when I received, from a rural though now famous part of County Mayo, the invite to speak on the topic '*Community in a Corporate Imperium*' I asked myself what the hell is this.

Fortunately I did a bit of both Latin and English for the Leaving Certificate and therefore was in a position to concur with the dictionary that indicated that '*imperium*' broadly means '*the power to command*'.

I realised immediately that this topic was relevant to the many problems that both we, as a community around Croke Park dealing with the corporate entity associated with Croke Park namely Pairc An Chrocaigh Teo that runs and owns the Croke Park Stadium face, and that the people of Mayo face when dealing with the corporate entity Shell that wants to exploit one of Ireland's and Mayo's greatest natural resources, a reported 10 billion barrels of oil equivalent.

In November 2010 I was privileged to be asked by the Dublin 1916/1921 Committee to give the speech at the Annual Clancy, Clune, McKee commemoration in Dublin Castle. As these great men had been murdered for standing up to the British Empire I concerned my speech with the fact that ordinary people's loyalty only extends out from family to local community to county and to the Nation. Beyond that we have 'Empire' and over the centuries all the great empires fell from the Egyptian through to the Roman through to the USSR; at the end of the day empires did not serve community but rather the desires of avaricious and power hungry royals and dictators and as such have always been doomed to failure.

Today the main drivers for Empire are huge corporate multinationals. Many unfortunately for humanity, include military contractors¹ such as BAE Systems, General Dynamics, Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Halliburton. Many other corporates ride the coat-tails of war to sweep up whatever wealth is available.

For the purpose of today's topic I will focus more on how the corporate imperium came about and deal more with the banks and corporate growth as it affects us rather than getting into the catastrophic effect of the corporate imperium that has led to the destruction of communities in war-torn regions of the world. I propose to respond to today's topic in two sections. In section 'I' I will give my views on how the corporate imperium came about and propose solutions and in section 'II' I will relate our own experience of dealing with the corporate GAA in the Croke Park area. While I will provide a lot of written detail in the text for the sake of completeness I will not go through all the detail in my speech today but will cover the major points and avoid overlap with other speakers.

¹ The business of war is profitable. In 2011, the 100 largest contractors sold \$410 billion in arms and military services. Just 10 of those companies sold over \$208 billion. This information is based on a list of the top 100 arms-producing and military services companies in 2011 compiled by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Source USA Today Samuel Weigley, 24/7 Wall St. *March 10, 2013.*

I The Corporate Imperium

Society across the world and for its own benefit did two very important things:

- a) **Financial System and Banks** - Society created a financial system a principal cog of which was to be the banks that would enable the distribution of money into society (known as credit expansion) so as to facilitate the creation of assets to make society prosperous. They also enabled people to save and those savings could also be lent by banks for developments subject to overall capital adequacy ratios that ensured that the bank would always have enough money to give back to savers/others if required. Money is a far more flexible system enabling trade than for instance the exchange of goods/services known as bartering.

- b) **Corporate Limited Liability Companies** - Society created 'corporates' that are companies that have limited liability. This enabled and encouraged entrepreneurs to engage in business and wealth creation without having to run the risk of losing everything if their business project failed. Registered corporates also served the purpose that they would be transparent and anybody could assess who the corporate they were dealing with was.

Thus society had two very important tools to enable growth and prosperity money and corporates.

So what went wrong?

1. **The Banks become corporates:** The banks themselves became corporates with shareholders and instead of just distributing money they became '*profit centres*' with an objective of making as much profit as possible for their shareholders. Yet their main purpose was supposed to be to facilitate distribution of money to enable others to create assets/services/wealth for society. The bank was supposed to be able to do this by lending carefully against well assessed business projects. All of our communities live with banks that are also corporates in our midst and that are an integral part of the infrastructure of our communities.

In the drive for profit not only were our banks and banks all over the world distributing money that they got from Central Banks and from savings but they were also borrowing heavily from other banks. Furthermore certain banks were investing in derivatives which were bundled financial contracts of other banks and financial institutions such as subprime mortgages. These derivative transactions of themselves did not help create any real assets or products that could be used by society and were essentially bets on financial products. In America in particular the financial house of cards eventually fell and Lehman Brothers declared bankruptcy in 2008. This caused shock waves around the world and greatly threatened economic stability.

However after the initial shock of the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy the banking corporations were soon to show their teeth and demonstrate their corporate imperium that crystallised as '***banks are too important to fail***' and as a consequence our society and communities will have to subordinate our wealth to their needs.

