

FORWARD

#26



A YOUNG VOICE FOR SOCIALISM

A History of Human Gender - LGSM - The Limits of Sexual Politics



LGBTQ+

LIBERATION,

NOT RAINBOW

CAPITALISM



The Problem of Rainbow Capitalism

Pink capitalism refers to the marketisation of LGBT+ culture and the exploitation of the LGBT+ demographic by capitalist businesses for the purpose of a profit rather than for the authentic motive of altruistic care for the LGBT+ community. In recent years we have seen an increase in businesses coming out as 'Pro-LGBT+'. While this is a good thing and does serve to help normalise our community, is it out of a genuine commitment to progressive political goals and idealistic concern for the welfare of the LGBT+ community?

A recent example of a company that came out as pro-LGBT+ was Primark. In the North of Ireland Primark produced a range of 'LGBT+' clothes and accessories in the run up to Pride in Belfast. Although this helped with LGBT+ representation, it contained a peculiar form of erasure, having little to no Trans nor Bi representation, two groups in our community which often face lower visibility and exclusion. It should also be pointed out that these clothes and accessories were produced in Turkey, a country which does not have any legal protections for LGBT+ people in employment, education, healthcare or housing. Provisions of the Turkish Criminal Code on 'public exhibitionism' and 'offences against public morality' are sometimes used to discriminate against LGBT+ people. The Law on Misdemeanours is often used to impose fines against trans people. On top of this, the ex-minister of Women and Family Affairs said in 2010: "I believe that homosexuality is a biological disorder, and this disease must be cured". Whilst some opted to donate all their profit from their LGBT+ range to an LGBT+ charity, Primark opted to donate 20%, and keep the other 80%. This type of

profiteering using the cause of the LGBT+ community seeks to pander to a marketable demographic, namely, white gay men, whilst side-lining people of colour, women, and trans people. This is part of an ongoing process where the aspects of LGBT+ culture that are considered useful to capital are monopolized and incorporated into its protection, while the radical and emancipatory features



of LGBT+ culture are locked out of the benefits. The inevitable conclusion of this is the reshaping of gender and sexuality to fit the needs of the



capitalist class, to weave seamlessly into the fabric of global exploitation. For many people, shared experiences of exploitation are their introduction into a whole value system of resistance and independence from powerful institutions. People in the

LGBT+ community have faced discrimination of all kinds, and this allows a reciprocal respect to exist between the exploited within the community and builds links of empathy between exploited groups. The pinkwashing of corporate greed creates a new ideological space where companies commodify the energy of the LGBT+ community while blinding people to the daily economic tyranny they impose on millions of lives all over the planet. Job discrimination is a massive problem which the LGBT+ community faces, particularly trans people, this issue is also a big part of our lives.

Another company to market themselves to the LGBT+ community is the alcohol company 'Smirnoff', who launched an ad campaign targeting the community with slogans like 'Labels are for bottles' and 'Heterosexual? Homosexual? Who gives a-sexual?' and whilst this does bring us into the limelight, it does nothing to address the fact that LGBT+ people have a substance abuse rate two to three times higher than the general populace. It should also be noted that again, Smirnoff's campaign had no mention of Bi or Trans people.

Pride and the rainbow flag has long stood as a symbol of resistance, protest and disobedience, of accepting the labels that our oppressors gave us and saying 'Yes, I am lesbian', 'I am gay', 'I am bisexual' or 'I am trans' and reappropriating this not as an insult, but as an accurate and positive descriptor. The mere act of us changing the connotations behind these labels from bad to good was an act of protest. Now the very same act of reappropriation is being turned against us as our resistance is re-appropriated once more into the same institutions that turned their backs to us when they couldn't make a return from us. We must reject pink capitalism and embrace a queer liberation, for there can be no true freedom of sexuality or gender when it is dependent on the whims of shareholders and market analysts. CR.



