

Cultural Debasement: Collective Identity and Capitalism

by Chris Murray *Tuesday, Jul 11 2006, 9:08am*

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Environmental Action : An Irish Study

The Irish State has passed, since 2002 a raft of legislations that are anti-citizen and anti-community. This has resulted in community and ecological activists taking a frontline defence against the incursion of capitalism. The issue for us as a community now is protection and stewarding our environment or bowing to what has been exposed as a form of cultural debasement wherein the state and elitists have attempted to divorce community from their heritage that is rich with stories, ideas and poetry. No where is this more obvious than in the ongoing battle to save the Tara-Skyrne Valley from destruction.

The tools used by the State, which accompany anti-citizen legislation, include injunction the 'consultative process' and intimidation. Media isolation is characteristic, the refusal by the press to view the issues concerning four ongoing campaigns as part of the legislative problems and in isolation from each other adds to the difficulties that small communities are battling with.

Each successive law has eroded the right of the citizen to freely object to issues that directly concern them as stewards and guardians of their heritage. These laws include the Housing Bill (Miscellaneous Provisions) 2002 known notoriously as the 'Trespass Law'.

The National Monuments Act 1934-2004 (as amended) gave the Minister for the Environment sweeping powers to alter, destroy, or deface any national Monument within 21 sitting days of the Houses of Parliament if it happened to interfere with the Roads programme.

The Planning and Development Bill (Strategic Infrastructure) 2006, which reduces the citizen's right to object to a planning decision made by a newly created division of the original planning board: ABP.

These laws have been introduced together with complimentary state-appointed corporations (for Planning publications) which state that route change on a motorway such as the M3 (the Tara road) will only be contemplated at the Environmental Impact Assessment Stage.

In the same period of time the Irish State has been consistently fined for ignoring EU directives on Heritage and Environment, including abolishing the only statutory agency charged with the protection of our Monuments in 2003.

In a recent case regarding the fragile archaeological complex at Tara, the State contended that it was not a 'complex' or landscape but a landscape 'containing' monuments, none of the monuments bore relation to each other thus they are at risk of demolition in 2007.

In Irish legislation a national Monument per se does not exist 'unless something is to be done with it'. If a national monument is discovered during the course of earthworks, it can be demolished by ministerial order within 21 days.

The Aarhus Convention has not been transposed into Irish Law and the citizen under tighter laws has to take the burden of proof as well as the financial burden of judicial process if s/he contemplates a case. In Co Mayo five men were imprisoned for opposing a gas pipeline going overland near their homes (Rossport 5/Shell to Sea campaign).

In Pallaskenry, Co Limerick , a young mother has been threatened with imprisonment for refusing to allow the council to put their community on a group water scheme because they have access to clean water already; the Bleach Lough water case.

In all these cases the financial consideration of the crony lobby has been put above the health and well-being of the community.

The debasement of community identity is a stage in capitalism that prepares the way for the commodification of individual rights.

In Tara, cultural debasement is a tool of suppression and should be resisted. Places like Tara carry the stories and poems of generations of poets, artists and thinkers. An attempt was made to disturb the hill and it failed -- British Israelites were looking for the Ark of the Covenant!

The present process is the bisection of the unexcavated Tara--Skyrne valley in order to further aggressive planning and the con-committant land grab around the area.

There is a local response but the action should extend to the national/cultural level, the damage to the cultural consciousness cannot be underestimated.

The battle to save Tara involves a dis-enfranchised community of people who wish to guard and maintain the identity of their culture in opposition to the greed of a monied elite. It is an expression of the cultural 'heart' at war with the forces of capitalism.

The current spread of ultra-right capitalist ideology and other forms of repression/suppression must be fought at every level of society. Those who have taken up the challenge to save (the) Tara should be an inspiration to the entire nation.

The wealth of the few (Capitalism) does not serve the interests of the many.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/savetara>

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-257.html>