This was an astonishing development. Rogue banks like Bank of America and HSBC had been operating in breach of the laws of the countries in which they were located and their activities included moving huge sums of money for drug-pushers, designated terrorists, and dealing in mortgage based derivatives that were fraudulently marketed and sold to pension funds. Yet the regulatory authorities ignored what was going on and acted a bit like the over indulgent mother who refused to believe her middle-aged live-at-home son could be in any way responsible for the prostitutes buried in the back yard. Indeed when unavoidable investigations initiated by various governments after the banking collapse took place, as the '*too big to fail*' banks needed billions of taxpayer's money pumped in to them, and when these investigations unearthed corruption at many levels all that many banks and financial institutions received by way of sanction was a slap-on-the-wrist fine, and the executives avoided jail or were pensioned off.

You might ask how could many banks have gotten off so lightly. Well the banks are corporates, they have influential shareholders; they have been both huge backers of political parties and major lobbyists. Bottom line they have way more influence than all our communities put together.

A good example of banks corporate imperialism in operation was the banking scandal here in Ireland. Anglo Irish Bank was the first to become insolvent and its executives went in turn to AIB and Bank of Ireland (BOI) seeking to be acquired as they, Anglo Irish Bank, could not repay their short term inter-bank borrowings as they became due and they hoped that the bigger banks AIB and BOI could extract them from their mess. At the same time AIB and BOI were aware that they themselves were also in trouble and would be in a similar mess soon, hot on the heels of Anglo Irish Bank. As far as I am aware senior executives of the Irish banks were involved in the discussions that led up to the blanket guarantee in all likelihood their influence was persuasive. The Irish Banks and the European lender banks were too big to fail and the solution was to saddle the Irish community with the debt burden. The Irish government was to sell off state assets to make repayments of the debt and to bring in austerity measures making us work harder for less ... all with the goal of our nation paying a large part of the fruits of our labour back to Europe. Years ago outsiders would have only successfully imposed this upon a nation using an army. Now it is disguised as '*financial rectitude*'. Remember we have also handed over control of our national budget and many of the powers of our Central Bank to Europe.

Solution: I believe that since banks play such a key role in society's development infrastructure they should be nationalised and made to '*stick-to-the-knitting*' of managing credit expansion and flows of money within our economy.

- 2. The Corporates became too powerful and too avaricious:** Using the tools of money and corporate limited liability some people became very wealthy and very powerful and in many cases this fuelled a desire for even more wealth and power including political power often driven by personal and inter-corporate rivalries. Financial institutions facilitated the take overs and aggregations of corporates to even bigger and more powerful corporates. The series '*The Men who built America*' gave a good illustration of this showing how Vanderbilt, Rockefeller, Ford, Carnegie and JP Morgan wrestled to become the most powerful people in America. Corporates have been around since the 16th Century and were often set up centuries ago by Charter to facilitate exploitation of resources, national and foreign, so as to benefit the state. Later they came to be set up to benefit individuals and/or shareholders.

America as we know with its Declaration of Independence and its Constitution aimed to be the great republic guaranteeing liberty fraternity and freedom for all. Yet President Lincoln expressed great concern at the rise of corporations as early as 1864 when he wrote the following:

I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. ... corporations have been enthroned and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will

endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed.

— *U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, Nov. 21, 1864 (letter to Col. William F. Elkins)*
Ref: “*The Lincoln Encyclopedia*”, Archer H. Shaw (Macmillan, 1950, NY)

How prophetic Lincoln’s worries proved to be.

In an article entitled ‘**Top 200: The Rise of Corporate Global Power**’ prepared by John Cavanagh and Sarah Anderson for the Institute for Policy Studies (‘IPS’) ² in December 2000 they remarked that ‘*As citizen movements the world over launch activities to counter aspects of economic globalization, the growing power of private corporations is becoming a central issue*’ and they further set out the following key findings in relation to the top 200 Corporations.

Key Findings

1. Of the 100 largest economies in the world, 51 are corporations; only 49 are countries (based on a comparison of corporate sales and country GDPs).
2. The Top 200 corporations’ sales are growing at a faster rate than overall global economic activity. Between 1983 and 1999, their combined sales grew from the equivalent of 25.0 percent to 27.5 percent of World GDP.
3. The Top 200 corporations’ combined sales are bigger than the combined economies of all countries minus the biggest 10.
4. The Top 200s’ combined sales are 18 times the size of the combined annual income of the 1.2 billion people (24 percent of the total world population) living in “severe” poverty.
5. While the sales of the Top 200 are the equivalent of 27.5 percent of world economic activity, they employ only 0.78 percent of the world’s workforce.
6. Between 1983 and 1999, the profits of the Top 200 firms grew 362.4 percent, while the number of people they employ grew by only 14.4 percent.
7. A full 5 percent of the Top 200s’ combined workforce is employed by Wal-Mart, a company notorious for union-busting and widespread use of part-time workers to avoid paying benefits. The discount retail giant is the top private employer in the world, with 1,140,000 workers, more than twice as many as No. 2, DaimlerChrysler, which employs 466,938.
8. U.S. corporations dominate the Top 200, with 82 slots (41 percent of the total). Japanese firms are second, with only 41 slots.
9. Of the U.S. corporations on the list, 44 did not pay the full standard 35 percent federal corporate tax rate during the period 1996-1998. Seven of the firms actually paid less than zero in federal income taxes in 1998 (because of rebates). These include: Texaco, Chevron, PepsiCo, Enron, Worldcom, McKesson and the world’s biggest corporation General Motors.