The Empire of Gender

For most, it's rare that modern discussions of gender extend beyond screenshotted tumblr posts and miseducated arguments over gender, sex and their differences – but debating human identities is far from anything new. Like all western social norms, 'gender' stems from economic relationships with land, wealth and privilege. Your favourite youtuber may have helped remind you to put compassion before tradition, but without an understanding of the reasons gender norms exist, we as a species can never defeat hundreds of years of gender oppression. The 15th Century brought about the Age of Discovery for some, and the Age of Colonisation for most. European countries embarked on great expeditions to claim land for their own, even though most were already inhabited, thus came friction. How Europeans went about destabilising already established societies has left a lasting impact today, especially in the destruction of social structures and their relation to land.

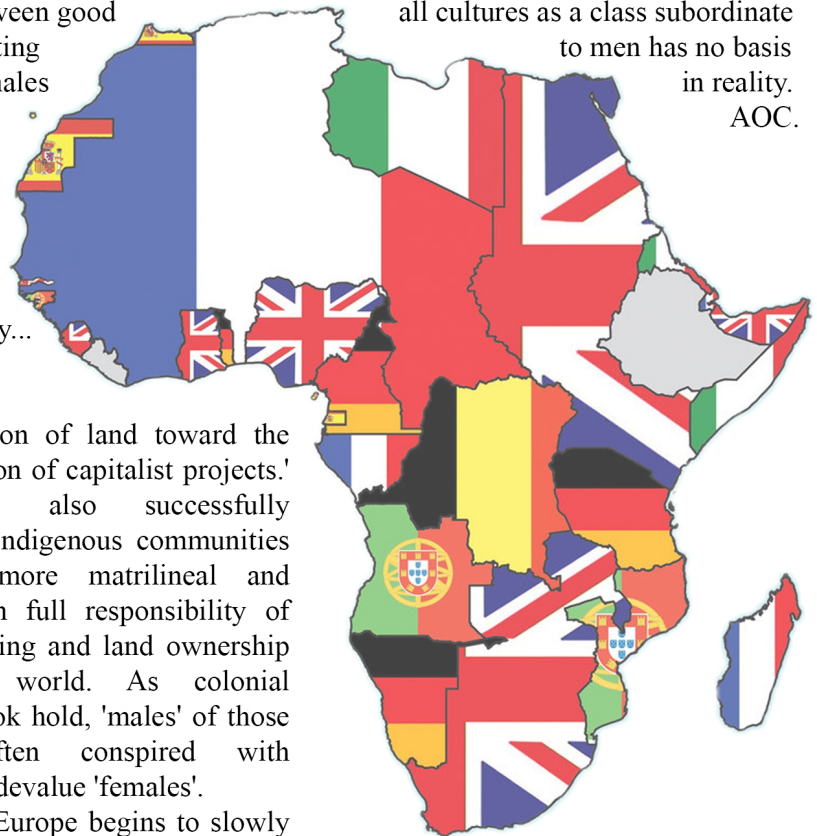
Even though many of these European nations had not been long free from Graeco-Roman mythologies of multiple genders, like Hermaphroditus (the two-sexed child of Aphrodite and Hermes) and Teresias (who transformed into a woman), they inflicted gender duality upon other

nations as a form of control. They portrayed their own beliefs of gender as being the mark of a civilisation, the mark of a human being – therefore claiming natives of the discovered areas as sub-human. Feminist philosopher, Maria Lugones, argues that sexualised violence was justified towards dehumanised colonised subjects and 'control of colonised bodies institutionalised the internalisation of colonial systems. Religious indoctrination, with divisions between good and evil equating colonised females with Satan, arguably established not only a colonisation of bodies, but of memory...

clearing the way for the re-appropriation of land toward the implementation of capitalist projects.' This tactic also successfully destabilized Indigenous communities that were more matrilineal and assigned men full responsibility of decision making and land ownership across the world. As colonial ideologies took hold, 'males' of those societies often conspired with colonisers to devalue 'females'. As much of Europe begins to slowly

self-educate itself out of gender norms, we turn to judgment of former colonies and their sexist/homophobic history – as if it wasn't something we thought them.

