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people who don't hold with Church views, encouraging chauvinism and intolerance of the worst kind. Despite their Christian rhetoric, they have rarely shown an iota of 'compassion' for anyone. For this reason alone victory is sweet.>

## CONTROL

But the Catholic Church continues to be a very powerful force in Ireland. This should not be forgotten. It still retains huge influence in schools, hospitals and in the local community. It also retains huge support among the main political parties — Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and Labour. The campaign to remove the Catholic Church from Irish society, where they survive at the tax payers' expense, still has a long way to go.

The successful 'yes' vote did show however that we can win — most importantly against superior forces, with greater resources. It is a victory for all those who did the merest bit to encourage a 'yes' vote. But there is also a warning in the narrowness of the victory.

The Catholic Right is now a force in Irish society. And they are organising in a more political direction. They are committed and strong and they have money. They want to bring Ireland back to an era when no one questioned anything, when women stayed at home because they were forced to. From now on the Catholic Right will fight tooth and nail on every issue of importance to them. There is still a long struggle ahead to beat them once and for all.



**AT LAST, the ban on divorce is gone. In the past few years, issues concerning the family and the place of women have been at the centre of Irish politics — in part because Catholic church thinking has long dominated these areas of life in Ireland. Things first began to change for the better in the early 1970s when women began to fight back against Church rule. Contraception was demanded and won.**

Later access to information on abortion, and abortion facilities in England, was fought for and won — though in a very restricted context. (Let us not forget that as many as 6,000 Irish women travel to England every year to have an abortion because it remains illegal in the 26 counties.) Now, with the recent Divorce Referendum, a restricted form of divorce will be allowed. Another blow has been struck against the Catholic church that fought its hardest to prevent any change occurring.

The 'yes' campaign won by the narrowest of margins — by less than half of one per cent of all the votes cast. The turnout of the electorate was approximately 61%. Even up to the very end the result was in doubt and a full re-count of all votes cast was necessary in order to confirm the result. Nevertheless, the majority was clearly for 'yes' and clearly for divorce.

Across the twenty-six counties the changes since 1986 — when the last referendum on divorce was held — were definite, and in some places dramatic. Swings to the 'yes' side varied between 10% and 20%, the highest being recorded in the working-class constituency of Dublin Central. In all 16 constituencies voted 'yes' and 25 voted 'no'.

Even predominantly rural constituencies such as Kerry South held respectable swings to the 'yes' campaign, this despite the complete lack of a 'yes' campaign in many of these areas. Two constituencies that eventually voted 'no' — Waterford and Wexford — still recorded two of the largest swings to the 'yes' side. This is one of the better aspects of the referendum compared with the vote in 1986. This time around those supporting divorce were not just con-

centrated in Dublin. This indicates a broader and more substantial move away from Catholic Church control in Ireland than in previous times.

## FREEDOM

The Divorce Referendum, though conservative in terms of what it proposed, was from the very beginning about much more. As the 'yes' and 'no' campaigns heated up in the weeks before the vote, two clear views about the way Irish society should be became apparent. Those supporting the 'no' side were intent on retaining control over the individual and what the individual does. Those who supported the 'yes' campaign wanted the arena of individual freedom enlarged. This is why we, as anarchists, were involved in the referendum.

Perhaps no one understood the issues in such a clear light as those who were behind the 'no' campaign — the Catholic Right. They were well organised, they had plenty of money (including American money) and they weren't afraid of the issues. They believe in authoritarian solutions to the problems in Irish society and they believe in forcing things down people's throats.

Arguing that the 'common good' must come first, they excused away the reality of marriage breakdown in Ireland with a total disregard for the individuals involved — be they women, men or children. Their attitude was 'Put Up or Shut Up'- and it was this approach that was eventually rejected by the 'yes' victory. The campaign fought by the Catholic Right was committed and forceful. A response that was in sharp contrast to that of the Government.

If ever there was a liability for the 'no' campaign, it was having the Government on its side. The Government led the 'yes' campaign, they controlled the money, they even tried to set the agenda of debate — in the end they nearly lost it for everyone. By their very presence they stymied initiative. The 'yes' campaign got off



the ground late, it lacked any initial willingness to tackle Catholic Church hypocrisy and it pussy-footed around all the main issues — the 'cost of divorce', the alleged effects on children, etc.

Worst of all, and perhaps this is their lasting legacy, the Government have lumbered the people with the disgraceful provision — now enshrined in the Constitution! — that one must separate for at least four years before you can entertain the idea of a divorce. This, we have argued, is an affront to every person who goes through the trauma of a broken marriage.

## COMPASSION

The 'yes' campaign was very broad, and it stood for different things at different times. Some of the arguments that it used were good — the arguments for 'divorce as a civil right' for instance, or the argument for the separation of Church and State'. Yet there were other ideas in the 'yes' campaign that we, as anarchists, had no truck with. We did not participate in the campaign for divorce so as 'to strengthen the institution of marriage'. Many of the political parties argued for divorce along these lines — quite illogically in our opinion.

The Workers Solidarity Movement said straight out that divorce will weaken the institution of marriage, and that this is a good thing. We are for choice in life, and for respect for the individual. We believe that people, on the whole, act carefully and responsibly with their lives. Most of all we do not believe that you need a law to keep you in a relationship with another person — we think the idea is actually absurd. Our partners in this life are our own business and the 'yes' victory was one small step towards bringing this a little closer. That is why we fought hard for a 'yes' vote.

The big loser in this referendum was the Catholic Church. They have, especially in times past, wielded great power in the twenty-six county state. They have wielded it disgracefully — punishing