10. Between 1983 and 1999, the share of total sales of the Top 200 made up by service sector corporations increased from 33.8 percent to 46.7 percent. Gains were particularly evident in financial services and telecommunications sectors, in which most countries have pursued deregulation.

- ² IPS is a community of public scholars and organizers linking peace, justice, and the environment in the U.S. and globally. They work with social movements to promote true democracy and challenge concentrated wealth, corporate influence, and military power.

The phenomenal power achieved by corporates as set out above gives an indication of the serious challenge that any community is likely to be faced with when it locks horns against the interests of a major international corporate, such as the likes of Shell as faced by communities in Mayo.

Many years ago in the period 1988/89 I was involved in the Father Paddy Ryan extradition case that brought a number of great people together directly and indirectly including the late Neil Blaney, Kevin Boland and farmer's leader TJ Maher. To see our project to its ultimate conclusion, *'Father Ryan's freedom'*, we had to deal with and/or out-manoeuvre, as the case may be, three countries namely Belgium, England and Ireland. The one thing I learned from all of that was that countries do not have a *'conscience'* they only have *'interests'*. I believe the same applies to corporates. It is because corporates do everything possible to protect their *'interests'* that we have the *'corporate imperium'* as recognised by the Peoples Forum in their title for today's discussion.

I have no doubt that others here today will go into the general corporate power issue in even greater detail than I have and touch as well on the enormous control of media and politicians that such corporations wield.

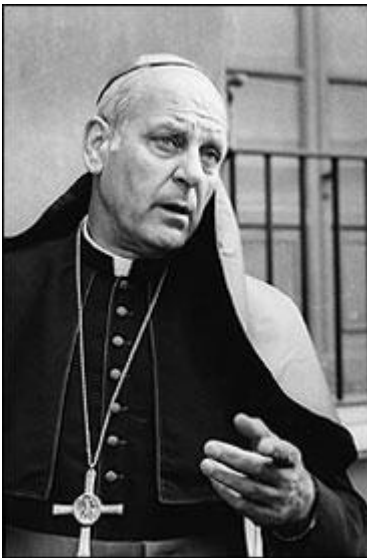
Solutions: Unlike a straight forward enough solution of nationalisation to deal with banks I believe that dealing with the power of corporates, especially multi-nationals, in a way that will give communities fair play will require multi-faceted solutions some of which might include:

1. **Media Independence:** Since information is king ownership and control of media outlets, including editorial, has to be independent with no conflict of interests acceptable. Legislate if required.
2. **Right of Response in published Media to include proportionate adequate response space:** This has already been provided in relation to referendums in Ireland and can become a practice norm in journalism or be legislated for if required.
3. **Discretionary Community Fund for Projects deemed to be in the National Interest:** Money should not be a barrier to local community's right to access and set out their rights and concerns in relation to any development particularly one that is deemed to be in the National interest. Accordingly I believe a fund should be available in principle to facilitate community's access to research and to legal and planning representations. Community member's representation / spokespersons / committees issues would have to be addressed here also.
4. **Corporate Social Responsibility:** a) Legislation - This is a modern enough buzz-word at the moment. The European Commission has sets of principles but has a way to go to approve legally binding laws that are enforceable as opposed to aspirational guidelines. Enforceable laws are required. b) There exist Corporate Social Responsibility Indices such as the Thompson Reuters Corporate Responsibility Indices. It should become

- mandatory for Corporates of a specified Market Capitalisation or size to register and provide a relevant index rating as part of its annual audit. There are also self-assessed Corporate Social Responsibility indices that may be more self-serving than useful.
5. **Required Transparency:** In regard to all funding, planning, corporate structures in relation to any corporate project affecting a community.
 6. **Proportionate penalties for breaches to the law and for damages caused by a corporate.**
 7. **Set limits to the size of companies... similar in principle to the prevention of monopolies and anti-trust laws.**

The above is not by any means an exhaustive or new list of means to assist communities when dealing with corporates; just a few options that come to mind.