Many records of Indigenous cosmologies have been long lost to history and so our true understanding of our species is limited. What we do know, however, is that gender as a form of subordination has no place in our society and the assumption that 'women' have always existed across all cultures as a class subordinate to men has no basis in reality.
AOC.



an abridged history of human genders

Muxe (Mexico) are generally males who either dress as women or dress as males with make-up. They may adopt "feminine" social roles such as working in embroidery, but many also have white-collar careers in Mexico.

Two-Spirit is a pan-Indian, umbrella term used by some indigenous North Americans to describe certain people in their communities who fulfill a traditional third-gender role in their cultures.

Femminiello (Italy) refers to biological males who dress as women and assume female gender roles in Neopolitan society. Their station in society is privileged, and the rituals (including marriage to one another) was based on Greek mythology related to Hermaphroditus and Teresias (who was transformed into a woman for seven years).

Genetics seems to have created a third sex in Dominican Republic. A heritable pseudo-hermaphroditic trait with undifferentiated genitalia, they generally were raised as girls, but began developing male traits at puberty.

A travesti is a person who was born male, has a feminine gender identity, and is primarily sexually attracted to non-feminine men. However, in contrast to transsexual women, they often don't see themselves as women.

The Kingdom of Dahomey (now Benin) had an all-female regiment of female warriors called the mino (our mothers). They were unmarried and childless women who were thought to have masculine or aggressive traits.

Khanith (Oman) are considered a specific third gender category in the Arabian Peninsula.

The köçek (Ottoman Empire) were a cultural phenomenon in which young men dressed in women's attire and formed traveling dance troupes who performed sexually suggestive dances. Although they were not necessarily gay, they were traditionally available to the highest male bidder.

Generally Chuckchi shamans are biologically male who married men but also were not subject to the social limitations placed on women.

The Bugi people of southern Sulawesi recognize three sexes (male, female, intersex) and five genders: men, women, calabai, calalai, and bissu.

Hijra (South Asia) are physiological males who adopt feminine gender identity, women's clothing and other feminine gender roles. During the era of the British Raj, authorities attempted to eradicate hijras, whom they saw as "a breach of public decency."

Mashoga is a Swahili term that connotes a range of identities on the gender continuum. While loosely used to indicate gay men, a large proportion of mashoga are biological men who adopt the female gender early in life.

In Maori culture, wakawahine are men who take up traditionally feminine occupations such as weaving. Wakatane denotes a biological female who pursues traditionally male roles, such as becoming a warrior or engaging in physical labor.

There's Power in a Union A Look at Solidarity in the Film 'Pride'

“That’s what the labour movement means. Should mean. You support me and I support you. Whoever you are. Wherever you come from. Shoulder to shoulder. Hand to hand.”
Dai Donovan, NUM Representative.

Historical context is important to our activism; knowing that working-class solidarity and past struggles have had benefits for us today. Unfortunately, especially when it comes to the most radical activities, these stories seem to be forgotten about and washed away by the sands of time, as verbal accounts die out and right-wing media write the first draft of history. It’s great, then, that we have a record of the achievements of solidarity movements and activist groups that got a standing ovation at Cannes Film Festival.

Pride is a 2014 film from celebrated theatre director Matthew Wachus and written by theatre writer and actor Stephen Beresford, being his first film screenplay. It tells the true-life story of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM), an alliance of lesbian and gay men supporting the UK miner’s strike of 1984-85. They are invited to a small mining town in Wales called Onllwyn and strike up an unlikely friendship with the residents. The group was founded by Mark Ashton and Mike Jackson (portrayed by Ben Schnetzer and Joe Gilgun respectively).

