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Grassroots Gathering

Ireland

Andrew Flood

March 26, 2005

The Grassroots Gatherings are a regular series of gatherings of libertarian activists that happen in the cities of Ireland. They have spun off a number of libertarian campaigns and local groups.

The Grassroots Gatherings were set up in 2001 out of discussions between activists involved in the environmental movement, Latin American solidarity, anarchist politics and community development who shared a commitment to non-hierarchical, bottom-up ways of organising. Gatherings are spaces for discussion and building links: they are not dominated by any political party, and the only decisions taken at Gatherings are about where the next one will be.

There are usually 2 or 3 Gatherings every year, rotating between different cities – Dublin, Cork, Belfast, Limerick and Galway have all hosted one or more. Gatherings are organised by local activist groups according to their own ideas, and have very different styles and shapes. Sometimes they are as small as 50 people, sometimes as large as 250. They are always free, and food, accommodation, childcare etc. when provided are covered by donations.

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The Gatherings have been a very creative space for activism. Out of them have come the **Grassroots Network Against War** (GNAW), which organised mass direct actions at Shannon, **Dublin Grassroots Network** (DGN), which organised the Mayday 2004 protests for an alternative Europe, and a whole host of other connections, projects and ideas. See Links page for some more info on “spin offs”

A number of local Grassroots groups have come out of the Gatherings, which take action locally around issues they decide to work on. At present these include Dublin, Belfast, Cork and Galway. There is also a national Grassroots mailing list for discussion and information. There is no head office, no central decision-making and no membership fees: Grassroots is what you make it, not what someone else does for you.

The Grassroots Principles

The call for the first Grassroots Gathering in 2001 set out a list of principles which have become accepted as a basis for the Gatherings. The basic points are these:

- People should control their own lives and work together as equals, as part of how we work as well as what we are working towards. Within the network this means rejecting top-down and state-centred forms of organisation (hierarchical, authoritarian, expert-based, Leninist etc.)
- The network should be open, decentralised and really democratic.
- We call for solutions that involve ordinary people controlling their own lives and having the resources to do so:
 - The abolition, not reform, of global bodies like the World Bank and WTO, and a challenge to underlying structures of power and inequality

- The control of the workplace by those who work there
- The control of communities by people who live there
- We argue for a sustainable environmental, economic and social system, agreed by the people of the planet.
- We aim to work together in ways which are accessible to everyone, particularly women and working-class people, rather than reproducing feelings of disempowerment and alienation within our own network.