II The Croke Park Area Community as ‘A Community in a Corporate Imperium’



Having done some initial research into the activities of the bank I gracefully declined the project and told my friend that I would prefer to be found hanging beneath a bridge in Tipperary for having tried to do something for Ireland than for investigating the activities of the Vatican Bank being my subtle reference to what happened Roberto Calvi who was found hanging beneath London's Blackfriars Bridge in 1982 not to mention journalist Mino Pecorelli who had showed an interest in the Vatican Banks activities and was murdered in 1979 and the later alleged murder of Pope John Paul I as written about by David Yallop. In essence the Vatican Bank had become totally corrupt and instead of serving the needs of the Catholic Church operated to serve its own perceived corporate needs as defined by those running it.

INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CROKE PARK AREA COMMUNITY: Having worked in Wall Street I came back to Ireland in 1982 and immediately got involved with the Croke Park Community and Handball Centre beside Croke Park becoming a long-time Chairman and later treasurer up to the present.

All was well until 1988 when Croke Park commenced its stadium re-development project. People remarked how professional the GAA was becoming. As part of the development they decided they wanted to take the Handball Centre at the back of Hill 16 and this led to a fierce battle between Dublin handballers and some members of the local community with the GAA in Croke Park which resulted in among other things Hill 16 being just a Hill of muck for two All-Ireland finals ... simply because the Croke Park GAA were not willing to enter in to a fair and binding agreement with the handballers and community in relation to a replacement facility. In fact the Croke Park GAA sent people in to smash up the Handball Centre at the back of Hill 16 so it was unusable. However the Croke Park GAA did concede that Dublin handballers and the community would have use of what was then called the new Handball Centre that had glass courts. The new Centre that had been built in 1971 was also to serve the local community with additional community facilities as this was a requirement for getting grants from the government and Dublin Corporation.

Local Community become concerned at Croke Park Stadium re-development: As the Croke Park development continued local community members were getting very concerned; not only was their concern about asbestos with the demolition of the old Cusack Stand (something that a Doctor colleague of now Taoiseach Enda Kenny confirmed to me when Mr. Kenny visited our Centre as opposition leader) but many residents believed that the Croke Park GAA was really intending to convert Croke Park into a multi-purpose Sports/Commercial Stadium that would have a grave and negative impact on their quality of life and on the value of their homes. At the time Croke Park GAA representatives scoffed at residents who made claims at public meetings that Croke Park Stadium would be used for concerts.

The Corporate Suiting-Up of the GAA: Croke Park Stadium as a capital asset was held in a corporate entity known as Cumann Luthchleas Gael Teo. This holding company's name was later changed to Pairc An Chrocaigh Teo i.e. Croke Park Limited. Later top GAA officials became so pre-occupied with the '*GAA Brand*' that the sovereign name '*Eire*' that used to be on all All-Ireland medals became replaced with the words '*GAA*'.

Already we were beginning to see the corporate suiting out of the GAA. Further changes included reducing the number of members of the Corporate GAA company Pairc An Chrocaigh Teo ('PACT') as set out in a leaflet prepared in 2012 by the '*Families Against Croke Park Corporate Bullying*' as follows:

PACT changed its Memo & Articles a number of times recently so it could engage in profit making activities, and it reduced the number of GAA Directors. Current Directors include individuals that have worked for either Allied Irish Bank, FAS or the Quinn Group (all €bn businesses). CRO Office - Company No. 4192.

A former Garda Commissioner was also added as a director.

Following the development of Croke Park Stadium, beautiful on the inside but hideous on the outside that is facing the local community and that is unlike Aviva Stadium, the Croke Park GAA started buying properties around the stadium. In 2004 they also commenced action against the Community & Handball Centre ('C&HC'), having already written to the Solicitor Generals office to block the payment of IR£150,000 that the C&HC had been granted in the National Lottery. So

here we had the Croke Park Stadium that had received over €110m in taxpayers money objecting to the IR£150,000 that the C&HC had previously been granted. The C&HC is an extremely important part of the local community serving the young and old and special needs and has provided a very important social outlet for its members and has also won many internationals in Handball, Dancing and MMA. The corporate GAA wished to take control of the centre and as admitted on an RTE Prime Time show wanted the space occupied by the Community & Handball Centre for turning lorries.

See Prime Time show on Youtube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EUVXUxAo4-4>

Formation of Croke Park Streets Committee Ltd: The C&HC has membership drawn from every street in the Croke Park Stadium vicinity and its members noted over the years the very adverse impact the stadium was having on the local community. Our members also realised we had a serious battle on our hands to defend ourselves against a corporate GAA that had a huge money arsenal and had huge political and media influence.

Indeed one now very senior politician wrote to me and stated in relation to GAA lobbying of politicians around a particular planning issue that:

'I should say from the start that never have I encountered such pressure over a matter. I have received several phone calls from many senior figures in my party re my stance of support. Thankfully my party recognises my right to do as I see fit in relation to constituency matters and recognises my right to represent the community.'