Ashton gets a lot of the focus of the narrative and while the movie doesn’t exactly downplay his political leanings, it’s never made explicit that he was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain and general secretary of their youth division. Despite this, the film is not afraid to wear the symbolism of LGSM’s politics on its sleeve. It opens with Pete Seeger’s Solidarity Forever, a poster of



Cast of Pride (2014) with surviving members

the October Revolution on LGSM’s bus, and one of the biggest motifs is an old union banner in Onllwyn of two hands clasped together.

Ultimately, what makes this movie so great is its accessibility. You don’t have to start with an agreement with the characters’ politics to understand the core of what this film is about: solidarity. Here are two groups being marginalised by Thatcher’s government; the LGBT community and the miners. Ashton outlines early on that police tactics on striking miners are similar to how gay people are targeted. It’s not that their situations exactly align, it’s that they are both the victims of systemic prejudices and know what it’s like to be powerless. It’s finding that commonality that creates bonds and sympathy for a cause. “Our unity is our strength” says Dai Donovan, played by Paddy Considine, in a poignant speech about the surprising comradery fighting an

enemy stronger than you can bring.

No matter who you are, you can be taken advantage of by the capitalist system if you are seen as an inconvenience.

There are subtler points on activist circles that this film depicts really well, from madcap ideas and stunts to the general wryness, cynicism, and injokes, the loosely structured but still serious meetings. The consistent rejection due to larger bodies not wanting to be affiliated with you. The splinter groups to tackle certain other issues. There’s a scene where they list off legal procedure the police must follow to arrest activists, showing there’s a need for them to know this for their own personal safety because of their sexuality - go up to most activists and they could rattle off laws like that to you almost by heart.

Most important is the comradery; the unspoken bonds and trust they have with their comrades. I love how the



owners of Gay's the Word, LGSM's hub and the only gay-themed bookshop in England allow other members to sleep at their houses. These young people were clearly kicked out and ostracised by their families, but here they have the support they need. In the end, this is the sense in which the LGSM mirrors the role of the union in the community. They have an impact on each other, with members of the mining community engaging with issues around sexuality at home and nationally, while many of the group re-connect with working class values. Most importantly, this movie is just fun! I've described it before as a politically charged Richard Curtis film (though not as treacly). Full of delightful British wit and cynicism but with a genuine warmth and earnestness that feels earned by the climax, we have a film that has lengthy discussions about the bonds of union might and solidarity contrasted with women drunkenly laughing over

finding massive dildos in some lad's room. Seeing Jonathan Blake, played by Dominic West (Blake was one of the first HIV positive patients diagnosed in the United Kingdom and, as of writing this, he's still alive) dancing at a Welsh community centre to "Shame Shame Shame" by Shirley and Company - I wouldn't trade that for the world. The real Blake has claimed he never danced that well, mind.

I don't want to give away the ending, but goddamn if it doesn't hit me every time I see it. You can look it up as it's a true story, but I would say try to go into this unspoiled. It's such a powerful, resonant note to leave off on. And it's a shame that this story has been buried for so long. It really shows the power of working class activism and solidarity through multiple perspectives. It's a really inspirational flick that really makes you feel that you can make a difference.



Mark Christian Ashton (19 May 1960 – 11 February 1987) was an Irish gay rights activist and member of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

After Queer Theory

James Penney's *After Queer Theory* is a much-needed polemic in the ongoing debate around sexual politics, a debate which both encapsulates and the defines the 'culture wars'. Language on the interface between the political and the sexual is constantly evolving and finding new conflicts that extend over the lines of both public discourse and private lives. Academics and commentators frequently fail to apply any socioeconomic context or political analysis of Late Capitalism to their work with the result that capitalism alone colours every reading and gets the last word in on meaning and how it's communicated. The academic field

of Queer Theory has had a profound effect on the vocabulary of progressive struggles, quickly spread in a combative evolutionary environment online. Its terminology and public image act to supply people with concepts to understand and advocate progressive sexual politics while others define themselves in reaction against them. A clear example of the importance of academic theory to the Right can be seen in the recent de-accreditation of Gender Studies in Hungary by the Orbán government. What is to the majority of people an esoteric field of literary and social studies is to the Right a monolithic institution corrupting and undermining 'Western' values, a dangerous and counter-cultural ideological unit that pervades society and by some implausible mechanism disturbs the social relations that make up the 'traditional' family unit, which is obviously a more palatable

