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Democratic Left's disposable radicalism

De Rossa & Rabbitte join Bruton's cabinet

Workers Solidarity Movement

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WHO REMEMBERS when Democratic Left was formed?
It was only two and a half years ago when they arrived on the scene trying to convince us that they were like an anti-coalition Labour Party. Their founding policy statement said “we see no role for our party as a partner of a right wing government”. And some were convinced, like the Labour members who uprooted themselves and joined DL, thinking it more left wing.

Now they are sitting in government with the former blueshirts of Fine Gael (the people who gave us a ‘state of emergency’ in the 1970’s) and their rivals in Labour (who contributed Conor Cruise O’Brien to Liam Cosgrave’s paranoid administration). Still, no point in raking over old coals. They will be far too busy having a go at workers in the ESB and Telecom, presiding over a run down health service, keeping social welfare payments at a pitifully low level, and all the other ‘responsibilities of government’.

It was easy to predict that DL would jump into bed with almost anyone who would give them a ministerial car. After all they believe in the division of society into rulers and ruled, you won't catch Rabitte or Gilmore calling for the workplaces to be turned over to the workers. And if you believe rulers are ok, you won't have a moral problem with being one.

The excuse will be that if it wasn't DL it would have been the PDs. As if DL were doing us a favour by riding around in state cars, getting big salaries and implementing laws like the Industrial Relations Act and giving tax amnesties to millionaires. It was harder to predict that John Bruton would need them so badly that he would have to give cabinet jobs to four of their six TD's!

Trusting a politician to stick by his/her policies is as naive as expecting a four year old child to guard a box of chocolates without eating half of them. To win reforms (apart from ones that have little financial cost or risk of unpopularity) we need the 'muscle' of strikes, demonstrations and civil disobedience to win concessions. That is what gets us the bigger changes, not appeals to well meaning or 'left' TDs.

And if we want to change the way society is run we can't rely on professional politicians. Anarchists want to end the rule of the rich and see power in the hands of all – not a small group of industrialists, ranchers or politicians.