It should also be noted that the GAA has a Rule 1.11

Non-Party Political that states that *'The Association shall be non-party political. Party political questions shall not be discussed at its meetings, and no Committee, Club, Council or representative thereof shall take part, as such, in any party political movement.'*

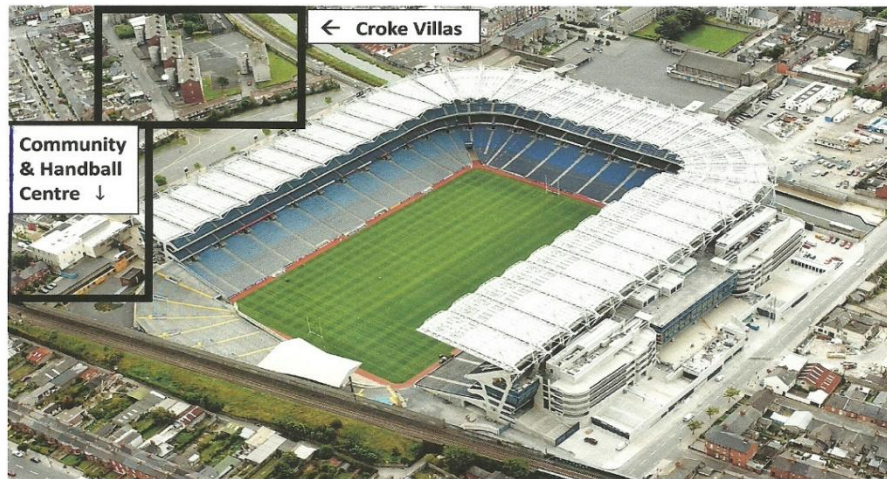
It seemed to us that certain GAA people were quite prepared to seek to influence Party Policy in relation to certain questions and indeed we got correspondence from a number of politicians reflecting this.

To be more effective in defending ourselves against the Croke Park GAA, members of the C&HC formed the Croke Park Streets Committees Ltd to first deal with the single issue of defending our C&HC and later we expanded into concerning ourselves with how the Croke Park Stadium was affecting our wider community. By forming in this way we were avoiding clashing with existing Croke Park Area residents groups that would have a broader remit in dealing with residents issues that might not be confined just to Croke Park Stadium issues.

Croke Park Stadium Company Pairc An Chrocaigh Teo ('PACT') sue all the members of the C&HC to get vacant possession: Without going into the detail of the amount of bullying that our C&HC received from the commencement of the Croke Park Stadium redevelopment in 1988, by end November 2011 PACT had issued legal proceedings against the Management Committee suing each one individually and on behalf of all the members of the C&HC.

A Dublin City Council Central Area Committee condemned the corporate GAA for their action at a meeting ... also on Youtube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JHsmiH50IE>

The Families Against Croke Park Corporate Bullying issued the following leaflet that in itself says a lot about the corporate GAA:



CROKE PARK GAA - PACT

(Páirc An Chrócaigh Teo – Croke Park Limited)

A COMPANY DRIVEN FOR PROFIT

SUING FAMILIES

GRABBING PROPERTY

Families Against Croke Park Corporate Bullying

Email: facpcb@gmail.com Phone: 087-7102044

(See YouTube - Croke Park Dispute)

PLEASE HELP US-COPY LEAFLET TO FRIENDS-SUPPORT NATIONAL PETITION

- Copy and/or email this leaflet to friends – every house in Ireland should have a copy. We are affected now - Your Family, Club, or Community may be next.

----- NATIONAL PETITION -----

- Sign our Online Petition at www.petitiononline.ie in the Sports Petitions sector OR
- Download a copy of our Petition at www.facebook.com/groups/397327116340/ or on Google: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qs8CKM_3rn1y3m9iP2YEvx2wCaul1hLNFIJHUKoYVVVY/edit
- Send to: PETITION HEADQUARTERS, C/O 105 Clonliffe Rd, Drumcondra, Dublin 3.

Croke Park Corporate GAA Ramp up their Commercial Activities greatly affecting the local community: Following the stadium re-development and notwithstanding objections from many parties associated with the local community, and notwithstanding agreements entered into by the Croke Park GAA with local residents groups to curb its commercial activities especially concerts and other consecutively run events, the Croke Park GAA continued to increase the intensification of use of the stadium. In 2014 alone Croke Park Stadium notified the local community of 33 events from the period of March 2014 to September 2014 including the 5-in-row Garth Brooks concerts. Such events result in a lock-down of the communities set out roughly in the picture that follows:

CROKE PARK STADIUM AREA LOCK-DOWN OF RESIDENTS



CROKE PARK STADIUM AREA LOCK-DOWN OF RESIDENTS: Rough outline of Area affected by the Lock-Down of the Croke Park area community before and after events in Croke Park Stadium. No movement of private family vehicles is allowed into or out of the cordon area (in Red) for a number of hours before or after an event. Residents have been encouraged to get a pass though this is not a legal requirement. Family and friends from outside the cordon find it all but impossible to visit inside the cordon during the restricted events hours. In 2014 the corporate GAA notified residents of 33 events taking place from March to end September. The lock-down is put in place and manned by members of An Garda Siochana. Private security have also been put on the streets on occasions by the Croke Park Stadium authorities leading to occasional harrasment of local residents.