explanation to their audience than the idea that capitalism changed. This book fundamentally contradicts the claim that Queer Theory is a dynamic powerhouse of subversion. James Penney argues that the field as it stands today has largely run its course and lost its steam as a centre of emancipatory force. Moreover, he extends this controversial premise to argue that the necessary action to re-activate it as a catalyst for social changes lies in a return to a Marxist and psychoanalytic conception of sexuality. To make his point, he engages in a materialist historiography of queer liberation politics in the 20th century, paying particular attention to the role economic and social conditions played in forging the academic understanding that is now termed Queer Theory. The embryonic stage of Queer Theory occurred during a period in which universities were being

commercialised and reorganised according to the discipline of market logic. This process reveals a missing ingredient in how the radical and collective political line of sexual politics which predominated in the 60s and 70s transformed into the insipid and capitalism-compatible version proffered by corporations and institutions today. On this historic journey, the critical moment was the proliferation of post-structuralism in Anglophone academic circles in the 90s (the mantras of which are uncritically recycled in current publications), after which class, gender and sexuality achieved their current status as separate but interlinked fluid categories of social difference. The immanent universality of the sexual throughout the body politic can thus be compartmentalised into individual lifestyles composed of a bricolage of ultimately essentialist building blocks. The schismatic disputations in which this school of thought broke with Marxism have largely been suppressed in the orthodox memory of the field. The inevitable outcome of this process has been the politicization of the sexual but the desexualisation of the political, as agendas move from universal collective goals to minoritarian concerns, their vision turning inward towards more geographically and economically privileged strata. Penney argues against the existence of a 'transgressive' sexuality as unintentionally normalising the false notion that there exists any form of legitimate sexuality. Essential to this is a repeated return to psychoanalytical theory to explain the impossibility of the normative sexual relation, and a repeated return to Marxism to explain the economic structure of social relations that form the basis for sexual identity in capitalism, the mode of production 'dependent on crisis, imperialism and war'.

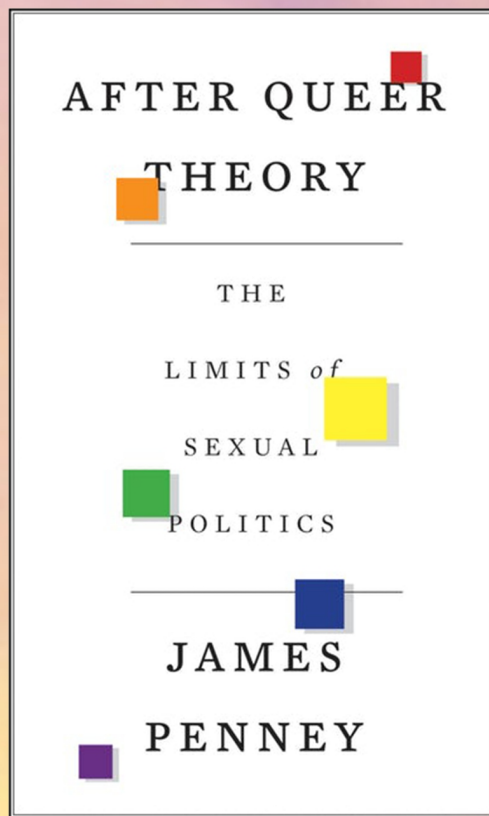
The author does not offer a vulgar Marxist rejection of sexual politics as unimportant or subservient to class, nor does he inveigh against postmodernist boogeymen, but rather