Such intensification of use was totally in contravention of prior agreements with the residents as we set out in a recent press conference in July 2014 when we were dealing with the Garth Brooks concert issue:

EXAMPLE OF AGREEMENT BREACHED BY CROKE PARK STADIUM AUTHORITIES

When questioned about adherence to agreements one Croke Park executive ubbelieveably, as reported in the media, resonded the '*Time Moves On*'

Abstract taken from the 1998 agreement between residents and the GAA signed by residents the GAA President and including a letter of support from the Taoiseach of the day. Copy available for inspection at head table.

Agreement between Gaelic Athletic Association and Croke Park Area Residents Alliance

Page 3 of 9

1.2 The Gaelic Athletic Association will undertake other commitments to directly alleviate the impact of events on local communities, including

- (f) avoiding whenever possible holding two Croke Park events on consecutive days (e.g. a Saturday replay followed by a Sunday game) and, on occasions where this is unavoidable, entering into prior agreed additional commitments, excluding direct financial compensation to the members of the Alliance, to alleviate the additional impact on the local community;

This clearly showed it was agreed that even two consecutive GAA match events was undesirable let alone 5 concerts. Mr Mulvey has suggested that consecutive events be limited to three when the original agreement was that there should be none if possible. Effectively the Croke Park GAA company PCT has kept pushing out the boat to get more and more major events to satisfy their greed at our community's expense. They are now almost daily running functions that are supposed to be run only, in accordance with planning conditions as we see it, when they are ancillary to GAA games and these also cause great disruption to the community.

1993 An Bord Pleanala Condition 11. (a) by which Croke Park Stadium is bound

PL 29N.089403		- 8 -
		<u>SECOND SCHEDULE (CONTD.)</u>
11.	(a)	The number of special events such as concerts, conventions or exhibitions shall not exceed three per annum.

Some results of the corporate driven GAA's poor relationship and consideration for communities.

The foregoing paragraphs should give a good indication of why the Croke Park local area residents and the C&HC members were not going to take the Garth Brooks imposition of 5 concerts in a row lying down and I set out below other matters that have caused conflict between the GAA and community.

1. **The Garth Brooks Fiasco:** The Croke Park corporate GAA's deplorable relationship with its local community culminated in the Garth Brooks fiasco. The corporate GAA have admitted losing income of over €5m and I am not sure if this could be more given pay-per-view rights in the USA if the corporate GAA negotiated any such rights in regard to the stadium. Originally reported estimates of income had been as high as €7.5m. Furthermore the potential for further litigation exists and Garth Brooks appointed legal representatives in Dublin should the need arise. The corporate GAA did everything in its power to push the '*Economic Juggernaut*' that the Garths Brooks project became and we even ended up with a special Oireachtas Committee to deal with an event that started off with the breach by the applicants

of the planning and licencing laws. Amazingly and to the best of my knowledge neither C&HC representatives nor any of the many residents committees were requested to attend the Oireachtas Committee chaired by well-known GAA man John O'Mahony TD.

2. **Belfast High Court Actions:** In Belfast a similar row with the West Belfast community over Casement Stadium that the GAA now want to develop into a multi-purpose sports/commercial complex ended in High Court actions with the GAA having to hand back the keys to the Casement Social Club that is constituted very similarly to the C&HC and the local Casement Park residents have fought the GAA and its Casement re-development GAA committee all the way to a judicial review in the Belfast High Court ... again little publicity of any of this in the southern media. I was elected Chairman of the Casement Social Club Legal & Strategy sub-committee to help deal with the threat to the Casement Social Clubs existence. The GAA have stated in the Belfast High Court that the delay in the development has already cost Stg £2.7m and you can add to that significant legal costs and re-location costs.
3. **Pairc Ui Caoimh residents fight Pairc Ui Caoimh re-development:** This has gone all the way to an oral hearing.
4. **Sky TV Deal:** This is one of the most upsetting GAA matters to most GAA members. As supporters, volunteers and players we are the GAA. Now to facilitate a bidding war between TV stations the GAA moved 19 matches away from viewing on the terrestrial Irish stations supposedly to bring the GAA to people abroad. Yet with the exception of Australia you still had to pay to see the match online while abroad.
5. **American Football Game takes precedence over All-Ireland semi-final:** If GAA people wanted any proof that business comes first for the corporate driven GAA then this was it, and dare I remind people here in Mayo today and having a soft spot for Mayo football (though a Tipp man I once lined out for the Mayo exiles in Gaelic Park in New York) that the decision to force the playing of that game in Limerick may well have cost Mayo an All-Ireland.
6. **PACT the corporate GAA Company now actually charges the GAA for hosting our National games.** In fact during the financial years 2012 and 2013 PACT netted over €8m from the GAA Association as set out in the abstract from the GAA accounts in the table below.
7. **The final sucker Punch – PACT (or Pairc An Chrocaigh Teo or Croke Park Limited) that has the Croke Park Stadium asset on its Balance Sheet is NOT a Unit of the GAA.** This very serious nugget of information came to be known when discovery issues were being dealt with in the courts as PACT was suing our families to take our C&HC from us. Because of the *'Thou Shalt not go to Court'* Rule 1.9 of the GAA set out in the GAA Official Guide as follows:

'Members shall not resort to court proceedings in

disregard of these procedures, the Appeal System and the

Dispute Resolution provisions.'

I and the C&HC both wrote to the President of the GAA and asked to be allowed to break the GAA's rules so that, in the special circumstances of PACT suing our families we be allowed to defend ourselves. To my absolute astonishment both I and the C&HC were informed by a GAA Solicitors letter that:

Dear Sir

We have been passed a copy of your letter dated 25 October 2012, which was addressed, to Liam O'Neill, President and to Paraic Duffy, Ard Stiurthoir. We would remind you of our letter of 20 September 2012 in which we indicated that any further correspondence should be directed to us. We also act on behalf of the GAA.

We respond to the points raised in your letter as follows:-

1. Permission to breach GAA Rule 1.9.

Rule 1.9 of the Official Guide has no application to these proceedings. PACT is not a unit of the Association.

The following confirmation of the foregoing by Paraic Duffy in a letter to John Costello CEO of the Dublin GAA County Board removed any doubt.

Páraic Ó Dufaigh
Ard-Stiúrthóir GAA

GAA
Páircín Cheolraigh
Balla Átha Cliath 3
Guthán +353 1 836 3222
Fais +353 1 836 5075

GAA
Croke Park
Dublin 3
Telephón +353 1 836 3222
Fais +353 1 836 5075



15 Márta 2013

Seán MacCoisdealbha Uasal
Runaí Coiste Áth Cliath

Séan, a chara

Thank you for your email of 23 January last enclosing letter from Proinsias Semple, Runaí Coiste Liathróid Laimhe Áth Cliath.

This matter is the subject of legal proceedings which PACT reluctantly concluded it had to institute against members of the management committee of the IHCSC. The matter is proceeding in the normal course before the Circuit Court and we are advised by our solicitors that applications for documentation are made to the Court. In that regard, we are advised that PACT has in fact furnished documentation relating to the proceedings to Anthony Fay & Co solicitors who are acting on behalf of a number of the management committee members.

The assertion that PACT is not a unit of the GAA association appears to come from a letter from PACT's solicitors Reddy Charlton to Eamon O'Briain who is a member of the management committee and who is representing himself in these proceedings. It is in fact the case that PACT itself is not a unit of the GAA.

You might note in any event that the matter is now to be referred to mediation with a view to seeking to resolve all matters in May 2013.

I trust this clarifies matters for you.

Is mise le meas

Páraic Ó Dufaigh
Ard Stiúrthóir

Páirc an Chrócaigh Teoranta & Subsidiary Companies

Company Profit and Loss Account

for the 10 month period ended 31 October 2013

	10 months 2013 €	12 months 2012 €
Income		
Rents for matches:		
Central Council	7,429,642	6,598,575
Leinster Council	874,492	870,383
National Leagues	427,285	363,333
Property rents	377,797	467,308
Corporate facilities	8,569,845	10,114,688
Hire of facilities	1,451,887	4,415,903
Advertising space	476,667	436,791
Other income	626,517	489,607
	20,234,132	23,756,588
Expenditure		
Staff costs & security	1,830,510	2,255,204
Stadium & Administration expenses	4,139,311	5,239,286
Marketing expenses	306,978	384,255
Community Funding	74,617	100,169
Rent & rates	514,881	616,206
Insurances	242,461	268,431
Heat, light & power	749,026	841,374
Stadium and facilities wear and tear	4,878,074	5,975,364
	12,735,858	15,680,289
Operating Profit before interest	7,498,274	8,076,299
Net interest (payable)/receivable and similar charges	(127,765)	12,106
Impairment on investment	(600,000)	(350,000)
Impairment of intercompany debtors	(497,545)	(669,734)
Profit before distribution and grants	6,272,964	7,068,671
Distribution to Ard Chomhairle	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)
Allocation to Asset Replacement Reserve		(2,000,000)
Surplus Transferred to Retained Earnings Reserve	2,272,964	1,068,671

The company had no recognised gains or losses other than its reported profit for the period.