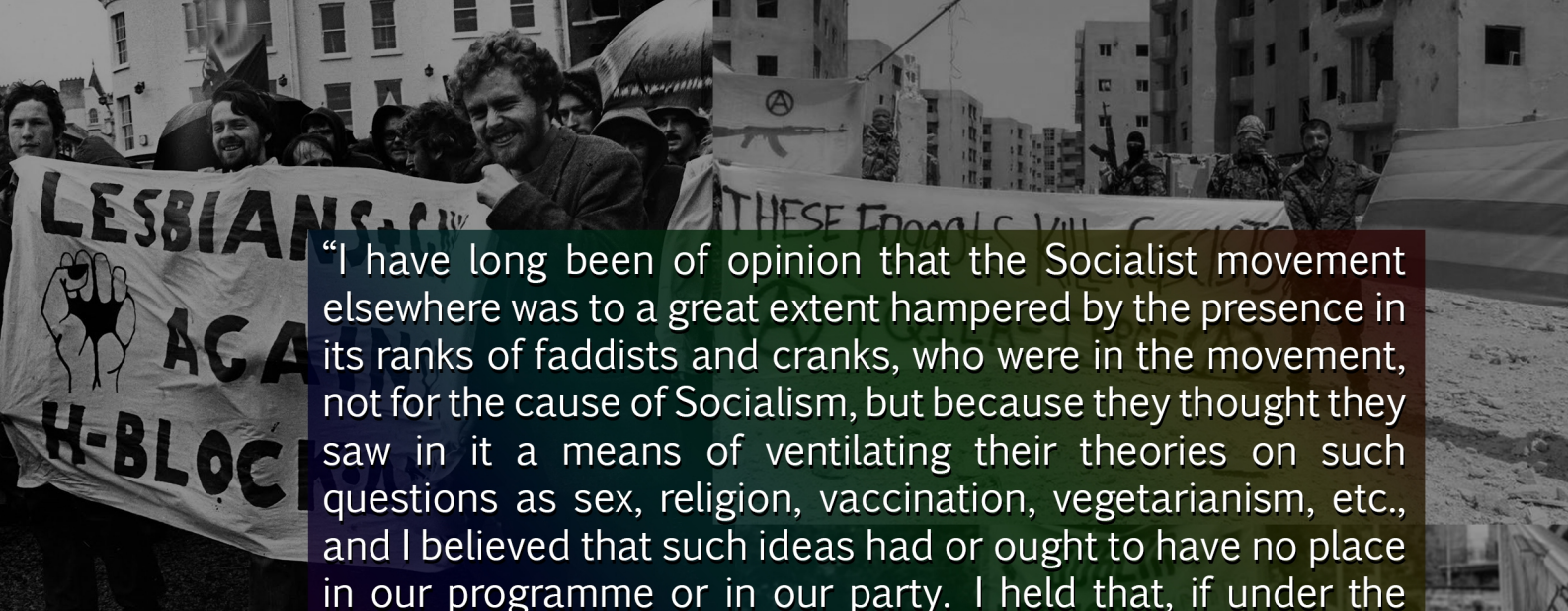
works through the inevitable contradictions of an identitarian conception of the 'community' seeking political recognition of the sexual subject (which is ultimately a pre-constructivist project in the guise of a postmodernist one), concluding that sex "haunts the expression of all political judgement". The sexual is more and more explicitly regarded as key to the development and rationale of political positions, with the emergence of phenomena such as the online incel culture which has attracted revulsion and curiosity by wearing on its sleeve a strain of right-wing thought that usually keeps its regressive and biologically determinist sexual mores latent. The muddled politicisation of sex as being a hierarchical resource under threat is not a recent innovation for the right. In 2012, NIPSA published a riposte to a report of the Taxpayers' Alliance (a British right-wing anti-benefits thinktank) on its "2020 tax commission". This response highlighted a bizarre line in the report that the opposition of the poor to welfare cuts was "partly plain old sexual jealousy at the root". Clearly the psychological has a role in the political, and despite the inability of the political to define or systematise the psychological in its formal discourse, it reveals itself in occasional paranoid outbursts such as these, and more broadly in the projected image of The Other that the Right oppose as invasive. Penney devotes attention to the ideas