Liam Ó Néill

Liam Ó Néill

Uachtarán

18 December 2013

Páirc Ó Dufáigh

Páirc Ó Dufáigh

Ard Stiúrthóir

PCT took a net €4,731,419 ²⁰¹³ ¹³⁷ €7,832,291 ²⁰¹²
 from the GAA Association

ie it is not contributing to our growth.

EC: LONell response to Waterford GAA Chairman
 re GB position

CONCLUSION

In Part I above I set out the threat that communities living in a corporate imperium face almost every day some more catastrophically than others. In particular I have dealt with Banks and the growth of corporate entities as these have affected us particularly in Ireland. By way of solutions I propose that the banks should be nationalised and in relation to corporates that there be more transparency, and independent media, right of community response in media, a community being given a right to access of funds to defend their rights in matters deemed of national importance, a limit on the size of companies, and appropriate penalties for breach of laws.

However for many of us a great part of our lives is our enjoyment of our national passtimes and our volunteerism for our community.

In Part II above I set out that the fact that our community around Croke Park and our own families in the C&HC beside Croke Park are constantly under one threat or another from the Croke Park GAA and its corporate entity PACT which is very upsetting. Many fine people in our community negotiated agreements with Croke Park only to be undermined by the Croke Park GAA's breach of such agreements with insult added to injury when one Croke Park executive, as widely reported in the media, declared in relation to a query on abiding by a specific agreement with residents that *'time moves on'*.

The importance of the GAA and community I set out as part of a website on the *'History of Handball in Dublin'*. I had already named the Fenians involved in the founding of the GAA before the meeting in Thurles in 1884 in a piece I contributed to the 3 Volume publication *'The Gaelic Athletic Association in Dublin 1884–2000'*.

Following the famine in the 1840's and the formation of the IRB, major nationalist figures, including Mayoman Pat Nally, after whom the Nally Stand in Croke Park is called, P.N. Fitzgerald, Pat Hctor, John Menton and Jim Boland, father of Harry Boland and later a Dublin GAA County Board chairman in the 1890's, sought to restore the morale of the Irish people. Given the failure of the Young Ireland movement in the mid 1800's and the emasculation of Ireland's male population caused by the famine at the same time, which famine many nationally minded Irish people believed was exacerbated by British occupation of Ireland and the landlord system, it was felt by some Fenians that there was no hope for Ireland unless her manhood's morale and confidence could be restored. This could only be achieved, the Fenians believed, if an organisation could be set up that would bring people together in every parish while at the same time not be seen as a threat to the Catholic Church or to British rule in Ireland.

Indeed the linking of Gaelic games and pass times with the idea of manliness was a major feature of Charles Kirkham's *'Knocknagow'* written circa 1870. Kirkham was a Tipperary Fenian that wrote in many Irish nationalist newspapers at the time. That the Fenians were the prime movers in founding the GAA was a belief I had from talking to my late uncle William O'Dwyer from Bansha who had said an O'Dwyer had been at the meeting in Thurles in 1884. Also at the founding GAA meeting was a McCarthy that was an RIC Inspector from Bansha, and I have since become aware that a police report in the 1880's made the same claim in regard to the Fenian movement being the founding influence of the GAA. I was also close to Kevin Boland whose grandfather James Boland was one of the prime IRB movers at the time. In fact not so long ago in defence of the Dublin Community & Handball Centre at Croke Park, Harry Boland, Kevin's brother and Jim Boland's grandson, wrote to protest to GAA Uachtaran Christy Cooney about the treatment of the Centres members by the Croke Park GAA who were threatening to demolish the Centre and he made mention in the letter of James Boland's part in founding the GAA, and his dealings with Cusack, while at the same time expressing to Cooney his disappointment at the treatment of the Centre's

members, particularly as the GAA was founded as a community organisation.

We need to take back the GAA from the '*corporate movers and shakers*'. This will ensure an important victory for community in a corporate imperium.

A number of Poems were written about the C&HC struggle to survive the Croke Park GAA's greed and can be accessed at:

<http://www.crokeparkcommunityhandballcentre.com/#!/poems/cbzl>

Thanks to you for giving me this opportunity to tell our story of a community living in a corporate imperium. Many of us have taken great encouragement from your determination to protect your community and we wish you all the best in that endeavour.