of Freud that preconfigure modern queer dialogue, carefully navigating his theoretical landscape and critically re-assessing his whole body of work rather than focusing on his proclivities for heteronormativity. His work employs an eclectic armamentarium of thinkers in its arguments, ranging from early theorists such as Marx, Lacan and Freud to contemporary historic materialist authors like Teresa Ebert, Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou. This combination has a freshness that avoids being overly prosaic, rendering its core ideas comprehensible with effort. It is not an overly lengthy work but it is a challenging one and it is

exactly in this subversive and uninhibited character that its relevance is demonstrated. It disturbs hegemonies and assumptions and serves the transformative quality that every good book has of forcing self-reflection. It distils and dissects recent and historical currents with equal precision and clarity. Regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with the premise and arguments of the

author, it is a profoundly educational and thought-provoking work that merits recommendation. As Penney states from the outset, the current stagnation in academia and politics is not the end of anti-homophobic criticism, but an opportunity to rethink the connection between the political and the sexual, to recapture the revolutionary immediacy of materialist socialist praxis. FT.





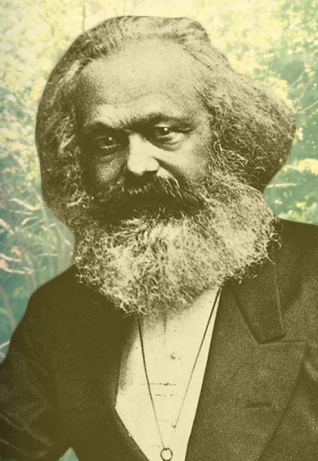
“I have long been of opinion that the Socialist movement elsewhere was to a great extent hampered by the presence in its ranks of faddists and cranks, who were in the movement, not for the cause of Socialism, but because they thought they saw in it a means of ventilating their theories on such questions as sex, religion, vaccination, vegetarianism, etc., and I believed that such ideas had or ought to have no place in our programme or in our party. I held that, if under the Socialist Republic individuals desired to have a Freethinker’s propagandist, a Jewish Rabbi, a mesmerist, a Catholic priest, a Salvation captain, a professional clown, or a Protestant divine, they would be perfectly free to maintain them for any of these purposes provided that society was reimbursed for the loss of their labour. In other words, that Socialism was compatible with the greatest intellectual freedom, or even freakishness. And that, therefore, we were as a body concerned only with the question of political and economic freedom for our class.”

James Connolly [Wages and other things, 1904]



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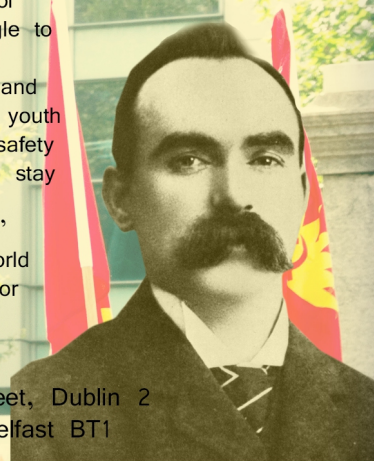


The Connolly Youth Movement is a youth organisation committed to fighting for democracy, freedom and unity in this country. The CYM takes part in the struggle to build socialism in Ireland and everywhere around the globe.

Since 2008 the crisis in Ireland has deepened which has seen many talented and gifted young people leave this island in search of a better life abroad. We as a youth organisation are fundamentally opposed to any government using its youth as a safety valve in trying to ease economic and political tensions. So we are determined to stay and fight the injustice brought on this and future generations.

Working with progressive movements to develop young workers’ and students’ consciousness in their own proud history and culture. As a member of the World Federation of Democratic Youth we struggle in opposition to imperialism and for liberation around the globe of all oppressed peoples, including ourselves.

The CYM has branches in Dublin, Belfast and Cork.



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